SARAH MORGAN DAWSON

A CONFEDERATE GIRL'S DIARY

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SARAH FOWLER MORGAN

INTRODUCTION

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It is perhaps due to a chance conversation, held some seventeen years ago in New York, that this Diary of the Civil War was saved from destruction.

A Philadelphian had been talking with my mother of North and South, and had alluded to the engagement between the Essex and the Arkansas, on the Mississippi, as a brilliant victory for the Federal navy. My mother protested, at once; said that she and her sister Miriam, and several friends, had been witnesses, from the levee, to the fact that the Confederates had fired and abandoned their own ship when the machinery broke down, after two shots had been exchanged: the Federals, cautiously turning the point, had then captured but a smoking hulk. The Philadelphian gravely corrected her; history, it appeared, had consecrated, on the strength of an official report, the version more agreeable to Northern pride.

"But I wrote a description of the whole, just a few hours after it occurred!" my mother insisted. "Early in the war I began to keep a diary, and continued until the very end; I had to find some vent for my feelings, and I would not make an exhibition of myself by talking, as so many women did. I have written while resting to recover breath in the midst of a stampede; I have even written with shells bursting over the house in which I sat, ready to flee but waiting for my mother and sisters to finish their preparations."

"If that record still existed, it would be invaluable," said the Philadelphian. "We Northerners are sincerely anxious to know what Southern women did and thought at that time,

but the difficulty is to find authentic contemporaneous evidence. All that I, for one, have seen, has been marred by improvement in the light of subsequent events."

"You may read my evidence as it was written from March 1862 until April 1865," my mother declared impulsively.

At our home in Charleston, on her return, she unstitched with trembling hands a linen-bound parcel always kept in her tall, cedar-lined wardrobe of curled walnut. On it was scratched in ink "To be burned unread after my death"; it contained, she had once told me, a record of no interest save to her who had written it and lacked the courage to re-read it; a narrative of days she had lived, of joys she had lost; of griefs accepted, of vain hopes cherished.

From the linen, as the stitches were cut, fell five blank books of different sizes. Two, of convenient dimensions, might have been intended for diaries; the other three, somewhat unwieldy, were partly used ledgers from Judge P. H. Morgan's office. They were closely written in a clear, firm hand; the ink, of poor quality, had faded in many places to a pale brown scarcely darker than the deep yellow to which time had burned the paper. The effort to read under such conditions, and the tears shed over the scenes evoked, might well have cost my mother her sight; but she toiled for many weeks, copying out the essential portions of the voluminous record for the benefit of the Northerner who really wished to know.

Her transcription finished, she sent it to Philadelphia. It was in due course returned, with cold regrets that the temptation to rearrange it had not been resisted. No Southerner at that time could possibly have had opinions so just or foresight so clear as those here attributed to a young girl. Explanation was not asked, nor justification allowed: the

case, tried by one party alone, with evidence seen from one standpoint alone, had been judged without appeal.

Keenly wounded and profoundly discouraged, my mother returned the diaries to their linen envelope, and never saw them again. But my curiosity had been roused by these incidents; in the night, thoughts of the records would haunt me, bringing ever the ante-bellum scent of the cedar-lined wardrobe. I pleaded for the preservation of the volumes, and succeeded at last when, beneath the injunction that they should be burned, my mother wrote a deed of gift to me with permission to make such use of them as I might think fitting.

Reading those pages for myself, of late, as I transcribed them in my turn, I confess to having blamed the Philadelphian but lightly for his skepticism.

Here was a girl who, by her own admission, had known but ten months' schooling in her life, and had educated herself at home because of her yearning for knowledge; and yet she wrote in a style so pure, with a command of English so thorough, that rare are the pages where she had to stop for the alteration of so much as one word. The very haste of noting what had just occurred, before more should come, had disturbed the pure line of very few among these flowing sentences. There are certain uses of words to which the twentieth century purist will take exception; but if he is familiar with Victorian literature he will know that these points have been solved within the last few decades—and not all solved to the satisfaction of everyone, even now.

But underlying this remarkable feat of style, are a fairness of treatment and a balance of judgment incredible at such a period and in an author so young. On such a day, we may note an entry denouncing the Federals before their arrival at Baton Rouge; another page, and we see that the

Federal officers are courteous and considerate, we hear regrets that denunciations should have been dictated by prejudice. Does Farragut bombard a town occupied by women and children, or does Butler threaten to arm negroes against them? Be sure, then, that this Southern girl will not spare adjectives to condemn them! But do Southern women exaggerate in applying to all Federals the opprobrium deserved by some? Then those women will be criticized for forgetting the reserve imposed upon ladies. This girl knew then what history has since established, and what enlightened men and women on both sides of Mason and Dixon's line have since acknowledged: that in addition to the gentlemen in the Federal ranks who always behaved as gentlemen should, there were others, both officers and privates, who had donned the Federal uniform because of the opportunity for rapine which offered, and who were as unworthy of the Stars and Stripes as they would have been of the Stars and Bars.

