

THE CIVIL WAR JOURNAL OF OCTAVIA WYCHE OTEY

By Mickey Maroney, Editor

Introduction

“We did not dare to write our situation while the Yankees were in here for fear the letter would be captured. Rest assured my dear sister, our subscribing to their oath was a perfect sacrifice of my self to my family”.

The above quote is from a letter which was recorded in one of sixteen volumes of the personal journal written by Octavia Wyche Otey of Meridianville, Alabama. Understandably, Octavia’s decision to sign the Union oath of allegiance was not readily accepted by various family members and friends. But most of them eventually understood the difficult circumstances facing the Oteys and did not scorn them for their decision.

The portion of Octavia’s journal pertaining to the Civil War covers only the

few months from September 1864 to March 1865 because Octavia wrote sporadically, as time and inclination dictated. Her journal gives a detailed account of life on a plantation, her family’s encounters with the Yankees, and the hardships caused by the War and the presence of Union troops nearby. More than an account of the War, it is an intimate record of family life fraught with illness, which, to Octavia, was more traumatic than the War itself. And as a consequence of her husband’s serious illness, she was forced to assume responsibilities that ordinarily would have been his.

Octavia Aurelia Wyche, was a young girl in 1849, had been plagued with doubts about her decision to marry William Madison Otey. But marry him she



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did, and her doubts soon disappeared. Their life together was one of devotion to each other.

Their families had owned neighboring plantations near Meridianville, although Octavia's family divided their time between Meridianville and another plantation they owned in Mississippi. Octavia, born in 1831 after her parents had moved to Alabama from Virginia, was the daughter of Mary Ann Rebecca and William Henry Wyche. Her father died in 1836, and while later her mother married John Kirkland. Two children were born to them before Mary Ann Rebecca's death.

Madison was born in Alabama in 1818 after his parents, too, had moved from Virginia. He was the youngest of nine children of Mary Lucy Walton and William Walter Otey. Like Octavia, Madison was a small child when his father died, but his mother did not marry again.

Madison began building a fine home for Octavia soon

after their marriage in 1849. By early 1851 they and their first child were settled in the newly-finished house, which they called Green Lawn. Madison had hired an English landscape architect to beautify the spacious grounds surrounding the house. The house, however, was not truly complete because Madison had built it with future expansion in mind.

Unfortunately, his ensuing poor health and the financial misfortunes caused by the Civil War prevented the construction of his planned addition. Nevertheless, the house, still standing, is an imposing structure. Its unusual front-to-back profile (two stories in front, one story in back) attests to the quirks of fate and fortune.

During the years before the Civil War, Madison and Octavia were quite well off financially. Indeed, under much that he was able to more than double the acreage that he had



inherited. The Oteys lived a customary plantation life -- rearing their children, tending to household, farming and business matters, and leading an active social life. Guests were always welcome at Green Lawn, and very often relatives or neighbors joined them for dinner.

Green Lawn, located a mile south of Meridianville, is situated on a low hill overlooking the road from Huntsville to Fayetteville and Nashville, Tennessee. In the 1860's this road was an important route between Huntsville and points north for troop movement, scouts, and foragers, of whom the Oteys saw quite a few.

The following pages of Octavia's journal have been copied as written -- including spelling errors, erratic punctuation, and a few lapses of correct grammar. In some instances, punctuation has been modified for the sake of clarity. A few words in the handwritten journal were impossible to decipher, and those words are indicated

by a question mark enclosed in brackets.

Various people who could be identified are referred to in footnotes. Below is a list of family members mentioned frequently in Octavia's journal:

- Tommie - daughter of Cousin Eliza.

Otey Children:

- Imogene - (Imogene Wyche) born December 1850.
 - Willie Walter - (William Walter) born 1853.
 - Mollie Beck - (Marie Rebecca) born August 1855.
 - Matt - (Madison Wyche) born 1858.
 - Ellise - (Laura Ellise) born 1860.
 - Lucy - (Lucille Horton) born September 1862.
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Sept. 10th 1864. It has been a good many year since I attempted to keep a journal. I will now



commence again. It will make writing more familiar and easier, and keep things jotted down that I do not wish to forget. This has been a year of trouble to our family, and also to the whole country. Anxiety about something to eat something to wear, and anxiety about everything. That which is not taken in the day from us, is stolen at night by negroes and robbers. God only knows what will become of us. He only can comfort or help us. Ever since the first of March, some of our white family have been sick, not a day when all were entirely well. I try to submit to it as cheerfully as possible, but my heart must be callous indeed to be indifferent to it. My dear husband's health is very bad. He has had the Chronic Diarrhea for 5 years this fall, and for the last 8 months he has been getting rapidly worse. I cannot realize that it is so, once so well and hearty. Two years ago weighing 240 lbs., now only 160, and falling off every day. He is so

sick now that he cannot sit up all day. Last night he rode old Mary Jane to church and came back very tired, and was taken sick with his bowels in an hour or so after he got home, and was very sick all night, and did not get out of his bed until [next] evening. He has pretty good appetite most of the time, but it is difficult to get anything suitable for him to eat. Night before last, while I was at church, somebody stole Jenny Lind, the only animal [an old mare] I had to drive or to get about with. She was about 12 or 13 years old, very poor, and blind in one eye, but she served me better than a fine horse would have done. I don't think the Federals would have taken her from us, but some mean white man or negro, has stolen her to sell. I do hope I will find her. She was stolen last month but I got her again. I made a jar of yeast to day. John Ford¹ took supper with us to night.

Sunday, Sept. 11th, 1864. We have been having



a good meeting at our church [Presbyterian] in Meridianville, for about 9 days, a warmer one than has been there, for years. At one time we had 21 or 22 mourners [?], and one night when I was there, we had three bright [?] conversions. Al Handcock, Albert Jones, Mrs. Nugent. It seemed strange such a revival at such a time. We have not been disturbed by the Yankees at all, so far, which has been a great blessing. Brother Saunders has been the only minister we have had, except help twice. He is almost broke down, but is preaching again today. I don't feel quite well enough, but if I did, don't know how I should go, as Coaly [mule] balks so, I do not think I will ever drive him again.

