[Lawrence Taliaferro]

In April, 1865 Lawrence Taliaferro who for four years had been with Lee's army returned to his home on the north side of the Rappahannock, perhaps five miles from Fredericksburg. He was twenty-five years of age . When he went into the war his father owned a farm of several hundred acres, with handsome buildings, fine stock and one hundred and fifty negros. Lawrence Taliaferro had always lived the life of a son of a country gentleman. Returning to Fredericksburg penniless he crossed the river and started across country to his old home. Before he had gone a mile he had lost his way. The country which he had once known as well as one knows the different halls and rooms of his own house, was like a foreign field to him. The forests had disappeared and where once there had been a single road there were now twenty. The Army of the Potomac of over 100,000 men, had occupied this place almost continuously from November, 1862 until May , 1863? They had cut every tree and sapling for miles in every direction to get fuel to burn, logs for their huts and corduroy for their roads. When Lawrence Taliaferro attempted to get to his old home he was in a country of which he knew nothing. His way lost, he could only wander from one new road to another until at last he came upon an unfamiliar hut. He rapped and an old darkie came out. He was one of his father's farmer slaves. The man conducted him to his old home. All out-houses and fences had disappeared, as well as the shade trees and shrubbery. There was only the shell of the house. He found his father and sister living there. Twom of the old servants had remained, refusing to leave their master. Upon inquiry he found that all that was left of the farm property was one old mule and a much-patched harness. A few days after his return an older brother came back from Lee's army and brought with him a worn-out horse. Then began the struggle for daily bread. The two young men patched up the harness for the mule and

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and horse, borrowed an old plow and began to prepare the ground for a garden. They had not been at home many days when they learned that a couple of men were in Fredericksburg buying bones. Now for miles around Fredericksburg the fields were thick with the bones of wornout mules and horses, which had died during that long period when the country was occupied by Northern and Southern troops. As soon as the Taliaferro discovered that these bones were salable they borrowed from an old friend the remnant of a wagon and started out to pick up bones. As the result of two days' work they found they had two thousand pounds which they sold for two cents a pound. "I thought my fortune was made", said Mr. Taliaferro, "when I got that money". From that time on they put in every hour of daylight gathering up bones, while the two old darkeys were putting in the garden and preparing the ground for corn. They carried on the bone business for a month when they made a new discovery.. Quantities of old iron were lying on the fields. This they found was salable. The Jews would buy this and they went into the junk business. They were much crippled in their work by the fact that their team was so poor that not more than half a day's work could possibly be gotten out of it.

This had been going on about a month when a great piece of fortune fell to them. Sherman's army in marching North passed near their home. One night the whole army was camped at this point and the Taliaferro were visited by two Union officers. They had come, they said; to see if old Mr. Taliaferro was living and in good health. It seems that the time the Union army had been encamped on and around his plantation the old gentleman had become a great favorite with the officers. And because of certain services which he had rendered them a guard had been especially stationed about his house, and his safety was insured. The officers were invited in and the Taliaferros did their best to get them a good supper; The men were very much pleased with their enter-

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tainment and when they went home insisted that the boys should go over to the army with their wagon the next day and return their visit. This they did and when they started to go home they found that the wagon had been filled with coffee, sugar, bacon, etc. "Enough" said Mr. Taliaferro, "to last six months;" and not only this; one of the officers went to the quartermaster and said, "See here, Aren't you turning loose every day jaded mules which can't keep up with the army? Haven't you now three or four which you know you will soon have to drop out? If so, give them to these men." "Well sir", said Mr. Taliaferro "do you know that that man actually brought out four mules and turned them over to us. They were pretty thin and tired and he rather apologized for them and said, 'Do you think you can get them home?' Well, sir, the tears just ran down my face. I said, 'If they can't walk I'll carry them. We took them home and turned them out to grass, for grass was one thing we did have. The whole country was green with it and in two months those mules were fat as butter and able to do a full day's work. The only thing outside of grass which the country afforded was rabbits and birds. They had been left alone for so long a time while the men were away that they were thick but we did not have powder or bullets and for some time did not know exactly how to catch them but we took up so much lead and so many shells on the battle field and were saving them all the time that at last we got powder by unscrewing the caps off the shells and taking it out and bullets by melting the lead and running it through holes punched in a piece of tin and letting it run into tubs of cold water. After we got this bullet factory started we had plenty of birds and rabbits.

We got on pretty well that summer. Our gardens was good and we laid up a good deal for winter but when winter came it was mighty hard to get wood. There was not any left in the country. I don't know what we would have done if it hadn't been for the Yankee's corduroy roads They were all through our plantation in every direction. We pulled up the pieces which were of course water-soaked and set them up on end in stacks so they would dry out and for two winters this is how we got our wood. It took us five years to get our plantation into shape to keep us and the two old darkeys and after that we began to make money enough to buy groceries and clothes but it has been hard work.

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