

Women of the Southern Confederacy

Mrs. Howard J. Cabell, Historian of Miss. Coll. Rifle Chapter, U. D. C., Clinton.

In recalling the memories of childhood I realize that the most impressions engraved upon my mind were those made during the war between the states. On looking back one thing stands pre-eminent—the attitude of the Confederate women. With what courage, fortitude and endurance they faced the situation. To stand amid death, carnage, the ashes of ruined homes, to listen to the booming shot and screaming shell, knowing that those dearest are exposed to the withering fire. This during the sixties many a southern woman knew. They wore their home-spun dresses dyed black, as mourning for their slain, and though their laughter sobbed with hidden bitter tears, they laughed sometimes, laughed over their make-shifts. They were many—dried pear leaves used as tea, roasted rye and other substitutes for coffee. I have known of a window curtain fashioned into a ball costume, a table cover into a becoming cape.

Early in 1864 Gen. Sherman before leaving the Vicksburg (the Federal Army at Chattanooga) decided on a march through the state of destruction of the "L" and "S" states. It was a march sweep across the entire state. It was while on this devastating raid that he one day announced in his report, "We have made fine progress today in the work of destruction." Mrs. Andrew Thomas of Sunnyside plantation, used to tell an amusing incident of this raid. Gen. Sherman rode up to her door and, dismounting, ordered a cup of coffee. "Alice," Mrs. Thomas said to her maid, "make Gen. Sherman a cup of coffee." In a short time the maid returned with the coffee served in a tin can. "Why did you not bring a cup and saucer?" demanded her surprised mistress. "Lord, mistress, he'd steal it," was the reply; "you know dem Yankees done tuck most all we all cups and saucers. We bound to keep some." Mrs. Thomas possessed a keen sense of humor. She could not repress the smile which rippled across her face as she glanced at the stern face of the famous general, as with frowning brow he gravely drank his coffee from the tin can.

Mrs. Mary Menger, of Clinton, Miss., also laughingly tells of an incident which occurred in her home at this time. She was ill in her bed one day when a number of Federal soldiers visited her house. Her little children, who were at dinner, came running from the dining room and every knife and fork from the table. "Thank goodness, I have knives and forks hidden away," Mrs. Menger remarked. In the late afternoon a neighbor called on Mrs. Menger requesting the loan of knives and forks, saying the Federals had made headquarters of her home that night; there were many officers to take supper. Mrs. Menger took from her hidden store every knife and fork she possessed and kindly handed them to the neighbor.

The writer was much during this time with Mrs. Polly Thomas, of Raymond, Miss. She gave four sons to the Confederate cause. One was killed at Malvern Hill. In the battle of Hartsburg another gallant son was lost. Her eldest and also her youngest son lingered many months in prison. Yet day after day she sat quietly knitting socks for southern soldiers, never showing those about her the grief of her heart which was her portion. Her sister, Mrs. Andrew Thomas, of Sunnyside plantation, displayed a like courage. She had two sons who fought for Dixie. One died in Virginia while serving his country; the other, wounded at Hartsburg, died after Lee's surrender from the effect of his wound.

The writer recalls standing one day in the spacious kitchen at Moss Hill watching the mistress of the mansion, Mrs. Mary Moffett, making cream candy for a soldier boy who had been brought to her house a few hours earlier. The hospitals in Clinton were overflowing, and she had opened her doors to the wounded and now had several on her hands to care for. The delicious cream candy was soon prepared. "He begged me to make the candy," Mrs. Moffett remarked; "he has no fever and it cannot hurt him. Take it to him for me; I am so busy." As I took the dish she directed me where to find him. He was such a little lad, who blushed when he saw a small girl enter his room. However, he was delighted to see the candy and was soon eating it with evident relish. The next morning a agent called at Moss Hill. "How is the little soldier boy, Aunt Mary?" was my first query. "He died last night," Mrs. Moffett answered; "died before the surgeon could reach here. A severed artery became untied in some way. Come and see him." I stood beside her as she drew back the sheet. The fair boyish face, on which "death had set its seal," was beautiful with clustering curls of soft, dark hair and long black lashes resting upon the still cheek. "I do not know his name," Mrs. Moffett remarked. Then bursting into tears, she cried, "He died as my dear boy did—for the Confederacy." Turning away I ran from the room out into the bright sunshine.

