



JUDITH MCGUIRE

## A Bleak Confederate Christmas (1864)

*Even though both Judith McGuire and her husband had government jobs in Richmond, they found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet because of the spiraling cost of living. In the following entries in her diary, she described their Christmas celebration in the beleaguered Confederate capital in 1864.*

[December] 24th.— . . . To-morrow is Christmas-day. Our girls and B. have gone to Cedar Hill to spend a week. Our office has suspended its labours, and I am anticipating very quiet holidays. A Christmas present has just been handed me from my sweet young friend S. W.—a box filled with all manner of working materials, which are now so scarce and expensive, with a beautiful mat for my toilet at the bottom of it. Christmas will come on the Sabbath. The “Colonel” is gone, but J. and C. will take their usual Sunday dinner, and I have gotten up a little dessert, because Christmas would not be Christmas without something better than usual; but it is a sad season to me. On last Christmas-day our dear R. T. C. was buried; and yesterday I saw my sweet young cousin E. M. die, and to-morrow expect to attend her funeral. . . .

26th.—The sad Christmas has passed away. J. and C. were with us, and very cheerful. We exerted ourselves to be so too. The Church services in the morning were sweet and comforting. St. Paul’s was dressed most elaborately and beautifully with evergreens; all looked as usual; but there is much sadness on account of the failure of the South to

keep Sherman back. When we got home our family circle was small, but pleasant. The Christmas turkey and ham were not. We had aspired to a turkey, but finding the prices range from \$50 to \$100 in the market on Saturday, we contented ourselves with roast-beef and the various little dishes which Confederate times have made us believe are tolerable substitutes for the viands of better days. At night I treated our little party to tea and ginger cakes—two very rare indulgences; and but for the sorghum, grown in our own fields, the cakes would be an impossible indulgence. Nothing but the well-ascertained fact that Christmas comes but once a year would make such extravagance at all excusable. We propose to have a family gathering when the girls come home, on the day before or after New Year’s day, (as that day will come on Sunday,) to enjoy together, and with one or two refugee friends, the contents of a box sent the girls by a young officer who captured it from the enemy, consisting of white sugar, raisins, preserves, pickles, spices, etc. They threaten to give us a plum-cake, and I hope they will carry it out, particularly if we have any of our army friends with us. Poor fellows, how they enjoy our plain dinners when they come, and how we love to see them enjoy them! Two meals a day has become the universal system among refugees, and many citizens, from

FROM Judith W. McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee* (New York: E. J. Hale and Son, 1867), pp. 323–24.

necessity. The want of our accustomed tea or coffee is very much felt by the elders. The rule with us is only to have tea when sickness makes it necessary, and the headaches gotten up about dark have become the joke of the family. A country lady, from one of the few spots in all Virginia where the enemy has never been, and consequently where

they retain their comforts, asked me gravely why we did not substitute milk for tea. She could scarcely believe me when I told her that we had not had milk more than twice in eighteen months, and then it was sent by a country friend. It is now \$4 a quart.



## Catherine Edmondston Reflects on the Situation of the Confederacy (1865)

*Catherine Ann Devereux married Patrick Edmondston of Charleston, South Carolina, in 1846. The couple eventually moved to North Carolina to live on a plantation named Looking Glass, given to them by her father, a prominent lawyer and planter in the state. The 1860 census indicated that the Edmondstons owned nearly 1,900 acres, along with eighty-eight slaves, putting them in the elite of the slaveholding class. In contrast to her father, who was a staunch Unionist in 1861, she and her husband strongly supported secession and southern independence. During the war she lived a typically rural existence of a plantation mistress, concerned with farming and daily tasks, but she was forced to perform more of these tasks herself because of scarcities and her slaves' growing disobedience. Her intellectual horizons were broader than many of her class, and she closely followed public events and the war's developments. In the following entry in her extensive wartime diary, she reflected on the situation in the Confederacy at the beginning of 1865, and particularly the proposal to end slavery. This entry blends many themes of the Confederate experience: the centrality of slavery to the war, deepening southern class divisions, mounting scarcities and hardships on the home front, complaints over the oppression of Confederate laws, bitterness at the course of England and other European powers, and the increasingly dire military situation combined with a desperate clinging to hope that in the end God would sustain the Confederacy.*

