

# **THE HUNTSVILLE HISTORICAL REVIEW**

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Alice Boarman Baldrige with her daughter, Vira, circa 1902. Mrs. Baldrige, a woman ahead of her time, was able to win public office even before women could vote, and was a successful lawyer before women were generally accepted in that profession.

## THE BALDRIDGE FAMILY OF HUNTSVILLE

by Ann Baldrige Craig

Dr. Milton Columbus Baldrige with wife, Narcissa Caroline Neeley (or Neely), and daughter, Viola, settled in Huntsville following his Civil War service as assistant surgeon for both the 27th Alabama and 48th Tennessee Regiments. Narcissa was the daughter of Anderson P. and Eliza M. Neeley of Rogersville (Lauderdale County), AL. Dr. Baldrige was born in 1831 in Cornersville (Marshall County), TN, and moved with his parents, William F. and Elizabeth Caroline Mitchell Baldrige to Florence (Lauderdale County), AL at age 12. He was educated at Belleview Medical College, NY, and attended lectures at Medical College of Ohio in Cincinnati.

Dr. Milton and family resided at 219 Clinton Street on the corner of Gallatin with property extending southward to Big Spring Branch. A son, Felix Edgar, was born in 1866, and a daughter, Stella, in 1869. The home now known as the Jeremiah Clemens House was sold at the death of his second wife, Ella M. Johnson Baldrige, in 1907 and is presently an office for Huntsville Utilities directly across the street from the new AmSouth Building.

Dr. Baldrige was elected President of the State Medical Society, President of the Madison County Board of Health, President of Southern Building Loan Association with C. H. Halsey, Lawrence Cooper, Joseph Martin, S. L. Whitten, and Samuel R. Cruse as officers. He served on the Board of Health, was City Health Officer, Jail Physician, Board Member of Huntsville Female College with Judge William H. Moore, John J. Dement, Thomas I. Humphrey, Archibald McDonnell, William R. Rison, Dr. James A. Beasley, John D. Brandon, John L. Rison, Robert H. Wilson, Col. Charles J. Mastin, A. M. Wynn,

S. W. Harris, Jackson Rand, J. F. Goldman, and Dr. Henry McDonnell. While President of the Medical Board of Examiners, Dr. Baldrige had the privilege of signing his son's medical certificate along with Drs. Samuel H. Lowry, P. M. Fletcher Sr., and J. L. Darwin.

Two years following his first wife's death, Dr. Milton married Ella M. Johnson, who bore a son, Milton C. Baldrige Jr. Ella's orphaned nieces, Helen Shaver (mother of the late Charles Sr.) and Mary Gilbert, were reared in the home with the Baldrige children. Dr. Baldrige died in January 1895 and is buried in the Baldrige plot in Maple Hill.

Felix Edgar Baldrige after graduation from Tulane University Medical School in New Orleans, joined his father as a Huntsville physician/surgeon. On his initial day of practice in June 1894, his patients included: Murray Robinson, Miss Mary Warwick, H. Weil, Mrs. Schiffman, Mr. Rand's child, Olive Davis, Walker Lacey, Mr. Redding, Mr. Pitkins, Mrs. Chapman's child, and a Negro.

Following his father's death and until his own death, Dr. Felix was in partnership with Dr. Hawkins D. Westmoreland with offices at 111-113 East Side Jefferson Street, leased from Oscar Hundley. Their lease agreement required that parlor and hall floors be waxed monthly and did not include the piano, velvet lounge, walnut hat rack and walnut stand with mirror upstairs. Dr. Felix was the first President of the Tennessee Valley Medical Society, several times President of the County Board of Health, elected to the Southern Surgical Association, Medical Examiner for the Knights of Columbus, 1st Lt. and Assistant Surgeon of 3rd Regiment of North Alabama, Member of the Association of Military Surgeons of the U.S., Assistant Company Surgeon for Southern Railway Company (which afforded the family free rail transportation to and from New York), local

Surgeon for Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway Company. With Dr. Westmoreland, he christened the operating room at Alabama A & M College which was donated by Miss Grace Walker for the McCormick family. He owned one of the first motor cars in Huntsville and with Dr. Westmoreland brought into the world hundreds of babies for the next generation of Huntsvillians.

In January 1895 Felix Baldrige married a New Orleans belle, Alice Boarman, whom he had met while in medical school at Tulane and she a student at Sophie Newcomb College (now a part of Tulane). Following graduation from Newcomb, Alice took post-graduate work at Wellesley College in Massachusetts for twofold reasons: to be assured her degree from a "Southern women's college" would be accepted nationwide and to put distance between herself and her fiancé who was completing his internship in medicine. At that time, young doctors were not allowed to marry until completion of their training.

