

Biography of
Rev. John Gardiner Richards



WRITTEN BY HIS SON
JOHN GARDINER RICHARDS

DEDICATED TO MY MOTHER
SOPHIE EDWARDS RICHARDS



1828-1914

REV. JOHN GARDINER RICHARDS

INTRODUCTION

This is intended as a biography or history of my father John Gardiner Richards. I am fully aware of the fact that I cannot do justice to the character of the great man to whom this tribute is dedicated, but feel that some record, though imperfect, should be made and bequeathed to his posterity that may give at least a faint idea of his attributes as a man and his outstanding Christian character and influence as a preacher of the Gospel of Christ that extended throughout a period of more than sixty-two years in the active ministry.

—J. G. R.

*Every word of this was
dictated to J.G.R.'s daughter,
Margarette Richards!*

1934

CHAPTER I.

John Gardiner Richards was born at Whitesburg near Selma, Ala., March 31st, 1828. His father was Stephen Malone Richards and his mother Jane Gardiner Richards. Stephen Malone Richards was of English and Welsh descent and his wife, Jane, was of Scotch-Irish descent. The Richards family in this country was descended from two Richards brothers, who came to this country from England some years before the Revolutionary War. One brother settled in Virginia and the other settled in the West. It was from the Western branch of the family that Stephen Malone Richards, the father of John Gardiner Richards descended. Stephen Malone Richards and Jane Wylie were married about 1826. They were both devout Christians. Stephen Malone Richards was a member of the Methodist Church and Jane, his wife, was a Presbyterian. They reared a large family of boys and girls, all of whom became active Christians, prominent in the affairs of the communities in which they resided.

John Gardiner was the oldest of the children. James, Charles, and William were the other sons, with their sisters Elizabeth Sarah, Mary, Julia, Mildred, Nancy, Jane, and Leonorah. All of these children, except Mildred, joined the Presbyterian Church. Mildred joined the Methodist Church with her father. The early years of John Gardiner Richards were spent upon his father's farm in Alabama. Here he was taught the principals of economic thrift, and the practical side of life which was to serve him in later years, and to make his judgment and his advice eagerly sought after by those with whom he came in contact, especially in the period of reconstruction following the Civil War.

John Gardiner received such education as the common schools of the times afforded, and that his duties upon the farm permitted. The writer does not know a great deal of his early years. His life, however, at this period was much the same as that of other boys, reared upon the farm and whose fathers had large families to rear and educate. His spare time was spent in such sports as hunting, fishing, and swimming in the

Tennessee River. He was an expert swimmer, and once told of a narrow escape from drowning when bathing in the Tennessee River. It happened this way—he dived beneath the water and swam for some distance before attempting to rise. There was a large shelving rock, hidden beneath the water and extending from the bank, and in rising he came up under the rock. His head would hit the rock and then he would sink. This happened several times, and, helpless, he gave up to drown. But the next time he came up his head missed the rock and he came to the surface and to life, despaired of.

Another accident that came near proving fatal was a fall from a building that his father was erecting on the plantation. He had climbed to the joist or sleepers of the upper story. The boards for the flooring had not been placed. In attempting to step from one sleeper to the other, they being about four feet apart, he missed his footing, and in falling, his chin struck the sleeper with the full weight of his falling body. His tongue was caught between his teeth and was severed about midway, with only a small ligament holding the parts together. The two parts were sewed together, but did not heal properly. Many times he would put out his tongue and show his children where it was severed, and the large lump that had formed about the middle of his tongue. Strange to say it did not affect his speech in the least, nor was he heard to complain.

On his father's farm were mules, horses, and oxen. The horses were used for riding and driving to buggies and carriages, the mules for cultivating his crops, and the oxen as draught animals—for hauling timbers to the saw mill and for trips to and from the markets. The oxen, while slow, could haul much heavier loads than the mules. They were yoked up two to the yoke and as many as eight or ten oxen to the wagon. John Richards was an expert driver of these animals. The writer has heard him say that he had driven as many as ten to the wagon at one time and that they were so well trained that he drove and directed them without a line or bridle and with only a whip to manage them. Oxen were not only the main draught animals in Alabama in the early days of young Richards, but today in many places in South Carolina, and in other sections of the country oxen are used for logging, saw

mills, and for the moving of other heavy draughts when the use of mules is impracticable.

John Gardiner Richards was about five feet six inches tall. Although never robust, his health was good. With his temperate habits, coupled with out door life and labors as a farm boy, he became quite an athlete and in his college days and young manhood there were few who could "out-tustle" him or throw him off his feet. As a young man his weight was about 135 pounds. In middle life his weight was 96 pounds. His weight remained about this poundage until he was about 75 years of age when he weighed about 115 pounds and his weight remained about this figure until his death at 86 years.

CHAPTER II.

John Gardiner Richards having finished the course of study offered by the common schools of Alabama, and having reached the age of seventeen and young manhood, entered Oglethorpe University, from which institution he graduated November 13, 1850.

His years in college were characterized by devotion to duty and thorough preparation for a continuation of his studies at Columbia Theological Seminary in Columbia, S. C.

There are now in the writer's possession (1934) in his old home in Liberty Hill, S. C., addresses which young Richards prepared and delivered at Oglethorpe. They show scholarly attainment, deep thought, and reasoning faculties that are unusual for one of his age and opportunities. February 22, 1849, he delivered an oration upon George Washington. May 8, 1849, he delivered an oration, "God in Nature." Two other orations without date were delivered about the same period. One, "Waste of Intellect" and the other, "Instability of Nations". November 13, 1850, he delivered his commencement address. This oration is particularly strong, couched in beautiful language and expressive of profound thought and deep sentiment, the subject, "An Efficient Character". After the years spent at Oglethorpe and his graduation from that institution November 13, 1850, young Richards matriculated at Columbia Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina, to prepare for his life's work, the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In early boyhood at the age of fourteen he united with the Ebenezer Presbyterian Church, the church of his mother. Naturally he selected the Presbyterian Seminary to prepare him for his ministry.

Columbia Theological Seminary in 1850 was, as it is today, one of the most outstanding educational institutions of the entire South and, in fact, the nation. In an institution noted for its orthodoxy, a very citadel for the protection of the faith, young Richards was here surrounded by influences that were to be among the most potent in shaping the life that for long

years was not only to be a leader in the church, but a power in leading souls to the throne of grace.

While pursuing his studies in the year 1852, he was licensed to preach by Tusculum Presbytery, Alabama. His license was signed by N. A. Penland, stated clerk. The writer does not know where young Richards preached while he was a licensee, but presumably at some place in South Carolina near the Seminary, where he was still pursuing his studies.

June 30, 1853, he was graduated from Columbia Theological Seminary. While there is not on hand any orations or other records that would indicate his standing in his studies while a student at the Seminary, circumstantial evidence is abundant that his scholarship was such as to place him among the leaders of the class. The Seminary* at this period of its history had some of the leading theologians and preachers of the country as its professors, Dr. John B. Adger and Dr. Howe being among the number. There will be recorded later in this biography a recommendation of young Richards, signed by Doctors Adger and Howe of the Seminary, that speaks of him in highest terms, and that is a lasting testimonial to his pre-eminent ability and character.

*Columbia Seminary is today located in Atlanta, Ga., and the son of Dr. Chas. M. Richards and the Grand Son of Rev. John G. Richards, Dr. James McDowell Richards is its President.

CHAPTER III.