January 9, 1865. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," but the hand writeth not. Never were we more absorbed in outward matters, never have we looked on them so anxiously as now, & yet it is days since I have written aught of them. This negro question, this vexed negro question, will if much longer discussed do us more injury than the loss of a battle. Gen Lee advises the Conscriptio[n] & ultimate Emancipation of 200,000 Slaves to be used as soldiers. One or two rabid partizan papers, Democratic, I might almost say Agrarian to the core, seize on the proposal, hold it up to the people, to the army, in the most attractive lights. They promise the white soldier that if the negro is put in the army, for every negro soldier fifteen white ones will be allowed to return home. They use it as an engine to inflame the passions of one class against another, tell the poor man that the War is but for his rich neighbor's slaves, that his blood is poured out to secure additional riches to the rich, etc., etc., nay one paper, to its shame be it said, the Richmond Enquirer, openly advocates a general Emancipation! as the price for fancied benefits to be obtained by an alliance with England & France. Actually it offers to sell the birthright of the South, not for a mess of pottage, but only for the hope of obtaining one. The Traitor, recreant to principle, lost to every sense of national honour, & blind to what constitutes a true national prosperity—the wonder is that he finds anyone either to read or think seriously of his monstrous proposition. But so it is. Coming as it does on the evacuation of Savannah when we are almost ready to sink under the accumulation of Yankee lies & Yankee bragg, over their boasted Victory over Hood, our money depreciated & depreciating daily more & more, deafened on one side by loud mouthed politicians who advocate "Reconstruction to save Annihilation," "Reconstruction as a choice of Evils," & on the other by the opponents of the Government who expati-

ate with alas too much truth upon the mismanagement, the waste, the oppression which, cast our eyes which way we will we see around us, threatened again with a new suspension of Habeas Corpus, the Constitution daily trampled under foot by Impressment Laws & Government Schedules, what wonder that many unthinking people catch at this straw as at hope of salvation & delivery from present misery without pausing to ask themselves what will be their condition when they have accepted it. But sounder & better councils will prevail. This beaten and crushed Abolitionist, the Enquirer, will find that the body of the people are against him. . . . Slaveholders on principle, & those who hope one day to become slaveholders in their time, will not tacitly yeild their property & their hopes & allow a degraded race to be placed at one stroke on a level with them. But these discussions & these thoughts have occupied us for the past fortnight & such a deluge of gloomy forebodings have been penned out upon us that I almost hailed the frequent mail failures as a blessing.

The tide now seems turning. God has blessed us with a signal victory over the Yankee fleet.<sup>1</sup> God's blessing & God's hand alone it is, for we had but little to do with it. . . .

Better news but still not authentic reaches us from Tenn. We hear that in a second battle we regained some of the prestige lost before Nashville, of which however we have still only Yankee accounts, but I will refrain all but passing mention of them until they are confirmed. Still they influence our spirits wonderfully. What cheers our very hearts is an intimation that Mr Davis has reinstated Gen Joe Johnston in command. The whole nation hails it with acclamation. Gen D H Hill too is ordered to report to Gen Beauregard, so our old dogs of War are unleashed again.

Sherman is reposing himself in Savannah after his leisurely saunter through Geo & bloodless conquest of that city. He makes a magnificent Christmas gift to Mr Lincoln of the City of Savannah

FROM Beth Gilbert Crabtree and James W. Patton, eds., *Journal of a Secesh Lady: The Diary of Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston, 1860–1866* (Raleigh, N.C.: Division of Archives and History, 1979), pp. 652–55.

<sup>1</sup>This is a reference to the recent Union failure to capture Fort Fisher and close the port of Wilmington, North Carolina.

with arms, munitions of war, cotton, Rice, siege guns, etc., too tedious for me to enumerate. He even includes the 25,000 inhabitants in his munificent donation; so, as other autocrats do, he has now only to enslave & deport them. God help them! The evacuation took them entirely by surprise we hear. Few of them escaped & they with the loss of all their effects. Sherman has a right to his self glorification. Let him indulge it whilst we cherish the hope that Beauregard will yet pluck the Laurel crown from his brow & trample it in the dust. His programme, as announced, is the capture of Branchville and advance along the lines of R R into Va. *Nous verrons!* No news from Petersburg or Richmond for days. All quiet since the defeat of the demonstration on Gordonsville.