I can understand, therefore, that this record should meet with skepticism at the hands of theorists committed to an opinion, or of skimmers who read guessing the end of a sentence before they reach the middle. But the originals exist to-day, and have been seen by others than myself; and I pledge myself here to the assertion that I have taken no liberties, have made no alterations, but have strictly adhered to my task of transcription, merely omitting here and there passages which deal with matters too personal to merit the interest of the public.

Those who read seriously, and with unbiased mind, will need no external guarantees of authenticity, however; for the style is of that spontaneous quality which no imitation could attain, and which attempted improvement could only mar. The very construction of the whole—for it does appear

as a whole—is influenced by the circumstances which made the life of that tragic period.

The author begins with an airy appeal to Madame Idleness—in order to forget. Then, the war seemed a sacred duty, an heroic endeavor, an inevitable trial, according as Southerners chose to take it; but the prevailing opinion was that the solution would come in victory for Southern arms, whether by their own unaided might or with the support of English intervention. The seat of war was far removed, and but for the absence of dear ones at the front and anxiety about them, Southern women would have been little disturbed in their routine of household duties. But presently the roar of cannon draws near, actual danger is experienced in some cases, suffering and privation must be accepted in all. Thenceforth, the women are part of the war; there may be interludes of plantation life momentarily secure from bullets and from oppression, yet the cloud is felt hanging ever lower and blacker. Gradually, the writer's gay spirit fails; an injury to her spine, for which adequate medical care cannot be found in the Confederacy, and the condition of her mother, all but starving at Clinton, drive these Southern women to the protection of a Union relative in New Orleans. The hated Eagle Oath must be taken, the beloved Confederacy must be renounced at least in words. Entries in the Diary become briefer and briefer, yet are sustained unto the bitter end, when the deaths of two brothers, and the crash of the Lost Cause, are told with the tragic reserve of a broken heart.

* * * * *

I have alluded to passages omitted because too personal. That the clearness of the narrative may not suffer, I hope to

be pardoned for explaining briefly, here, the position of Sarah Morgan's family at the outbreak of the Civil War.

Her father, Judge Thomas Gibbes Morgan, had been Collector of the Port of New Orleans, and in 1861 was Judge of the District Court of the Parish of Baton Rouge. In complete sympathy with Southern rights, he disapproved of Secession as a movement fomented by hotheads on both sides, but he declared for it when his State so decided. He died at his home in Baton Rouge in November, 1861, before the arrival of Farragut's fleet.

Judge Thomas Gibbes Morgan's eldest son, Philip Hickey Morgan, was also a Judge, of the Second District Court of the Parish of Orleans. Judge P. H. Morgan (alluded to as "Brother" and his wife as "Sister" throughout the Diary) disapproved of Secession like his father, but did not stand by his State. He declared himself for the Union, and remained in New Orleans when the Federals took possession, but refused to bear arms against his brothers and friends. His position enabled him to render signal services to many Confederate prisoners suffering under Butler's rule. And it was a conversation of his with President Hayes, when he told the full, unprejudiced truth about the Dual Government and the popular sentiment of Louisiana, which put an end to Reconstruction there by the Washington Government's recognition of General Francis T. Nicholls, elected Governor by the people, instead of Packard, declared Governor by the Republican Returning Board of the State. Judge P. H. Morgan had proved his disinterestedness in his report to the President; for the new Democratic régime meant his own resignation from the post of Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Louisiana which he held under the Republicans. He applied then to himself a piece of advice which he later was to give a young relative

mentioned in the pages of this Diary: "Always remember that it is best to be in accord with the sentiments of the vast majority of the people in your State. They are more apt to be right, on public questions of the day, than the individual citizen."

If Judge Thomas Gibbes Morgan's eldest son stayed within the Union lines because he would not sanction Secession, his eldest daughter—Lavinia—was on the Federal side also, married to Colonel Richard Coulter Drum, then stationed in California, and destined to become, in days of peace, Adjutant-General under President Cleveland's first administration. Though spared the necessity of fighting against his wife's brothers, Colonel Drum was largely instrumental in checking the Secession movement in California which would probably have assured the success of the South.

