

Beech Island to Chester - 1819

All is in a bustle at Riverside for on tomorrow Charlotte Zubley Clarke is to leave her father's home as the bride of John Mills, youngest son of Colonel John and Mary Gill Mills. She is quite sad over the thought of leaving her dear father who has always been so indulgent. Her maid, Cumber, is highly insulted to hear she is to ride on one of the wagons up to Chester. She has an idea that steamboats sail up to Chester like they do to Savannah and Augusta. She, her uncle, and his family are to go now to the upcountry as Miss Charlotte's Negroes. Mr. Clarke hated to part with this family, as they were among the most trustworthy of his slaves. However, he could not bear the idea of his dear Charlotte going up there alone with negroes not to be depended upon. This family were of the old Zubley set of slaves and were devoted to "Missy", as they called their lovely young mistress. Besides, Gabe was a fine shoemaker, and John Mills had told him how scarce a good shoemaker was in the upcountry. Besides that, he was considered a fine blacksmith. Mr. Clarke had thought of all this because if John Mills wasn't rich, then he had given him one of the most valuable Negroes he owned.

Mr. Clarke was having Gabe load the wagons from a ferry boat with things that had been sent down on the boat from Augusta. If ever a bride left her father's home well supplied with the comforts of life, Charlotte Clarke did. Her brother, Samuel, was there, too, seeing that everything was packed on the wagon, so as not to be injured or lost on the long journey up to Chester. John Mills had arrived the day before, and when seeing her father was going to give her such a liberal supply, he suggested that the wagons start a day ahead. Charlotte's brother, John, had kindly offered to come along with the wagons to help Gabe get the things to Chester in safety.

Mrs. Burney had come with the other Reddick children to make their home with her brother-in-law, Mr. Clarke. He would be so lonely now, and also, his health was failing.

John Mills was met by his brother, Thomas, at Edgefield the day he came for his wedding. Thomas was much gratified when he saw what an improvement had come over his heretofore reckless brother. John had a serious air and a dignity of manner that surprised Dr. Mills. He told his wife of how very much John had improved and said that he had great hopes of John yet being a first-class lawyer and a steady, settled man. The eventful day arrives, and Dr. Mills, with his wife and children, arrive at Riverside. They have come on ahead leaving John Mills to ride over with the minister who is to perform the marriage ceremony.

As the buggies or carriages drive up to Riverside, Mrs. Burney, who has her own quaint ideas about everything says, "Oh, let me go where I can't see these carriages and buggies. I feel like it is dear Charlotte's funeral they are all coming to."

She had such a sad ending to her marriage that she was always fearful that some sorrow instead of happiness would follow any girl who was fool enough to marry.

The nearest relatives and friends were all present. Charlotte Clarke was attired in an elegant gray broadcloth suit. Her lovely hair was caught up in a high knot and an elegant pearl comb held it in place. She had always worn her hair in loose curls and now it was hard to keep it tucked up, so little curls were everywhere trying to make their escape. She was very pale when her father came in with his proud air and had her leaning on his trembling arm.

Dr. Mills came in with John Mills. Although the room was not allowed to be decorated by either Mr. Clarke or Mrs. Burney, who had said it was funeral enough without flowers to make it look more so, Mrs. Ardis had insisted upon having the darkened room brilliantly lighted by colored wax tapers.

Take a trip to Old Purity Cemetery, near the site where John and Ann White settled, and read the inscriptions on the tombstones. Many have White names and others are White descendants. All of the Whites buried there are descendants of that first John and Ann White. The succeeding generations' roots run deep today. They share a love for kin and Chester County.

Burton Gettys White

About The Author

Burton Brice Gettys White is the daughter of Lawson Alexander Gettys of Shelby, North Carolina, and of Mary Adams Brice Gettys, a native of Fairfield County, South Carolina. She grew up in Shelby, North Carolina, graduated from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, North Carolina, and is married to Harvey Stewart White, a retired executive of Equitable Life Insurance Co. The Harvey Whites returned to Chester after his retirement to build a home on part of their "White Heritage."

