

Dixie; or A Sailor's Story.

It was a still summer night. Lake Erie was unusually calm; yet struggling billows rolled here and there. The Northern Light, enroute from Chicago to Buffalo, with a large cargo of grain and machinery and with three hundred passengers on board, was sailing gracefully on her course. The clear sky was one big unrolled galaxy of stars; the large full moon hung directly overhead and its reflection lit up the dark blue waters. That peculiar beauty of the lake in the moon light has often served as the poet's theme.

My shipmate and I were sitting enjoying a tranquil smoke on the after-quarter deck. Everything was quiet below; the music and dancing in the cabin had ceased. The midnight watch had changed and gone down. The dull heavy thumping noise of the big engine below, beating constantly the time, the occasional clank of the rudder chains at the stern, and the smothered roar of rushing waters at the prow, were the only noises to disturb the perfect silence. While thus sitting in the cool lake breeze and gently rocked by the motion of the ship, my mind wandered to long loved places, to the home of my childhood, to some old play ground, to some mound marking the resting place of a dear friend. The fire in my pipe had gone out. My shipmate was apparently looking at his feet, his pipe in his mouth upside down, no fire in it.

Our reverie was suddenly broken by a long, loud blow of the big whistle. The whole ship trembled. We were answered by the passing boat; the answer sounded only like an echo. My shipmate, seeing the ashes out of my pipe, said, "I was just thinking how to-day I might have owned a ship like this." I knew from the signs that a long story was now going to be unraveled. "Yes, I might have been worth as much as this whole ship and the cargo thrown in," he continued. "Every time I think about it I kick myself for being such a d—— fool. Here I am just a sailor before the mast and have to work two and three days and nights

at a clip very often, as we did last trip into Chicago, and I expect we will have to do it when we get into Buffalo. I might just as well have been wearing my broadcloth." He had now gotten his pipe refilled and lighted, after taking a few puffs he continued "I was born and raised in Tennessee on old Judge Trotter's plantation. Old Trotter had about three hundred slaves; he was very good to 'em; they done about as they pleased, and he never 'lowed a one of them to be whipped if he knew it. They saucied everything about the place 'cept him and ole missus.

My mother was one of the house women, so I was raised about the house. When I got big enough some of the boys learned me to drive, and before long I was driving the carriage all around. At first I thought it fun but after awile I got tired of it and then they made me do it. That was about all the work I ever done, was driving that carriage, and it was going nearly all the time.

Old Trotter's only child, Georgia, was just one year younger than me, and as I said I was raised about the big house, so we were brought up together, my mother nursed us both. It was alright when we was little, but when we got bigger Georgia's mother tried to keep us apart a little more. But it was no use. Georgia was one of those spoiled young ones, hard-headed, and bound to have her own way. She would fight her mother and father or anybody when she was only twelve years old, and when she got one of her high ways she was boss of the place. After while, when Georgia was about seventeen, the old folks sent her away to school, Boston I believe it was. Before she left she bid me good-bye when no one saw us.

Then she was only a frolicking girl but three years afterwards when she came back, what a change! She was young missus and tended to all her father's business. She was smart; she had studied 'rithmetic and Greek and grammar and all this kind a thing.

She took her rides in the carriage nearly every morning. I was the only coach man