After graduating at Columbia Theological Seminary November 30, 1853, John Gardiner Richards was called to preach at the Westminster Presbyterian Church, in Charleston, South Carolina. He was not the regular pastor, but was the assistant to Dr. Danner. It was while preaching in Charleston that he met Sophie Edwards Smith. They were married about 1855, and soon after moved to Ebenezer, York County, to which church Mr. Richards had been called as pastor. Sophie Edwards was the daughter of William Smith and Catherine Righton Smith. Mr. Smith was a Scotchman and his wife of Huguenot extraction. Sophie was one of a large family. She was a member of the Presbyterian Church, and a devout Christian. She was not only lovely in appearance but altogether lovely in character, and as a wife and mother. To Sophie Edwards and John Gardiner Richards were born eleven children, three daughters and eight sons. Stephen Malone, the oldest son, William, and Norman S. were born at Ebenezer, a small town just about two miles north of Rock Hill. Ebenezer was one of the most prominent towns of York County at this time. The city of Rock Hill had not even been incorporated and there were no churches there. Mr. Richards, while pastor at Ebenezer, preached the first sermon ever preached at Rock Hill, or where the city now stands. The sermon was preached in an old school house, the members of two or three families present. Mr. Richards said that the names of the two families were White and Black. The descendents of these families are prominent in Rock Hill today. His work was greatly blessed while he was pastor at Ebenezer, and there were many additions to the church upon profession of faith. William and Norman, who were born to the Richards' at Ebenezer, died and are buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery of that place. The graves are unmarked. Norman was never really named as he died at birth, or very soon after. Stephen Malone, the first son born to Sophie Edwards and John Gardiner Richards, survived and with his parents moved to Liberty Hill, South Carolina, when his father became pastor of the church at that place.

CHAPTER IV.

In the year 1858, Mr. Richards accepted a call to the Presbyterian Church in Liberty Hill, South Carolina. His pastorate in this community lasted for nearly thirty years. During the greater part of this time he preached every other Sunday at Bethel Church, about twelve miles east of Liberty Hill, and near the present town of Kershaw. The trips to Bethel Church were usually made on horse back. Sometimes he used the buggy, and when several members of the family would attend the services at Bethel, a two horse wagon was used to convey them. During his pastorate at Liberty Hill, eight children were born to them. Annie Righton, James Prioleau, John Gardiner, Norman Smith, Jeanie Lisle, Charles Malone, Lewis Patterson, and Henrietta Marion. Of the children born at Liberty Hill all are still alive on this day, June 26, 1934, except James Prioleau. Stephen Malone, as has been stated, was born at Ebenezer. He has also gone to his reward.

When the Reverend Mr. Richards moved to Liberty Hill in 1858, the community was one of the wealthiest in the entire State. It was a community of large farmers and every land owner was wealthy and owned many slaves. Mr. Richards used to say in late life that he had traveled a great deal and had extensive experience, but had never seen such real elegance anywhere as was to be found in Liberty Hill, when he came there in 1858. This was of course before the war between the States. Liberty Hill, like many other sections of South Carolina and the South, was devastated by the war and the fall of the Confederate government in 1865. Liberty Hill, at this time, was inhabited by Pattersons, Thompsons, Jones, Cunninghams, Curetons, Browns, Dixons, McDows, Perrys, Georges, and Mathesons. There were other prominent families living near Liberty Hill at this time. There were several families of Browns, Cunninghams, Pattersons, and Joneses. When Reverend Mr. Richards began his pastorate at Liberty Hill in 1858, every family was wealthy, and were supporters of the church and its pastor. At the close of the war the entire community had been reduced to a state of abject poverty. The freedom of

the slaves, the destruction of property by Sherman's army, security debts, and the demoralization of business generally were contributing causes in reducing this once proud and wealthy people to a condition of practical helplessness and despair. The church of course suffered pecuniarily as its supporters were reduced to poverty, but the church records do not indicate any spiritual weakening or falling away. To the contrary, the church remained steadfast in the faith as its membership under the leadership of Reverend John Gardiner Richards, the pastor, set about to restore order in a community where there existed nothing but chaos.

Through his connection and past affiliation with the people and congregation of Ebenezer, York County, Mr. Richards secured supplies necessary to keep the people from actual suffering for bread and meat. These people of the Ebenezer section had not suffered from the ravages of war as those of Liberty Hill. So they provided Mr. Richards, their old pastor, with four mules and a wagon, and loaded it with supplies which he distributed to the needy at Liberty Hill. But more of this condition, and the conspicuous and masterly part Mr. Richards played during this interesting and dangerous period of reconstruction immediately following the war will be referred to later.

The manse occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Richards and their little son Stephen, and where eight of their children were later born, is still standing and in good state of preservation. It is occupied at this time, June 1934, by Rev. F. A. Drennan, pastor of the Liberty Hill Church. It is a comfortable, though unpretentious colonial building. Around it cluster many sweet and sacred memories, and much of the history of the John Gardiner Richards family.

CHAPTER V.

Upon the firing of the first gun at Charleston, S. C., and the beginning of the war between the States in 1861, the Reverend John Gardiner Richards, although he had a wife and three children and although he was pastor of a large and growing church, felt that his duty to God, his family, and his State called him into the service. So he volunteered for the period of the war. Having informed his congregation, and with the approval of the session of the church, and with the moral support of his heroic wife, he saddled his horse and rode off to the war. Mr. Richards and Mr. Watt Wardlaw were the first volunteers from Liberty Hill, and these patriots left Liberty Hill together, and remained in active service during the four years of one of the bloodiest and most hotly contested wars that has ever been waged. Reverend Mr. Richards volunteered his services as a chaplain and first went to Charleston, South Carolina, where his brother-in-law, General William Duncan Smith, was in command. General Smith, however, died of yellow fever early in the war and Mr. Richards was assigned to the Tenth South Carolina Regiment, under Colonel (afterwards General) A. M. Manigault. The writer has in his possession two valuable letters which bear upon the subject and which show the high regard in which Mr. Richards was held, and the demand for his services and his influence in this period of our country's history. The first letter, which is given in full, was written by Rev. George Howe, D.D. and signed along with him by Rev. John B. Adger, D.D., these gentlemen acting for a committee of the Synod of South Carolina. The letters follow:

Theological Seminary
Columbia, S. C.
April 29, 1863

This may certify that the bearer, Rev. John G. Richards, is an approved member of the Presbyterian Church of South Carolina and an acceptable preacher of the gospel. He has been designated by the Presbytery of Harmony as in their view suited to the work of the Chaplaincy in the army. His preference is for the army of the west. Rev.

Jos. M. Mack has also in like manner been designated by them for the same service. Both are pastors much esteemed in the church and both would prefer service in the western army. As members of the committee appointed by the Synod of South Carolina to provide the supply of our army with suitable chaplains, we respectively direct your attention to these gentlemen if the Regiment under your command should be destitute of one filling this office.

With great respect
We are your obt. servts

Signed: Geo. Howe

John B. Adger

Com. of the Synod of S. C

To Colonel Manigault
10th Reg. S. C. Volunteers.

The second letter, given in full here, is signed by officers of the Second Ark. Reg. and is self explanatory:

Camp, 2nd Ark. Regt.

Bellbuckle, Tenn.

May 12, 1863

Rev. J. G. Richards

We the undersigned having addressed you a communication about three weeks ago to ascertain if we could secure your services as Chaplain of our Regiment, and failing thus far to hear from you, concluded to write again. If we can secure your services we wish you to come immediately. If you can't come, please see if you can secure the services of the Reverend Charlton H. Wilson. We have not his address. Capt. Gregg will address Revd. Mr. Wilson's father on the subject as we have not his Post Office address, should we fail to get you. If you will come we will secure a commission for you through our Colonel. The Regt. is anxious to get a Chaplain. Please let us hear from you immediately. We will insure you the pay of a Captain.

Very Respectfully,

Committee signed: A. D. Gregg, Capt. Co. H.

