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THE CONDITION OF AFFAIRS IN THE LATE INSURRECTIONARY STATES SOUTH
CAROLINA

Volume I

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Reuben Bryant sworn and examined by the chairman.

QUESTION: In what part of this county do you live?

ANSWER: On the lower side.

QUESTION: In what township?

ANSWER: Pacolet Depot Township.

QUESTION: What do you follow there?

ANSWER: Farming.

QUESTION: How long have you lived in this county?

ANSWER: Ever since I was born.

QUESTION: How old are you?

ANSWER: I shall be 67 years old on the 16th of October, if I live to see it; so my parents say; 67 or 68.

QUESTION: Have the Ku Klux been at your house at any time?

ANSWER: Yes sir; they call themselves Ku Klux.

QUESTION: Proceed and state to the committee all that occurred at that time and when it was.

ANSWER: It was the last of last May. It was the same night they were at General Bates and was somewhere about the last of May -- I cannot tell the exact day of the month. I didn't expect to be called, and I didn't memorize it.

QUESTION: Go on and tell what they did and said.

ANSWER: They came sometime after midnight. When I found them out they had the house surrounded, and they hallooed and told me they wanted some guns, and if I would get up and give the guns to them they wouldn't hurt me; and if I did not they intended to have them. I told them if they promised not to hurt me I would get up and give them the guns. I knew that if they intended to have them they would have them.

QUESTION: What guns had you there?

ANSWER: It was a couple of United States guns that my son had brought there for me and my tenant. I had them wrapped up securely. They have to be wrapped up securely. I never shot them at all. One was upstairs and the other downstairs, to be there if I wanted to use it at any time. I gave them the first one, the one I really claim. I didn't consider it his, but it was in my care. I told them I claimed no other. They told me I was a God damned liar. That there was another gun there, and they intended to have both. They didn't come into the house. I had given them one, and the other I had, and blundered up for the other; they wouldn't let me get a light.

QUESTION: Was that all that occurred with them at that time?

ANSWER: They didn't hurt me at that time. They talked, some of them, very imprudent.

QUESTION: What did they say?

ANSWER: They cursed me when I opened the door; the one I call the captain and another man was standing on one side and the other the other, and he seemed to be very boisterous and called me a God damn old hypocrite and a traitor and a turncoat; the captain -- I called him that -- took notice; none of the rest did. He appeared to be a moderator; he tried to keep order; he said he had always heard I was a gentleman. He had always understood I was a gentleman and I should not be hurt.

QUESTION: Was this all that occurred?

ANSWER: Do you want all the talk that I can recollect that they said?

QUESTION: Tell us all they said and did, without special questions.

ANSWER: They told me I must go and have my name registered in The Spartan; that I was a Democrat; I had always been a Democrat; and when my son came out as a Republican candidate, of course I voted for him. I voted the Republican ticket that time only, and it was an easy matter to do that, because I had always been a Democrat; that had been my principles; they said they intended to kill my son just as certain as he was then living or anything could be, if he did not go immediately and announce his principles and have it published in the paper; they said nothing was any surer than that they were certain to kill him.

QUESTION: What son?

ANSWER: The only son I had then. Dr. Javan Bryant.

QUESTION: Had he been a candidate for the legislature?

ANSWER: Yes sir.

QUESTION: In pursuance of that did you publish a notice in the paper?

ANSWER: I sent up a little notice: "This is to certify I have always been a friend of my country and a Democrat in principle, although I did at the last election vote a Republican ticket."

QUESTION: Would you have done that if it had not been for this visit and demand?

ANSWER: By no means; and when I came to this place I was advised by one of the prominent lawyers not to do it; that they all knew my principles and did not blame me a bit for voting for my son.

QUESTION: What motive led you to make this publication?

ANSWER: They said they would visit me again and play hob with me if I did not.

QUESTION: Was it the apprehension of that?

ANSWER: Yes sir; I didn't want to be killed; it was very easy for them to do it, and I would not have belied my conscience hardly to have saved my life.

QUESTION: How many of these men were there?

ANSWER: I could not tell you, if was to guess; they were all around the house besides those before the door.

QUESTION: How were they dressed?

ANSWER: It was in the night; they seemed to be one color and another; the one I called captain was spotted all over. The one who stood by was the one who talked so impudently.

QUESTION: Did you recognize any of them?

