

GRIEVING FOR A NATION:  
FROM WIFE TO WIDOW IN THE CONFEDERATE SOUTH

By

ANGELA ESCO ELDER

(Under the Direction of Stephen Berry)

ABSTRACT

Approximately 250,000 Confederate soldiers died in the American Civil War, creating thousands of widows. And yet, the stories, experiences, and impact of these women remains largely absent from the historical narrative. This thesis focuses upon the immediate effects of widowhood as an emotional experience, with an emphasis on the two and a half year mourning period. War widows had a tremendous amount of social capital and the Confederacy was anxious to oversee how they spent it. Etiquette books, condolence letters, literature, and other elements of southern society prescribed a specific type of mourning for war widows. Mourning prescriptions may have been uniform, but widows were not. The war created widows in higher numbers, younger ages, and of all social classes. This thesis focuses on the emotional, human experience of losing a husband and how that emotional experience was channeled, contained, and, sometimes, reinvested in the Confederacy.

INDEX WORDS: American Civil War, Confederacy, Death, Emotions History, Gender, Grief, Marriage, Widows, Women

GRIEVING FOR A NATION:  
FROM WIFE TO WIDOW IN THE CONFEDERATE SOUTH

by

ANGELA ESCO ELDER

B.A., The University of Georgia, 2009

B.S.Ed., The University of Georgia, 2009

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ART

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2011

© 2011

Angela Esco Elder

All Rights Reserved

GRIEVING FOR A NATION:  
FROM WIFE TO WIDOW IN THE CONFEDERATE SOUTH

By

ANGELA ESCO ELDER

Major Professor: Stephen Berry

Committee: Kathleen Clark  
John Inscoe

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
May 2011

## DEDICATION

To Nathan Elder

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Words certainly fall short in expressing my gratitude to all those who have enriched this thesis. As an undergraduate I was inspired by Dr. Steven Nash, who continues to give me magnificent advice to this day. The University of Georgia's history department, with its talented professors, compassionate staff, and energetic graduate students, is certainly one of the richest soils from which a thesis can blossom. I am grateful for the generosity of Amanda and Greg Gregory who have supported both the department's Civil War Era studies and this research project. I must also thank my fellow graduate students, especially the Southern Roundtable, for listening to my ceaseless chatter as I worked through problems aloud in their cluttered offices and cozy kitchens. My committee, a dream team consisting of Dr. Kathleen Clark and Dr. John Inscoe, could not have been more helpful or encouraging if they tried. As for my advisor, the dynamic Dr. Stephen Berry, I simply cannot thank him enough for his feedback, encouragement, and constant support through the process that is thesis writing.

Friends outside the department, including Beth Crowley, Heather Geiger, Mari Catherine Napoli, Megan Payne, Diana Sargent, Valerie Thomason, and countless others—thank you for the cookies, the distractions, and the constant supply of laughter. To my family, thank you for being my cheerleaders when I needed you most. I appreciate my in-laws not just for the writing desk they provided me, but for always making me feel like a daughter, not a daughter-in-law. To Dasher, thank you for being my persistent personal trainer. A special word of appreciation must go out to my mother, whose kindness, selflessness, and loud laughter can never be appreciated enough.

And to my husband—my living husband whose wife spends far too many hours reading about dead ones—this thesis would not have been possible without you. You bought the groceries, cooked the dinners, and cleaned the dishes after the dinners. You kept life moving when I remained stuck behind mountains of books, papers, and my laptop. And you reminded me that life still existed when I got too involved with the stories of those who were losing it. Studying widowhood has a funny way of making a wife appreciate what she has. Thank you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                            | Page |
|----------------------------|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....      | v    |
| CHAPTER                    |      |
| INTRODUCTION.....          | 1    |
| 1    HE’S DEAD.....        | 14   |
| 2    TO BE A “WIDOW”.....  | 39   |
| 3    BEHIND THE BLACK..... | 68   |
| EPILOGUE.....              | 94   |
| REFERENCES.....            | 98   |

## INTRODUCTION

*“My aunt and her son accompanied the widow to Richmond in a freight car, she sitting beside the coffin. No one of us is likely to forget the sad days that followed. She was like a flower broken in the stalk.”*

-Mrs. Burton Harrison, describing her cousin, Hetty Cary<sup>1</sup>

Hetty Cary was pretty, so pretty that one soldier claimed she was “the most beautiful woman of her day and generation...altogether the most beautiful woman I ever saw in any land.” Championed as “Richmond’s belle,” most knew her and nearly as many admired her in 1865. At Hetty’s wedding, an attendee gushed that Hetty’s “complexion of pearly white, the vivid roses on her cheeks and lips, the sheen of her radiant hair, and the happy gleam of her beautiful, brown eyes seemed to defy all sorrow, change, or fear.” Even her future brother-in-law declared her the “greatest [attraction] to me in the world.” On Thursday, January 19, 1865, Hetty walked down the aisle of Saint Paul’s Episcopal Church to marry John Pegram, a Confederate colonel. Despite the raging Civil War, “all was bright and beautiful” at their wedding. This was an event attended by Virginia’s elite, “a crowd of relatives and friends.” Not only did Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his wife attend the celebration, they also sent their personal carriage to carry the bride and groom to the chapel. For one friend it was a night when “one of the handsomest and most lovable men I ever knew wed to the handsomest woman in the Southland.” It was a grand event in which “happiness beamed from every eye.”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Burton Harrison, *Recollections Grace and Gay* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1911), 205.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Kyd Douglas, *I Rode with Stonewall: The War Experiences of the Youngest Member of Jackson’s Staff* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1940), 271, 325; Wilson Miles Cary to Captain Henry P. Goddard, 30 January 1909, Transcript, Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond as quoted in Walter S. Griggs, Jr., *General John Pegram, C.S.A.* (Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1993), 47. Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh papers henceforth referred to as P-J-M; Constance Cary as quoted in Griggs, 114-115; William Pegram to Mary Evans Pegram Anderson, 16 December 1863, P-J-M, as quoted in Peter S.

John returned to duty within days, settling Hetty into a farmhouse behind Confederate lines. This home, just nine miles south of Petersburg, also served as his headquarters. John stayed with Hetty most nights, a luxury many officers' wives did not enjoy. The deep rumble of cannons could be heard from the kitchen, but Hetty nonetheless referred to it as "our dear little cottage home." Delighted to be near her new husband, Hetty exclaimed "I had rather pass my honeymoon there than anywhere else in the whole world." On February 5, 1865, Ulysses S. Grant sent troops to the area. He wanted the Confederate supply lines, which ran through Petersburg, to be cut. Just before sunrise on February 6, John was "aroused by the information that the enemy was about to renew attack." His beautiful bride of less than three weeks "made him coffee and prepared breakfast for him in the gray of dawn" before she went to spend the day with her mother. After a long day of fighting and maneuvering at Hatcher's Run, John was "encouraging his troops" near Darbney's saw mill. The sun would soon set, but not before a union bullet "struck him in the side just above the lower rib." John gasped "I am wounded badly." He died in the snow nearly instantaneously.<sup>3</sup>

"Of his comrades, none was found who would volunteer to break the news" to Hetty. General Gordon asked John's close friend Henry Kyd Douglas to inform her, but even he refused. After John's body was "tenderly placed" in a downstairs office in the farmhouse, Hetty was told that "she may safely return to their quarters...for it would be late before he [her husband] could get back." That night she slept in their bed, "in the room above his body," still unaware of her husband's fate. The following morning she heard a knock on the door from "a

---

Carmichael, *Lee's Young Artillerist: William R. J. Pegram* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 111; Judith W. McGuire, 12 March 1865, in *Diary of a Southern Refugee during the War by A Lady of Virginia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 341; Carmichael, 154; Douglas, 325; McGuire, 341.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson Miles Cary to Captain Henry P. Goddard as quoted Griggs, 115; Harrison, 204; U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, vol. 46, pt. 2, 1206, as quoted in Griggs, 117; R. Travers to Virginia Johnson Pegram, 10 February 1865, P-J-M Papers, as quoted in Carmichael, 156.

gentleman, Miss Hetty, he wants to speak with you. It's a gentleman you know very well." She "sprang forward, fondly expecting to be folded in the arms of her beloved husband, for he was always playing some such surprise on her when he came home." Instead, an older gentleman stood in the doorframe with a note in his hand. She eagerly inquired about the letter, to which "he replied as he handed her the note, 'Prepare for the worst!!'" Hetty immediately asked, "'What is the worst?' He responded, 'Your husband has fallen...he is dead.'"<sup>4</sup>

Ham Chamberlayne wrote that Hetty was "prostrated by the horror of it." When brought to her husband's body downstairs, she knelt beside his cold form and "put her hand into the breast of his coat, drawing out first his watch, still ticking, that she had wound for him just before they parted; next, a miniature of herself, both stained with life blood." On the journey to bring her husband's body home to Richmond, her grief consumed her still. General Robert E. Lee wrote to her "I cannot find words to express my deep sympathy in your affliction." One night, just outside of Richmond, Hetty "lay on a pallet by the body of her dead husband, and when dawn arrived, she had to be torn from him almost by force."<sup>5</sup>

"A deep gloom has just been thrown over the city by the untimely death of one of its own heroic sons," remarked one Richmond resident after John's body arrived. Exactly three weeks from the date of her wedding, Hetty was walking down the aisle again. "Again has St. Paul's, his own beloved church, been opened to receive the soldier and his bride—the one coffined for a hero's grave, the other, pale and trembling, though still by his side, in widow's garb." The same

---

<sup>4</sup> Conflicting records obscure who exactly informed Hetty of her husband's death. The quote included above hints that Hetty knew the gentleman who shared the news well, but in her cousin's recollections he is merely referred to as "an old gentleman, a civilian" who volunteered to share the news. An account by Colonel Douglas, however, suggests Major New told her the following morning. Harrison, 204-5; Jane Cary to Mr. Riccards, 14 May 1865, P-J-M Papers, as quoted in Griggs, 118.

<sup>5</sup> John Hampden Chamberlayne, *Ham Chamberlayne—Virginian: Letters and Papers of an Artillery Officer in the War for Southern Independence, 1861-1865*, ed. C. G. Chamberlayne (Richmond: 1932), 309 as quoted in Carmichael, 156; Harrison, 205; Robert E. Lee to Hetty Cary Pegram, 11 February 1865, P-J-M Papers, as quoted in Griggs, 120; Jane Cary to Mr. Riccards, as quoted in Griggs, 118.

minister who had conducted their wedding now conducted his funeral. Wedding guests who laughed just three weeks prior walked through the doors of the church as mourners. After the ceremony, the attendees took a “slow pilgrimage” up a steep bluff to the Pegram plot in the Hollywood Cemetery. The plot overlooked the James River. John’s family gathered behind Hetty, now a widow, just 29 years old. Three weeks a wife, she would remain a widow for over 15 years.<sup>6</sup>

Between 1861 and 1865, approximately three million husbands, fathers, sons, uncles, and brothers left for war. Over 250,000 southern families would never see their loved one’s face again. The exact number of women who became widows as a result of the American Civil War is unknown, but considering such a death toll it is safe to assume that this number was in the tens of thousands. If post-war America was “a nation in mourning,” as the famed diarist Mary Boykin Chesnut wrote on August 2, 1865, then the South was a region rocked by an emotional catastrophe. Approximately 61% of white, southern men aged 13 to 43 fought in the Confederate Army, as opposed to the Union Army’s mobilization of 31%. For every five of these southern men who marched off to war, four returned. The Civil War created an unprecedented number of widows. And yet, the stories, experiences, and impact of these widows remains largely absent from the historical narrative.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> McGuire, 341; Harrison, 203.

<sup>7</sup> According to Drew Gilpin Faust, Confederate men died at a rate three times that of their Yankee counterpart. As she explains in her notes, Mark A. Vinovskis concluded that 18% of white southern males aged thirteen to forty-five died in the war, James McPherson claims 31% of Confederate soldiers died, and Gary Gallagher estimates the Confederate death rate to be one in four. Like Faust, I cite the more conservative death statistics. A map illustrating the tremendous amounts of widows created by the Civil War can be found in J. David Hacker, *Libra Hilde*, and James Holland Jones, “The Effect of the Civil War on Southern Marriage Patterns,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. LXXVI, no. 1 (February 2010), 65. Mary Boykin Chesnut Diary, August 2, 1865, edited by Isabella D. Martin and Myrta Lockett Avery, *A Diary from Dixie* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1906), 404. Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2008), xi; Maris A. Vinovskis, “Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War? Some Preliminary Demographic Speculations,” in *Toward a Social History of the American Civil War: Exploratory Essays*, edited by Maris A. Vinovskis (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 9.

In the past three decades, library shelves have grown heavy with impressive scholarship addressing the experiences of white women living in the Confederate South. What began as a study of elite plantation mistresses has expanded to include explorations into class, race, age, and gender constructions. Books like Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber's *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, Drew Gilpin Faust's *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*, LeeAnn Whites' *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890*, and Laura Edwards' *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* lay a solid foundation. In order to understand widowhood, one must first understand womanhood.<sup>8</sup>

While these monographs analyze white southern womanhood as a whole, none directly address the experience of Confederate widowhood extensively. Kristen E. Wood, the first and only historian to publish a monograph on American widowhood, included a single chapter on Confederate widows in *Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the American Revolution through the Civil War*. While her wealthy widows were mostly women widowed before the Civil War, her account nonetheless showed how permanently husbandless women lived as slaveholding elite in the Confederacy. Wood argued that a "slaveholding widow developed a distinctive version of mastery" upon which the Civil War had a "devastating impact." Wood only briefly mentioned the "initial incapacitating grief" of losing a husband and quickly argued widows had "little choice" but to deal with the demands of their estates. Widows could easily lose their "dignity, slaves, food stuffs, livestock, furniture, clothes, jewelry, and occasionally

---

<sup>8</sup> *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, eds. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); LeeAnn Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000); Laura F. Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

their houses to Union troops.” While Wood effectively illustrated the demands of an elite lifestyle on Confederate widows, she did not discuss emotions or women widowed as a result of the war in any detail.<sup>9</sup>

Excellent articles discussing the financial aspects of Confederate widowhood have also appeared in recent decades. Jennifer L. Gross wrote extensively on this topic. In 1995, she completed her thesis “You Must Do the Best You Can: The Civil War Widows of Brunswick County, Virginia.” Using quantitative methodology, she compiled a statistical analysis of ages, children, property, and occupations of the 72 widows within this rural county to explore the financial situation of these women. Gross scrutinized the distribution of husbands’ estates and the affect of personal property on employment developments. According to Gross, economic considerations guided Confederate widows’ every move, from the decision to reside with family members to the choice of remarriage for their children’s wellbeing. Within the last sentences of her last paragraph, Gross conceded that “obviously, these women faced not only economic hardship as a result of their widowhood, but also the pain and grief associated with losing a loved one.” While she claimed this to be an obvious aspect of widowhood, she offered little analysis within her 127 page study of her subjects’ emotions. Gross hinted at something tremendously interesting when she wrote “the bereavement of these widows was perhaps exacerbated by the Confederate loss of the war, because, in effect, they had given up their husbands for a lost cause” but offered no additional investigation into the idea.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Kirsten E. Wood, *Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the American Revolution through the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 6, 14, 5, 161.

<sup>10</sup> The majority of material discussing widowhood in the North also remains wedded to the pension system. For excellent articles on that topic, consult one of the following: Amy E. Holmes, “‘Such is the Price We Pay’: American Widows and the Civil War Pension System,” in *Toward a Social History of the American Civil War: Exploratory Essays*, ed. Maris A. Vinovskis (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Megan J. McClintock, “Civil War Pensions and the Reconstruction of Union Families,” *Journal of American History* 83, no. 2 (September 1996); Richard F. Miller, “For His Wife, His Widow, and His Orphan: Massachusetts and Family Aid during the

Continuing to delve into the financial elements of widowhood, in 2005 Gross published an essay entitled “And for the Widow and Orphan: Confederate Widows, Poverty, and Public Assistance.” Gross again discussed the financial aspects of a widow’s family wealth, property, and the “shift from a reliance on local resources to a reliance on the state.” Her only reference to the emotional experience of being a widow claimed these women became “increasingly loud and active” because they “believed they were sacrificing too much for the cause.” The first two paragraphs of the study inspire questions about the lived experience of a Confederate widow.<sup>11</sup> Another useful article on the financial implications of widowhood is Robert Kenzer’s 2002 essay “The Uncertainty of Life: A Profile of Virginia’s Civil War Widows.” His study provided thorough examples of Confederate widows responding to financial difficulties. Kenzer’s article examined nearly 3,000 of Virginia’s widows and determined their likelihood to rely on relatives for support. When the Civil War ended, Virginian widows “could not look to a national Confederate government for assistance” and therefore depended on kinship ties during periods of financial difficulty. Kenzer exposed instances of widows interpreting wills, moving into the homes of their in-laws, and remarriage. His research showed that “few of these women” with strong kinship ties “needed to take gainful employment.” While this article revealed the impact

---

Civil War,” *Massachusetts Historical Review* 6 (2004); The quotations in this paragraph can be found here: Jennifer Lynn Gross, ““You Must Do The Best You Can’: The Civil War Widows of Brunswick County, Virginia, 1860-1920” (MA thesis, University of Richmond, 1995), 97, 2, 56, 76, 87, 97.

<sup>11</sup> Gross completed her dissertation ““Good Angels’: Confederate Widowhood and the Reassurance of Patriarchy in the Postbellum South” in 2001 at the University of Georgia. The article I discuss in this paragraph is a condensed version of her major arguments within the dissertation. In total, she has published three articles out of her dissertation. Jennifer Lynn Gross, ““Good Angels’: Confederate Widowhood in Virginia,” in *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South*, ed. Catherine Clinton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jennifer Lynn Gross, ““And for the Widow and the Orphan’: Confederate Widows, Poverty, and Public Assistance,” in *Inside the Confederate Nation: Essays in Honor of Emory M. Thomas*, eds. Lesley J. Gordon and John C. Inscoe (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 213, 214; Jennifer L. Gross, “The United Daughters of the Confederacy, Confederate Widows, and the Lost Cause: “We Must Not Forget or Neglect the Widows,” in *Women on Their Own: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Being Single*, eds. Rudolph M. Bell and Virginia Yans (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 180-194.

of family upon widows' financial lives, it ignored the emotional support families surely provided.<sup>12</sup>

These works successfully scrutinized the topic of widows' economic survival, but ignored the adjustments and opportunities that came along with the death of a husband. Women could borrow male prerogatives and power more easily when their husbands were absent or dead. Additionally, prior articles neglect to include discussions of widows' emotional and social survival. Drew Gilpin Faust's work comes closest to addressing this aspect of widowhood. Her book, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, offers the most extensive study of the sentimental and communal experience of Civil War widows. Faust's discussion of the Good Death, condolence letters, and mourning rituals all contribute to an understanding of widowhood as a lived experience apart from financial considerations. While Faust's book engaged with many of the topics and themes this thesis addresses, her focus is on death in a broader sense, not on the actual widows, and thus it ignores their centrality and impact upon the South.<sup>13</sup>

This thesis springs from this intersection of gender, economics, and death scholarship but also includes a new lens of analysis: emotion. For centuries, historians have left the "phenomenon of human emotion" to psychologists, philosophers, and biologists. Peter N. Stearns, one of the few historians who has studied emotional change in a social context, argues that "we short-change our power to explain if we leave out the impact of emotional culture." He further maintains that "the potential for examining the wider consequences of emotional

---

<sup>12</sup> Robert Kenzer served as Jennifer Gross' thesis advisor at the University of Richmond. Robert Kenzer, "The Uncertainty of Life: A Profile of Virginia's Civil War Widows," in *The War Was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War*, ed. Joan E. Cashin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 112, 114, 129.

<sup>13</sup> In addition to Faust, in 2008 Mark S. Schantz published a vital book on religion, death, and the American Civil War. Like Faust, he refers only to widows tangentially. Mark S. Schantz, *Awaiting the Heavenly Country: The Civil War and America's Culture of Death* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Faust, 146-7, 148.

change—for taking emotions seriously as a source of social behaviors, within families to be sure but also in a variety of other, more public settings—has not been tapped.” Like Stearns, philosopher Jesse J. Prinz argues that “palpitations, pangs, and twinges in the gut” contribute to reasoning and, ultimately, action. This theoretical framework championing the importance of emotions as an element of rationalist social history is immensely useful in explaining the importance of widows in nineteenth century southern society.<sup>14</sup>

By focusing on the emotional experience and emotional power of white women who not only lived in the Confederacy but also lost their husbands in its defense, this thesis expands upon prior studies. The pages that follow focus upon the immediate effects of widowhood, with an emphasis on the mourning period. Etiquette books and tradition alike stipulated that widows should mourn for two and a half years, progressing through various stages of mourning, each with specific dress and decorum requirements. It was in this mourning period that she received the most attention and scrutiny from her family and community. As death tolls rose, so did the number of widows with which southern communities interacted.

To ignore Confederate widows and their social power is to be blind to one of the core features of mid-nineteenth century southern society and culture. Through an analysis of widows, one learns not just about them but also about the society which attempted to advise, sustain, and

---

<sup>14</sup> Philosophers, psychologists, biologists, and other scholars have argued over definitions for the term “emotion” for centuries. For the purpose of this thesis, I define an emotion as a feeling elicited by an external event which in turn affects perception and thoughts, often inspires bodily reactions and/or facial expressions, and often leads to action tendencies. This definition is discussed in more detail in Jesse J. Prinz’s *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Rom Harré, “An Outline of the Social Constructionist Viewpoint,” in *The Social Construction of Emotions* ed. Rom Harré (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1986), 2; Stearns’ book is an analysis of changing emotional standards in middle class American culture between World War I’s end and the mid-1900s. Peter N. Stearns, *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth-Century Emotional Style* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 14; Daniel M. Gross is another scholar who attempted to bring emotion back into history through an analysis of politics and rhetoric. He argues that emotion has recently emerged in many fields, like history, because “it promises access to the domain of protoreason previously obscured” (pg 9). His theory-heavy book is titled *The Secret History of Emotion: From Aristotle’s Rhetoric to Modern Brain Science* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006); Prinz, viii.

guide them. Some wanted widows to be emblems of the Confederacy after the loss of the war because they needed something, anything, to hold on to—a walking embodiment of sacrifice that inspired almost pleasant feelings of melancholy for the Lost Cause. After the war, she would mold how it would be remembered. But during the war, she had a specific role to play—bound not merely to patriarchy but to nationalism, to Confederate survival. If a widow recommitted herself to the Confederacy and poured her emotional resources into the war, that was a powerful endorsement. If she withdrew her emotional resources, or worse, used her new standing to criticize the war, that was a powerful indictment. War widows had a tremendous amount of social capital and the South was anxious to oversee how they spent it. Southern newspapers and letters urged women to take pride in a “husband whose memory is honored and whose children will feel proud.” If wives did not support and honor the cause their husbands had died for, who would?<sup>15</sup>

The topic of Confederate widowhood is both understudied and vast. As a result, there are many subjects within this broad topic which are not addressed in this thesis. For example, this thesis focuses upon widows politically aligned with the Confederacy, not widows who lived in the South but sympathized with the Union cause. A detailed analysis of widowhood in border states or other conflicted counties is still needed. While widows from each of the eleven states who seceded from the Confederacy are represented in this study, the majority of evidence comes from widows living in North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, is discussed at length to include the

---

<sup>15</sup> This argument is not only influenced by the emotions theory framework described earlier, but also by Stephanie McCurry’s contention that the Confederacy became answerable to poor whites and women in ways the old South never had been. My research leads me to believe the Confederacy is in fact even more answerable to its widows. Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). M. D. D., Savannah, Georgia to Rosa Delony, Athens, Georgia, 14 January 1864, William Gaston Deloney Papers, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia. William Gaston Deloney Papers henceforth referred to as Deloney Papers, UGA.

experience of some city-living widows, but the remainder of the source base remains predominately rural in its focus. To the extent source material allows, lower-class widows are included in this discussion, though the majority of written records are from those with the time and financial security to produce them. The role of widows in memorialization efforts, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and other elements of the Reconstruction period are outside the scope of this project. Widowhood portrayal in nineteenth century literature is another area in which this thesis merely scratches the surface. Many of these topics are begging for books in themselves. Sadly, one thesis simply cannot encompass all aspects of widowhood with the depth and breadth this topic craves.