Mrs. Burney said in her sarcastic tone, "Looks like we were a set of Roman Catholics here instead of Christian people!"

Mrs. Ardis paid no attention to her cranky sister, who she said was always different from her. However, Mrs. Ardis was willing enough to depend on her cranky sister if she wanted sound good sense. Charlotte's aunt, Mrs. Ardis, wanted her to be married in white satin, but Charlotte allowed her Aunt Burney to influence her in this.

"Why what is the sense, child, of that when you are to leave in one hour's time to travel to Edgefield to take the stage for a long muddy ride. Never mind what your Aunt Nancy thinks about a white satin dress. She always thought too much about dress anyway."

Charlotte looked lovely, but her bright color was gone. The gray dress of broadcloth was made to fit her figure so closely that it gave her the appearance of a taller girl than she really was. She had a cluster of orange blossoms fastened at the throat and a spray of orange flowers were fastened in her dark hair. Her eyes, naturally bright, were now so brilliant that they, with her pale cheeks, gave her a look of unusual beauty.

John Mills chided her in a gentle way for being so pale on her marriage day. "Why Charlotte, what has become of your roses?" And, pinching her cheeks in a playful way, he said, "I hope you are not grieving on account of this being our wedding day."

"Oh, no, dear, I am not grieving, but when excited, any color leaves me. Then when it does return it comes back brighter than ever."

So, it proved that day to be true. No sooner was the solemn marriage ceremony over, and her father had folded her in a close embrace and the aunts and uncles had come up to receive their kisses and give congratulations, than the crimson blood came into Charlotte's face and then indeed was she beautiful. Charlotte was in one of her lively moods and she was the life of the little company assembled to enjoy the pleasure of her wedding day. A grand wedding breakfast was served.

Invitations had been sent up to Chester inviting Mrs. Mills, Mr. and Mrs. Alex Pagan, and Robert Mills, but none had been accepted. Robert had a very important case, and, as court was soon to be held in Chester, he could not leave. Besides, he, too, was a married man now. Dr. Mills was disappointed that none of his upcountry kin accepted the invitations sent them, and Charlotte felt a little nervous when she thought that she was going among Mr. Mills' upcountry kin and did not know a single one of them.

Mary Ann, wife of Thomas Mills, has said to her, "Charlotte, if they treat you as coolly as they have me, I will feel sorry for you."

Charlotte did not want Cousin Mary Ann to know how nervous she felt at the idea of not being kindly received by her husband's relatives, so she laughed and said, "Oh never mind, I mean to make them love me. Then I will bring them down to see you."

Now Mrs. Mills laughed and said, "Whoever thought you and I would be sisters-in-law.

Charlotte, just think of it, we are twin sisters' daughters. I belong to Nancy Zublely and you to Anne Helene Zublely. Our children will be first cousins."

Here Mrs. Burney, who had never had any children said, "Nonsense, Mary Ann, Charlotte may never have any children like her old aunt."

She patted Charlotte on the head, who had turned crimson at Cousin Mary Ann supposing such an unheard of thing.

We will now go back to the little wedding party at Riverside. Mr. Clarke's niece, Betsy Seabrook, has since married Mr. Williams, and they live on the island. Cousin Betsy is a great friend of Charlotte, and today she is at the wedding. Mr. Williams is a remarkably witty man, and he and Charlotte are the gayest of the gay. He is teasing her and telling her that the mud in the upcountry is so deep that all you can see at times is the horses' ears. He teases about so many other ridiculous absurdities of the upcountry style of living that Dr. Mills and John Mills exchange looks not very complimentary to Mr. Williams. The truth is that Mr. Williams has hammered too much truth of the upcountry. He also told of a big tent that the men and women all slept in with calico curtain to divide them off. The ladies all looked at each other and Mrs. Burney, who did not like Mr. Williams anyway, for his cutting at her for being a grass widow, said in her most sarcastic tone that Mr. Williams would make Charlotte think that she was going among a sea of Hottentots. Dr. Mills laughed outright at Mrs. Burney. John Mills, not knowing Mr. Williams' propensity for teasing, looked at him with a hot flush mounting to his face and was about to say something to Mr. Williams. However, Dr. Mills had seen that his brother did not like Mr. Williams' cuts at the upcountry manners or the criticisms of such a ridiculous nature. So, just as John Mills would have said something very cutting, Dr. Mills laughed and entered into the fun and wound Mr. Williams up so completely that he was glad to change the subject to a more suitable topic than making games of the groom's natural home.