In the early dawn of a may morning—May 12, 1863—the writer stood beside her grandmother's chair, Mrs. Mary Mead, who sat at the head of her table in the long dining room at Greenwood, her plantation home. The evening of Mrs. Mead's life was drawing near. She had stood on the bluff at Natchez and seen coming down the great river the first steamboat that ever navigated the waters of the Ohio and Mississippi. She had lived to see her country shaken by four wars. Had seen dear ones march away to the rendezvous at Baton Rouge in 1812. Said good-bye to those who followed General Jackson in 1815 to the Creek war. In 1815 she scraped lint to dress the wounds of those wounded in the battle of New Orleans. In 1846 she saw friends leave for Mexico and rejoiced

over the victory of Monterey. And now on this May morning she sat behind her coffee urn pouring coffee for the three Confederate soldiers who sat around her table.

Col. Farrquarson, the brave colonel of that gallant regiment, the Forty-first Tennessee; Lieut. Cuddy Thomas, the husband of her eldest granddaughter; Lieut. Thomas had served in the Army of Virginia, but was now at home on furlough, as was also the soldier who sat beside him, Mr. Albert Tulley, a scout of Beauregard's command. Colonel Farrquarson had been a Fort Donelson prisoner, exchanged in September, 1862. This morning he intended joining Gen. John Gregg's brigade at the little town of Raymond, eight miles distant, and his friends, Lieut. Thomas and Mr. Tulley were going with him. Mrs. Mead's grandson, Peterfield Jefferson, a lad scarcely 15, lingered near listening to the talk of the soldiers. A few hours later he followed these gentlemen to the battlefield. Late in the forenoon a little darky who was in the habit of accompanying Porterfield everywhere returned to Greenwood with this startling announcement, "Mars Field dun tuck his gun and gone to de war to jine de army." It was 4 p. m. before the thunder of the guns ceased and almost dusk when the daring boy galloped up the carriage drive at Greenwood, his chestnut curls covered with dust, his face dark with the smoke of battle, but he dismounted with the air of a conquering hero. He had that day fought for the south. He said that General Bragg had fallen, but could not tell anything of the friends who had left us at dawn, but feared they were prisoners. Colonel Farrquarson's young wife catching up her little son uttered a low wailing cry. The ladies of the family began to weep. The children screamed with all the power of their lungs. In the midst of it all the tired soldiers rode up unharmed. Lieut. Thomas held on his horse a little soldier he had picked up on the battlefield who, like Peterfield Jefferson, had left his home without his mother's knowledge to join the army. It was impossible to get a surgeon. Mrs. Mead cut away his coat sleeve and carefully dressed the boy's wounded arm. During the bitter struggle her capable fingers dressed many a bleeding wound. Spinning wheels and looms were kept busy on her plantation. Many a Confederate soldier wore comfortable clothing made from this home-spun cloth. A field of wheat was planted, and with the wheat straw Mrs. Mead fashioned light straw hats, which the convalescing soldiers sitting around hospital doors in the sunshine found a far more comfortable head covering than the cloth army cap. Mrs. Mead also made quantities of wine, jellies, pickles and preserved fruits for the hospital. On one occasion during a Federal raid a party of soldiers searched her house ostensibly to find arms. They finally entered the cellar, but soon came up again with wine. As they stood around the table drinking the wine Mrs. Mead locked the cellar door. In a few minutes a vigorous knocking came from within. A soldier had been locked in. Mrs. Mead hurriedly picked up her bunch of keys managed to get the wrong key into the lock, where it stuck fast. The noise from within became a howl of terror. The imprisoned soldier was suffering from an attack of fright. His comrades failing to understand the situation, gathered around Mrs. Mead with angry threats. At the head of the cellar steps there was an alcove, in which she had placed a safe filled with jellies and preserved fruits. Above the safe was a small window. Thinking this window a mode of escape, the soldier endeavored to climb to the top of the safe. Losing his balance he fell to the cellar floor, the safe on top of him. The racket made by the howling soldier, falling safe and breaking glass was not small. I think Mrs. Mead would have suffered at the hands of the angry, excited soldiers had she not succeeded a moment later in unlocking the door. As his comrades saw the soldier creep forth, his face, head and clothing smeared with blood, jelly and preserve juice their anger was changed to mirth. He did not seem to appreciate their jeering laughter, as seating himself on the steps he began picking from his cut cheek and wrists splinters of shattered glass. This Yankee may have been a brave soldier on the battlefield, but locked in a dim cellar in an enemy's country he was an ardent coward.