Felix and Alice first settled with his stepmother, Ella, in the Clinton Street home. Alice served as his bookkeeper and joined in many cultural and social activities in her new surroundings. In 1896 a son, Milton Columbus, was born. The following year, Alice's sister, Vira Boarman, elected to have her wedding to Norman Whitehouse, a New York stockbroker and socialite, held in the Baldriges' rental house on the corner of Franklin and Gates Streets. Many articles appeared in various New York and Philadelphia papers regarding the Huntsville wedding.

The William Bankheads (he later was a Congressman and Speaker of the House of Representatives) and the Baldriges were close friends, and both ladies were with child at the same time. Tallulah Bankhead (who became a famous actress) was born in an apartment,

corner of Washington Street and Eustis Street, a few days or weeks prior to Vira Boarman Baldrige's birth. Although Dr. Baldrige was probably a presiding physician at Tallulah's birth, Mrs. Baldrige was not informed of Mrs. Bankhead's death until after little Vira was born, for fear of upsetting her delicate condition. Vira was born in the McGee Hotel where they resided at that time and later the family moved to rooms at the Van Valkenburghs' in the Steamboat Gothic House on Franklin Street. Alice never learned to cook; hence, they resided in hotels or in homes with others. Their first real home was purchased in 1906 at 706 (originally 527) Adams Avenue in the shadows of and under the huge boughs of the famous Adams Avenue Oak. Mrs. Baldrige retained ownership of this home during her many years of residing in New York. Her daughter, Vira Wise (later Davis), reared her three daughters there and sold the house in 1964. It was demolished just prior to the establishment of the Twickenham Historic District of Huntsville.

As a bride, Alice was elected to the new Huntsville Library Board and was described in a Huntsville Newspaper: "Mrs. F. E. Baldrige, the beautiful wife of Dr. F. E. Baldrige, was elected Vice President of the library. She was a college woman, an inveterate reader, aggressive, and determined to make the library a certainty. She was one of its chief workers." Mr. W. T. Hutchens was Library President, with Mr. R. E. Spragins and Mr. David Grayson on the Board. In 1904 Alice edited a newspaper HUNTSVILLE EVENING TRIBUNE, Library Edition, with other staff members Mrs. Hector Lane, Mrs. Robert E. Brickell, Mrs. Turner Clanton, and Mrs. John M. Bolling. This paper consisted of local interest articles and many photographs of prominent Huntsville citizens and children.

With two or three other young Huntsville matrons (thought to be Florence Bolling and Alberta Boswell), Alice began the study of law by correspondence. When her children reached school age, Alice earned a teacher's certificate and taught them at home with a strict regimen not only of reading, writing and arithmetic, but English, Greek, Latin, German and French." Son Milton was accepted in St. Paul's at 14 and Harvard at 16. Following his service as an officer in World War I and a stint overseas, he graduated from Harvard Law School and practiced law in New York City until retirement. Vira was accepted at Shipley Preparatory school and Bryn Mawr College in Bryn Mawr, PA.

In 1916, with Woodrow Wilson running for re-election as President, Alice was nominated as a member of the Madison County School Board. Although women did not yet have the right to vote, Alice was elected, the first woman politician in Madison County, possibly in Alabama. Five were elected from a slate of Alice Baldrige, Joseph Brendle, J. A. Carpenter, M. F. Irwin, J. O. Orman, H. C. Pollard, E. T. Terry, and E. O. Williamson. In the HUNTSVILLE MERCURY of October 1916, she is quoted: "I ran absolutely independently of any machines and won. I confess I did not expect to. The idea of a woman holding elective office was so new that I feared the prejudice against it would be insurmountable, but I felt I should serve a good purpose if I only made it easier for the next woman. ... I have had happy, hearty laughs with many of the dear, delightful, but inconsistent anti-suffrage gentlemen friends who 'couldn't bear the idea of women in politics,' yet voted for the very first woman who ran for office. 'Oh, but,' they said, 'it was because we thought you so well fitted for the office.' I said, 'That is all we suffragists are asking, to be permitted to serve when fitted, if we wish, and most of all, to be allowed to help choose those who are

fitted' and I am still waiting for the first intelligent rejoinder."

