Introduction

WOMEN AND THE WAR

Since the late 1980s, the scholarly literature on women and the Civil War has grown significantly, deepening our understanding of the diversity of women’s wartime contributions as well as their suffering, triumphs, frustrations, and perseverance, the violence some were forced to endure, and the implications of the war for their social and political advancement. At the heart of all this illuminating scholarly work lie the primary sources: writing about women’s lived experience during the long, bloody war. The selections in this reader offer more than a dozen differing perspectives on the ways in which women confronted the unfolding war and how it changed their lives, in many cases forever.

In May 1861 Virginia’s Judith W. McGuire expressed the prevailing sentiment among women, North and South, in those early days of the conflict: “All ages, all conditions, meet now on one common platform. . . . [W]hile men are making a free-will offering of their life’s blood on the altar of their country, women must not be idle” (pages 7–8 in this reader). And so, women across America eagerly committed time and energy to providing for “their” soldiers in the field: uniforms and bedding, medicines and Bibles, food, stationery, and more. Women’s means for gathering these supplies were often innovative, including massive fundraising events like the February 1864 “Great Fair” in Washington, D.C., “got up by the ladies for the benefit of the Christian Commission” (page 52), and described here by journalist, schoolteacher, poet, government clerk, and wartime relief volunteer, Lois Bryan Adams.

American women also applied their well-honed skills as guardians of their families’ health to bringing comfort to the sick and wounded soldiers, sometimes traveling far from home for the purpose. In a selection from her wonderful memoir, Hospital Sketches, Louisa May Alcott reflects on the tasks that women hospital workers both North and South undertook:
“washing faces, serving rations, giving medicine, and sitting in a very hard chair, with pneumonia on one side, diptheria on the other, five typhoids on the opposite, and a dozen dilapidated patriots, hopping, lying, and lounging about, all staring more or less at the new ‘nuss’” (page 20). For her part, African American schoolteacher Charlotte Forten of Philadelphia noted with admiration the patient endurance shown by the wounded soldiers she helped care for: “It was pleasant,” Forten informed her diary in mid-1863, “to see the brave, cheerful, uncomplaining spirit which they all breathed” (page 49). Women nurses engaged in work that bore some resemblance to their traditional gender roles; other women yearned to abandon tradition altogether. “O if I was only a man!” wrote Louisiana’s Sarah Morgan (page 44), suggesting that she would enlist as a soldier if she could, and a few women disguised themselves to do just that.

On both sides of the conflict, wartime women remained sharply alert to the war’s progress. “[We] are beat & badly,” wrote Elizabeth Blair Lee to her husband, Samuel, after the Union rout at the first Battle of Bull Run in July 1861 (page 11). “Affairs look dark for our Confederacy just now,” lamented Kate Stone of Louisiana in April 1863 (page 36), taking particular note of how the Union’s mounting successes combined with the Emancipation Proclamation had undermined the slaves’ obedience, especially among those whom the federal government had enrolled in its army (pages 37–39). Thousands of escaped slaves assumed the uncertain status of “contraband of war,” to whom women brought education and relief. “The misery I have witnessed must be seen to be believed” (page 31), wrote Harriet Jacobs to a woman friend about her labors among the contrabands. A former slave herself, Jacobs remained optimistic: “It would do your heart good,” she wrote, “to talk with some of these people. They are quick, intelligent, and full of the spirit of freedom” (page 32).

For many women in the South, white and black, the war’s most noteworthy feature was its daily challenge to their capacity to survive. In her memoir, Sallie Brock recalled that as early as the fall of 1861, thanks to the Union occupation of parts of Virginia, the Confederate capital had become a “city of refuge” into which “the homeless and destitute” crowded seeking

“safety and support” (page 12). In June 1863, Oliver Norton of Pennsylvania wrote to his sister, Elizabeth, that one poor Southern woman he met had lost all interest in the issues that had led to war in the first place; at this point, he commented, she “cared but little how the war ended, so it ended soon” (page 47).

Other southern women, however, displayed diehard determination to see the Confederacy through to victory, especially when perceived Yankee insults augmented the pain of defeat on the battlefield. “What else than contempt and abhorrence can the women of New Orleans feel or exhibit for these officers and soldiers of the United States?” asked Louisiana’s governor, Thomas O. Moore, in May 1862 after Benjamin F. Butler, commanding the Union occupation of New Orleans, issued his sweeping and unprecedented “Woman Order” in an attempt to restrain pro-Confederate women’s relentless abuse of his soldiers (page 17). “Give up to them?” wrote Louisiana’s Sarah Morgan, “Rather than submit, I would that, all gathered together, we should light our own funeral pyre, and old men, brave soldiers, fair women and tender children should all perish hand in hand in the bright flames” (pages 43–44).

No single volume can embrace the full range of northern and southern women’s Civil War experiences or of their generous labor on behalf of the causes they held dear, but the pages that follow offer a rich introduction.

Elizabeth D. Leonard

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Judith W. McGuire lived in Alexandria, Virginia, where her husband, John P. McGuire, was rector of the Episcopal High School of Virginia. When Union troops occupied Alexandria on May 24, 1861, the McGuires would flee their home on the school campus and spend the next four years as refugees; the school was turned into a Union army hospital.

May 10.—Since writing last, I have been busy, very busy, arranging and rearranging. We are now hoping that Alexandria will not be a landing-place for the enemy, but that the forts will be attacked. In that case, they would certainly be repulsed, and we could stay quietly at home. To view the progress of events from any point will be sad enough, but it would be more bearable at our own home, and surrounded by our family and friends. With the supposition that we may remain, and that the ladies of the family at least may return to us, I am having the grounds put in order, and they are now so beautiful! Lilacs, crocuses, the lily of the valley, and other spring flowers, are in luxuriant bloom, and the roses in full bud. The greenhouse plants have been removed and grouped on the lawn, verbenas in bright bloom have been transplanted from the pit to the borders, and the grass seems unusually green after the late rains; the trees are in full leaf; every thing is so fresh and lovely. “All, save the spirit of man, is divine.”

War seems inevitable, and while I am trying to employ the passing hour, a cloud still hangs over us and all that surrounds us. For a long time before our society was so completely broken up, the ladies of Alexandria and all the surrounding country were busily employed sewing for our soldiers. Shirts, pants, jackets, and beds, of the heaviest material, have been made by the most delicate fingers. All ages, all conditions, meet now
on one common platform. We must all work for our country. Our soldiers must be equipped. Our parlor was the rendezvous for our neighborhood, and our sewing-machine was in requisition for weeks. Scissors and needles were plied by all. The daily scene was most animated. The fires of our enthusiasm and patriotism were burning all the while to a degree which might have been consuming, but that our tongues served as safety-valves. Oh, how we worked and talked, and excited each other! One common sentiment animated us all; no doubts, no fears were felt. We all have such entire reliance in the justice of our cause and the valor of our men, and, above all, on the blessing of Heaven! These meetings have necessarily ceased with us, as so few of any age or degree remain at home; but in Alexandria they are still kept up with great interest. We who are left here are trying to give the soldiers who are quartered in town comfort, by carrying them milk, butter, pies, cakes, etc. I went in yesterday to the barracks, with the carriage well filled with such things, and found many young friends quartered there. All are taking up arms; the first young men in the country are the most zealous. Alexandria is doing her duty nobly; so is Fairfax; and so, I hope, is the whole South. We are very weak in resources, but strong in stout hearts, zeal for the cause, and enthusiastic devotion to our beloved South; and while men are making a free-will offering of their life’s blood on the altar of their country, women must not be idle. We must do what we can for the comfort of our brave men. We must sew for them, knit for them, nurse the sick, keep up the faint-hearted, give them a word of encouragement in season and out of season. There is much for us to do, and we must do it. The embattled hosts of the North will have the whole world from which to draw their supplies; but if, as it seems but too probable, our ports are blockaded, we shall indeed be dependent on our own exertions, and great must those exertions be.

The Confederate flag waves from several points in Alexandria: from the Marshall House, the Market-house, and the several barracks. The peaceful, quiet old town looks quite warlike. I feel sometimes, when walking on King’s street, meeting men in uniform, passing companies of cavalry, hearing martial music, etc., that I must be in a dream. Oh that it were a dream, and that the last ten years of our country’s history were blotted out! Some of our old men are a little nervous, look doubtful, and talk of the impotency of the South. Oh, I feel utter scorn for such remarks. We must not admit weakness. Our soldiers do not think of weakness; they know that their hearts are strong, and their hands well skilled in the use of the rifle. Our country boys have been brought up on horseback, and hunting has ever been their holiday sport. Then why shall they feel weak? Their hearts feel strong when they think of the justice of their cause. In that is our hope.

Walked down this evening to see Mrs. Johns. The road looked lonely and deserted. Busy life has departed from our midst. We found Mrs. Johns packing up valuables. I have been doing the same; but after they are packed, where are they to be sent? Silver may be buried, but what is to be done with books, pictures, etc.? We have determined, if we are obliged to go from home, to leave everything in the care of the servants. They have promised to be faithful, and I believe they will be; but my hope becomes stronger and stronger that we may remain here, or may soon return if we go away. Everything is so sad around us! We went to the Chapel on Sunday as usual, but it was grievous to see the change—the organ mute, the organist gone; the seats of the students of both institutions empty; but one or two members of each family to represent the absentees; the prayer for the President omitted. When Dr. Packard came to it, there was a slight pause, and then he went on to the next prayer—all seemed so strange! Tucker Conrad, one of the few students who is still here, raised the tunes; his voice seemed unusually sweet, because so sad. He was feebly supported by all who were not in tears. There was night service, but it rained, and I was not sorry that I could not go.
Elizabeth Blair Lee wrote from Philadelphia to her husband, a naval officer on blockade duty off Charleston, about the aftermath of the Union defeat at Bull Run on July 21, 1861. Lee normally resided at Blair House on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., and at Silver Spring, the Maryland estate of her politically prominent family. Her father, Francis Preston Blair, was an adviser to Andrew Jackson who now counseled President Lincoln; her brother Montgomery was postmaster general; and her brother Frank was a Republican congressman from Missouri. Lee refers in her letter to Robert Patterson, the sixty-nine-year-old commander of Union forces in the Shenandoah Valley, whose failure to engage Confederate general Joseph E. Johnston allowed Johnston to send most of his troops to fight at Bull Run.

Philadelphia July 23, 1861
Dear Phil The most comfortable sensation I have about this move from my home is that it will be a relief to you & that after this you will never have an anxious thought about us—feeling we have the most cautious care taken of us—

News from Washington indicates a revival of energy in Washn They are sad & the secessionist too are equally busy over their dead & wounded Mr. Pryor a brother of the M.C. says their loss was awful even before he was taken prisoner early in the day— It must have been or they would have followed up their Victory more vigorously which they had not done at 2 olk today Patterson’s men are ready to mob him so one of them told me today They say he is as more of an ally to the South than even Genl Jo Johnston The rumors about our loss is all uncertain for the rolls were not called at midday to day & I saw many of the soldiers straggling in late last night & early the morning— One of them sat in the rain on the stone foundation of brother’s front fence— I asked if he was hungry? No! Thirsty? no, sick? no,— wounded no no only mad— we are beat & badly because we have no generals— no competent officers He was almost heart broken from his tone & manner— a very respectable looking man— The Citizens treated them well— fed & sheltered them from the storm— Maryland seems steady— All was quiet in Balt— as we came thro it— & I saw 50 flags where I saw ten in June—

I shall still stay here a few days & then go to Bethlehem for Mary Blair’s party without Dr Hodge advises me to go to the Sea shore for these headaches which I think comes from the same cause that makes specs comfortable— & if he advises me to go to the sea— Ill go with Mira & Mr. Dick to the Atlantic City— across New Jersey & just 2 hours from here & until this is settled I’ll home here under Aunt Becky’s care— Blair & Becky are my best protection in my wanderings— & our dear child is certainly a great comfort— He was joyous today in the Cars with hope of going to see Papa I do hope you will soon come into port— tho this Rhode Island provision looks like keeping you all out but the rest have had their turn & you ought to have yours—Ever yr devoted Lizzie

Betty & Apo go to New York tomorrow— Betty to Martins & Apo to Connecticut
Sallie Brock: from Richmond During the War

A Virginia native, Sallie Brock was working as a tutor in King and Queen County, Virginia, in 1860. As the war began she returned to Richmond, where her father owned a hotel. In a memoir published in 1867, Brock described conditions in Richmond in the first autumn of the war.