On an afternoon of this same year, 1863, Mrs. Mead's plantation home was burned by the Federal troops. On this occasion six of the old ante-bellum homes in the vicinity of Clinton, Miss., were destroyed: Greenwood, Moss Hill, Campbell Place, Primrose, Cedar Hill and Nortonia, indeed over the greater part of the south in those dark days the smoke of burning homes drifted across the sky. Mrs. Mead was a typical southern woman. She was the widow of Gen. Cowles Mead. Gen. Andrew Jackson and his wife, the Blennerhassatts and many others whose names make history were her personal friends. She was a woman of indomitable courage, always ready to face an emergency. In 1813 after the awful massacre of the whites by the Indians at Port Mims, Mrs. Mead, a young girl in her father's home, was left alone one day. She saw approaching the house six Indians. While the Indians in the vicinity of her home were apparently friendly, it was known that at heart they were hostile and treacherous. The young girl knew from the menacing attitude of their chief that they meant mischief. As the chief started up the steps she arose from her seat, and lifting up her chair brought it down with crashing force over his head. He fell to the ground. Staggering to his feet he muttered, "Brave squaw." He and his followers hastily left the premises, thinking, just as the young girl intended they should that she had protectors. Mrs. Mead's life rounded almost a century. She lived to see the fifth generation in her

family. She met death as she had lived, with courage. All over the South were women like her, women who worked with heart and soul for the Southern Confederacy.

A strong character of this dark time was Mrs. Ellen Anderson, of Mississippi. After the surrender of Vicksburg in 1863 her residence in Jackson, Miss., was occupied by sharpshooters and afterwards burned by the Federals. Mrs. Anderson bravely retired to her plantation home in Hinds county. She was a niece of Jefferson Davis, and this fact increased her danger of living at this time on a lonely plantation.

I cannot finish this sketch without a mention of Mrs. Sarah Eggleston, of Raymond, Miss. Honorary president of the Mississippi Division of the U. D. C., editor of Our Heritage, the U. D. C. sheet. Mrs. Eggleston is loved by every U. D. C. chapter in the state. It is when she stands up to talk to her daughters, as she lovingly calls the members of the chapters, that we who lived in that old time feel our hearts stirred again with its thrill and think with breaking heart of the flag now furled forever. Mrs. Eggleston shared with her husband, Capt. Jack Eggleston, of the Confederate navy, the dangers of that time, accompanying him wherever possible. She saw more of the Confederacy, of the actual war, perhaps than did any other southern woman. How dear to her heart today is the memory of the "Lost Cause." She has worked for months to be erected at Raymond, Miss., a monument to the Confederate dead of Hinds county. Her effort has been successful. The monument will be unveiled in April. A gentleman remarked to Mrs. Eggleston: "I hear you gave several thousand dollars to this monument." "No," was the reply. "I wrote many letters, but only gave a few nickels, dimes and postal stamps. I gave more than money—I gave my heart." Mrs. Sarah Eggleston and Mrs. Ellen Anderson still live to prove of what fine stuff were made the women of the Southern Confederacy.

The heroic courage of the women of Vicksburg before and after the siege has already passed into history. How during the pitiless bombardment of the city they were forced to take refuge in caves dug in hillsides, yet how they braved the ceaseless stream of the shells to minister to the sick and wounded and to cheer the soldiers who fought behind the breastworks. When food gave out, when starvation stared the garrison in the face, it was the women of Vicksburg who stimulated the soldiers' flagging courage. Here I must mention Miss Ellen Martin, who after the occupation of Vicksburg by the Federal troops risked so much to get through the Federal lines medicine and clothing to the Confederate soldiers. It was only after she had succeeded in doing much good that her efforts were discovered. She was then exiled from Vicksburg and without the Federal lines.

It was after the war drums had ceased to beat that the southern women proved their strength. They stood the strongest test that the world has ever known. They had been like children playing in the sun. Had known no hardships, had never worked, had been taught no business methods. Many of them bereft of bills, bands, sons and other protectors, their plantations torn from their frail hands by merciless mortgages, passed from ease and affluence to a life of daily toil. With the tastes of Vanderbilts and the purse of paupers, they confronted indeed a grave problem. Yet how was it met? With courage and without complaint they faced the dark days of reconstruction, living in the midst of bloody riots between the whites and the negroes.

In 1868 the women of Mississippi saw their beloved Governor Humphreys removed from the executive mansion and replaced by the military governor Adelbert Ames. They saw Mrs. Humphreys, one of the loveliest and noblest women that ever occupied the executive mansion pass down the steps of the mansion to the street between the files of Federal soldiers. With what sinking hearts they realized the ignorance and incompetency of the military governor Ames when he sent through a county in which, a few days earlier, one of those race riots had occurred, and armed band of negro militia.