ANSWER: I couldn't swear positively to any of them. I could tell you who I believed this one was who talked so mean and impudent. Would that do any good?

QUESTION: Tell us why you believe so.

ANSWER: You see they all talked somewhat Irish. The captain made very good Irish in his speech. The others would disguise their speech this way and that way; they were not so well trained in it. They asked me where I got the guns, and how. I told them, and this one spoke and says, "what is the reason he didn't give them to me." And then he spoke in his own language that word.

QUESTION: Did you recognize him from that?

ANSWER: I can tell you who I believe he was; but will I not be in danger? I have not told anybody yet.

QUESTION: That is for you to judge.

ANSWER: They might come and devour me. (pausing). I don't want to pull down a sword upon my own head. They have got the one I believe was there already indicted for Ku Kluxing at another place, bound over to court. That is one I believe it was. It is for his conduct at another place the same night.

QUESTION: I think you had better give us the name.

ANSWER: But you'll publish it, won't you?

QUESTION: It will be in the testimony when it is published.

ANSWER: I cannot swear positively to him, understand that. I tell you he spoke in his own language one word, and his behavior and his general talk comported with the man I believe it was and his size and all.

QUESTION: Is that the only one you recognized?

ANSWER: Yes sir. I suppose I am sworn to tell my opinion.

QUESTION: You are sworn to tell the whole truth about it.

ANSWER: I believe it was John Vandiver. He is indicted for going into General Bates house the same night. They recognized him, and he is now bound over for it.

QUESTION: Was this the same night that the visit was made to General Bates house?

ANSWER: Yes sir so I understand. I was not at General Bates.

QUESTION: Was this the only visit they ever made to your house?

ANSWER: The only visit they ever made that I know of; that I am sure of; but I believe they were there another night, a portion of them; but I didn't see them.

QUESTION: Were you at home the second night?

ANSWER: No sir.

QUESTION: Where were you?

ANSWER: I was lying out in the woods, if you want to hear the truth, trying to save my life, and my wife too. I had no other family.

QUESTION: What took you to the woods?

ANSWER: I was afraid they would come and devour me.

QUESTION: Had there been any threat made?

ANSWER: They threatened that night that they would give me four days to do it, and some prominent friends advised me not to. They said my politics were so well known, and I didn't have my name put in that paper, and the four days had expired, and I was afraid. If they had asked I would have give them everything I had in the house.

QUESTION: You say your wife lay out?

ANSWER: Yes sir.

QUESTION: How old is she?

ANSWER: 26.

QUESTION: A young wife? (note: Joanna Harvey)

Answer: Yes sir; and as right and fine a woman as any, I reckon. She has brought me a fine son (note: Edward Green Bryant) since that time, just a few nights after that. She was in a bad fix to see that awful looking gang there that night.

QUESTION: Are there other people in your neighborhood who have been lying in the woods?

ANSWER: The neighborhood, sir, is generally under the dread and fear, if you can believe what they say. I believe what I have heard them say of the Ku Klux. You see I live on the road, and they pass there frequently, right along my house.

QUESTION: Have you seen the Ku Klux pass?

ANSWER: I have seen men pass I believed were them.

QUESTION: But when they were in disguise, riding as such?

ANSWER: No sir. I didn't see them in disguise.

QUESTION: Who did you refer to as passing along the road?

ANSWER: Those that they said were Ku Klux.

QUESTION: Have there been many instances of people lying out in the woods?

ANSWER: I have heard of many, very many, instances. They said General Bates laid out for weeks previous to this, afraid to be in his own house. But this is only what I have heard. I have told you all that I know myself.

QUESTION: Have people told you they laid in the woods for this reason?

ANSWER: I have heard it rumored all around. I have an old neighbor between 80 and 90 years old, as he says -- he lives almost in sight of me -- as harmless a man as there is in the state, a hard working old man. His children have all left him to work for his living in his old age. These men went there and threatened to shoot the poor old man, and abused him tremendously.

QUESTION: Who was that man?

ANSWER: Joseph Harvey. His daughter wanted to know what they wanted. She said they had done no harm. One of them said, "It is that damn old father of yours we are after." She turned and hallooed and screamed, and the old man raised up in bed; but she kept between them and him, and begged so powerfully, though they cursed a great deal, they didn't hurt her. This I had from them.

(Those tracing any of the surnames included in this testimony, please contact:
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