RICHMOND A CITY OF REFUGE-EXTORTIONS.

Richmond had already become a “city of refuge.” Flying before the face of the invader, thousands sought within its hospitable walls that security they could not hope to receive in exposed and isolated places. Tales of suffering were even then the theme of thousands of tongues, as the homeless and destitute crowded into our city for safety and support. The usual hotel and boarding-house accommodations were found altogether insufficient to supply comfortable places of sojourn for the great numbers demanding sympathy and shelter. From the first day that war was declared against the South, Richmond was taxed to the utmost extent of her capacity to take care of the surplus population that accumulated within her limits.

Many of the citizens received and entertained these wanderers; but many, by the suspension of the ordinary business pursuits of the city, were so reduced in income that it became an impossibility for them to extend to such numbers the assistance which a native kindness and generosity prompted.

From the extraordinary influx of population, and the existence of the blockade, which prevented the importation of supplies in proportion to the demand, we were compelled to submit to the vilest extortions by which any people were ever oppressed. It was first observed in the increased prices placed upon goods of domestic manufacture. Cotton and woolen fabrics soon brought double prices, even before there was a general circulation of the money issued by the Confederate Treasury. The wisest laid in supplies sufficient to stock a small shop, and had enough to last during the entire war; but an overwhelming majority, unsupplied with means to use providently, waited for each day to provide for the peculiar wants of the day, and at length suffered for the simplest necessaries of life.

A lady in conversation with a friend, as early as May, 1861, said, “If you need calico, you had better purchase at once, for our ninepence goods have gone up to sixteen cents, and very soon we shall have to pay twenty-five cents. Our ten cent cotton domestics are now retailing at sixteen cents, and before the end of June it is said to be doubtful whether there will be any left in Richmond, and if any, we shall have to pay three prices.” Could she have foreseen the time when for a yard of the goods in question she would have to pay as many dollars, and later still twice the amount in dollars, she would indeed have urged her friend, who was incredulous to the truth, to purchase supplies sufficient for a number of years.

The same fact was observable in regard to imported articles of food. The extraordinary increase in price was first noticeable in that demanded for coffee. An old lady, one of the most famous of the many distinguished housewives of Virginia, in great astonishment, said in August, 1861: “Only think! coffee is now thirty cents per pound, and my grocer tells me I must buy at once, or very soon we shall have to pay double that price. Shameful! Why, even in the war of 1812 we had not to pay higher than sixty cents. And now, so soon! We must do without it, except when needed for the sick. If we can’t make some of the various proposed substitutes appetizing, why, we can use water. Thank God, no blockade can restrict the supply of that. That, at least, is abundant, and given without money and without price.”

Could this conscientious economist then have foreseen the cost of the berry for her favorite beverage at fifty dollars per pound, she would not grudgingly have paid the grocer his exorbitant demand of fifty cents.

During the existence of the war, coffee was a luxury in which...
only the most wealthy could constantly indulge; and when used at all, it was commonly adulterated with other things which passed for the genuine article, but was often so nauseous that it was next to impossible to force it upon the stomach. Rye, wheat, corn, sweet potatoes, beans, ground-nuts, chestnuts, chicory, ochre, sorghum-seed, and other grains and seeds, roasted and ground, were all brought into use as substitutes for the bean of Araby; but after every experiment to make coffee of what was not coffee, we were driven to decide that there was nothing coffee but coffee, and if disposed to indulge in extravagance at all, the people showed it only by occasional and costly indulgence in the luxurious beverage.

Tea, sugar, wines, and all imported liquors, increased rapidly in expense as the supply grew scarce, but not in the same ratio as coffee, which had been in universal use at the South—the low price at which it had been purchased, and its stimulating and pleasant effects making it agreeable, necessary and possible for even the poorest to indulge in its use.

The leaves of the currant, blackberry, willow, sage, and other vegetables, were dried and used as substitutes for tea by those who could not or did not feel justified in encouraging the exorbitant demands of successful blockade runners and dealers in the article. When sugar grew scarce, and so expensive that many were compelled to abandon its use altogether, there were substituted honey, and the syrup from sorghum, or the Chinese sugar cane, for all ordinary culinary purposes. The cultivation of the latter has become a very important consideration with the agriculturists of the more northern of the Southern States, being peculiarly adapted to the soil and climate, and furnishing a cheap and excellent substitute for the syrup of the sugar cane of the Gulf States and the West Indies.

With an admirable adaptation to the disagreeable and inconvenient circumstances entailed upon us by the blockade, the necessary self denial practiced by the people was in a spirit of cheerful acquiescence, and with a philosophical satisfaction and contentment that forgot the present in a hopeful looking for better and brighter days in the future.

Cheerfully submitting to inconveniences, and deprived from the first of the usual luxuries and many of the necessaries of life, the people were buoyed up with the hope and belief that their sufferings would be of short duration, and that an honorable independence and exemption from the evils which surrounded them, would soon compensate amply for the self denial they were called upon to practice. The remembrance then would be rather glorious than disagreeable in the reflection that they, too, had shared the travail which wrought the freedom of their country.

If there were any who sighed after the flesh-pots of Egypt, the sighs were breathed in the silence of retirement, and not where the ardor of the more hopeful could be chilled by such signs of discontent.

There was, however, a class in Richmond who very ill endured the severe simplicity and the rigid self-denial to which they were compelled to conform in the Confederate Capital. Gradually and insidiously innovations were permitted, until at last the license tolerated in fashionable society elsewhere grew to be tolerated somewhat in Richmond, and in the course of time prosy Richmond was acknowledged “fast” enough for the fastest.
A Union fleet under the command of David Farragut captured New Orleans on April 25, 1862. When the forces occupying the city were treated with blatant contempt by many of its women—one army officer was spat upon, and a chamber pot was emptied from a balcony on to Farragut's head—Major General Benjamin F. Butler issued General Order No. 28 on May 15. Butler's “Woman Order” warned that any woman who insulted Union soldiers would be treated as “a woman of the town plying her avocation.” Butler later wrote that the “order executed itself” and that no arrests were needed to enforce it. (Under New Orleans municipal law, women arrested for prostitution were jailed overnight and then fined five dollars in police court.)

Louisiana Governor Thomas O. Moore issued this proclamation in response.

**PROCLAMATION.**

**Executive Office,**

**Opelousas, La., May 24, 1862.**

**To the People of Louisiana:**

The general commanding the troops of the United States now holding possession of New Orleans issued the following order on the 15th instant:

As the officers and soldiers of the United States have been subject to repeated insults from the women (calling themselves ladies) of New Orleans, in return for the most scrupulous non-interference and courtesy on our part, it is ordered that hereafter, when any female shall, by word, gesture, or movement, insult or show contempt for any officer or soldier of the United States, she shall be regarded and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her avocation.

By command of Major-General Butler.

The annals of warfare between civilized nations afford no similar instance of infamy to this order. It is thus proclaimed to the world that the exhibition of any disgust or repulsiveness by

the women of New Orleans to the hated invaders of their home and the slayers of their fathers, brothers, and husbands shall constitute a justification to a brutal soldiery for the indulgence of their lust. The commanding general, from his headquarters, announces to his insolent followers that they are at liberty to treat as women of the town the wives, the mothers, the daughters of our citizens, if by word, gesture, or movement any contempt is indicated for their persons or insult offered to their presence. Of the nature of the movement and the meaning of the look these vagabond refuse of the Northern States are to be the judges.

What else than contempt and abhorrence can the women of New Orleans feel or exhibit for these officers and soldiers of the United States? The spontaneous impulse of their hearts must appear involuntary upon their countenances and thus constitute the crime for which the general of those soldiers adjudges the punishment of rape and brutalized passion.

History records instances of cities sacked and inhuman atrocities committed upon the women of a conquered town, but in no instance in modern times, at least without the brutal ravishers suffering condign punishment from the hands of their own commanders. It was reserved for a Federal general to invite his soldiers to the perpetration of outrages at the mention of which the blood recoils in horror—to quicken the impulses of their sensual instincts by the suggestion of transparent excuses for their gratification, and to add to an infamy already well merited these crowning titles of a panderer to lust and a desecrator of virtue.

Maddened by the noble loyalty of our people to the Government of their affections, and at their disgust and execration of their invaders; stung into obliviousness of the world's censure by the grand offering made of our property upon the altar of our liberties; his passions inflamed by the sight of burning cotton illuminating the river upon whose waters floats the powerful fleet that effected the downfall of our chief city; disappointed, chafed, and chagrined that our people, unlike his own, do not measure liberty, truth, or honor by a pecuniary standard, he sees the fruits of a victory he did not help to win eluding his grasp, and nothing left upon which to gloat his vengeance but unarmed men and helpless women.
Louisianians! will you suffer such foul conduct of your oppressors to pass unpunished? Will you permit such indignities to remain unavenged? A mind so debased as to be capable of conceiving the alternative presented in this order must be fruitful of inventions wherewith to pollute humanity. Shameless enough to allow their publication in the city, by the countenance of such atrocities they will be multiplied in the country. Its inhabitants must arm and strike, or the insolent victors will offer this outrage to your wives, your sisters, and your daughters. Possessed of New Orleans by means of his superior naval force, he cannot penetrate the interior if you resolve to prevent it. It does not require a force of imposing magnitude to impede his progress. Companies of experienced woodsmen in every exposed locality, with their trusty rifles and shot-guns, will harass his invading columns, deprive him of his pilots, and assure him he is in the country of an enemy. At proper points larger forces will be collected, but every man can be a soldier to guard the approaches to his home. Organize, then, quickly and efficiently. If your enemy attempt to proceed into the interior let his pathway be marked by his blood. It is your homes that you have to defend. It is the jewel of your hearths—the chastity of your women—you have to guard. Let that thought animate your breasts, nerve your arms, quicken your energies, and inspire your resolution. Strike home to the heart of your foe the blow that rids your country of his presence. If need be let his blood moisten your own grave. It will rise up before your children as a perpetual memento of a race whom it will teach to hate now and evermore.

THOS. O. MOORE.

“TORN AND SHATTERED”:
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, DECEMBER 1862

Louisa May Alcott: from Hospital Sketches

A schoolteacher, writer, and dedicated abolitionist, Louisa May Alcott left her home in Concord, Massachusetts, in December 1862 to volunteer as a nurse at a military hospital in the District of Columbia. Her nursing experience ended when she fell seriously ill with typhoid fever in January 1863 and returned to Massachusetts. Alcott’s book Hospital Sketches, in which she appears under the name “Tribulation Periwinkle,” was published in August 1863. Its third chapter describes the arrival of men wounded at Fredericksburg, Virginia, where Union general Ambrose Burnside had launched a series of unsuccessful frontal assaults against Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia on December 13. The battle cost the Army of the Potomac 12,653 men killed, wounded, or missing.

Chapter III.

A DAY.

“They’ve come! they’ve come! hurry up, ladies—you’re wanted.”

“Who have come? the rebels?”

This sudden summons in the gray dawn was somewhat startling to a three days’ nurse like myself, and, as the thundering knock came at our door, I sprang up in my bed, prepared

“To gird my woman’s form,
And on the ramparts die,”

if necessary, but my room-mate took it more coolly, and, as she began a rapid toilet, answered my bewildered question,—

“Bless you, no child; it’s the wounded from Fredericksburg; forty ambulances are at the door, and we shall have our hands full in fifteen minutes.”

“What shall we have to do?”

“Wash, dress, feed, warm and nurse them for the next three months, I dare say. Eighty beds are ready, and we were getting
impatient for the men to come. Now you will begin to see hospital life in earnest, for you won’t probably find time to sit down all day, and may think yourself fortunate if you get to bed by midnight. Come to me in the ball-room when you are ready; the worst cases are always carried there, and I shall need your help.”

So saying, the energetic little woman twirled her hair into a button at the back of her head, in a “cleared for action” sort of style, and vanished, wrestling her way into a feminine kind of pea-jacket as she went.