A. T. Meek, Capt. Co. I.

R. F. Harvey, Lt.-Col., 2nd Ark. Regt.

The reply of Mr. Richards to the second Arkansas Regiment is not on hand, but the facts are, he did not accept the urgent and second request to become Chaplain of this Arkansas Regiment, but, as has already been said, he became Chaplain of the Tenth South Carolina Volunteers under Captain Manigault. His preference, however, for service in the West was gratified, for the Tenth South Carolina was assigned to the hard fighting on the western front.

Mr. Richards was not one who spoke a great deal of his war service, but he has been heard on occasion to speak fully and interestingly of that trying period, of the heroic conduct of the confederate soldier, and of the fortitude with which they faced many battle fields and overcame the greatly superior numbers of the enemy. Mr. Richards, although Chaplain of his Regiment, was in much of the fiercest fighting of the West. His chief mission was to preach to the soldiers and minister to the wounded, but his duty and his ministration frequently carried him in the thickest of the fight, and under the heaviest fire, both artillery and rifle. He assisted the surgeons and doctors in administering restoratives, and the amputation of shattered limbs and other surgical operations. In the midst of the trying and oft-times heart rending duties, when his comrades were falling thick and fast and there were guns lying idle, having fallen from lifeless hands, Mr. Richards, on more than one occasion snatched up a gun and took part in the fighting. This, the writer has heard from others as well as from his own lips. On one occasion, when Chaplain Richards was engaged in the fighting, a soldier, fighting by his side, said, "Chaplain, this is no place for you, your place is in the rear, praying for us." As he uttered these words, an enemy bullet struck him in the breast and his soul was carried to its reward, for it is hoped and believed that the prayers had already been offered at a throne of Grace that made secure for this gallant spirit a home for the peaceful and the blest.

The position of Chaplain ranked along with that of Captain and the pay was the same. Chaplain Richards saw service in the Vicksburg Campaign, Missionary Ridge, Chickamauga, and was in the severe fighting on Snodgrass Hill. A charge by the South Carolinians up Snodgrass Hill under the devastating fire

of the enemy was one of the most daring and brilliant achievements of the war.

Mr. Richards frequently said in speaking of the confederate soldier, that he thought that General Albert Sidney Johnston was one of the most brilliant of the South's generals and that had he lived, the result of the war might have been different. He also admired the genius of General Forest, whose policy was "to get there fustest with the mostest men." He considered General Joseph E. Johnston a great commander and said that he thought that President Davis was unfair to him. He said that Johnston was a great strategist and his retreat before Sherman was masterly. Johnston, with greatly inferior numbers, was wearing Sherman down and waiting for a propitious time to give battle. The confederate cabinet, however, became impatient. Sherman's marching on the South must be stopped, so Johnston was superseded by Hood. Hood proceeded to give immediate battle and was defeated and crushed at Atlanta, Georgia, and Sherman continued his march, practically uninterrupted.

Chaplain Richards bought a horse on the Sabbath. It happened this way. The fighting, though intermittent, had lasted for several days. Mr. Richards had lost his horse and also in the confusion, lost account of the day of the week. He saw this horse, liked it, and decided to purchase it. He made the trade and rode off and did not know it was Sunday until he reached his own camp. While he was showing his horse and bragging on his trade, the Reverend Mr. Dunlop, a great friend and brother minister, shocked him with the statement, "Why, Dick," (as he called him), "you don't mean to say you bought a horse on the Lord's Day?" Mr. Richards kept the horse and brought him home after the war. The horse was named Pankey. Pankey was a fine horse and was of course of great service to his master. The horse was accustomed to being stopped on the field of battle, and wherever there was a wounded soldier to be ministered to. Mr. Richards told of riding near the battle-field one dark night. The horse was traveling a pathway, when suddenly he stopped. Mr. Richards spurred him and tried to make him go, but he would not budge.

He dismounted, and stooping so as to see what was wrong, beheld a dead soldier with upturned face right beneath his eyes. "My hat rose off my head, or so it felt," said Mr. Richards. "I mounted as soon as I could find the stirrup, and Pankey went right off, satisfied. The horse evidently felt that that poor soldier needed the attention he had seen so many others receive."

On another occasion, Chaplain Richards got cut off from his command and Pankey saved him. The yankees were trying either to capture or kill him. They, firing at him, had driven him into a swampy thicket. The under-growth was so thick with briars, and the mud and slush was so great, he did not think his horse could get through. So to save himself he decided to abandon his horse. He dismounted and struggled through, but to his surprise and delight, Pankey crashed through it all and was at his side when he reached the opening and sound footing. He mounted his horse and made his escape while the yankees still fired at him.

Chaplain Richards remained in the army and in active service until the surrender of General Lee at Appomatox. Of course he came home on furlough to visit his family occasionally, but this was seldom, as his duties in the army demanded his time, as it did that of all active soldiers.

Chaplain Richards had three brothers, also in the western army, but not in his regiment. James P. Richards was a captain of infantry and was severely wounded, having all the bones in his left arm above the elbow shot out. He was also shot clear through the body, his lungs being pierced. The surgeon drew a silk handkerchief through his body. Captain Richards survived, however. Charles M. Richards, another brother, was first lieutenant of infantry. He was shot through both knees, but recovered and died from the effects of the old wound some years after the war, while preaching to the Indians. William, his youngest brother, died from fever while serving in the army. Chaplain Richards was never wounded, although he had many narrow escapes from enemy bullets. The writer has heard him laugh and say that he had dodged from many a bullet as it "zipped" by his head. Although the danger had passed he

heard the sighing of the lead. Chaplain Richards kept a very complete diary while in the army. This very interesting and valuable memorandum is now in the possession of his oldest daughter, Mrs. Annie Richards Hay.

CHAPTER VI.

With the surrender of General Lee, and the fall of the Confederacy, the Reverend Mr. Richards returned to his home at Liberty Hill to find that Sherman's army had destroyed all of his cattle, horses, mules, and even the chickens. Everything that the people of the community had to live on was destroyed from the face of the earth. Fences were burned, even some of the fine old colonial homes were destroyed and the premises devastated. Sherman, with part of his army, camped at, or near, Liberty Hill eleven days. A freshet in the Wateree River about four miles west of Liberty Hill swept Sherman's pontoons away and divided his army. Part were on the Fairfield and Chester side of the river, and part on the Kershaw and Lancaster side. This accounts for his long stay in Liberty Hill. He was afraid to advance with his forces divided. And well he might have been, for the broken, but unconquered Confederates under General Wheeler were on his flanks and striking wherever they dared with their small force. When Mr. Richards reached home he found his wife and four children, Stephen, Annie, Prioleau and John, the last named, a babe six months old, destitute. The family had subsisted for some days on parched corn, wasted by Sherman's horses, and on what Mary, one of the slaves, could steal from the Yankees for whom she cooked. Mr. Richards set about immediately to provide for his family and other members of his church and community who were equally in distress. Upon his horse, which he rode home from the army, he set out for Ebenezer, York County, where he preached before he accepted the call to Liberty Hill. The good people of Ebenezer (they had not suffered from the ravages of Sherman's army) gave him, or rather provided for him, four mules or horses and a wagon and loaded the wagon with corn, meat, flour, sugar, coffee, and other necessities. He set out for Liberty Hill, where he distributed the supplies among the destitute of the community. These supplies, furnished by the people of Ebenezer, were a godsend, not only to the Richards family, but to many others, and tided them over until gardens could be planted and other steps taken to meet the immediate demands.

Reverend Mr. Richards immediately resumed his pastorate and set about to reorganize and to rehabilitate the community. The people had lost their slaves and all their personal property and were reduced to abject poverty. They were unable to pay their pastor but this made no difference to Mr. Richards who continued his faithful ministry and at the same time prepared for the planting of crops for the support of his family.

