



# THE LAST LAIRD OF SAPELO

by [T.M. Brown](#)

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A Civil War novel traces a wealthy plantation owner's fight to protect his family's lands as the North extends its blockade to Georgia's outer islands and ports.

In May 1861, Randolph Spalding figures that it is just a matter of time before the Union blockade of Southern ports hits his cotton business. Union troops would likely occupy his beloved Sapelo Island in Georgia and confiscate his cotton to feed the "Insatiable English and Northern textile mills" that "craved all the cotton

the South could produce." Randolph, like his father, Thomas, before him, seeks to dissuade the Georgia legislature from joining the other Southern states in the Secession. But his pleading is ignored. A shortage of "competent military officers" causes Georgia Gov. Joseph E. Brown to appoint "prominent men to lead their local militias." Randolph is commissioned as a colonel and ordered to report to Brig. Gen. Alexander Lawton, the commander of Georgia's coastal defenses based in Savannah, because his knowledge of the waterways in and around Sapelo Island is considered invaluable. Brown's narrative centers on the real-life Spalding family, powerful plantation owners in Georgia during the Civil War era, and lays bare the complex questions surrounding slavery, issues that still reverberate in today's political discourse. His focus on the home-front experiences rather than the actions on the battlefields captures the conviction of the plantation class that the war was about states' rights, not slavery. Upon hearing the song "The Bonnie Blue Flag...Hurrah! Hurrah! for Southern Rights," Randolph proclaims: "We just want to preserve our god given rights" to self-determination. Brown is an able wordsmith. His precise descriptions of period dress and culture as well as his use of racial slurs in the dialogue are evocative of the time and place. While light on tension, the novel skillfully underscores the economic importance of cotton to both the North and South. When Lawton suggests that the North has enough troops to just disrupt the South's ports, Randolph argues that President Abraham Lincoln needs cotton for the North's mills and will go on the offensive to secure it.

A well-researched Civil War drama, highly informative about cotton's importance to both sides.