I am free to confess that I had a realizing sense of the fact that my hospital bed was not a bed of roses just then, or the prospect before me one of unmingled rapture. My three days’ experiences had begun with a death, and, owing to the defalcation of another nurse, a somewhat abrupt plunge into the superintendence of a ward containing forty beds, where I spent my shining hours washing faces, serving rations, giving medicine, and sitting in a very hard chair, with pneumonia on one side, diphtheria on the other, five typhoids on the opposite, and a dozen dilapidated patriots, hopping, lying, and lounging about, all staring more or less at the new “nuss,” who suffered untold agonies, but concealed them under as matronly an aspect as a spinster could assume, and blundered through her trying labors with a Spartan firmness, which I hope they appreciated, but am afraid they didn’t. Having a taste for “ghastliness,” I had rather longed for the wounded to arrive, for rheumatism was n’t heroic, neither was liver complaint, or measles; even fever had lost its charms since “bathing burning brows” had been used up in romances, real and ideal; but when I peeped into the dusky street lined with what I at first had innocently called market carts, now unloading their sad freight at our door, I recalled sundry reminiscences I had heard from nurses of longer standing, my ardor experienced a sudden chill, and I indulged in a most unpatriotic wish that I was safe at home again, with a quiet day before me, and no necessity for being hustled up, as if I were a hen and had only to hop off my roost, give my plumage a peck, and be ready for action. A second bang at the door sent this recreant desire to the right about, as a little woolly head popped in, and Joey, (a six years’ old contraband,) announced—
The sight of several stretchers, each with its legless, armless, or desperately wounded occupant, entering my ward, admonished me that I was there to work, not to wonder or weep; so I corked up my feelings, and returned to the path of duty, which was rather “a hard road to travel” just then. The house had been a hotel before hospitals were needed, and many of the doors still bore their old names; some not so inappropriate as might be imagined, for my ward was in truth a ball-room, if gun-shot wounds could christen it. Forty beds were prepared, many already tenanted by tired men who fell down anywhere, and drowsed till the smell of food roused them. Round the great stove was gathered the dreariest group I ever saw—ragged, gaunt and pale, mud to the knees, with bloody bandages untouched since put on days before; many bundled up in blankets, coats being lost or useless; and all wearing that disheartened look which proclaimed defeat, more plainly than any telegram of the Burnside blunder. I pitied them so much, I dared not speak to them, though, remembering all they had been through since the route at Fredericksburg, I yearned to serve the dreariest of them all. Presently, Miss Blank tore me from my refuge behind piles of one-sleeved shirts, odd socks, bandages and lint; put basin, sponge, towels, and a block of brown soap into my hands, with these appalling directions: “Come, my dear, begin to wash as fast as you can. Tell them to take off socks, coats and shirts, scrub them well, put on clean shirts, and the attendants will finish them off, and lay them in bed.”

If she had requested me to shave them all, or dance a hornpipe on the stove funnel, I should have been less staggered; but to scrub some dozen lords of creation at a moment’s notice, was really—really——. However, there was no time for nonsense, and, having resolved when I came to do everything I was bid, I drowned my scruples in my washbowl, clutched my soap manfully, and, assuming a business-like air; made a dab at the first dirty specimen I saw, bent on performing my task vi et armis if necessary. I chanced to light on a withered old Irishman, wounded in the head, which caused that portion of his frame to be tastefully laid out like a garden, the bandages being the walks, his hair the shrubbery. He was so overpowered by the honor of having a lady wash him as he expressed it, that he did nothing but roll up his eyes, and bless me, in an irresistible style which was too much for my sense of the ludicrous; so we laughed together, and when I knelt down to take off his shoes, he “flopped” also and wouldn’t hear of my touching “them dirty craters. May your bed above be aisy darlin’, for the day’s work ye are doon!—Whoosh! there ye are, and bedad, it’s hard tellin’ which is the dirtiest, the fut or the shoe.” It was; and if he hadn’t been to the fore, I should have gone on pulling, under the impression that the “fut” was a boot; for trousers, socks, shoes and legs were a mass of mud. This comical tableau produced a general grin, at which propitious beginning I took heart and scrubbed away like any tidy parent on a Saturday night. Some of them took the performance like sleepy children, leaning their tired heads against me as I worked, others looked grimly scandalized, and several of the roughest colored like bashful girls. One wore a soiled little bag about his neck, and, as I moved it, to bathe his wounded breast, I said, “Your talisman didn’t save you, did it?”

“Well, I reckon it did, marm, for that shot would’a gone a couple a inches deeper but for my old mammy’s camphor bag,” answered the cheerful philosopher.

Another, with a gun-shot wound through the cheek, asked for a looking-glass, and when I brought one, regarded his swollen face with a dolorous expression, as he muttered—

“I vow to gosh, that’s too bad! I warn’t a bad looking chap before, and now I’m done for; won’t there be a thunderin’ scar? and what on earth will Josephine Skinner say?”

He looked up at me with his one eye so appealingly, that I controlled my risibles, and assured him that if Josephine was a girl of sense, she would admire the honorable scar, as a lasting proof that he had faced the enemy, for all women thought a wound the best decoration a brave soldier could wear. I hope Miss Skinner verified the good opinion I so rashly expressed of her, but I shall never know.

The next scrubbee was a nice looking lad, with a curly brown mane, and a budding trace of gingerbread over the lip, which he called his beard, and defended stoutly, when the barber jocosely suggested its immolation. He lay on a bed, with one leg gone, and the right arm so shattered that it must evidently
The fancy seemed to tickle him mightily, for he laughed blithely, and so did I; which, no doubt, caused the new nurse to be regarded as a light-minded sinner by the Chaplain, who roamed vaguely about, informing the men that they were all worms, corrupt of heart, with perishable bodies, and souls only to be saved by a diligent perusal of certain tracts, and other equally cheering bits of spiritual consolation, when spirituous ditto would have been preferred.

“I say, Mrs.!” called a voice behind me; and, turning, I saw a rough Michigander, with an arm blown off at the shoulder, and two or three bullets still in him—as he afterwards mentioned, as carelessly as if gentlemen were in the habit of carrying such trifles about with them. I went to him, and, while administering a dose of soap and water, he whispered, irefully: “That red-headed devil, over yonder; is a reb, damn him! You'll agree to that, I'll bet? He's got shet of a foot, or he'd a cut like the rest of the lot. Don't you wash him, nor feed him, but jest let him holler till he's tired. It's a blasted shame to fetch them fellers in here, along side of us; and so I'll tell the chap that bosses this concern; cuss me if I don't.”

I regret to say that I did not deliver a moral sermon upon the duty of forgiving our enemies, and the sin of profanity, then and there; but, being a red-hot Abolitionist, stared fixedly at the tall rebel, who was a copperhead, in every sense of the word, and privately resolved to put soap in his eyes, rub his nose the wrong way, and excoriate his cuticle generally, if I had the washing of him.

My amiable intentions, however, were frustrated; for, when I approached, with as Christian an expression as my principles would allow, and asked the question—“Shall I try to make you more comfortable, sir?” all I got for my pains was a gruff—

“No; I'll do it myself.”

“Here's your Southern chivalry, with a witness,” thought I, dumping the basin down before him, thereby quenching a strong desire to give him a summary baptism, in return for his ungraciousness; for my angry passions rose, at this rebuff, in a way that would have scandalized good Dr. Watts. He was a disappointment in all respects, (the rebel, not the blessed Doctor,) for he was neither fiendish, romantic, pathetic, or anything interesting; but a long, fat man, with a head like a burning bush, and a perfectly expressionless face: so I could hate him without the slightest drawback, and ignored his existence from that day forth. One redeeming trait he certainly did possess, as the floor speedily testified; for his ablutions were so vigorously performed, that his bed soon stood like an isolated island, in a sea of soap-suds, and he resembled a dripping merman, suffering from the loss of a fin. If cleanliness is a near neighbor to godliness, then was the big rebel the godliest man in my ward that day.

Having done up our human wash, and laid it out to dry, the second syllable of our version of the word war-fare was enacted with much success. Great trays of bread, meat, soup and coffee appeared; and both nurses and attendants turned waiters, serving bountiful rations to all who could eat. I can call my pinafore to testify to my good will in the work, for in ten minutes it was reduced to a perambulating bill of fare, presenting samples of all the refreshments going or gone. It was a lively scene; the long room lined with rows of beds, each filled by an occupant, whom water, shears, and clean raiment, had transformed from a dismal ragamuffin into a recumbent hero, with a cropped head. To and fro rushed matrons, maids, and convalescent “boys,” skirmishing with knives and forks; retreating with
empty plates; marching and counter-marching, with unvaried success, while the clash of busy spoons made most inspiring music for the charge of our Light Brigade:

“Beds to the front of them,
Beds to the right of them,
Beds to the left of them,
Nobody blundered.

Beamed at by hungry souls,
Screamed at with brimming bowls,
Steamed at by army rolls,
Buttered and sundered.

With coffee not cannon plied,
Each must be satisfied,
Whether they lived or died;
All the men wondered.”

Very welcome seemed the generous meal, after a week of suffering, exposure, and short commons; soon the brown faces began to smile, as food, warmth, and rest, did their pleasant work; and the grateful “Thankee’s” were followed by more graphic accounts of the battle and retreat, than any paid reporter could have given us. Curious contrasts of the tragic and comic met one everywhere; and some touching as well as ludicrous episodes, might have been recorded that day. A six foot New Hampshire man, with a leg broken and perforated by a piece of shell, so large that, had I not seen the wound, I should have regarded the story as a Munchausenism, beckoned me to come and help him, as he could not sit up, and both his bed and beard were getting plentifully anointed with soup. As I fed my big nestling with corresponding mouthfuls, I asked him how he felt during the battle.

“Well, ’twas my fust, you see, so I aint ashamed to say I was a trifle flustered in the beginnin’, there was such an allfired racket; for ef there’s anything I do spleen agin, it’s noise. But when my mate, Eph Sylvester, caved, with a bullet through his head, I got mad, and pitched in, licketty cut. Our part of the fight didn’t last long; so a lot of us larked round Fredericksburg, and give some of them houses a pretty consid’able of a rummage, till we was ordered out of the mess. Some of our fellows cut like time; but I warn’t a-goin to run for nobody; and, fust thing I knew, a shell bust, right in front of us, and I keeled over, feelin’ as if I was blowed higher’n a kite. I sung out, and the boys come back for me, double quick; but the way they chucked me over them fences was a caution, I tell you. Next day I was most as black as that darkey yonder, lickin’ plates on the sly. This is bully coffee, ain’t it? Give us another pull at it, and I’ll be obleeged to you.”

I did; and, as the last gulp subsided, he said, with a rub of his old handkerchief over eyes as well as mouth:

“Look a here; I’ve got a pair a earbobs and a handkercher pin I’m a goin’ to give you, if you’ll have them; for you’re the very moral o’ Lizy Sylvester, poor Eph’s wife: that’s why I signalled you to come over here. They aint much, I guess, but they’ll do to memorize the rebs by.”

Burrowing under his pillow, he produced a little bundle of what he called “truck,” and gallantly presented me with a pair of earrings, each representing a cluster of corpulent grapes, and the pin a basket of astonishing fruit, the whole large and coppery enough for a small warming-pan. Feeling delicate about depriving him of such valuable relics, I accepted the earrings alone, and was obliged to depart, somewhat abruptly, when my friend stuck the warming-pan in the bosom of his night-gown, viewing it with much complacency, and, perhaps, some tender memory, in that rough heart of his, for the comrade he had lost.

Observing that the man next him had left his meal untouched, I offered the same service I had performed for his neighbor, but he shook his head.

“Thank you, ma’am; I don’t think I’ll ever eat again, for I’m shot in the stomach. But I’d like a drink of water, if you aint too busy.”

I rushed away, but the water-pails were gone to be refilled, and it was some time before they reappeared. I did not forget my patient patient, meanwhile, and, with the first mugful, hurried back to him. He seemed asleep; but something in the tired white face caused me to listen at his lips for a breath. None came. I touched his forehead; it was cold: and then I knew that, while he waited, a better nurse than I had given him a cooler draught, and healed him with a touch. I laid the sheet over the quiet sleeper, whom no noise could now disturb; and,
half an hour later, the bed was empty. It seemed a poor requital for all he had sacrificed and suffered,—that hospital bed, lonely even in a crowd; for there was no familiar face for him to look his last upon; no friendly voice to say, Good bye; no hand to lead him gently down into the Valley of the Shadow; and he vanished, like a drop in that red sea upon whose shores so many women stand lamenting. For a moment I felt bitterly indignant at this seeming carelessness of the value of life, the sanctity of death; then consoled myself with the thought that, when the great muster roll was called, these nameless men might be promoted above many whose tall monuments record the barren honors they have won.