In the early days of Secession agitation, another son of Judge T. G. Morgan, Henry, had died in a duel over a futile quarrel which busybodies had envenomed. The three remaining sons had gone off to the war. Thomas Gibbes Morgan, Jr., married to Lydia, daughter of General A. G. Carter and a cousin of Mrs. Jefferson Davis, was Captain in the Seventh Louisiana Regiment, serving under Stonewall Jackson; George Mather Morgan, unmarried, was a Captain in the First Louisiana, also with Jackson in Virginia. The youngest, James Morris Morgan, had resigned from Annapolis, where he was a cadet, and hurried back to enlist in the Confederate navy.

At the family home in Baton Rouge, only women and children remained. There was Judge Morgan's widow, Sarah Fowler Morgan; a married daughter, Eliza or "Lilly," with her five children; and two unmarried daughters, Miriam and Sarah. "Lilly's" husband, J. Charles La Noue, came and went;

unable to abandon his large family without protector or resources, he had not joined the regular army, but took a part in battles near whatever place of refuge he had found for those dependent on him. We note, for instance, that he helped in the Confederate attack on Baton Rouge, together with General Carter, whose age had prevented him from taking regular service.

A word more as to the author of this Diary, and I have finished.

The war over, Sarah Morgan knitted together the threads of her torn life and faced her present, in preparation for whatever the future might hold. In South Carolina, under Reconstruction, she met a young Englishman, Captain Francis Warrington Dawson, who had left his home in London to fight for a cause where his chivalrous nature saw right threatened by might. In the Confederate navy under Commodore Pegram, in the Army of Northern Virginia under Longstreet, at the close of the war he was Chief Ordnance officer to General Fitzhugh Lee. But although the force of arms, of men, of money, of mechanical resources, of international support, had decided against the Confederacy, he refused to acknowledge permanent defeat for Southern ideals, and so cast his lot with those beside whom he had fought. His ambition was to help his adopted country in reconquering through journalism and sound politics that which seemed lost through war. What he accomplished in South Carolina is a matter of public record to-day. The part played in this work by Sarah Morgan as his wife is known to all who approached them during their fifteen years of a married life across which no shadow ever fell.

Sarah Morgan Dawson was destined to outlive not only her husband, but all save three of her eight brothers and sisters, and most of the relatives and friends mentioned in

the pages which follow; was destined to endure deep affliction once more, and to renounce a second home dearer than that first whose wreck she recorded during the war. Yet never did her faith, her courage, her steadfastness fail her, never did the light of an almost childlike trust in God and in mankind fade from her clear blue eyes. The Sarah Morgan who, as a girl, could stifle her sobs as she forced herself to laugh or to sing, was the mother I knew in later years.

I love most to remember her in the broad tree-shaded avenues of Versailles where, dreaming of a distant tragic past, she found ever new strength to meet the present. Death claimed her not far from there, in Paris, at a moment when her daughter in America, her son in Africa, were powerless to reach her. But souls like unto hers leave their mark in passing through the world; and, though in a foreign land, separated from all who had been dear to her, she received from two friends such devotion as few women deserve in life, and such as few other women are capable of giving.

She had done more than live and love:—she had endured while endurance was demanded; and, released from the house of bondage, she had, without trace of bitterness in her heart, forgiven those who had caused her martyrdom.

Warrington Dawson.

Versailles, France,
July, 1913.

BOOK I

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Baton Rouge, Louisiana,
March 9th, 1862.

Here I am, at your service, Madame Idleness, waiting for any suggestion it may please you to put in my weary brain, as a means to pass this dull, cloudy Sunday afternoon; for the great Pike clock over the way has this instant struck only half-past three; and if a rain is added to the high wind that has been blowing ever since the month commenced, and prevents my going to Mrs. Brunot's before dark, I fear I shall fall a victim to "the blues" for the first time in my life. Indeed it is dull. Miriam went to Linwood with Lydia yesterday, and I miss them beyond all expression. Miriam is *so* funny! She says she cannot live without me, and yet she can go away, and stay for months without missing me in the slightest degree. Extremely funny! And I—well, it is absurd to fancy myself alive without Miriam. She would rather not visit with me, and yet, be it for an hour or a month, I never halfway enjoy myself without her, away from home. Miriam is my "Rock ahead" in life; I'll founder on her yet. It's a grand sight for people out of reach, who will not come in contact with the breakers, but it is quite another thing to me, perpetually dancing on those sharp points in my little cockleshell that forms so ludicrous a contrast to the grand scene around. I am sure to founder!