Before the war the church at Liberty Hill was wealthy, and the officers and members were liberal in the support of their pastor. But now things were quite different. Unable to provide for their own families, there was little to give the pastor and his family. To meet this changed condition it became necessary for Mr. Richards to engage in secular enterprises. As an evidence of the financial strength, or weakness, rather, of the church, he received \$30 in money as pastor's salary the first year after the war. A merciful God blessed the earth, and the year following the war, fruit was abundant, and Mr. Richards said that where seed was sown, even upon the highways, plants sprang up and grew and produced a harvest. Mr. William Dixon, splendid citizen and an elder in the church at Liberty Hill, joined him and they together rented Goose Neck Plantation, just southwest of Liberty Hill. The negroes of course had all been freed, and while there was plenty of labor upon the plantation, contracts had to be entered into and confirmed by the Freedmans Bureau in Camden. Neither Mr. Dixon nor Mr. Richards had any stock to work the plantation with, so Mr. Richards went again to his friends in Ebenezer, York County, for relief. He succeeded in purchasing seven or eight mules and horses, with the understanding that the payment be deferred until the Fall and until the crops could be gathered and marketed. They succeeded in making a splendid crop, especially cotton. The price paid for cotton that year was around 33c a pound. Mr. Richards paid his Ebenezer friends for the stock, paid other expenses of the farm, and had \$500 cash remaining for his share of the year's operation, the first money he had ever saved.

This was the beginning of a period of years in which Mr. Richards engaged in farming and the mercantile business, and in which he proved himself to be a man of exceptional business

ability. He was very successful, both as a farmer, and as a merchant, and his advice was sought and his judgment relied upon by the men of the entire community. Although the church was unable to support him and his family, he continued his pastoral duties just as he had faithfully performed them when the church was wealthy, and had promptly met its obligations to him. God's blessings were upon him, the church continued to grow, and he was prospered in his secular undertakings, and was enabled to support, not only his own family, but many of the destitute in the community, both white and black. Mr. Richards formed a mercantile partnership with Mr. W. K. and L. C. Thompson of Liberty Hill, both members and afterwards officers in his church.

Business was first opened in the old Hutson residence that then stood about seventy-five yards back and to the left of where R. C. Jones' store now stands. The firm name was "Thompson and Company." Mr. L. C. Thompson was the active manager. In the meantime, the firm purchased a lot just across the street and to the east of the estate of Mr. John Brown, and erected a splendid store building. This building was one of the best store buildings that the writer has ever seen in a country community. There they installed a fine stock of general merchandise. For a time the firm was very successful and made money. This, however, did not continue. Mr. L. C. Thompson withdrew from the firm. About this time Mr. W. K. Thompson, who was extensively engaged in farming, also withdrew from the firm and Mr. Richards re-established it under his own name and went to Charleston to interview the creditors. They told Mr. Richards that if he would take active charge of the business that they would continue to extend credit and give him time to work out the debt. This he agreed to do. He returned home, bought out the other interest for thirteen hundred dollars, and assumed all of the firm's obligations. In active charge and sole owner, Mr. Richards hired a clerk, (J. C. Cunningham) and began a mercantile career that, over a long period of years, was to prove most successful. In this enterprise he established for himself an enviable reputation as a financier and business man. When he engaged in the mercantile business, he of course sold for cash, but he also

embarked in what is known as the lien business, supplying many who could not otherwise secure supplies, taking a lien and mortgage as security. His old ledger or charge book is still in possession of his family and is a monument to his humanity, and his philanthropic dealings with his fellow man. This ledger or record book shows conclusively that if Mr. Richards had been paid what was owed him, if the notes and other obligations held by him had been satisfied, that if it had not made him wealthy, certainly he would have been financially comfortable for the remaining years of his life. However, the writer knows that, throughout his life, Mr. Richards never sued or prosecuted any man, although the provocation and justification for such action on his part arose many, many times. The dominating influences throughout his business career that are indelibly impressed are his anxiety for a legitimate support for his large family and that he might do all possible to supply the needs of others whether they be black or white.

During the period of years that Mr. Richards was in business he bought considerable real estate, owned a good many cattle, mules and horses, and did a considerable farming business. He first bought the Perry Place, a part of the old Jack Perry estate. This land is situated west of Liberty Hill on Singleton's Creek. He later bought half of the Huey Place, Colonel L. J. Patterson buying the other half. This land lies west of Liberty Hill. Some years later he bought half of Goose Neck Plantation, southwest of and near Liberty Hill. His lands amounted in all to about 1400 acres. These lands he later divided between his children, and part of it is still in their possession. He also bought the William Cunningham home place and 100 acres of land surrounding it. On this place he set off homesteads for his son, Norman S. Richards and for his daughter Annie Richards Hay. The remaining acres and the house, in the settlement of his estate came into the possession of his son, John G. Richards. He and his family reside there at this time.

The church at Liberty Hill, through all these years, while strong and active spiritually, was still in a weakened financial condition. While Mr. Richards continued faithfully and lovingly to discharge his duties as pastor, the congregation was un-

able to pay his salary or provide even the absolute necessities for his family that at this time was composed of his wife and nine children, later to be added to by the adoption of two other children of his deceased sister in Arkansas. The addition of these children, Patty and Beverly Johnson, increased the number to eleven children dependent upon Mr. Richards for support and education. Until the purchase of the Cunningham residence, the Richards family had resided at the manse. While a fine old colonial home, yet it was entirely inadequate to comfortably house this large family. The church, unable to compensate Mr. Richards for his services, and being in debt to him for a very considerable amount, urged him to accept the manse property and home as part payment of its obligations to him. This he positively refused to do and gave the church a clear receipt for all past indebtedness to him.

When the Cunningham homestead was placed upon the market for sale by Dr. T. F. McDow, who held the mortgage, Mr. Alex Perry became a prospective purchaser. If Mr. Perry had bought the place, the Cunninghams would have had no place to go. Here Mr. Richards saw an opportunity, not only to provide an adequate home for his family, but at the same time provide a home for the Cunninghams. Dr. McDow, great friend of Mr. Richards, preferred that he purchase the home. While determined to sell, he preferred that a Liberty citizen become the purchaser. Mr. Richards consulted with the officers of his church. He also consulted Mr. R. B. Cunningham and Mr. A. D. Jones, brother and brother-in-law respectively of Mr. William Cunningham, then dead, but whose family was living in the homestead in question, as to the course he should pursue. Both Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Jones advised him to purchase the place. He then decided to purchase the Cunningham home, but not until he had arranged with the officers of the church that the Cunningham family was to be given the use of the manse free of rent, at least as long as he was pastor of the church and the manse under his control. With this arrangement perfected, the Richards family moved into the Cunningham home and the Cunningham family into the manse. The Cunningham family continued to live in the manse for many years free of rent, and until they voluntarily gave it up.

CHAPTER VII.

The Reconstruction period immediately following the war between the States, was little less trying and dangerous than the war itself. The negro slaves, far superior in numbers to the whites, had not only been freed, but they had been given the ballot and were in actual control of the State and county governments. To redeem the State from this condition of affairs called for the patriotism of every true white man, and of all professions and callings in life. The negroes in control of the government were under the direction of alien and local renegade white men, and under the protection of yankee garrisons, armed with federal bayonets. It was the solution of this problem, how to reclaim the government, depose these hoards of parasites without conflict with the yankee soldiers and a renewal of the war itself, that confronted the patriots of the entire South. Mr. Richards at once became a leader in his community and his county, Kershaw. And it was through his wise counsel that bloodshed was averted, and the negroes were kept under control. While the tension was great at all times, it was upon election occasions that the danger of an outbreak and bloodshed was greatest. Mr. Richards had the utmost respect of the negroes. They knew that he was absolutely fearless and that what he said, he meant. They knew that he had their best interests at heart, that while he openly declared that the negro had no rightful place in the government, that their rights should be protected by the government and that his great influence would always be directed to that end. He talked and advised personally with the negro leaders. He made speeches to them, and kept in constant touch with conditions generally. He was active in the Red Shirt movement, led by the Garys, Hamptons, Butlers and Tillmans, and that was so potent in finally redeeming the State, and again placing it in the hands of the white man and democratic government. While he was not a member of the Klu Klux Klan, so great was his influence and the universal respect in which he was held, that he directed the activities of the Klan in the community. The influence of the Klan at

Liberty Hill was most effective, as it was in every section in which it operated, but it committed no violence in this community. Its persuasive and intimidating influence, however, acted like a charm, and caused the negroes to have visions of most fearful possibilities.

