

## Susan Nelson

### Interview with Susan Nelson

9 Trapman Street, Charleston, S.C.

Mrs. Arthur Lynah

Ashley Avenue, Charleston, S.C.

—*Martha S. Pinckney, Charleston, S.C.*

### "FOREST", A FAITHFUL SERVANT

Susan Nelson, 9 Trapman street, about eighty years old, daughter of Paris ("Forest") and Christina Gibbs, is a fine type of trained house servant. Tall, slim, and erect, she carries herself with dignity, and curtsies with grace. Her color is dark brown, her features aquiline. She seldom smiles.

"I am the youngest of my family and they are all dead. I never had a child. I was married in the Methodist Church, but my husband married again. From the first I can remember, I lived in Charleston with my mother and father. He had his freedom before the war and worked on the Bay. When he came home from his days work he had a cot by the door where he would lay down to rest, and all the time he used to tell me about 'those happy days', as he said. Ask Mrs. Arthur Lynah about my father; she knows about him."

Susan goes on with her story:—

"My father belonged to Judge Prioleau and was trained to wait on the table from the time he was a boy; and this is how he nearly got a whippin'—his master liked 'Hoppin John' and there was some cold on the table—you know 'Hoppin John'? His master told him to 'heat it'; he thought his master said 'eat it', so he took it out and sat down and eat it. When he went back his master asked him where was the 'Hoppin John'? Paris say he eat it. His master was mad—after waitin' all that time—and say he should have a whippin'. But Mistress say 'Oh, no, he is young and didn't understand'; so he never got the whippin'.

"Later he was taken from waitin' on table to be his master's body-servant and that was when his name was changed. One of the young ladies, his master's daughter, was named Alice, and when he called 'Paris', it sounded like 'Alice', so his master named him 'Forest' and he kept the name from that time, for his first and his last name, and he always went by the name of Forest until he died."

He went abroad with Judge Pricleau as his body-servant, and traveled in Europe. (Authority—Mrs. Arthur Lynah)

"In later years, when his master was paralyzed, Forest was his attendant; and when his master died, Forest watched by him all night. He lay down under the couch—they used to lay them on couches then—and he slept there and wouldn't leave him, and stayed there all night; and his mistress came in the early morning and kissed his master, and she said 'you here, Forest' and he answered, 'yes, mistress.' After that, everything was changed. His mistress wanted to give him his freedom, but the rest of the family didn't agree to that, so he went to Savannah with 'Mas Charles'. But though he was treated well he was so homesick that he couldn't stay. He thought of his mistress and of the old home, and of his mother, and he ran away and came back to the Plantation. Mas Charles was so mad when he came after him that he was ready to whip him; but when he saw how happy they were he agreed to give Forest his freedom."

Before the War Between the States Forest was married, living in Charleston, and working on the Bay. Susan remembers her terror when the shells of the Federal bombardment were bursting over the city, and recalls holding out her arms for someone to hold her. Her father had returned home one afternoon and was resting from a hard days work, when a shell crashed through the walls of their little home on Tradd street, and passed immediately over him as he lay on his cot. The neighbors came rushing in thinking that everybody had been killed, but the shell had passed through, shattering the house but leaving Forest unharmed. He lived to the age of ninety-seven, valued and respected; his daughter carries on his good reputation, and is known by the name of SUSAN "FOREST."