I hold that every family has at heart one genius, in some line, no matter what—except in our family, where each is a genius, in his own way. Hem! And Miriam has a genius for

the piano. Now I never could bear to compete with any one, knowing that it is the law of my being to be inferior to others, consequently to fail, and failure is so humiliating to me. So it is, that people may force me to abandon any pursuit by competing with me; for knowing that failure is inevitable, rather than fight against destiny I give up *de bonne grâce*. Originally, I was said to have a talent for the piano, as well as Miriam. Sister and Miss Isabella said I would make a better musician than she, having more patience and perseverance. However, I took hardly six months' lessons to her ever so many years; heard how well she played, got disgusted with myself, and gave up the piano at fourteen, with spasmodic fits of playing every year or so. At sixteen, Harry gave me a guitar. Here was a new field where I would have no competitors. I knew no one who played on it; so I set to work, and taught myself to manage it, mother only teaching me how to tune it. But Miriam took a fancy to it, and I taught her all I knew; but as she gained, I lost my relish, and if she had not soon abandoned it, I would know nothing of it now. She does not know half that I do about it; they tell me I play much better than she; yet they let her play on it in company before me, and I cannot pretend to play after. Why is it? It is *not* vanity, or I would play, confident of excelling her. It is not jealousy, for I love to see her show her talents. It is not selfishness; I love her too much to be selfish to her. What is it then? "Simply lack of self-esteem" I would say if there was no phrenologist near to correct me, and point out that well-developed hump at the extreme southern and heavenward portion of my Morgan head. Self-esteem or not, Mr. Phrenologist, the result is, that Miriam is by far the best performer in Baton Rouge, and I would rank forty-third even in the delectable village of Jackson.

And yet I must have some ear for music. To "know as many songs as Sarah" is a family proverb; not very difficult songs, or very beautiful ones, to be sure, besides being very indifferently sung; but the tunes *will* run in my head, and it must take *some* ear to catch them. People say to me, "Of course you play?" to which I invariably respond, "Oh, no, but Miriam plays beautifully!" "You sing, I believe?" "Not at all—except for father" (that is what I used to say)—"and the children. But *Miriam* sings." "You are fond of dancing?" "Very; but I cannot dance as well as Miriam." "Of course, you are fond of society?" "No, indeed! Miriam is, and she goes to all the parties and returns all the visits for me." The consequence is, that if the person who questions is a stranger, he goes off satisfied that "that Miriam must be a great girl; but that little sister of hers—! Well! a *prig*, to say the least!"

So it is Miriam catches all my fish—and so it is, too, that it is not raining, and I'm off.

April 7th.

Until that dreary 1861, I had no idea of sorrow or grief.... How I love to think of myself at that time! Not as *myself*, but as some happy, careless child who danced through life, loving God's whole world too much to love any particular one, outside of her own family. She was more childish then—yet I like her for all her folly; I can say it now, for she is as dead as though she was lying underground.

Now do not imagine that Sarah has become an aged lady in the fifteen months that have elapsed since, for it is no such thing; her heart does ache occasionally, but that is a secret between her and this little rosewood furnished room;

and when she gets over it, there is no one more fond of making wheelbarrows of the children, or of catching Charlie or mother by the foot and making them play lame chicken.... Now all this done by a young lady who remembers eighteen months ago with so much regret that she has lost so much of her high spirits—might argue that her spirits were before tremendous; and yet they were not. That other Sarah was ladylike, I am sure, in her wildest moments, but there is something hurried and boisterous in this one's tricks that reminds me of some one who is making a merit of being jolly under depressing circumstances. No! that is not a nice Sarah now, to *my* taste.

The commencement of '61 promised much pleasure for the rest of the year, and though Secession was talked about, I do not believe any one anticipated the war that has been desolating our country ever since, with no prospect of terminating for some time to come. True the garrison was taken, but then several pleasant officers of the Louisiana army were stationed there, and made quite an agreeable addition to our small parties, and we did not think for a moment that trouble would grow out of it—at least, we girls did not. Next Louisiana seceded, but still we did not trouble ourselves with gloomy anticipations, for many strangers visited the town, and our parties, rides, and walks grew gayer and more frequent.

One little party—shall I ever forget it?—was on the 9th of March, I think; such an odd, funny little party! Such queer things happened! What a fool Mr. McG—— made of himself! Even more so than usual. But hush! It's not fair to laugh at a lady—under peculiar circumstances. And he tried so hard to make himself agreeable, poor fellow, that I ought to like him for being so obedient to my commands. "Say something new; something funny," I said, tired of a subject on which he

had been expatiating all the evening; for I had taken a long ride with him before sunset, he had escorted me to Mrs. Brunot's, and here he was still at my side, and his conversation did not interest me. To hear, with him, was to obey. "Something funny? Well—" here he commenced telling something about somebody, the fun of which seemed to consist in the somebody's having "knocked his *shins*" against something else. I only listened to the latter part; I was bored, and showed it. "Shins!" was I to laugh at such a story?