While this master's thesis does not and cannot address all the topics above, what it does do is focus on the emotional, human experience of losing a husband and how that emotional experience was channeled, contained, and, sometimes, reinvested in the Confederacy. The examples within this project highlight the tremendous diversity of widows and the forms in which widowhood and mourning could take in the South. Women became widows at younger ages, after shorter marriages, and in greater numbers. As such, widowhood itself had to change not only because of the changing makeup of widows, but because these were war widows. Southern society watched widows like they never had before. Mourning prescriptions became more rigid in the public observance and less flexible in their private lives. Letters from family and soldiers urged war widows to fulfill mourning prescriptions more persistently than they ever would have encouraged a non-war widow. The Confederacy rested upon the idea that the

Confederate soldier was the ideal man, not a man easily replaced or forgotten by his wife. The Confederacy needed widows' social capital—their emotional endorsement—for the cause.<sup>16</sup>

Each chapter in this thesis builds on the others to trace the emotive element of widowhood, the transition from wife to widow, and the reactions of Southern communities to widows' behaviors. Chapter 1 opens with a brief discussion of antebellum marriage, followed by an exploration into marriage during the war, a husband's death, and the discovery of loss. Chapter 2 is an analysis of mourning rituals and nineteenth century expectations regarding grief. Here the ideal is laid out—who exactly was a widow supposed to be? Three young widows, all plantation belles, all recently married, serve as the subjects of Chapter 3. Through an analysis of their reactions, the emergence of various mourning styles and widowhood types, some quite unlike the ideal described in Chapter 2, is apparent. The Epilogue briefly introduces the notion of widowhood as it appears in film and literature and the implications of these characters on the remembrance of Confederate widows.

This thesis is ultimately a story of loss, readjustments, and, in some cases, a lack of readjustments. The pages that follow highlight a lack of typicality. Mourning prescriptions may have been uniform, but widows were not. Southern women of all ages and social classes became widows by the thousands. Widowed by the Civil War, they felt, lived, and survived the deaths of their husbands in various ways. Some cried forever. Some remarried quickly. Some followed the dictates of etiquette books and community members. Some refused. Some simply couldn't. By blending cultural and emotional history, this thesis not only provides perspective on the emotions of Confederate widowhood, but also on the struggles of families, communities, and

---

<sup>16</sup> This thesis also keeps all spelling and phrasing quoted from documents in its original form without including the intrusive [sic] notation. On rare occasions, punctuation has been converted to modern-day notations for clarity.

southern society as a whole to cope with both the loss of men and the new preponderance of widows. The Confederate cause took away their husbands forever. Now, it wanted more.

As war widows, these southern women had a new standing in society. They had a moral platform and an opportunity to make a statement. They had social capital, and they could withdraw that capital from the bank of Confederate nationalism or continue to champion the Confederate cause that put their husbands in early graves. By introducing an analysis of emotions, emotional power, and the affect these widows had on antebellum mourning rituals and the war itself, this thesis gives us the first chapter in a much needed emotional history of widows in the American Civil War.

## CHAPTER 1: HE'S DEAD

*“My Dear One, I have just received two letters from you. I am truly sorry to see that you are fretting yourself so much for me. We must put our trust in the Lord. He is able to shield us from the enemy’s balls, if he sees fit, and if we never meet on earth, let us meet in Heaven where parting will be no more.”*

-James Michael Barr to his wife<sup>1</sup>

In “the dead of the night,” her galloping carriage arrived at the heavy gate and halted. The rider bounded from the coach, shattering the shadowy stillness of the evening, and “moved rapidly up the steps.” She was weary for when “the telegraph brought the dreadful news that he was dangerously wounded, she never waited an instant nor stopped a moment by the way, day or night.” The wounded man was her husband, a Confederate captain who had “lost both legs in a fight below Petersburg.” Throwing open the door and rushing into the hospital hall, she anxiously asked “Where’s Captain T.?” She had travelled far to arrive in Richmond, Virginia, that night. The guard to whom she directed her query hesitantly replied “Captain T. is dead, madam, and was buried to-day.” The moment the words reached her ears, the woman “fell to the floor as one dead.” The news was like “a thunderbolt at the feet of the poor lady.” At length, she found her voice. The new widow “made the immense building ring with her bitter lamentations!” “What *shall* I do?” she cried.<sup>2</sup>

She was just a day too late. When the chaplain went to see her husband that morning, “there was nothing in his room but the chilling signal of the empty hospital bunk.” Surgeons

---

<sup>1</sup> James Michale Barr to Rebecca Ann Dowling Barr, 18 July 1863, as quoted in *Let Us Meet in Heaven: The Civil War Letters of James Michael Barr, 5<sup>th</sup> South Carolina Cavalry*, ed. Thomas D. Mays (Abilene: McWhiney Foundation Press, 2001), 121.

<sup>2</sup> McGuire, 28 October 1864, 310-313.

moved on to other patients. The chaplain returned to the other weary souls in need. All believed that Captain T.'s story had ended, just like thousands of others, with the burial of his body.<sup>3</sup>

But his story was not over—he left a widow. After hearing the news and collapsing, she became “wild with grief” and could “hear no voice of sympathy.” Ignoring those surrounding her, she launched into “the story of her married life as if she were alone.” “I shall never see his face again!” the widow realized abruptly and asked “where is he buried?” After learning the location of the gravesite, she replied “I must go there; he must be taken up; I must see him!” “But madam,” the guard responded, “you can’t see him; he has been buried some hours.” The widow was resolute. She wanted his body, not for its own moldering sake, but to take it home, put it in the ground, and have a place to mourn him. They dug him up that morning and she “carried him back to his own house and his children.” It was time for her to “seek a grave” for the man she loved.<sup>4</sup>

One sentence was all it took. A mere combination of words could shatter a woman’s world and in turn change how the world saw her. While the emotions, actions, and thoughts varied amongst widows, all widows experienced this earthshaking shift. By definition, she lost a husband. Now, she was a widow and must discover a way to live as one. But before she was a widow, she was a wife. In order to understand her loss, we must first understand what she had.

The antebellum and Civil War South functioned as a patriarchal system in which women remained subordinate to men. Southern author and political thinker George Fitzhugh captured the core of patriarchal beliefs well when in 1854 he wrote “woman...has but one right and that is the right to protection. The right to protection involves the obligation to obey. A husband, lord and master...nature designed for every woman.” But while patriarchy was most certainly built

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

“on a male assumption of power and privilege, justified in the physics of bone and muscle and biology, policed by courts, churches, fists,” it was also built by women who championed and polished the image of a patriarchal man. Men protected what they loved and women loved a strong man. Even in war, wives continued to fulfill their duties as a submissive but loving wives. When one soldiering husband heard of his wife’s recent illness, he wrote for her to come to him, believing “you would be so interested in keeping house for me that you would not get sick again.” From rainy battlefields and dusty camps some husbands penned pages upon pages of instructions. “I want the rye sowed in the barn lot as soon as the hogs have eat out if there is any seed left let it be sowed down to the woods field” ordered one husband. Women obliged and even asked for these instructions, maintaining their husbands’ secure rule, even though they were not present.<sup>5</sup>

In the chaos of the Civil War, some soldiers relinquished power at home to their wives. One husband felt quite confident in his wife’s wisdom and ignored her constant pleas for instructions. When he finally addressed her requests, he replied “you wrote to me to write to you about managing. You know best now. Do the best you can to make something to eat.” Likewise, Edwin Fay told his wife “You ask me what I think of the trade of the house for the negroes. I don’t know what to say to you except that I want you to act just as if you were a widow in your own right. You know I place implicit confidence in your judgement.” One widow struggled to manage after her husband’s death, recalling “Oh how often Winston has told

---

<sup>5</sup> George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South: Or the failure of Free Society* (Richmond: Morris, 1854), 214 as quoted in Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 6; Stephen Berry, “More Alluring at a Distance: Absentee Patriarchy and the Thomas Butler King Family,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. LXXXI, No. 4, Winter 1997, 894; James E. Rains, to [Ida Yeatman Rains], Tennessee, 3 January 1862, Civil War Collection Microfilm, Box 11 Folder 10, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville; U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1860 United States Federal Census Slave Schedules of Chattahoochee, Gadsden, Florida, ancestry.com; James J. Nixon, Camp Retrieve, to Louisa A Nixon, Mt. Pleasant Florida, December 5, 1861, James J. Nixon Letters, 1861-1863, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville. James J. Nixon Letters henceforth referred to as Nixon Letters, UF.

me that I ought not be so dependent on him, but to learn how to manage.” Now, he was dead, and it was all up to her.<sup>6</sup>

The wives of wealthy planters not only had to manage a household, but a plantation. Historian Drew Gilpin Faust persuasively argued that in the slave South, “violence was the ultimate foundation of power.” Power and violence, however, did not fall within the female sphere. The image of women whipping slaves, violently attempting to draw blood and tears from a human being, clashed with all accepted gender roles. But masters marched off to war and as a result, wives found themselves struggling to both perform his duties and maintain her image as a docile and vulnerable example of her sex. The impossibility of this task bred frustration. Plantation mistresses frequently penned their aggravations to their husbands, such as Mary Bell who complained she often felt “ready to give up and think surely my lot is harder than anyone else.” James J. Nixon, who owned ten slaves in 1860, informed his wife Louisa that “sometimes it appears to me like that it would be better for me to hire out our darkies than to undertake to make another crop under the circumstances.” Despite wives’ failures in slave control, most women could and would not imagine a life without the institution. This was why their husbands had left. This was what their war was about. The Constitution that their men fought for had made the issue clear. In March 1861, Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens explained to all that the cornerstone of the new nation “rests upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery—subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal

---

<sup>6</sup> Commodore Decatur Epps to Catherine Epps, 3 August 1862. C.D. Epps Papers, 1862-1915, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. C. D. Epps papers henceforth referred to as Epps Papers, UNC; Edwin H. Fay to wife, 13 November 1863 as quoted in *This Infernal War; the Confederate Letters of Edwin H. Fay*, eds. Bell Irvin Wiley with the assistance of Lucy E. Fay (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958); Octavia Stephens to Davis Bryant, 11 June 1864, Stephens-Bryant Family Papers, George A. Smathers Special and Area Studies Collections, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. Stephens-Bryant Family Papers henceforth referred to as S-B Papers, UF.

condition.” As such, women needed to hold the South’s social structure together via methods of violence or persuasion until their men could come marching home.<sup>7</sup>

While many husbands left behind wives they had loved for years to go to war, others left spouses of mere weeks. This was in part due to the flurry of marriages that swept the South during the Civil War. In Virginia, there existed “a perfect mania on the subject of matrimony. Some of the churches may be seen open and lighted almost every night for bridals, and wherever I turn I hear of marriages in prospect.” Young belles feared they might become spinsters while men craved the reassurance of wives awaiting their return as they marched toward an undecided future. “Every day I feel more reluctant to go into an uncertain life without having the consciousness of being yours entirely” penned Frank Schaller, a colonel in the Twenty-Second Mississippi Infantry. He concluded “I would like to marry before going into battle...now prepare for it. I am in earnest.” Many young girls, overwhelmed by this wartime pressure, married earlier than they anticipated, or perhaps desired. As a result, newlyweds who lost their husbands in war found themselves in a situation where they were expected to mourn longer than they had even been married. Georgia Page King had been married fifteen months when her husband died. Laura Cornelia McGimsey had been married seventeen months at the time she received word of her husband’s death. And Ellen “Nellie” Richmond Ramseur lost her husband to a Yankee bullet just eight days shy of their first wedding anniversary. Young brides coming

---

<sup>7</sup> The historiography of mistresses and masters is both enormous and deep. Some essentials include: Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Catherine Clinton, *Tara Revisited: Women, War, and the Plantation Legend* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1995) and Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books,) 1982; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*; Victoria E. Ott, *Confederate Daughters: Coming to Age during the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008); Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 70; Mary Bell, to Alfred Bell, 16 December 1864, Bell Papers, Manuscript Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, as quoted in Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 72; James J. Nixon, Apalachicola, to Louisa A Nixon, Mt. Pleasant Florida, December 19, 1861, Nixon Letters, UF; Alexander Stephens, “Slavery the Cornerstone of the Confederacy” Speech, March 21, 1861, Savannah, Georgia in Marion Mills Miller, ed., *Great Debates in American History: State Rights (1798-1861); Slavery (1858-1861)* vol. 5 of *Great Debates in American History* (New York: Current Literature Publishing Company, 1913), 288-290.

to terms with life as young widows, and sometimes young mothers, would wreak havoc on nineteenth century mourning rituals.<sup>8</sup>

The logistics of separation expanded the opportunities for men of all classes to express their love for their wives on paper as never before. Ebenezer B. Coggin, a farmer with only \$100 in personal estate in 1860, joined the 47<sup>th</sup> Alabama Infantry in 1862. He wrote a steady stream of letters to his wife Ann until his death in October 1863. “My deare wife” he began on January 20, 1862, “my heart is fild with greef and my eyes with tears to think that we ar so far apart that I cannot See you and my Sweet little Children.” Stephen Dodson Ramseur also professed his love abundantly in his letters. “My Heart’s Most Precious Darling! You are the light and delight of my life. I live for you. And Oh! your love makes life so delightful for me,” he wrote in a characteristically beautiful letter. And yet, Ramseur felt words were insufficient, for while he wished “I could give expression in this letter to the intensity, the deep devotion, of my love to you,” Ramseur simply believed “Dearest little wife, this is impossible.” The separation was tough on the couple, who had married in 1862. Letters were the only way in which he could express his love, and so he wrote it down, penning “my Sweetest Darling, My Heart’s Queen, my Best beloved, My beautiful little wife, how earnestly, increasingly I long to be with you.”<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> McGuire, 329; Frank Schaller, *Soldiering For Glory: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Frank Schaller, Twenty-Second Mississippi Infantry*, ed. Mary W. Schaller and Martin N. Schaller (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 44; General William Duncan Smith to Georgia Page King Wilder, 10 April 10 1861, King and Wilder Family Papers, 1817-1946, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia. King and Wilder Family Papers henceforth referred to as K-W Papers, GHS; Georgia Page King Wilder to Floyd King, July 8, 1861, K-W Papers, GHS. For more information about marriage trends in the Civil War, see J. David Hacker’s article mentioned in footnote 7 above; Laura Cornelia McGimsey Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Stephen Dodson Ramseur, *The Bravest of the Brave: The Correspondence of Stephen Dodson Ramseur*, ed. George G. Kundahl (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1860 United States Federal Census Population Schedule of Northern Division, Chambers, Alabama, ancestry.com; Ebenezer B Coggin to Ann E. Coggin, 20 January 1862, Ebenezer B. Coggin Papers, 1862-1889, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery. Henceforth referred to as Coggin Family Papers, ADAH; Ramseur, 250, 262, 261.

Certainly, not all notes passed between husband and wife were notes of love. “I received your unkind letter of the 30<sup>th</sup>,” wrote James Edward Rains to his young wife. Married in 1858, Ida Yeatman was at home in Tennessee with their infant daughter while James fought for the fledgling Confederacy. At the outset of the war, James only reluctantly supported the concept of secession, but he quickly rose through the Confederate ranks to the position of brigadier general in the 11<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Infantry. “You scold me very severely when I am with you,” James wrote his wife, but “I did not think that you would write me such a letter at a time when I may be called away from you, perhaps forever.” Ida accused her husband of spending their money selfishly, to which he replied, “the single article of caps is the only thing about which I have been extravagant. On this point I plead guilty to the charge.” As an officer, James argued, “I am obliged to support my rank.” Questioning his wife, he asked, “are you unwilling for me to make myself comfortable and support the position I occupy?” James went on to describe the hunger he was currently experiencing, informing Ida that “under all these circumstances I do think your scolding exceedingly unkind and undeserved.” “I will endeavor to live on salt pork and stale bread and you will have all you want,” he concluded sharply.<sup>10</sup>

James was shot through the heart and died instantaneously on December 31, 1862 at the battle of Murfreesboro. “What must have been the feelings of the...young wife...enviored by Yankees...in Nashville, unable to come to him” wondered a funeral attendee, who recalled that “it seems but yesterday since we laid our hands on the cold, dead face of General Rains.” Indeed, what were the feelings of the young widow? Did losing the husband she so recently married bring her sorrow? Or, was she perhaps a touch relieved that she could now manage their

---

<sup>10</sup> James E. Rains, to [Ida Yeatman Rains], Tennessee, 1 July 1861, Civil War Collection Microfilm Collection, Nashville.

money herself? After all, with James' death, Ida could now feed their young daughter without worrying that money would disappear into hat purchases.<sup>11</sup>

When husbands marched off to battle for honor, freedom, and slavery, they did not view their actions as shirking husbandly duty, but fulfilling it. The question of where their duty belonged, wife or country, was rarely asked at the outset of the war. In a letter written just one week before he received a mortal wound in the Battle of Seven Pines, Sydenham Moore wrote "I feel that our lives are at the disposal of an over ruling Providence and that if it is his will that I should fall...I feel that I am doing my duty to my wife and children, expelling a foe." While ideologies certainly bolstered their beliefs, "it was for her that he was fighting; it was for her that he would suffer and die." She was the reality amid the mass of abstract ideologies. Some wives, however, had trouble accepting this argument. One wife's fears are apparent in her husband's response that "you appear to think that I am more easily weaned off than you thought I would be, from my dear family, I really thought that you knew my disposition better than to think that I ever could be weaned off, when my whole thoughts and affections are with you." Another husband penned "Catherine, don't think that I run off on purpose to keep from staying with you. I want to see you mighty bad." Despite these declarations, intermittent actions did not seem to match the words penned by loving husbands. When forced to choose between his wedding and his country's orders, Ramseur missed his wedding. He immediately wrote a letter to his beloved fiancée, revealing "my disappointment has almost unmanned me. But no, I will perform my duty here & there. I'll come & claim your love." Though they would marry just over a month later, on October 28, 1863, the incident highlights which duty Ramseur placed precedence upon. While duty to country and to family did not necessarily conflict in men's minds, as the war

---

<sup>11</sup> James Lee McDonough, *Stones River: Bloody Winter Tennessee* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1980), 211.

continued, tensions swelled. Food grew scarce, slaves became increasingly rebellious, and Union troops marched closer to hometowns. Desertion rates escalated. The distinction became muddled. Stress abounded.<sup>12</sup>

But even as men justified their reasons for fighting, they necessarily realized their own mortality. Soldiers thought and often wrote about death. Anticipating “a heavy fight” in October of 1862, Commodore Decatur Epps, a private in the 6<sup>th</sup> Georgia Regiment, Company F, informed his wife that “I will write you the straight of it if I come through. I don’t know whether I will or not, but I am in hopes I will...don’t be uneasy about me.” As with all letters, he signed his name with the phrase “I remains yours truly ‘till death.” Likewise, in January 1863, William Delony acknowledged his own mortality in his proclamation “sink or swim live or die, survive or perish if I know my own heart, I am willing to fight on until the end is accomplished.” E. B. Coggin, a poor farmer from Milltown, Alabama, preferred to express his thoughts on death in poetry. On July 14, 1862, he wrote:

“Remember me tho many miles apart we Be  
I shall Remember thee if you on Earth no more I see  
If on Earth we meat Nevermore  
I hope that we may meat on Heavens happy shore.”

James J. Nixon, a soldier of the 8<sup>th</sup> Florida Regiment who would die of wounds he received at the Battle of Brandy Station, told his wife to “enjoy yourself as much as you can” for “it is just as well to live while we are living.” Some soldiers could not help but dwell upon death as it stole the lives of their friends, their family, and their commanders on the battlefield. For some, the constant news of loss led to a callous acceptance of the event. When a soldier fell dying in

---

<sup>12</sup> Sydenham Moore to Amanda Moore, 24 May 1862, Sydenham Moore Family Papers, 1833-1873, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery; Stephen W. Berry II, *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 183; James J. Nixon, Apalachicola, to Louisa A Nixon, Mt. Pleasant Florida, 19 December 1861, Nixon Letters, UF; Commodore Decatur Epps, Union County, Georgia, to Catherine Epps, 30 December 1862, Epps Papers, UNC; Ramseur, 166.

the path of Union colonel Charles Wainwright, he reported: "I had no more feeling for him, than if he had tripped over a stump and fallen; nor do I think it would have been different had he been my brother." And yet, the news of the singular death of a loved one or the experience of a large battle could explode the manufactured walls built to protect a soldier's heart. Though John McCorkle had seen countless men die and experienced many battles, in 1864 he wrote his wife that he still "felt awful as the misels of death was filing in every direction." On that July day he witnessed "men faling on every hand...I feel thankful that the good lorde has sparde my life." John was captured five months later and died of pneumonia in Chicago's Camp Douglas Prison.<sup>13</sup>

For more than 250,000 Confederate soldiers, dying became a reality. Unlike modern bullets, Civil War minnie balls "did not pass directly through tissues," but rather "tumbled, rearing a terrible swath through muscle and bone...bones splintered and shattered into hundreds of spicules, sharp, bony sticks that were driven by the force of the bullet through muscle and skin." Getting shot was no small matter. C. D. Epps was wounded in the Battle of Chickamauga. "Never in any battle I had witnessed was there such a discharge of cannon and musketry," recalled another officer years later. Hurtling through the air, the leaden ball lodged itself into the base of Epps' right knee joint. Before the war, he worked as a farmer in nearby Murray County, Georgia, an occupation that would require his mobility. "Dear wife," Epps wrote serenely from Polk Hospital in Rome, Georgia, "I take the pleasant opportunity to write you a few lines to let you know that I am getting along well at present." He felt encouraged by

---

<sup>13</sup> Commodore Decatur Epps, Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky, to Catherine Epps, 13 October 1862, Epps Papers, UNC; Commodore Decatur Epps to Catherine Epps, 17 August 1862, Ibid; Will Delony, Camp near Culpepper, to Rosa Delony, Athens, Georgia, 13 January 1863, Deloney Papers, UGA; Ebenezer B Coggin to Ann E. Coggin, 14 July 1862, Coggin Family Papers, ADAH; James J. Nixon, Camp Retrieve, to Louisa A Nixon, Mt. Pleasant Florida, 5 December 1861, Nixon Letters, UF; Charles Wainwright, as quoted in Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 59; John McCorkle, Atlanta, Georgia, to Martha Stallings McCorkle, 14 July 1864. John McCorkle Correspondence, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah.

his doctor, who “told me he thought I would be able to come home by next Sunday week.” From his cot he ordered Catherine to “bring one good straw bed and one good feather bed and two pillows so you can carry me...the doctor won’t let me go until you come well prepared to carry me good and easy.” Catherine received his note and immediately left to retrieve her husband. “I went to the battlefield and brought him to his home before he died,” she wrote on her pension application, decades later. Her attempts to nurse him back to health failed. Epps passed away on December 20, 1863, just before Christmas. They had been married for less than five years.<sup>14</sup>

While Catherine got to witness her husband’s last breath, most wives did not. In October 1863, Ann Coggin received a letter with unfamiliar handwriting, closed with her husband’s name. Like Epps, E. B. Coggin fought at Chickamauga and fell victim to a Yankee bullet. His bone shattered. The note Ann received was likely transcribed by a concerned nurse or visitor in Atlanta’s Empire Hospital. “I am doing as well as I can be expected for a man with his foot amputated,” the note read, though he wished his friends would “come see me as I am here among strangers and their presence would give me comfort and pleasure.” Coggin informed his “dear wife” that over the past days he had “waited anxiously” in anticipation for a note in her loving hand. Though disappointed, Coggin excused Ann’s silence “thinking probably you did not get my letter.” Six days later, having still not heard from her, he dictated another letter. “Having written you twice and as yet have not received an answer makes me feel quite uneasy,” he told her. “I need someone here. The Doctor told me that he would send me home if any of my people were here to take me.” Coggin then cautioned Ann that “I am not doing as well as I was.”

---

<sup>14</sup> Missing records makes it quite difficult to pinpoint the exact number of Confederate soldiers who died in the Civil War, making 250,000 likely a low estimate. Frank R. Freeman, *Gangrene and Glory: Medical Care during the American Civil War* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1998), 48; Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 291; Commodore Decatur Epps, Polk Hospital, Rome, Georgia, to Catherine Epps, 13 November 1863, Epps Papers, UNC; Catherine Epps Widow’s Application, 1891, Murray County, Georgia, ancestry.com.

