

### The Fort Hill Mansion

(CONTRIBUTED BY MRS. P. H. MELL—FIRST INSTALMENT.)

The boys of Clemson College should feel that it is their duty and a great privilege to visit this historic home. No graduate should leave the place without being thoroughly familiar with the home of Calhoun, its furnishings, associations and cherished traditions. It is a link that connects us directly with this great statesman, the pride of South Carolina. Calhoun is the most prominent and brilliant figure in the history of the State, and the study of his character and career will fascinate every intelligent and ambitious youth. He had a peculiar love and sympathy for young men, and during his life he was their especial friend. After his death, Mr. Webster said of him, "He delighted especially in conversation and intercourse with young men. I suppose there has been no man among us who had more winning manners in such an intercourse and such conversation with men comparatively young."

His home is to South Carolina what Mt. Vernon is to the nation, and the thousands of visitors since his death have proved, and still prove, how warm a place he holds in the affections of his people. This great and noble man will never be forgotten; his long and laborious life, his conscientious devotion to the welfare of his State, and his earnest work for the best interests of the nation, have given him a permanent and distinguished place in history. The people of South Carolina were deeply attached to him, and his memory will be forever honored.

Knowing these facts, Mr. Clemson, who ardently admired and appreciated his distinguished father-in-law, wisely made provision in his will for the perpetual preservation of the Calhoun Mansion, "Fort Hill," and its furniture, for he well knew that everything associated with the great Calhoun is of historic interest and will increase in value with

the passage of years. Item 4 of the Clemson Will reads as follows: "It is my desire that the dwelling house on Fort Hill shall never be torn down or altered, but shall be kept in repair, with all the articles of furniture and *virtu* which I hereinafter give for that purpose, and shall always be open for the inspection of visitors."

The friends of Clemson College will also honor Fort Hill as the home of Mr. Clemson during the last years of his life. Here, in conjunction with his generous and high-minded wife, he laid the plans for this great school, which to-day stands a magnificent monument to his memory. In his early life he traveled much; being a man of culture and a connoisseur, and also a man of wealth, he naturally collected many objects of *virtu*. All of his fine collection of paintings and many articles of interest he bequeathed with Fort Hill, according to item 9, which states: "I give and bequeath to my executor, to be held by him subject to the trusts and conditions of items 1, 2 and 3 of this my will, and for the purpose of adorning the Fort Hill residence, as provided in item 4 of this my will, all my permanent furniture, relics and articles of *virtu*, pictures and paintings, etc., and all my books."

The books were placed in the library of the main college building, when it was completed, and they were unfortunately destroyed in the fire of May 22, 1894, when this building was consumed.

The Trustees have faithfully discharged their duties in the care of the old mansion and its contents. For several years, owing to the rapid growth of the college and the lack of sufficient dwellings, the mansion was used as a residence and the furniture was packed and stored, only one room, the old parlor, being open to visitors.

Last fall the Board of Trustees judged that the time had arrived for opening and refitting more rooms for public inspection, the old mansion and historic office were again

thoroughly repaired and repainted, and now the stately columns, gleaming white among the venerable oaks and cedars, look out as proudly as they did in the days of Calhoun. Three rooms of the mansion, the parlor, dining room and a bed room, and the office or library in the yard, have been fitted up with the Calhoun furniture and look as they did three-fourths of a century ago.

The eastern colonnade, facing the Electrical Building, has been selected for the public entrance; visitors approaching from that side will not encroach upon the private rooms of the family occupying the other part of the house. This colonnade is paved with flags, which have been worn by the feet of thousands of visitors, and give silent but eloquent testimony in honor of Calhoun. The front door opens into a small hall, barely large enough for purposes of passage and for the steep winding staircase. Through a door on the left the visitor enters the parlor, which is furnished as it was when Calhoun's family were young. It was then the scene of many social gatherings; there were five sons and two daughters, and they made the house gay and entertained much company. In this room, November 13, 1838, Anna Maria Calhoun and Thomas G. Clemson were married; fifty years later he died in an adjoining room, in lonely, desolate old age; bereft of wife and children, his only pleasure in the last years of his life had been in planning this great school for the youth of the State.

The parlor has another door opening out upon the eastern colonnade; a railing inside of this door was used formerly to prevent visitors from crowding into the room and handling the numerous articles too roughly. People came in throngs upon excursion trains, and it is said that the floor threatened to give way upon one occasion from the number in the room. The ceiling is low, the walls are neatly papered and the floor is covered with a handsome carpet; the room is well lighted by four windows; three of these are draped

with red moreen curtains, with black silk borders. These curtains are mentioned in an old inventory, made by Mrs. Clemson in 1852, while in Belgium, where Mr. Clemson was *Charge d'Affaires*. She brought them home with her to Washington, and then to Fort Hill after the war.

The high old-fashioned mantelpiece, painted black, supports two busts of Calhoun. In front of the fireplace is a very old piano of English make, from the factory of Gunther & Borwood, 31 Little Queen street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London. The instrument is trimmed with brass and handsomely inlaid; the slender legs are gracefully finished and a little drawer for music is on each side of the front. More than a century has passed since it first responded to the touch of girlish fingers, for it belonged to Mrs. John C. Calhoun, when she was Floride Calhoun. She was most carefully educated by her mother and given all the accomplishments of the day. Now this quaint little instrument, with its brass-trimmed legs, one pedal queerly set, its music cabinets and pretty inlaid work is viewed with much curiosity. Soft, muffled sounds, still harmonious and musical, proceed from its keys when touched. It is said that Calhoun loved music, especially Scotch ballads, and one can picture the fair Floride touching these keys with studied grace and warbling those artless melodies to her dignified lover.