April 12th.

Day before yesterday, just about this time of evening, as I came home from the graveyard, Jimmy unexpectedly came in. Ever since the 12th of February he has been waiting on the Yankees' pleasure, in the Mississippi, at all places below Columbus, and having been under fire for thirteen days at Tiptonville, Island No. 10 having surrendered Monday night; and Commodore Hollins thinking it high time to take possession of the ironclad ram at New Orleans, and give them a small party below the forts, he carried off his little aide from the McRae Tuesday morning, and left him here Thursday evening, to our infinite delight, for we felt as though we would never again see our dear little Jimmy. He has grown so tall, and stout, that it is really astonishing, considering the short time he has been away.... To our great distress, he jumped up from dinner, and declared he must go to the city on the very next boat. Commodore Hollins would need him, he must be at his post, etc., and in twenty minutes he was off, the rascal, before we could believe he had been here at all. There is something in his eye that

reminds me of Harry, and tells me that, like Hal, he will die young.

And these days that are going by remind me of Hal, too. I am walking in our footsteps of last year. The eighth was the day we gave him a party, on his return home. I see him so distinctly standing near the pier table, talking to Mr. Sparks, whom he had met only that morning, and who, three weeks after, had Harry's blood upon his hands. He is a murderer now, without aim or object in life, as before; with only one desire—to die—and death still flees from him, and he Dares not rid himself of life.

All those dancing there that night have undergone trial and affliction since. Father is dead, and Harry. Mr. Trezevant lies at Corinth with his skull fractured by a bullet; every young man there has been in at least one battle since, and every woman has cried over her son, brother, or sweetheart, going away to the wars, or lying sick and wounded. And yet we danced that night, and never thought of bloodshed! The week before Louisiana seceded, Jack Wheat stayed with us, and we all liked him so much, and he thought so much of us;—and last week—a week ago to-day—he was killed on the battle-field of Shiloh.

April 16th.

Among the many who visited us, in the beginning of 1861, there was Mr. Bradford. I took a dislike to him the first time I ever saw him, and, being accustomed to say just what I pleased to all the other gentlemen, tried it with him. It was at dinner, and for a long while I had the advantage, and though father would sometimes look grave, Gibbes, and all at my end of the table, would scream with laughter. At last

Mr. Bradford commenced to retaliate, and my dislike changed into respect for a man who could make an excellent repartee with perfect good-breeding; and after dinner, when the others took their leave, and he asked permission to remain,—during his visit, which lasted until ten o'clock, he had gone over such a variety of subjects, conversing so well upon all, that Miriam and I were so interested that we forgot to have the gas lit!

April 17th.

And another was silly little Mr. B——r, my little golden calf. What a—don't call names! I owe him a grudge for "cold hands," and the other day, when I heard of his being wounded at Shiloh, I could not help laughing a little at Tom B——r's being hurt. What was the use of throwing a nice, big cannon ball, that might have knocked a man down, away on that poor little fellow, when a pea from a popgun would have made the same impression? Not but what he is brave, but little Mr. B——r is so soft.

Then there was that rattle-brain Mr. T——t who, commencing one subject, never ceased speaking until he had touched on all. One evening he came in talking, and never paused even for a reply until he bowed himself out, talking still, when Mr. Bradford, who had been forced to silence as well as the rest, threw himself back with a sigh of relief and exclaimed, "This man talks like a woman!" I thought it the best description of Mr. T——t's conversation I had ever heard. It was all on the surface, no pretensions to anything except to put the greatest possible number of words of no meaning in one sentence, while speaking of the most trivial thing. Night or day, Mr. T——t never passed

home without crying out to me, "*Ces jolis yeux bleus!*" and if the parlor were brightly lighted so that all from the street might see us, and be invisible to us themselves, I always nodded my head to the outer darkness and laughed, no matter who was present, though it sometimes created remark. You see, I knew the joke. Coming from a party escorted by Mr. B——r, Miriam by Mr. T——t,[1] we had to wait a long time before Rose opened the door, which interval I employed in dancing up and down the gallery—followed by my cavalier—singing,—

"Mes jolis yeux bleus,
Bleus comme les cieux,
Mes jolis yeux bleus
Ont ravi son âme," etc.;

which naïve remark Mr. B——r, not speaking French, lost entirely, and Mr. T——t endorsed it with his approbation and belief in it, and ever afterwards called me "*Ces jolis yeux bleus*."

April 19th, 1862.

