

May 15, 1862

All is excitement in Williamsburg. Genl. McLaws and his staff have just left the old City which has been guarded by them since the out-break of the War. They, with the remainder of Genl. Magruder's command have received orders to fall back towards Richmond, giving place to the troops of Longfellow's division and others under the immediate direction of the Chieftain Genl. Joseph E. Johnston. The booming of cannon and the incessant rattle of musketry proclaim that the fighting of yesterday has been renewed below the town, that after their little run towards York Town the Yankees have returned to the charge, picking up heart of grace together with abandoned muskets with which they liberally strewed the field in making their hasty retreat, causing their Commander, Genl. McClellan to exclaim to his staff, "It is going to be another damned Bull Run affair." Southern Regiments announce the approach of the Federal Army. First in line comes the Artillery as fresh to all appearance and richly caparisoned as though no battle had been fought, no cannon taken but the day before. Then follows the infantry in one unbroken line of twenty-eight Regiments with bands of music playing Dixie, Yankee Doodle, Hail Columbia and John Brown's Body. They pass on up the Duke of Gloucester St. which in its time has echoed to the tramp of Hessians, English, French, Continental troops, and felt the noiseless foot-fall of the stealthy Indian. The Cavalry possess themselves of the Palace Green covered with its golden shower of buttercups. Supply wagons camp upon the Court House Green. Indignant faces look out from behind closed blinds upon the desecration, as they feel it to be, of their beautiful old Town. The sight of the great army with all its warlike appliances in gallant array, pressing on the little band of badly clothed, badly fed patriots, who, foot-sore and hungry, plough through mud and water on to Richmond, depresses those who for the first time see the strength of the foe with whom the Southern Army must contend. They rouse themselves, however, remembering that duty lies before them, for even now the hospitals and Churches occupied by wounded soldiers who are alike prisoners of

of war, needing the ministering care and sympathy of woman. Soon are seen groups of two and threes with baskets in hand and faces closely veiled winding their way to the Episcopal and other Churches where war reveals its horrors to those who here see for the first time death and wounds accompanied with the heroic fortitude of the true soldier. In the Chancel lay a magnificent form from which the spirit had fled. A wounded comrade with quivering lip said, "He is dead, Madam;" in the aisles are three or four more of the dead mingled with the living. Soon the arrangements are made to take those who can be moved to private houses. From these asylums of peace and tender care how many passed away to the presence of God. The Rev. Dr. Martin of the Baptist Church and the Rev. Samuel Blair of the Presbyterian ministered in every way to the wounded and dying. In the Court House a sadder scene yet meets the eye; here are twenty-five dead; among them extended upon the clerks table lies the body of Col. G. W. Ward of the 2d Florida; a bullet pierced his breast and he died in the field; a paper pinned on his coat gives his name and asks for decent interment. Capt. Hayes of the Horse Artillery claims him as a West Point class mate and requests permission to assist at his funeral with a file of his soldiers--a proposal willingly accepted--as there are but few left to bury our dead. He was laid to rest in the peaceful Church yard of the Episcopal Church, Rev. Mr. Ambler reading the service. Subsequently someone marked the grave with a rough head-stone with only the initials G. W. W. In the coming years few will know that here lies a brave Confederate Soldier, who died for his country. This gentleman was related to the Gambles of Florida and the Cabells of Virginia. By them his memory should be cherished. By his side we lay the body of gallant Capt. Humphreys of Alexandria. No coffin could be procured, and wrapped in his blanket he sleeps his last sleep in his unmarked grave. Year by year children come with wreaths of flowers and lay them upon the soldier's grave. But are there none in his native town, in the company he commanded, in the home he left desolate to do him honour?

To place even the simple stone at his head with the sacred letter, C. S. A., with the date of his death?