As evidence of the wonderful power Mr. Richards exerted over the negroes, here is one striking illustration. It was election year, about the year 1880. The negroes outnumbered the whites about twenty to one. The feeling against the white man, their former master, was particularly resentful on these election occasions, their passions being fanned to fever heat by their leaders, who made these ignorant hoards believe that if the white men got control of the government they would immediately be put back into slavery. Under these circumstances it is readily seen how great was the danger. In overwhelming numbers, armed with pistols, razors, knives and sticks, and every conceivable device, they were ready for a battle for extermination. The whites realized the danger, and there was quiet, grim determination to meet the issue, when it came, as only brave and true men can. There was a negro leader in the crowd by the name of Preston Brown. This negro had some education, and was noted for his hatred of the white man, which made him particularly acceptable as a leader of this ignorant mob. Press, as he was known, was regarded by the whites as dangerous, a negro of some physical courage. At a point where it seemed almost certain that the battle would begin, Mr. Richards went up to Brown, and in his impressive and convincing manner, said, "Preston, I want you to know that if trouble begins here today, you will be the first man killed. I know of at least six men who have their eyes on you, determined to shoot you down the first opportunity." This was a bold, a fearless stroke, and it had the desired effect. With their leader intimidated and cowed, the negroes became quiet and gradually dispersed, and thus almost certain bloodshed was averted.

Throughout the entire Reconstruction period, and until the State was redeemed and the white man's government was established, Mr. Richards, through his wise counsel steered our people through the bleak era, without bloodshed, into a con-

dition of peace, quiet and prosperity. After the government was restored there was, however, still some work for the reformer and true patriot. Ring rule dominated the politics of our county and state. Again, Mr. Richards became active and led in the fight to correct this condition of affairs in Kershaw County. He began the fight at the club meeting and carried it into the county convention. His effort was to have a fair distribution of the offices of the county. As things had become to exist, Camden, the town and county seat, so manipulated that all of the more desirable and paying offices were captured by the town. Mr. Richards made the first speech against ring-rule, so far as the writer is aware, that was made in South Carolina. His speech antedated Tillman's fight and reform movement against these conditions by several years. He succeeded in his present purpose and forced a fair division, but not without a hot and acrimonious debate with Colonel William M. Shannon, at that time the leading lawyer of Camden, and afterwards killed by Colonel E. B. C. Cash in the last duel fought in South Carolina. Mr. Richards, so completely routed the opposition that Colonel Shannon became personal and said that Mr. Richards' Cloth (meaning his ministerial office) was all that protected him. To this Mr. Richards replied that he wanted Colonel Shannon to understand that his cloth did not protect him, that he assumed personal responsibility for his position. The convention applauded him and his victory was complete. At that time it was said that he could be elected to Congress or any other important political position if he had become a candidate. But the idea of abandoning the ministry for any political position never received a serious thought from this consecrated soldier of the Cross. So profound an impression did his efforts for pure democracy and the rights of the people against ring-rule make throughout Kershaw County, that when two of his sons, in later years became active in politics, and were candidates for office, they received strong support from many, purely because they were sons of the man who had championed in such an able and fearless manner the rights of the people in that noted and historical convention.

CHAPTER VIII.

As has already been written, Liberty Hill community at the close of the Civil War was a complete financial wreck. Slaves had been freed, security and other debts had taken their property, and men who have never been required nor even known how to work were thrown upon their individual efforts for the support of their families. This was a time of crucial test, a time that called for genuine manhood and superior leadership, and it was to the Reverend John Gardiner Richards, their friend and pastor that the community turned to supply this leadership, and he in every way met with signal ability the requirements of these most exacting times. Beginning with his return from the army and his supplying the community with food contributed by his friends and old parishoners of Ebenezer, York County, Mr. Richards continued from his store and farm to supply the needs of those of the community who were in need and could not provide for themselves. As has already been stated, he was driven to engage in secular work for the support of his own family, and this proved to be a blessing as well to the community. He encouraged and assisted the young men of the community to make a fresh start in life and become self sustaining. He assisted practically every young man in Liberty Hill at that time to a start in life. The Elliott Place, a valuable plantation southwest of Liberty Hill, was for sale for \$1,000. Mr. Richards had the money for cash payment, and was ready to purchase, but heard that a young man who was just starting out and without means, wanted the place. Mr. Richards not only withdrew from the purchase himself, but encouraged and assisted him in making the trade. Within the past few months and just before the death of one of Liberty Hill's prominent citizens, the writer was talking to him and recalled how he, as a boy, admired a fine horse, he as a young man owned and rode at a tournament just in front of the Monkey Roost. Quoting him as accurately as possible, "Yes, as a young man starting out in life, I had little, but your father said to me one day, 'I have \$500 that I can spare, and I will lend it to you to help you out.'" Mr. Richards never mentioned

this loan, or the fact that he had ever assisted him. In a financial way, he assisted several prominent white families, besides negro families too numerous to mention.

The Goose Neck Plantation that was mentioned before belonged to the William Cunningham estate. Dr. T. F. McDow held a mortgage upon the place and his son, J. C. McDow, to whom the mortgage had been transferred, offered the plantation for sale. Mr. Richards was anxious that the Cunninghams should at least secure a part of the plantation, so he conferred with Mr. McDow, and said that he would purchase half of the place for cash (money was very scarce at the time) if Mr. McDow would make clear titles to the Cunninghams for the other half. This Mr. McDow agreed to do, and Mr. Richards paid the money and gave the Cunninghams choice as to which half they would have. They selected the lower, or southern half of the place, which was cut off and titles made to them. Many as were his kindnesses, and the great philanthropies extended throughout all those years of rehabilitation, much of it he never made known, even to his devoted wife, and helpmate, Sophie, who had given him her loving support and cooperation, and the one who had done so much to make his great life a blessing. Together with sublime faith they had met every difficulty, together they had reared and blessed a large family, and together they had been a blessing to the entire community in which they had lived and served.

When a man and woman, husband and wife, rear a large family of children, when they provide for and educate them, the usual verdict of the world is that that man and woman have made a success of life. The writer is perfectly willing to agree to that verdict, providing that along with the provision for that family the parents have not neglected the spiritual interests of those dependent upon them, but have both by precept and example striven to lead them to the higher life—to Salvation through Christ. Reverend and Mrs. John G. Richards are most abundantly entitled to both the verdict of the world and the amended verdict, for certainly they had reared a large family of their own children, and along with them, a large family of children who were made dependent by the loss of either their own fathers, or mothers, or both of them. To the writer's own

knowledge, six others besides the Richards' own nine living children enjoyed the blessings of that godly home and in every single instance these young people made personal profession of faith in their Saviour, Jesus Christ. The marvelous part of it all is, how this man, who had lost all of his worldly possessions through the fortunes of war, could rear and educate such a large family, cut through the maze of difficulties surrounding the disordered times, and at the same time be the main spiritual leader and material support of an entire community. Marvelous!