There will be preaching again tonight. Last night father brought home 8 gallons of [Probably whiskey. The "dots" are Octavia's]. It is put where it won't be found easily. It is hard work keeping anything now. Since Jenny was stolen Mr. Otey got

father to have two staples fixed in the stable and chains fastened to them and our two mules chained by the neck, every night. Mr. Otey is better to day, but complains a good deal of weakness, he is lying down a good deal. Will appears to be in better health lately. A short time ago he had an attack of Nettle Rash. It made him quite sick at the time, but he was in bed only one day, and has seemed better than usual since then. He went to church the night I went in cousin Eliza's carriage. He went last night with John Ford, but came back early, on account of the heat. Kinley² brought me some water from "johnson's wells" to day. Parthenia³ has done no work this week. Imogene and Mollie staid last night at Mr. Strothers, and went to preaching and came home this morning, walked. Ed Chadie and Willie Figures here this evening, also J. Russel. Nina⁴ and cook Maria⁵ went to church last night. They are very much



pleased, [unfinished sentence]

Monday Sept. 12th '64.

This is a beautiful morning, cool like fall. I don't get very good sleep at night up with the baby or someone. Mr. Otey is up this morning, earlier than usual, and reading his Bible. Poor Imogene did not get much sleep last night for the baby Lucy [2 years old]. We have not received a letter from Ella⁶ since one dated 11th of December. When will the dear child come home, when will all of our dear relations come home? And when will our poor prisoner boys be released? Poor fellows, they must have a hard time, it requires courage to endure. As well as to do. I owe Cap⁷ a letter and I will write in a day or two. I would have written long ago, but Mr. Otey's health and mine, has been so bad that I did not have the heart to write to poor Cap, and he in prison too. When I write to him I cannot write freely as I wish to, and I would like to write him a pleasant letter. I feel

stronger this morning, than usual, but not well. Every day my heart threatens me with an attack. I dread those spells, though I suffer no pain. Will is busy netting a Partridge net. And I have common need, a silk net for Mollie Beck's head.

Mr. Otey is so weak and feeble, that I am distressed to look at him, and sometimes, I feel as if my heart would break to think of his situation. My only hope for him to be spared to us, is in God. My children cause me a good deal of trouble now, they are so restless, and reckless, and I am sorry to say, some of them are disobedient. Imogene [13 years old] and Willie Walter [11 years old] are the exceptions, however, for I believe they do the best they can. Mollie [9 years old] is so wild I can not keep her at any house work, but I have more trouble about poor Ellise [4 years old] than any of the rest, she is always in mischief and does not mind correction or reproof. I hope God will help me raise



them all right, so that they may be his here and hereafter. Children and all. We feel the influence of the times. I wanted to go to church so much to night, but cannot go. I have gone in cousin Eliza's carriage twice. We are all rather low down now, for us to be. We are having beautiful nights now for meeting. Jimmy Erskine came her to night, walked to preaching [slightly more than a mile].

Tuesday 13th, 1864.

This is another beautiful morning, cool and clear. We are rather expecting the Yankees out this morning. We heard that a foraging party would be out to day, and we prepared for them accordingly. Only three or four rode by however, and did not come to the house. They took a barrel of salt from Charley Strong⁸ and one from Mrs. Pleas Strong⁹ yesterday. Cousin Eliza offered me a seat in her carriage to day, but I was afraid to leave home, and sent Imogene. Father heard Mollie Beck, Walter and Matt Wyche [6 years old]

say their lessons in the library this morning. While we were at the breakfast table this morning Bob and Farmer Strong¹⁰ rode up. They sat about an hour. We got a quarter of Beef from John Pruitt's¹¹ to day. Parthenia's meat gave out four days too soon, and I gave her quite a scold about it, she says she had a chill this evening. She did better than she has done for years until about four weeks back. Cook Maria does better than any negros on the place, and even she gets out of sorts sometimes. Nina does a great deal better than some, but not near as well as she could do.

Wednesday 14th, 1864.

The weather still continues good, it is beautiful weather for the meeting, the moon shines all night. Imogene and I, take it "time about" going to meeting. We both cannot leave Lucy, at once. Cousin Eliza gave me a seat in her carriage to night. We are entirely indebted to her for chance to go to church. We had a good sermon from



Bro. Saunders, but no conversions. Sister Maria¹² and Mrs. Search¹³ were here a little while this evening. Gave sister M. a small jug of Cider.

Thursday 15th. 1864.

Mr. Otey is no worse I don't think, but he does not acknowledge feeling any better. He has a bad rising that troubles him a good deal. John Ford took supper with us to night. Jimmie Erskine came back out here from church. Imogene went to night.

Thursday [sic] - see previous entry date] 16th

1864. We had a light shower last night, and this morning it is cool and clear, a real fall morning. Maria gave us delightful rolls and Beef steak for breakfast, almost equal to sister Caroline's¹⁴ Cousin Eliza offered me a seat in her carriage to prayer meeting this morning, but before we could go a large train of forage wagons and cavalry came by, going north of us, and we were afraid to leave home. None sopped here, for a wonder, but when they

come back, I am affraid they will stop. We have 7 young turkeys and very fine ones, and the finest 2 year old Gobler I ever saw, and a hen. I would not like for the Yankees to get them. I fitted a white body [bodice?] on Mollie this morning. Matt Wyche has spent this day with Davis Battle¹⁵, he is very fond of going there. Charly Strong here a little while this morning. Cousin E. offered some of us a seat again to night. Mr. Otey still suffering with that rising, and not very strong, lies down about two hours after dinner. Will is looking better than he has for some time, his health about the same. Still busy, him and Mr. Otey, about the Partridge nets. My health is better now.