There is a handsome set of chairs of the fashion of our grand-fathers—ten straight-backed chairs and two arm chairs, all of mahogany and haircloth. There is also a handsome mahogany center table, with black Spanish marble top, and a pier table to match, with dark marble top, supported by carved columns of mahogany; a large pier glass hangs above it. Another small mahogany table of antique pattern completes the list of furniture as the parlor was in the days when Calhoun was master. A small engraving of Patrick Henry is pinned upon the wall, and a small one of

Calhoun is framed in a home-made frame of seeds. Perhaps this was done by his invalid daughter, Cornelia. In one corner hang the dilapidated remnants of what was once a magnificent cloak of otter skins, given Mr. Calhoun by an Indian Chief. This was his traveling cloak, and securely wrapped in its folds, he could bid defiance to the weather during those long and fatiguing journeys which he was compelled to take before the days of railroads, when it took four weeks for him to go from South Carolina to Washington to attend the sessions of Congress.

The other interesting articles now on exhibition in this room belonged to Mr. Clemson. A small pedestal in one corner supports an extremely curious brass plate about twenty inches in diameter. It is thickly covered with engraved characters, evidently emblematical. There is a heraldic design in the center; this is surrounded by a broad band filled with letters, an odd jumble with no perceptible signification; the rim is covered with fanciful tracery. This plate was found by Mr. Clemson when he was a young man, in the streets of Paris, just after a French riot. It had evidently been dropped by the rioters after pillaging some building. No one has ever been able to decipher its meaning, although many connoisseurs have made attempts to do so. Impressions have been taken of the designs and lettering and sent to experts, but the meaning is still wrapped in mystery.

Two handsome easy chairs, covered with striped silk velvet, were purchased in Brussels, at the sale of the effects of Count Woyna, after his death. He was a German ambassador and a friend of the Clemsons.

The most elegant pieces of furniture in the room are a royal arm-chair and foot-stool to match, made of rosewood, richly carved and upholstered in crimson velvet. These were presented to Mr. Clemson by his personal friend, the good Leopold I., King of Belgium, the favorite uncle of

Queen Victoria. Each arm of the chair is decorated with an elaborately carved head of a handsome man with a pointed beard. It is said that these heads are likenesses of King Leopold himself. Mr. Clemson prized this chair and foot-stool most highly. They were associated with the most brilliant period of his life. He was nominated by President Tyler *Charge d'Affaires* to Belgium, June 17, 1844. As the representative of the United States he was shown marked courtesy by the members of the foreign diplomatic corps and by King Leopold, who soon became his warm friend, a friendship which Mr. Clemson valued most highly. Letters from the King to Mr. Clemson are now preserved in the college vault, with other interesting papers.

King Leopold was a man worthy of all admiration for character, intellect and culture; he was one of the richest men in Europe and brilliantly educated. In spite of his wealth, he was opposed to pomp and ostentation in his Court; still he loved the arts and sciences and the society of scholarly men. His gallery of paintings was famous, and some of the pictures in the Clemson collection were copied by special permission from the originals in the private gallery of the King. He was one of the wisest and most tactful sovereigns in Europe, and his abilities, good judgment and moderation were so highly esteemed that he was upon several occasions called upon to act as mediator in the political complications of European governments. He was the brother of the Duchess of Kent, Queen Victoria's mother, and he was greatly beloved by the English Queen and very popular in England.

One can easily understand why this beautiful chair and foot-stool, with their precious associations, should have been most highly valued by the Clemsons. Sitting now in the corner of the old parlor, they appeal to the imagination of every thoughtful spectator, and fancy can vividly picture court scenes of sixty years ago.

Suspended from the ceiling in the center of the room is a large blade of a sawfish. It has hung there for so many years that its history is forgotten, but it is possible that it was presented to Mr. Calhoun by his wife's youngest brother, James Edward Calhoun, who was an officer in the navy and sailed to many remote ports, bringing home a number of curiosities.

A sabot, or the wooden shoe of a Belgian peasant, lies upon one of the tables, and near it is a sword, sad memento of a tragedy, for it belonged to Ransom Calhoun, a nephew of Mrs. John C. Calhoun, who was killed in a duel with Col. Rhett, in 1862.

The last item of interest in the room was presented recently by Mrs. John F. Calhoun, of Clemson College. It is a large square of white satin, handsomely framed. Upon it was printed, in 1850, a tribute to Calhoun from the sorrowing citizens of Charleston. Broad mourning bands encircle it, and it is headed:

Tribute to the Memory of  
JOHN CALDWELL CALHOUN,  
By the Citizens of Charleston, S. C.,  
On Tuesday evening, April 2, 1850.

No man ever lived who was more loved, revered and trusted by his people than was the great Calhoun.

MRS. P. H. MELL.

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### An Old Mansion

An avenue of stately oaks made a fitting approach to the old mansion. Their interwoven branches, draped with festoons and long streamers of moss, formed a roof of green, through which the sunlight only occasionally leaked to coax into existence, here and there, little clumps of grass, which were seldom disturbed by the foot of the intruder.