For five days and nights the ears of the inhabitants were assailed by the constant tramp of troops, the clank of sabers, the neighing of horses, the rolling of wheels as caissons, ambulances, wagons, artillery, cavalry, and Infantry possess themselves of the devoted city. The streets are impassable, filled with mud and water and a surging soldiery. Under one of the shade trees of the Court House Green a blacksmith has set up a temporary bellows. Here he has been shoeing a horse which with every stroke of his hammer he calls Abe Lincoln, to the ears he seeks to offend that horse seems to have as many feet as a centipede, so long it is in getting shod. After giving the little comfort that lay in their power to the wounded the women returned to their homes, now their prison houses. One lady vowed that no Yankee should cross the threshold of her Father. Her consternation may be imagined when she saw three Federal Officers approaching the house and pass the guard unchallenged. She confronted them and boldly denied admission. One of them swearing a wicked oath said, "This woman ought to be arrested," receiving the reply from one of his companions, "Let's go and do it." They seemed to have thought better of it for no arrest was made. The guard excused himself by saying he had no authority to keep out officers.

Genl. McClellan with his Staff, among whom were the Duke de Chatres, the Count de Paris and Prince de Joinville remained in Williamsburg for three days. Then the whole grand Army passed on leaving a small force to garrison the town, guard the prisoners and torment the citizens. This last they did very effectually, but their utmost vigilance did not prevent the escape of two soldiers who were in hiding for several days. Time passed in bringing occasional news from the Confederacy. A stray paper would find its way now and then through the lines and the advent of the Examiner was always hailed with delight by the Yankees, revealing as it too often did, the inefficiency and weakness of the Confederacy.

Williamsburg during the Occupancy of the Federal Troops

The tragic and comic often appear side by side. When, therefore, McClellan and his vast army occupied the City of Williamsburg for three days, the bitterness of the inhabitants was sometimes relieved by a laugh-provoking incident. For instance, when an old maiden lady in all the amplitude of excessive hoop skirts waited on Genl. McClellan at his headquarters surrounded by his staff, some of whom represented the flower of the French nobility, and requested him to furnish her with a guard "if there was such a thing as a gentleman in the Yankee army" the effect was ludicrous. When, too, she followed up this advance by an assault upon the unfortunate soldier deemed worthy to act as her protector, the absurdity of the situation was increased. To relieve the tedium of weary watching over an old lady, he indulged in a little innocent whistling, which greatly offended her as being an infringement upon her dignity and importance. Subsequently, on being informed that he had just had a brother killed in battle, she relented towards him so far as to tell him if, it should be any comfort to him she would withdraw her objection to his whistling and she also offered him a cup of tea, which he declined, "fearing it might be made of gunpowder". The event showing that under all of her asperity there was still left in her bosom some of the milk of human kindness and that the Yankee in the midst of a great sorrow was not devoid of a sense of humor.

When the novelty of living under strict military surveillance had somewhat worn away the days passed wearily enough. It is true the wounded in the hospital and in the private houses were still to be cared for, though day by day the number lessened as some new form was laid to rest in the City cemetery by living hands, or sadly thrown un-coffined by an unsympathetic foe into a hole dug under the windows of the Baptist Church (then the only hospital), on the open common or green. The

writer can never forget seeing a dead soldier wrapped in his coarse blanket lying in the vestibule of the Church, his body kept for a comrade to die that the trouble of internment might be lessened - a Confederate woman placed a white rose upon his breast and shed a tear for those who loved him at home. Many and harrowing were the scenes enacted in this Federal Hospital filled with Confederate wounded, where the victims suffered everything of mutilation and ignominy from a brutal drunken surgeon, who will carry with him in life and death the execrations of the sufferers and those who witnessed his heartless deeds. He won for himself, and never lost it the sobriquet of "Head Devil". Thank God, all were not of "his kidney". The Commandant of the Post at this time, Col. Campbell of Pennsylvania, was as considerate to the inhabitants as he dared to be and Dr. Peter Wager, U. S. A. Surgeon entitled himself to the gratitude of the whole community by his care for them in sickness and his efforts to protect their property. In this last he often failed, but the effort was made.

Extracts from a journal of those times may not be uninteresting. It must, however, be remembered that the people were smarting under every sense of indignity and humiliation. The language if strong was quite natural under the circumstances.