At the close of the war, Reverend and Mrs. Richards had four living children, Stephen, Annie, Prioleau and John. To this number were added, at intervals of about two years, Norman, Jennie, Charlie, Lewis, and Marion. Charles M. Richards, a brother of Mr. Richards, a Lieutenant in the army, and whose education and preparation for the ministry had been interrupted by the war, was added to the Richards family. Reverend Mr. Richards assisted his brother through Columbia Theological Seminary and into the Gospel Ministry. Kittie Smith, a niece of Mrs. Richards, whose mother had died, became a member of the Richards family. Julia Smith, another niece, who had lost her mother, was added to the family circle. Later Julia Evans, Mr. Richards' niece from Arkansas, whose mother had died, was taken into the family, and some years later, Pattie and Beverly Johnson, his sister's children, who had lost both father and mother were adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Richards and became regular members of the family. Not once throughout all the years did anyone hear a single word of complaint from either Mr. or Mrs. Richards. Neither was there the slightest difference in the treatment of the children, nor could anyone tell the real from the adopted children by either word or action on the part of the parents. Mr. and Mrs. Richards were happy in their own family, and they were made even happier that they could furnish a home for these children who had been deprived of a home and tender ministrations of their own loving parents.

With the close of the war the educational structure of the South, along with practically everything else, except the dauntless spirit of her people, was almost entirely wiped out. The

common school system especially had to be reorganized and put into operation, and there was little money with which to do it. Liberty Hill, always noted for its educated, cultured, and refined people, was almost entirely without school facilities. The counties and the State could only furnish money to run the schools about a month and a half, and this condition obtained for a number of years. Reverend Mr. Richards as chairman of the board of trustees, set about to improve this, to him, intolerable condition. He was assisted materially by Mr. R. B. Cunningham and Dr. T. F. McDow. They saw to it that competent teachers were employed and that they were paid thirty to thirty-five dollars per month and were given their board free. The teachers were boarded around among the different families. In this way the Liberty Hill school was built up to a standard of proficiency and in a few years was preparing its pupils for college. Mr. Richards saw to it that his children took advantage of every facility furnished by the school at Liberty Hill, and in addition, succeeded in sending seven of his nine children to college. Of these, Annie, Marion, Prioleau, and Charlie graduated, and all of his children and the two adopted children still with him were given sufficient education to meet the demands of life. Mr. Richards remained the chairman of the board of trustees and was the school's chief support for many years, and until the State was again able to support her schools.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Richards operated his store for a number of years without serious opposition or without competition. Later, Floyd and Hunter opened a store. While that was annoying, yet it did not seriously affect the growing business of Mr. Richards. But it was not long after this before W. K. Thompson opened a store also. Then followed a store by Perry and Brown and later by C. J. McDowell. Five stores in the small village of Liberty Hill meant that none of them could possibly prosper. In the meantime, Mr. Richards was quite extensively engaged in farming. As a farmer he was thorough and progressive, always practical, but never theoretical. He was the first man in the community to adopt the terracing system for the preservation of his land. He was the first to introduce barbed wire fences. He was the first to introduce the reaper, and the first to grow German millet, and lucerne (the latter known today as alfalfa).

About the year 1883, along with R. B. Jones he rented from Mr. A. D. Jones, his White Oak Plantation, containing a thousand acres, nine miles south of Liberty Hill. The annual rental agreed upon was \$540. R. B. Jones, after one year, quit and moved to Florida. It was the purpose of Mr. Richards to sub-rent as much land as possible and to devote the remaining to stock raising. After Mr. Jones left, there was no one to look after the place and it was many miles away. Of course, if the enterprise was to be profitable, then someone must take active control. John G. Richards, Junior, his son, then 19 years of age, volunteered to go to White Oak and take charge. The plantation was thoroughly organized; many tenant houses were built and about 300 acres wired up for pastures. Mr. Richards invested considerable money in cattle, and this part of the business was profitable. However, he was unable to give personal attention to the general conduct of the affairs of this large undertaking, as he had accepted the position as Evangelist for Harmony Presbytery, and of course was away a greater part of the time engaged in his ministerial duties.

For nine years the place was operated under this management and returned to Mr. A. D. Jones at the expiration of the lease,

free of debt. The writer does not know that one dollar was cleared in this transaction, and for several reasons. First because of the inexperience of the man who had charge, and because of the disastrous floods in the Wateree River, practically every year that Mr. Richards had the place leased. With the expiration of this lease and the termination of operations at White Oak, Mr. Richards closed his farming and other secular enterprises and devoted his time and energies entirely to the preaching of the Gospel, and the work of the Church of Christ.

Driven into secular work by necessity, Mr. Richards over a period of thirty years had demonstrated his wonderful capacity as a business man, and at the same time had not neglected his pastoral duties or the greater responsibility of preaching the Gospel of Christ. The churches at Liberty Hill and Bethel, his charges, throughout all these years had continued to grow and prosper. God's gracious blessings had attended his ministrations. In addition to his other responsibilities and labors, Mr. Richards took a great interest in the spiritual and material welfare of the negroes of Liberty Hill and vicinity, and enjoyed their respect and love. During his long pastorate at Liberty Hill, in the gallery of the church was always to be found a number of colored people when he preached. He was largely instrumental, if he was not entirely responsible, for the organization of the negro Presbyterian Church that exists at Liberty Hill today and that is a large and vigorous organization and has been throughout all these years. The first pastor of this church was Rev. Henry Ghee, who lived in the Bethel Church neighborhood. Mr. Richards had much to do with the training of this faithful man and earnest preacher of the Gospel. In later years he assisted in preparing Reuben James and Isaac James and Henry Jackson for the ministry. These men also became preachers in the Liberty Hill Colored Presbyterian Church and rendered faithful service. He also assisted and instructed Davie Richard and Reuben Gaither, who were Colored Baptist preachers and frequently preached for the people in their colored churches throughout the community. He was called upon in some instances to preach at the burial of their dead and he often performed the ceremony upon the marriage of their people. While he was a strict believer in

the entire social separation of the races, he respected their rights and was anxious and zealous for their spiritual welfare and their material advancement. He was universally loved and respected and his judgment and wise counsel was sought wherever he was known.

[At this time, as I undertake to write this biography of my beloved father, I am 69 years of age. I have seen a good deal of this world, and I have been thrown with men, both great and small, and I feel that I am in position to be a fairly good judge of men and their accomplishments. In all of my experience I say with deliberation and without prejudice that as a well rounded man, as a man standing four square, and as a man of really worthwhile achievement I have never known my father's superior, nor do I believe I have ever known his equal among men.]

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Richards, although frail, was remarkably healthy. Quiet and dignified, he was a strong, positive character, commanding respect and love of those who knew him,—especially the young. He was fond of sports and took a great interest in all innocent games, and encouraged the young people in them and often joined in them himself. When baseball was first introduced at Liberty Hill, he would often take part in the game himself, and for a number of years, acted as umpire in the games played there. He was a good croquet player and enjoyed the game. At checkers, he was fine and few could beat him. While not known to engage in a tournament, one of the most popular sports for many years in Liberty Hill, he was always present for the occasion, and was especially interested in the horses, and the skill of the respective riders in the handling of their lances and taking of rings. He owned a number of fine saddle horses and most usually one or more of his horses were in the tournament. He was very fond of horse back riding, and nearly every day found him in the saddle, riding over his farms or attending to other business. One of his most famous horses was Black Charlie. This horse was cold black with one white hind foot and a white star in his face. Of all the sports, Mr. Richards enjoyed a fox chase most. While he never owned a pack of hounds himself, he allowed his boys to own them while he furnished the upkeep for them. He seemed never to tire while on a fox hunt. His chief enjoyment was to watch and encourage the hounds on a running trail, and the most faithful dog was always his pet and favorite. Among his favorites was a bitch named Cad. She was white with spots and one of the hardest workers known in this country. Many times Mr. Richards has been heard to say, when the hounds were in full cry behind a fox, "Now, we have had a fine chase and I wish the fox would get away." On his seventy-second birthday, Mr. Richards rode, for a greater part of the day, horse back on a fox hunt. After a fine chase and the catching of the fox, he said to his son, Norman, who was with him on this occasion, "Well, this

is something to tell my grandchildren. I rode horse back and caught a fox on my seventy-second birthday."