Well this evening as the Forage train came back, it was nearly dark when they got here, and they just ripped over the place, come in the yard and took a Turkey out of the hen house, and took 9 head of cattle from us, our sole dependence for something



to eat this fall. Three of them were calves, and one of them a steer, our only one. We tried hard to get them to leave one or two but they cursed me, and told me they did not care if we did starve. My little children were standing by and heard them curse their Mother twice. What was in the heads of those children? If human nature is what I think it is, the men and women of the next generation will cause the Yankees more trouble than their parents ever did. If I did not fear displeasing my maker, I would be tempted to administer "Hanibal's oath" of eternal vengeance and hatred to our oppressors.

Poor Mollie cried bitterly when they took our cattle. She don't like the idea of starving, and has a tender heart. The men just laughed at our distress, and one of them said if he owned a fine large farm like this, he would want anything more. I told him that I did. I wanted

something to eat, but nothing moved them.

Friday 16th [sic - - see previous dates] Sept., 1864. This morning I got up a little after 4 o'clock and waked father up, he wanted to get off early to [the] mill. He got off about day, and got back by three or four o'clock in the evening with a turn of very nice flour. He went with Kinly to protect the mules. I started very early this morning with cousin Eliza, for Huntsville, to try and get back something. We had a very worrying day, on account of my heart disease. I determined to stay in the buggy as much as possible, as I dread a return of that disease. Cousin E. went to the court house to get a pass but the doors were not opened, and she left. We then went to Gen. Granger's, and there found Mr. Dox¹⁶ and Mr. Jolly. Cousin E. stated our case to them. The Gen. said it was against orders to take work oxen or milk cows, and give us an order to [Col.] Johnson, and he (J.)



sent us to Capt. Bond, and he sent us to the Corel [corral], where we found part of our cattle. Cousin E. got three work oxen, and two yearlings, and I got our steer and two yearling calves. I got them as calves, I could get them no other way. We did not have time to get receipts so concluded to come tomorrow. We got no papers or news. They all seemed very heartless to me. They won't think me union, and I can't say I am. Gen. G. said looking at me "umph, rebel?" I said Gen. my husband was a Union man but is now sick and helpless. I did not tell him we were suffering all as patiently and cheerfully as possible in hopes of Southern independence. The tears came to my eyes, but they were not for myself.

I was not near as tired as I expected to be. I went to church tonight, Will and I, with Tommy and cousin Eliza. We heard a good sermon. Made arrangements to go to town with cousin E. in the

morning. Wash¹⁷ was afraid to go to town so Willie Walter had to drive all 8 of our cattle as far as Johnny McDavid's house.

Saturday 17th Sept., 1864. Cool and a little cloudy. Cousin Eliza and I started early this morning for Huntsville, intending to get receipts for our cattle, and as our family made their breakfast on bread this morning, and I had to kill a chicken for dinner, I concluded to demand Beef. Of Johnston. I waited until cousin E. was through. I stated my case then, to Col. Johnston, and told him I had 10 white ones in family and had no meat [for] breakfast, and did not know when we would have any, that our sole dependence was on our tem [oxen], and they had taken all of them, and asked if I could not have one of them back. He said I could if Capt. Bond could spare one, and at the intercession of one of the men, he concluded to let me have one. We went to the encampment around the fort, commanded by Maj.



Stout, he appeared to be a very gentlemanly officer and gave cousin E. one of her oxen back to her. We had work driving it to the edge of town, had to go back then and get mine from the Corell [corral], the largest ones were all killed, so I had to take a one-year old calf. We had no one with us but Willie Walter and a little negro of cousin E.'s. J. Ford had one [ox] to drive so he helped Willie Walter drive ours too. We went back into town and got receipts. I also bought a dollars' worth of Beef and 3 papers. Everybody very kind to us to day. I carried Jim Cooper a bottle of Cider. Also, Jane, flour. Tom¹⁸ was carried to Nashville against his will by the soldiers the other day. Cousin Eliza stopped at Mrs. Fackler's and got out. I sat in the buggy. Laura Basset came out to the buggy and talked to me some time, she is an old schoolmate of Ella's. Mrs. Fackler and Mr. Fackler came out and spoke very kindly to me.

Imogene went to church, also Walter and Mollie with Tommie. Jimmie Erskine came here after church. Dr. Searcy was here to day and lanced Mr. Otey's rising. It run a good deal. He feels very much relieved tonight.

Sunday 18th Sept., 1864. It is a beautiful and cool morning, like fall, as it is. We went in our own carriage to church this morning, Mr. Otey, Will, Imogene and I. Father and J. E. walked to church. We liked never to have got up the hill, as one of the mules won't pull. J. E. took hold of the reins and pulled and coaxed them up the hill. I feel that I have great cause for thankfulness to day, my husband, brother and father, and oldest child and myself all at church together at once. Imogene joined the church this morning, and I feel very glad indeed. When an infant we gave her to God in baptism, and now in her 14th year she sets her soul to it, by publicly joining the church of God. We all once more partook of the Holy



sacrament together. I feel that it was indeed a blessing to be there. We expected company to dinner to day, but were disappointed, though Sidney Darwin was here. The evening passed off quietly, and at night, Imogene, Father, and Walter walked up to church. About half after 9 o'clock I heard horses feet and went to the window, and blew out my candle, and listened. I think about 50 horsemen passed, they say infantry also. In about an hour, Imogene returned, having rode home with H. Wade¹⁹. She said there was great interest manifested in the church, 10 or 12 mourners, and no suspicion of evil, when one of the ladies went to the door, and came back, reporting the house surrounded by Yankees. Several went to the door and were not permitted to come out, the men guarding the door with drawn swords and bayonets. They inspected the company and said the ladies might leave,

and having detained them there some time, suffered all to leave. They thought religion a cloak to military movement. I hope they were satisfied, as they gave permission to continue the meeting. Maj. Calkins, the Provost Marshal, commanded the company. It is humiliating to be treated so. It is worse than we ever treated our negroes. We must pray the Lord to give us patience to live. Mr. Otey feels better to day than usual.