As for ourselves, since the negroes holiday at Christmas, for Christmas shone no holiday to any but them, we have been engaged with our year's supply of meat. Frying up Lard, squeezing out cracklins, & all the, to me, disagreeable et ceteras of "a hog killing" are I believe a perfect happiness to Cuffee!<sup>2</sup> The excitement & interest over the weight of their favorites, the feasting on chitterlings & haslets, the dabbling in grease, seems to constitute a negro paradise, whilst the possession of a "bladder to blow" or better still a hog tail is all a negro child needs of earth's enjoyments. Well we "killed Hogs" here, then we went to Hascosea & did the same thing there.

As usual we were weatherbound & detained 24 hours longer than we intended to remain. Mr E ordered a large box of books, principally farming periodicals (which we had bound the winter before the commencement of the war & which came home whilst we were in great excitement about Ft Sumter & which we have since refrained from opening on account of our unsettled state & the determination we from time to time take to pack up all our books) to be opened, & we passed the time most pleasantly & profitable, rubbing up our old knowledge, forming new plans, agricultural, horticultural, & domestic which this spring & summer we hope to put in execution. I lent an es-

<sup>2</sup>A term frequently used to refer to slaves.

pecial eye to the Poultry yard—am armed with several infalible receipts to cure & to prevent "the gapes," all of which I shall try on my spring chickens. In Vinegar receipts too I have come home quite learned & I now sigh for a peice of genuine Vinegar plant! I have some very fine Vinegar made from the skimmings of last year's Sorghum, but alas, it is too little for my many uses. I used to be famous for Pickles, but my cunning has departed, as the price of whisky and Apple Brandy has risen, for on them did I rely to give my Vinegar body. I am now making yeast by the pailful and even contemplate malting some corn to supply the deficiency. This war is teaching us many things. Dying, spinning, and weaving are no longer unknown mysteries to me. I think of making a compilation of all my practical knowledge on the subject and I intend for the future Peace or war to let *homespun* be my ordinary dress.<sup>3</sup> The object of my ambition is to have a black watered silk trimmed with black thread lace. Think of it! How shall I feel when I pull off my russet yarn spun & woven on the Plantation & bedeck myself in that style! It seems so long since I wore a silk dress that I begin to doubt if I ever owned one.

I have been reading Motley's "United Netherlands" & have derived great comfort from it.<sup>4</sup> We are not so divided, lean not so much on foreign aid, & are not reduced near so low as they were, & yet by perseverance they triumphed. Their advantage lay in a command of the Sea, however, an ability to export and import as they liked, an assistance we too would have did foreign nations uphold their own international Law on the subject of Blockades! International Law, a humbug & a sham, designed only by the strong as a police code to keep order amongst themselves but ignored & for-

<sup>3</sup>Homespun was clothing made out of thread spun and woven on the premises rather than in a textile mill. Before the war, homespun was increasingly a sign of social backwardness and often poverty, and clothing made from factory cloth, which was smoother and more brightly colored, was greatly preferred.

<sup>4</sup>The American historian John L. Motley wrote a widely read history of the successful Dutch revolt against Spanish rule in the seventeenth century.

gotten when a weak power suffers from its infringement. This it is which has changed our once strong love to England into Gall! this & the manner in which her boasted *Neutrality* is maintained. Her *Neutrality*, heaven save the mark, is only an-

other word for *deceit*, for mean low petty trickery, for cringing to the U S, saying to us "Am I not in Peace my brother" & stabbing as Joab-like under the fifth rib.



GEORGE WARD NICHOLS

## Southerners Have Lost the Will to Resist (1865)

*Before setting off on his famous march to the sea, Sherman had boasted that he would make southerners sick of war. After refitting his army in Savannah, Georgia, on February 1, 1865, Sherman turned north and marched thorough South Carolina, the hated symbol of secession. While Sherman's march thorough Georgia is more famous, his army was actually far more destructive in its trek through South Carolina, which culminated in the burning of Columbia. In the following selection, Major George Ward Nichols, who was an aide-de-camp to Sherman, described the impact of Sherman's march on the morale of the residents of South Carolina. Nichols had studied art in Europe and was a journalist in New York when the war began. He held several administrative positions in the army before joining Sherman's staff. His book, which attracted wide attention, was based on a diary he kept during Sherman's campaign in Georgia and the Carolinas.*