Also in 1916, according to THE BIRMINGHAM NEWS, she was asked by Mr. Bradley to address the County Commission on behalf of the building of the Jackson Highway (probably the road to Scottsboro and Chattanooga). She is quoted: "I wondered...why Mr. Bradley thought I should make a good beggar--then I knew. It was simply because I was a woman, and we women are the arch wheedlers and coaxers of the race. ... We have begged for everything we got. ... First we begged for our personal freedom and got it, we begged for an education and got it, we begged to be allowed to own our own property and got it, we begged for legal and economic equality, and we are getting it, and now we are begging for our political enfranchisement, and this we shall most surely get. I think it must have been some such historical bird's eye view of women's success in begging that prompted Mr. Bradley to appoint me official beggar tonight. I hate to fail the traditions of my sex. I am perfectly willing to beg for the Highway and more than willing to get it, but personally, gentlemen, I do not know how to beg very well. However, I have picked up a few little tricks of the trade, and so tonight, I have decked myself in my very best bib and tucker, added an extra curl to my hair, extra roses to my cheeks and am doing my level best to fascinate you to death and to hypnotize the Jackson Highway out of you. Gentlemen, we women have been begging for ages, and we always got it."

Mrs. Baldridge delivered suffrage speeches throughout Alabama, while her sister, Vira Boarman Whitehouse, was New York State Woman Suffrage Party Chairman, the largest suffrage organization in the country. They were pictured in an article in THE BIRMINGHAM NEWS, June 1916, as "Two Beautiful Sisters." The photographs appeared with write-ups about Mrs. Whitehouse's position in New York and Mrs.

Baldrige's surprise election to the school board. According to Elizabeth Humes Chapman, "Alice Boorman Baldrige developed into one of the best women speakers in the state. She was one of the women chosen by the state organization to present a plea for national enfranchisement of women at Washington, DC. She was a beautiful woman with a gifted mind which she kept ever active. She became President of the Women's League after the close of the decade and continued to direct women's minds toward public service until she left Huntsville to practice law in New York City in 1922."

Following the untimely death of her husband, Dr. Felix Baldrige, during the 1917 flu epidemic, she threw herself wholeheartedly into her study of law. She passed the Alabama Bar, was admitted to practice in November 1918, having been presented in court by Lawrence Cooper, Esq. For less than two years she practiced in Huntsville with David Grayson, her neighbor and friend, who resided on Adams Avenue in the home presently owned by Mr. Harry Rhett. One of her cases mostly remembered by her peers, unfortunately, was her representation of a teen-aged defendant accused of rape. She won for him!

She worked diligently to help secure a Carnegie grant for the local library and was elected Vice President of the Carnegie Board of the library with Dr. Francis Tappey as President, Miss Amelia Dillard, Treasurer, Miss Mattie Darwin, Librarian.

In the fall of 1920 she embarked on a trip around the world for a year, as chaperone for a young New York friend, and with a maid. The HUNTSVILLE TIMES requested she send articles of her travels, which she did. Various articles about her trips across the United States, Hawaii, Japan, China, and Egypt were published. She had left her daughter, Vira, in Newport,

RI, at the summer home of her sister who was to see Vira safely to her school in Bryn Mawr, PA. Imagine her shock while touring China to receive a cable notifying her that her daughter, 18 years of age, had eloped with a young Huntsville man, Louis Wise. Rather than spend her Christmas holidays with the Whitehouses in New York City, Vira chose to be with her close Huntsville friend, Elizabeth McAllister. Young Louis joined her on the first leg of her return trip to Pennsylvania. They left the train at Chattanooga, where Louis's sister resided, and were married there. Six months later, on her return from her trip around the world, Mrs. Baldrige moved Vira and Louis into her Adams Avenue home and moved herself to New York City to establish a law career which lasted until 1956 when she was past 80 years of age.

In New York she was associated with the firm of Laughlin, Gerard, Bowers & Halpin on Wall Street. When Rockefeller Center was opened, she moved with the firm of John J. Halpin to the 48th floor of the new RCA Building. On her retirement, the firm bore the name Halpin, Keogh (the congressman for whom the Keogh savings plan was named), and St. John. Although professing to be a life-long Democrat, she disapproved of everything for which the New Deal stood, and accepted the chairmanship of the Alfred Landon Volunteers when he ran opposing Franklin Roosevelt. President Roosevelt was a close friend of the senior partner of her law firm, James W. Gerard, former Ambassador to Germany. An article in the NEW YORK TIMES in the fall of 1936 quotes her: "I disapprove of the general waste, inefficiency, destruction of values, extravagance and ever-growing complexity and tyranny of the present administration. ... I approve of the continuance of the capitalistic system which, unless the socialistic, communistic and impractical New Deal experiments are abandoned, will soon be

destroyed resulting in chaos. ... As a Democrat, a lawyer, and an American citizen, I resent the frequent and flagrant violation of states' rights by the present administration and the legislation passed by it, either in unpardonable ignorance or unpardonable defiance of the Constitution...." At the same time she was berating President Roosevelt, her sister and Mr. Whitehouse were accepting social invitations from the President and his wife for visits to the White House.