Mrs. Williams, turning to Charlotte, said, "Charlotte, you know Williams' love of teasing, so don't allow anything he has said to influence you against your new home".

Charlotte laughed and said, "Oh, no, I understand Mr. Williams, so, I know how to take his fun."

In order to catch the afternoon stage, the wedding party was making ready to leave for Edgefield. Dr. Mills and Mr. Samuel Clarke were to accompany the bride and groom to Edgefield. John Mills and his bride, Dr. Mills, and Samuel Clarke all rode in the closed carriage belonging to Dr. Mills. Mr. Clarke was quite overcome when he bade his daughter farewell. But before leaving, he sent for John Mills to come to him in his own private room.

Looking straight at John Mills, he said in such a tone of sadness, "I have given up my treasure to your keeping, sir. I shall expect you to consider what I have given you as one of the choicest gifts. I understand that you are not a rich man. However, should you prove worthy of the trust I have given you, sir, all that I have will be yours to tenderly love and care for my beloved daughter." He then said, "Mr. Mills, you are the only man I have ever met to whom I would have entrusted Charlotte's happiness."

John Mills was deeply moved and going up to the silvery haired old man, he extended his hand, saying, "Mr. Clarke, with God's help, I will try to never disappoint you or in any way prove myself unworthy of the treasure you have entrusted to my keeping."

The old man clung to his hand and walked out on the piazza where all the guests were chatting and taking leave of their favorite, for Charlotte had been a favorite with all. The wagons had started the afternoon before and sad was the parting of the older Negroes with Gabe and his family. Cumber left her old home in dudgeon and openly said she was not gwine to stay in dat upcountry if she didn't like it, but was coming straight back to her "Old Massa." Now all the good-byes were over, but with almost a cry of a hunted deer, Charlotte ran to her old father and clung around his neck. At last, he mastered his feeling enough to say that he would soon come to see her in her new

home and that she must have some of those good johnny cakes (a kind of cornbread) for him. Charlotte smiled through her tears, and soon Dr. Mills was assisting her into the closed carriage. Then he motioned to John who jumped in with a look of relief on his handsome face, for good-byes were something he naturally hated. And, these downcountry people were so demonstrative in their leave taking that it bored him. Mr. Samuel Clarke now got in and then Dr. Mills got in and the carriage door was closed and the driver drew up the reins and away they went.

Charlotte looked so sad that her brother said in such a gay tone, "Why Sister, don't look like we are going to a funeral!"

So, she, of a lively nature, now chatted. John, seeing that she was cheerful, became so entertaining that the driver on the outside wondered what could be the fun. And the boy who was driving the donkey cart with the two trunks tried to keep up with the carriage so he could hear "de white buckra laugh." It was very cold now. A sharp wind blowing from the north caused Charlotte to shiver, and she drew her fur cloak closer around her.

Dr. Mills, seeing her shiver, said playfully, "My little sister need not begin to shiver at this little breeze. It would not surprise me if when you reach Chester, you will find everything covered with snow."

Dr. Mills told Charlotte as they rode along of his mother and sister. Mr. Clarke and John were in such a chat that Charlotte and Dr. Mills could talk freely with each other.

He said, "Charlotte, you will find the manners and customs of the upcountry quite different from what you have been accustomed to, and here a certain haughty tone came into his voice that Charlotte did not like to hear. There were never truer patriots in America than those who lived out on Fishing Creek. Although, the hardships of wars have passed over them and caused the women to become of a more masculine nature because they had to depend upon themselves so constantly, still, underneath all that plainness their hearts are just as pure, and a noble principle is their motto. "Now, Charlotte, when you meet my dear old mother, she may appear a little cold in her greeting of you, but you just be your own sweet self and all that reserve will melt away. I am sure you will be a favorite with all the upcountry kin."