Monday 19th Sept., 1864. This is a beautiful day. All hands commenced picking cotton. Matt Wyche gave out early, father picking also. Mr. Otey not quite so well 'o day, his back quiet weak, and his bowels inclined to run off. He won't diet, himself. Imogene and Mollie knitting stockings. Our meeting still continues. This morning Lewis bought an old bedstead from me, paying me one dollar and promising me three more.

I boiled one of my hams to day. I hate to see the last of



my meat go so fast, I gave the negroes their last middling [fatback or streak of lean meat from the middle of the hog between the shoulder and ham] to day also. I have not had much energy the last two or three days. I cut out the bodies and sleeves of two shirts for father, and two for Will. John Ford took supper with us and went to church, so we had old Mary Jane hitched in the buggy, and Mr. Otey and I went up to church also. We made the trip safely. Had an excellent sermon from Bro. Saunders, but no conversions. No interruptions from Yankees.

Tuesday 20th Sept., 1864. It is quite cool this morning, but rather cloudy. Mr. Otey's bowels were threatening to move off yesterday evening. He rode out to see his hogs this morning. I went over to cousin Eliza's also and spent the morning. I have no energy at all, I am really lazy. To night Mr. Otey, Imogene, Willie Walter,

cousin Eliza, and Liza Mc. All went to church in our carriage, we borrowed a horse from cousin E. to work with our mule. They all got back safely.

Wednesday 21st Sept., 1864. It is raining this morning, and all are kept in the house. Mr. Otey and Will are busy working on their Partridge net. Borrowed cousin E.'s mare again and went to church in the carriage. Mr. Otey, Will and I heard an excellent sermon from Bro. Saunders. It was whispered over the house that Yankees were at the door. We kept our seats, but we were soon relieved by being told that it was a mistake. On our way home it was told that they were Confederates in Yankee uniform, and we passed them in fact on our way home. Nina and Franky²⁰ washed wool to day. Bought 46 lbs. of middlings.

Thursday Sept. 22, 1864. Another damp cloudy day, trying to rain every once in a while. I have been very busy to day



cutting out and fixing work for Nina and Parthenia. I am trying to keep Mollie in the house more, and am learning her to knit ribs to a sock. Today our white family are in better health than usual for us, although Mr. Otey and Will are very tired working on their net, and Father has almost broke himself down working, and we cannot keep him from it. The bird net is finished. Jimmie Erskine here to day. Bob Strong here this evening. I made some more yeast this evening. J. Erskine and Imogene went to church to night in Mr. Strong's school wagon. Bother came back about 11 o'clock. Mr. Otey made a little white oak basket, Matt and Lucy both claim it.

Friday Sept 23rd, 1864.

It is quite cloudy this morning, but not raining yet. Mr. Otey's health seems to be a little better now, though he has to take Opium pills almost constantly to keep his bowls in check. It has been raining off and on all day. J.

Erskine and Jack Robinson here all day. The children all in the house to day, and are quite noisy. Mr. Otey is amusing himself making baskets, has made one and [gave it] to Lucy and Matt Wyche together, and made Mollie a very nice knitting basket and has commenced one for Imogene. I made Anderson²¹ clean my silver forks and butter knife, and all the broken pieces of silver to day. I cleaned my work stand nicely and cut out work for Parthenia and Nina. I weighed out meat to day, gave P. 3 lbs., N. 9 lbs., L.R. 4 [lbs.]. Nina's baby Albert keeps quite sick. Our Rolls not so good lately.

The authorities in Huntsville commenced making ladies take the oath too day, every lady that got a pass had to take the oath. It has created quite a stir amongst the ladies. Lewis quit eating here to day. Mr. Otey made Mollie a nice knitting basket.

Saturday Sept. 24th, 1864. This is dear little Lucy's birthday, she is two years old, and a sweet,



merry, blue eyed, curly headed thing she is, she talks very well, and very sensibly too. She is a great comfort and pleasure to all on the place. I wish her aunt Ella could see her long sunny curls. Mary Beck's hair curled tolerably well, but Lucy's curls better.

Well, I made some sweet cakes to day, the first I have made in a long time. They were very nice, but not quite enough of them. This evening the Yankees came by after more cattle. They did not take ours this time, but my turkeys were over the creek, and they shot at them 4 or 5 times, we felt certain they had killed some of them, but had to keep still and listen at them, we could not help ourselves. I had some hopes though, knowing that they sometimes shot 3 or 4 times at a sheep to kill it. Well, by night, all the turkeys came up, they killed none but had scattered them. I thanked God for that.

Sunday Sept. 25th, 1864. It is a beautiful morning. Brother Bone

preached at Meridianville to day. Tommie gave me a seat in her carriage, and I went to church with her. We heard a splendid sermon. I thought it the best I ever heard him preach. His text was "James, 1 chapter, 27 verse". His sermon not including prayer, was an hour and a half, but I was not tired at all. Service to night, Mr. Otey and Imogene went with Tommie to church. We had bad luck last night. Some dogs killed 4 of our sheep, we only had 8, and we had to eat the meat. We had no other.

Cook Marie asked me last night to let her go to Huntsville to day. I don not like for her to go there, but did not refuse her. And P. staid quite late untill 8 o'clock, our supper was very late, and Mr. Otey and Imogene did not wait for supper but got some milk and bread, and left.