Another date in Hal's short history! I see myself walking home with Mr. McG—— just after sundown, meeting Miriam and Dr. Woods at the gate; only that was a Friday instead of a Saturday, as this. From the other side, Mr. Sparks comes up and joins us. We stand talking in the bright moonlight which makes Miriam look white and statue-like. I am holding roses in my hand, in return for which one little pansy has been begged from my garden, and is now figuring as a shirt-stud. I turn to speak to that man of whom I said to Dr. Woods, before I even knew his name, "Who is this man who

passes here so constantly? I feel that I shall hate him to my dying day." He told me his name was Sparks, a good, harmless fellow, etc. And afterwards, when I did know him, [Dr. Woods] would ask every time we met, "Well! do you hate Sparks yet?" I could not really hate any one in my heart, so I always answered, "He is a good-natured fool, but I will hate him yet." But even now I cannot: my only feeling is intense pity for the man who has dealt us so severe a blow; who made my dear father bow his gray head, and shed such bitter tears.

The moon is rising still higher now, and people are hurrying to the grand Meeting, where the state of the country is to be discussed, and the three young men bow and hurry off, too. Later, at eleven o'clock, Miriam and I are up at Lydia's waiting (until the boat comes) with Miss Comstock who is going away. As usual, I am teasing and romping by turns. Harry suddenly stands in the parlor door, looking very grave, and very quiet. He is holding father's stick in his hand, and says he has come to take us over home. I was laughing still, so I said, "Wait," while I prepared for some last piece of folly, but he smiled for the first time, and throwing his arm around me, said, "Come home, you rogue!" and laughing still, I followed him.

He left us in the hall, saying he must go to Charlie's a moment, but to leave the door open for him. So we went up, and I ran in his room, and lighted his gas for him, as I did every night when we went up together. In a little while I heard him come in and go to his room. I knew nothing then; but next day, going into mother's room, I saw him standing before the glass door of her armoir, looking at a black coat he had on. Involuntarily I cried out, "Oh, don't, Hal!" "Don't what? Isn't it a nice coat?" he asked. "Yes; but it is buttoned up to the throat, and I don't like to see it. It looks—" here I

went out as abruptly as I came in; that black coat so tightly buttoned troubled me.

He came to our room after a while and said he was going ten miles out in the country for a few days. I begged him to stay, and reproached him for going away so soon after he had come home. But he said he must, adding, "Perhaps I am tired of you, and want to see something new. I'll be so glad to get back in a few days." Father said yes, he must go, so he went without any further explanation.

Walking out to Mr. Davidson's that evening, Lydia and I sat down on a fallen rail beyond the Catholic graveyard, and there she told me what had happened. The night before, sitting on Dr. Woods's gallery, with six or eight others who had been singing, Hal called on Mr. Henderson to sing. He complied by singing one that was not nice.[2] Old Mr. Sparks got up to leave, and Hal said, "I hope we are not disturbing you?" No, he said he was tired and would go home. As soon as he was gone, his son, who I have since *heard* was under the influence of opium,—though Hal always maintained that he was not,—said it was a shame to disturb his poor old father. Hal answered, "You heard what he said. We did *not* disturb him." "You are a liar!" the other cried. That is a name that none of our family has either merited or borne with; and quick as thought Hal sprang to his feet and struck him across the face with the walking-stick he held. The blow sent the lower part across the balcony in the street, as the spring was loosened by it, while the upper part, to which was fastened the sword—for it was father's sword-cane—remained in his hand. I doubt that he ever before knew the cane could come apart. Certainly he did not perceive it, until the other whined piteously he was taking advantage over an unarmed man; when, cursing him, he (Harry) threw it after the body of the cane, and said, "*Now* we are equal." The

other's answer was to draw a knife,[3] and was about to plunge it into Harry, who disdained to flinch, when Mr. Henderson threw himself on Mr. Sparks and dragged him off.

It was a little while after that Harry came for us. The consequence of this was a challenge from Mr. Sparks in the morning, which was accepted by Harry's friends, who appointed Monday, at Greenwell, to meet. Lydia did not tell me that; she said she thought it had been settled peaceably, so I was not uneasy, and only wanted Harry to come back from Seth David's soon. The possibility of his fighting never occurred to me.

Sunday evening I was on the front steps with Miriam and Dr. Woods, talking of Harry and wishing he would come. "You want Harry!" the doctor repeated after me; "you had better learn to live without him." "What an absurdity!" I said and wondered when he would come. Still later, Miriam, father, and I were in the parlor, when there was a tap on the window, just above his head, and I saw a hand, for an instant. Father hurried out, and we heard several voices; and then steps going away. Mother came down and asked who had been there, but we only knew that, whoever it was, father had afterward gone with them. Mother went on: "There is something going on, which is to be kept from me. Every one seems to know it, and to make a secret of it." I said nothing, for I had promised Lydia not to tell; and even I did not know all.