All having eaten, drank, and rested, the surgeons began their rounds; and I took my first lesson in the art of dressing wounds. It wasn’t a festive scene, by any means; for Dr. P., whose Aid I constituted myself, fell to work with a vigor which soon convinced me that I was a weaker vessel, though nothing would have induced me to confess it then. He had served in the Crimea, and seemed to regard a dilapidated body very much as I should have regarded a damaged garment; and, turning up his cuffs, whipped out a very unpleasant looking housewife, cutting, sawing, patching and piecing, with the enthusiasm of an accomplished surgical seamstress; explaining the process, in scientific terms, to the patient, meantime; which, of course, was immensely cheering and comfortable. There was an uncanny sort of fascination in watching him, as he peered and probed into the mechanism of those wonderful bodies, whose mysteries he understood so well. The more intricate the wound, the better he liked it. A poor private, with both legs off, and shot through the lungs, possessed more attractions for him than a dozen generals, slightly scratched in some “masterly retreat;” and had any one appeared in small pieces, requesting to be put together again, he would have considered it a special dispensation.

The amputations were reserved till the morrow, and the merciful magic of ether was not thought necessary that day, so the poor souls had to bear their pains as best they might. It is all very well to talk of the patience of woman; and far be it from me to pluck that feather from her cap, for, heaven knows, she isn’t allowed to wear many; but the patient endurance of these men, under trials of the flesh, was truly wonderful; their fortitude seemed contagious, and scarcely a cry escaped them, though I often longed to groan for them, when pride kept their white lips shut, while great drops stood upon their foreheads, and the bed shook with the irrepressible tremor of their tortured bodies. One or two Irishmen anathematized the doctors with the frankness of their nation, and ordered the Virgin to stand by them, as if she had been the wedded Biddy to whom they could administer the poker, if she didn’t; but, as a general thing, the work went on in silence, broken only by some quiet request for roller, instruments, or plaster, a sigh from the patient, or a sympathizing murmur from the nurse.

It was long past noon before these repairs were even partially made; and, having got the bodies of my boys into something like order, the next task was to minister to their minds, by writing letters to the anxious souls at home; answering questions, reading papers, taking possession of money and valuables; for the eighth commandment was reduced to a very fragmentary condition, both by the blacks and whites, who ornamented our hospital with their presence. Pocket books, purses, miniatures, and watches, were sealed up, labelled, and handed over to the matron, till such times as the owners thereof were ready to depart homeward or campward again. The letters dictated to me, and revised by me, that afternoon, would have made an excellent chapter for some future history of the war; for, like that which Thackeray’s “Ensign Spooney” wrote his mother just before Waterloo, they were “full of affection, pluck, and bad spelling;” nearly all giving lively accounts of the battle, and ending with a somewhat sudden plunge from patriotism to provender, desiring “Marm,” “Mary Ann,” or “Aunt Peters,” to send along some pies, pickles, sweet stuff, and apples, “to yourn in haste,” Joe, Sam, or Ned, as the case might be.

My little Sergeant insisted on trying to scribble something with his left hand, and patiently accomplished some half dozen lines of hieroglyphics, which he gave me to fold and direct, with a boyish blush, that rendered a glimpse of “My Dearest Jane,” unnecessary, to assure me that the heroic lad had been more successful in the service of Commander-in-Chief Cupid than that of Gen. Mars; and a charming little romance blossomed instanter in Nurse Periwinkle’s romantic fancy, though
no further confidences were made that day, for Sergeant fell asleep, and, judging from his tranquil face, visited his absent sweetheart in the pleasant land of dreams.

At five o’clock a great bell rang, and the attendants flew, not to arms, but to their trays, to bring up supper, when a second uproar announced that it was ready. The new comers woke at the sound; and I presently discovered that it took a very bad wound to incapacitate the defenders of the faith for the consumption of their rations; the amount that some of them sequestered was amazing; but when I suggested the probability of a famine hereafter, to the matron, that motherly lady cried out: “Bless their hearts, why shouldn’t they eat? It’s their only amusement; so fill every one, and, if there’s not enough ready to-night, I’ll lend my share to the Lord by giving it to the boys.” And, whipping up her coffee-pot and plate of toast, she gladdened the eyes and stomachs of two or three dissatisfied heroes, by serving them with a liberal hand; and I haven’t the slightest doubt that, having cast her bread upon the waters, it came back buttered, as another large-hearted old lady was wont to say.

Then came the doctor’s evening visit; the administration of medicines; washing feverish faces; smoothing tumbled beds; wetting wounds; singing lullabies; and preparations for the night. By eleven, the last labor of love was done; the last “good night” spoken; and, if any needed a reward for that day’s work, they surely received it, in the silent eloquence of those long lines of faces, showing pale and peaceful in the shaded rooms, as we quitted them, followed by grateful glances that lighted us to bed, where rest, the sweetest, made our pillows soft, while Night and Nature took our places, filling that great house of pain with the healing miracles of Sleep, and his diviner brother, Death.

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Harriet Jacobs, the author of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, had gone to the District of Columbia in the summer of 1862 and begun relief work among the former slaves who had fled there. She wrote about conditions in northern Virginia to the abolitionist Lydia Maria Child, who had edited *Incidents*, in a letter that appeared in William Lloyd Garrison’s antislavery newspaper *The Liberator* on April 10, 1863. In her report Jacobs referred to the recent formation of the Massachusetts 54th Volunteer Infantry under the command of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, the first black regiment raised by a northern state. She also alluded to a recent article in the magazine *Home Evangelist* that claimed drunkenness, lying, theft, and licentiousness were prevalent among the freedmen at Washington. General Rufus Saxton, who Jacobs quotes, was the Union military governor of the coastal regions of South Carolina and Georgia.

**BLACK REFUGEES: VIRGINIA, MARCH 1863**

*Harriet Jacobs to Lydia Maria Child*

Harriet Jacobs, the author of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, had gone to the District of Columbia in the summer of 1862 and begun relief work among the former slaves who had fled there. She wrote about conditions in northern Virginia to the abolitionist Lydia Maria Child, who had edited *Incidents*, in a letter that appeared in William Lloyd Garrison’s antislavery newspaper *The Liberator* on April 10, 1863. In her report Jacobs referred to the recent formation of the Massachusetts 54th Volunteer Infantry under the command of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, the first black regiment raised by a northern state. She also alluded to a recent article in the magazine *Home Evangelist* that claimed drunkenness, lying, theft, and licentiousness were prevalent among the freedmen at Washington. General Rufus Saxton, who Jacobs quotes, was the Union military governor of the coastal regions of South Carolina and Georgia.

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**COLORED REFUGEES IN OUR CAMPS.**

The following letter is from a very worthy, intelligent woman, who was herself a slave during twenty-five years, and who is now manifesting sympathy with her long-oppressed people by nursing them in the vicinity of our camps. To do this, she not only relinquishes good wages in a family for many years strongly attached to her, but also liberally imparts from her own earnings to the destitute around her.

L. M. CHILD.

**ALEXANDRIA, MARCH 18.**

Since I last wrote to you, the condition of the poor refugees has improved. During the winter months, the small pox carried them off by hundreds; but now it has somewhat abated. At present, we have one hundred and forty patients in the hospital. The misery I have witnessed must be seen to be believed. The Quakers of Philadelphia, who sent me here, have done nobly for my people. They have indeed proved themselves a
Society of Friends. Had it not been for their timely relief, many more must have died. They have sent thousands and tens of thousands of dollars to different sections of the country, wherever these poor sufferers came within our lines. But, notwithstanding all that has been done, very many have died from destitution. It is impossible to reach them all. Government has erected here barracks for the accommodations of five hundred. We have fifteen hundred on the list.

Many have found employment, and are supporting themselves and their families. It would do your heart good to talk with some of these people. They are quick, intelligent, and full of the spirit of freedom. Some of them say to me, “The white men of the North have helped us thus far, and we want to help them. We would like to fight for them, if they would only treat us like men.”

The colored people could not do enough for the first regiments that came here. They had entire faith in them as the deliverers of their race. The sight of the U.S. uniform took all fear out of their hearts, and inspired them with hope and confidence. Many of them freely fed the soldiers at their own tables, and lodged them as comfortably as possible in their humble dwellings. The change is very sad. In return for their kindness and ever-ready service, they often receive insults, and sometimes beatings, and so they have learned to distrust those who wear the uniform of the U.S. You know how warmly I have sympathized with the Northern army; all the more does it grieve me to see so many of them false to the principles of freedom. But I am proud and happy to know that the black man is to strike a blow for liberty. I am rejoiced that Col. Shaw heads the Massachusetts regiment, for I know he has a noble heart.

How pitiful it is that members of any religious sect should come here, and return home to report their observations, without one word of sympathy for God’s suffering poor! This is suggested to me by reading the New York Evangelist. These poor refugees undoubtedly have faults, as all human beings would have, under similar circumstances. I agree with that noble man, Gen. Saxton, who says they appear to him to be “extremely human.” As to drunkenness, I have seen but one case. As to stealing, I wish the writer in the New York Evangelist had made himself acquainted with the old slave-pen here, now used for a prison. When I last went there, I found seventy whites and one colored man. The marriage law has been disregarded, from old habits formed in slavery, and from want of true friends to encourage them in the observance of it now. I wish the writer of that article could have been where I was last night, in our rough, little, poorly-built church.

It was densely crowded; and although some alarm was excited by the rafters giving way overhead, quiet was soon restored, and the people were deeply attentive. Eight couples were married on this occasion. We have a day-school of eighty scholars, and a large number attend our evening school—mostly adults. A large sewing-circle, composed of young and old, meet every Saturday afternoon. Three colored men teach a school in this city for those who can afford to pay somewhat for instruction. They have a large number of pupils, mostly children of colored citizens; but a few of the “little contrabands” attend their school.

We are now collecting together the orphan children, of whom there are a great number, owing to the many deaths that have occurred of late. In justice to the refugee women, I am bound to testify that I have never known them, in any one instance, refuse to shelter an orphan. In many cases, mothers who have five or six children of their own, without enough to feed and cover them, will readily receive these helpless little ones into their own poor hovels.

O, when will the white man learn to know the hearts of my abused and suffering people!

HARRIET JACOBS.
While her husband served with the 22nd Iowa Infantry in the Vicksburg campaign, Catharine Peirce managed several farm and town properties, handled the family finances, and raised three young children. After his enlistment Catharine and the children had moved in with her brother, Cyrus, and his wife, Mary, who was Taylor’s sister.

Des Moines April/12/63
Dear Taylor
I have not got much to communicate this morning but it is sunday and I write to let thee know how we all are. We are all well to day. Cyrus is better than he has been for some time at least better than he was this time last year and I hope he will get better as the spring advances.

Dear one I sit down to write to thee not knowing what I may find to say to thee. We get no war news at this time. I suppose that the heads of affairs are trying to keep thing quiet for the present so the rebles will not know what their at. All I have to say about it is that I hope they will do something soon that will tell and that pritty loudly too for I think that now is the time to strike a blow that will make them squirm. From what I can hear the rebles are nearly starved out and if it is true they will have to give up before long. We heard last week that there had been a bread riot among the woman and Children in Savanna and that they were in a starveing Steate and would set fire to the city if they did not get bread. It seems to me that is a big threat for woman to make but then a woman will do and dair a great deal for her starveing children. I think a pity of the poor little children but the just must suffer with the unjust. If the parents had not been such foul traitors they might still of enjoyed peace and plenty unless they belong to the class of men that are pressed into the war against their principals which I learned there are hundreds of such among the reble forces.

I can not help but feel thankful to the giver of all good that we have pleny here at the North and a fine prospect for more. The spring is opend but not as earley or as forward as it had the apperence of two or three weeks ago. But still the framework gos on gloriously. We have had no rain for some time and it is getting pritty dry so the grass is backward this season. We have had no boats up this spring and that has made teaming a good business here and wages are good generaly. The river was full enought at one time for boats to run up but I suppose that government has them all in her services to carrie provisions for the soldiers. It must take an awfull amount to supply the army that lay around Vicksburg with enough to eat.