Monday Sept. 26th, 1864. We heard yesterday that Forrest had taken Athens, and taken 2 or 3000 Yankees and negroes' prisoners. It proved to be



so, but the amount of prisoners not ascertained. Federal troops are rolling through them where he pleases. About 4 o'clock a company of Federals under Maj. Moore passed by here, on a scout, north of here. They did not stop, but for fear they may get my turkeys when they go back, I had them all drove in a house. I think I will keep them there until I eat from unless the Yankees do that for me, they took one from there not long ago. Imogene and Ellise went up to sister Maria's this morning, to stay several days. Willie Walter and Matt Wyche walked up there with them, and back in the evening. Nina's baby still continues quite sick. Father is quite sick to day, and Will is complaining more than usual. He is afraid he is going to have a spell again. Mr. Otey appears better, but has to keep under the influence of Opium most of the time. Cousin Eliza over here to day.

Tuesday Sept., 27th, 1864. We are having some

rain and cloudy weather now. Our cotton has been picked over now, it is opening slowly. This evening the Yankees came back, they had gone as far as Fayetteville. They had stopped down at the shop. I heard they were coming, in time to send Kinley and Jack off in to the corn field with the mules, to hide them. The Maj. [Moore] came up to the house and asked if we had any U. S. horses. I told him no. He did not say anything about mules. I thanked God for his protection once more. Alice came over here this evening for some Ivy roots. It commenced raining before she left. A stranger came up here asking to stay all night. I hated to turn him off, so let him stay all night. He was Yankee I think. Otey Pruitt²² staid here to night.

Cousin A. [Amanda] Wade²³ went to town Saturday or Sunday and they required her to take the oath which she refused to do, so they won't let her out. Cousin Eliza sent me



word to be ready to go to town tomorrow.

Wednesday 28th Sept., 1864. This morning is rather cloudy, and cousin Eliza declined going to town. I am very glad, for I have a great dislike to going there now. I am footling over some socks for Mr. Otey. I don't knit very fast. It is very hard to keep Mary Beck at her knitting, and she can knit fast and well too. But she brings me in a good many eggs. Imogene is quite lazy about knitting also, but she is interrupted a good deal. Imogene and Ellise got home this evening. Lucy is almost weaned from Imogene. Tommie came over this evening and while here the supper bell rang, so she took supper with us. Mr. Strong took supper with us also, and then went up to church. Mr. Otey was complaining more than usual of his bowels, he appeared quite sick to night. Will and Father appear better. I went with Tommie to church, very few there.

Thursday 29th Sept., 1864. It is raining this morning, and every one kept in the house. Father is hearing the children's lessons this morning. Lucy is very iritable this morning. A company of Federals passed here this morning on their way to town, and in a few minutes, another passed on their way out on a scout north. None stopped.

My dear husband has not been so well to day. He was lying down most of the morning, and this evening he rode to Meridianville, but he complains of feeling very badly and weak, and looks weak out of his eyes. He says his liver is not acting at all. He took a Blue pill to night, with a little Calomel and Dovers powders in it. I do hope it will do him some good. Mr. Strong brought him some Sassafrilla root the other day, he has made him some bitters.

I hear that Forrest has a thousand negroes tearing up the railroad. I am afraid it will be hard on the



citizens if the Yankees remain in here.

Friday 30th Sept., 1864. The weather unsettled yet. Last night Mr. Otey was quite sick, his bowels were out of order, and the Blue Pill has had no effect on him. I had to check his bowels with those Opium pills. He suffered with sick stomach and pain in his bowels. He rode off this morning and returned about 11 o'clock. Not long after he returned we saw a man in gray clothes riding leisurely along and not far off, another one, and both went over to cousin Eliza's. In a few minutes 6 or 8 came riding slowly down the road with John Pruitt in their midst, three dressed also in gray. We were all lost in conjecture, fondly hoping they were Confederates, yet sick with hope deferred. Mr. Otey said he knew they were confederates. They did not look like Yankees. Soon came a note from Tommie stating that they were Confederates, and that several thousands were coming on behind. I am

afraid I was not very dignified for a few minutes. Our friend, Thaler [?] Kelly soon rode up, and told us they were about to attack Huntsville. He took dinner with us, a good many others did also. A good many men passed by but we did not count them. Cousin Eliza came over a little while this evening, she was quite excited. After supper to night another regiment passed, and then 4 men came and asked to stay all night. We had no supper to offer them but took them in. It rained very hard for a little while to night. I am so sorry it has rained so on our poor soldiers. I dread, yet long for tommorow to come. It has been over a year since we saw a Confederate soldier before today, much less a large body of them. I expect near 3000 have passed. Zenia²⁴ says our soldiers took that old steward off, from sister Caroline's place [Oaklawn], and sent him over the river. His negro wife left then also, and the house now is empty and deserted. What a pity



that place should be treated so, it makes me sad to think of it. I am anxious to hear from them all, and Ella, why don't she write? I imagine all kinds of reasons for her not writing. Surely if she was dead we would hear of it. Ill news flies fast. God bless and take care of her and hers.

Saturday Oct. 1st. 1864.

It is an ugly, unlikely morning, and has been raining all day. All the morning we listed anxiously for the sounds of attack on Huntsville, but in rain. About 11 o'clock we heard that the Confederate army had passed around Huntsville, and no one knew where they were going. Anxiety and excitement have given me a bad headache, and heart ache too, how can we stand living this way? Father still keeps sick with the jaundice. Will appears about the same. I scarcely know how Mr. Otey is, the way the negroes do, worrys him half to death. He says he does not know where we are to get any thing to eat.

We have very little now. Every thing is in confusion to day, Confederates passing singly and in squads all the time. It is hard to have to live this way. The children are all very wild, poor Ellise very bad, I do not know what to do with her. John Ford was here this evening.

Sunday Oct. 2nd, 1864.

The sun is trying to shine this morning, but has a sickly look. Father, Will, and Mr. Otey are all busy listening to the cannons this morning, in the direction of Athens. God give us this victory, I pray, but I won't listen at them, it would be encourage hopes, not to be realized. Will says I must come out and listen.

