CHAPTER XV

REVIVAL OF BUSINESS
(1865-1875)

Let us go back to the end of the war and follow the progress of the old residents of Jacksonville in the revival of their pursuits of life amidst the distracting influences of the "Reconstruction", of which the preceding chapter is only an outline and a brief one at that.

Upon the formal surrender of the Florida troops on May 20, 1865, the different organizations of Confederates disbanded and those that had enlisted from Jacksonville and their families began to return. The railroad from Baldwin to Jacksonville had been torn up and from that point many of them had to walk, ladies and children as well as men. To these returning citizens Jacksonville presented a heartrending sight, as the desolating effects of war and decay were apparent on every side. The streets were littered with the trunks of trees that had been felled as a barricade against the Confederate cavalry which now and then came in close to the town. Ruins of buildings burned; broken-down fences and neglected yards; dilapidated appearance of once neatly painted dwellings—all were depressing to those who sought their former homes. And worst of all, the best and largest dwellings that had escaped the Federal burning in 1863, were occupied by United States officers and troops, in some instances by negro troops, and when the owners applied for possession, many of them learned that their property had been confiscated and sold, the purchasers in some cases being their former neighbors and false friends. Few of the ex-Confederates could provide for the immediate redemption of their property; with the most of them it was a question of keeping body and soul together, and they set to work building cheap shelters for themselves and their families. There was but one sawmill in operation in this vicinity and lumber was sold at an exorbitant price; there was only one store in the town besides the sutlers' stores. The former stores and warehouses on Bay Street were occupied for Federal army purposes as supply depots and some of them as barracks for the troops.9