Columbia will have bitter cause to remember the visit of Sherman's army. Even if peace and prosperity soon return to the land, not in this generation nor the next—no, not for a century—can this city or the state recover from the deadly blow which has taken its life. It is not alone in the property that has been destroyed—the buildings, bridges, mills, railroads, material of every description—nor in the loss of the slaves, who, within the last few days, have joined us by hundreds and thousands—although this deprivation of the means by which they lived is of incalculable importance—that the most blasting, withering blow has fallen. It is in the crushing downfall of their inordinate vanity, their arrogant pride, that the

rebels will feel the effects of the visit of our army. Their fancied unapproachable, invincible security has been ruthlessly overthrown. Their boastings, threatenings, and denunciations have passed by us like the idle wind. The feet of one hundred thousand abolitionists, hated and despised, have pressed heavily upon their sacred soil, and their spirit is broken. . . .

By constantly improving many excellent opportunities for conversing with prominent citizens, I have unquestionable evidence of their desire to end the war by submitting to the national authority. While not disguising their belief in the sovereignty of a state, and scarcely concealing their hate for the Yankees, they acknowledge their powerlessness to contend against the might of the idea of nationality embodied in our armies and navies. A citizen, whose name may be found in the earliest

FROM George Ward Nichols, *The Story of the Great March* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1865), pp. 170–72.

annals of the state, and stands forth in high honor in the war of the Revolution, but whose sons are now in high office in the army of treason, said to me to-day:

“Sir, every life that is now lost in this war is murder; *murder*, sir. We have fought you bravely, but our strength is exhausted; we have no resources; we have no more men. The contest was unequal. You have conquered us, and it is best to submit and make wise use of the future. This is not my opinion because the Union flag is flying upon yonder capitol to-day, but it has been my conviction for many months past—a conviction more than confirmed by recent events. We could have peace, sir, but for that vain, obstinate, ambitious

man, Jeff. Davis. I am not in excitement nor anger, sir, when I assure you that I know that a large majority of our people curse him, not only with their hearts, but their lips. His haughty ambition has been our ruin.”

The words of this gentleman express the sentiments of nearly all the leading civilians I meet, excepting only that the expression is sometimes more vehement, while the conversation is occasionally interlarded with more violent objurgations against Jeff. Davis. Unhappy chief! failure has brought down upon him hatred and abuse. Were he in South Carolina now, no cheers would greet him, no friendly welcome would meet him; nothing but execrations would be showered upon his head.



LUTHER MILLS

## Desertion Now Is Not Dishonorable (1865)

*A native of Virginia, Luther Rice Mills graduated from Wake Forest College in 1861 and then entered the Confederate Army. He served as a lieutenant in the Twenty-sixth Virginia Infantry and was commander of a sharpshooter unit. He took part in the siege of Petersburg, Virginia, in 1864–1865 and was captured in April 1865 on the retreat from Richmond. In this letter to his brother, Mills discussed the problem of desertions from the Army of Northern Virginia and the influence of the home front in encouraging desertion. After the war, Mills became a professor at Wake Forest.*

Trenches Near Crater  
March 2nd, 1865.

Brother John:

Something is about to happen. I know not what. Nearly every one who will express an opinion says Gen'l Lee is about to evacuate Petersburg. The authorities are having all the cotton, tobacco &c. moved out of the place as rapidly as possible. This was commenced about the 22nd of February. Two

thirds of the Artillery of our Division has been moved out. The Reserved Ordnance Train has been loaded up and is ready to move at any time. I think Gen'l Lee expects a hard fight on the right and has ordered all this simply as a precautionary measure. Since my visit to the right I have changed my opinion about the necessity for the evacuation of Petersburg. If it is evacuated Johnson's Division will be in a bad situation for getting out. Unless we are so fortunate as to give the Yankees the slip many of us will be captured. . . . If Petersburg and Richmond is evacuated—from what I have seen &

heard in the army—our cause will be hopeless. It is useless to conceal the truth any longer. Many of our people at home have become so demoralized that they write to their husbands, sons and brothers that desertion *now* is not *dishonorable*. It would be impossible to keep the army from straggling to a ruinous extent if we evacuate. I have just received an order from Wise to carry out on picket tonight

a rifle and ten rounds of Cartridges to shoot men when they desert. The men seem to think desertion no crime & hence never shoot a deserter when he goes over—they always shoot but never hit. I am glad to say that we have not had but four desertions from our Reg't to the enemy. . . .

