

A ROMANCE¹

Colonel Oliver Towles was born at a place called Middlebrook in the vicinity of Marye's Hill near Fredericksburg, Virginia, was a lawyer and also Colonel of a regiment of infantry in the Revolutionary struggle of 1776. He had but two sons, Captain Harry Towles, an officer in Wayne's expedition against the Indians when he was killed, but quite a boy at the time. Oliver Towles, his youngest son, who was afterwards Major in the war of 1812, was born in the town of Fredericksburg, Virginia, February 14th, 1771, and died August 21st, 1823. Major Towles married Miss Agatha Lewis in the year 17__ at the Sweet Springs, Monroe County, Virginia, now West Virginia. Her father, Captain William Lewis, who was at Braddock's defeat and was wounded there, lived on his estate at the said Springs and died there. He was the brother of General Andrew, Colonel Charles, Samuel, Thomas and John Lewis, all of whom except Thomas, were in the Virginia army at Braddock's defeat. The issue of the marriage between Major Towles and Agatha Lewis was as follows: Oliver, Thomas, William, John and Alfred, Maria (Mrs. Rives), Elizabeth Lewis (Mrs. Dabney), and Caroline M. (Mrs. Sims), Elizabeth Lewis (Mrs. John B. Dabney) was born Christmas day, 25th of December 1801 near the town of Fredericksburg, Virginia, at the family residence called Middlebrook, where Major Towles lived after his marriage about eleven years, and left there when his daughter Elizabeth was about three years old, and moved to Greenbrier County, Virginia, on Greenbrier river. They lived here five or six years and then sold that farm to some people named Alderson. About 1810 Major Towles moved to Union, the County seat of Monroe, and remained there a short time. About 1811 Major Towles came to Lynchburg. Betsy Towles first saw Mr. John B. Dabney at Nancy Wyatt's wedding in Lynchburg when she married Chiswell Dabney Sr. Betsy Towles was then about twelve years old. The next meeting was at a large dinner party at Mr. George Tucker's, afterwards Professor at the University of Virginia. It was a gentleman's party and Miss Towles was invited by her friend, Mrs. Tucker, to bring my father and mother together. My mother did not know, however, that she was to be the only lady present on this occasion. Young Mr. John Dabney commenced his suit by drinking a glass of wine with Miss Towles on that festive occasion (matchmaking as rampant then as it is now). Miss Betsy was now about sixteen and was as active as an antelope. My father says that my mother made a great impression on him then. The next occasion of the meeting of our young friends was at the wedding of Miss Mary Brent in Lynchburg. Miss Betsy was a bridesmaid at their wedding. Young Mr. Dabney (then a young lawyer who was born the 15th of November 1794) again here met with Miss Betsy and continued as regular suitor of her hand until their marriage on the 4th of October 1821. They were married by the Reverend William Reid, a Presbyterian divine.

Young Mr. Dabney was put to great straights to get an opportunity to address Miss Betsy on account of the continual round of company in which they moved; but finally succeeded in bringing his suit to an issue while engaged in a horseback ride with Miss Betsy on the Poplar Forest road near a place called Tate's Spring. Six months afterwards they were married. At Miss Betsy's wedding the following were the groomsmen and bridesmaids; Hampden Pleasants and Cornelia Daniel 1st, Eleanor and Ottway, Anna Carter, Mariah Tucker, William Rives, John Wyatt, Dr. William Fontaine. Dr. Fontaine was a very handsome man and Nancy Dabney, my uncle Chiswell's wife, told Miss Betsy that she saw that she was already put out and regretted not seeing the young doctor before marrying the young lawyer.

¹ The following was written in pencil at the back by some other hand--very carelessly.