In the 1937 WOMAN'S ALMANAC, FACTS FOR, BY AND ABOUT WOMEN, she was listed as "Outstanding Woman Lawyer." AMERICAN WOMEN - THE OFFICIAL WHO'S WHO OF WOMEN OF THE NATION, Volume II, 1937-38 carried an article on her accomplishments. INDEX TO WOMEN by Norma Olin Ireland, 1970, listed: "BALDRIDGE, Alice Boarman (flourished 1930's), American Lawyer, Woman of Achievement."

Mrs. Baldrige was a member of the Colony Club of New York, National Association of Women Lawyers, charter member of the Sophie Newcomb Chapter of Pi Beta Phi. She retired in 1957 to her home in Huntsville and soon became hospitalized following a broken hip and a series of strokes. During her long confinement, a granddaughter asked her why she had never remarried. Her terse reply was, "I did not need any man to support me, and I certainly would never have considered supporting any man." From the time of her daughter's divorce in the early 30's, Mrs. Baldrige was the sole support of her and her three daughters.

In the 35 years spent in New York, Mrs. Baldrige never lost interest in Huntsville. She made loans on farm land and mortgaged same, and at one time owned 40 farms of various sizes in Madison County. Several of these were taken in the government condemnation of land for Redstone and Huntsville Arsenals. Because of

the low prices paid for the land acquisition, Mrs. Baldrige always claimed the government literally stole her property.

Alice Boarman Baldrige died in July 1961 and is buried with her daughter, Vira, and Vira's second husband, William Ward Davis, in Maple Hill Cemetery. There are five grandchildren. Her son, Milton, was father of Milton Jr. of Roseburg, OR, and Betsy Murphy of Bronxville, NY. Vira was the mother of Mary Alyce Baldrige Anderson, Ann Baldrige Craig, and Betty Jane Wise. Both Mary Alyce and Ann legally changed their surname to "Baldrige" while residing in New York. Ann (Mrs. Preston Craig) and two sons, Tony and Cary, are the only family members presently residing in Huntsville, having returned "home" after many years in other locations.

# LANMAN'S VIEW OF HUNTSVILLE IN THE 1850'S<sup>1</sup>

With an Introduction by Nancy Rohr

If Anne Newport Royall was an attentive visitor to Huntsville, Charles Lanman was equally worldly and observant. His descriptions of the town and its citizens are insightful and complimentary.

Born in Monroe, Michigan, June 14, 1819, Lanman was sent back east at the age of ten to be educated. At 16 he worked for an East India mercantile house in New York City. While there he began exploring sites in the eastern part of the country that were not on the usual tourist path. His approaches were often unique; he was among the first to use the canoe as a recreational boat. To describe the sites he visited, Lanman painted sketches that were published in the United States and in England.

For a period of time he was an editor and publisher of newspapers in New York and the midwest. He continued exploring the countryside on foot, on horseback, and by canoe from the Bay of Fundy to the states on the Gulf of Mexico. His magazine articles about these trips were extremely popular, and were published successfully as books. In 1849 he became librarian to the War Department in Washington. A year later he became private secretary to Daniel Webster and published an anecdotal book about Webster. His next success came as he first published the well known Dictionary of the United States Congress, eventually taken over by the federal government.

Lanman continued to publish, taking time for exploring trips when he could. This multi-talented gentleman spent his last years in Georgetown, writing and painting. All together he published 32 volumes before his death on March 4, 1895.

Julia Pamela Pleasants, the poet that he quotes in this essay, was the daughter of James Jay Pleasants and Emily Julia Bibb Pleasants, a granddaughter of Thomas Bibb. Born in Huntsville in 1827, she was left an orphan when both parents died within a month of each other in 1849. With many beaux available, at the age of 27, she married David Creswell. They eventually moved to Shreveport, Louisiana. She published four volumes of poetry and two novels.

