

# THE END OF AN ERA

BY

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## PREFACE

THIS book needs this much of an apology. It is to a great extent the autobiography of an insignificant person. If it were that alone, it would have no excuse for publication, and would possess little interest for those outside the immediate home circle. But it is not an autobiography alone. It introduces views of Southern life and feelings and civilization, prior to and during the war, which possess an unflagging interest for the American people; and it tells the true story of several striking events which preceded our civil strife, and many episodes of the great war. Besides these, it gives accurate descriptions not heretofore published of the appearance and actions and sayings of many distinguished participants on the Confederate side.

When I first concluded to print the book, I made an honest effort to construct it in the third person. It was a lamentable failure, and made it appear even more egotistical than in its present form. Having returned to the narrative in the first person singular, I found myself a participant in several scenes in which I was not actually present. How to eliminate these, and at the same time preserve the continuity of the narrative, was a serious problem. I solved it at last by the consent of my only living brother that he would stand for me in several epi-

sodes, having told me all I know.<sup>1</sup> I will not mar the narrative by pointing out the places in which my brother is myself. This confession redeems the book from being classed either as an autobiography or a romance; and whenever anybody shall say to me, "Why, you were not there?" I will answer, like the Israelite gentleman, "Yes, I know. Dot vas mine brudder." The reader gets the facts as they were, and that is all he ought to expect.

I dedicate it to my old Confederate comrades, the bravest, simplest, most unselfish, and affectionate friends I ever had.

J. S. W.

NEW YORK, September 10, 1899.

<sup>1</sup> Hon. Richard A. Wise, Williamsburg, Va.

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