They were now driving into Edgefield, and the stage had not yet arrived. Our little party gets out of the comfortable carriage and goes into the hotel to be by a comfortable fire that is burning in the big fireplace. As they come into the waiting, or receiving room, they attract a good deal of attention. Dr. Mills is a commanding looking man, and John and Charlotte are dressed in the most elegant style and are such a handsome couple. Mr. Samuel Clarke wears a soft wool overcoat with a silk-velvet collar; such a grand looking set of people seldom came into the hotel waiting room all at once. The proprietor is so anxious to get set for the strangers that he almost falls over a foot stool in his effort to get a huge rocking chair close to the fire for the young lady. All were soon seated around the roaring fire, which is very comfortable, and the proprietor thinks this is a very propitious time for him to find out who all these fine folks are.

So going up to John, he says in his most affable manner, "I guess your party has come to catch the stage for Columbia."

"Yes sir, that is our intention."

Seeing that John was not one to communicate with, he then turned to Mr. Clarke, saying, "I am thinking you will have some snow on you before you reach Columbia."

Mr. Clarke was ready to make people feel easy. "Well, sir, I am glad I am not of the party that will go off in the stage."

Then the man said, "I saw you all come in the same carriage, so guessed you were all going together."

"No, sir. Dr. Mills and I have only come here today to see my sister and her husband off."

The man smiles as though he knew it all. But, after a while, he ventured in a half scared tone, "If I might be so bold, what is your name, sir?"

Mr. Clarke, now really amused, said, "Well, I am Samuel Clarke, and that large gentleman who has just gone out is Dr. Thomas Sumter Mills. And, that gentleman over there is Mr. John Mills and the lady is his wife."

John Mills turned and looked at the man so sharply with his black eyes that the man grew embarrassed and rushed to a large box and grabbed up another armful of dry wood and began to pile it on the already hot fire.

John Mills, out of all patience with the man's inquisitiveness, jumped up and said, "What the devil are you putting on more wood for? This fire is hot enough to roast an ox!"

Charlotte looked startled when her husband said this to the man in his own house. Mr. Clarke walked out with an odd look on his kind face, thinking that John would have to break himself from using such expressions if he would make his sister happy. The man looked at John Mills in a sneaky way and went out of the room, also.

John now looked at Charlotte, and seeing from her expression that she was startled at his rude way of speaking to the man, he reached over and caught her hand and said, "Do excuse me for speaking as I did before you, but that inquisitive fool annoyed me so that I could have knocked him down."

Charlotte thought, "You have a quick temper that I did not know you had." But she said in a strained voice, "Mr. Mills, do break yourself from using such expressions or you will say worse after a while."

"Oh, now, deary, you will keep me from, that. Now, darling, here comes the stage."

She had never seen a stage, and so catching her husband's arm, she hastened with him to watch the great clumsy stage as it was being drawn by four large horses. The stage was painted yellow and had small glass windows the whole length of both sides. On top was a kind of iron railing to keep the baggage from falling off. Soon Charlotte saw her trunk being drawn up by a rope. A man from the top was pulling after another man on the ground had tied the rope around the trunk. Mr. Mills' trunk was thrown up on top, as his was a small one. Now the horses were being exchanged for fresh ones.

Then come another great trial for Charlotte, as her brother draws her off to one side and says, "Here, sister, is a little gift from me."

He slipped a handsome new purse into her hand and then he kissed her tenderly. Dr. Mills had been talking to his brother, and they were both deeply moved. Dr. Mills kissed Charlotte good-bye in the most affectionate manner, Then the gentlemen shook hands in a cordial way. The stage door is shut with its usual bang and a shrill blast of the bugle announces that all is in readiness for the slow tedious journey through heavy sand first and then through mud and mire when they reach the deep swamps around Branchville.