Well, the day is gone, nothing is known certainly, of our army. The report to day is that both sides have received reinforcements, that 1500 confederates passed Dr. Shelby's on their way to Athens, also that Gen. Forrest passed through New Market to day. If he is in here something will be done. They say the



Yankees have received help of the 14th or 15th army corps. Our troops left a wounded Yankee at Mrs. Nugent's, but they would not come out after him. Quite a stir has been made in Huntsville, a great many have left the place. John Prior sent Mr. Otey \$5.00, all he has ever paid him for \$20 worth of cider sold by him for us. Mr. Otey went to church to day, twice. His bowels are better, yesterday and to day, than they have been in some time, only one action to day. He is very thin, does not weigh more than 150 lbs. He has so much to worry him. Imo[gene] went to church this evening with cousin Eliza. Willie Walter and Matt Wyche went up to Fern [?] and John Pruitt's this morning, going to stay all night. I had a spell with my heard to day, lasted me three or four hours.

Monday Oct. 3rd, 1864.
 Another day of rain and sunshine, mostly rain. To night it is raining hard. It is dreadful on the poor soldiers, especially the new

recruits. The Yankees say they whipped our men to the river yesterday, but nothing certain is known of military movements, no cannonading heard to day. Three Yankees passed here to day, as far as the creek, know nothing about them. Will's health appears better lately, father's also, seems better. Mr. Otey's bowels are better, but he will eat apples, and I think he ought to be very careful what he eats. He takes it very hard, the way we are situated. He is trying to get what few hogs we have, penned, to fatten them, but he is in fear all the time of their being taken from us. Sometimes I feel quite desparate, all seems dark around me, I feel like I could struggle no longer, but that would not increase my happiness, so "I must e'en keep a trying". We are expecting to make some molasses soon, and that will help us a good deal. I have been cutting out work today, knitting and reading. I heard today that Jenny



Lind was in the Coral in town.

Tuesday Oct 4th, 1864.

Raining and sun trying to shine all day, quite warm also. All of us are as well a usual except Lucy. She is not very well, her bowels are out of order. Father went out in the orchard and got some peaches twice. He carried cousin Eliza some this evening. She says I can get some syrup from her kettle to make preserves with. Mrs. Benley sent here for some peaches this evening. I sent her a basket full. John Pryor stopped here this evening to excuse himself to Mr. Otey, who was up at Meridianville. John says Jenny Lind is at the coral at old Mrs. Patton's or was last Friday. I do wish I could get her, but they won't let citizens in or out of town. We do not know what the movements are on either side. We live in constant expectation of everything we have being taken from us. It rained very hard this evening, Mr. Otey came home in the rain. I gave Mr. Otey yesterday

his third bottle of [?] and will his second bottle. For 5 days now, Mr. Otey's bowels have been all right but he is imprudent. I fear he will have a relapse.

Wednesday Oct. 5th,

1864. It rained very hard this morning, but it is a good deal cooler. Our cows have most all gone dry, and we get very little milk or butter. This morning we had neither. It is very hard on the poor children, nothing but a little piece of fried middling, and break and water, and not as much as they could eat of that, but our rolls were nice. It is true we don't always have as much as we could eat, but I have faith to believe that God will never really let us suffer. It is strange how we can stand it. We had to kill a shoat this morning. Mr. Otey hated very much to kill it, but if we don't, the Yankees may, and the children must have something to eat.

Father has been hearing the children's lessons pretty constantly lately. The other day when our soldiers



were passing, a Federal soldier asked Lucy (our little two-year-old) if she was a little Yankee? She said very shortly, no. I told him I had insulted her very much a few days before, by asking her if she loved the Yankees? Says he, "What do they expect to do with us when the very babies hate them". Yes, there is a feeling of eternal dislike, and hatred, for our oppressors growing up in the hearts of the babes and children of this generation that will never be obliterated. It has been raining almost constantly to day, the creek is higher than it has been before this year, I think. Will is not feeling so well today, Father appears better, Mr. Otey still the same. Mr. Otey gave cook Maria some leather to sole her shoes with.

Thursday Oct. 6th, 1864. It is cooler and looked less like rain this morning than it has in some time. This evening it appeared to clear off. The creek is very high. 15 or 20 Yankees went by here this

morning, came back about dark, did not stop here. This morning I opened a package of beautiful painted and mottoed cards, and let the children all choose one to be marked with their name, and given them for good behavior. They are to conquer their worst fault, and learn their lessons well. S. Ford and her little niece, Laura Lanier, spent the evening here. John [Ford] was at cousin Eliza's. My baby appears to be quite sick to day. I have given her three small doses of Calomel, and she appears quite sick to night, with right smart fever and sick stomach. I feel quite uneasy about her. I would not be surprised if Mattie were having chills, he has forever and head ache to night.

Friday Oct. 7th, 1864. It has been a beautiful day, cool and clear. I am afraid we will soon have frost, and we have not made our molasses yet. John Ford here to day, spent the day, Will helping him net on his Partridge net. After he left,



cousin Eliza came over and sat a while, she says she had just heard that we had another big fight in Virginia, and that Lee had whipped Grant again. And that Gen. Forrest had whipped Rousseau badly about Shelbyville. I hope it is true. It is said also that Buford took off from Athens, quantities of fine horses, cattle, and wagons loaded with meat. Dr. Searcy came down to see Lucy to day.

Saturday Oct. 8th, 1864.

Another beautiful day, but the cold pinches, we are not prepared for it. I spent this morning looking over clothes and mending stockings. The children have commenced hunting chestnuts, but the negroes get ahead of them. There are a great many Scaly barks [hickory nuts] this fall but we have no way to get them. Mr. Otey is busy getting his Sugar cane ready to grind, we can get the use of cousin Eliza's mill the first of next week. Cousin Eliza sent over here for some peaches this

morning. She sent me a pitcher of Syrup, it was very nice. Mr. Strong came about dinner time and sat a while. After dinner, Miss A. Wade came and spent the evening. The house was turned up side down, Nina cleaning up, but it is Saturday evening. Will is not feeling so well this evening. Mr. Otey and Father worked themselves down. This evening we killed a little Beef. Lucy is a good deal better, she is getting over her spell quicker than I expected. Mattie has had two or three chills, I am giving him Quinine to day. He had quite a hot fever last night. It is an awful state of society here now. If we only think of it, we have patience with everything and not let on that any thing is amiss, we can't help ourselves and if we commense reproving the servants we only make matters worse. I confess I do not know what to do, but I wish that Parthenia and her family had never come home while the Yankees are here. Her and her whole



family are as mean as they can be.