Underneath his plea, Lt. F. L. Boathby added his own note to the wife, writing “Madam, I would advise you to come or send some one here to your husband as he is not doing well.” Five days later, still at the Empire Hospital of Atlanta, Coggin died.<sup>15</sup>

As their friends lost loved ones, wives became increasingly worried about their husbands’ lives. Uncertainties and fears became entangled with their every waking thought. Septima Collis, after fruitlessly searching a nearby battlefield for her husband, felt overwhelmed by questions. “Was I widowed? Was my husband lying in the trenches suffering from some horrible wound, and I not near him? Oh what an anxious night!” she penned. The next day, Septima gratefully discovered that her husband was alive, though “literally covered from head to foot with cakes of mud.” Another woman, Minerva McClatchey worried ceaselessly as “we hear thousands of rumors—but nothing reliable.” “Faith and hope and every thing else nearly dies out of my fearful heart in view of the monstrous fact of our indefinite separation,” wrote Rosa Delony on June 15, 1862. She felt “as restive and impatient as a young unbroken colt,” aching for news of her husband and for the day when he could finally return home. Like many women, for Rosa “constant anxiety” seemed to be “tearing out” her very spirit.<sup>16</sup>

While upper class women could pour their doubts onto the crisp pages of their diaries and letters, a lack of resources, time, and education left many lower class women without this option. In her diary, Judith recorded one unnamed woman’s struggle with fears about her husband’s life. On February 28, 1864, she and a friend encountered a poor woman who lived in “a small and

---

<sup>15</sup> Ebenezer B Coggin, Empire Hospital, Atlanta, Georgia to Ann E. Coggin, 17 October 1863, Coggin Family Papers, ADAH; Ebenezer B Coggin, Empire Hospital, Atlanta, Georgia to Ann E. Coggin, 23 October 1863, *ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> Septima Collis was not a Confederate supporter and her husband fought within the Union ranks. While there were certainly differences between the Union and Confederate experiences, women from both sides often experienced similar thoughts and emotions of fear, worry, and love, as illuminated by this quote. Septima Maria Levy Collis, *A Woman’s War Record, 1861-1865* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1889), 50-55; Minerva Leah Rowles McClatchey, *A Georgia Woman’s Civil War Diary: The Journal of Minerva Leah Rowles McClatchey*, ed. T. Conn Bryan, *Georgia Historical quarterly* 51 (1967) 212-213; Rosa Delony, Athens, Georgia, to Will Delony, 15 June 1862, Deloney Papers, UGA; Rosa Delony, Athens, Georgia, to Will Delony, 2 August 1863, *ibid*.

squalid-looking” home in the “streets and lanes of Butcher Flat.” Most of the people living in this section of town were “supplied with meal by the cooperation” and “were supporting themselves with Government work.” This lower-class woman “stood at a table cutting out work” when she stopped Judith and her friend, calling “Ladies, will one of you read my husband’s letter to me? For you see I can’t read writing.”<sup>17</sup>

As the women began to read the “badly written but affectionate letter,” the poor woman could not contain her emotion. “The tears now poured down her cheeks,” Judith penned. The suffering woman explained to her visitors that her husband “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.” She was wrestling with her deepest fear: that “may-be something has happened to him.” Judith tried to comfort the woman and “assured her that there had been no fighting—not even a skirmish.” The unnamed woman appeared calmer and “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.” The tattered hat belonged to her husband. In the battle of Chancellorsville, a bullet had come “very nigh grazing his head,” piercing the hat. Judith “remarked upon its being a proof of his bravery, which gratified her very much.” The woman carefully hung the hat up again, near her bed, for all to see. Judith and her friend endeavored to comfort the poor woman, for despite her immense pride in her husband, she still “felt uneasy, because something told her he would never get back.”<sup>18</sup>

Sometimes, a letter from a loving husband would lift his wife’s hopes, only to have them abruptly shattered by horrible news. “My dear wife,” James Nixon began on August 8, 1863, “this is to inform you that my wound is still improving slowly...I am under the best medical and

---

<sup>17</sup> McGuire, 28 February 1864, 254-255.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

surgical treatment and hope to be able to start home in a few days.” James would be dead by Christmas, dying under his wife’s care and leaving her with four sons under the age of ten. Likewise, when the doctor wrote Ann about her husband’s health, he assured her that her husband was “not considered in danger,” though he died by the end of the week. In Arkansas, one Confederate widow, “entirely without other escort,” rode her horse over 300 miles through contested territory in order to reach her wounded husband. She arrived safely but was “left only the mournful consolation of a visit to his grave.” Unfortunately, the difference between minor and mortal wounds could be difficult to determine. On average “each Confederate soldier was disabled by wounds and sickness about six times during the war.” Minor wounds could quickly turn to mortal ones with the help of dirt and disease. The frequency of sickness and injury would leave many with a false sense of security. The discovery that a recovering husband had suddenly died was exceptionally heartbreaking.<sup>19</sup>

Not all men who passed away in a hospital had an opportunity to get final words home. In his diary, Confederate soldier Joseph Mothershead reflected upon the soldiers who died instantaneously in battle, crumpling lifelessly on the field. The “noble spirits who dashed bravely forth to meet the foe went not far before they fell...weltering in blood.” These were husbands torn “from the embraces of wife and children and the enjoyments of home.” Their voices, the ones that once said I do, “had been forever hushed by the fatal minnie.” On the battlefield they laid “quiet in death, stained with gore.” As the Missouri man witnessed death

---

<sup>19</sup> James J. Nixon, Richmond, to Louisa A Nixon, Mt. Pleasant Florida, Nixon Letters, UF; U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1860 United States Federal Census Population Schedule of Chattahoochee, Gadsden, Florida, ancestry.com; Lt. F. L. Boathby, Empire Hospital, Atlanta, Georgia to Ann E. Coggin, 23 October 1863, Coggin Family Papers, ADAH; K. D. Goodbar, “Mrs. Richard Ledbetter,” in *Confederate Women of Arkansas 1861-’65: Memorial Reminiscences* (Little Rock: The United Confederate Veterans of Arkansas, 1907), 36; Richard Boies Stark, “Surgeons and Surgical Care of the Confederate States Army,” *Virginia Medical Monthly* 88 (Oct. 1961), 604, as quoted in Carol C. Green, *Chimborazo: The Confederacy’s Largest Hospital* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2004), ix.

and walked amongst the bodies of his comrades, he did not write about their honorable deeds or lost potential. Instead, Mothershead dwelled upon the “wailing at distant homes when the news goes swiftly back.” His thoughts returned often to the “loss of husbands slain,” a loss that would cause “many to mourn as widows.” Though June 13, 1862 was a day “won for the young Confederacy,” he could not forget the widows produced by the success. Mothershead did not know that in two years he too would be dead, and his wife would become one of those widows.<sup>20</sup>

These examples are illustrative of the thousands of men who died from battle wounds. When wives sent their husbands off to war, this was the type of honorable death they most likely expected to claim their husbands. And yet, even if husbands could survive the actual wounding, the battle was not over. Disease often lurked on the next dirty instrument or watery sponge. Lack of food, sleep, and sanitation allowed germs to flourish on wounded soldiers. When William Gaston Delony arrived at a hospital, he had “lost too much blood, and was too weak to rally” for an amputation. Doctors were unable to remove the bullet lodged in his left thigh and gangrene set in. He died October 2, 1863. A huge and terrible threat, gangrene “was black and exuded the terrible odor of putrefaction, similar to spoiled meat.” One surgeon described the infection as a most “fearful and unwelcome guest in any hospital...It claims many victims in its fierce attacks, and often puts to naught all the resources of the most skillful surgeon.” This slow, painful, pungent demise was not what widows envisioned for their heroic, soldiering husbands.<sup>21</sup>

Some men died, however, without any exposure to either battlefields or bullets. When Nancy Gilliam kissed her husband goodbye at the start of the war, she certainly didn’t expect to

---

<sup>20</sup> Joseph R. Mothershead, the author of the quotes in this paragraph, was a Confederate soldier from Haynesville, Missouri. It is unclear which battle or skirmish he is writing about on June 13, 1862. He died August 6, 1864 in Atlanta, Georgia. Joseph R. Mothershead Journal, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1862, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1862, Civil War Collection, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Confederate Collection Box 7, folder, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Stanton Hospital, Washington D. C. Nov 28, 1863 to Rosa, from W. H. Channing Chaplain of Stanton Hospital Deloney Papers, UGA; Freeman, 50; Surgeon W. W. Keen, quoted in Green, 136.

receive a letter that read “your Beloved husband he Departed this life about 6 o clock this morning after suffering some 3 or 4 Day very horriable with the Brain fever.” And yet, letters like this were far more common than wives imagined. Diarrhea, typhoid fever, typhus, malaria, yellow fever, smallpox, measles, and other diseases thrived in the unsanitary camps, battlefields, and hospitals. Unfortunately, an 1865 fire in Richmond destroyed almost all of the Confederate Medical Department’s records. Records did survive from Chimborazo Hospital, the largest hospital of the Confederacy and a model for smaller hospitals throughout the South. While operating, the hospital admitted 77,889 patients. 50,350 of these admissions were for “sickness” while only 14,661 fell under the category of “wounded.” These statistics demonstrate the rampant nature of disease in the war, which not only seized the bodies of the wounded, but also stalled the hearts of the healthy.<sup>22</sup>

In 1918, Eliza Jane Kendrick Lewis Walker finished her memoirs, which included memories of how she learned of her husband’s illness. Eliza lived in Russell County, Alabama, during the war. One day a “sheet of pale blue paper” arrived at her home, with “penciled words from my husband.” Noticing every detail, she remarked that James Cook Lewis had written the note “with a hand that must have been very weak despite the comforting message.” “My darling wife,” he began, “I am getting along just as well as I could...will be up in a day or two. A great many are ill...I slept all day. Am well cared for.” Concerned for his wife’s emotional well-being, he cautioned Eliza “don’t be distressed...telegraph will be resorted to when I get low down.”<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> B. B. Oneal, Lynchburg, Va, to Nancy Gilliam, 2 June 1862, Nancy Gilliam Papers, 1850-1904, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery ; Ira M. Rutkow, *Bleeding Blue and Gray: Civil War Surgery and the Evolution of American Medicine* (New York: Random House, 2005), xiii; Green, ix.

<sup>23</sup> Eliza Jane Kendrick Walker, *Other Days: Reminiscences*, 1924, pg 94-95, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.

Eliza recalled that “the letter had scarcely reached me” when she suddenly “heard the clatter of a horseman” at twilight. “Instinctively I knew that the mission of that rider would be over when he saw me,” she wrote. Eliza received the alarming telegram and left immediately “by slow transportation...carriage and train” in order “to make my way to my husband’s bedside.” Three days after she arrived, her husband was in a “plain pine coffin.” “If only the graves could have given up their dead,” she lamented when reflecting upon the loss of the Confederacy.<sup>24</sup>

Another Alabama woman, Malinda Waller Averett, would lose her husband to disease. She was pregnant when her husband Harris joined the 55<sup>th</sup> Alabama Infantry in 1863. “I wish you could come home for I am as fat as a pig in a pen...I would write something which would make you laugh but I am afraid some man would see it” she wrote shortly after he left. Three weeks later, she informed her husband that “I have stayed so long as I can.” She planned to “make my new dress and I am coming.” The separation was hard on the young couple for “It seems like you have been gone a year,” Malinda wrote just months after Harris marched off. Her pregnancy was progressing rapidly, leading her to explain that “I want to come before I get too big so you can hug me good. I am getting pretty high around. I am afraid you can’t get your arms around me.” Once again fearful that her candidness might be discovered, she asked “my dear Harris do burn up this letter when you read it. I am afraid somebody might get hold of it.” Harris did not follow his wife’s directions, and thus the letter survives as an example of a nineteenth century marriage free

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

from pretense. “How I wist I was with you now,” Malinda informed her husband, adding “I wold eat a peace of you.”<sup>25</sup>

In addition to providing a captivating peek into their relationship, Malinda and Harris’ letters also illuminate the rampant nature of disease in camps. “Dear husband,” Malinda penned on October 2, 1863, “I never hird talk of so much sickness in my life, sick an a dying like sheap with chills and feavor. I think it must be dry weather.” Her husband would catch this sickness by the end of the month. Malinda received a letter from P. Zimmerman, who felt “it to be the duty of someone to let you know the condition of your husband.” A “severe chill, which proved to be an attack of pleura-pneumonia” had seized Harris. The sickness “has been running its course unabated,” continued Zimmerman. “Should you wish to come and see him, you may probably get here before he dies, should that be the result,” he concluded. But by the time Malinda received the letter, her husband had been dead for days. In fact, Harris died on October 27, 1863, just hours after Zimmerman wrote the ominous letter. Harris never saw combat. He also never met his third little girl, Harriet, who was born in 1864.<sup>26</sup>

Of course, there were other, more unique ways in which soldiers could lose their lives. “My dear wife and children,” an upset Asa V. Ladd wrote on October 29, 1864, “I take my pen with trembling hand to inform you that I will be shot between 2 and 4 o’clock this evening.” A thirty-four year old farmer, Asa was married with four children. He joined the Confederate forces in early 1861, served as a private in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Missouri Calvary, and endured capture on October 16, 1864. Union military authorities in St. Louis, Missouri, had selected Asa, along

---

<sup>25</sup> Malinda Waller Averett, Reeltown, Alabama, to Harris Hardin Averett, 11 September 1863, Harris Hardin Averett Papers, 1854-1863, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery; Malinda Waller Averett, Reeltown, Alabama, to Harris Hardin Averett, 1 October 1863, *ibid*.

<sup>26</sup> Malinda Waller Averett, Reeltown, Alabama, to Harris Hardin Averett, 2 October 1863, *ibid*; Malinda Waller Averett, Reeltown, Alabama, to Harris Hardin Averett, 27 October 1863, *ibid*; U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1870 United States Population Schedules of Reeltown, Tallapoosa, Alabama, [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com).

with five other Confederate soldiers, for execution. “I am condemned to be shot,” he explained to his father, “in retaliation for some men shot by Reeves. I am an innocent man and it is hard to die for an others sins.” To his wife, Asa further explained “there is 6 of us sentenced to die in room of 6 union soldiers.” Colonel Timothy Reeves, a Confederate guerrilla leader, had shot union prisoners earlier in the month, on October 3. Federal authorities did not discover the bodies, which lay in shallow graves forty five miles west of St. Louis, until October 25. Two of the bodies were “so badly eaten by hogs, they could not be identified.” Authorities of the Gratiot Street Prison inspected the rolls and chose Asa as one of the six men to suffer retaliatory measures. The decision was final. Asa concluded his last letter with words of love, lamenting that “I must bring my letter to a close, leaving you in the hands of God. I send you my best love and respects in the hour of death...good-by Amy.” Escorted by the 10<sup>th</sup> Kansas Infantry, the prisoners rode “a short distance south of Lafayette Park.” Several hundred spectators surrounded the men. Asa was tied to a post, blindfolded, and shot at 3:00 p.m..<sup>27</sup>

Most prisoners did not suffer death in this manner. Certainly, few men knew the exact hour they would die as Asa had. In fact, prisoners likely assumed that life in a prison, while miserable, would be less deadly than life on a raging battlefield. Approximately 410,000 men experienced incarceration during the Civil War; 56,000 would not survive their imprisonment. “The horrors of the prison are so grate...if everybody could Know & feel as I do I think there would be nomore Jales built,” wrote William Speer while imprisoned at Johnson’s Island in

---

<sup>27</sup> Acts of retaliation performed on unarmed POWs remains the “most incredulous and least known aspect” of the Civil War, according to Lonnie R. Speer, author of *War of Vengeance: Acts of Retaliation Against Civil War POWs*. The number of men who died in these situations is currently unknown. Asa V. Ladd, Gratiot St. Prison in St. Louise, MO, to wife, 29 October 1864. Asa V. Ladd Papers, 1864, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville. Asa V. Ladd Papers henceforth referred to as Ladd Papers, TSLA; Lonnie R. Speer, *War of Vengeance: Acts of Retaliation Against Civil War POWs* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2002), 7-8.

Ohio. From 1861 to 1865, 12% of all Confederate prisoners in Union prisons died, mostly from disease.<sup>28</sup>

When men left for war, the ways in which they could meet their demise were nearly innumerable. Many widows, and society as a whole for that matter, angrily came to believe “the roll of death is fearful—the cruel monster is insatiable.” A husband’s final moments were extremely important to his widow. Widows wanted to know the details of their husbands’ deaths and would often spend weeks attempting to discover them. On November 28, 1863, Rosa Delony received a letter in response to her “enquiries in regard to the death of your husband.” To her first question about the religious state of her husband, Chaplain W. H. Channing responded that “the Chaplain who was with your husband has lately died” but he had heard that Will’s “close was peaceful.” Rosa had also asked about Will’s mortal wound, the location of his body, and where they kept his possessions. It was not until December 3, 1863, two months after Will’s death, that Rosa received an official notice from the hospital announcing the death of her husband. “Any further information concerning his death will be most freely given,” the clerk assured her.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup>While Andersonville is infamous for the high casualty rates and miserable conditions, other prisons in the North could prove to be just as hazardous to a soldier’s life. New York’s Elmira, for example, recorded a 24% mortality rate, which is not unlike Andersonville’s mortality rate of 29%. However, it is important to note that the majority of Andersonville’s deaths were due to neglect, while Elmira’s was to disease. The union prison system was more stable and had a lower casualty rate than that of the Confederate prison system. Benjamin G. Cloyd *Haunted by Atrocity: Civil War Prison in American Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 1. William Speer, “A Confederate Soldier’s View of Johnson’s Island Prison,” ed. James B. Murphey, *Ohio History* 79 (Spring 1970), 109, as quoted in Benjamin G. Cloyd *Haunted by Atrocity: Civil War Prison in American Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 15; Cloyd, 14.

<sup>29</sup>Major General Early Van Dorn, dubbed “the terror of ugly husbands” by one reporter, provides yet another unique story of how a husband might die at war. Though married, he gained a reputation for adulterous affairs both before and during the war. Dr. James Bodie Peres, who believed that Van Dorn had an affair with his wife in 1863, shot him in the back of the head and killed him. More research needs to be completed to see what widowhood might have looked like for Van Dorn’s wife, Caroline Godbold. Emma Holmes, October 8, 1864, in *The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes 1861-1866*, ed. John F. Marszalek (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 375; W. H. Channing, Chaplain of Stanton Hospital in Washington, D. C., to Rosa E. Delony, Athens, Ga, 28 November 1863, Deloney Papers, UGA.

Before the war, a wife expected to sit beside a bed, hold her husband's hand, and watch him die after a long, fulfilling life. The war changed this, leaving wives without details of their husbands' deaths. A well-written letter allowed a widow to place herself next to her husband mentally. For instance, a letter informed Louisa that her husband David was stricken "with yellow fever Monday evening, suddenly, and from the commencement was a very ill man." The author described the "most alarming symptoms" of her husband, the "human aid" which David received, the fluctuations of his health, who visited him, who was with him when he died, who held his hand, and the final messages he wished to be repeated to his family members. These details would bring comfort to wives like Louisa. She now knew that her husband did not die abruptly on a cold battlefield or in a bustling hospital surrounded by strangers. As Fause points out, chaplains, nurses, doctors, and soldiers tried to keep "as many of the elements of the conventional Good Death as possible" alive in their letters, aiming to soothe faraway wives. The comfort these letters provided, however, was often fleeting, for no letter could bring her husband back to life again.<sup>30</sup>

Because casualty reporting was inconsistent, a woman was often at the mercy of the men who fought alongside her husband to learn not only the details of his death, but even that the death had occurred. The arrival of a crumpled envelope addressed with unfamiliar handwriting might contain a message from a man like William Fields, who wrote "as you in all probability have not heard of the death of your husband and as I was a witness to his death I consider it my duty to write you although I am a stranger to you." Likewise, Rosa, who was pregnant at the time, learned of her husband's death not from the hospital or even from a letter addressed to her.

---

<sup>30</sup> F. Lay, to E. L. Harris, 11 October 1864, David Bullock Harris Papers, 1789-1894, Manuscript Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University; For an excellent book on death in the Civil War which includes a lengthy discussion of this notion of a Good Death, see Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 6-11.

Instead, Rosa learned of Will's passing from two Athens citizens. William Church, a sergeant in Will's Georgia Troopers, informed Mrs. Pleasant Stovall of Will's death in a hastily written telegram. He told Mrs. Stovall "on account of her condition break the news to Mrs. Delony as best you can...William Gaston Delony...died on Friday afternoon from the effects of gunshot wounds he received on the left leg. His funeral took place on Saturday afternoon about four o'clock at Stanton Hospital where he died." Mrs. Stovall and Rosa worked together closely in the Ladies Aid Society. Church was a dear friend of the Delony family and a man who Rosa affectionately called Willie in her letters. They knew that with the arrival of this slip of paper, Rosa's life would change forever.<sup>31</sup>

Widows' responses to the news of death were as diverse as the widows themselves. From shock to denial, depression to acceptance, inconsolable wives came to terms with their new identity as widows in different ways. The amount of time this process took varied tremendously. Some women felt disoriented by the news, like Octavia "Tivie" Stephens, who wrote her brother "I know not how to write I am so bewildered." Though she had been told numerous times that her husband was dead, she felt, "I can not realize the whole truth, it seems dark and mysterious." For others, shock brought silence, such as the widow who responded "unnaturally calm and has not shed a tear...poor girl, I fear the reaction when his body arrives—she had a sad and heavy responsibility left upon her and so young." For this type of widow, shock served as a temporary

---

<sup>31</sup> William Fields to Mrs. Fitzpatrick, June 8, 1865, Maria Clopton Papers, Medical and Hospital Collection, Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Va as quoted in Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 15; The Southern Telegraphy Company, telegram from W. L. Church to Pleasant Stovall, 6 October 1863, Deloney Papers, Hargrett; John F. Stegeman, *These Men She Gave: Civil War Diary of Athens, Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1964), 99, 149-50.

defense, sheltering the mind from the overwhelming and besieging emotions. Not all reacted this calmly.<sup>32</sup>

One young wife created such a scene of “frantic grief” that a nurse, Anna Holstein, felt the event was “graven as with an iron pen” upon her memory. “Added to this fatiguing” work of nursing, “there seemed to be no limit to the numbers who came looking after their dead and wounded, the loved and lost.” According to Holstein, this particular wife “came hurriedly, as soon as she knew her husband was in a battle, only to find him dead and buried two days before her arrival.” The young woman refused to believe that her husband had been laid “beside his comrades in the orchard.” She “insisted upon seeing him” and could not contain herself as the shovels of earth slowly uncovered the grave. Consumed with “agonizing grief,” the woman “clutched the earth by handfuls where it lay upon the quiet sleeper’s form” unable to “wait the slow process of removing the body.” When the “slight covering was removed, and the blanket thrown from off the face, she needed but one glance to assure her it was all too true.” That was her husband’s face. His body lay in a grave. He was dead. She went back to the hospital, “passive and quiet beneath the stern reality of this crushing sorrow.”<sup>33</sup>

This widow was not the only one who craved the closure irrefutable proof could bring. One widow penned sorrowfully that “the last lingering hopes have all been crushed. None of us could mistake those pieces of cloth. I thank God that he had on clothes that we knew. Otherwise we never would have felt sure that they were his precious remains.” Likewise, Barbara Ellen

---

<sup>32</sup> Octavia Stephens to Davis Bryant, April 4, 1864, in *Rose Cottage Chronicles: Civil War Letter of the Bryant-Stephens Families of North Florida*, eds. Arch Fredric Blakey, Ann Smith Lainhart, and Winston Bryant Stephens, Jr. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 334; Emma Holmes, July 4, 1862, in *The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes 1861-1866*, ed. John F. Marszalek (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 179.

<sup>33</sup> The widow in this story is not identified as either a Union or a Confederate soldier, but I do not consider this to be particularly important. Raw, initial, searing emotions are human, not Union or Confederate. Mrs. H [Anna Morris Ellis Holstein], *Three Years in Field Hospitals of the Army of the Potomac* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1867), v, 13.