After Mr. Richards had moved to Blenheim and became pastor of the Blenheim and Reedy Creek Churches, he frequently visited his old home at Liberty Hill. The last two fox hunts he ever enjoyed were most remarkable. They were on different occasions and visits, and he was more than eighty years of age. His boys arranged a fox hunt for him. Some of the hunters were on horse back, but one of his sons took him in a buggy. On both occasions the hunts were on Beaver Creek, about four miles south of Liberty Hill. The hounds jumped a fox, and he ran off about three miles straight. It appeared that Mr. Richards would miss the chase, but the fox turned and came straight back, and for about an hour a most exciting chase was enjoyed. Mr. Richards sat in his buggy and heard the entire chase. He saw the fox several times as he ran by his buggy, and he was near when the fox was caught. The same thing occurred, as has been said, on his last two hunts, or at least he was not known to go on another fox hunt at Liberty Hill.

CHAPTER XI.

Mr. Richards weighed around one hundred pounds the greater part of his active life. His remarkable health, in the writer's opinion, is to be attributed to his out-door life, his great self control, and his abstemious habits. He both chewed and smoked tobacco, but he was one of the very few men who could stop both when he thought it best to do so. He would indulge himself again when he decided that it would not be injurious. He suffered two very severe spells of dysentery and came very near dying. His stomach was his weak point. The greater part of his life, for breakfast he would take a soft boiled egg, a biscuit, or toast, half a cup of coffee, about a half tablespoon of hominy, and a small piece of crisp bacon. His other meals, although of different diet were about in like proportion. Many a time he was heard to say, when urged to eat by his devoted wife, "I eat to live. I do not live to eat." Another peculiarity he drank very little water, about as much in a day as the ordinary person did at one time.

He was always deliberate and methodical, and no matter how pressing his other duties, he rarely ever failed to assemble his family for both morning and evening prayers. These occasions were the sweetest and most impressive, and the effect the most lasting of all the family associations. Another custom around which clusters sweet memories was the gathering together of the family on Sunday evenings and the singing of hymns around the piano or on the front porch, if the weather was suitable. The Reverend Mr. Richards had a true and clear leading voice, and our mother a deep and very sweet alto. All the children and adopted children had good voices. Among the boys and girls there were soprano, alto, tenor and bass voices, and father, mother and children together made a choir of exceptional variety, volume, and sweetness. There was never a more devoted family.

Mr. and Mrs. Richards was strict disciplinarians. They required respectful obedience from their children at all times and when necessary they did not spare the rod. Mr. Richards controlled most usually with a look and a shake of his finger, and

the explanation, "Tut, tut." But sometimes he had to resort to thrashing the offending child with a newspaper. The writer is 69 years of age and each day he grows older he is more grateful for the loving, but strict discipline exercised by his father and mother over him and is sure that this is the feeling of all their children as to their personal lives.

Allow digression here, to say that the lost art of parental control in this day and time is the one thing more than any other that is casting its baneful influence upon the church, state, and nation. There is no substitute for the proper corrective influences of the home.

Mr. Richards was always sociable and loved company, and his home was dominated by the very soul of hospitality, and was rarely ever without visiting friends or relatives. He loved to visit his friends and was always interested in matters that vitally concerned them. His closest friends of Liberty Hill were Dr. T. F. McDow, Mr. William Dixon, and Colonel L. J. Patterson. He usually spent an evening each week, Wednesday, after Prayer Meeting, in the home of Colonel and Mrs. Patterson. In the business world, the merchants with whom he did most business were George W. Williams and Company (afterwards the firm of Robertson, Taylor & Williams); Johnson, Crews & Company; Pelzer, Rogers & Company, of Charleston, S. C., and C. Noelken, an old German, of Camden, S. C. Robertson, Taylor & Williams paid him the deserved compliment of saying that they knew of no one who had accomplished more, or who could have taken over the business at Liberty Hill, paid its debts and made a success. Mr. Richards was exceptionally successful throughout his business career and accumulated both money and valuable property. It is true that the latter part of the time he lost considerable money. This was due to circumstances over which he had no control. The decline of his business was also due to the fact that he gave less of his personal attention to it as his family grew to maturity and as they, one by one, became self-sustaining. He gradually drew entirely out of business and devoted his time to the work of the Gospel Ministry. But not until all of his business obligations had been satisfactorily settled and he had divided all of his property equally among his children.

There is a matter of great significance that should be recorded right here—and it shows the great wisdom of Mr. Richards, as all along through his life wisdom directed his course. No man of whom the writer has any knowledge, ever lead a more unselfish life. He lived for his family and his fellow man, and asked for but little for himself, except the happiness he enjoyed in making others happy and contented. He wanted his children to have and enjoy his property before he passed away. He stated that he felt that any of his children would be glad to have him in their homes and to provide for him in his old age if it became necessary, but that he did not want to be dependent. So, in dividing his property, he took the notes of those to whom he gave the property for its value and charged 8% legal annual interest. If he had become otherwise dependent, this interest would have made him independent. However, he never collected one cent of interest and finally destroyed the notes, and at his passing, at 86 years of age, his undivided estate was worth in actual cash several thousand dollars.

CHAPTER XII.

Reverend John Gardiner Richards spent a greater period of years in the active Gospel Ministry than is allotted to most men to live. He began his work as a preacher, as has already been stated in the Circular, now Westminster Church, at Charleston, S. C. In Charleston, he was assistant to Dr. Danner. He served as regular pastor, first at Ebenezer, York County, second at Liberty Hill, Kershaw County, and third and last at Blenheim and Reedy Creek Churches in Marlboro and Marion Counties. He spent 62 years as a preacher of the Gospel of Christ. He spent five of these years as Evangelist for Harmony Presbytery, having received the unanimous support of the Presbytery for this most important position. While Evangelist, he was instrumental in organizing ten new churches, and all of them, as the writer understands, are today active and prosperous organizations. Mr. Richards, while Evangelist, was chiefly instrumental in organizing Pee Dee Presbytery, one of the active Presbyteries today of the South Carolina Synod. Pee Dee was formed from a part of Harmony Presbytery, and the greater part of the new churches organized by Mr. Richards. As a member of the courts of the church, he always took a prominent part, and his judgment sought and his advice generally accepted. He was a fine parliamentarian, well versed in church polity, and as a debater, strong, clear, and convincing. He served as moderator of Presbytery, Moderator of the Synod of South Carolina and was four times a member of the General Assembly of the Southern Church. He was a member of the General Assembly held at Rochester, New York. This was the last Assembly before the division caused by the war and the causes which lead to the war. He also held an important position as Director of the Columbia Theological Seminary for about twenty years. He preached at Liberty Hill and Bethel Churches for nearly thirty years. He had many calls to other and larger churches during this pastorate. He was called to the church at Florence, S. C. twice. He received a call to Greenwood, Mississippi. He was called to Bryan, Georgia, and to the Second Church of

Augusta, Georgia. It is certain he received many others besides these that he refused to accept, feeling that it was his duty to remain in the field where he was then laboring. He had preached at Liberty Hill when the congregation was wealthy, he had remained with these people through the struggles incident to the war, and the reconstruction period, and their interests both spiritual and material were dear to his very heart. And there were other reasons. He has been heard to say in discussing this matter that he felt that his failure to accept larger fields may have been a personal sacrifice to himself, but that he could discharge his duty as pastor and preach in the Liberty Hill and Bethel field and at the same time protect his large family of boys from the temptations to which they would be subjected in a larger town or city. Knowing some of his sons as of course the writer knows them, and one in particular, he could not have made a wiser choice.