### Huntsville

With the town of Huntsville, Ala., I am quite delighted, and do not wonder at its reputation. It occupies an elevated position, and is hemmed in with high hills, from the summit of which it presents an uncommonly picturesque appearance. The surrounding country is very fertile and highly cultivated, and the cotton interest has made it a place of considerable business. It claims a population of some twenty-five hundred souls, contains many handsome residences, with several neat churches, and is the seat of two institutions of learning, the Bascom Institute, and a Presbyterian College. It is supplied with the best of water by a mammoth spring which gushes from a rock in the centre of the town, and this, with the array of from one to two hundred saddle-horses which are daily collected around the county court-house square, ought to be mentioned as among the features of the place. But, on becoming acquainted with the people of Huntsville, (as it has been my privilege,) the stranger will find that they are the leading attraction. Owing to its pleasant and healthful location a large number of the more influential families of the South have congregated here; so that the society is all that could be expected from a happy union of intelligence, refinement, and wealth. Several of the fortunes which are enjoyed here were acquired in New Orleans; and, judging from

the intimate intercourse existing between that city and this inland village, it might almost be imagined that the latter was the country cousin of the former. To this condition of things, therefore, may be attributed the fact that knowledge of the world and expansive ideas in regard to life are more a matter of course in this somewhat isolated place than in other Southern towns of the same size. To give an idea of the wealth of Huntsville it is only necessary to state that the aggregate fortunes of twenty well-known families, are said to amount to six millions of dollars. Some of the private hot-houses and gardens in the place would delight the most fastidious of horticulturists, albeit the mercury has fallen sixty-one degrees in the last ten hours. The lover of art will be surprised to find here a private gallery of paintings and statuary which is said to have cost seventy-five thousand dollars, and contains some productions of decided merit, which is a remark that many private galleries in the country cannot bear.

On the score of hospitality, the people of Huntsville are unsurpassed by any of their neighbors, if indeed they do not excel very many of them. I would not make any unjust comparisons, but I must judge from personal experience. I entered Huntsville a stranger, and took lodgings at its best hotel, which was comfortable, but by no means luxurious. Its reputation was not good, however, and this circumstance, in spite of my earnest excuses, caused me to become the guest of one of the leading families of the town, under whose roof I have been made to feel perfectly at home, and where I have been treated more like an old friend than a stranger. This is the way they treat pilgrims in Alabama, and no wonder, therefore, that the interpretation of its beautiful name should be Here we rest; and now I remember, moreover, that Huntsville lies within the bend of that portion of the Tennessee river which caused it to receive the

name of Spoon river, thereby appropriately suggesting the idea that the good things of life are here most abundant. And thus much in a general way of this pleasant Southern town.

And now for a sable incident or two, which I think worth mentioning on account of the morals they inculcate. On Sunday last, in one of the leading churches of the town, and by an eloquent man, was preached a funeral sermon on the body of a negro child. There was a large attendance of rich planters and their wives, and much feeling was manifested by all present. The father of this child, though a slave, is an expert blacksmith, and earns annually one thousand dollars, three hundred of which are given to his master, while the remaining seven hundred are retained by the "down-trodden" victim for his own use and benefit. It would seem, therefore, that to hear the clanking of this man's chain the practical abolitionist would have to enter his workshop. I have also witnessed since my arrival here a public sale of slave property. The number of persons disposed of was some half-dozen; they belonged to the estate of a deceased planter, and were sold by his administrator for the benefit of his orphan children. The conditions of the sale were that no family-ties should be broken, and that deeds would be given only to those purchasers who would pledge themselves to be perfectly kind and humane. The prices ranged from one thousand to sixteen hundred dollars, and as much hilarity prevailed among the darkies when assembled in front of the courthouse as if they were about to enter upon a frolic; and I was forcibly impressed with the manner in which the more high-priced jeered those of the party who had only brought a thousand dollars, calling them "cheap thousand dollar niggers." The effect of the sale upon the orphan children, however, was sad in the extreme, and I heard one of them exclaim, a young lady, that she was altogether "the greatest sufferer there." The same roof had

sheltered them in other days, and I verily believe that if there had not been some legal impediment the orphans would have sacrificed their whole property before parting from their well-trying and devoted servants.

The vicinity of Huntsville, although rich in many more important things, is especially rich in odd characters, and one of my particular favorites of this genus is old John Evans, who must now make his bow to the public. He was born a vagabond, bred an overseer, and leads the life of a wayward and wandering hunter and fisherman. He is a middle-aged man, lank and brawny, amiable to the last degree, and a natural naturalist. It is said that he has made and been worth his fifty thousand dollars, but he sold himself to the Mephistopheles of Monongahela, and now lives in a log-cabin on the banks of the Tennessee, the poorest and most independent man in his county. He has been a close observer of the creatures with which he chiefly spends his time, and his conversations upon their habits are always interesting. I give you a few items that I remember. He had killed a rattlesnake measuring six feet in length, in whose stomach was found, nearly in a perfect state, a young fox; and he has seen a water moccasin snake seize a small fish and hold it above the surface of the water, as if conscious of the fact that this was the quickest way to deprive it of life; and he also asserted, what seemed to me incredible, that the eyes of the common buzzard, after being pricked to blindness by a sharp knife, possessed the power of completely recovering themselves in the course of fifteen minutes, provided the head of the bird was placed under its wing during the time. In regard to this last assertion I proclaimed myself quite skeptical, and yet John EVans will declare upon oath that he tried the experiment on five different birds with complete success, and I may add that one of the most intelligent and honorable gentlemen in Huntsville testifies