Huff accepted the death of her husband when her brother-in-law sent her a lock of her husband's hair. Such evidence provided verification and a confirmation that the wife was now widow. This proof confirmed that she was indeed a widow and must discover what that would mean for her.<sup>34</sup>

Observers often felt unsure of how to handle the reactions of widows, writing things like "I cannot describe the grief of his widow & with sorrow I write these few lines." Men struggled with the thought of denying wives one last look at their husbands. One deceased husband was so "dreadfully mangled in the face" that even though the widow had the body, "it was impossible to allow the family a last look...how harrowing to their feelings to think those loved forms so near and yet unable to obtain one last agonizing look." While some widows knew where their husbands were buried, many women did not even know where their husband's body lay. For Annie O'Hear, the arrival of letters only added to "her overwhelming grief for her husband, whom there can be little doubt was killed in the fatal battle [in Virginia] which left desolation in so many other Charleston homes." Emma Holmes believed that a grieving widow was "the saddest of sights" and hated to see "a young girl of beauty, talents, refinement & wealth, whose mind is so clouded by melancholy as to be oblivious of the realities of the present." But this sight was the reality, and it was everywhere.<sup>35</sup>

Even soldiers, surrounded by unforgettable death scenes, found the reactions of widows to be memorable. One soldier, Robert Stiles, felt "it is strange how everything connected with

---

<sup>34</sup> Louis P. Towles, ed., *World Turned Upside Down: The Palmers of South Santee, 1818-1881* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 404, quoted in Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 146; Kenzer, 120.

<sup>35</sup> David Todd to Emilie Todd Helm, April 15, 1862, Helm Papers, Kentucky Historical Society, quoted in Stephen Berry, *House of Abraham: Lincoln and the Todds, A Family Divided By War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2007), 116; Emma Holmes, 26 July 1861, in *The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes 1861-1866*, ed. John F. Marszalek (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 70; Augustina Stephens to Octavia Stephens, Welka, March 21, 1864, in *Rose Cottage Chronicles*, 330; Emma Holmes, June 22, 1864, in *The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes 1861-1866*, ed. John F. Marszalek (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 356; Emma Holmes, June 22, 1864, *Diary of Miss Emma Holmes*, 356.

the burial, except the sad scene at the grave, seems to have faded out of my recollection.” He describes the funeral of James H. Beers, a Confederate soldier who died on May 3, 1863, from wounds he received at the Battle of Chancellorsville. Stiles acted as an escort for the family, riding “in the carriage with the widow and his two little girls.” As Beers was laid to rest with military honors, Stiles reflected “that not a muscle of their pale, sweet faces quivered as the three volleys were fired over the low mound that covered him.” He believed this incident to be “the most impressive instance I have ever known of trenchant, independent thought and uncalculated, unflinching obedience to the resulting conviction of duty—obedience unto death.” Three women, the widow and her two young daughters, remained fixated in his mind, and thus made it into his memoirs.<sup>36</sup>

No matter the response, one thing was certain: her husband was dead. She often lost a man she loved, her confidant, the father of her children, her chief financial supporter. Gone forever was the “most important character in our little home.” A loud knock on the door or the arrival of a letter was all it took to propel a wife onto her emotional voyage. Her husband, her anchor, was dead. His smell, his smile, his annoying habits, and his adorable mannerisms were gone. Living, not just making a living, consumed the mind of new widows. She was a widow and must come to terms with what his death meant for her life.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Robert Stiles, *Four Years Under Marse Robert* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1904), 41-43.

<sup>37</sup> Rosa Delony, Athens, Georgia, to Will Delony, 13 December 1861, Deloney Papers, UGA.

## CHAPTER 2: TO BE A “WIDOW”

*“Love that was plighted ‘until Death,’  
 Withered too soon by a chilling breath  
 A soldier’s faith and a patriot’s pride,  
 The heart of a leader tried and true;  
 The heart of a leader true and tried;  
 A life for his country freely given,  
 Gathered here—but ‘exhaled to Heaven’”*  
 -condolence poem written to Hetty Cary<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 1862, Theophilus Perry took his father’s slave, joined Company F of the 28<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry, and rode off to fight for the Confederacy. Not two months into his life as a soldier, he wrote to his young wife Harriet: “I never knew how much my life is wrapped up in you and daughter, as I now know...All the world is blank and sadness unless your face shines upon it.” His wife was similarly dejected: “You are my life,” she told her husband, “it is all I can do to live separated from you.” She attempted to remain encouraging in her letters to Theophilus, but to her sister she shared the secrets of her heart. “I am here so lonely and uneasy” she wrote, “it seems to me that Mr. Perry’s being in the army will kill me. I am no better reconciled than I was at first.” She claimed she could not “sleep nor take pleasure or interest in any thing in the world” while he was away. Harriet felt “so low spirited I dont know what to do...I dont know what is to become of us—we are sorely scourged if any people ever were...for I have no idea he will ever return to stay—war makes its widows by the thousand.” And in 1864, war made a widow of her.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> C., *In Memory of Brigadier General John Pegram, Killed in Battle* February 6, 1865, in Griggs, 124.

<sup>2</sup> Editor M. Jane Johansson published the letters between Harriet and her husband to document the “intimate and emotional” lives “of one couple and their ultimate tragedy.” Too often, the tale ends as this published narrative does. When Theophilus died in battle, just over four years after his marriage to Harriet, the book ends. Johansson

The Civil War produced widows in such numbers, under such circumstances, and at such ages that widowhood changed. In the antebellum period, what a woman wore and how she was treated changed when she became a widow. Nineteenth century etiquette books told women what to wear while condolence letters told them what to do. The Civil War, in turn, would change these elements of mourning. For Confederate widows, expectations became more numerous and less flexible. Widows received advice on how to dress, act, and even think from family, friends, neighbors, husbands, newspapermen, and novelists. Confederate society watched and rewarded those who followed its dictates. Unlike the antebellum widow, the Confederate widow lost her husband to a war that, in turn, needed her. If she championed her husband's memory, she championed his cause. By hastily mourning him, she cheapened it. Messages sent to war widows combined to create a one-size-fits-all approach to mourning that would ultimately fail because widows were younger, more numerous, and continued to live in the midst of a war. For many, the model would remain just that: an ideal that had little impact on the lived experience of Confederate widowhood.

Clothing was one of the foundational elements of antebellum mourning rituals. The ideal widow filled her wardrobe with heavy black dresses. For two and a half years, she would swath herself in dark clothing from the moment she woke until she laid down her head. The color black reminded widows, friends, and strangers alike of her arduous grief. "Dress has its language, which is, or may be, read and understood by all" claimed one 1856 etiquette book. The authors believed "there should be a harmony between your dress and your circumstances." Thus, in the first year of mourning, "the bereaved wore solid black wool garments," a "simple

---

writes a half page informing the reader that Harriet moved to North Carolina and remarried in 1872, but nothing more. Harriet Eliza Person to Mary Temperance Person, Marshall Texas, October 22, 1862, in *Widows by the Thousand: The Civil War Letters of Theophilus and Harriet Perry 1862-1864*, ed. M. Jane Johansson (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), xv, 1-2, 5, 10, 45.

crape bonnet—never a hat—and a long, thick, black crape veil.” The darkness of the fabric ought to reflect her depressed spirits. In the second year, a widow could progress to wearing “a silk fabric trimmed with crape and use black lace for her collars and cuffs” and “shorten her veil and make it of tulle or net.” Eventually, she “might vary her wardrobe with garments or trim of gray, violet, or white,” signaling that her heart was aching less. These clothes transformed widows into a symbol of grief and informed her community that she was in mourning, and thus should be treated accordingly.<sup>3</sup>

Some antebellum etiquette books described stringent mourning dress requirements to an almost comical extreme. Emily Thornwell’s 1856 book *The Lady’s Guide to Perfect Gentility* devoted an entire paragraph to mourning bonnets. Initial descriptions of the hat appear rather benign and simple. She informed the reader that mourning bonnets ought to be “made of black silk” and “covered in crape.” Thornwell became more particular when describing the hems of the bonnets, that the bow and strings should be “broad-hemmed, the double hem being from half an inch to one inch broad.” Then, she proceeded into descriptions of the bonnet for “deep mourning.” Deep mourning was specifically applied to those drowning in the fiercest waves of grief and therefore was the expected dress of widows. The front of the bonnet should have “a fall or veiling of crape” measuring “half a yard deep, and a yard and a half long.” The ideal and respectable widow, according to this description, walked about with a foot and a half of dark, heavy fabric in front of her face. For petite women, the veil would nearly drag on the floor before them. As seen in this physical description of the mourning bonnet, widows were expected to glide through the world, playing a public role. She could be easily identified, watched, and

---

<sup>3</sup> *How to Behave: A Pocket Manual of Republican Etiquette, and Guide to Correct Personal Habits* (New York: Fowler and Wells, Publishers, 1856); Margaret M. Coffin, *Death in Early America: The History and Folklore of Customs and Superstitions of Early Medicine, Funerals, Burials, and Mourning* (New York: Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, 1976), 197-8.

spoken to, but not with. The mourning attire placed her in a sort of floating bubble—she was in the world, but not quite interacting with it.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to clothing, a specific set of requirements for attitudes and behavior accompanied antebellum wardrobe restrictions. These appear not only in etiquette books but also in condolence letters. Upon the death of her husband, a widow could expect to receive dozens of letters from those who loved and knew her. For example, after the death of Henry Jackson in 1840, his wife received many letters from family and friends assuring her that they “truly sympathize[d]” with her loss. These condolence letters offered not only assertions of sympathy and love, but also advice and guidance. A key aspect of early widowhood involved “the struggle for composure; widows labored mightily to keep their emotions in check as befit their secular responsibly, social propriety, and religious duty.” Condolence letters aimed to assist widows in this struggle by soothing them with religious sentiment. The antebellum widow could trust in “the inscrutable providence of God.” Likely widowed late in her life after a lengthy marriage, she could now enjoy her grandchildren and look forward to a blessed and quickly approaching afterlife with her husband.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to taking comfort in religion, antebellum society urged widows to take comfort in the memory of their late husbands. As one antebellum etiquette book explained, her husband was not truly gone because the ideal antebellum widow “sees and loves the object of her affection, in all things which surround her.” Within the mourning period, for the idyllic widow “all love and tenderness of her being go forth continually to meet and embrace him.” This emphasis on religion and devotion to the memory of her husband exemplifies the typical

---

<sup>4</sup> Emily Thornwell, *The Lady's Guide to perfect Gentility*, available on googlebooks.com, (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1856), 217.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Cocke to Jane Cocke, 18 November 1812, Cocke Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, as quoted in Wood, 138.

performance of mourning in the antebellum era. Most antebellum correspondents hoped to console a widow and give light advice. Genuine feelings expressed in these letters assured a widow that she was loved and not alone.<sup>6</sup>

The Civil War altered antebellum mourning rituals tremendously, impacting both clothing customs and condolence letters. One contributing factor to this change was that the war created widows in higher numbers than ever before in American history. Judith McGuire felt “it is melancholy to see how many wear mourning” clothes. Widowhood was more prevalent and more visible for towns had not one widow, but many. On December 18, 1862, Lucy Breckinridge found herself surrounded by “14 ladies dressed in black” and remarked “there were so many ladies there, all dressed in deep mourning, that we felt as if we were at a convent and formed a sisterhood.” Unlike the antebellum period, during the Civil War so many women wore black that it often seemed that the entire South was cloaked in nighttime shadows.<sup>7</sup>

The inability to purchase proper mourning garb plagued women of lower classes. Especially during the economic hardships of the Civil War, mourning was a luxury that these women could not afford. McGuire described “one sad girl” who was “too poor to buy mourning” due to “fallen fortunes.” Another who could not afford to buy a mourning wardrobe dyed all of her clothes black in order “to make them suitable.” Silk black dresses, heavy veils, and other features of mourning were expensive. With supply shortages and greater demands, the materials became even more expensive and harder to find. Though they were priced-out of

---

<sup>6</sup> Eliza Schley to Sarah Jackson, 24 June 1840, Jackson and Prince Family Papers, Southern Historical Society, as quoted in Wood, 107; Wood, 137.

<sup>7</sup> McGuire, 3 January 1864, 250; Lucy Breckinridge, *Lucy Breckinridge of Grove Hill: The Journal of a Virginia Girl, 1862-1864*, ed. Mary D. Robertson (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 18 December 1862, 88-89;

respectable mourning rituals, it seems lower class women often did the best they could to mimic these customs, even if it meant dying the only clothes they owned in a gloomy ink.<sup>8</sup>

A second reason wartime mourning changed relates to the age of war widows. While premature and sudden death certainly occurred in the antebellum period, the extent to which the Civil War killed young men astounded communities across the South. The suddenness of this death led to a phenomenon of many young, pregnant widows. In a time when the average southern woman gave birth to eight to ten children in her lifetime, it is perhaps not so surprising that the Civil War created so many pregnant widows. When William Gaston Delony died, his wife was eight months pregnant with a little girl. The baby was born just a month after her father's death, leaving Rosa with four children under the age of seven. Confederate officer Stephen Dodson Ramseur was ecstatic to hear the news of his young wife's first pregnancy but felt it was "the greatest trial of my life to be separated from you *now*! But these trials do us good, even as gold is refined by the fire." When his wife gave birth, he claimed "the news relieved me of the greatest anxiety of my life" and immediately wrote his wife to ask whether he had a son or a daughter, signing the letter "with love inexpressible." This would be the last letter he would ever send. Shot in battle, he died just days after his child's birth, still unaware of his baby's gender.<sup>9</sup>

As Ramseur's story shows, even if the child had been born, there was a chance a soldiering father would not meet the little bundle of joy. Another example which highlights just how drastically different the experience of a Confederate widow could be when compared to the older antebellum widow, is that of Captain Brown. Captain Brown of North Carolina arrived

---

<sup>8</sup> McGuire, 3 January 1864, 250; Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 150.

<sup>9</sup> The baby was a girl; Jan Lewis and Kenneth A. Lockridge, "'Sally Has Been Sick': Pregnancy and Family Limitation Among Virginia Gentry Women, 1780-1830," in *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 22, No. 1, Autumn, 1988, 5-19; Ramseur, 287, 289, 290.

wounded to a Virginia hospital and seemed to Judith McGuire both “bright and cheerful, with every appearance of speedy recovery.” While there, he talked about his wife and his six children, one of whom he has never seen. Captain Brown, aware that his wife would like him home for the birth of his child, had obtained a furlough, “but the recent battles coming on, he would not leave his post.” He planned to leave for home just as soon as the fight was over, but instead he was mortally wounded. “I intended to be there,” he said, “I made all my arrangements to be there; I know she wants me; she wrote me to come to her; oh, I wish I was there, but now I can’t go, but I hope I did right; I hope it is all right.” It would not be alright. Gangrene appeared and Captain Brown watched “death coming steadily on.” His death left a young widow with five children and a newborn baby. Unlike most antebellum widows, the war widow not only had to worry about herself, but her young children.<sup>10</sup>

While the younger age of widows would change many aspects of their mourning experience, it did not impact every aspect of widowhood. Religious sentiments continued to be in nearly every letter written to a woman widowed during the Civil War. Like antebellum condolence letters, some correspondents genuinely attempted to comfort a widow with the notion of reunion in the hereafter. Dallas Wood, after learning about the death of his brother in law, reminded his sister that “we all have the cheering assurance of a blissful home in Heaven where there will be no war and no parting again.” Before his death, a different husband wrote “I want to meet you all in haven whear woress and fightings will be ore, whear wives and husbands part no more, whear parance and children each other greete, wheare all is joy and pleasure sweat.” For strength, one sympathizer encouraged a recent widow to “lean you[r] head upon the bosom of your sympathizing Savior” and remember that “our Father reigns and in mercy remembers

---

<sup>10</sup> McGuire, 13 November 1864, 314-315.

us.” Like the sentiments expressed in antebellum letters, the sympathetic thought that “God alone can sustain you while passing thru’ these deep, deep waters” and assurances that “God will help you thro’ your troubles” continued the religious consolation of the pre-war era.<sup>11</sup>

Most elements of condolence letters, however, did change in response to the war. While condolence letters certainly had an advisory element in the antebellum era, this element became more highly visible in letters to the younger and more numerous Confederate war widows. The changes in condolence letters reflect the needs and hopes of a wartime society. The way in which authors phrased their letters reveals what the writers hoped the widow would say, think, and feel. In the sentence “God love & bless you & bind up your broken, bleeding heart—give you patience under this heart-crushing sorrow, & resignation to His will,” the desire for a widow to be patient and resigned is apparent. “Now my dear friend,” penned another sympathizer, “all that remains for us is to try to submit to His will.” In wartime condolence letters, the tone often became more commanding, instructing the widow to be obedient and passive in the wake of God’s command. A fair number even encouraged widows to be cheerful in their situation. “I rejoice, as I know you do, that it [his death] has pleased our Heavenly Father, as we must believe,” wrote another well-wisher, subtly encouraging her to celebrate in her husband’s death. “Look upward, mourners, look above!” called yet another poem, “then trust in thy Redeemer’s love.” This form of religious sentiment, unlike antebellum-inspired comfort, became distant and almost unfeeling. Instead of simply taking comfort in religion, as their antebellum ancestors did,

---

<sup>11</sup> Dallas Wood, Dalton, Georgia, to Louisa A Nixon, Mt. Pleasant Florida, 25 December 1861, Nixon Letters, UF; John F. Davenport to Mary Jane Davenport, 7 September 1862, John F. Davenport Civil War Letters, 1862-1864, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; Martha D. D. to Rosa Delony, Athens, Georgia, October 13, 1863, November 6, 1863, Deloney Papers, UGA.

the ideal war widow not only accepted God's will but rejoiced, for her husband was in a better place and died for a cause that pleased Him.<sup>12</sup>

Southern society became increasingly convinced that it was essential for war widows to remember their late husbands both honorably and often and thus the notion became prevalent in condolence letters. The foundations for this idea came from the antebellum period, like the etiquette book which insisted widows "affections are in heaven, with the companions, whom, on earth they shall see no more." A war widow did not just have a dead husband, but a "brave, gallant husband." Soldiering husbands didn't just die, but died "whilst gallantly fighting for his country." "Bless God that you had such a husband whose memory is honored and whose children will feel proud" wrote one condoler to a new widow. The pressure placed on widows to remember husbands stemmed from a fear that amidst soaring death tolls, soldiers would be forgotten. In a letter to his sister, one soldier wrote that while he hoped she "may enjoy yourself this day and have a merry Christmas," there was "no doubt you could enjoy your self much more if dear Jimmy was alive." The death of a husband should not cause a widow to be any less committed to the man. Ideally, her devotion would not only continue, but increase.<sup>13</sup>

Wartime condolence letters also urged widows to remain loyal to the cause that their husbands died defending. The cause he died for was important, for nothing could be worse than to be remembered as "a hero in a broken cause" who was "pouring out his wasted life," and

---

<sup>12</sup>Sister to Nellie Ramseur, Thomasville, Georgia, 8 November 1864, Southern Historical Collection, as quoted in Ramseur, 299; Ann A Crenshaw, to E. L. Harris, 18 October 1864, David Bullock Harris Papers, 1789-1894, Manuscript Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University; F. Lay, to E. L. Harris, 11 October 1864, *ibid*; Ellen Long Daniel's Scrapbook, Ellen Long Daniel Papers, 1848-1918, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Ellen Long Daniel Papers henceforth referred to as Daniel Papers, UNC.

<sup>13</sup>Lizzie Torrey, *The Ideal of Womanhood, or, Words to the Women of America* (Boston: Wentworth, Hewes & Co., 1859), 130-2; Martha D. D., 13 October 1863; Maria Delony, 11 August 1864, Deloney Papers, UGA; Sam Adams to Amanda Moore, 27 September 1863, Sydenham Moore Family Papers, 1833-1373, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.

leaving “the land he loved to darkness and defeat.” After the war, the South wanted and needed someone to “strew the early flowers upon the soldiers’ graves” and make sure that “no grave has been forgotten.” But during the war, the Confederacy needed the support of widows to carry on. Condolence letters urged widows to remember both the husband and the cause that put him in an early grave.<sup>14</sup>

Because the Civil War produced younger widows with children, letter writers felt the need to advise a widow on the care of her children. In the antebellum era, when it was more likely widows would be well beyond their childrearing years, this additional advice was irrelevant. However, a young Confederate widow should “take care of yourself for your dear children. Who can fill a Mother’s place?” Letters repeatedly echoed this reaction, reminding a woman that while she may be upset, she must fulfill her primary duty as a mother. One mother-in-law scolded her late son’s wife, saying she “must not give up on your feelings my dear child, but think of those precious little ones whose sole dependence is upon you, strive to cheer up.” To the same widow, a cousin penned “for the sake of the little ones depending upon you...be calm and trustful.” Even poems bestowed advice on grieving mothers, to “not be by passion’s tempest driven.” Children needed to be fed, clothed, and watched. A mother too consumed with her own grief to care for her husband’s prodigy was not desired.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike the antebellum period, Civil War correspondents were not usually a widow’s similarly-aged peers or younger family members. Instead, many writers were older than the widows themselves, likely contributing to the more advisory aspect of these letters. Also

---

<sup>14</sup> Mary E. Flemming to Octavia “Tivy” Bryant Stephens, S-B Papers, UF, UF; Ellen Long Daniel’s Scrapbook, Daniel Papers, UNC.

<sup>15</sup> M. D. D. to Rosa Delony, 6 November 1863; Maria Delony to Rosa Delony, 11 August 1864, Deloney Papers, UGA; Martha D. Duncan, to Rosa Delony 25 November 1863, Deloney Papers, UGA; Ellen Long Daniel’s Scrapbook, Daniel Papers, UNC.

because of their young age, condolence letters began to encourage widows to mimic older widows—often their mothers or aunts. Certainly, many women lived as widows before the Civil War, but most of these women entered into widowhood late in their lives. For one Eliza Walker, the model was her own mother. Her father, while “examining a strange horse, he received a kick in the breast, and died instantly.” Her mother was sitting in the hall of their home and “saw him fall to the ground.” As a widow, Eliza’s mother represented the ideal in her eyes. “I know that no braver or more wonderful woman ever lived,” she wrote. Likewise, when William Delony’s father died in 1832, Will’s mother Martha successfully raised four children on her own. With this precedence, Martha expected her daughter in law to be able to do the same for her grandchildren. “You have great work, Rosa,” penned one loved one, noticing the tremendous amount of strain placed upon the young widow. And indeed she, and many others, did.<sup>16</sup>

Beyond condolence letters, the Civil War gave a woman a new advisor: her husband. Soldiering husbands, recognizing the chance of premature deaths, began to give their wives mourning instructions on how to live, should they die. Asa V. Ladd, the soldier shot in retaliation for the Union men killed by a Confederate guerrilla leader, provided his wife with detailed instructions. “You need have no uneasiness about my future state, for my faith is well founded and I fear no evil. God is my refuge and hiding place,” he assured her. As such, “I want you to teach the children piety, so they can meet me at the right hand of God” he penned, echoing the sentiment of condolence letters in their religious instruction. He also wanted his wife to devote herself to her children by going “back to the old place and try to make support.” “You are now left to take care of my dear children. Tell them to remember their dear father,” he stressed. He did not want to be forgotten. Asa also included directions about closing up his

---

<sup>16</sup> Walker, 63; Martha D. Duncan, to Rosa Delony 25 November 1863, Deloney Papers, UGA.

business affairs and information to tell his friends. But to his wife, he only had assurances of love and a wish, that “I dont want you to let this bear on your mind anymore than you can help...I want you to meet me in heaven” Asa wrote.<sup>17</sup>

Like those who wrote condolence letters encouraging widows to remember their husbands, husbands themselves held a deep fear that they would be forgotten. “Dear Linda,” penned one husband a month before his untimely death, “let nothing change you from the path of faithfulness to me and the children,” he cautioned. A soldier who performed his duty by fighting to the death hoped his family would do their duty by remaining proud and loyal to his memory. John F. Davenport wrote his wife that “I feal like I will return home to the sweat imbrace of you and our sweat Little Children,” but added “if I should fall remember I am fighting for the rites of Liberty for you and our Little ones.” Not only did he want Mary Jane to remember that he was fighting for liberty, his letters are also haunted by the fear that she would not remember him. “Oh my dearest earthlay Jewel...if we should never live to see each other again in this life oh let us live so we will be sure to meet in haven thare we will never never parte again,” he penned. He craved an everlasting love. At the bottom of the letter, he wrote “forget me never” and circled the sentiment. A minnie ball ended John’s life on July 9, 1864.<sup>18</sup>

When Stephen Dodson Ramseur died, he too left specific instructions that may have influenced his wife’s decision to grieve everlasting. On his deathbed, he ordered Major R. R. Hutchinson “to tell you [Nellie] that he had a firm hope in Christ and trusted to meet you hereafter.” Ramseur hoped Nellie would remain faithful to his beliefs and memory, so that one

---

<sup>17</sup> Asa V. Ladd, Gratiot St. Prison in St. Louise, MO, to wife, 29 October 1864, Ladd Papers, TSLA.