Sunday Oct. 9th, 1864.

This morning we had heavy frost. It is clear and cold, it is beautiful weather. Our grapes have not been gathered yet, nor the sugar cane ground. We must gather the grapes tomorrow, and make a little wine. Mr. Otey and Father went to church this morning. I generally let Orleana²⁵ have half of every Sunday, so she wnt out this morning, and Imogene nursed Lucy. She begs for Imogene to take her all the time anyhow.

Matt Wyche is taking Quinine again to day, he had no chills yesterday. Will is complaining of feeling badly, but he has scarcely any cough at all. I was taken at the dinner table today, with a spell of my heart, it has lasted all day. Cousin Eliza and Tommie were over here this evening.

Monday Oct. 10th, 1864.

Another frost this morning. I had the grapes gathered this morning, but we can't have them pressed until I

have the cider mill home. I made Nina and Mollie pick all the tomatoes they could find today. I was sick all night with my heart and head ache, and in bed all day. I have not been able to fix any work today for any one.

Parthenia patching father's pants, Nina making Molasses, peach preserves. Father getting well again, he and Mr. Otey are hard at work on the Sugar cane, commenced pressing the cane to day. Mr. Otey did not sleep well last night; his bowels were hurting him all night. Today he is taking Opium pills. He will each too much, and now he is working too much. Fannie Strong²⁶ called this evening. I have promised to send Imogene to her as a music scholar. All day sick with my head and heart. Lucy and Mattie are better, Will better, but complaining. Tom came back to day from Nashville.

Tuesday Oct. 11th, 1864. It is a beautiful day, I am up again, but feel quite



weak. I picked wool all this morning, and tried to make the children pick also. I want to send it to be carded on Friday. This evening I made some delightful Tomato Catchup but did not bottle it. Will and I, with Nina's help, pressed out the grapes this evening, got about two gallons and a quart of juice. I sweetened a gallon and the pints with sugar, the rest I sweetened with sugar cane syrup. Matt Wyche is quite sick to day. I think he has had another chill. I have heard that he waded in the water yesterday, perhaps that is the cause of it. The little fellow is very patient in his sickness, he takes his medicine well. I am afraid the damp weather we have had will cause a good many chill. Will has had slight fever lately. Mr. Otey's bowels not right yet but not exactly running off. Father made 18 gallons Syrup today, but tires himself nearly to death. Cousin Eliza sent over to see if I would get to town with her

tomorrow. I do not know what to do.

Wednesday Oct. 12th, 1864. It is cloudy this morning, but I do not think it will rain. I have concluded to go to town with cousin Eliza, Willie Walter goes on horseback, riding old Commodore. We went in the Court house, and there found Mr. or rather judge Dox, who got our passes for us without any difficulty, for which we are much obliged.

It is strange how we can get used to anything, before this war commenced I could not bear the idea of going inside of the court house. Now, I walk [in] it as indifferently, and composedly, as if it were some servant's dwelling. The thought that it is for my husband and family, with God's help, carries me through it all. I saw Sidney Darwin to day, he appears to be a good friend to us. I could not find my mare, I am afraid I never will. I was offered a fine cooking stove to day for \$40 but did not have the money to buy it. I



am very sorry I cannot get it. Capt. Bond who owes us for our Beef cattle, paid me 28 and $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. sugar and \$10 on my act. [account], and cousin E. \$20. My sugar was equivalent to \$10.

Matt Wyche was quite sick last night, but is better to night. Mr. Otey's bowels are not quite right, yet. Got Mr. Otey's pants cut out, Will's coat pattern. Bought Father some Tobacco. Got some Opium pills for Mr. O.

Thursday Oct. 13th, 1864. Another clear, pretty day. Father gets up before day, and goes to the sugar mill, and makes the fire. I hate to see him old as he is, working so much, but he will do it. Lucy was quite hoarse last night, she is very troublesome at night, she wants Imogene all the time. This morning a forage train passed around our place, and went to Bob Strong's and filled their wagons. Some of the men passed through the creek bottom, and went to the sugar mill, and the Lieut. Ordered his men to take

Kinly, Jack, Bill Ed, and Chimp²⁷ and carry them off with them, did not ask any questions at all. The Lieut. Then went over to cousin Eliza's, probably thinking that they belonged there. Mr. Otey told me to run over there, and see the officer and see if I could not get them off. When I got to cousin Eliza's beg gate, I was out of breath and my heard beating very fast. There I met the officer, and I represented our situation to him and told him how helpless our family were. He turned around to Kinly and Jack and told them to go back. As for the other two, they would have to go, and without waiting for a reply put spurs to his horse, and rode on ahead of his men, leaving me both astonished and distressed. The whole conversation had not occupied three minutes. I was and am now very much distressed that they should have taken Mr. Pruitt's negroes, after he was so kind as to let them help us make our molasses, and their leaving those hired



here. Makes it look as if I had chosen them and let his go. I begged for all, and I suppose his selection was just "happen so". I sent Mr. Pruitt word immediately, and he and Dr. Searcy went by not long afterwards, to try and get them back. We live in constant trouble. Mr. Otey has worked so hard this week that it has made him sick, his bowels not easy or right yet.