to the truthfulness of Evans's strange story. From time immemorial old women have declared that down, under a buzzard's wing was good for sore eyes, and if the marvellous story cannot be traced to this medicinal one, then must we see in the latter a proof of the former. But as John Evans's explorations in natural history are usually more amusing than useful, so are his hunting expeditions more frequent than profitable. He objects not to trapping an occasional beaver for the sake of the novelty, or to killing a deer, a few turkeys, or a score of ducks for the market, but he is a far happier man when he is lying in wait for the varmints of the country, as he calls them, such as the fox and the coon, the hedge-hog and the skunk, the mink and the corn-stealing crow. And in more than the figurative sense is our vagabond hunter a marked man, for the first glance of his countenance never fails to convince the stranger that he carries a double-face, since the right side has been blackened with bruises and rendered almost fleshless by the continual kickings of his rusty old gun, which he declares shoots to perfection when about half filled with powder and shot. So industrious is he withal that he has been known to spend an entire day in wading a muddy pond for a few ducks, and devoting a whole night to revenging himself upon some unfortunate dog that may have chanced to annoy him on a quiet road when he is wont to travel. In spite of all this, however, he has a lazy look and a languid air; and yet the most unaccountable of all his eccentric and contradictory traits is an overweening passion for wild horses. He dotes upon them, spends all his spare cash for good specimens, and the more vicious they are the better, and whether drunk or sober he is a superior horseman. Indeed, so many have been his narrow escapes from being killed that he is known the country round as "the man who never lets go;" and the last two stories related of him, by way of proving his chief characteristic, are as follows: On one

occasion, while journeying to a neighboring town, he chanced to kill a rattlesnake, and, desiring to preserve its oil for the cure of rheumatism, he cut off the serpent's head and deposited the body for safe keeping under a bush until his return home. He was riding at the time a very wild but partially blind horse, and, when the moment arrived for picking up his plunder, he seized the snake in his left hand, and, holding it aloft, continued his journey. The horse became frightened, and with a loud snort started to run away. The tail of the snake occasionally touched his flank and increased his fear; he became unmanageable and flew like the wind, until the people of Huntsville were alarmed by the sudden appearance in their midst of the steed and rider, around whose head the snake was flapping at a terrible rate, and whose only exclamation was a grunt of defiance, while the reptile was perfectly secure in his convulsive grasp. On another occasion our friend John promised an acquaintance a mess of pickerel, (here erroneously called salmon,) and started upon a fishing expedition. He was successful, got drunk, and, mounting his horse, started for home. On his way thither he rolled from his saddle, caught his foot in a stirrup, and in this manner by the gentle and sagacious horse was dragged along the road, holding on like grim death to his string of fish, and muttering to himself "this is a devilish rough road, any how." As fortune would have it, the very man for whom the fish were intended happened to meet the fisherman in his unhappy plight, and rushing to his assistance asked him if he was hurt; whereupon John Evans exclaimed: "I told you so, Billy, by gum; I've caught the two biggest salmon you ever did see." Many a black bottle has our hero emptied since that time, and many times has he been thought a dying man; but he is still "holding on" to life, and is still pointed at as "the man who never lets go."

Since my arrival in Huntsville, about ten days ago, the rains have been unusually heavy, and the streams of the country are at present much higher than ever before known. All travelling by water as well as by land has been suspended, and the Tennessee river, which at Whitesburg (the port of Huntsville,) is usually half a mile wide, is at present nearly five miles in width, and a three-story house, standing on a high bank, where I took breakfast on my arrival, is only now discoverable by its chimneys. I revisited the place for the purpose of sketching it, and the man who drove me down descanted upon it as a "one-horse concern," which I found to be a sneering epithet indiscriminately applied here to a poor town, a small steamboat, or a mean man. At one of the only two cabins belonging to Whitesburg which were not submerged I witnessed a young and delicate white girl chopping up a huge log of wood, and was told that, as her father was seldom at home and her mother was sick, she was in the habit of doing all the wood-cutting for the family. This picture reminded me of the back settlements of New England, where were born some of the more notorious political declaimers against the slavery of the black race.

