

(Column about old Nashville written by Louisa Cooke Don-Carlos)

There were two brothers in our state, both handsome, gifted and beloved. Both orators of the old-fashioned Henry Ward Beecher style and they ran on opposite tickets for governor and their campaign was called the "War of Roses." Bob, the Democrat, had the white rose emblem, and Alf, the Republican, sported the red rose. Even as late as 1885, to be a "Republican" in our circles was a fearsome thing. Alas, for such a one, "None was so poor as to do him reverence." So, needless to say, Papa was a Democrat and was for Bob, and I wore a white satin rose on my school pinafore and having fallen into the habit of scribbling rhymes in my composition book, I parodied a song of the day and wrote:

"There was an old man  
And he had two sons,  
And those two sons were brothers,  
Bob Taylor was the name of one  
And Alfred was the other.  
As Cleveland is a Democrat,  
I'm sure that I don't see  
Why the Governor of our state  
A Democrat should not be.  
And until someone proves me wrong  
I'll ride my Democratic hobby.  
Still wear my pretty rosebud white  
And give three cheers for Bobby."

My Papa was quite proud of the doggerel and carried it in his waistcoat pocket. At one of the matinee meetings at Sandy Carter's he read it aloud. Gideon Baskette, the editor of THE BANNER, was present and published it that night. It is not necessary to say that I was overcome with delight. But more honour was to come; for some one said it to a tune and they sang it at the rallies. Some years passed. With my Peabody licentiate in my pocket, I went to teach in Willie Halsell College in the Indian Territory and there married a young lawyer who was a western man and a staunch Republican.

Justice in the Territory [was carried out by] United States Commissioners under a District Judge and my Harry was spoken of for a place in the Sixth Commissioners District. He had the Republican backing but, alas, the Democrats "owned the government" and Mr. Cleveland was in his second term. But I thought of Bob, who was now a senator in Washington. My husband was getting discouraged over his prospects, when I rummaged in a scrapbook and took out the old campaign song of the War of Roses. With fear and trembling I wrote a letter. I'd never approached a senator before and was afraid to ask Harry about it for fear he would put a quietus on the whole thing. So I began:

Dear Mr. Bob:

I am B. H. C.'s [Bolivar H. Cooke] daughter of Nashville and you once sent me a big bouquet and a three-tiered iced cake some female constituent sent up to the gubernatorial office in the Capitol.

The reason you did this was the enclosed rhyme which I wrote at the age of eleven and which they sang at your Nashville Rallies. Now, Mr. Bob, I've married a 'Yankee" (a Republican, it's true) but he has all the Republicans and many of the leading Democrats in the Territory behind him. I enclose the song and the names of some of his Democratic backers. And won't you please, sir, go up to the White House and speak a word for him to the President?

In a few days a charming letter came from "Mr. Bob" and a promise to "see the President about my business." And two weeks later, I was "Mrs. Judge" for my Harry received the appointment of commissioner of the Sixth Commissioner's District in the Indian Territory.

This preliminary court tried all things from bootlegging to murder and as no clerk's fees were allowed, I made up the transcripts of the cases from the judge's notes. In the court were a whirl of cowboys, Indians and claimants (of head rights) for government bonuses and any time of day or night there'd be a hallo outside our little house and a party of Indians, (smoky, greasy, and smelling like wild animals) would troop in on my pretty white matting with their muddy moccasins, cowboy boots and musty smell and Harry, looking very tall, thin and pale behind his Van Dyke beard would marry a bridal couple. and I to put the fee in a box kept under the bed, as our tiny rented cottage (owned by an Indian neighbor) had not a closet. I learned to cook on a wood stove from the recipes wrapping a baking powder can and that's why (after 50 years) I'm still using "Dr. Price's Baking Powder."v but all this is years and miles away from Gay and Vine Street; yet the roots of a life that flowers in an alien clime are truly part and parcel of it as its bloom and its fruitage.