Thee wanted me to send thy book account on Ault and a note. The note I inclose to thee. The book account I hope thee has receved before this time as I sent it some three weeks ago and also Mary’s and Franks pictures. I would get little Ellis picture if I thought I could get any thing like a good one to send to thee but the artists do not like to take the picture of a baby and it is a hard matter to get them still long enough to get any like a picture. So I will wait a while and hope that thee will get home soon to see the little thing. I think he looks very much like the old hoss himself. The other Children say they want thee to come home so that they can kiss and hugg thee. They both have to kiss thair Aunt and uncle every night before they go to bed and wish one for thee. I believe I must close now. With heart felt love I remain thine Catharine. Give my respects to all that I know that thee think are deserveing of such.

Catharine A Peirce Des Moines Iowa Polk County
Kate Stone lived with her family at Brokenburn, a cotton plantation in what is now Madison Parish, Louisiana, about thirty miles northwest of Vicksburg. Foraging parties from the Union army camps along the Mississippi moved through the area in early 1863, seizing food and horses and encouraging slaves to leave their plantations. On March 22 Stone recorded how “two most villainous-looking Yankees” had taken her horse at gunpoint. The following day, alarmed by reports that armed former slaves were helping Union soldiers plunder neighboring plantations, she wrote: “The sword of Damocles in a hundred forms is suspended over us, and there is no escape.” A month later, Stone and her family were refugees staying near Monroe, Louisiana, eighty miles west of the Mississippi. She described the incident that caused them to flee.

April 25: We see that Van Dorn has had another fight and been repulsed. We can only hope Brother Coley and Dr. Buckner are safe. We will not hear for many days. Affairs look dark for our Confederacy just now.

This country is filled with refugees. Nearly all our friends are back here or on their way to Texas, where we hope to be before long. Out here the prices asked for everything are enormous. The people of Monroe seem determined to fleece the refugees. It cost us $3,000 to get a four-horse hack to bring us from Monroe here—four miles.”

Having no other way of amusing myself, I may as well write the account of our flight from home and our subsequent adventures.

On Thursday, March 26, hearing that Mr. Hardison had returned from Monroe, Sister and I walked up in the afternoon to hear what news he had brought. As we approached the house, it struck me that something was wrong. As we were going through the garden George Richards came out and told us a party of Yankees and armed Negroes had just left, carrying with them every Negro on the place, most of Mrs. Hardison’s and the children’s clothes, and all the provisions they could manage. They were led by Charles, Mr. Hardison’s most trusted servant, and they were all vowing vengeance against Mr. Hardison. They said they would shoot him on sight for moving two of his Negroes a few days before. Mr. Hardison had fortunately seen them coming and, knowing he would be arrested or perhaps killed as a conscript officer, had escaped to the woods.

We walked in and found Mrs. Hardison and the children all much excited and very angry, with flaming cheeks and flashing eyes. The Negroes had been very impertinent. The first armed Negroes they had ever seen. Just as we were seated someone called out the Yankees were coming again. It was too late to run. All we could do was to shut ourselves up together in one room, hoping they would not come in. George Richards was on the gallery. In a minute we heard the gate open and shut, rough hoarse voices, a volley of oaths, and then a cry, “Shoot him, curse him! Shoot him! Get out of the way so I can get him.” Looking out of the window, we saw three fiendish-looking, black Negroes standing around George Richards, two with their guns leveled and almost touching his breast. He was deathly pale but did not move. We thought he would be killed instantly, and I shut my eyes that I might not see it. But after a few words from George, which we could not hear, and another volley of curses, they lowered their guns and rushed into the house “to look for guns” they said, but only to rob and terrorize us. The Negroes were completely armed and there was no white man with them. We heard them ranging all through the house, cursing and laughing, and breaking things open.

Directly one came bursting into our room, a big black wretch, with the most insolent swagger, talking all the time in a most insulting manner. He went through all the drawers and wardrobe taking anything he fancied, all the time with a cocked pistol in his hand. Cursing and making the most awful threats against Mr. Hardison if they ever caught him, he lounged up to the bed where the baby was sleeping. Raising the bar, he started to take the child, saying as he waved the pistol, “I ought to kill him. He may grow up to be a jarilla. Kill him.” Mrs. Hardison sprang to his side, snatched the baby up,
and shrieked, “Don’t kill my baby. Don’t kill him.” The Negro turned away with a laugh and came over where I was sitting with Little Sister crouched close to me holding my hand. He came right up to us standing on the hem of my dress while he looked me slowly over, gesticulating and snapping his pistol. He stood there about a minute, I suppose. It seemed to me an age. I felt like I would die should he touch me. I did not look up or move, and Little Sister was as still as if petrified. In an instant more he turned away with a most diabolical laugh, gathered up his plunder, and went out. I was never so frightened in my life. Mrs. Hardison said we were both as white as marble, and she was sure I would faint. What a wave of thankfulness swept over us when he went out and slammed the door. In the meanwhile, the other Negroes were rummaging the house, ransacking it from top to bottom, destroying all the provisions they could not carry away, and sprinkling a white powder into the cisterns and over everything they left. We never knew whether it was poison or not.

The Negroes called and stormed and cursed through the house, calling each other “Captain” and “Lieutenant” until it nearly froze the blood in our veins, and every minute we expected them to break into our room again. I was completely unnerved. I did not think I could feel so frightened.

Mrs. Alexander went into her room hoping to prevent their robbing her bed, when one of them pointed his pistol at her and said, “I told you once before, old woman, to keep out of here and stop your jaw.” Mr. McPherson and George were all the time on the gallery with Negroes guarding them with leveled guns.

After carrying on this way about two hours they lit matches, stuck them about the hall, and then leisurely took themselves off, loaded down with plunder. We rushed around, put out all the matches, gathered up the few little articles left, and started at once for home. Since the Negroes declared as they moved off that they were coming back in a little while and burn every house on the place, I took the baby and Mrs. Hardison, Mrs. Alexander, and the children with George and Mr. McPherson gathered up everything of any value left, and we hurried home, reaching there spent with excitement. Mrs. Hardison was almost crazy.

As we passed through our quarters, there were numbers of strange Negro men standing around. They had gathered from the neighboring places. They did not say anything, but they looked at us and grinned and that terrified us more and more. It held such a promise of evil. Jimmy went out at once to where Mr. Hardison was in hiding to tell him his family were with us. Jimmy just escaped being shot by Mr. Hardison, who, in the dusk, took him for a Yankee. Mr. and Mrs. Hardison and the small children went off as soon as possible, not thinking it safe to remain so near home. During the night a party came to the yard looking for them, but on the house servants’ assuring them that the Hardisons were gone, they did not come to the house.

We made preparations that night to move at daybreak, but something deterred us. Mamma thought she would go out and get letters of protection but later abandoned the idea. It was then too late for us to get off, and we spent a night and day of terror. The next evening the Negroes from all the inhabited places around commenced flocking to Mr. Hardison’s, and they completely sacked the place in broad daylight, passing our gate loaded down with plunder until twelve at night. That more than anything else frightened Mamma and determined her to leave, though at the sacrifice of everything we owned.

We made arrangements to get Dr. Carson’s skiffs and sent Webster around collecting saddles and bridles. On account of the water we could go only on horseback to take the skiffs. With much difficulty we got everything ready for the start at midnight. Aunt Laura was the only one who did not want to go. She begged Mamma to let her and Beverly stay, saying that she would get old Mr. Valentine to stay with her, but of course Mamma could not allow that. The boys brought in everything we had buried out, except Aunt Laura’s silver. That had to be left packed in a barrel and buried in the yard. The boys had done it one very dark night, when they hoped all the Negroes were in their cabins as it was raining. All the servants behaved well enough except Webster, but you could see it was only because they knew we would soon be gone. We were only on sufferance.

Two days longer and we think they would all have gone to the Yankees, most probably robbing and insulting us before
they left. About eleven the boys went off with their guns to have the horses saddled and brought up. After a good deal of trouble, they came. The boys carried their guns all the time. Without them I think we would never have gotten off. Webster tried every artifice to get hold of one of them, but the boys never relaxed their watch. The night was cloudy and dark with occasional claps of thunder, but we had to go then or never. We knew the news would be carried to camp, and the Yankees had forbidden citizens to leave their places. Aunt Laura, protesting all the time she could not ride, was at last after much coaxing and fixing mounted on poor Little Jack Fisher, the family pony, old and gentle, with Annie perched behind her. I took Beverly in my lap. All the others mounted, and with the baggage cart with Uncle Bob driving and Jimmy guarding it in the extreme rear, the procession moved off.

It was too dark to see the road but Johnny led off, and each one followed the shadow in front. At first Aunt Laura was loud in exclamation and complaint, until someone suggested that she would bring the Negroes down on us. That acted as a quietus, and thereafter she groaned only in spirit. Several times as the clouds lifted and it grew something lighter, I saw her pony struggling in a mud hole and Aunt Laura reeling in the saddle, but not a scream disturbed the stillness of the night. As we opened gates and rode through place after place in perfect silence, not a light was visible anywhere. After passing Out Post, the road was so bad and it was so dark that we were forced to wait for daylight. We dismounted in the middle of the road, and to Aunt Laura’s surprise and amazement Mamma lay her head down in Johnny’s lap and went sound asleep. Riding in the dark made her sick, and she was worn out with excitement and loss of sleep.

As soon as it was light enough to see, the sleepers were awakened, and we mounted and went on over the very worst road it was possible for ladies to travel—just a long bog from one end to the other. The morning air was pleasantly cool, and as the red light crept up the sky we heard all kinds of wildwoods sounds—squirrels chattering in the trees, birds waking with a song, the calls of the wild ducks and turkeys, and three or four deer bounding into the woods just before us.

When we reached within a mile of our place of debarkation, the road became impassable, and we struck off into the woods. The cart had to be left there and the baggage carried on by mules. After much trouble, getting lost and riding through water up to our saddle skirts—I actually swam a bayou with Beverly in my arms—we succeeded in getting all of our party and a little of our baggage to the landing place below Mrs. Stevens’. We sent Webster back to the cart for the baggage, and no sooner was he out of sight than he mounted a horse and set off for home. He told Charles that he knew he was not going to Bayou Macon with Miss Manda and that Charles had better come on with him. Thus by his treachery we lost almost everything we brought away with us, for when we heard it, it was already too late to send back for the things. We knew the Yankees would certainly be where we were by 8 o’clock, and it was nearly that hour. We knew that we must get off at once if at all, for when the Yankees came they would turn us back. They never allow anyone to leave if they can help it. Finish this another day.
EXPPELLING “ENEMIES”: LOUISIANA, APRIL 1863

Sarah Morgan: Diary, April 30, 1863

Sarah Morgan had fled her home in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in August 1862 when Confederate forces unsuccessfully attempted to retake the city. She lived for eight months with relatives at Linwood, a plantation five miles northeast of Port Hudson, while her widowed mother stayed in the nearby town of Clinton. Severe food shortages and the prospect of a Union attack on Port Hudson eventually drove Morgan, her sister Miriam, and their mother from northern Louisiana in April 1863. After fruitlessly trying to find refuge in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, they reluctantly decided to move in with Morgan's half brother in Union-occupied New Orleans. In September 1862 Major General Benjamin F. Butler, the Union commander at New Orleans, had ordered that any person who failed to take the oath of allegiance be registered as “an enemy of the United States.” Shortly after Morgan arrived in New Orleans, Major General Nathaniel P. Banks, Butler’s successor, ordered the expulsion of all registered enemies who remained within Union lines. Morgan wrote about the order on the anniversary of the death of her brother Henry, who had been killed in a duel in New Orleans in 1861.

Thursday April 30th.