But of all the impressions made upon me during my visit here, the most agreeable by far was made by Miss Julia Pleasants, the young and accomplished poetess. She is as great a favorite in the entire South as she is in this her native town, and is destined to be wherever the thoughts of genius can be appreciated. She commenced her literary career by contributing an occasional poem to the Louisville Journal, whose distinguished editor, George D. Prentice, Esq., has done more by kindly words than any other man, to foster female talent and encourage the female writers of this country. Born and bred in the lap of luxury, it is a wonder that the intellect of Miss Pleasants should have been so well disciplined as its

fruits, in spite of their unripeness, would lead one to suppose it had been; but death having recently made her an orphan, and taken from her side a much loved sister, she has been schooled in the ways of Providence as well as of the world, and now, when she strikes the lyre, it responds chiefly in those tones which find a resting-place in her sorrowing heart. That she has written and published too much is, perhaps, a matter of course. Her numerous admirers have been gratified, undoubtedly, but she has not been benefited thereby, any more than was Mrs. Hemans by her poetic repetitions. Like Mrs. Hemans, however, Miss Pleasants is a thinker and a writer of a high order, and her mission upon earth cannot but be both beautiful and profitable. As she has not yet published a volume of her poems, it is hardly proper that I should view her with a "critic's eye;" but the carefully considered compliment that I would pay to her genius is abundantly fortified by a manuscript volume of her better productions, which it has been my privilege to read and to enjoy. The most ambitious and most faultless poem which she has yet written, is called "The Viewless Bride," and is a superb personification of the New Year. It is allied in spirit to Bryant's "Thanatopsis," quite as original in conception, and nearly as melodious and hymn-like a composition. And another poem, entitled "The Lost," written in memory of her parents, can hardly be read without tearful emotions. That I am permitted to append these two poems to this letter, is simply an evidence of my importunity and the lady's kindness.

#### The Viewless Bride.

Sad, sad and low the Old Year's dying sigh,  
Steals up the cloudy ramparts of the sky;  
And gaily to the midnight's silvery chime,  
The fair Young Year trips through the wintry rime  
The beautiful Young Year! all tears, all smiles,  
Emerging from the future's shadowy aisles,  
Her snowy garments flutter far and wide,

And vaporous mystery veils the Viewless Bride.  
The night-winds warble as she wanders by;  
The night-clouds flee the empyrean laguli,  
And merry stars come, singing joyous rhyme,  
To grace her bridal with primordial Time.  
With time, that grand and high mysteriarch,  
Who leads his rites through regions dim and dark,  
And wins the vestal years, a lovely race,  
To bloom and perish in his wild embrace.  
And yet how bright and careless glistens now,  
The cloudless radiance of the New Year's brow;  
The gentlest twilight-fall not yet hath shed  
Its dewy darkness on her youthful head;  
Swift o'er the glacial sward she gaily flies,  
And carols to the blue columnar skies.  
She recks not of the cycles gone before,  
That died like surges on a storm-beat shore,  
But light and airy is her printless tread,  
And joyous o'er the slumbers of the dead.

Ah! who can tell through what a wildering way--  
Through what a wild her onward track shall stray?  
How often will she view the night-stars pale,  
And lordly forests totter to the gale,  
The morning sky with weighty tempests bowed,  
And tears descend from evening's lilac cloud;  
What wrecks shall strew the stretching ocean sands,  
When glory leads to strife the clashing bands;  
What cities fall to rise not up again,  
When earthquakes desolate the peopled plain.  
Alas! it needs no prophet's trump to peal  
The woes her future wanderings shall reveal;  
We see her marching now--a victress chief,  
In all the dark emblazonry of grief;  
Around the bright Olympian sun she drags  
A ruined star, and waves her flamy flags,  
A Myriad fluttering pulses cease to beat,  
And crimson heart-drops stain her snowy feet.  
Far down the star-lit vistas of the sky  
Her pean wild-like muffled thunders fly--  
They fly, alas! the saddest, saddest song,  
In all the chorus of the astral throng.