When father came back, Harry was with him. I saw by his nod, and "How are you, girls," how he wished us to take it, so neither moved from our chairs, while he sat down on the sofa and asked what kind of a sermon we had had. And we talked of anything except what we were thinking of, until we went upstairs.

Hal afterwards told me that he had been arrested up there, and father went with him to give bail; and that the sheriff had gone out to Greenwell after Mr. Sparks. He told me all about it next morning, saying he was glad it was all over, but sorry for Mr. Sparks; for he had a blow on his face which nothing would wash out. I said, "Hal, if you *had* fought, much as I love you, I would rather he had killed you than that you should have killed him. I love you too much to be willing to see blood on your hands." First he laughed at me, then said, "If I had killed him, I never would have seen you again."

We thought it was all over; so did he. But Baton Rouge was wild about it. Mr. Sparks was the bully of the town, having nothing else to do, and whenever he got angry or drunk, would knock down anybody he chose. That same night, before Harry met him, he had slapped one man, and had dragged another over the room by the hair; but these coolly went home, and waited for a *voluntary apology*. So the mothers, sisters, and intimate friends of those who had patiently borne the blows, and being "woolled," vaunted the example of their heroes, and asked why Dr. Morgan had not acted as *they* had done, and waited for an apology? Then there was another faction who cried only blood could wash out that blow and make a gentleman of Mr. Sparks again,—as though he ever *had* been one! So knots assembled at street corners, and discussed it, until father said to us that Monday night, "These people are so excited, and are trying so hard to make this affair worse, that I would not be surprised if they shot each other down in the street," speaking of Harry and the other.

Hal seemed to think of it no more, though, and Wednesday said he must go to the city and consult Brother as to where he should permanently establish himself. I was

sorry; yet glad that he would then get away from all this trouble. I don't know that I ever saw him in higher spirits than he was that day and evening, the 24th. Lilly and Charlie were here until late, and he laughed and talked so incessantly that we called him crazy. We might have guessed by his extravagant spirits that he was trying to conceal something from us....

He went away before daybreak, and I never saw him again.

April 26th, 1862.

There is no word in the English language that can express the state in which we are, and have been, these last three days. Day before yesterday, news came early in the morning of three of the enemy's boats passing the Forts, and then the excitement began. It increased rapidly on hearing of the sinking of eight of our gunboats in the engagement, the capture of the Forts, and last night, of the burning of the wharves and cotton in the city while the Yankees were taking possession. To-day, the excitement has reached the point of delirium. I believe I am one of the most self-possessed in my small circle; and yet I feel such a craving for news of Miriam, and mother, and Jimmy, who are in the city, that I suppose I am as wild as the rest. It is nonsense to tell me I am cool, with all these patriotic and enthusiastic sentiments. Nothing can be positively ascertained, save that our gunboats are sunk, and theirs are coming up to the city. Everything else has been contradicted until we really do not know whether the city has been taken or not. We only know we had best be prepared for anything. So day before yesterday, Lilly and I sewed up our jewelry,

which may be of use if we have to fly. I vow I will not move one step, unless carried away. Come what will, here I remain.

We went this morning to see the cotton burning—a sight never before witnessed, and probably never again to be seen. Wagons, drays,—everything that can be driven or rolled,—were loaded with the bales and taken a few squares back to burn on the commons. Negroes were running around, cutting them open, piling them up, and setting them afire. All were as busy as though their salvation depended on disappointing the Yankees. Later, Charlie sent for us to come to the river and see him fire a flatboat loaded with the precious material for which the Yankees are risking their bodies and souls. Up and down the levee, as far as we could see, negroes were rolling it down to the brink of the river where they would set them afire and push the bales in to float burning down the tide. Each sent up its wreath of smoke and looked like a tiny steamer puffing away. Only I doubt that from the source to the mouth of the river there are as many boats afloat on the Mississippi. The flatboat was piled with as many bales as it could hold without sinking. Most of them were cut open, while negroes staved in the heads of barrels of alcohol, whiskey, etc., and dashed bucketsful over the cotton. Others built up little chimneys of pine every few feet, lined with pine knots and loose cotton, to burn more quickly. There, piled the length of the whole levee, or burning in the river, lay the work of thousands of negroes for more than a year past. It had come from every side. Men stood by who owned the cotton that was burning or waiting to burn. They either helped, or looked on cheerfully. Charlie owned but sixteen bales—a matter of some fifteen hundred dollars; but he was the head man of the whole affair, and burned his own, as well as the property