Wednesday- "I went this morning to the Hospital and found the poor Irish boy pale with apprehension. He told me the "Head Devil" had ordered him to report that morning that he might amputate his arm. I examined his arm and thought it was much swollen and inflamed no bones were broken, as it was only a flesh wound. I told him to follow me. I took him to a sort of closet and told him to lock himself in and answer to no tap but mine. I gave him a signal. Then I went off and made a poultice according to my lights, and applied it to his arm. I shall keep him locked up until the old drunken wretch forgets him."

Thursday- "The Head Devil" told me today that he was not a Commissioned Officer, but a Volunteer, receiving no pay for his services, that he was working for

eternity and hoped to get his reward there. I said, "I trust you may get what you richly deserve, but it will not be in Heaven." The Irish boy improves, but is still kept sub rosa. A curious thing is working out of his wound, wood, bristles and wire. He explains it by saying he was searching through a Yankee's knapsack and had just taken out a hair brush, when he was shot and knew no more. I think I will save his arm."

Friday- "This morning poor Jeffrey's leg has been broken afresh, that drunken wretch lifted the leg and carelessly let it fall, the work must all be done over again. The poor fellow's leg will be bent and twisted for life."

A week later- "Oh! my God! what a scene have I witnessed today. I went to the Hospital as usual and carried a gargle for G. whom I found much better and sitting on the side of his bed. He thanked me for the gargle but said he did not need it. He then spoke of his wish to be exchanged. I spoke cheerfully to him and went on upstairs to see about the other sufferers. I met Mrs. H. J. coming down. In five minutes she ran back screaming for me to come that G. was dead. "Impossible, I said. I have but this moment left him better and brighter." "That is so," she replied, "but he is dead -- dead." The Surgeon came up and told him all he needed was a tonic and gave him a vial as long as your little finger and told him to drink a half a teaspoonful; he drank and is dead." - Oh! Lord how long?"

Several days later- "This morning while going my rounds somebody shouted "They are going to blow up the Hospital." Such excitement I never saw. The poor bed-ridden wounded unable to move filled with alarm, the women flying about like crazy people, nobody seeming to know exactly what was the matter. I finally discovered that a train of powder had been laid along the passage to reach a keg of powder concealed in a closet by old clothing cut from the wounded, and thrown aside with the bloody rags used in dressing their wounds. These things alone saved the building, for when I reached the spot almost paralyzed with terror, I had just sense enough left to drag them down upon the train of powder, at the

other end of which the fuse was sputtering. The guard could nowhere be found. When the attention of the Officer of the day was called to the outrage he pretended not to believe it, or to know who was on guard. The only conclusion that I can come to is, that the Officers are afraid to punish their men, and, no wonder, for they are fiends in human form."

"Little Davis is dead, poor young boy far from home and mother to lay down his life. He has found in Miss Emily a faithful tender nurse. The whole Confederate heart of the town is filled with pity for the poor lad who having lost one leg has now lost his life."

A Yankee taunted me by saying we might well boast of giving up everything to the Cause, but he "guessed" if we had to go ourselves into battle we would find it quite a different thing from fighting by proxy. I replied "I do not know how that would be, but I can assure you no woman would be found shot in the back." He wilted at once, and I afterwards heard he had himself received the fire of the Confederates as he fled before them."

Little Davis was buried this evening in the City Cemetery. His grave was too shallow. The undertaker (one of our own people), was reproved for it; he excused himself on the ground that after the War was over the body would probably be removed. Turning to Miss Emily he said, "never do you mind for when you die, just send for me and you shall have a grave deep enough and I will put you away with pleasure." A compliment of some ambiguity, but everybody loves Miss Emily and wants to do something for her." We heard cannon firing while at the grave. It seemed so near, but our men have not come yet, nor will come for many a day I fear."