Mr. Richards was as gentle as a woman. At the same time, he was absolutely fearless. He was a man who did not know what moral or physical fear meant as applied to himself. He had a fiery temper and was quick to resent an injustice or an affront, but it was soon over and he assumed his usual quiet, gentle manner. He reached his conclusions upon all matters of importance after careful and prayerful consideration, and then acted without fear of results, or of what others thought. He often said to his children, "Be sure you are right, and then go ahead." His course through life was remarkably free from the influence of other men or of what others thought. Sometimes his actions created resentment and soreness, but these were temporary, for very soon he was found to be right, and his course approved. His life was freer from mistakes in so far as the writer is capable to judge than any man with whose life he is familiar. A striking example of his fearless discharge of duty, is one which took place soon after the close of the war, and the freedom of the slaves. He reached a conclusion that he should preach to the negroes, tell them that they were free, and impress upon them their new responsibilities, and their duty as citizens. A Mr. Ballard, who lived about three miles from Liberty Hill, heard of Mr. Richards intentions and became very much incensed. He had

been a large slave owner, and it is not recalled whether or not he was a member of Mr. Richards' church. Mr. Ballard sent word to Mr. Richards that if he dared to preach to the negroes upon the subject of their freedom, he would take him out of the pulpit. Of course this created quite a sensation in the community. Mr. Richards felt that his duty was clear and he was determined upon his course. There was an officer in the church who fearlessly endorsed his position, and this was Mr. William Dixon, an elder and a man. The appointed Sunday arrived, and there was a large congregation of both white people and negroes. Mr. Ballard and his henchmen were on hand. Mr. Richards entered the pulpit, took his text, and preached the sermon to the ex-slaves that he intended to preach. Mr. Ballard did not attempt to interfere, and after the service, was heard to say, "Well, I don't suppose that sermon will do any harm." Mr. Richards weighed about a hundred pounds, and Mr. Ballard was a large man, but if he had attempted violence, or undertaken to drive Mr. Richards from the pulpit, he would soon have found that he had stirred a veritable nest of yellow jackets.

Mr. Richards was a preacher of the old school. He prepared his sermons thoroughly, and wrote them out fully. He read his sermons, as most preachers of that day did. While he read closely at the beginning of his sermons, as he warmed to his subject, he discarded his manuscript to a great degree. While his voice was not resonant, it was clear and penetrating, and he gripped and held his audience throughout his discourse. His was an eloquence that few men possessed. He had the happy and unusual power of appealing to the mind and heart at the same time. He convinced the reason while at the same time, appealed to the heart, the very soul of a man. There were few indeed who sat regularly and listened to his sermons who did not with the Holy Spirit's blessings upon his sermons confess their sins and turn to their Saviour, his Saviour for salvation. His sermons were usually about twenty-five minutes in length and he once said that there were few men who could not say in thirty minutes all that they had to say, and that usually they began to repeat after thirty minutes. In this he was right as he was practically always right. Mr. Richards

preached the simple and pure Gospel and rarely resorted to imagery. He preached Christ, and Him crucified. He preached Heaven as the Home of the redeemed, and Hell as the reward of the wicked, the unredeemed. He fought sin in its every form, and was uncompromising with unrighteousness, whether practiced by professing Christians or out in the world. He was very diffident, but you could not detect it when he was speaking or preaching. He said, in his late life, that he had never arisen to speak that he did not feel a little nervous. This was one of the sources of his strength, and his gripping and appealing eloquence, for the most fervent eloquence is usually by speakers who are conscious of this feeling of timidity, especially when they begin to speak. Mr. Richards, doubtless, selected his text and thought it out during the week, but he almost always wrote his sermons on Saturday nights. Mr. William Dixon used to say Mr. Richards usually preached his best sermons on the Sunday after he had had a fox chase the Saturday before. Miss Alice Wardlaw, the adopted daughter of Colonel L. J. Patterson, and her sister, Mrs. A. W. Smith, although they travelled a great deal and were given the opportunity of hearing many distinguished preachers, said they were always glad to return to Liberty Hill so that they could enjoy Mr. Richards' preaching. The writer does not think he has ever heard Mr. Richards preach a sermon that the tears did not come unhidden in the eyes of some of his listeners. He has heard many competent judges say they had never heard him preach a poor sermon, and some of these had listened for more than thirty years.

Some of Mr. Richards' more intimate friends in his congregation at Liberty Hill have already been mentioned. But among his special friends at Beaver Creek and Bethel were the Brewers, the Dyes, the Urserys and the Stovers.

After retiring from the pastorate of the Liberty Hill Church, and his years of service as Evangelist, Mr. Richards moved with his wife and unmarried children to Blenheim, S. C., where he preached the remaining years of his active ministry. Two years after this his devoted wife, Mrs. Sophie Edwards Richards, died while on a visit to her children in the old home at Liberty Hill. Three years later, Mr. Richards married Miss

Sarah Matheson of Blenheim, who made him a faithful wife and added much to his comfort in his declining years. She died some years later, and was buried at her old home in Blenheim.

After filling the pastorate at Blenheim and Reedy Creek and preaching occasionally at Dunbar for a period of years, Mr. Richards decided to retire from the active ministry at the age of 83 years. These churches, where he had so greatly endeared himself, reluctantly consented to the severance of the relationship, but not until they had expressed their love and appreciation and had presented him with a gold headed walking cane and a handsome gold watch, beautifully engraved with expressions of love and esteem.

For the remaining three years of his life, Mr. Richards made his home with his daughter, Jennie Lisle Hunter, at Blenheim, S. C. But he spent a part of his time visiting his other children and grandchildren and blessing their homes with his presence. Mr. Richards continued to preach whenever the opportunity presented itself. While frail of body of course, his mind was as clear and as strong as ever, and his preaching, if possible, was even more soul stirring than in his younger days. It is one of the frailties and characteristics of old age that one becomes to live in the past, and dwell upon the happenings of long ago. But this was not true of the Reverend Mr. Richards. While he of course referred to the past, the things that most interested him were those of the present and the future, and he never lost his love for young people, and the things that interested them.

In his later years, he referred to his long life and its vicissitudes, to its triumphs and its failures, to his devoted wife and the comfort that his children had been to him, to the love and mercy shown him by the God in whom he had trusted and tried to serve. But he said, "When I look back over it all, I do not believe I would be willing to undertake it again, if the opportunity were afforded me." When we think of this statement, the inevitable conclusion is that Mr. Richards felt that life, with all of its happiness is a most solemn responsibility. He often said, in fact, he has used the expression in the pulpit, "It is far more solemn to live than it is to die."

Mr. Richards' motto for his family, as written in his autobiography, is, "Each for all, and all for God." He wished with all his heart and soul for his family to love each other and to cooperate for one another's welfare, but above all things that they love and serve God.

In the spring of 1914, in the 87th year of his age, the Reverend John Gardiner Richards was stricken with fever. After about three weeks of patient suffering, the great spirit that had blessed so many here on earth went to its God. His remains were brought here and buried by the side of his devoted wife, Sophie Edwards Richards, the mother of his children, there to quietly rest until God, in his own good time, shall resurrect and reunite them before his throne in Heaven.

All along through the life of the Reverend John Gardiner Richards there runs the golden thread of a peerless manhood, the reflected brilliance of which lights the pathway, and directs the footsteps of those who also would become great.