It is daylight when they reach Columbia. Charlotte is so tired for she has never been so jostled and bumped about in her life. She has always ridden in a comfortable carriage or on a steamboat. So, this ride has nearly used her up. John sees how tired she is and asks if she would like to rest here until tomorrow. She hastens to assure him that she can go on. He reluctantly consents, but insists upon her getting out of the stage and going into the large waiting room so he can get her a cup of coffee. At the mention of coffee, Charlotte brightens up and goes into the big, old-fashioned waiting room where a Negro woman is in attendance for any travelers who come in.

She comes at once to this couple, and making a low curtsy, she asks in a polite manner, "Will de genteman and de young missy take breakfast?"

John says they will.

Then with another low curtsy to John, she says, "Will de gentleman be seated and read de news while de young missy goes and washes and combs her hair?"

She looked at Charlotte's curly head in such an admiring way that it amused John. She soon led the way for Charlotte to a little dressing room for ladies, as was the sign over the door.

As she ushered Charlotte in, she said, "Now Missy, while your brudder read the news, you must let me rang your beautiful hair."

Charlotte had taken off her heavy felt hat with its waving plumes, and her hair fell in a mass of curls to her waist.

The Negro stood with her arms akimbo and said, "Lord, but you is a beauty! Your brudder ought to be mighty proud of his sissy."

Charlotte laughed and said, "So, you think we look like each other?"

"Dot you do. As like as two peas in a shell."

She had poured out some cool water in a nice clean basin and got some fresh towels out of a stand of draws. Now turning to Charlotte, she asked if she would like for her to comb her hair. Charlotte thanked her and said she would comb her hair herself.

So she said, "Den I go see what they gwine to gib you for yo' breakfast."

Out she went and soon came through the big room and looking at John she said, "Massa, you ought to be mighty proud of yo' sister. Now come and get some breakfast."

Charlotte, refreshed, came out looking so lovely. John was not surprised at the old Negro's admiration of his "little sister." He whispered to Charlotte not to tell her any better. So, those two were regarded as brother and sister by all who were seated at the public breakfast table, as the old woman had told them that "there was a lovely young lady and her handsome brudder who came in de stage and wuz coming in to take breakfast." When John and Charlotte were ushered into the dining room, all the guests supposed them to be brother and sister. John was highly amused when the old woman who waited on the table with her other duties would say, "help yo' sister, suh, to some of de sausage." Just as John was having his own fun, a gentleman, or rather a youth, came hurriedly into the breakfast room and was passing around the table with quite a haughty air. He looked and saw Charlotte. He almost stopped. The girl's beauty struck him at once. He glanced at her companion.

And, just as John Mills looked up to see who the stranger was who had stopped so suddenly, he jumped up saying, "Why, Bradley, where did you spring from?"

John Bradley came to the table and, with one of his smiles that few ladies could resist, said in his most courteous manner, "I suppose this is your charming bride?"

John Mills introduced his wife, and he said he had no idea of meeting him here.

"No, my visit down here was unexpected to myself. I came on business for someone." Then, turning to Mrs. Mills, he chatted in the most agreeable manner, telling her he was truly sorry for her to have to come to the upcountry at this season of the year. "Why, when I left Chester day before yesterday, the snow was about two inches deep and it was still snowing. Have you ever seen any snow, Mrs. Mills?"

"Oh, yes sir, I have seen snow, but our snow storms don't last long and have never been deeper than one inch."

He looked at John Mills and said, "Mr. Mills, what will she think of our snowstorms?"

John laughed and said he guessed she would think she had struck an iceberg.

John Bradley said in a laughing tone, "You ought to sue Mr. Mills for damages for being so unfeeling as to bring a lovely tropical plant up here at this season of the year. Why, I am afraid you will freeze going up to Chester for my feet became like blocks of ice this morning. Mr. Mills, you get this old colored woman to heat some bricks for your wife to keep her feet warm."

John Mills was disposed to treat the matter as a joke, so John Bradley called the "mammy waitress." The old woman had been out so had not learned of her mistake yet. John Bradley asked her to heat up four bricks and have them wrapped up by the time the stage was ready to start.

Charlotte Mills thought, "What a thoughtful young man. I am sure he does not look like a 'cracker.'" After John Bradley had gone out of the dining room, she turned to her husband and said, "Why, Mr. Mills, I am charmed with Mr. Bradley!"