Was not the recollection of this day bitter enough to me already? I did not think it could be more so. Yet behold me crying as I have not cried for many and many a day. Not for Harry; I dare not cry for him. I feel a deathlike quiet when I think of him; a fear that even a deep drawn breath would wake him in his grave. And as dearly as I love you, O Hal! I don’t want you in this dreary world again! Not here, O Hal! Not here! Stay where you can look down on these pitiful mortals and smile at their littleness. But I would not have you among them, Hal! Stay there, where maybe one day God will call me. I will go to you, but don’t wish to be back here, Harry. Long long ago I learned to say “Thy will be done,” and almost to be thankful you were in your grave. Two years ago to day Hal, you folded your hands and died so quietly and meekly. Two years of trials and hardships have been spared you. Say thank God, Harry! O safe, safe, in the heaven above pray for us, pity us, miserable creatures that we are!

To day came to us the proclamation which should link the name of Yankee to those of the inhabitants of the lower regions. Talk of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes! Talk of Louis XIV! Of— Pshaw! my head is in such a whirl that history gets all mixed up, and all parallels seem weak and moderate in comparison to this infamous outrage. To day, thousands of families, from the most respectable down to the least, all who have had the firmness to register themselves enemies to the United States, are ordered to leave the city before the fifteenth of May. Think of the thousands, perfectly destitute, who can hardly afford to buy their daily bread even here, sent to the Confederacy, where it is neither to be earned, nor bought, without money, friends, or a home. Hundreds have comfortable homes here, which will be confiscated to enrich those who drive them out. “It is an ill wind that blows no one good.”

Such dismal faces as one meets everywhere! Each looks heart broken. Homeless, friendless, beggars, is written in every eye. Brother’s face is too unhappy to make it pleasant to look at him. True, he is safe; but hundreds of his friends are going forth destitute, leaving happy homes behind, not knowing where the crust of bread for famishing children is to come from to-morrow. He went to Gen. Bowen and asked if it were possible that women and children were included in the order. Yes, he said; they should all go, and go in the Confederacy. They should not be allowed to go elsewhere.

Penned up like sheep to starve! That’s the idea! With the addition of forty thousand mouths to feed, they think they can invoke famine to their aid, seeing that their negro brothers don’t help them much in the task of subjugating us. And these are the men who cry Liberty, Equality, Fraternity! These are the men who hope to conquer us! Ever unite with them? Never, never! Defenders of Charleston, Savannah, Mobile! These are the foes who are striving to overcome you! Deliver your cities in their hands? Die first!

O that from the Atlantic to the Rio Grande their vile footsteps should have been allowed to press our soil! Give up to
them? Rather than submit, I would that, all gathered together, we should light our own funeral pyre, and old men, brave soldiers, fair women and tender children should all perish hand in hand in the bright flames we would send up to Heaven as a memorial of our toil, sorrow, and suffering.

If I was a man! O if I was only a man! For two years that has been my only cry, and to day I fairly rave about it. Blood, fire, desolation, I feel ready to invoke all, on these Yankees. Miriam and I are both desperate. If we could only get back, even to Clinton! It seems base treason to remain apparently under the protection of this hateful flag, while all of our own creed and country are sent out to starve. We would endure any thing, if we could only get mother's consent. If she would only stay with Brother, and let us go back to Clinton! For she cannot endure the privations we would have to undergo, while we could stand anything, just to get out of sight of these Yankees again. But she wont listen to it. So we will have to remain patiently here, and consequently labor under the suspicion of belonging to a side we abhor with all our souls. George and Gibbes will be frantic about it. If we could only, only get away!

Evidently, Banks had been whipped in the Attakapas. In spite of his fanfaronade of trumpets, I believe he has been outrageously beaten (as usual) and turns round to punish women and children for his defeat. The “Union” is certainly on its last legs when its generals resort to such means as getting negroes to fight its battles seeing how white men fail, and take to running women and children out of the land. You have roused the Devil in us, Banks! We women will tear you to pieces yet!

Dont care who knows I smuggled in a dozen letters! Wish I had had more!

Meeting “Secesh” Civilians: Virginia, June 1863

Oliver W. Norton to Elizabeth Norton Poss

A veteran of the Peninsula campaign, Second Bull Run, and Fredericksburg, Private Oliver W. Norton fought at Chancellorsville with the 83rd Pennsylvania Infantry under Colonel Strong Vincent. In late May Vincent became the new brigade commander, and Norton was assigned to brigade headquarters.

Headquarters, Third Brigade, First Division, Fifth Army Corps, Crittenden's Mill, Va., June 8, 1863.

Dear Sister L.:

I have no letter of yours to answer, but having nothing to do and knowing that you are always glad to hear from me, perhaps I can’t do better than to spend an hour jotting down for your amusement a few incidents by the way. Life at headquarters is pleasant on one account—it gives me a better opportunity to see and talk with the people of the country than I had in the regiment.

You will see by this that we have again moved. Since the 27th ult. we have been engaged in guarding the river at different points above Fredericksburg. Crittenden’s Mill is some twenty miles above town and two miles back of the river. Ellis’ Ford and Kempel’s Ford are near, and our brigade is ordered to guard these crossings and watch the enemy on the other side. Reports of the observations have to be sent to Division headquarters every four hours of the day and night. Headquarters are at the house of a certain widow James. She has three sons in the rebel army and is a pretty loud secesh herself. My bivouac is in one of the old lady’s tobacco houses, and there I am writing this at present, so if it smells of tobacco don’t charge it to my habits. On the road up here we stopped one night at the house of a Mr. Imbray. He was a cripple and at home, but made no
secret of his being *secesh* to the backbone. “I belong to the South,” said he, “and my heart is with the South. If I was with the army I should shoot at you with all the power I had, but, meeting as we do, I shall not allow any difference of opinion to influence my treatment of you.” (Very considerate, wasn’t he, when we had the force there to enforce respect?) But it wasn’t of him I meant to speak, but of his daughters. There were two, one a lady of “uncertain age,” and the other not. The “not” was about eighteen, and the bitterest, rabidest, outspokenest, cantankerous-est specimen of *secesh* femininity I’ve come across yet. She had no objection to talk, and she commenced at me when she saw my flag, with, “Is that a Yankee flag?” “Well, the Yankees use it,” said I, “but here’s the Yankee flag,” and I unrolled a new silk “star spangled” and waved it over her head. “Don’t you think,” said I, “that that’s a prettier flag than the ‘stars and bars?’” “No, indeed! I can’t see it, sir—no, sir—give me the Confederate flag. I don’t want none o’ yer gridirons about me.” Finally after some bantering we dropped the subject and I induced her after a chaffer to sell me two quarts of milk for half a dollar, and she offered me half a loaf of rye bread for the same price, but I preferred hard tack. “We’re no way par-

ticular about prices with you all,” she said. “So I see,” meekly replied I. Next morning we were going, and I was bound to have some fun first, so I opened by asking her if she didn’t sometimes feel lonesome with none of the young men about. “Well, sir, not lonesome enough to care to see you Yankees about.” (Repulse.) “Have you any relatives in the rebel army?” “I have two brothers and a lover in the Confederate army.” (Cool—that about the lover.) “Then Yankee boys stand no chance in your good graces?” “No, sir, I hate the sight of them.” (Cooler yet.) “Why, I don’t think you are a secessionist.” (Tactics.) “Well, I am, sir, I am true to the South.” (I wish I could write their pronunciation of South; it beats all the down-east you ever heard of.) “No, you are a Yankee, at least a Yankee *secesh*.” “No, indeed, sir, nary drop o’ Yankee blood in my veins, I tell you, sir.” “Oh, but you are, begging your pardon, and I’ll prove it to you.” “No, sir, you can’t do that, sir; better tell that to some one else. If I had any Yankee blood in me I’d let it out. Yes, indeed, I would.” “Well, you acknowledge that a Yankee thinks more of property and money than any-

thing else, don’t you?” “Yes, sir, I’ve heard they do, and I believe it.” “Yes, well, you’re a Yankee then. If you were a *secesh* you would go with the South and help them. True *secesh* women do that, but your family have some property here and you stay to take care of it and let the South get along the best she can. You are a genuine Yankee, say what you please. You wouldn’t go and share the fortunes of your ‘Sunny South,’ but you must stay to keep the Yankees from destroying the property.” Oh, how she did sputter! “To think that she should be called a Yankee!” I guess she’ll get over it.

Down on the bank of the river I went into a house and met a young married woman with a baby in her arms. She had been pretty once and it was not age that spoiled her beauty, but care. “Can you sell me a pie, or something good for my dinner?” said I. “A pie! sir,” said she. “Well, now, sir, if I was to tell you that I have not tasted or seen a piece of pie for more than a year, would you believe me?” “I certainly should if you said so. Of course I couldn’t doubt a lady’s word.” “Sir, ’fore God it is the truth. I have only been married ’bout a year, and my husband, who was an overseer, came on to this place after the fruit was all gone, and I’ve had no fruit. I haven’t seen a bit of sugar, nor coffee, nor tea for nigh eight months, I reckon,” and she went on and gave me such a story of struggles to keep alive, to get enough to keep from starving, as made all the hard times I have ever seen seem like a life of luxury. I did pity her. On such as she, the poor whites of the South, the burden of this war is heaviest. She had but little sympathy for the South or North either. She cared but little how the war ended, so it ended soon. Poor woman, she understood but little of the nature of the contest. She sent a little darky girl to bring in a pan of milk. The girl came with it balanced on her head, not touching her hands. I remarked how strange it seemed to me to see everybody in the south carry pails on their heads. “Why,” said she, “how do you-all carry ’em?” “In our hands.” She laughed. “I have to tote all my water up a steep bank, and, if I toted it in my hand, it would pull me over.” She gave me some milk, and by the time I had eaten my dinner the colonel came back from the lines, and I mounted my horse and came back to camp.

Strawberries are ripe and I get a few. No more news from Fredericksburg.
MOURNING COLONEL SHAW:
SOUTH CAROLINA, JULY 1863

Charlotte Forten: Journal, July 20–24, 1863

The daughter of a prominent Philadelphia black family and an active abolitionist, Charlotte Forten became one of the first black schoolteachers in the Sea Islands when she arrived on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, in October 1862. Forten met Robert Gould Shaw in early July when the 54th Massachusetts was posted to St. Helena, and wrote in her journal: “What purity what nobleness of soul, what exquisite gentleness in that beautiful face!” On July 18 the 54th Massachusetts lost 272 men killed, wounded, or captured, more than two-fifths of the regiment, in an assault on Fort Wagner in Charleston Harbor. The abolitionist, social reformer, and writer Thomas Wentworth Higginson, “Col. H.” in Forten’s journal, commanded the 1st South Carolina Volunteers, a black regiment organized in the Sea Islands in late 1862.

Monday, July 20. For nearly two weeks we have waited, oh how anxiously for news of our regt. which went, we know, to Morris Is. to take part in the attack on Charleston. To-night comes news oh, so sad, so heart sickening. It is too terrible, too terrible to write. We can only hope it may not all be true. That our noble, beautiful young Colonel is killed, and the regt. cut to pieces! I cannot, cannot believe it. And yet I know it may be so. But oh, I am stunned, sick at heart. I can scarcely write. There was an attack on Fort Wagner. The 54th put in advance; fought bravely, desperately, but was finally overpowered and driven back after getting into the Fort. Thank Heaven! they fought bravely! And oh, I still must hope that our colonel, ours especially he seems to me, is not killed. But I can write no more to-night.

Beaufort, July 21. Came to town to-day hearing that nurses were sadly needed. Went to Mrs. L.’s. Found Col. H. and Dr. R. there. Mrs. L. was sure I sh’d not be able to endure the fatigues of hospital life even for a few days, but I thought differently, and the Col. and Dr. were both on my side. So at last Mrs. L. consented and made arrangements for my entering one of the hospitals to-morrow.

It is sad to see the Col. at all feeble. He is usually so very strong and vigorous. He is going North next week. The Dr. is looking very ill. He is quite exhausted. I shall not feel at peace until he is safe in his northern home. The attachment between these two is beautiful, both are so thoroughly good and noble. And both have the rarest charm of manner.

Wednesday, July 22. My hospital life began to-day. Went early this morning with Mrs. L. and Mrs. G., the surgeon’s wife, saw that the Dr. had not finished dressing the wounds, and while I waited below Mrs. S. gave me some sewing to do—mending the pantaloons and jackets of the poor fellows. (They are all of the 54th.) It was with a full heart that I sewed up bullet holes and bayonet cuts. Sometimes I found a jacket that told a sad tale—so torn to pieces that it was far past mending. After awhile I went through the wards. As I passed along I thought “Many and low are the pallets, but each is the face of a friend.” And I was surprised to see such cheerful faces looking up from the beds. Talked a little with some of the patients and assisted Mrs. G. in distributing medicines. Mrs. L. kindly sent her carriage for me and I returned home, weary, but far more pleasantly impressed than I had thought possible, with hospital life.