"The Provost Marshall (Capt. Hennessey) has consented to let me take charge of Mr. Saunders' valuable Library. I hope I can find someone to move it. I have asked Edmund Parsons (Mr. Saunders' butler) to help me to save his Master's books,

but he declined, was "afraid to meddle"--all bosh, a good-for-nothing, ungrateful wretch. I never shall believe that negroes have souls, I know they have no heart." I could not get the books moved and to-day a Yankee woman has carried away an ambulance well loaded with them. Day by day I see them carried away by the armful. Once Mr. Saunders was asked by some Northern man to whom he politely showed his library, to sell some of the volumes. He replied, "I would as soon think of selling my wife and children." I expect that man is at the bottom of their present removal.

Early in September a spirit of unrest seemed to possess the Yankees quartered here. They evidently expected an attack--frequently their pickets were fired into above Town showing that the Confederate scouts at least, were near. In revenge for the assaults and the inquietude of spirit thus engendered of the evening of Sept. the 8th they set fire to William and Mary College, the fire was arrested by the Citizens, women and children carrying buckets of water and doing all that they could to put out the flames, not, however, before their light was seen in the surrounding country as a beacon inviting the approach of the avenger. No wonder was excited the next morning when the Yankees were seen riding helter-skelter pell-mell through the streets, followed by the sharp report of pistols, the shouts of citizens and Shingler's Cavalry. Such a scene of the wildest tumult and joy can only be imagined by those who have felt the sudden uplifting of the oppressor's heel. Women laughed and wept, wrung the hands of strangers, imploring Heaven's blessing upon them and the Cause for which they fought; in the wild delirium of the moment no thought came of the rude aftermath that would follow upon the retreat of the Confederates. The present was everything; with what excitement they saw the Confederate Cavalry driving the Federals before them, with what exaltation they witnessed their return with sixty Federal prisoners, marching them through the town over which they had for four months tyrannized. Col. Campbell, the Commandant of the Post, had, it

was believed, observed as mild a policy towards the citizens as the nature of his position would permit. His capture was, therefore, felt to be a loss in the fiery ordeal to which they were soon subjected. By 11 o'clock A.M. the last was seen of Shingler's Cavalry. A momentary, but ominous calm, was followed by the return of the Yankees infuriated by defeat and inflamed with liquor, a cask of spirit having unfortunately been found in the commissariat. By five o'clock in the afternoon the College was again on fire, and this time no citizen was permitted to approach; a cordon of drawn sabers surrounding the building, not even so much as a book was saved. The interesting old portraits of Commissary Blair, the Hon. Robert Boyle and others, had, when the College was made a Confederate Hospital, been placed in charge of the Mansford family, and in their house they were preserved until the close of the War. They now adorn the walls of the College Library. The successor of Col. Campbell declared his inability to protect this Institution of learning or to control his drunken soldiery. But for the interposition of Genl. Keys, in command at York Town, the old historic City would probably have been laid in ashes. He sent up a Company to restore order and place guards through the town. Notwithstanding these precautions few of the citizens slept that night. Some of the citizens had made themselves peculiarly obnoxious to the Yankees, and on these their wrath was visited. Mr. C. W., though sick in bed, when he heard the Confederate Cavalry dashing through the street and the clash of sabers managed to reach a window and there with the boots he was unable to draw on, he beat a tattoo of welcome on the Dutch roof of his house, calling out "kill 'em kill 'em". His voice though feeble reached the ears of the Yankees. Bitterly was he made to rue the day, for as soon as it was safe for them to do so the Yankees swarmed into his house, broke up his furniture and destroyed everything they could lay their hands on. Mrs. W. endeavored to prevent their going upstairs to the sick room of her husband, and was herself forced to jump with her infant in her arms over the banisters and flee she knew not whither.

At this juncture an Officer arrived on the scene and commanded the soldiers to depart; unfortunately, he could not restore order in the dismantled wrecked house. Old grey-haired women, frightened nearly to death scurried through the streets pursued by Yankees on horseback with drawn sabers threatening to kill them. One lady who had been very out-spoken and was very decided in her views and in expressing them without fear was on that day twice spit at, once on the street and once while quietly sitting by the window of her own house. She is now living in Richmond and can attest the truth of the facts herein stated.