<sup>18</sup> Harris Hardin Averett, Camp near Pollard, to Malinda Waller Averett, Reeltown, Alabama, 10 September 1863, Harris Hardin Averett Papers, 1854-1863, ADAH; Dallas Wood, Dalton, Georgia, to Louisa A Nixon, Mt. Pleasant Florida, 25 December 1861, Nixon Letters, UF.

M. D. D. to Rosa Delony, 14 January 1864, Deloney Papers, UGA; John F. Davenport to Mary Jane Davenport, 20 August 1862, John F. Davenport Civil War Letters, 1862-1864, ADAH; John F. Davenport to Mary Jane Davenport, 1 June 1864, *ibid*.

day they would be reunited in heaven. Nellie chose to obey his wishes and wore black until her own death decades later. Some believed Nellie was a true wife, for “the true wife, when widowed, remains a widow, till death re-unites her to the being—complementary to herself.” Ramseur was not alone in his request that his wife never remarry. Seizing on antebellum etiquette books which claimed “perpetual widowhood is alone consistent with our Ideal of woman;—is alone worthy of a great heart, which love has filled,” many began to urge young widows to remain single and dedicated to their late husbands.<sup>19</sup>

The Civil War also gave widows an entirely new task to complete: get their husbands’ bodies home. The idea of a body resting far from home, or worse, in enemy soil, was unacceptable. A woman’s mourning work began once she had a place to mourn. If a Confederate widow could manage to determine the location of the body, she should “seek a grave for the dead” at home, “close by those he loved, among kindred and friends in the fair sunny land he died to defend.” Union husbands, like William F. Vermilion, also informed their wives that they would like to make it home—whether dead or alive. On June 30, 1863, William wrote: “You have often asked what I want you to do if I should not get home.” After thinking on the idea, he had come to a conclusion. “Get me home if you can,” he penned, “bury me on some nice loyal spot of ground, plant flowers over the grave.” Most importantly, “don’t forget to go to that spot Dollie,” he concluded. The last thing that soldier wanted was to be left far from home. “I don’t want to sleep in the land of traitors,” he explained, “I couldn’t rest well.”<sup>20</sup>

In addition to condolence letters and the wishes of husbands, the ideal Confederate widow was crafted by another new element: widowhood literature. Fictional stories reinforced

---

<sup>19</sup> Ramseur, 294; Torrey, 130, 129.

<sup>20</sup> McGuire, 28 October 1864, 310-313; William Vermilion, Helena, Arkansas, to Mary Vermilion, 30 June 1863 in *Love Amid the Turmoil: The Civil War Letters of William and Mary Vermilion* ed. Donald C. Elder III (Iowa City: Iowa Press, 2005), 150.

the concept of eternal devotion to one's husband and urged war widows to channel their grief into their husband's memory. During the war, one newspaper printed the following tale, which is worth quoting at length:

“An incident is related which affords a striking but sad illustration of the effects of civil war. The lady in question has resided with an only daughter for many years in Alexandria. About nine months since, a mutual friend introduced a young gentleman of Richmond to the family. The young people soon became intimately acquainted, and, quite naturally, fell in love. The parents on both sides consenting, the parties were betrothed, and the marriage date was fixed for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July...the gentleman joined the forces of his state...matters thus remained till the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, when, exactly at the hour of the time originally fixed for the marriage, intelligence was received at the residence of the ladies that the young man had been shot by a sentry two days before, while attempting to desert and join his bride. His betrothed did not shed a tear, but, standing erect, smiled, and then remarking to her mother, “I am going to desert too,” fell to the floor, while the blood bubbled from her lips, as her soul passed back to Him who gave it.”<sup>21</sup>

While the woman in this story was not a true widow, this tale nonetheless describes the high level of devotion southern culture glamorized in fiction. Certainly, this story does not suggest that when the Civil War killed a woman's beloved she too must die, but it does allude to the deep devotion a woman should hold for her spouse in both his life and death. Pain, grief, and sadness should accompany her widowhood. For many women, it did; but not all.

Like condolence letters, literature encouraged a widow to be not only dedicated to her husband's memory, but to the cause he died defending. Women's identification with the cause during the war foreshadowed the memorializing of the Lost Cause upon the war's conclusion. Augusta Jane Evans, author of *Marcaria: Altars of Sacrifice*, explained this notion well in her immensely popular book. Published in 1864, southern customers bought over twenty thousand copies before the war ended. “Oh, to this consecrated legion, stretching like a wall of flesh along the borders of our land, what a measureless debt we owe,” exclaimed one of her main characters,

---

<sup>21</sup> Frank Moore, *The Civil War in Song and Story 1860-1865* (New York: P.F. Collier, Publisher, 1892), 76.

witnessing the death of a young boy “raving with delirium” from a wound received at the Battle of Seven Pines. “May we be constantly reminded of the debt of gratitude we owe to our armies,” she continued. While female fidelity to the cause was important during the war, it was even more so after. A nostalgic view of the past, and her past married life, was expected.<sup>22</sup>

Diaries and memoirs also painted pictures of who southern society hoped widows would be. Upon arriving in Richmond in December 1861, Louise Wright, the daughter of a Confederate senator, described a Confederate army decimated by “shot and shell and disease.” The “land ran red with blood and the wail of the widow” could be heard “above the roar and din of battle.” And yet, she emphasized that no Confederate citizen cried “Hold, it is enough.” Despite the loss of husbands, “ultimate defeat was not contemplated.” Louise went on to champion the plight of women and widows of the South. She describes the women as “the most gentle and feminine,” the ones “upon whom the suffering and sorrow of the time pressed most heavily.” “The women of the South,” she continued, “were, if possible, more indomitable in their courage than the men!” Southern women, with “the tender fierceness of the dove,” felt the pain of battle as their husbands did. “Into their own gentle breasts they received each wound by which a hero fell,” she concluded. And yet, they didn’t call for the war to end in her description. They did not call for surrender or peace or the return of husbands. This description is typical of the idealized image southerners crafted and pressured their women to embody. Widows who met the ideal were spoken of in this high language and championed as ideal women of the South.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Augusta Jane Evans, *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice*, ed. Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992) xvii, 390, 382, 411; Torrey, 130, 132; *Rose Cottage Chronicles*, 334.

<sup>23</sup> Louise Wigfall Wright, *A Southern Girl in '61: The War-Time Memories of a Confederate Senator's Daughter* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1905), 215-216.

Additionally, newspapers also played a role in encouraging widows to channel their emotional capital into the cause. During the war, remaining loyal to the Confederacy was not just important for widows, but for most southerners. While prior scholarship suggests that Confederate morale might have plummeted as the war dragged on, historian George Rable believes that “commitment to the Confederacy remained remarkably resilient,” as commitment filled with wishful thinking “helped citizens hang onto hope even in the absence of any tangible reasons to do so.” Likewise, Jason Phillips’ *Diehard Rebels: The Confederate Culture of Invincibility* describes soldiers who not only “knew they were not conquered, but even more, they thought they were unconquerable.” During the war, newspapers asked all women to commit themselves to the cause so that they too would be unconquerable. In 1861, a *Columbus Sun* editor wrote “I call upon you, young women of the South, to come up to this work! This is no time for idle leisure, or profitless occupation...if you live in listlessness and indolence, it is so much towards wasting the effective strength of our armies.” The young Confederacy’s soldiers needed shirts, socks, pants, blankets, shoes, and other commodities that could and would be made in large quantities by women. “Sisters of the South,” penned one enthusiastic writer for the *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel*, “let us hurl the destructive novel in the fire, and turn our poodles out of doors, and...convert our pianos into spinning wheels...whose music is rendered almost as beautiful by its copious produce.” The loyalty and labor of all women, including widows, was needed to support the armies. Figuratively, women were just as important as soldiers to the cause. This requirement for support can be seen throughout the conflict. In 1863, an article in the *Savannah Republican* reminded women of their duties, reading “Women of the South! Do your spirits faint, or your hands falter? You, who so nobly urged this work, will you sustain it still? Are you not ready, if need be, to fill every possible post at home, and send the

last man to the field?” Sacrificing the men in a woman’s life, and more specifically, her husband, represented the pinnacle of devotion in the war. Her husband’s death, however, did not mean that the Confederacy no longer needed her support.<sup>24</sup>

In sum, the ideal Confederate widow wore black, mourned for a minimum of two and a half years, resigned herself to God’s will, focused on her children, modeled herself after older widows, followed her husband’s wishes, got his body home for burial, devoted herself to his memory, and committed herself to his Confederacy. These messages of ideal wartime widowhood, coming from condolence letters, husbands, literature, and newspapers permeated all of southern society. Even women who simply encountered widows felt the pressure to act in a particular way. Sarah Morgan immediately regretted her behavior around one recently widowed woman, deeming it callous and improper. In her diary, she reflected on the incident, writing “and the thought of that little widow came often and often when we were playing our absurd games; I felt as though we were all doing her an injury. We grew shockingly undignified, playing Crambo...we played too many ridiculous games; I for one am ashamed of myself.” The ideal little widow should be surrounded with a solemn air, not serve as a witness to such frivolous games.<sup>25</sup>

To encourage women to live up to this ideal, society elevated widows who remained loyal to the Confederate cause. To be a Confederate widow was to be better than a standard widow or member of the poor. To have a husband who fought and died was honorable. As one

---

<sup>24</sup> George C. Rable, “Despair, Hope, and Delusion: The Collapse of Confederate Morale Reexamined” in *The Collapse of the Confederacy*, eds. Mark Grimsley and Brooks D. Simpson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 131; *Columbus Sun*, June 20, 1861, published in Andrew S. Coppersmith, *Fighting Words: An Illustrated History of Newspaper Accounts in the Civil War* (New York: The New Press, 2004), 21; Jason Phillips, *Diehard Rebels: the Confederate Culture of Invincibility* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 2; *Augusta Chronicle & Sentinel*, April 25, 1861, also published in Coppersmith’s *Fighting Words*, 22; *Savannah Republican*, July 19, 1863, also published in Coppersmith’s *Fighting Words*, 189.

<sup>25</sup> Torrey, 129; Sarah Hunt Morgan, *Sarah Morgan: The Civil War Diary of a Southern Woman*, Ed. Charles East (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 448.

woman put it, she would not let her husband “stand back, like some women’s husbands, to be drafted,” because she “would have been ashamed of that.” It was better to send a husband off to war, and potentially to death, voluntarily. Judith McGuire describes meeting one “wretchedly dressed woman, of miserable appearance.” After introducing herself as Mrs. Brown, she explained “with an honest countenance” that her husband joined the Confederate army and “was killed at the second battle of Manassas.” Fleeing Fredericksburg with her three little children, she “had tried to get work in Richmond; sometimes she succeeded, but could not supply her wants.” When she could not get enough bread to feed her family, 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.” Judith, shocked by this story, asked “but do they satisfy your hunger?” to which Mrs. Brown replied “Well, it is something to go upon for awhile...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.” Alarmed by the idea of starving children being sent to bed without food, Judith gave meat to the widow and wrote: “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.” Mrs. Brown, as a soldier’s widow, had a special place in society above the other poor in the town. She had sacrificed a husband, and because of this, she would be fed.<sup>26</sup>

But in the end, it was up to the widow to interpret all of these messages, live within the pressure, and navigate her way through mourning. The Civil War changed the prescription of widowhood, but she could decide which elements to perform. Southern society crafted a specific model that they wanted and needed wartime widows to be. A widow not only had emotional

---

<sup>26</sup> McGuire, 28 February 1864, 254-255.

power, but also the power to mold and shape the memory of her husband: who he was, what he believed, how he would be remembered. As a lived experience, widowhood changed. It had to. Advice on paper was one thing, real emotion was another. The widow was the one living through widowhood and she would choose how it would look in her life.

Some widows did try to live up to the ideal Southern society stressed. Soldiers often recorded stories and encounters that reinforced this image of the saintly and dedicated widow. Robert Stiles, while in Virginia, sat on the porch of a farm house with “a soldier’s widow.” The young widow noticed that “my coat was badly torn.” The widow, “kindly offering to mend it,” took the jacket and immediately sat down to fix the tear. No soldier in her late husband’s army would appear in a torn jacket if she could help it. The widow could no longer fix her own husband’s clothing, so she now fixed that of other Confederate soldiers, supporting the cause her husband gave his life for.<sup>27</sup>

Confederate supporters would have loved to hear the story of Madam Porter, a “war widow or otherwise” who bested Union officers with her wit and charm. William Wiley, a Union soldier from Peroria, Illinois, recorded the story on October 11, 1863, in his pocket diary. Madam Porter owned a large plantation in Franklin, Louisiana. Seemingly placing her property before her loyalties, she “was in the habit of entertaining some of our officers very nicely” with “fine dinners” in order to receive protection for her property. One night, when a lieutenant and several other young officers “were being entertained at supper,” one of Madam Porter’s slaves “came running in and said, scuse me massa colonel but I guess you all had better look out a little I see a lot of fellers acrossing ober de bayou in skifs and I think dey is rebels.” The officers “left the table rather abruptly and mounted their horses and started for camp at the top of their speed

---

<sup>27</sup> Robert Stiles, *Four Years Under Marse Robert* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1904), 322-323.

supposeing that the widdow and the rebs had laid a trap for them.” William was on picket at the time and watched as his esteemed officers “rode for dear life until they reached our picket line.” This tale of a spunky widow who tricked the occupying Union troops likely entertained the town for weeks. She represented the ideal Confederate widow and an ideal southern woman, fighting the Union troops in her own way.<sup>28</sup>

But for some widows, it was harder to achieve the ideal even if they chose to try. Grief plagued widows in different degrees and at different times. Some were younger than others and some had barely tasted marriage before it was over. Grief-stricken widows sometimes struggled with resignation to their situation. Ellen Long Daniel managed to maintain her immense grief in a way that the Confederacy would have appreciated—privately. She lost her husband in 1864 and filled a scrapbook with poems, pictures, and newspaper clippings related to war and loss. Through this scrapbook, readers gain a tremendous insight into her grief. Early in the book appears the poem entitled “Gone.” It begins “Gone! Yes he’s gone with no word of endearment” and continues on to discuss elements of widowhood, such as “the fabric of years was dissolved in an hour” and “life is blank to a girl broken hearted.” The poem addresses the weariness of grief, seen in the sigh “wearily gazing, like one who is dreaming, Her deep grief yet trying to stifle with sighs, Sad, bitter tears will be presently streaming, From sorrowing depths of those violet eyes.” The pressure of being a widow is most apparent in the final stanza:

“Gone! Yes he’s gone, and she’ll nourish her sorrow,  
In silence and sharpness ‘twill dwell in her breast;  
Sadness as weary to-day as to-morrow,  
The same mocking dreams ever haunting her rest;  
Man, in his anguish, may publish his sadness,  
And brazen it on by the force of his will.  
To woman ‘ts given to laugh in her gladness;

---

<sup>28</sup> William Wiley, *The Civil War Diary of a Common Soldier: William Wiley of the 77th Illinois Infantry*, edited by Terrence J. Windschel (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 79.

To suffer in silence—to weep and be still!”<sup>29</sup>

The true feelings of a widow were to be private. All wanted to see her black gowns and solemn expression. She should embody peace and acceptance. True feelings of grief and heartbreak in their often loud and ugly form would shatter this fragile image. Widows needed to appear resigned to their situation, even if they were not. Widows could mourn, but mourn silently, filling scrapbooks with their grief, as Ellen Long Daniel did. In addition to the poetry, her scrapbook also included a huge picture of Mary Anna Jackson, the widow of Stonewall Jackson. She was a woman Ellen could understand. When looking through the book in private, Ellen could let passion reign. But in public, she would not do so. She would play the role of the Confederacy as an accepting widow.<sup>30</sup>

And yet, while this ideal was crafted, molded, and accepted by some, another stock character emerged within the realm of widowhood—one which rejected the model. This stereotype, that of a flirty widow, was at best comical. At her worst, she could bring about the destruction of the South and all it stood for. Her batting eyelashes and rosy cheeks widened cracks of devotion and threatened to shatter morale, especially towards the end of the war and in the post-war years. The lightening of her mourning clothes was not a symbol of lessening grief, but a countdown to courting. Some would not even wait that long. Widows who refused to live for the past, for their husbands and the Confederacy, challenged not only nineteenth century mourning rituals but the Confederate cause itself.

Of course, not all of southern society believed that young widows must remain single forever. Most sanctioned remarriage after the respectable amount of time had passed. Nor was the idea of a flirtatious widow new. One etiquette book, published in 1846, conceded that “there

---

<sup>29</sup> Ellen Long Daniel’s Scrapbook, Daniel Papers, UNC.

<sup>30</sup> Ellen Long Daniel’s Scrapbook, Daniel Papers, UNC.

is a peculiar fascination about widows...whether it by sympathy for the weeds of mourning, the interest excited by a lady in distress, or a certain air acquired by experience in matrimony, widows are very commonly the objects of a tender passion.” As such, the book included instructions for approaching widows. A formatted letter advised interested men on the proper way to introduce the idea of a second marriage to a woman who had lost her husband. The formulaic letter reveals that even though remarriage was an option, the idea was still surrounded by a specific set of expectations and requirements. A hasty remarriage suggested that the loss of the husband and the war was unimportant. Southern society simply could not and would not accept the idea that “all our sacrifices, all the blood shed has been for nothing.” They believed moving on should not be an easy, painless process. Happy, hurried marriages suggested otherwise and were thus discouraged.<sup>31</sup>

The idea of the flirty widow prevailed in jokes, books, and letters. The stereotype became so prevalent that the idea of the flirty widow permeated both northern and southern camps alike. Asking his wife to “excuse the lewdness of the joke,” Charles Johnson proceeded to inform her that the poetic line “Oh! for a lodge in some vast wilderness, amidst a contiguity of shade” had been paraphrased to “Oh! for a lodge in some vast widow’s nest, amidst a contiguity of hair.” He then explained that he had merely been trying to remember the poem, but “the two slipped into my idle brain together.” He was not alone, for the joke appears in other wartime journals and letters of other soldiers, such as Willoughby Babcock, who recorded in a letter that a friend of his “tantalizingly” asked: “How would you like a lodge in some vast widow’s nest?”<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> *The Art of Good Behavior; and Letter Writing on Love, Courtship, and Marriage: A complete guide for ladies and gentlemen, particularly those who have not enjoyed the advantages of fashionable life* (New York: Published by C. P. Huestis, 1846), 108-110; Rable, 154.

<sup>32</sup> Charles F. Johnson to Mary Johnson, 19 June 1864, in Charles F. Johnson, *The Civil War Letters of Colonel Charles F. Johnson: Invalid Corps*, ed. Fred Pelka (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 256;

A modicum of truth fueled the fun, and the fears, in the character of the flirty widow. Wealthy widows, who could support themselves financially as single women, seemingly had no reason to remarry in society's eyes. And yet "immorality sweeps over the land and religion burns dimly in the misty atmosphere" wrote Abbie Brooks in her diary. Younger widows had a more difficult time acceding to proscriptions on their behavior that were intended for a different age. A reluctance to remain wedded to the past and to the Confederate cause was certainly not purely a phenomenon for widows, but for many people across the South. Sadness and grief had settled over the land and stayed. For some, the burdensome consistency of this sorrow was simply too much to bear. For example, in Richmond "some persons in this beleaguered city seem crazed on the subject of gayety. In the midst of the wounded and dying, the low state of the commissariat, the anxiety of the whole country, the troubles of every kind which we are surrounded, I am mortified to say that there are gay parties in the city." A number of southerners, including widows, would rather "forget all our troubles," both past and present. Social functions provided a distraction from mourning, death, and the constant supply shortages. Kate Stone wrote "we can live only in the present, only from day to day. We cannot bear to think of the past and so dread the future." In a time of soaring death rates, Kate also mused that "one grows callous to suffering and death" and therefore people simply didn't "mourn as they used to." To many, these parties seemed insensitive. Soldiers, just a hundred miles away, risked their lives and struggled to find enough food to eat while some members of the elite enjoyed parties. Yet, to others, these events served as critical coping techniques. When bad news

---

Willoughby Babcock, *Selections from the Letters and Diaries of Brevet-Brigadier General Willoughby Babcock of the Seventy-Fifth New York Volunteers* (New York: The University of the State of New York, 1922), 94.

seemed to be lurking around every corner, occasionally people just needed a physiological escape.<sup>33</sup>

While it was difficult enough for some people to tolerate the fact that parties occurred during the war, it was even harder to stomach the idea that several widows attended these gatherings. One “gay young widow” shocked bystanders when seen dancing “a few months after the death of her soldier husband, with a long black veil on” and holding a handkerchief that “looked as if it had been dipped in ink.” A disapproving observer remarked, “She should have dipped it in blood.” Another southerner, Sarah Kennedy, claimed that while “gloom reigns in the hearts, and homes, of most of our people,” the “widows and widowers are the only ones who are having a gay time.” In March of 1864, a group including widows gathered for an oyster supper and “cleaned [the table] of all refreshments.” When Sarah learned of this, she haughtily remarked that “juveniles always cleared the table,” insinuating that the widows in attendance were both immature and underdeveloped women. While most widows certainly did not want to see their husbands’ names on casualty lists, the finality of death at least released them from the anxiety of the unknown that plagued many wives. Attending dances and dinner parties served as distractions from their grief and a temporary release from their worries.<sup>34</sup>

For some men, young Confederate widows seemed to take on a certain peculiar attractiveness. Remarks by observers indicate that a level of sexual magnetism often became associated with young Confederate widows. In September 1863, Mary Bell believed she had discovered “the secret attraction that widows seemed to possess.” She supposed that their allure

---

<sup>33</sup> Abbie Brooks, February 8, 1865, as quoted in Rable, 138; Kate Stone, *Brokenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone, 1861-1868*, ed. John Q. Anderson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), 293, 292, 277; McGuire, 8 January 1865, 328; Morgan, 11 October 1862, 300.