Thursday, July 23. Said farewell to Col. H. who goes North in the “Arago” today. Am very sorry that Dr. R. c’d not go with him, not having been able to get his papers. He is looking so ill. It makes me very anxious. He goes to Seaside for a few days. I hope the change, and Mrs. H.’s kind care will do him good. Took a more thorough survey of the hospital to-day. It is a large new brick building—quite close to the water,—two-storied, many windowed, and very airy—in every way well adapted for a hospital. Yesterday I was employed part of the time in writing letters for the men. It was pleasant to see the brave, cheerful, uncomplaining spirit which they all breathed. Some of the poor fellows had come from the far west—even so far as Michigan. Talked with them much to-day. Told them that we had heard that their noble Colonel was not dead, but had been taken prisoner by the rebels. How joyfully their wan
faces lighted up! They almost started from their couches as the hope entered their souls. Their attachment to their gallant young colonel is beautiful to see. How warmly, how enthusiastically they speak of him. “He was one of the best little men in the world,” they said. “No one c’ld be kinder to a set of men than he was to us.” Brave grateful hearts! I hope they will ever prove worthy of such a leader. And God grant that he may indeed be living. But I fear, I greatly fear it may be but a false report. One poor fellow here interests me greatly. He is very young, only nineteen, comes from Michigan. He is very badly wounded—in both legs, and there is a ball—in the stomach—it is thought that cannot be extracted. This poor fellow suffers terribly. His groans are pitiful to hear. But he utters no complaint, and it is touching to see his gratitude for the least kindness that one does him. Mrs. G. asked him if he w’ld like her to write to his home. But he said no. He was an only son, and had come away against his mother’s will. He w’ld not have her written to until he was better. Poor fellow! that will never be in this world. *

Another, a Sergeant, suffers great pain, being badly wounded in the leg. But he too lies perfectly patient and uncomplaining. He has such a good, honest face. It is pleasant to look at it—although it is black. He is said to be one of the best and bravest men in the regiment.

When I went in this morning and found my patients so cheerful some of them even quite merry, I tho’t it c’ld not be possible that they were badly wounded. Many, indeed have only flesh wounds. But there are others—and they among the most uncomplaining—who are severely wounded;—some dangerously so. Brave fellows! I feel it a happiness, an honor, to do the slightest service for them. True they were unsuccessful in the attack of Fort Wagner. But that was no fault of theirs. It is the testimony of all that they fought bravely as men can fight, and that it was only when completely overwhelmed by superior numbers that they were driven back.

Friday, July 24. To-day the news of Col. Shaw’s death is confirmed. There can no longer be any doubt. It makes me sad, sad at heart. They say he sprang from the parapet of the fort and cried “Onward, my brave boys, onward”; then fell, pierced with wounds. I know it was a glorious death. But oh, it is hard, very hard for the young wife, so late a bride, for the invalid mother, whose only and most dearly loved son he was,—that heroic mother who rejoiced in the position which he occupied as colonel of a colored regiment. My heart bleeds for her. His death is a very sad loss to us. I recall him as a much loved friend. Yet I saw him but a few times. Oh what must it be to the wife and the mother. Oh it is terrible. It seems very, very hard that the best and the noblest must be the earliest called away. Especially has it been so throughout this dreadful war.

Mr. P. who has been unremitting in his attention to the wounded—called at our building to-day, and took me to the Officers Hospital, which is but a very short distance from here. It is in one of the finest residences in Beaufort, and is surrounded by beautiful grounds. Saw Major Hallowell, who, though badly wounded—in three places—is hoped to be slowly improving. A little more than a week ago I parted with him, after an exciting horseback ride, how strong, how well, how vigorous he was then! And now thoroughly prostrated! But he with all the other officers of the 54th, like the privates, are brave, patient—cheerful. With deep sadness he spoke of Col. Shaw and then told me something that greatly surprised me;—that the Col. before that fatal attack had told him that in case he fell he wished me to have one of his horses—He had three very fine spirited ones that he had brought from the North. (I afterward found this to be a mistake. He only wished me to take charge of the horses until they c’ld be sent North to his wife.—) How very, very kind it was! And to me, almost a perfect stranger. I shall treasure this gift most sacredly, all my life long.

*He has since recovered. I am surprised to hear.
A journal, schoolteacher, and poet who had edited the literary and household departments of the *Michigan Farmer* for several years, Lois Bryan Adams moved to Washington in the summer of 1863 and began working as a clerk for the recently established Department of Agriculture. Adams contributed regular letters to the *Detroit Advertiser and Tribune* while also serving as a volunteer for the Michigan Soldiers’ Relief Association. She wrote about a fund-raising fair held at the Patent Office (where the Department of Agriculture was housed) in a letter that appeared in the *Advertiser and Tribune* on February 29, 1864.

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*From Washington*

**Opening of the Great Fair at the Patent Office**

*From Our Own Correspondent*

*Washington, February 23, 1864*

Washington celebrated the birthday of its great namesake in a very appropriate manner. The 22nd was the day set apart for the inauguration of the grand Fair got up by the ladies for the benefit of the Christian Commission and the families of the District volunteers. Although quite a little army of soldiers, clerks, and others, officered by the lady managers had been at work on the decorations of the hall, all was not yet quite complete when the hour for admitting the public arrived, but amid the blaze of splendor that everywhere met the eye, these little deficiencies were quite unnoticed.

The hall itself is the grandest place that could have been selected for such an exhibition. It is in the third story of the Patent Office building, on the partially finished and unoccupied north side, and is 300 feet in length by 75 feet wide, and high in proportion. The floor is of marble, and the walls, though yet unplastered, have been so wreathed and draped with evergreens and the national colors, that scarcely a blemish is visible. Down the center and along each side, stands, booths, bowers, and fairy-like arbors are ranged, all brilliant with the “red, white, and blue,” draped, festooned, and bound and blended with the twining wreaths of evergreen. These booths and bowers all bear appropriate mottoes, and are all filled with the beautiful and tempting things that Fairs are made of, with pleasant-faced ladies adding still stronger temptations for visitors to invest in the great charity scheme. The hall is warmed by registers, and well lighted with gas, and presents by night a scene of bewildering beauty and dazzling splendor.

At the extreme west of the hall a handsome stage is built up, at the back of which is a large brazen shield, from which spears and lances radiate like sunbeams, bearing on their points small crimson pennons, while behind them flash the everywhere present stars and stripes. The front of this stage is handsomely draped and festooned, like everything else, with red, white and blue, and evergreens fashioned in various symbolic forms. On each side of the front is a splendid stand of arms, surmounted by armor and an ancient plumed helmet, and intertwined with evergreens.

It was expected that Edward Everett would have been here to deliver the opening address, but he did not come, and his place was very happily supplied by the Hon. L. E. Chittenden. The vast hall was crowded almost to suffocation long before the speaker was announced, and the passing time was somewhat enlivened by the martial music of the band present.

A little before eight, a general buzz and clapping of hands went through the crowd, and it was whispered that the President was coming up the hall. Very soon, accompanied by his son Robert, the Rev. Mr. Sunderland, Hon. B. B. French, and other gentlemen, he passed through to the rear of the stage, came upon it and quietly took his seat on a sofa in one corner, with his son beside him. Prayer was offered by Mr. Sunderland in a most fervent and patriotic spirit, after which Mr. Chittenden was introduced. His address was of considerable length, but so earnest, patriotic, and eloquent, that it was listened to throughout with rapt attention, the audience frequently showing their
Women and the War

Lois Bryan Adams

hearty approval by sincere and merited applause. After the address, the Hon. B. B. French, Commissioner of Public Buildings, read an original poem on the occasion of the present gathering and exhibition. It was also radically patriotic and anti-slavery in its tone, and was loudly applauded by the audience.

When Mr. French retired there was a universal clapping of hands for the President to come forward. It continued so long and so earnest that several gentlemen on the stage went to him to persuade him to gratify the general desire; but it was some moments before he would allow himself to be moved at all, and when he did rise and come forward, it was evidently with very great reluctance. He was looking extremely pale and worn, but smiled good-naturedly as he remarked that he thought the Committee who had invited him to be present had practiced a little fraud upon him, as no intimation had been given that he would be expected to say a word. He was unprepared for a speech, and felt that after the eloquent address and poem to which the audience had listened, any attempt of his would be a failure; besides, from the position he occupied everything that he said necessarily went into print, therefore, it was advisable that he should say nothing foolish. (Laughter and applause, and a voice, “Nothing foolish ever comes from our President.”) It was very difficult to say sensible things. In speaking without preparation he might make some bad mistake, which, if published, would do both the nation and himself harm. Therefore, he would only say that he thanked the managers of the fair for the persevering manner in which they had prosecuted the enterprise for so good an object, and with this expression of his gratitude, he hoped they would accept his apology and excuse him from speaking.

He then retired to his seat amidst the hearty applause of the multitude. Soon after this the benediction was pronounced, and the President and his party withdrew. There was music by the band, and some singing on the stage afterward, and the hall was filled till midnight and after by the crowds who on this first day of opening came more to see than to buy.

One of the most attractive features among the decorations at this fair, is a miniature representation of Gen. U. S. Grant's headquarters at Chattanooga. Near the center of the hall a space some 14 feet square is inclosed, and within are built up two little mountains of rock work, mosses, and branches of evergreen. On the top of one mountain is a fort, with soldiers, cannon, and everything complete; on the other a lookout; a rustic bridge spans the gorge between them, and at the bottom of the gorge is a small body of water with a boat and ducks on its surface; and along its banks and scattered among the rocks are turtles, cattle, goats, and birds, as like as life. A winding gravel road runs from the fort to the lookout, and heavily laden wagons are ascending the heights of each mountain. On the low ground beneath the foot and protected by it, is a rustic building, with the name “U. S. Grant” over the door. Around the whole enclosure slender columns with evergreens springing up, from the tops of which light arches meet over the center, forming a sort of airy dome. Altogether it is very beautiful and draws crowds of admirers.

As a sort of side scene some enterprising ladies have got up a representation of a New England kitchen a hundred years ago. Here several hoopless dames may be seen in petticoat and short gown, with high-crowned cambric caps and other evidences of antiquity; one is spinning at the big wheel, another at the little one; one winding yarn from old-time swifts, one carding; young girls churning, knitting and paring apples; visitors coming in with their antique calash sunbonnets; the fortune-teller in her red cloak and hood, the circulating snuff-box, strings of dried apples along the wall, the wooden mortar and pestle and iron candlesticks on the chimney-piece, old-fashioned pitchers and pewter dishes on the dresser—all are there, and the identical old fire-place, that some of us may remember, with the pot hanging from the crane, and the forestick burned in two. It all seems very well done except the talking. When people here attempt Yankee talk, they slide down at once into the negro slang, which is quite another thing. However, the New England kitchen at the Washington fair promises to be a very attractive and remunerative feature. L.
Judith W. McGuire and her husband settled in February 1862 in Richmond, where she later found work as a clerk in the Confederate commissary department. In her diary on December 12, 1863, she noted that the price of bacon was $2.50 a pound, and then wrote: “How are the poor to live? Though it is said that the poor genteel are the real sufferers. Money is laid aside for paupers by every one who can possibly do it, but persons who do not let their wants be known are the really poor.” On February 15, 1864, she recorded that bacon was now selling for $8 a pound.