The history of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in the south and in this state would fill a reader's hand than mine. Their work and their successes belong to the living present. While most of this sketch records the memories of a buried past, many of those heroic women who knew that past are with us still. But scattered over the land in every southern cemetery are unknown, nameless crosses, the graves of southern women whose dauntless hearts faced the sixties.

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Adieu to the Wheel and Loom.

By Miss Annie T. Clark.

Kosciusko, Miss.

Adieu! adieu! old wheel and loom,
Your long, hard task is o'er,
And from our fireplaces and our homes
You'll pass forevermore.
You're done with woman's slender hand,
And to your pond'rous beam
We'll chain throughout this "sunny land"
The giant power of steam.

But sadly, slowly, put them by
And with bright tears bedew
These relics of the dark, dark days
This land has struggled through;
Of days when wives and mothers prayed
As they turned the busy wheel!
And begged of God for loved ones laid
On the field mid clashing steel.

Off has woman's tear drops dimmed
The swiftly flying thread,
As in her heart some picture rose
Of the wounded or the dead.
And while stern want was in her home
He lay low in the tomb,
For when with aching heart and hand.

And jeweled fingers dropped the lute
And cast the brush away,
While for loved friends and brothers gone,
They wrought Confederate gray.
Though now bright gems are flashing round
And robes of royal dye,
Let no one turn with scornful lip,
When the homespun passes by.

And when in song and storied page
These days are handed down,
Let woman's humble wreath of praise
Hang neath the laurel crown.
Then sadly put the old wheel by,
'Tis linked with days of gloom,
With blood and tears and woman's tears,
Adieu old wheel and loom.

The Adventure of a Brave Girl.

My father, Mr. J. J. Reynolds, lived on the road from Burnesville (on the Memphis and Charleston Railroad) to the Red Sulphur Springs, Hardin county, Tennessee. Being on the territory between the contending forces, we were constantly visited by scouting parties from both sides. All that was not given to the Confederates was generally taken by the Federals. I remember they (the Yankees) took eleven horses and mules from my father's lot one night and left in their stead an old blind horse, a gray one. Looking back through all these years, it seems strange that so much merriment could have been made over the "old blind horse," some of the negroes, still faithful at home, supposing he must have been the veritable "old gray horse" that the Yankees had caught leaving out of the wilderness. I was soon on his back without a saddle to see if I could ride a "blind horse," my dear little claybank pony, Philadelphia, having been taken off by the United States troops.

"Aunt Estelle," my mother and general protector, who had been my father's nurse (when he was a baby), only the faith, the same trust that we experienced on railroad trains, boats and ocean steamers in the folks that have them in hand and in Him who holds us in the "hollow of His hand." We got over safely, walked a mile and half on the other side, with our boatman as a guide, found the house, a log house with two rooms, one chimney, in which was a good fire. We warmed well. Then the man took us in the other room, where the shoes were in a barrel. A large hole was in the wall of the room where the chimney had not been built, through which the snow was coming in. I took out all the shoe measures for all the folks at home; got all the order filled. I shall never forget the gentle kindness of the man that helped me with the shoes, and although the prices in Confederate money usually were enormous, I think he charged me reasonable prices. I got the "bag" of shoes. The boy carried them to the boat for me, rowed us safely over to the anxious, waiting women on the shore. I can remember only gladness and joy in my heart. I suppose the man and boy have passed on long ago to the great life beyond, and I trust to the beautiful country of the Prince of Peace, and should I meet them I shall be glad to tell them again how much they helped that cold December day during the great need of those war times.

The blind horse did not fall. How I carried that bag of shoes on him I cannot tell, but I did. I returned safe about "night fall," meeting the negroes along the road, who had gone half a mile to meet me, and who herded my safe return with calling to each other, "Here's Miss Frances! Here she is! Here she is." Today through all these years I hear the voices and the firelight shining through the windows and doors of our blessed home as I came home from that successful day of adventure with that "bag of shoes."

MRS. S. FANNIE CLARK,
Okolona, Miss., Feb. 29, 1908.

First Aid.

Sisters went out with other ladies to the battlefield during the battle in Raymond. They stayed in the graveyard back while the battle was raging in front, received the wounded, staunch blood, dressed wounds, comforted the dying, writing down names and messages for home folks.

In 1887 my sister Mary was at the American embassy in Paris when the talk turned on the heroism of Confederate women. A Mrs. Hill, of Texas, told that her brother was wounded in Mississippi and she was sent for. When she saw the wound she faints. The surgeon said: "You ought not to faint. Why the first person who dressed your brother's wound was a girl named Mary Dabney." Tabernax!