The fair Young Year! her dowry is the tears  
That stricken mortals fling on silent biers;

Her bridal garlands are the sorrowing rue,  
The funeral cypress and the tristful yew.  
She cannot shun the woe her touch imparts,  
For each fresh footstep crushes human hearts;  
And still where'er she turns through boundless  
space,

Death, death she finds the heir-loom of her race.  
The bright New Year! What dark and fearful change  
Her step will bring upon the mountain range--  
Beside the silver stream--out on the sea,  
And where the desert girds the lone palm-tree;  
To many a tropic clime--where icebergs roll  
In silent grandeur round the frigid pole--  
Where lava-tongues fork through the crater's mouth,  
And swift Siroccos sweep the lovely South--  
Where iron battle leads his crested van--  
Wherever roams the restless race of man.  
Ah! yes, though now she carols but of glee,  
To many a one her silvery song will be,  
The honey-birds, that wiles with tuneful air,  
The Eastern traveller to the wild beast's lair.

Such sorrows are, and oh! far more beside,  
The pale attendants of the youthful bride;  
And yet sometimes she circles, like the larks,  
With music through the dawning grey and dark,  
The fair young Year! pale trembling thing! She  
brings

Some blessings dripping from her dewy wings;  
Not altogether is she crowned with tears,  
But here and there a sunshine streak appears.  
And who could not forgive a double face,  
When half is wreathed with smiles and gilt with  
grace?

Aye! though she only boasts of terrene birth,  
She'll make for some an Eden of this earth;  
We see her now with angel wings unfurled.  
In pitying guardage of a shipwrecked world.  
She calls her children out by bright blue  
streams,

And gives to truthful spirits pleasant dreams.  
She loads with song the night-bird's silver tongue,  
And nurtures tulips for the gay and young;  
While round the good man's wrinkling brow she  
weaves,

With tender hand, the snowy almond leaves.  
She thrills with joy the artist's raptured soul,  
When crimson twilights round the welkin roll;  
And cheers the swain with thoughts of future ease,  
When Autumn's fruitage bends the orchard trees.  
To one she gives a proud and lustral name,  
And circles genius with the wreath of fame,  
Then where the bright hymeneal altar glows,  
She crowns another with a blushing rose.  
And some shall find a bright and shining hope,  
That long had mocked the costliest telescope,  
When they shall learn the joy of sins forgiven,  
And tread the straight but starry path to Heaven.

#### The Lost.

How kind they are, to come in sleep,  
When earth is robed in silence deep,  
And soothe, with pressure soft and mild,  
The weary temples of their child.

How good, to leave unswept the wires  
Of gold, which grace their angel lyres;  
And breathe such loving days divine,  
Across a heart so sad as mine.

It is no dream, I see them now--  
Above my couch they gently bow,  
As oft in childhood's morn they came  
When illness touched my tender frame.

They look not old, (their veins are rife  
With gushings from the fount of life,)  
But young, as when they joined their lot  
In love, which death divided not.

Their locks are thrown, as if to hide  
The scarce-seen wings on either side,  
For fear I might not recognize  
Such shining wanderers from the skies.

But memory never could forget  
Those white-arched feet so firmly set,  
Which seemed to childhood's wondering mien,  
Fit only for a fairy queen.

'Tis she! beneath its dark-brown hair  
No other brow could shine so fair,  
And with the soul's pure radiance grace  
That soft divinely Grecian face.

That chiseled head--that clear profile--  
That living intellectual smile--  
Those soft blue eyes, that voice, which stirs  
My very soul--they all are hers.

"My child"--what tones of love profound,  
(Earth hath not now so sweet a sound;)  
"Let grief no more corrode thy breast,  
And break thy sainted mother's rest.

"My stricken darling, mourn her not,  
But be contented with thy lot;  
Let all thy life be good and pure,  
And teach thy spirit to endure."

And who is he, with visage bland  
Who holds in his her slender hand?  
A mien so free--a heart so true,  
This clouded earth sure never knew.

He speaks, and to each tender tone,  
My soul returns impassioned moan;  
While shades of bright but fleeting years  
Are mirrored darkly in my tears.

"My daughter"--oh! that thrilling word--  
My heart is quivering like a bird  
Through which, while breasting stormy skies,  
The archer's gilded arrow flies.

"My daughter"--ah! a thick'ning flight  
Of sighs break through the bars of night,  
And all its flood of tear-drops roll  
Upheaving from my billowy soul.

They stain the loving hands, which now  
Would calm the aching of my brow,  
While fast their heavenly features grow  
O'ershadowed with terrestrial woe.

They cannot brook so sad a sight,  
On wavering wings, they take their flight;  
They seek again the Eternal Throne,  
And I am left alone,--alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>1</sup>Lanman, Charles. Adventures in the WILDS OF  
THE UNITED STATES and British American  
Provinces. (Philadelphia: John W. Moore,  
1856) pp. 151-164.

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