Yours truly

L. R. Mills

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

### With Malice toward None (1865)

*Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address is justly famous. Delivered on the eve of victory, it is remarkable for its compassion, for its profound understanding of the depths of the tragedy the nation had suffered, and for its great humility. In his brief remarks, Lincoln characterized the war as God's punishment for the national sin of slavery and closed with a moving plea for a generous peace. Rarely has the eloquence of this speech been approached in the history of American politics. Noah Brooks, a newspaperman who was present, reported that just as Lincoln rose to speak, "the sun, which had been obscured all day, burst forth in its unclouded meridian splendor," an incident Brooks interpreted as an omen that the darkness of war was passing away.*

March 4, 1865

[Fellow Countrymen:]

At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention, and engrosses the energies

[sic] of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil-war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to *saving* the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to *destroy* it without war—seeking to dissol[v]e the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would *make* war rather than let the

FROM Roy P. Basler, et al., eds., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 8 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953), pp. 332–33.

nation survive; and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the *cause* of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but

woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.



MARY A. FONTAINE

## Bitter Tears Came in a Torrent (1865)

*Mary A. Fontaine, who was the daughter of a prominent Baptist minister and the wife of a Confederate officer, lived in Richmond near the Capitol Square with its important public buildings. At the time of the city's fall she had not seen her husband, who was now a prisoner of war, for more than a year. In the following letter, she described the arrival of Union forces in the Confederate capital in April 1865. (The paragraphing has been modified.)*



Richmond, Va.  
April 30, 1865

My Dear Cousin,

. . . I hardly dare venture a description of the first few days of April, but will attempt to give you an idea. Sunday, the 2nd, was one of those unusually lovely days that the Spring sometimes brings, when delicate silks that look too fine at other times seem just to suit; when invalids and convalescents venture out in the sunshine; when the churches are crowded as never before. So it was on this Sunday. I have never seen a calmer or more peaceful Sabbath morning, and alas! never a more confused evening. During service messengers tiptoed into the churches after prominent military and civil officers, and when the congregation were dismissed, everybody asked, "What is it?" but no one could tell.

Presently there were rumors that Gen. Lee's line was broken, and the enemy had reached the R. R., and Richmond must fall, etc., etc. We ladies were not contented except in the yard, and all were in the street with troubled faces. Major Williamson came to prepare to leave; then, one by one, the gentlemen hurried up with orders to leave that night. Then Mr. Davis, oh, so bowed and anxious, came, and when he told us he feared Richmond must be evacuated by midnight, the truth was forced upon us. We turned to our rooms to prepare those who were to leave. Mrs. Williamson gave herself to a grief which was terrible.

All through that long, long night we worked and wept and bade farewells, never thinking of sleep; in the distance we heard the shouts of the soldiers and mob as they ransacked stores; the rumbling of wagons, and beating of drums, all mixed in a confused medley. Just before dawn explosions of gunboats and magazines shook the city, and glass was shattered, and new houses crumbled beneath the shocks. Involuntarily I closed the shut-

ters, and then everything had become still as death, while immense fires stretched their arms on high all around me. I shuddered at the dreadful silence. Richmond burning and no alarm. It was terrible. I cannot describe my feelings as I stood at a window overlooking the city in that dim dawn. I watched those silent, awful fires, I felt that there was no effort to stop them, but all like myself were watching them, paralyzed and breathless.

After a while the sun rose as you may have seen it, a great, red ball veiled in a mist. Again the streets were alive with hurrying men and women, and the [cry] of "Yankees" reached me. I did not move, I could not, but watched the blue horseman ride to the City Hall, enter, with his sword knocking the ground at every step, and throw the great doors open, and take possession of our beautiful city; watched two blue figures on the Capitol, white men, I saw them unfurl a tiny flag, and then I sank on my knees, and the bitter, bitter tears came in a torrent.

*May 7th* . . . About eight o'clock, after some thirty Cavalrymen had taken possession of Richmond, hoisted their flag, etc., the Artillery came dashing up Broad street, positively the fat horses came trotting up that heavy hill, dragging the cannon as tho. they were light carriages, the trappings were gay, and I commenced to realize the fearful odds against which our gallant little army had contended. Then the Cavalry thundered at a furious gallop. We haven't been used to that, you know, and it startled us; indeed I imagined that there never was such riding before, unless at Bull Run. Then the Infantry came playing "The Girl I left behind me," that dear old air that we heard our brave men so often play; then the negro troops playing "Dixie." . . .