of others. A single barrel of whiskey that was thrown on the cotton, cost the man who gave it one hundred and twenty-five dollars. (It shows what a nation in earnest is capable of doing.) Only two men got on the flatboat with Charlie when it was ready. It was towed to the middle of the river, set afire in every place, and then they jumped into a little skiff fastened in front, and rowed to land. The cotton floated down the Mississippi one sheet of living flame, even in the sunlight. It would have been grand at night. But then we will have fun watching it this evening anyway; for they cannot get through to-day, though no time is to be lost. Hundreds of bales remained untouched. An incredible amount of property has been destroyed to-day; but no one begrudges it. Every grog-shop has been emptied, and gutters and pavements are floating with liquors of all kinds. So that if the Yankees are fond of strong drink, they will fare ill.

Yesterday, Mr. Hutchinson and a Dr. Moffat called to ask for me, with a message about Jimmy. I was absent, but they saw Lilly. Jimmy, they said, was safe. Though sick in bed, he had sprung up and had rushed to the wharf at the first tap of the alarm bell in New Orleans. But as nothing could be done, he would probably be with us to-day, bringing mother and Miriam. I have neither heard nor seen more. The McRae, they said, went to the bottom with the others. They did not know whether any one aboard had escaped. God be praised that Jimmy was not on her then! The new boat to which he was appointed is not yet finished. So he is saved! I am distressed about Captain Huger, and could not refrain from crying, he was so good to Jimmy. But I remembered Miss Cammack might think it rather tender and obtrusive, so I dried my eyes and began to hope he had escaped. Oh! how glad I should be to know he has suffered no harm. Mr. Hutchinson was on his way above, going to join others

where the final battle is to be fought on the Mississippi. He had not even time to sit down; so I was doubly grateful to him for his kindness. I wish I could have thanked him for being so considerate of me in my distress now. In her agitation, Lilly gave him a letter I had been writing to George when I was called away; and begged him to address it and mail it at Vicksburg, or somewhere; for no mail will leave here for Norfolk for a long while to come. The odd part is, that he does not know George. But he said he would gladly take charge of it and remember the address, which Lilly told him was Richmond. Well! if the Yankees get it they will take it for an insane scrawl. I wanted to calm his anxiety about us, though I was so wildly excited that I could only say, "Don't mind us! We are safe. But fight, George! Fight for us!" The repetition was ludicrous. I meant so much, too! I only wanted him to understand he could best defend us there. Ah! Mr. Yankee! if you had but your brothers in this world, and their lives hanging by a thread, you too might write wild letters! And if you want to know what an excited girl can do, just call and let me show you the use of a small seven-shooter and a large carving-knife which vibrate between my belt and my pocket, always ready for emergencies.

April 27th.

What a day! Last night came a dispatch that New Orleans was under British protection, and could not be bombarded; consequently, the enemy's gunboats would probably be here this morning, such few as had succeeded in passing the Forts; from nine to fifteen, it was said. And the Forts, they said, had *not* surrendered. I went to church; but I grew

very anxious before it was over, feeling that I was needed at home. When I returned, I found Lilly wild with excitement, picking up hastily whatever came to hand, preparing for instant flight, she knew not where. The Yankees were in sight; the town was to be burned; we were to run to the woods, etc. If the house had to be burned, I had to make up my mind to run, too. So my treasure-bag tied around my waist as a bustle, a sack with a few necessary articles hanging on my arm, some few quite unnecessary ones, too, as I had not the heart to leave the old and new prayer books father had given me, and Miriam's, too;—pistol and carving-knife ready, I stood awaiting the exodus. I heaped on the bed the treasures I wanted to burn, matches lying ready to fire the whole at the last minute. I may here say that, when all was over, I found I had omitted many things from the holocaust. This very diary was not included. It would have afforded vast amusement to the Yankees. There may yet be occasion to burn them, and the house also. People fortunately changed their minds about the *auto-da-fé* just then; and the Yankees have not yet arrived, at sundown. So, when the excitement calmed down, poor Lilly tumbled in bed in a high fever in consequence of terror and exertion.

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I was right in that prophecy. For this was not the Will Pinckney I saw last. So woebegone! so subdued, careworn, and sad! No trace of his once merry self. He is good-looking, which he never was before. But I would rather never have seen him than have found him so changed. I was talking to a ghost. His was a sad story. He had held one bank of the river until forced to retreat with his men, as their cartridges were exhausted, and General Lovell omitted sending more. They had to pass through swamps, wading seven and a half miles, up to their waists in water. He gained the edge of the