That was the beginning of a close friendship.

MRS. T. M. MILLER.

An Interesting Letter From Capt. W. A. Montgomery

My Dear Madam:
Remembering my promise to give you some dots for your paper in the interest of our Confederate woman's monument and having a few leisure moments as I await for the morning's train here, I want to write of Mrs. Letitia Rossman, the mother of Mrs. Charles B. Allen, of Yokena. Her son, Rian (than whom no braver soldier ever faced a foe), and his friend, Charles B. Allen, also a grand soldier, were shooting with me when I was captured near Red Bone, in Warren county, in 1864, after an unsuccessful attempt to burn the Yankee gunboat Indiana, that was fast upon a sandbar in Davis' Bend on the Mississippi. They made their escape and came to the Rossman home, near Baldwin's Ferry, after dark, and although not in the habit of sleeping in a house so near to the enemy, they concluded to put their horses in the stable and go up stairs and sleep, as they had been up all the night before. That night a very unusual thing happened. A Captain Howe, with two companies of mounted United States Infantry, concluded he would make a night raid upon the Rossman home, proverbial for the gathering there of Montgomery's SCOTIA. Now, Charles Allen was at that time in love with Miss Eugenia Rossman (now Mrs. Chas. Allen), daughter of the Mrs. Rossman, whose memory I would cherish as a grand Confederate woman whom we all loved for her noble deeds.

During the night Mrs. Rossman rushed up stairs to where the two soldiers slept and hurried them out of bed with the information that the Yankees were all around the house, and bade them follow her into her room before she would open the door for the Yankees to make search. The captain knew they were there, because he had captured their horses. Mrs. Rossman then opened the door of the hall and pointed them to the room up stairs where they had slept, but said to the captain, "You may search, but the boys are gone," and appearing to be in splendid cheer because they had gone. The Yanks went up stairs, and there found their guns and pistols and outside clothing, and soon returned to the door of the ladies' room and ordered them to get up and dress; that they meant to search their room for the Confederates. Mrs. Rossman in the meantime had taken the boys into a back room, where Miss Eugenia and Miss Kate Rossman were sleeping and put them between the mattresses of the bed, where his sister and cousin were sleeping, and put the young man, Charles Allen, who afterwards became her son-in-law, on top of an old-fashioned wardrobe with heavy corners around the top, where by laying with face up and feet drawn in a cramped position he was well hid from a man on the floor. The Yanks searched the elderly ladies' room and demanded admission into the young ladies' apartment. Mrs. Rossman told them that she had no objection to their searching, but that surely they would not go into the young ladies' room. Capt. Howe, however, said he would go in, but not disturb the ladies; that he only wanted to see whether indeed they were young ladies in bed or the two rebels they were hinting. She opened the door and invited him in, and after holding a light to the young ladies' faces and being convinced that his game was not there, he stepped upon a chair and scraped his sword over the top of the wardrobe to see that there was no one up there. Charles Allen, who is yet living, will tell you that as he did so he heeded the inch of his nose, and if it had been an inch longer the game would have been captured. All this time Capt. Howe's men had completely circled the house and there was no chance of escape, but as the commanding officer stepped out upon the front gallery, after leaving orders for the young ladies to get up and dress themselves, so that he might more thoroughly search the house, his men took it for granted he had the prisoners and came to the front of the house. Mrs. Rossman, ever on the alert, as soon as the Yankee captain went out of the room made the boys come out of their hiding places and stand beside the back door. The Yanks were gone from that door only a half minute when she pushed her boy and Charles Allen out of the back door and told them to run for liberty, and they made it, but the cold October air made it cool stepping for barefooted soldiers clothed only in X-barred underwear.

If this is worth anything to you, I will be glad if I have done anything to perpetuate the name of this noble woman, whose loyalty to the Confederate cause entitles her to be remembered in columns more lasting than marble or brass. But there are others in your own county of whom I shall try to write. Your friend,
W. A. MONTGOMERY.

Fruit Cake.

The ingenuity of the Southern housekeeper during the war was often taxed to provide a pleasing variety for her table. Fruit cake was made of dried apples, peaches and figs finely minced. To these were added the meat of hickory nuts, walnuts or native pecans, and if some spices could be had the compound resembled perfectly the usual fruit cake and also proved very palatable.

In the absence of flavoring extracts and essences, peach kernels for bitter almond, deer tongue, a fragrant leaf plant, for vanilla, and leaves of orange and lemon were successfully used.

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