<sup>34</sup> Mrs. John Sherwood, *Manners and Social Usages* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1899), 193; Sarah Kennedy, 19 March 1864, Sarah Kennedy Papers, The Civil War Microfilm Collection, #824, Reel 4, Tennessee Library and State Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

blossomed from their grief. “How much more the heart is touched by the tender beauty of a woman who has loved and suffered than by the gay shallow pink & white prettiness of a girl,” she remarked to her husband. In Florida, one aunt described a widow who “looked so sad in her deep black, so young and pretty, she touched all hearts.” And when Ben Coleman wrote letters home to his parents, he carefully laced his notes with remarks about a certain single woman. He casually instructed his parents to “tell that good looking widow (God knows I wish I could see her) to send me some wine.” These descriptions do not quite mesh with the tearstained, blotchy-faced image of a woman mourning the loss of her husband, and yet they appear consistently within the letters and diaries of the period, hinting at an element of widowhood overshadowed by the expectations of what a widow should be. The perverse attractiveness of widows mixed with the intrigue and curiosity that they inspired brought attention to these women and their actions.<sup>35</sup>

While remarking upon the physical attractiveness of a widow was not so scandalous, her supposed irresistibility proved to be more worrisome. One Confederate husband informed his wife of a “young widow, real good looking” visiting his camp from St. Louis. “If you do not hear from me again you can guess ‘what is the matter.’ But unfortunately I was simple enough, when asked if I was married, to acknowledge the fact. Perhaps it will make no difference,” he penned. His wife chose not to respond to his suggestive remarks. Other women envied the magnetic draw widows seemed to possess. “Miss Carrie,” from Tennessee, remarked “that she almost wishes she had been born a widow. They are so fascinating and irresistible.” Even James T. Ayers, a chaplain with the 104<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Colored Troops, struggled to resist the allure of a Tennessee widow. He described her in his diary as a “Little bewitching yong Blue Eyed

---

<sup>35</sup> Mary W. M. Bell to her husband, September 1, 1863, The Civil War Microfilm Collection, #824, Reel 4, Tennessee Library and State Archives, Nashville, Tennessee; *Rose Cottage Chronicles*, 336; Ben W. Coleman to his parents, December 7, 1863, The Civil War Microfilm Collection, #824, Box 8, Tennessee Library and State Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

fairskinned widow tidy Enough for one to eat.” “Seldom do I meet her Equals anywhere,” he continued, “God bless the Little widow, them Blue Eyes that Little plump Rosy Cheek them Delicate Lilly white hands that Lady Like Smile.” Ayers had visited her with the intention to recruit her slave into his regiment. As he rode away however, he realized “that Little woman had Caused me to forget” his purpose. Ayers shrugged off the loss, concluding that a “man would be A monster Could he Deny such an Angel as this” anyway.<sup>36</sup>

Flirting, especially in public, was exactly the loosening of virtue that many southerners feared. Flirty women, especially widowed women who were supposed to be mourning the loss of their husbands, shocked and horrified traditionalists like Mary Boykin Chesnut. On a train in November 1863, a “smartly dressed female” sat beside her and “in plaintive accents began to tell her melancholy tale.” Her husband had died recently in a battle around Richmond. When another man offered her a vacant seat beside him, the young widow left Chesnut and “as straight as an arrow she went in for a flirtation with the polite gentleman.” In “another scandal,” Chesnut spoke with a man who witnessed “girls who kissed the back of horrid men’s necks—faugh! Or widows who brushed with their eyelashes their cousin’s cheeks in the public cars.” These actions did not correlate with the image of the ideal widow, a heartbroken woman who sacrificed her husband to the Confederacy. Such liberties suggested not only a lack of dedication to their late husbands, but also to the cause the men gave their lives for.<sup>37</sup>

While flirting with other southerners was bad enough, flirting with the enemy was simply unacceptable. To choose a northerner over a southern soldier represented an abandonment of her

---

<sup>36</sup> James Madison Bowler to Elizabeth Caleff Bowler, *Go If You Think It Your Duty: A Minnesota Couple’s Civil War Letters*, ed. Andrea R. Foroughi (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 208), October 23, 1863, pg 162; Kennedy, March 19, 1864; James T. Ayers Journal, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1864, in *The Blue and the Gray: The Story of the Civil War as Told by Participants (Volume One: The Nomination of Lincoln to the Eve of Gettysburg)*, edited by Henry Steele Commager (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1973), 82.

<sup>37</sup> Mary Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, ed. C. Vann Woodward (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 489, 472.

family, friends, community, and all her husband had fought to maintain. In Warren County, North Carolina, Mary J. White described one widow who “reaped the contempt of most her friends when she befriended a Federal officer.” Some community members believed that she “had set her cap for the captain.” The lack of respect this widow held for the Confederate cause made White furious. “I wish he would take her off with him, but before she goes, I should like for her to be given a good coat of tar and feathers, for she richly deserves it,” she exclaimed in her diary.<sup>38</sup>

Flirting could lead to an even greater impertinence: an early remarriage. Although some saw nothing wrong with a widow finding love once more—provided she fell head over heels after mourning her soldier husband for thirty months—some young widows were unable or unwilling to wait that long. Upon seeing the flirty widow on the train, one stranger commented to Chesnut: “Well, look yonder. As soon as she began whining about her dead beaux I knew she was after another one...It won’t be her fault if she don’t have another one soon.” The stranger watched a minute more and then remarked again, “she won’t lose any time.” Likewise, Naomi Hayes believed widows were even more impatient for marriage than maidens, for “those who already knew the pleasures of married life were less willing to live outside it.” In a case study of Virginia, historian Robert Kenzer compiled statistical data suggesting that the younger a widow was, the greater the likelihood that she would remarry. Through an analysis of pension records and census data, Kenzer determined that 1866 was the most common year for remarriage and that widows who remarried had a median age of twenty-four years in 1860. He concluded that “given the tremendous shortage of men after the conflict, the opportunity to remarry was quite restricted except for the youngest and wealthiest southern women.” This shortage helps to

---

<sup>38</sup> Mary J. White Diary, May 2-4, 1865, in Manly Wade Wellman, *The County of Warren, North Carolina, 1586-1917* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 153.

explain why some young widows, when presented with an opportunity for marriage, refused to wait for two and a half years.<sup>39</sup>

Despite these exceptions, the majority of Confederate widows did attempt to live within the strengthened regulations of mourning closely. Many wives found themselves heartbroken and grasping to cope with their loss. In a time wracked with uncertainty, a prescribed manner for grieving was one consistency upon which widows could depend. The traditions relieved suffering by giving clear expectations in a time of emotional chaos. An ideal war widow honored her husband and the Confederacy with her every action. The ideal widow would certainly not flirt, dance, attend parties, or remarry. In the abstract she could serve as the epitome of all the South was and could be. She poured her power, her support, and her emotions into the Confederacy.

But some women, usually of a younger age and a higher social class, challenged the restrictive war prescriptions with their actions. In doing so, they threatened the virtue the South was attempting to maintain. In reality, widows would always be a mere replica of the ideal and some women reflected the vision better than others. The eternally devoted widow and the promiscuous widow are but two extremes in a range of experiences. War was chaotic and grief was messy. To be sure, many were watching to discover if a widow proved worthy of her “Noble husband.” Some women lost husbands they loved and some women lost husbands they did not. Bullets pierced the lungs, legs, and livers of breathing, thriving men. The dead were gone. But for their wives, their widows, life continued. Widows had a world to face, a life to

---

<sup>39</sup> Chesnut, ed. Woodward, 489-90; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 150; Kenzer, 125.

live, and a future to shape. And so, in a manner reminiscent of their husbands, they marched on.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup>M. D. D. to Rosa Delony, 6 November 1863, Deloney Papers, UGA.

### CHAPTER 3: BEHIND THE BLACK

*“Now I’m a widow. Ah! That mournful word. Little the world think of the agony it contains!”*  
 - Sally Randle Perry, to her diary<sup>1</sup>

On July 7, 1861, Solomon P. Solomon called across the house to inform his daughter Clara that “Charley Dreux is dead; he was shot in the head in a skirmish.” Charley, a Confederate Lt. Colonel from New Orleans, was the “first of the Louisianan Officers who has paid the penalty of his life.” For sixteen year old Clara, the news was appalling. “I was horrified,” she explained to her diary, and “I immediately thought of his young wife and child.” She began to picture herself standing alongside the young widow. “In the agony of her grief will she exclaim, ‘Why was he not spared’! Will this be selfishness? It does seem hard...tis said that officers stand the least chance of being killed. But stop, we are quarrelling with Divine Providence,” Clara rambled, grasping at the emotions. She attempted to convince herself that when Charley was shot, “thoughts of his dear wife and child must have crossed his mind.” Above all, Clara did not envy the person who would inform the wife of her widowhood. “How painful will be the duty of the one who will unfold to her a tale, which will blight her young life, crush her dearest hopes, and perhaps, forever cast a gloom over her future—who knows what a day may bring forth,” she wrote. The Civil War had just begun, but Clara could not help but wonder “how many heart-rending tales like this, have we yet to hear.”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Sally, the author of this quote, lost her husband John in the battle of Sharpsburg. She had two young sons. Sally Randle Perry, 30 November, 1867, Sally Randle Perry Diary, 1867-1868, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

<sup>2</sup> When Union troops occupied New Orleans in April 1862, Charles Didier Dreux’s widow left the Confederacy and sought refuge in Havana, Cuba. While there, her only child died. Clara Solomon, 7 July 1861, *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon: Growing up in New Orleans, 1861-1862* ed. Elliott Ashkenazi (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State

Despite the Confederacy's insistence that widows complete widowhood as it was prescribed, no amount of force could compel all widows to do so. Letters, newspapers, and literature could champion ideal widowhood while strangers, soldiers, neighbors, family, and friends could encourage widows themselves, but ultimately it was up to the widow to answer the questions Clara posed in her diary. Why was he killed? Did he think of me? What do I do now? Octavia Bryant Stephens, Georgia Page King, and Fannie Franklin Hargrave each wrestled with these questions in the 1860s and provide a lens into widowhood as a lived experience. All three women were wealthy, young, recently married, and seemingly in love. Before the war, they lived atop the crest of the societal hierarchy—southern belles who benefited from a plantation system built upon the backs of blacks. During the war, they lived and traveled within the heart of the South through the states of Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Their husbands fought for the Confederacy and died while doing it. Two of the women were pregnant at the time of their husbands' demise, all three were in their twenties, and all three had been married for less than five years. And yet, despite these many similarities, each reacted to widowhood differently. Each woman could have afforded mourning clothing. Each woman would have been versed in the teachings of etiquette books and well aware of proper Victorian mourning rituals. Within each woman was the potential to become the ideal widow. Only one did.

*"I think I never shall become reconciled to his death":* Octavia "Tivie" Bryant<sup>3</sup>

On her fifteenth birthday, Tivie could hardly believe how her life had changed. "One year ago tonight I was at Welaka with all of our family enjoying myself very much indeed,

---

University Press, 1995), 62; Grace Elizabeth King, *Creole Families of New Orleans* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 66.

<sup>3</sup> Octavia Stephens to Davis Bryant, 11 June 1864, S-B Papers, UF.

dancing and frolicking,” she informed her diary. Welaka, a town founded by Tivie’s father in 1852, was approximately 70 miles south of Jacksonville, Florida. The sunny town’s warm winters, easy river access, and reputation as a “hunting and fishing paradise” attracted tourists and settlers alike. By 1860, just eight years after its founding, the town boasted 317 white residents, 66 homes and stores, and 137 slaves. From Boston, Tivie reflected on her past year and “what changes have taken place since then.” In 1856, she commonly enjoyed a “ride and a frolic out to the Plantation” with Winston Stephens, a twenty-six year old plantation owner of ten slaves and almost 360 acres. The couple was engaged and deciding “where to put the house” on the property. “I will live wherever you wish,” she penned, so long as she remained “your Tivy.” But when Winston asked Tivie’s parents for their consent, they vehemently refused. Alarmed that their fourteen year old daughter was not only attracting suitors, but engagements, they immediately sent Tivie to her uncle’s school for young ladies in Massachusetts. Tivie “felt very sad” and believed it “a great trial for me to leave my home and all that are so dear to me.” Even her wardrobe reflected this change in circumstances. “A year ago to night I was dressed in a pink muslin dress low necked and short sleeved,” Tivie recalled fondly, but “to night high necked and long sleeved black dress.” She did not need to reflect long before concluding, “Oh how I would like to be home.”<sup>4</sup>

Tivie returned home in 1858 as tiny as ever, barely over five feet tall and scarcely 100 pounds. With her pale complexion, brunette hair, and “expressive black eyes,” Tivie had captured Winston’s heart so completely that he would later say “you had as well bid the Sun cease to wander the earth with its heat, giving life to vegetation and thereby producing plenty for

---

<sup>4</sup> Octavia Bryant Diary, October 21, 1856, S-B Papers, UF; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Slave Schedule I, Population Schedule, Putnam County, as quoted in *Rose Cottage Chronicles*, 14; Octavia Bryant to Winston Stephens, 12 October 1856, S-B Papers, UF.

all Gods creation as to bid the heart of Winston not to commune with the object of its adoration.” As a dutiful daughter, Tivie promised her parents not to entertain any more suitors until she was at least 18 years old. When Winston returned from fighting in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Seminole War, she informed him that “I was too young, and am now too young to judge for my happiness in my future life.” “We all esteem you as a friend, and wish you to visit the house as gentlemen do, but not in any other position as regards myself,” she further explained.<sup>5</sup>

In the following months, Tivie and Winston saw each other often at parties and dinners. Spring blossomed and then another hot Florida summer began, harkening back to the summer they fell in love just two years prior. Despite Tivie’s repeated insistence that they were simply friends, she took great pleasure in Winston’s continued attention. “While I played [piano] he watched me the whole time and when the melon came he began throwing seeds at me and I at him and we became quite friendly” she giggled into her diary. His letters put “roses to my cheeks” as she read them. Despite all the beautiful and eligible ladies in Welaka, Winston “talked to me most of the evening” at parties and always “danced the first dance with me and the last.” It was not long before Winston, or the “Dear Crabid old Bachelor,” as he called himself, began openly expressing his devotion to her once more.<sup>6</sup>

When he proposed again in September, Tivie hesitated. “Forgive my keeping you in such suspense but you know Yes or No are the hardest words in the world to say,” Tivie tried to explain to Winston. After much thought, she attempted both to satisfy her heart and remain a dutiful daughter, deciding “I will agree to be engaged to you secretly until I am 18, then I will

---

<sup>5</sup> Winston Stephens to Octavia Bryant, 27 June 1859, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Bryant to Winston Stephens, 15 February 1858, S-B Papers, UF.

<sup>6</sup> Octavia Bryant Diary, 5 June 1858, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Bryant to Winston Stephens, 11 December 1858, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Bryant Diary, 5 July, 1858, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Bryant to Winston Stephens, 29 January 1859, S-B Papers, UF.

ask my parents again and I hope gain their consent.” Winston would continue to press for an earlier wedding date, but Tivie remained resolute. “Dear Old Man I do indeed pity you in your loneliness,” she replied, “but oh I cannot yet give up my single life, you know I did not wish to marry for years yet.”<sup>7</sup>

By February 1859, Winston had grown impatient. He requested a secret meeting with Tivie amongst the haunting stones of a graveyard. There was “no other safe way” to have the discussion he planned. Between graves he attempted to convince her to marry him without parental approval, but his efforts backfired miserably and Tivie broke off their engagement. “I never cried so much in my life,” Tivie wept into her diary. Winston sent her angry letters, claiming, “I have ben led astray by your smiles and sweet words of promises.” He accused Tivie of “an irreparable wrong you have done an innocent and unoffending heart.” He wrote: “go to your parents for forgiveness as it seems they are the only ones you care for.” Unable to stomach her presence, Winston concluded: “Tivie if you cant be my wife we must be strangers.”<sup>8</sup>

And yet, he could not banish his love and desire for the young girl. After all, her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday was only getting closer. Winston argued for their marriage as a superior choice to “matches that are formed by parents and friends to suit their wish.” Winston combined both logic and compliments in an attempt to tangle her emotions. By July of 1859, she was back to being his “angel purity of love and Goodness!” Resigned to the fact that she would not budge on her parents’ demands, Winston began signing letters with a countdown to her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday in October. “Two months and twenty one days,” he would write. Tivie began planning the wedding yet again, but this time gained the confidence of her mother. She wrote a letter to her

---

<sup>7</sup>Octavia Bryant to Winston Stephens, 2 September 1858, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Bryant to Winston Stephens, 1 January 1859, S-B Papers, UF.

<sup>8</sup> Octavia Bryant to Winston Stephens, 13 February 1859, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Bryant Diary, 20 February 1859, S-B Papers, UF; Winston Stephens to Octavia Bryant, 20 February 1859, S-B Papers, UF.

father, who was traveling, in September, requesting his permission. “I would dislike to marry without [your consent],” she explained, “but if you do not, I will be obliged to for my own happiness.” This time, Winston would come first. Tired of fighting his daughter and perhaps realizing the futility of doing so, Tivie’s father granted his blessing. Happy to have the tumultuous four years of courting behind them, Tivie and Winston finally wed on November 1, 1859. Winston was 30 years old; Tivie was twelve years his junior.<sup>9</sup>

Together, they moved to the house Winston built on his plantation for them, Rose Cottage, anticipating a life of wedded bliss. Their first child, Rosalie, came into the world just shy of their one year anniversary. Tivie thought Rosa was “the prettiest baby I have ever seen” prompting Winston to reply, “she is the greatest baby in the Southern Confederacy and she has got the greatest Mother in the same scope.” Their lives as newlyweds would prove to be short lived, though. Three months after Rosalie’s birth, Florida seceded and joined the Confederacy. By the end of the year, Winston too would join the war.<sup>10</sup>

Financially secure with strong political connections, Tivie and her family rarely found themselves without basic necessities during the war. Nonetheless, it was not long before Tivie was begging for it to end. “Oh how I wish the war never had started,” she sighed to Winston in 1863, “I think we had better give up, and have our husbands with us...[life] will be much harder when we are subdued after our husbands have been killed.” Part of this sentiment surfaced in response to the death of Tivie’s second daughter in 1863, who she described as “very small but has dark eyes and hair and I think will be pretty.” The baby died in infancy, before Winston even met her. “Oh how this grief is hard to bear,” she explained to Winston. Because they were

---

<sup>9</sup> Winston Stephens to Octavia Bryant, 10 April 1859, S-B Papers, UF; Winston Stephens to Octavia Bryant, 31 July 1859, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Bryant to James W. Bryant, 6 September 1859, S-B Papers, UF.

<sup>10</sup> Octavia Stephens to Winston Stephens, 7 September 1861, S-B Papers, UF; Winston Stephens to Octavia Stephens, 10 September 1861; *Rose Cottage Chronicles*, 22.

apart at “the very time when we should be together to try and comfort and sustain each other,” she used her letters to “unburden my heart.” When their other daughter Rosa became sick shortly after, Tivie felt “like a wet rag...I have to lie down and hold her up, I can neither sit up nor open my eyes, I did not know I could be so much over come by it.” Even though Rosa recovered, Tivie decided to move from her beloved Rose Cottage to a home in Thomasville, Georgia, near extended family.<sup>11</sup>

From the battlefield, Winston could do little to help his wife, so he attempted to cheer her through his letters. He wrote things that would make her laugh though her hardships, like “Kiss Rosa for me and as many more females as you please but no males if you please.” Winston missed Tivie terribly while at war, writing “Old lady, I want to see you mighty bad.” “Golly,” he continued, “I would give lots just to have one pouting smack, and I would give any thing I’ve got to have you serve me as you did you know when.” Certainly, not all of Winston’s letters were entertaining and optimistic. On Feb 27, 1864 while on picket near east Florida, Winston wrote a particularly poignant letter discussing the hardships of war. “Oh how much I wish I could never see such a sight as I witnessed after the battle near Olustee Station,” he began. Seeing his comrades fall forced him to “think of the loved ones at home who have been left lonely in this life by the loss of a husband...some dear one whose life is so suddenly cut off.” Realizing this would not be the type of letter his wife would enjoy, he quickly changed subjects, acknowledging “these reflections are not sweet and I’ll not write of them.” This was the last letter he ever wrote Tivie.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Octavia Stephens to Winston Stephens, 5 August 1863, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Stephens to Winston Stephens, 2 January 1863, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Stephens to Winston Stephens, 31 January 1863, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Stephens to Winston Stephens, 31 May 1863, S-B Papers, UF.

<sup>12</sup> Winston Stephens to Octavia Stephens, 10 September 1861, S-B Papers, UF; Winston Stephens to Octavia Stephens, 4 May 1863, S-B Papers, UF; Winston Stephens to Octavia Stephens, 27 February 1864, S-B Papers, UF.

Winston was shot on March 1, 1864, by a Union sniper. With the pull of one little trigger, he was mortally wounded. Winston's brother, Swebston Stephens, was with him when he was shot. Feeling obligated to describe Winston's last breaths, he penned Tivie a letter. "We were side by side and tho' I was not looking at him when the fatal ball pierced him I heard it and turned," he began. "I dismounted and took him up and sit him on my horse," so that he could be "leaning back against me." "That last look," Swebston remembered, "that last look was full of love. His lips moved but no word escaped. I see that look now and ever will." As the only witness to Winston's death, Swebston's story cannot be tested. But as far as descriptions of death could go, this loving, peaceful end would likely bring Tivie comfort, when compared to alternatives.<sup>13</sup>

The tremendous grief Tivie felt after the loss of her baby daughter was nothing compared to the emotions that seized her after the death of her much-loved husband. Her brother Willie, who was also off at war, knew that Tivie's grief would be nearly unbearable. He informed their mother that "I can offer no consolation now acceptable to such a grief as Tivie's, at present she can only realize the fact that he is lost to her, and see nothing in his death and the circumstances to console her." Little did he know that his mother, too, was dead, dying just two days after Tivie learned of Winston's death. But even this does not encompass the whole story. In one week, Tivie became a widow, lost her mother, and gave birth to a little boy. Tivie described her trials in her journal:

March 15, 1864. With what a sad, sad heart I begin another journal. On Sunday Feb 28<sup>th</sup>, dear Mother was taken with a congestive chill. On Friday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, Davis came with the news of the death of my dear dear husband, he was killed in a battle near Jacksonville on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March. Mother grew worse and on Sunday, Mar 6<sup>th</sup>, she too

---

<sup>13</sup> There is no contemporary description of Winston's death, according to the editors of *Rose Cottage Chronicles*, so this later account is included as the best source available. Swebston Stephens to Octavia Stephens, 20 October 1866, S-B Papers, UF.

was taken from us, between 12 and 1 o'clk she passed quietly away from Typhoid Pneumonia. At 7 o'clk p.m. I gave birth to a dear little baby boy, which although three or four weeks before the time, the Lord still spares to me. Mother was buried on the 7<sup>th</sup>...our relatives and new made friends have been kind in visiting...I have named my baby Winston, the sweet name of that dear lost one my husband, almost my life. God grant that his son whom he longed for but was not spared to see may be like him.<sup>14</sup>

Relatives and friends quickly wrote condolence letters to Tivie. "How shall I begin a letter to you, knowing how heart broken you are" asked Tina, a loving relative. "I declare I think about you and cry until my brain seems to be on fire," she continued. "Many wives have lost her Husband, but not such as yours, how short the time seems to look back when you were both so happy at Rose Cottage." Tivie's sister-in-law wrote: "I know that such affliction as yours there is nothing that can comfort but the hope of a reunion here after." An aunt explained "my heart bleeds for you, dear—when I think of your trial in parting with him so suddenly and at that time." Her brother Willie shared his joyful hope that "I am happy in the belief that there are times when the spirits of those in Heaven hover around those whom they love on earth."<sup>15</sup>

Of course, the letters also contained their obligatory pieces of advice. "In a dream I had last night I thought you seemed quite reconciled and said you thought he was taken from the evil to come," wrote one cousin, subtly encouraging Tivie to accept Winston's death. She should also "try to improve your health and spirits for the sake of your little ones." An aunt told her to "turn to the bright side and dont give up to grief." Another relative recommended she "try and bear your afflictions with christian fortitude."<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Willie Bryant to Rebecca Bryant, 8 March 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Stephens Diary, 15 March 1864, S-B Papers, UF.

<sup>15</sup> Augustina Stephens to Octavia Stephens, 21 March 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Mary Branning to Octavia Stephens, 4 May 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Catherine Park to Octavia Stephens, 6 June 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Willie Bryant to Octavia Stephens, 19 April 1864, S-B Papers, UF.

<sup>16</sup> Loulie to Octavia Stephens, 13 March 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Aunt MSB to Octavia Stephens, 16 March 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Augustina Stephens to Octavia Stephens, 21 March 1864, S-B Papers, UF.

While living near Thomasville, a multitude of visitors called on Tivie. Unlike plantation widows who lived miles from loved ones, physical proximity in a town encouraged family and friends to personally visit a young widow. Just some of her March visitors included Aunt Caroline, Uncle Jared, Aunt Julie, Hattie, Henry, Lilla, Willie, and Lizzie. Tivie gained additional physical support because of her location. Tivie could “leave Rosa to make candy” and leave the baby with Aunt Julia “while I went to the Court House” to gain some time alone.<sup>17</sup>

Tivie’s family was especially concerned about Tivie and the way she managed her grief. A couple of weeks after Winston’s death, one brother wrote optimistically that “Tivie now is able to come to the table and will soon be around and attending to all the household duties, and before I leave her will be able to take interest in matters around her.” The next week, Tivie described her progress in her journal: “I walked to the Pond with Willie...and the children, the first time I’ve been out for three weeks.” Willie praised her for her actions, writing “your conduct through it all deserves the highest commendation, and has shown a character superior to most women many years older.”<sup>18</sup>

Despite Tivie’s ideal behavior in the beginning, she soon seemed to regress. Willie worried “that you may allow yourself to sink into a state of melancholy...let me warn you against this and implore you my dear sister to strive to bear up under your terrible visitation with calmness and resignation.” She needed to perform her “sacred duty to your helpless children.” Willie explained that “I feel confident that after a time your life will not seem so gloomy and objectless to you.” In another letter, her brother Willie continued to advise her, recommending she “bear it with meekness.” In yet another, he implored her to “be patient and content.” Tivie’s

---

<sup>17</sup> Octavia Stephens Diary, 22 April, 1864, 2 May 1864, S-B Papers, UF.