The Rev. Mr. Blair, one of the best and purest of men, was accused of cutting the telegraph communication with York Town. He was arrested and carried off as a prisoner to Fort Magruder. Here in the darkness of the night he fell asleep on a bench. He was aroused from his heavy slumbers, by such execrations and oaths that for a moment he thought he had died and had gone to hell. In speaking of it afterwards to a friend, he said, "I assure you, sir, that such was the character of the language that to have ^{heard} a good Confederate cursing would have been a relief to my feelings."

So much for Shingler's raid. Its results were sixty or more prisoners carried off to Richmond; some few were added to the list of killed and wounded, whose places were soon supplied. The destruction of William and Mary College and other property. The tightening of the Federal rein over the citizens, who had already had the spur dug deep into their sides, and a great accession of hatred in both parties. All of very questionable advantage to the City of Williamsburg.

So long as the wounded remained in the private houses their presence had a moral weight and gave a sense of protection that their enfeebled and captive condition could not have verified. Shortly after Shingler's raid the few who had sufficiently recovered from their wounds were ordered to report at Fortress Monroe.

They left behind them a sense of desolation greater than that experienced with the evacuation of the Peninsula.

A return to the journal.

"The H. D. told me yesterday, when I said something more than usually provoking, 'Know you not that I have power to send you as a prisoner to Fortress Monroe?' 'I desire nothing better' I said, 'for I have heard that Genl. Dix is a gentleman and I will be glad of an opportunity to tell him of your cruelty and how you all abuse your power. Send away, it is just what I most desire.'"

"I am so glad no Yankee has ever gotten the better of me, I quite enjoy their hatred, though they may yet make me suffer for it." I am almost afraid to put on record, (though I do hide this journal in my bustle) how often I have sent letters into the Confederacy while buying meat and meal at their lines. Even while the Yanks were watching me and I knew it, I have shipped off news of any increase of their numbers, the condition of Fort Magruder and many other items-- enough to ensure my being scalped, or sent as a spy to Fortress Monroe--I must be more careful, as I do not wish to be sent away while our poor wounded need me. But the day may come when I shall want to go into the Confederacy and I must look out for "a friend at court".

The part played by the negroes during this period is worthy of mention. They did not immediately leave their homes or refuse the usual service, but went off by degrees as they made their arrangements. While they remained, they were very different beings from the trusted and faithful friends they had been supposed to be. Every house that contained one of them sheltered a traitor, every secret was conveyed to the enemy--the hiding place of every valuable was in time betrayed. "Surely a man's foes shall be they of his own household." A gentleman had buried in his garden a choice lot of old wine over which he planted vegetables. A negro woman of his household suspected the fact and betrayed it. The wine was taken, with
An old lady was served in the same way--this difference, that the Officer in command

sent a wagon in the broad face of day and demanded her wine saying, "he would take care of it for the sick." The boxes were carried off under protest. All along the streets the soldiers seized upon bottle after bottle, snapped off the necks, and drank the nectar to the health of the justly irate owner. Negro women held high carnival with the soldiers of the United States Army, who thought it was debasement to associate with them on terms of perfect equality and to dance with them night after night. From these mad revels the negro men were excluded. The house selected for their entertainments was once the home of Chancellor Tyler and now known under the name of a more recent resident as the "old Coke house".

Many were the Confederate soldiers who had hunted in boyhood all around Williamsburg and knew every foot of the country, who could, therefore, successfully elude the vigilance of the Picket and slip into the town under the cover of night speak a word of comfort to the old mother, kiss wife and babies and be off again before morning light. But woe betide such an one should the negro who cradled his infancy chance to find him there. Seven leagued boots would have been necessary for his escape. Negroes set fire to the Clerk's Office rich in records of Colonial history, though some of the most valuable of these papers had been removed to Richmond but were subsequently destroyed in the great fire of 1865. The negroes conceived the idea that the Clerk's office contained papers respecting their ownership and so long as they existed, freedom could never be obtained. Much valuable material was sacrificed to their ignorance and folly.

Return to the Journal.

"Our poor wounded are all gone or dead, and now I want to get into the Confederacy and look after my own boys. I shall, I fear, have difficulty in getting out of the lines, for as soon as it is known that I desire to go, the Yankess will wish to keep me in durance vile. However, I will try for a passport."