28th.—Our hearts ache for the poor. A few days ago, as E. was walking out, she met a wretchedly dressed woman, of miserable appearance, who said she was seeking the Young Men’s Christian Association, where she hoped to get assistance and work to do. E. carried her to the door, but it was closed, and the poor woman’s wants were pressing. She then brought her home, supplied her with food, and told her to return to see me the following afternoon. She came, and with an honest countenance and manner told me her history. Her name is Brown; her husband had been a workman in Fredericksburg; he joined the army, and was killed at the second battle of Manassas. Many of her acquaintances in Fredericksburg fled last winter during the bombardment; she became alarmed, and with her three little children fled too. She had tried to get work in Richmond; sometimes she succeeded, but could not supply her wants. A kind woman had lent her a room and a part of a garden, but it was outside of the corporation; and although it saved house-rent, it debarred her from the relief of the associations formed for supplying the city poor with meal, wood, etc. She had evidently been in a situation little short of starvation. I asked her if she could get bread enough for her children by her work? She said she could sometimes, and when she could not, she “got turnip-tops from her piece of a garden, which were now putting up smartly, and she boiled them, with a little salt, and fed them on that.” “But do they satisfy your hunger,” said I? “Well, it is something to go upon for awhile, but it does not stick by us like as bread does, and then we gets hungry again, and I am afraid to let the children eat them too often, lest they should get sick; so I tries to get them to go to sleep; and sometimes the woman in the next room will bring the children her leavings, but she is monstrous poor.” When I gave her meat for her children, taken from the bounty of our Essex friends, tears of gratitude ran down her cheeks; she said they “had not seen meat for so long.” Poor thing, I promised her that her case should be known, and that she should not suffer so again. A soldier’s widow shall not suffer from hunger in Richmond. It must not be, and will not be when her case is known. Others are now interested for her. This evening Mrs. R. and myself went in pursuit of her; but though we went through all the streets and lanes of “Butcher Flat” and other vicinities, we could get no clue to her. We went into many small and squalid-looking houses, yet we saw no such abject poverty as Mrs. Brown’s. All who needed it were supplied with meal by the corporation, and many were supporting themselves with Government work. One woman stood at a table cutting out work; we asked her the stereotyped question—“Is there a very poor widow named Brown in this direction?” “No, ladies; I knows two Mrs. Browns, but they ain’t so poor, and ain’t no widows nuther.” As neither of them was our Mrs. B., we turned away; but she suddenly exclaimed, “Ladies, will one of you read my husband’s last letter to me? for you see I can’t read writing.” As Mrs. R. took it, she remarked that it was four weeks old, and asked if no one had read it to her? “Oh yes, a gentleman has read it to me four or five times; but you see I loves to hear it, for may-be I shan’t hear from him no more.” The tears now poured down her cheeks. “He always writes to me every chance, and it has been so long since he wrote that, and they tell me that they have been fighting, and may-be something has happened to him.” We assured her that there had been no fighting—not even a skirmish. This quieted her,
and Mrs. R. read the badly written but affectionate letter, in which he expresses his anxiety to see her and his children, and his inability to get a furlough. She then turned to the mantelpiece, and with evident pride took from a nail an old felt hat, through the crown of which were two bullet-holes. It was her husband’s hat, through which a bullet had passed in the battle of Chancellorsville, and, as she remarked, must have come “very nigh grazing his head.” We remarked upon its being a proof of his bravery, which gratified her very much; she then hung it up carefully, saying that it was just opposite her bed, and she never let it be out of her sight. She said she wanted her husband to fight for his country, and not “to stand back, like some women’s husbands, to be drafted; she would have been ashamed of that, but she felt uneasy, because something told her that he would never get back.” Poor woman! we felt very much interested in her, and tried to comfort her.

Biographical Notes

Lois Bryan Adams (October 14, 1817–June 28, 1870) Born in Whitestown, New York, the daughter of a carpenter. Family moved in 1823 to Michigan Territory and settled near Ypsilanti, then moved to the Constantine area in 1835. Attended White Pigeon Academy, branch of the University of Michigan, in 1839. Married James R. Adams, a newspaper editor, in 1841. Moved to Kentucky after her husband died of consumption in 1848, and taught school for three years before returning to Michigan in 1851. Began writing for the monthly (later weekly) Michigan Farmer and for the Detroit Advertiser and Tribune. Moved to Detroit in 1853 to work on the Michigan Farmer, and became its copublisher in 1854 and household editor in 1856. Sold her interest in the publication in 1861. Published Sybelle and Other Poems (1862). Moved to Washington, D.C., in 1863 to take post as clerk in the recently formed Department of Agriculture and became assistant to the director of the agricultural museum. Volunteered during the war for the Michigan Soldiers’ Relief Association while contributing columns to the Detroit Advertiser and Tribune. Continued work at the Department of Agriculture after the war. Died in Washington, D.C.

Louisa May Alcott (November 29, 1832–March 6, 1888) Born in Germantown, Pennsylvania, the daughter of schoolteacher and educational reformer Amos Bronson Alcott. Became a teacher and began publishing poetry and stories in the 1850s. Supported abolitionism, temperance, woman’s suffrage, woman’s rights, and other reform movements. Traveled to Washington, D.C., in December 1862 to serve as nurse in an army hospital, but soon fell ill with typhoid fever and returned to Massachusetts; described her nursing experiences in Hospital Sketcher (1863). Her novels include Little Women (1868–69), An Old-Fashioned Girl (1870), Little Men (1871), and Jo’s Boys (1886). Died in Boston.

Sallie Brock (March 18, 1831–March 22, 1911) Born Sarah Ann Brock in Madison County, Virginia, the daughter of a hotel owner. Moved with her family to Richmond in 1858. Began working as a tutor in King and Queen County, Virginia, in 1860, but returned to Richmond in

Harriet Ann Jacobs (1813–March 7, 1897) Born in Edenton, North Carolina, the daughter of slaves. After the death of her mother in 1819, she was raised by her grandmother and her white mistress, Margaret Horniblow, who taught her to read, write, and sew. In 1825 Horniblow died, and Jacobs was sent to the household of Dr. James Norcom. At sixteen, to escape Norcom’s repeated sexual advances, Jacobs began a relationship with a white lawyer, Samuel Tredwell Sawyer (later a member of the U.S. House of Representatives), with whom she had two children, Joseph (b. 1829) and Louisa Matilda (b. 1833). In 1835, Jacobs ran away and spent the next seven years hiding in a crawl space above her freed grandmother’s storeroom. In 1842, escaped to New York City, where she was reunited with her children. Worked as a nurse for the family of Nathaniel Parker Willis; moved to Boston in 1843 to avoid recapture by Norcom. Moved to Rochester in 1849, where she became part of a circle of abolitionists surrounding Frederick Douglass. In 1852, Cornelia Grinnell Willis, second wife of Nathaniel Parker Willis, purchased Jacobs’s manumission. Published Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself, pseudonymously in 1861. From 1862 to 1868 Jacobs engaged in Quaker-sponsored relief work among former slaves in Washington, D.C.; Alexandria, Virginia; and Savannah, Georgia. She then lived with her daughter in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and in Washington, D.C., where she died.


Judith W. McGuire (March 19, 1813–March 21, 1897) Born Judith White Brockenbrough near Richmond, Virginia, the daughter of a judge. Married John P. McGuire, an Episcopalian rector, in 1846. Moved to Alexandria in 1852 when husband became principal of the Episcopal High School of Virginia. Fled Alexandria in May 1861 and settled in Richmond in February 1862. Worked as a clerk in the Confederate commissary department, November 1863–April 1864. Published Diary of a Southern Refugee, During the War (1867). Kept a school with her husband in Essex County in the 1870s. Published General Robert E. Lee: The Christian Soldier (1873). Died in Richmond.
Thomas O. Moore (April 10, 1804–June 25, 1876) Born near Clinton, North Carolina, the son of a plantation owner. Moved to Rapides Parish, Louisiana, in 1829 to manage uncle’s plantation. Married Bethiah Johnston Leonard, 1830. Acquired his own plantation, raising cotton and later sugar. Served as a Democrat in the state house of representatives, 1848–49, and in the state senate, 1856–60. Elected governor of Louisiana in 1859 and served January 1860–January 1864. Strongly supported secession after Lincoln’s election. Following the Union occupation of New Orleans in April 1862, moved state capital from Baton Rouge to Opelousas and later Shreveport. Fled to Texas in spring of 1864 to escape Union troops, and to Mexico and Cuba following the Confederate surrender. Returned to Louisiana after being paroled by President Andrew Johnson, and received full pardon on January 15, 1867. Died at his plantation near Alexandria, Louisiana.

Sarah Morgan (February 28, 1842–May 5, 1909) Born in New Orleans, the daughter of a lawyer. Family moved in 1850 to Baton Rouge, where father served as a judge. Spent war with widowed mother and sisters in Baton Rouge, in the countryside near Port Hudson, and in Union-occupied New Orleans. Two of her brothers died of illness in January 1864 while serving in the Confederate army. Moved with mother to brother’s plantation near Columbia, South Carolina, in 1872. Began writing editorials for the Charleston News and Courier in 1873 as “Mr. Fowler.” Married Francis Warrington Dawson, editor of the News and Courier, in 1874. Husband killed in 1889 by doctor who had been paying unwanted attentions to family’s governess. Moved in 1899 to Paris, where her son lived. Published Les Aventures de Jeannot Lap, version of Brer Rabbit stories, in 1903. Died in Paris.


Catharine Peirce (March 16, 1828–April 2, 1867) Born Catharine Milner in Pennsylvania, the daughter of a schoolteacher. Married Taylor Peirce in York County, Pennsylvania, in 1846. Joined husband, who had been working as a farm laborer, in Union, Iowa, in 1851. Spent war with children, brother, and sister-in-law in Des Moines, Iowa, helping brother to run boardinghouse for transient soldiers while her husband served in the Union army. Died in Des Moines while giving birth to her daughter Catharine, who survived.

Kate Stone (May 8, 1841–December 28, 1907) Born Sarah Katherine Stone in Hinds County, Mississippi, the daughter of a plantation owner. Family moved to plantation in Madison Parish, Louisiana, thirty miles northwest of Vicksburg. Educated at boarding school in Nashville. Two of her five brothers died while serving in the Confederate army in 1863. Family fled plantation in April 1863 during the Vicksburg campaign and went to eastern Texas. Returned to plantation in November 1865. Married Henry Bry Holmes in 1869. Founded local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Died in Tallulah, Louisiana.
Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln wins presidential election, November 6, defeating Stephen Douglas (Northern Democratic), John C. Breckinridge (Southern Democratic), and John Bell (Constitutional Union). Lincoln receives 180 out of 303 electoral votes, all of them from free states. South Carolina convention votes to secede from the Union, December 20.


Congress proposes Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution abolishing slavery, January 31. Sherman begins march through the Carolinas, February 1. Lincoln delivers his Second Inaugural Address, March 4. Sherman reaches Goldsboro, North Carolina, March 23. Grant assaults Confederate lines at Petersburg, April 2, forcing evacuation of Richmond. Lee surrenders to Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, April 9. Lincoln is shot, April 14, and dies, April 15; Vice President Andrew Johnson becomes president. Remaining Confederate armies surrender, April 26–May 26. Ratification
Questions for Discussion

1. What were the differences and similarities between the wartime experiences of northern and southern women, and between black and white women?

2. How were women’s actions during the war shaped by peacetime expectations regarding women’s role in society? How did the actions of women during the war challenge these expectations?

3. What view of women’s role in public life is conveyed by General Butler’s “Woman Order,” and by Governor Moore’s response to it?

4. How does Judith W. McGuire’s depiction of the impact of the war on white southern women in May 1861 compare with what McGuire wrote in February 1864, and with Sallie Brock’s depiction of life in Richmond in the fall of 1861?

5. Oliver W. Norton describes encounters with two women in Virginia to his sister. How does his depiction of the dedicated “secesh” woman compare with that of the young mother?

6. The fear of slave rebellion had haunted white southerners for decades before the war. Is Kate Stone’s narrative of her encounter with former slaves raiding plantations a fulfillment of those fears, or does her experience contradict them? Does her narrative seem reliable regarding what happened, and insightful as to why the events she relates occurred?

7. How does reading these firsthand accounts affect your sense of the purpose and meaning of the war? Does it change how you understand the role of individuals—their words and actions—in historical events? What are the differences between exploring the war through participant accounts and reading a historical narrative of the same events?

8. What did you find most surprising or unexpected about these writings?

9. Choosing one of the pieces, what do you think was the author’s purpose for writing it? Do you think it achieves its purpose?
might the act of writing it have helped the author to make sense of his or her experience of the Civil War?

10. How are the experiences of the Civil War reflected in the language, tone, attitude, and style of the writing?