<sup>18</sup> Willie Bryant to Davis Bryant, 21 March 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Stephens Diary, 27 March 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Willie Bryant to Octavia Stephens, 31 March 1864, S-B Papers, UF.

aunt jumped to her defense, explaining that she was simply misunderstood by others. She explained that Tivie was “peculiar but not cold, and has a great deal of character under that quiet exterior.” In her aunt’s opinion, Tivie was capable of settling into the appropriate role of a widow. Tivie may have “looked so sad in her deep black,” but she was “so young and pretty, she touched all hearts: she bore it all well.”<sup>19</sup>

While she may have seemed to bear it well externally to some, internally she remained heartbroken. The death of Winston shattered Tivie’s identity, as seen in her letter: “I know not how to write I am so bewildered...my grief now is almost more than I can bear...I have not the heart to do anything, all the pleasure of my life was wrapt up in Winston, he was almost my life.” In her diary she described mornings spent “reading some of my journals of the many happy hours spent with my dear husband” and evenings “reading old letters.” While reminiscing about her newlywed years, she wished “oh that they could return.” Her brothers became even more worried about her lack of progress. Willie insinuated that she was becoming “cold, gloomy, suspicious, irritable, and unhappy and making those around us unhappy...I need only refer to you to your own feelings and experience for a confirmation of this.” Tivie needed to learn how to “pay respect” to her husband “without neglecting all else.” Tivie was aware that she was not meeting expectations. In June, she thanked her brother Davis for all his assistance and acknowledged “I know it rests upon your minds, will I ever be able to take care of my children?” She didn’t answer her question, but simply informed him “I always prayed that I might die first, that I might never have to mourn for him, I think I shall never become reconciled to his death.”<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Willie Bryant to Octavia Stephens, 17 April 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Willie Bryant to Octavia Stephens, 18 April 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Julia Fisher to Davis Bryant, 4 April 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Julia Fisher to Davis Bryant, 3 May 1864, S-B Papers, UF.

<sup>20</sup> Octavia Stephens to Davis Bryant, 4 April 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Stephens Diary, 13 March 1866, 25 May 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Willie Bryant to Octavia Stephens, 4 May 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Stephens to Davis Bryant, 11 June 1864, S-B Papers, UF.

Though her marriage lasted just four years and four months, Tivie would mourn Winston's death for the rest of her life. To her brothers, it seemed she might finally be improving. Davis was "so much relieved to know that you are again able to attend to and take some interest in your domestic affairs." But, in her diary, Tivie systematically reminded herself of her losses and continued to record her tremendous grief. With the rolling of each year, she marked every anniversary of both their marriage and his death. Tivie immersed herself in a cycle of everlasting mourning. On October 21, 1864, she wrote "My 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday, a sad one, so many changes since the last. My dear Husband and Mother both gone, beside many other changes." On November 1, 1864, "The 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my wedding day, but my dear husband is not with me to celebrate it, he is in a better world and how many years may pass before I meet him there I know not." Christmas 1864 was "a sad instead of a merry one." Christmas 1866 was also "a quiet and sad one to me, though the children happy." March 1, 1867, was "the third anniversary of my dear Husband's death, a blue day with me." In 1873, "9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Winston's death—I had a severe blind headache." Her grief proved immovable even with the coming of a new century. As late as November 1, 1904, she penned "this is the date of my marriage 45 years ago."<sup>21</sup>

Tivie found joy in loving her two children, but with that love came more grief. She named her son, who was born in the days following Winston's death, after his father. Yet, she struggled to call him the name of her beloved. Her cousin Tina lectured her, writing, "dont call him Winnie it is a womans name and an ugly one, call him as you did the dear one after whom he is named." But Tivie could not bring herself to do this and would continue to refer to her son

---

<sup>21</sup> Davis Bryant to Octavia Stephens, 10 April 1864, S-B Papers, UF; Octavia Stephens Diary, 21 October 1864, 4 November 1864, 25 December 1864, 25 December 1866, 1 March 1867, 1 March 1873, 1 November 1904, S-B Papers, UF.

as Winnie well into his adulthood. When her daughter got married in June 1882, Tivie described it as “a real grief” and worried that a pregnancy could harm her “delicate” daughter. When Rosa became pregnant in late 1882, Tivie wrote a friend that “we all must be with her all we could.” Tivie’s motherly intuition proved accurate on February 24, 1883, when Rosa was “fixing her hair” and “had a convulsion.” She died later that afternoon. Tivie’s darling son Willie also left her, marrying and moving to Massachusetts to practice dentistry in 1894. Tivie visited them often but always returned home to the tiny town in Florida where she had fallen in love decades ago. In 1908, she finally died, ending her “share of the worlds trials,” ready to be reunited with the man she loved all her life.<sup>22</sup>

*“For sixty seven days and nights he suffered—and I never left him day or night—thank God—instead of growing weaker I grew stronger”*: Georgia Page King<sup>23</sup>

On January 19, 1861, the state of Georgia seceded from the Union. “Oh! How I wish, from my heart, it could have been otherwise—As I tear it all from my heart, I am not ashamed to say, I weep,” William Duncan Smith wrote from Milledgeville in 1861. “It was very hard to sever the silver tie which had bound me, willingly, for some many years to my noble commands and to well tried friends,” he lamented to Georgia Page King of St. Simon’s, Georgia. When he handed in his resignation from the U.S. Army, “my heart yearned—my brothers, once; now perhaps, my foes.” But within these wrenching emotions, his heart also yearned for something, or rather, someone, else. “And now, My dear Miss Georgia, I must beg you to listen to me calmly,” he began. “Immediately after my arrival here, I sought your Father—found him—told

---

<sup>22</sup> Augustina Stephens to Octavia Stephens, 8 January 1865, S-B Papers, UF; Winston Stephens, “The Little Boston Rebel,” S-B Papers, UF, 27; Octavia Stephens to Mary Hall, 27 January 1883, as quoted in *Rose Cottage Chronicles*, 371; Octavia Stephens Diary, 24 February 1883, S-B Papers, UF; Augustina Stephens to Octavia Stephens, 21 March 1864, S-B Papers, UF.

<sup>23</sup> Georgia Page King Smith to Henry Lord Page King, 30 October 1862, K-W Papers, GHS.

him what I wished to win—and asked permission to write you,” he explained. Upon listening to William’s wishes, Georgia’s “kind and courteous father (as he always is)...granted the privilege which I desired.” And so, their courtship began.<sup>24</sup>

Scarcely three months passed before William was in love. “You cannot imagine, my dear Miss Georgia, how sad, how—very sad I felt at our parting” nor “how profoundly I love you,” he explained to her. “But you do love me, do you not?” he asked, aching for reassurance. Though they had only been courting three months, William wanted to be married. “A war is fast approaching. Oh Let me claim you as my own! Let me have the right to protect you, and shield you by my earnest love,” he begged. Realizing Georgia would object to this hurried marriage, he urged, “Do not let, oh! do not let, any slight obstacles, or conventionalities, prevent you from being mine as soon as you can. We know not what may happen!” William wanted her as a wife he could protect. As a wife, she could champion his wartime successes and send him letters to read each night. “How will I be able to manifest my affection, if you are not my wife,” he asked.<sup>25</sup>

But Georgia was a dutiful daughter, one who would not make this decision hastily or without her family’s approval. “Do listen to me!” begged William, struggling to undo decades of her upbringing. When Georgia was a girl, her mother had praised her as “an old fashioned little thing” and raised her to be both practical and dutiful. After her mother’s death, Georgia became the family’s matriarch by managing the family’s extensive plantation on St. Simon’s Island. But perhaps William did not have so hard a task as he assumed, for at that exact time Georgia was explaining to her father that she was “so sick of living in this lonely place with so many cares & so few pleasures.” She wanted an adventure. On April 19, William wrote again,

---

<sup>24</sup> William Duncan Smith to Georgia Page King, 20 January 1861, K-W Papers, GHS.

<sup>25</sup> William Duncan Smith, Savannah, to Georgia Page King, St. Simons, 10 April 1861, K-W Papers, GHS.

declaring “I will not be so formal, when my heart contradicts all formality.” He again pressed her to marry him immediately. Toying with her notions of duty, he asked, “If anything mortal should happen to me who you love, would it not be doubly trying to grieve over him, for whom you would not have a right to grieve except in thee studied retirement of your own feeling heart?” As a widow, she would have the right to publically and lovingly grieve over him. As a mere sweetheart, that duty was denied.<sup>26</sup>

“I tremble,” Georgia wrote to demonstrate the strength of her powerfully conflicting emotions. Though her father and older brothers were absent, in the tenor of the times she decided to seize her own independence and marry William. In July, she anxiously wrote her brother Henry Lord “Lordy” Page King that “the hour has come—the man who...I have consented to marry...is about to leave for war.” She explained that “I have at length after weight of prayer—after tears and with earnest faith in God’s direction—determined to marry him before he goes to Virginia—and follow him there in a few weeks.” She knew that their short courtship would concern her brother and preemptively replied “I am perfectly satisfied that I love him dearly sufficient to sacrifice a great deal for his sake.” Together, William and Georgia wrote a letter to her brother Floyd. “My deep regret at the absence of our beloved Father—dear Lordy—and yourself—cast a shadow over my happiness,” she assured him. “I feared that you all might not approve—but my heart relented,” she wrote in an attempt to explain her unusual actions. William added an addendum to the note thanking him “for your kind consideration and for your

---

<sup>26</sup> To read more about the family dynamics of the Kings, see Berry, “More Alluring at a Distance”; William Duncan Smith, Savannah, to Georgia Page King, St. Simons, 10 April 1861, K-W Papers, GHS; Anna Page King to Thomas Butler King, 15 August 1842, K-W Papers, GHS, as quoted in Berry, 881; Georgia Page King to Thomas Butler King, 18 April 1861, as quoted in Berry, 891; William Duncan Smith to Georgia Page King, 19 April 1861, K-W Papers, GHS.

unselfish and appreciative consent to the dearest wish of my reason and of my heart.” Not waiting for a response, on July 9, 1861, Georgia married William.<sup>27</sup>

Family members quickly dashed off letters in return. “It is impossible to describe my feelings when I read your letter of the 7<sup>th</sup>” Lordy began, “the tumult was so great that I will not attempt to unravel the maze of emotions which oppressed me.” He seemed in shock, surprised his sister, the good girl, would take such radical action without prior consent from her brothers or father. “That you, Georgia, should be married and I not present is what I never conceived before to be possible!” he explained. Despite the surprising news, Lordy realized that “whatever I might have thought of the wisdom of the vital step you have taken matter nothing now, for I will stand by you to the last and my hard heart melt in prayers.” He wished her happiness and hoped to love her new husband “as a brother.”<sup>28</sup>

Lordy’s letter to Georgia’s husband took a more boisterous tone. “I am half jealous for you taking my dear sister away from me, but you are such a fascinating fellow that I suppose she could not help herself,” he joked. He proceeded to give “a regular benediction on you both—May you ever be healthy, wealthy, & wise in peace and happiness.” “You will doubly need the rest of my good wishes,” he chided, unless William suddenly showed “more wisdom than you do in spending your honeymoon in a camp.” Lordy worried about his younger sister and hoped “dear Georgia has not had so rough a time in camp as I fear she had.” Still struggling to realize that his dutiful sister was now married, he tried to reconcile himself to the fact that William was a good man. But no matter his opinions, they were wed ‘til death do them part.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Georgia Page King to Henry Lord Page King, 1 July 1861, K-W Papers, GHS. Georgia Page King to John Floyd King, 8 July 1861, K-W Papers, GHS.

<sup>28</sup> Henry Lord Page King to Georgia Page King Smith, 15 July 1861, K-W Papers, GHS.

<sup>29</sup> Henry Lord Page King to William Duncan Smith, 3 August 1861, K-W Papers, GHS.

And William was thrilled. After she returned home to run her family's plantation, he would write in a typically beautiful letter: "Beloved, you are my beautiful fascinating bewitching little wife. I am yours—Altogether yours, in soul, mind, and body, my heaven-given wife." For his "beloved wife Georgia" he wrote a lengthy poem to celebrate their first wedding anniversary. He began when their courtship began, when "a nation's wrong had waked a nation's ire," and then likened her to a heavenly angel:

She spoke, and from her pearly mouth did gush  
Sweet liquid words, which to my heart did rush  
Her lovely eyes, beamed as from Angel's face  
My soul, unsandaled, stood in Holy place.

He traced their courtship and described their wedding day:

Happy the husband who can truly say,  
"Hail sweet return of Heav'n-blessed Wedding Day!"  
I hail this day! Hea'vn's blessing o'er us throw  
Profusely, as were giv'n one year ago!

William concluded his poem with this stanza:

If virtue e'er can bless a husband's heart,  
And Purity can e'er its charm impart,  
My soul will make to purer, better life,  
By the sweet teachings of my modest wife.<sup>30</sup>

On July 9, 1862, they celebrated, though miles apart, their one year wedding anniversary. They did not know that soon, they would in fact be together. William would be sick by the end of the month and dead by the end of the year.

William's fate, like thousands of others, "was not sealed amid the shock of battle but in the anguish and gloom of the sick chamber." On July 26, William became ill and was taken to his uncle's home in Charleston, South Carolina. He was plagued by dysentery, an inflammatory

---

<sup>30</sup> William Duncan Smith to Georgia Page King Smith, 22 December 1861, K-W Papers, GHS; William Duncan Smith to Georgia Page King Smith, 9 July 1862, K-W Papers, GHS.

disorder often caused by an infestation of parasitic worms. For William, the disease, “defying all medical treatment,” was both “painful and protracted.” Georgia went to him in Charleston and cared for him night and day. In a letter to her brother, she described this experience in excruciating detail. “About two weeks after the first hemorrhage my darling’s appetite began to fail...nothing could check the constant action on his bowels—at least one day—oh God the agony!” she exclaimed. For the next two months, her new husband would remain bedridden, unmanned, oozing blood and bodily fluids. “All night I watched—and by the clock gave the medicine and brandy and nourishment—fanning him all the time.” William was constantly on the brink of death. “When he asked that night if it was blood again” only to have his question affirmed, “he turned to me fervently and said “Kiss me darling—Kiss me again,” thinking it would be his last. It was not.<sup>31</sup>

“For sixty seven days and nights he suffered—and I never left him night or day—thank God—instead of growing weaker I grew stronger and seldom felt the need of sleep,” explained Georgia to her brother, dutiful as ever. She held William’s head in her arms or lap while his body fought the disease. In his sleep to Georgia “he murmured ‘How dearly I love you how dearly I love you,’” again and again. Finally, after over two months of debilitating pain, William died on October 4, 1862, in the afternoon. “At last—just before the angel came to take him from me...I bent down over him he raised his dying lips and kissed me twice earnestly,” wrote Georgia. “I laid my head near his ear, and told him of my eternal love—and he was satisfied—it was what he desired...my head was on his dear broad breast when the soul went out in a gentle

---

<sup>31</sup> “Death of Brig. General Wm. Duncan Smith,” unidentified newspaper clipping, K-W Papers, GHS; Georgia Page King Smith to Henry Lord Page King, 30 October 1862, K-W Papers, GHS.

breath.” The first thought that came to her mind? “Oh God why did I not die! I dare not question thee.”<sup>32</sup>

Friends and family, aware of William’s lingering illness, came to see the grieving widow in Charleston and then in St. Simon’s. Among others, Georgia explained to her brother that “Molly had come for me,” “the Grants are very near and kind as ever,” that Jenny would remain “until after frost,” and that she had “heard from Floyd.” “God has been wonderfully merciful in sparing you beloved brothers,” Georgia pointed out, in an attempt to be grateful for what she still had and discover her purpose. “I do earnestly pray God in mercy to take me as soon as He, in his infinite wisdom, will consent to do it, but I know if I am left it is for some use to others.” Though heartbroken, even within these initial days of grief, Georgia tried to see the positive in her predicament.<sup>33</sup>

Certainly, Georgia felt the sorrow of losing a husband. She believed “God has seen fit to visit me with the sorest affliction the human heart could know.” In the early stages of her husband’s sickness, she explained “I did not feel that I could say ‘Thy will be done.’” But through his sickness, her faith grew stronger and acceptance became easier. She believed God “feels a peculiar compassion for the widow—knowing the utter desolation of her heart if her love is such as it should be for the one He has given her for a husband.” While Georgia felt that “I could have died with him—this separation is so hard,” she finished the sentence “but I doubt not God’s wisdom.” When “I am shut up in a selfish grief,” she became even more upset and attempted to pull herself from it.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Georgia Page King Smith to Henry Lord Page King, 30 October 1862, K-W Papers, GHS.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Georgia's determination to both mourn her husband and accept God's will was exactly what those around her wanted her to do. Her friend Lizzie Caperton wrote "When I read yr letters, my precious one, I knelt down and offered Praise to god for the example to my simple desponding heart of your submission to His will and your great faith in His love." She was an example to those around her. Georgia mourned her loss, but did not dissolve into a melancholy puddle of anguish. She mourned with grace and championed her husband's memory. She did not call her brothers home but instead encouraged them to carry on in the fight. She followed the dictates of the etiquette books and the advice of her family. By mourning gracefully she did not undermine the Confederacy, but accepted that her husband was "a noble husband" who needed to give his life for a larger cause.<sup>35</sup>

By June 9, 1870, Georgia had found love again. Born in 1844, Joseph J. Wilder was ten years her junior. While William had been fighting, Joseph, still a teenager, was studying in Germany. When Georgia was mourning the death of her husband in January 1865, Joseph's father informed him that "this day you are twenty one years of age, you are now a full man...the legal term of infancy has expired and you now assume that of manhood...you now have your own name and fortune to make." After the war, Joseph joined his father as a successful cotton merchant. In Savannah's Christ Church, Georgia wed Joseph in an event that delighted many. Family and friends celebrated because Georgia, a dutiful widow, had mourned her husband long enough. Two years later, Georgia had her first and only child, a little girl. She remained happily

---

<sup>35</sup> Lizzie Caperton to Georgia Page King Smith, 3 November 1862, K-W Papers, GHS; Georgia Page King Smith to Henry Lord Page King, 30 October 1862, K-W Papers, GHS.

married until Joseph died on September 10, 1900. Georgia would live another ten years, a respectful widow once more.<sup>36</sup>

*“Now don’t go scolding because I didn’t tell in my other letter for I didn’t think then it would come off so soon”*: Fannie Franklin Hargrave<sup>37</sup>

Bright Williamson Hargrave was shot outside of his home in May 1861. Perhaps Fannie was watching the argument, her face pressed against an upstairs window of their expansive plantation home, or perhaps her mother had banished her to the back of the house with the rest of her siblings, thirteen in all. Beard Williams, the man who shot her father, was Fannie’s brother-in-law, the husband of her oldest sister Olivia. Her father had recently returned from the Georgia Secession Convention, where he represented Carroll County and signed the secession ordinance. Why Beard Williams came to the house with a gun that day is unknown. Perhaps it was politically inspired, perhaps it was a culmination of a family quarrel, or perhaps merely a mishap in a heated argument. Either way, her father was dead. Fannie, eighteen years old and the oldest unmarried daughter, helped her mother gather up the ten younger children and take them to Atlanta. Her mother, while taking care of six children with the measles, contracted pneumonia herself and died in 1862. The family was scattered across the South. Fannie bounced back and forth between two guardians, Judge Long in Carrollton, Georgia and David Clopton in Van Wert, Georgia. She would lose touch with several of her brothers and sisters in this time, unable to locate them again until she was elderly.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Joseph J. Wilder and Georgia P. Smith Marriage Certificate, 9 June 1870, K-W Papers, GHS; John Randolph Wilder to Joseph John Wilder, January 5, 1865, K-W Papers, GHS.

<sup>37</sup> Fannie Franklin Hargrave Carson Brannan to Bessie H. Long and friends, November 1865, Hargrave Family Papers, Annie Belle Weaver Special Collections, Ingram Library, University of West Georgia [UWG].

<sup>38</sup> A biography of the Hargrave Family is included in the family papers, the author’s name not recorded. Likely, it was compiled by Julia Graves Ivey, the donor of the collection. Hargrave biography, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG.

In December 1863 or January 1864, twenty-year-old Fannie Franklin Hargrave married James N. Carson. He was the co-owner of Carson-Brannan Cotton Brokerage in Pulaski, Tennessee and a commissariat in the Confederate army. How they met, what their courtship was like, when exactly they married, and other details of their relationship are unknown, though one cousin of James' did exclaim "I admit I was surprised, yes amazed, confounded, and astounded. I never dreamed of you marrying, I am glad indeed." James left his young wife in Carrollton, a town just west of Atlanta, when he returned to the war. Rumors of General William Tecumseh Sherman's plans swirled throughout the South, causing Fannie to become nervous. "You hear all kinds of rumors-none however, in our favor," wrote Fannie to her "dear husband." In June 1864, she became "very uneasy about our falling in the Yankee lines...I beg that you will come—if it is in the range of possibility & move me to a place of safety." Whenever she traveled, Fannie hid the money James left her, \$6,000 in gold, around her waist, afraid to leave it at home. In the midst of all the uneasiness, she informed James "how much I miss you, you can't imagine." Judge Long, with whom she was staying, told James "do come if possible very soon, and take Fannie away from here—she had been deeply sad for the past few days. I cannot realize that she is the same frolicsome, lively creature that she was when you were with her." Her sadness would only increase, however, in the coming months.<sup>39</sup>

On July 3, 1864, James was in Cedartown, Georgia, purchasing supplies for troops. He was visiting a friend's home when "Yankees dashed into town before any one had any notice of their coming." James raced out the back door of the house and "attempted to get to the Plum orchard but they killed him just as he jumped the fence." James was "shot in the bowels," and

---

<sup>39</sup> Mollie Brannan to Jimmie, aka James Carson, June 8, 1864, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG; Fannie Franklin Hargrave Carson to James Carson, 25 May 1864, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG; 4 June 1864, Fannie Franklin Hargrave Carson to James Carson, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG; C. E. Long to James Carson, 8 June 1864, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG.

brought into the house, “with blood streaming from his wound.” For his friends, this was a traumatic experience. “If I live a thousand years I can never get over seeing him shot,” Mrs. Darden, a friend, recalled. In a letter to Fannie over a year after the incident, she added “you can imagine how I feel standing here looking at the floor with blood all over it. We have had it scoured three times but it is perfectly plain now and never will come up.”<sup>40</sup>

Like Tivie, Fannie not only had to adjust to life as a widow, but also life as a mother. Shortly after James’ death, Fannie gave birth to a little boy. She named him James N. Carson Jr., in honor of her late husband and lovingly called him Jimmy. This baby, however, would only bless his mother’s world for about nine months before he died, bringing even more sorrow into the twenty-one year old widow’s life. “We all loved your sweet little cherub and mourn for him as if he were our own” remarked her sister. Sympathizing with Fannie, she claimed “I too can never forget his heavenly eyes—his bright sunny face.” Death seemed to be following Fannie, attacking those she loved most and heaping sadness upon the young widow.<sup>41</sup>

And yet, in just one year and seven months after her husband’s death, Fannie was married again. Her choice was Hiram King Brannan, Fannie’s late husband’s business partner in their cotton-brokerage business and his second cousin. In November 1865, Fannie left for Pulaski, Tennessee with the intention of marrying him, despite the fact that she was still in the middle of her mourning period. Fannie wrote her friends: “now don’t go scolding because I didn’t tell in my other letter for I didn’t think then it would come off so soon.” Fannie’s sister, while full of compassion for Fannie, wrote, “I can hardly help from hating Mr. Brannan for stealing you from us. Poor Jule cried for three days and nights after you left.” Her friend Molly remarked “I was

---

<sup>40</sup> Benjamin F. Bigelow, 3 July 1864, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG; Fannie Hargrave Carson to Lou E. Hightower, 6 July 1864, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG; Lou E. Hightower, 13 July 1864, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG. Fannie Darden to Fannie Hargrave Carson, 21 February 1866, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG.