"Some of these Yanks are human after all. This morning Lieut. Dissoway called and requested to see me. I found him a very genteel young fellow of twenty-four,

He told me he had heard I wished to go into the Confederacy and that he had called to offer his services to procure a passport for me, as he was that day going to York Town. I thanked him, and as he seemed a gentleman we fell into some other conversation. I said in the name of Heaven why did you leave your mother, as you say you are her only son? Make haste and get out of this unholy war and go back to her. He made some foolish reply about the flag--as they all do--. Lieut. Dissosway had only been gone about an hour when I heard a pistol shot. Mrs. T. soon came in and told me he had been killed by one of his own men, who had been punished by his orders for some bad conduct. I am very sorry, for I liked him as well as I could one of his hated race. His remains were to be taken to his stricken mother, I grieve for her. Mrs. T. and I got some beautiful flowers which we sent with our cards to be put in his coffin. He was very much of a gentleman and attractive in all ways but one--being a Yankee soldier was certainly very much against him."

November 1863. - Sending those flowers was a simple thing but it had fine results. My passport was secured. I could hardly believe that I had left Williamsburg and the Yankees behind me when I arrived at my friends, Mr. and Mrs. George Hankins†, about thirteen miles above Town; here I stopped for the night. Before I could get off Yankee raiders arrived and began to destroy everything right and left. I asked to see the Officer in command, or hearing my name, inquired if I were the lady who sent the flowers to the mother of Lieut. Dissosway? I said that I was. Then Madam, this whole thing shall be stopped at your request; calling his men off. I had thus the pleasure of relieving my friends in their distress." "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." It may also be said of kindness. With this extract showing its wonderful power we close the Journal.

The clouds thickened over Williamsburg as the days went by. First one person and then another weary of the restraints of captivity and filled with anxiety about the Army dropped off into the Confederacy where privation and high prices awaited them, each more endurable than the constant presence of a hated foe. Tabb's

raiders came and went; General Wise's Brigade held the town for several days; then they too went leaving the City to the mercy of an enraged soldiery.

The order was issued for the inhabitants to take the oath of allegiance to the U. S. Government or to abandon their homes. A band of about sixteen decided promptly to give up all the sacred associations of home and to go forth stripped of the accumulation of years into the barren Confederacy. There were others equally true and faithful to the Southern cause who were unable to go, and when the hated option was offered them with reluctance and protest took the fatal oath. Among those whose narrow means bound them to the spot was Miss Emily Morrison--a name ever to be held in reverence and honour. With an aged and ill mother there was no alternative; stay she must. When the Officer arrived to put the test she was in an agony of distress. In vain was the pen placed in her trembling fingers; they had no power to hold it. Her mother from her seemingly dying bed exhorted her not to perjure herself. "Let me not die, my daughter, seeing you take this lie upon your heart. Let me go into the presence of my Maker believing you true to yourself and to your Country." The Officer was melted by this scene and left these two noble women in peace. Miss Emily has gone with her soul pure and white into the presence of the Great Creator, the Angel of Mercy recording "she hath done what she could."

The exiled party reached Norfolk, were detained several days, saw many friends, had a pleasant little trip at the expense of the United States Government and were then ordered back to Williamsburg. The whole movement was mysterious until it was discovered to have been a purely local plan to secure the property of the inhabitants and not at all a general order.

Then came the burning and pulling down of houses. The last remnant of the circumstance and pomp of Colonial days passed away with the total destruction of the Palace buildings. Dr. Peter Wager, U.S.A. endeavored to save them and obtained the promise of the Provost Marshall--one Morrison--to let them stand, but

in less than two hours his emissaries were at work and soon there was "not one stone left upon another." The houses were torn to pieces and the bricks carried away. When the owners returned after the War the foundations alone remained of what had once been the abodes of comfort. With the year that followed the surrender at Appomattox the old people, deprived of hope, weary with the march of life, abandoned the struggle, crossed their pale hands and lay down to die, as effectually killed by the results of the War as if they had fallen on the field of battle.