"Yes though he is only a youth, still he does the work of a man of thirty-five. You will also find his mother and sister very agreeable companions. They live just across the street from where he boards at Mr. George Kennedy's."

Charlotte seems interested to hear of Chester and who will be her associates, so John Mills tells his young wife all he can to interest her.

Young John Bradley comes in with his overcoat collar turned up and snow is sprinkled over his shoulders. He shakes himself and says, "Mrs. Mills, the snow has followed me from Chester, so you will have a full view of a northern snowstorm. Get your wrap close around you for it is bitter cold. Just within the last hour it has changed."

She began to pull her fur cloak around her and before her husband could get to her to assist her in drawing up her heavy cloak, John Bradley with a deft hand has caught up the cloak and is wrapping it around the shoulders of Mrs. Mills, laughing good naturedly and saying, "I have been drilled in this by my mother and sister."

Charlotte thanks him with a beaming face and thinks, "Well, if this is a specimen of Chester's manners, I am sure the most punctilious person could not complain of this young man's manners."

The stage is now ready and John Mills takes his wife's arm and starts to leave, as the old woman comes running in hugging a large bundle close up in her arms saying to John Bradley, "Oh, young boss, I got your hot bricks sure."

John laughed and said to bring them on to the stage door.

She bustled out and overtook Mr. Mills and Charlotte and laughed as she looked at them. "Well, you and little Missy did fool dis old woman one time."

Now they were all seated and the old woman stood and handed the hot bricks to John Bradley. He put the first one under Charlotte's feet and told her to hold it down firmly or it would jump out from its place. Then taking the other two, he offered one to Mr. Mills, who politely refused it saying he never suffered with cold feet.

The man closed the door and mounted himself up by the side of the driver and the shrill blast of the bugle sounded and away the stage went through the falling snow. Charlotte looked out of the window at the light feathery snow and thought she had never seen such a beautiful snowstorm before in her life. She was charmed until up in the day when they began to strike the muddy roads and she was nearly jostled off her seat once or twice. John Mills and John Bradley laughed at her frantic efforts to keep from being thrown from one side to another.

At last her husband, fearing that she would really be hurt, sat close to her saying in a teasing way, "Now I will have to put my arm around your shoulders to keep you from breaking your neck. Mr. Bradley will explain to other passengers who may get in here that we are a newly married couple and are quite loving."

There were only a few passengers in the stage, and they laughed and enjoyed the fun that Mr. Mills, his merry wife, and John Bradley seemed to be having over the terrible thumps and bumps that they were all getting as the stage went further on up the country. Charlotte's hat was shaken off her head once or twice, so John Bradley suggested that she allow him to put it up in the rack so that the lovely plumes would not be so abused by the way it was falling off her curly head. Her hair was so fine and curly that she could not keep the hat pin stuck in firm enough. Now that the hat was off, her hair came down and fell in a mass of curls over her shoulders down to her waist. John Mills tenderly supported his young wife to keep her from being jostled to pieces. She grew tired as night came on, and resting her head on her husband's shoulder, she fell asleep. John Mills noticed John Bradley's look of admiration at his lovely wife and asked Bradley what he thought of his wife.

"I think she is lovely. I was just thinking if I were an artist, I would delight in painting her picture and yours as she rests her lovely head on your shoulder."

John Mills felt really gratified that John Bradley admired his lovely wife for he felt an unbounded confidence in the taste of this youthful connoisseur's judgment. Thanking John for his beautiful compliment, he said in a low tender tone that she was as pure and good as she was lovely.

They reached Mr. John Young's at night when they ought to have been there at dinner-time, but the roads are in such a muddy state that the horses could not make much speed. Instead of reaching Chester that night, they will have to spend the night at this place, which is a boarding house for the accommodation of travelers. The little party got out and had to stay over night here. Mr. Young gives them a comfortable fire to sit by before supper and Charlotte is so tired that she is glad to get some place to rest her weary bones. Supper is served in a long low ceiling room and the nicest hot supper is served in a bountiful manner, but Charlotte is too tired to enjoy it. Soon Mr. Young sees that the lady is worn out. He is thoughtful enough to have her room fixed at once for her. He knows John Mills very well, but does not know he has been off to marry.