<sup>41</sup> Fannie’s sister, to Fannie Hargrave Carson, 4 November 1865, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG.

quite surprised when I heard you were going to marry.” One woman flatly told her, “O I wish you were not married.” In a fleeting moment of introspection, even Fannie doubted her decision, writing “I hope I made my choice with considerable deliberation.” Fannie’s new sister-in-law, however, was happy about the development and felt her brother was “quite fortunate to have him a fine looking, captivating, rich” new wife who could produce “a dozen little Brannans—dear little red headed pug nosed babies they will be.”<sup>42</sup>

Beyond her decision to remarry, it also appears that Fannie was a popular woman while living in Georgia. After she left for Tennessee, her sister complained that “every time I go out, or see anybody ‘have you heard from Miss Carson’ is dinged in my ears.” In fact, she explained to Fannie that “I have been questioned by some of your admirers until I have grown almost tired.” To pacify one eager suitor, Fannie’s sister played quite a trick. After days of being “tormented” by a certain Captain, Fannie’s sister went home to get “him a lock of your hair.” Giving a man a lock of hair was a sign of nineteenth-century affection. “I came home and clipped a tress from old yellow oxen tail, perfumed it highly and sent it to him with the request that he should wear it next to his heart and not expose it to the vulgar gaze of anyone. The last time I saw him he drew it out of his breast pocket and pressed it tenderly to his lips,” giggled the trickster sister. Rich, beautiful, and only twenty-one years old, Fannie appears to have made quite an impression on those who knew her.<sup>43</sup>

On February 21, 1866, three months after her second marriage, Fannie received an important letter describing “all the particulars of the death of your much loved husband.” This

---

<sup>42</sup> An unnamed sister to Fannie Hargrave Carson Brannan, 4 November 1865, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG. Mollie to Fannie Hargrave Carson Brannan, no date, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG; Bessie Lowe to Fannie Hargrave Carson Brannan, no date, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG; Meta to Fannie Hargrave Carson Brannan, 9 February 1866, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG;

<sup>43</sup> From unnamed sister, to Fannie Hargrave Carson Brannan, 4 November 1865, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG.

letter did not describe the death of her current husband Hiram, but her late husband James.

Unaware of Fannie's new marriage, the writer of the letter tried "to tell all the messages of love" that James had left her. Additionally, the letter writer remarked that "we have so often thought and talked of you, and wondered where you were or what had become of you." They likely did not imagine that the young woman was already remarried, and to her late husband's business partner at that. Could a man who gave his life for the Confederate cause be forgotten so easily? After all, James had not even been in the ground two years before she had married again, and to a man who was not even a soldier. The lack of a family and home, combined with her youth and lively personality, led to a different type of widowhood for Fannie. Community expectations shaped mourning, but so did a variety of other factors.<sup>44</sup>

Through these three widows, the actualities of widowhood become apparent. Family, friends, neighbors, soldiers, husbands, literature, newspapers, and other elements of southern society all sent a message—the same message—to all Confederate widows. "Your best earthly treasure has been snatched from you" read one condolence letter, "& I know you feel as if there was nothing left worth living for, but you must summon all your fortitude." Losing a husband was "a great trial," but there was more to be done. Neglecting to mourn devalued the man and his cause. Mourning too intensely could be just as detrimental, for it ignored the larger sacrifice to the hope of an independent Confederacy. But the Civil War produced widows as daily life had never produced them before. First, by the hundreds. Then, by the thousands. Their numbers climbed into the hundreds of thousands. The war created thousands upon thousands of widows—young, old, rich, poor, black, white. Death took husbands from them all. After a husband died, the woman had to work through emotions, expectations, and reestablish herself.

---

<sup>44</sup> Fannie Darden to Fannie Hargrave Carson, 21 February 1866, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG.

Her childhood, her personality, her finances, her family network, and her marriage all impacted how she would mourn. A typical widow simply did not and could not exist. Some widows would strive to fit the mold and succeed, some failed trying, and some simply didn't try. A one-size-fits all mourning prescription could not be enforced. There was simply too much death and too many widows.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Mary to Fannie Franklin Hargrave Carson, 17 July 1864, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG.; Lou E. Hightower to Fannie Franklin Hargrave Carson, 13 July 1864, Hargrave Family Papers, UWG.

## EPILOGUE

*“Here she sat like a crow with hot taffeta to her wrists and buttoned up to her chin, with not even a hint of lace or braid, not a jewel except Ellen’s onyx mourning brooch, watching tacky-looking girls handing on the arms of good-looking men. All because Charles Hamilton had had the measles. He didn’t even die in a fine glow of gallantry in battle, so she could brag about him.”*  
 -Scarlett O’Hara<sup>1</sup>

In 1939, Scarlett O’Hara waltzed across the silver screen and flirted her way into American hearts. When her first husband died, she was just seventeen years old and believed that she was far too young to be a widow, for “widows should be old—so terribly old they didn’t want to dance and flirt and be admired.” But the Civil War changed lives, even fictional ones. Scarlett’s mother cautioned her to “never chatter vivaciously” and always “wear hideous black dresses without even a touch of braid to enliven them.” Scarlett felt trapped, forced to “go on making a pretense of enthusiasm and pride in the Cause which she could not feel, acting out her part of the widow of a Confederate officer who bears her grief bravely, whose heart is in the grave, who feels that her husband’s death meant nothing if it aided the Cause to triumph.” Of all the mourning requirements, to Scarlett “the most dreadful of all” was the expectation that she “could in no way indicate an interest in the company of gentlemen.” Under the weight of these expectations, Scarlett discovered “how easily a widow might get herself talked about” and concluded that “widows might as well be dead.” She should be dead because he was.<sup>2</sup>

Sixty years later another widow, Alberta S. Martin, captured the attention of millions of Americans as “the Oldest Living Confederate Widow.” With a “yeah, reckon so,” twenty-one-year-old Alberta had kissed William Jasper Martin and married him. The year was 1927.

---

<sup>1</sup> Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 121, 95, 94, 120, 95, 94.

William was eighty-one-years-old and a Confederate veteran. Decades later, when asked about her unusual marriage, Alberta explained that it was “better to be an old man’s darlin’ than a young man’s slave.” In 1996, Dr. Kenneth Chancey, a member of the Sons of the Confederacy, discovered the elderly Alberta nestled in Elba, Alabama. Poverty and obscurity may have haunted her past, but becoming “the belle of 21st-century Confederate history buffs” as the last Confederate widow changed her life. “I ain’t the oldest livin’ Confederate widow,” she exclaimed, “I’m the onliest one. The last of the livin’.” She attended conventions, reenactments, and rallies across the South dressed in the colors of the rebel flag. The Alabama governor’s office bestowed Alberta the title Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Aide-de-Camp in the state militia while another Confederate group named her an honorary cannoneer. She was over ninety years of age and giggled “and I ain’t never shot a peashooter!” Alberta became the matriarch of a large family, and was surrounded by people who would hold her hand “crying and thinking about their family that suffered greatly in the past.” She would play this part even in death. When Alberta died on May 31, 2004, Memorial Day, planning began for an elaborate 1860’s style funeral and Heritage Confederate Service. Men marched in Confederate uniforms, her casket was draped in a Rebel flag, and people gathered to watch the half mile parade.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> After dozens of articles flooded the internet plastered with news of this last Confederate widow’s death, other stories surfaced of older widows still alive and kicking. Currently, it appears Maudie Celia Acklin, holds the title of being the oldest Confederate widow, outliving Alberta by four years. At age 19, she married 87-year-old William M. Cantrell in 1934. See Mark Patterson, “Widow Recalls Marrying Civil War Veteran,” CNN, June 17, 2004, <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/US/South/06/16/civilwar.widow/> (accessed December 1, 2009); Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1998), 340; Alberta Martin, interview by Joe Richman, July 1, 1998., <http://www.radiodiaries.org/transcripts/OtherDocs/civilwar.html> (accessed December 1, 2009); Obituary of Alberta Martin., “Alberta Martin, 97, Confederate Widow, Dies,” *New York Times*, June 1, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/01/us/alberta-martin-97-confederate-widow-dies.html> (accessed December 1, 2009); Ibid; Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic*, 341; Obituary of Alberta Martin,; *Confederates in the Attic*, 342; Ibid; Obituary of Alberta Martin; Order of the Confederate Rose, “Last Living Civil War Widow(s),” [http://www.confederate-rose.org/widow-Alberta\\_Martin.htm](http://www.confederate-rose.org/widow-Alberta_Martin.htm) (accessed December 1, 2009); Last Confederate Widow, “Funeral,” <http://lastconfederatewidow.com/Funeral.htm> (accessed December 1, 2009); Mark Bullock,

When the term “Confederate widow” is typed into an online search, these are the two women who appear. One old, one young, both harkening back to an era lost. As icons, both Scarlett and Alberta represent a much larger population of women, whose contemporaries, in turn, expected them to be icons. Undeniably, Alberta and Scarlett are fascinating females, but the label “Confederate Widow” is what elevated them to an iconic status. Margaret Mitchell produced a piece of fantasy and yet, when it comes to widowhood, she unearths something painfully real. Young widows, like the fictional Scarlett, had given enough to the cause and refused to be buried with it. The Confederacy told them to marry brave soldiers and they did. Confederate wives wrote letters, sacrificed luxuries, sewed flags, mailed food, and championed their husbands’ victories when the cause asked them to do so. But when a husband died and the Confederacy stepped in to tell widows how to mourn, many refused to follow orders. To give up a husband was one thing, but be buried alongside him was another. Eternal mourning required a widow to deny her present and her future. War widows, younger than ever before, did not want to be buried in the past. The Confederacy was simply asking for too much—too much from the human heart.

Alberta, as the last Confederate widow, was neither young nor beautiful like Scarlet, but instead lived as a stately ruin of the Confederacy. People could gaze upon her and imagine what her husband had lived through. They could think about death and what it would be like to watch a husband die. They could watch her for a moment or an afternoon, but at the end of their tour, they returned home safely, family intact. Alberta, like all Confederate widows, was the one who had lost the husband. She was the one who went to bed alone each night. Through Alberta,

---

“Last Confederate Widow Laid to Rest,” WSFA, June 12, 2004, <http://www.wsfa.com/Global/story.asp?S=1907163&nav=0RdENY4p> (accessed December 1, 2009).

people could imagine the pain in surviving a husband and an era, but for them, the emotions remained imaginary. She was a stately ruin they could gaze upon, but they did not have to crumble themselves. All Confederate widows, from the 1860s to Scarlett to Alberta, lost a husband and gained a tremendous amount of attention. Though thousands watched them, few would want to live their lives.

## REFERENCES

## Primary Sources

*Manuscripts*

Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.

Ebenezer B. Coggin Papers, 1862-1889.

Harris Hardin Averett Papers, 1854-1863.

John F. Davenport Civil War Letters, 1862-1864.

Nancy Gilliam Papers, 1850-1904.

Sally Randle Perry Diary, 1867-1868.

Sydenham Moore Family Papers, 1833-1873.

George A. Smathers Libraries, Special and Area Studies Collections, University of Florida, Gainesville.

James J. Nixon Letters, 1861-1863.

Stephens-Bryant Family Papers, 1664-1989.

Georgia Historical Society, Savannah.

John McCorkle Correspondence, 1863-1864.

King and Wilder Family Papers, 1817-1946.

Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens.

William Gaston Deloney Papers, 1829-1915.

Tennessee Library and State Archives, Nashville.

Asa V. Ladd Papers, 1864.

Ben W. Coleman Papers, in the Civil War Microfilm Collection.

Mary W. M. Bell Papers, in the Civil War Microfilm Collection.

Joseph R. Mothershead Journal, in the Civil War Microfilm Collection.

Rains Family Papers, in the Civil War Microfilm Collection.

Sarah Kennedy Papers, in the Civil War Microfilm Collection.

Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, the University of North Carolina: Chapel Hill.

C. D. Epps Papers, 1862-1915.

Ellen Long Daniel Papers, 1848-1918.

Laura Cornelia McGimsey Papers, 1856-1868.

William R. Perkins Library, Manuscript Department, Duke University, Durham.

David Bullock Harris Papers, 1789-1894.

*Published Diaries, Letters, Memoirs, Writings*

Alexander, Edward Porter. *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of Edward Porter Alexander*. Edited by Gary W. Gallagher. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

*The Art of Good Behavior; and Letter Writing on Love, Courtship, and Marriage: A complete guide for ladies and gentlemen, particularly those who have not enjoyed the advantages of fashionable life*. New York: C. P. Huestis, 1846.

Ayers, James T. in *The Blue and the Gray: The Story of the Civil War as Told by Participants (Volume One: The Nomination of Lincoln to the Eve of Gettysburg)*. Edited by Henry Steele Commager. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1973.

Babcock, Willoughby. *Selections from the Letters and Diaries of Brevet-Brigadier General Willoughby Babcock of the Seventy-Fifth New York Volunteers*. New York: The University of the State of New York, 1922.

Barr, James Michael. *Let us Meet in Heaven: The Civil War Letters of James Michael Barr, 5<sup>th</sup> South Carolina Cavalry*. Edited by Thomas D. Mays. Abilene: McWhiney Foundation Press, 2001.

Bowler, James and Elizabeth Madison. *Go if you Think it your Duty: A Minnesota Couple's Civil War letters*. Edited by Andrea R. Foroughi. St Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008.

Breckinridge, Lucy. *Lucy Breckinridge of Grove Hill: The Journal of a Virginia Girl, 1862-1864*. Edited by Mary D. Robertson. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994.

Chamberlayne, John Hampden. *Ham Chamberlayne—Virginian: Letters and Papers of an*

- Artillery Officer in the War for Southern Independence, 1861-1865.* Edited by C. G. Chamberlayne. Richmond: 1932.
- Chesnut, Mary Boykin. *A Diary from Dixie.* Edited by Isabella D. Martin and Myrta Lockett Avery. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1906.
- Chesnut, Mary Boykin Miller. *Mary Chesnut's Civil War.* Edited by C. Vann Woodward. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
- Chesnut, Mary Boykin Miller. *The Private Mary Chesnut: The Unpublished Civil War Diaries.* Edited by C. Vann Woodward and Elisabeth Muhlenfeld. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Collis, Septima Maria Levy. *A Woman's War Record, 1861-1865.* New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1889.
- Douglas, Henry Kyd. *I Rode with Stonewall: The War Experiences of the Youngest Member of Jackson's Staff.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1940.
- Evans, Augusta Jane Evans. *Macaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice.* Edited by Drew Gilpin Faust. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.
- Fay, Edwin. *This Infernal War; the Confederate Letters of Edwin H. Fay.* Edited by Bell Irvin Wiley with the assistance of Lucy E. Fay. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958.
- Goodbar, K. D.. "Mrs. Richard Ledbetter," in *Confederate Women of Arkansas 1861-'65: Memorial Reminiscences.* Little Rock: The United Confederate Veterans of Arkansas, 1907.
- Harrison, Burton. *Recollections Grace and Gay.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911.
- Holmes, Emma. *The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes 1861-1866.* Edited by John F. Marszalek. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979.

Holstein, Anna Morris Ellis. *Three Years in Field Hospitals of the Army of the Potomac*.

Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1867.

*How to Behave: A Pocket Manual of Republican Etiquette, and Guide to Correct Personal*

*Habits*. New York: Fowler and Wells, Publishers, 1856.

Johnson, Charles. *The Civil War Letters of Colonel Charles F. Johnson, Invalid Corps*. Edited by

Fred Pelka. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004.

McGuire, Judith White Brockenborough. *Diary of a Southern Refugee during the War by A*

*Lady of Virginia*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995.

Moore, Frank. *The Civil War in Song and Story 1860-1865*. New York: P.F. Collier, Publisher,

1892.

Morgan, Sarah. *Sarah Morgan: The Civil War Diary of a Southern Woman*. Edited by Charles

East. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991.

Perry, Theophilus and Harriet. *Widows by the Thousand: The Civil War Letters of Theophilus*

*and Harriet Perry*. Edited by M. Jane Johansson. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000.

Ramseur, Stephen Dodson. *The Bravest of the Brave: The Correspondence of Stephen Dodson*

*Ramseur*. Edited by George G. Kundahl. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

*Rose Cottage Chronicles: Civil War Letters of the Bryant-Stephens Families of North Florida*.

Edited by Arch Frederic Blakey, Ann Smith Lainhart, and Winston Bryant. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998.

Schaller, Frank. *Soldiering for Glory: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Frank Schaller, Twenty-*

*Second Mississippi Infantry*. Edited by Mary W. Schaller and Martin N. Schaller.

- Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007.
- Sherwood, Mrs. John Sherwood. *Manners and Social Usages*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1899.
- Solomon, Clara. *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon: Growing up in New Orleans, 1861-1862*. Edited by Elliott Ashkenazi. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995.
- Stephens, Alexander. "Slavery the Cornerstone of the Confederacy" in *Great Debates in American History: State Rights (1798-1861); Slavery (1858-1861)* vol. 5 of *Great Debates in American History*. Edited by Marion Mills Miller. New York: Current Literature Publishing Company, 1913
- Stiles, Robert. *Four Years Under Marse Robert*. New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1904.
- Stone, Kate. *Brokenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone, 1861-1868*. Edited by John Q. Anderson. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955.
- Thornwell, Emily. *The Lady's Guide to Perfect Gentility*. New York: Derby & Jackson, 1856.
- Torrey, Lizzie. *The Ideal of Womanhood, or, Words to the Women of America*. Boston: Wentworth, Hewes & Co., 1859.
- Walker, Eliza Jane Kendrick. *Other Days: Reminiscences*, typescript, located in Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1860 United States Federal Census Slave Schedules accessed via [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com).
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1850-1920 United States Federal Census Population Schedules accessed via [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com).

Vermilion, William. *Love Amid the Turmoil: The Civil War Letters of William and Mary*

*Vermilion*. Edited by Donald C. Elder III. Iowa City: Iowa Press, 2005.

Wiley, William. *The Civil War Diary of a Common Soldier: William Wiley of the 77th Illinois*

*Infantry*. Edited by Terrence J. Windschel. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001.

Wright, Louise Wigfall. *A Southern Girl in '61: The War-Time Memories of a Confederate*

*Senator's Daughter*. New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1905.

#### Secondary Sources: Books and Articles

Berry, Stephen. *All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South*. Oxford:

Oxford University Press, 2003.

Berry, Stephen. *House of Abraham: Lincoln and the Todds, A Family Divided By War*.

New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2007.

Berry, Stephen. "More Alluring at a Distance: Absentee Patriarchy and the Thomas Butler King

Family" in *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*. Vol. LXXXI, No. 4, Winter 1997.

Carmichael, Peter S. *Lee's Young Artillerist: William R. J. Pegram*. Charlottesville: University

Press of Virginia, 1995.

Clinton, Catherine. *Tara Revisited: Women, War, and the Plantation Legend*. New York:

Abbeville Press, 1995.

Clinton, Catherine. *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South*. New York:

Pantheon Books, 1982.

Cloyd, Benjamin G.. *Haunted by Atrocity: Civil War Prison in American Memory*. Baton

Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010.

- Coffin, Margaret. *Death in Early America: The History and Folklore of Customs and Superstitions of Early Medicine, Funerals, Burials, and Mourning*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, 1976.
- Coppersmith, Andrew S.. *Fighting Words: An Illustrated History of Newspaper Accounts in the Civil War*. New York: The New Press, 2004,
- Faust, Drew Gilpin. *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Faust, Drew Gilpin. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. New York: Random House, Inc., 2008.
- Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Freemon, Frank R.. *Gangrene and Glory: Medical Care during the American Civil War*. Cranbury: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1998.
- Griggs, Walter S. Jr.. *General John Pegram, C.S.A.*. Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1993.
- Green, Carol C.. *Chimborazo: The Confederacy's Largest Hospital*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2004.
- Gross, Daniel M. *The Secret History of Emotion: From Aristotle's Rhetoric to Modern Brain Science*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- Gross, Jennifer Lynn. "'And for the Widow and the Orphan': Confederate Widows, Poverty, and Public Assistance." In *Inside the Confederate Nation: Essays in Honor of Emory M. Thomas*, edited by Lesley J. Gordon and John C. Inscoe. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005.
- Gross, Jennifer Lynn Gross. "'Good Angels': Confederate Widowhood in Virginia," in *Southern*

- Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South*. Edited by Catherine Clinton. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Gross, Jennifer Lynn. "The United Daughters of the Confederacy, Confederate Widows, and the Lost Cause: 'We Must Not Forget or Neglect the Widows,'" in *Women on Their Own: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Being Single*. Edited by Rudolph M. Bell and Virginia Yans. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008.
- Gross, Jennifer Lynn. "'You Must Do The Best You Can': The Civil War Widows of Brunswick County, Virginia, 1860-1920." MA thesis, University of Richmond, 1995.
- Hacker, J. David, Libra Hilde, and James Holland Jones. "The Effect of the Civil War on Southern Marriage Patterns," in *The Journal of Southern History*. Vol. LXXVI, no. 1. February 2010.
- Harré, Rom. "An Outline of the Social Constructionist Viewpoint," in *The Social Construction of Emotions*. Edited by Rom Harré. New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1986.
- Holmes, Amy E. "'Such is the Price We Pay': American Widows and the Civil War Pension System." In *Toward a Social History of the American Civil War: Exploratory Essays*, edited by Maris A. Vinovskis. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Horwitz, Tony. *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1998.
- Jallard, Pat. *Death in the Victorian Family*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Kenzer, Robert. "The Uncertainty of Life: A Profile of Virginia's Civil War Widows." In *The War Was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War*, edited by Joan E. Cashin. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Kete, Mary Louise. *Sentimental Collaborations: Mourning and Middle-Class Identity in*

- Nineteenth-Century America*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.
- King, Grace Elizabeth. *Creole Families of New Orleans*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921.
- Laderman, Gary. *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes towards Death, 1799-1883*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.
- Lewis, Jan and Kenneth A. Lockridge. "'Sally Has Been Sick': Pregnancy and Family Limitation Among Virginia Gentry Women, 1780-1830," in *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 22, No. 1, Autumn, 1988.
- Miller, Richard F.. "For His Wife, His Widow, and His Orphan: Massachusetts and Family Aid during the Civil War" in *Massachusetts Historical Review* 6, 2004.
- McClintock, Megan J.. "Civil War Pensions and the Reconstruction of Union Families" in *Journal of American History* 83, no. 2. September 1996.
- McCurry, Stephanie. *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- McMillen, Sally G. *Motherhood in the Old South: Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Infant Rearing*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990.
- McDonough, James Lee. *Stones River: Bloody Winter Tennessee*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1980.
- Mitchell, Margaret. *Gone with the Wind*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936.
- Ott, Victoria E.. *Confederate Daughters: Coming to Age during the Civil War*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008.
- Phillips, Jason. *Diehard Rebels: the Confederate Culture of Invincibility*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007.

Prinz, Jesse J.. *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Rable, George C.. "Despair, Hope, and Delusion: The Collapse of Confederate Morale Reexamined" in *The Collapse of the Confederacy*. Edited by Mark Grimsley and Brooks D. Simpson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.

Rutkow, Ira M.. *Bleeding Blue and Gray: Civil War Surgery and the Evolution of American Medicine*. New York: Random House, 2005.

Schantz, Mark S. *Awaiting the Heavenly Country: The Civil War and America's Culture of Death*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.

Speer, Lonnie R.. *War of Vengeance: Acts of Retaliation Against Civil War POWs*. Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2002.

Stearns, Peter N. *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth-Century Emotional Style*. New York: New York University Press, 1994.

Stearns, Peter N. and Jan Lewis, eds. *An Emotional History of the United States*. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

Stegman, John F.. *These Men She Gave: Civil War Diary of Athens, Georgia*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1964.

Vinovskis, Maris A. Vinovskis. "Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War? Some Preliminary Demographic Speculations," in *Toward a Social History of the American Civil War: Exploratory Essays*. Edited by Maris A. Vinovskis. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Wellman, Many Wade. *The County of Warren, North Carolina, 1586-1917*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959.

Wood, Kirsten E.. *Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the American Revolution through the Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.