Then our Richmond servants were completely crazed, they danced and shouted, men hugged each other, and women kissed, and such a scene of confusion you have never seen. Imagine the streets crowded with these wild people, and troops by the thousands, some loaded with plunder from the burning stores, whole rolls of cloth, bags of corn, etc., chairs, one old woman was rolling a great sofa; dozens of bands trying to drown each other it

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FROM Mary A. Fontaine to Mrs. Marie B. Sayre, April 30, 1865, Douglas S. Freeman, ed., *A Calendar of Confederate Papers* (Richmond: Confederate Museum, 1908), pp. 249-53.

seemed; gorgeously dressed officers galloping furiously about, men shouting and swearing as I never heard men do before; the fire creeping steadily nearer to us, until houses next to us caught and we prepared to leave; and above all, inconceivably terrible, the 800,000 shells exploding at the laboratory. I say imagine, but you cannot; no one who was not here will ever fully appreciate the horrors of that day. I have heard persons say it was like their idea of the judgment day; perhaps it may be.

So many shells exploding for five hours would be fearful at any time; the heavens were black as with a thunder cloud, great pieces of shells flying about, oh! it was too awful to remember, if it were possible to be erased, but that can not be. By night things quieted down; there were brigade headquarters in the house; so we were protected from stragglers; and the oppressive stillness and darkness (there was no gas) was as fearful as the confusion had been.



A. W. BARTLETT

## Richmond's Black Residents Welcome Abraham Lincoln (1897)

*After the fall of Richmond to Union forces, Abraham Lincoln visited the former capital of the Confederacy on April 4, 1865. The city's white population generally remained indoors, but former slaves joined by a few white Unionists gave him a tumultuous welcome. A New Hampshire soldier described the president's reception.*

When it became certain that it was really "Marsa Abraham" that was in their midst, there was such a rush to see and speak with him that it was almost impossible, at times, for his carriage to move. A number of bright eyed and woolly headed urchins, taking advantage of this delay, climbed upon the top of the carriage and took a peep at him over the rim, greatly to the amusement of the President. His reception in a city which, only a day or two before, had been the headquarters and centre of the Rebellion, was most remarkable; and more resembled the triumphant return from, than an entry into the enemy's capital. Instead of the streets being silent and vacated, they were filled with men, women, and children, shouting and cheering wherever he went.

"I'd rather see him than Jesus," excitedly exclaims one woman, as she runs ahead of the crowd to get a full view of his benign countenance. "De kingdom's come, and de Lord is wid us," chants another. "Hallelujah!" shouts a third; and so on through a whole volume of prayers, praises, blessings, and benedictions showered down upon him, the great emancipator of a race, and the saviour of his country, thus redeemed, as he walked slowly forward with smiling face and uncovered head. . . .

But it was not the colored population alone which welcomed the Union troops and their great commander-in-chief into the city of Richmond. Thousands of the white citizens were glad to be again under the protection of the flag of their fathers; and some, who had been true to it from the first, keeping it safely hidden away as a sacred emblem of their loyalty, were more happy, if possible, though less demonstrative, than the negro, as they once more were allowed the privilege of spreading its bright folds to the free air of heaven.

FROM A. W. Bartlett, *History of the Twelfth Regiment New Hampshire Volunteers* (Concord, N.H.: I. C. Evans, 1897), pp. 271-73.



JOSHUA L. CHAMBERLAIN

## An Awed Stillness (1915)

*Few soldiers wrote about their experiences in the war with more eloquence than Joshua L. Chamberlain. A professor of literature at Bowdoin College when the war began, Chamberlain volunteered in 1862 and served as the colonel of the Twentieth Maine. He fought in over twenty engagements, was wounded six times, received the Congressional Medal of Honor, and at the end of the war held the rank of brevet major general and commanded two brigades in the Fifth Corps of the Army of the Potomac. In a singular honor that testified to the great respect his heroism and leadership had earned him, Ulysses S. Grant selected Chamberlain to receive the formal surrender of Lee's army at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia, on April 12, 1865. After the war he was governor of Maine and president of Bowdoin College.*

It was now the morning of the 12th of April. I had been ordered to have my lines formed for the ceremony at sunrise. It was a chill gray morning, depressing to the senses. But our hearts made warmth. Great memories uprose; great thoughts went forward. We formed along the principal street, from the bluff bank of the stream to near the Court House on the left,—to face the last line of battle, and receive the last remnant of the arms and colors of that great army which ours had been created to confront for all that death can do for life. We were remnants also: . . . veterans, and replaced veterans; cut to pieces, cut down, consolidated, divisions into brigades, regiments into one, gathered by State origin; . . . men of near blood born, made nearer by blood shed. Those facing us—now, thank God! the same. . . .