He comes in and says, "Mr. Mills, your sister seemed so worn out and sleepy that I have had her room fixed for her. You and John Bradley can occupy the same room."

A man who had been in the stage and knew better laughed and said, "Why, Mr. Young, Mr. Mills is now a married man and that's his wife!"

John Mills joined in the laugh, but John Bradley seeing how much embarrassed Charlotte was, said in a very haughty voice, "Mr. Young, allow me to introduce you to Mrs. John Mills."

Mr. Young had been pulling John Mills by the arm telling him he was a 'sly dog' not to tell him, but when he heard the haughty tone of John Bradley, he confronted the young man saying, "You might let Mills introduce his own wife, I think."

But, going up to Charlotte, he extended his hand in a hearty way and said, "I am mighty glad to meet you, but you must excuse me, for I did really think you were his sister. You have the same curly hair and the same black eyes."

Charlotte shook hands and began to think maybe this was real "upcountry manners." She was glad when a clumsy Negro girl appeared with a tallow candle in a brass candle stick. Mr. Young said that the girl would show her to her room. She was only too glad to fly away to the seclusion of her own room. She felt like crying. Never in her life had she been thrown with men who would make a lady so conspicuous. She thought of John Bradley's timely thoughtfulness in introducing her to the landlord. A thousand thoughts flitted through her mind. She remembered what her dear old father had told her when she sat at his knee and talked of her leaving him and of making her home in the upcountry.

He had said, "Charlotte, my daughter, you will find the manners and customs of those people quite different from those you have been accustomed to. And though they may seem rough and uncouth, still underneath all that they have true noble hearts and the best of principles. They would not stoop to deceive you by a great palaver of deceit, but you must try not to be overly sensitive. And, though they may say and do things that are a little out of the line of cultured society, still you must try to be patient, and you will find those people the most upright and staunch friends. Now, my daughter, remember this, don't fly off in a tantrum the first time something is said or done to shock your modesty."

Charlotte thought, "Well, my trial has come sooner than I had expected, so I am from this night on going to try to adapt myself to any society I may be thrown into."

The next morning when Charlotte appeared in the breakfast room, she said good morning so pleasantly and politely to Mr. Young that she completely won his regard. And, as long as he lived, he and Mrs. Mills were the best of friends.

As they were riding along, Charlotte said, "I thought we would have passed Winnsborough before now."

John Mills and John Bradley both laughed saying, "You were asleep when we came to Winnsborough."

"I must have slept very soundly not to have awakened when these drivers were changing horses."

Charlotte and John Bradley chatted about Chester. John Mills was amused at some questions Charlotte would ask, and the man's answers really tickled lively John Mills. The snowstorm was over, but every hill was covered with snow. About ten o'clock John Bradley said to Mrs. Mills that they were coming in sight of the village of Chester. She looked eagerly in the direction he pointed.

With a little tremor in her voice she asked, "Will your mother be there to meet us?"

"Oh, no. As you know, she lives about seven or eight miles out on Fishing Creek."

The young wife looks so disappointed that John Bradley feels so sorry for her that he says in the most consoling tone, "Well, Mrs. Mills, my mother and sisters are there and will be charmed to meet you."

Mrs. Mills looked at him with such a happy expression taking the place of the look of disappointment that he felt glad he had told her of his own mother. So, he determines that this lovely woman shall not lack for attention from his mother and sister.

On they came. The faithful horses, pulling harder than ever now for they recognize this "haven of rest" which they will soon reach. Charlotte sees several houses far off in the distance on the right hand side of the road. She asks whose house it is in a deep grove of trees.

Her husband looks and says, "That is where my mother's friend lives. Mrs. William White lives there. She is living on land that was given to the Whites by George III, and she was one of the most patriotic women during the Revolutionary War and also in the War of 1812. She sent her sons, all but one, Garner, not being old enough to serve."