Our earnest eyes scan the busy groups on the opposite slopes, breaking camp for the last time, taking down their little shelter-tents and folding them carefully as precious things, then slowly forming ranks as for unwelcome duty. And now they move. The dusky swarms forge forward into

gray columns of march. On they come, with the old swinging route step and swaying battle-flags. In the van, the proud Confederate ensign—the great field of white with canton of star-strewn cross of blue on a field of red, the regimental battle-flags with the same escutcheon following on, crowded so thick, by thinning out of men, that the whole column seemed crowned with red. At the right of our line our little group mounted beneath our flags, the red Maltese cross on a field of white, erewhile so bravely borne through many a field more crimson than itself, its mystic meaning now ruling all.

The momentous meaning of this occasion impressed me deeply. I resolved to mark it by some token of recognition, which could be no other than a salute of arms. Well aware of the responsibility assumed, and of the criticisms that would follow, as the sequel proved, nothing of that kind could move me in the least. The act could be defended, if needful, by the suggestion that such a salute was not to the cause for which the flag of the Confederacy stood, but to its going down before the flag of the Union. My main reason, however, was one for which I sought no authority nor asked forgiveness. Before us in proud humiliation stood the embodiment of manhood: men whom neither toils and

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FROM Joshua L. Chamberlain, *The Passing of the Armies* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1915), pp. 248–49, 258–65.

sufferings, nor the fact of death, nor disaster, nor hopelessness could bend from their resolve; standing before us now, thin, worn, and famished, but erect, and with eyes looking level into ours, waking memories that bound us together as no other bond;—was not such manhood to be welcomed back into a Union so tested and assured?

Instructions had been given; and when the head of each division column comes opposite our group, our bugle sounds the signal and instantly our whole line from right to left, regiment by regiment in succession, gives the soldier's salutation, from the "order arms" to the old "carry"—the marching salute. [General John B.] Gordon at the head of the column, riding with heavy spirit and downcast face, catches the sound of shifting arms, looks up, and, taking the meaning, wheels superbly, making with himself and his horse one uplifted figure, with profound salutation as he drops the point of his sword to the boot toe; then facing to his own command, gives word for his successive brigades to pass us with the same position of the manual,—honor answering honor. On our part not a sound of trumpet more, nor roll of drum; not a cheer, nor word nor whisper of vain-glorying, nor motion of man standing again at the order, but an awed stillness rather, and breath-holding, as if it were the passing of the dead!

As each successive division masks our own, it halts, the men face inward towards us across the

road, twelve feet away; then carefully "dress" their line, each captain taking pains for the good appearance of his company, worn and half starved as they were. The field and staff take their positions in the intervals of regiments; generals in rear of their commands. They fix bayonets, stack arms; then, hesitatingly, remove cartridge-boxes and lay them down. Lastly,—reluctantly, with agony of expression,—they tenderly fold their flags, battle-worn and torn, blood-stained, heart-holding colors, and lay them down; some frenziedly rushing from the ranks, kneeling over them, clinging to them, pressing them to their lips with burning tears. And only the Flag of the Union greets the sky!

What visions thronged as we looked into each other's eyes! Here pass the men of Antietam, the Bloody Lane, the Sunken Road, the Cornfield, the Burnside-Bridge; the men whom Stonewall Jackson on the second night at Fredericksburg begged Lee to let him take and crush the two corps of the Army of the Potomac huddled in the streets in darkness and confusion; the men who swept away the Eleventh Corps at Chancellorsville; who left six thousand of their companions around the bases of Culp's and Cemetery Hills at Gettysburg; these survivors of the terrible Wilderness, the Bloody-Angle at Spottsylvania, the slaughter pen of Cold Harbor, the whirlpool of Bethesda Church! . . .

. . . How could we help falling on our knees, all of us together, and praying God to pity and forgive us all!