Charlotte was very much interested and said, "Oh yes, your brother, Dr. Mills, has often told me of that brave old lady. Will I get to see her?"

"Yes, I will take you out there someday to spend the day. She is one of my best friends and her sons are noble brave men."

John Bradley said, "Mrs. Mills, the day you and Mr. Mills go to spend the day, do let me go with you."

"We shall be delighted to have you go with us," answered Mr. Mills.

They were crossing a deep branch and Charlotte, seeing the water running so swiftly said, "Is this a creek?"

"No, it is called the Tanyard Branch on account of the tannery which you will see off to the right there."

She looked and saw the old weather-beaten house used for tanning leather.

Now the horses began to pull up the steep snow-covered hill which led up to the Kennedy Tavern. On one side, Charlotte looked and saw what she supposed was a vegetable garden with a rock wall around it. But, in one corner stood a large willow tree covered with snow.

Charlotte said, "Oh, look at the beautiful tree!"

"Yes," answered John Bradley, "that tree is a weeping willow. Mr. John Kennedy is very proud of that tree, for it is the largest willow tree anywhere to be seen."

On the left, one could see the brick basement of the George Kennedy tavern. The man who is seated by the driver begins to send out such blasts from his bugle that it fairly deafens those who are in the stage. Soon they are on top of the high hill and Charlotte has a view of the village. She is not very much impressed with it as it looks now, for there has been a drove of mules and hogs which have passed over the hill this morning. Now nothing was to be seen but the black mud from one end of the street to the other. Just before she got out, she caught sight of an ugly, queer shaped building painted a dingy red. The stage turns the corner and she sees the long piazza of Mr. George Kennedy's tavern.

Mr. Kennedy comes down the stone steps with alacrity and, seeing John Mills, he called out in a merry voice, "John Mills, here you are and your bonny bride with you!"

John jumped out and assisted his wife out. Then, as he shook hands with Mr. Kennedy, he introduced his wife.

Mr. Kennedy came close up to her and looking at her with his keen blue eyes, he took her hand and said, "I am glad to know you, madam. Just come right in. My old woman will meet you in the house."

He hurried them in, but not before John Bradley had a chance to say good-by and that he would see them again that day. Charlotte almost wished this pleasant boy was going with them. When Mr. Kennedy saw her, he said, "Come here, old woman, and let me introduce you to the loveliest bride that has come to Chester in lo these many days." She comes up smiling and blushing and extends her thin white hand in a shy ladylike manner saying that she was glad to meet her and come in by the fire. Charlotte was only too glad to hear of a fire and soon followed this lady into a large room which was very nicely furnished. But, what struck Charlotte most forcibly was the comfortable fire which was throwing out such a warmth from its great fireplace. The large old fashion andirons were like burnished gold, and the bright crimson carpet was so comfortable that Charlotte gave a sigh of relief. (And, so ends Charlotte Clarke Mills' journey from Beech Island to Chester.

Jerry B. Stringfellow

About the Author

Geraldine Barron Stringfellow is the daughter of the late James I. Barron and Dorothy Betts Barron, now Mrs. Lewis Clayton of Spartanburg, South Carolina. Jerry grew up in Chester, attended Salem College at Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and graduated from the University of South Carolina in Columbia. She is married to William Kirkwood Stringfellow, Jr., who is associated with Barron's Funeral home and co-operates with his father in a cattle farming operation. The Stringfellows live on Lancaster Road.

"Beech Island to Chester" is an excerpt taken from a family chronicle which was written in 1902 by Jerry Barron Stringfellow's great-grandmother, Catherine Bradley Hood. This story and most of the information in the chronicle was told to Mrs. Hood by her grandmother Charlotte Zubley Clarke Mills. Charlotte lived in two houses in Chester, both of which are still standing. John Mills built the brick house on Saluda Street, now known as the Coleman house, for his bride, Charlotte. Many years after his death, Charlotte moved into the house known as "Aunt Hill," at 152 Center Street, which was purchased for Charlotte's daughter, Helene. This house is now owned by Mrs. Killough White, Sr.



Bradley Home on Center Street



Catherine Bradley Hood