Tom, our poor runaway, is here again to day, he seems very unhappy, he asked Mr. Otey tonight to get him some tools and leather, and let him stay up stairs, and make shoes. Mr. Otey did not tell him what he would do, or he does not know whether to let Tome come home to stay or not. My dear husband is quite sick to night, he thinks he is taking a bad cold. He complains of a pain in his left side, that I don't like. I do not know the cause of it. My dear brother Will is better to day. Mattie, clear of fever or chill to day. John Ford here this evening. I

have been busy, and all hands, picking wool all day.

Friday Oct. 14th, 1864.

We had frost this morning, but it has been cloudy most all day. I think it is most too cool to rain. I got every little sleep last night, Mr. Otey was quite sick all night, and I was up with him. He said his bowels pained him, and he was sore and sick all over. This morning he was easier, but has kept his bed all day. He has taken two Opium pills to day and they make him very sleepy. I cooked him some rice to day, he eat a little of it. Will and Imogene have been trying all the week to go over to cousin Eliza's, so to day I told them to wait no longer, but go now, and if I needed them, I would send for them. Nina has been picking wool this morning, this evening washing her clothes.

Matt Wyche is up to day and at play. I am afraid he will be imprudent and have another chill. Mr. Pruitt and Dr. Searcy got back their boys that were taken yesterday, but they could



not get poor Chimp. I will try when I go down next. I have a beautiful bouquet of roses all the winter. The perfume of flowers always recalls pleasant and sweet recollections, sometimes undefined, sometimes very distinct.

When I was in town the other day, I was told that Armssie²⁸ [?] Otey had sent his uncle Matt or me word to send him two pair of yarn socks and a blanket or quilt. I shall try and send them, though I do not know now where I will get them from as I have 10 pair of feet to get stockings for this winder, and not much done toward it, as yet. And I have given long ago all the bed clothes I had to spare, to our poor soldiers. I will try and do what poor Armssie requests.

Saturday Oct. 15th, 1864. Frost again this morning, busy helping put away molasses. Mr. Otey up to day, but I am afraid he has broken himself down about the molasses, and helping to gather Apples. He and father and the

chaps finished gathering Apples to day. I expect we have about 30 bushels in all. Nina cleaning up. Will put a new string to the clock to day. Cousin Eliza here this morning, also Charley Strong. Finished the molasses yesterday, made 50 gallons. Mr. Pruitt has got Chimp back again.

Sunday Oct. 16th, 1864.

Last night it rained a little, this morning it is clear but a heavy dew has fallen, and no frost. Had chicken, rolls and coffee for breakfast this morning, as it was Sunday. Mr. Otey did not sleep well last night, he worked too hard yesterday. He complains of feeling badly all over, but he eat a hearty breakfast, he generally has appetite. Last night I did not sleep any until most 3 o'clock, so I feel quite badly to day. Lucy is very troublesome at night. Father and Mr. Otey went to church this morning. I could not go, I had no way. Mr. Strong here again to day. Walter and Mollie read some in the Testament to day. They went to the



chestnut trees in the field, and got a hundred chestnuts spires [?]. Mattie is lying about his evening, I am afraid he is sick.

Will seems better this evening than he has been in some time. He walked with me to the bottom of the yard, and into the road, to see if Mr. Otey was coming. We saw him coming on old Mary Jane. He was feeling very badly, said he had been sick all day. The whites of his eyes were quite yellow, and his skin yellower than usual, and Dr. Searcy thought he was taking the jaundice. To night I have given him a Blue pill with a little Calomel (Father said about 3 grains) in it. He spent the day at John Pruitt's. I gave Father and Will a bottle of Brandy apiece.

Monday Oct. 17th, 1864.

Last night Mr. Otey slept a little better than he did the night before. But he thinks a great deal about his situation, he says he is as thin as a shed. I would give anything in the world to have his health restored. I

was very busy this morning straining off my wine. I have 5 bottles sweetened with Syrup and 9 sweetened with sugar. I also filled 6 bottles with Tomato Catchup. Father went off to the corn field gathering corn, and Mr. Otey hated to be doing nothing, so he went to grinding Cider. I made Tom come and help him, he made 15 gallons. Tom finished digging Ground Peas today, then went to gathering corn. Tonight I had everything made ready for Father an early breakfast in the morning, he speaks of going with Kinly to mills.

Tuesday 18th, 1864. It rained a little this morning, but not much. None the rest of the day. Father got off early to mill this morning, carried my wool with him. He brought home some beautiful flour, and got the wool carded into rolls and paid 20 cts. A lb. for carding. He bought me two pair of wool and cotton socks for Armssie, paid \$1.25 cts. A pair for them. I wrote to Armssie to night.



Will seems a good deal better. He went to the cotton patch to day, and picked 6 lbs. Willie Walter and Mollie picked white peas this evening. I had some cider boiled to day. Imogene made some molasses candy this evening. Zenia came here to day for some Apples for sister Maria, I think I gave her most a bushel. My baby is very unwell to night, she has a bad cold, and coughs a good deal, and she won't take medicine. I had to whip the poor little thing to night to make her take her medicine. Mattie cried like I was whipping him. Mr. Otey slept tolerably well last night, his pill has acted twice. He thinks it has stirred up the bile a little, but he complains of feeling quite badly. What would I not give if he were well. Gave Mr. Otey a bottle of Brandy.

Wednesday 19th, 1864.

This morning early, before sun up, as I was dressing, I heard someone say, "why, there is a Yankee running after a negro," and sure

enough, across the bottom of the front yard ran a Yankee negro with his gun, after a negro man in his every day dress. First one negro and then another, of cousin Eliza's, one of Charles Strong's and our Tom, streaked it across our lots at the north side of our house, and not a hundred yards from the hindmost, the Yankee negros ran. Six shots were fired at them, but all missed. None were hurt or caught, but the poor negroes were frightened nearly to death. Tom came in to night and said he thought he had better go and give himself up than to lead this kind of life. I would have given a heap to have had this kind of life. I would have given a heap to have had Joe Ellet here this morning. After everything was quiet, the Yankee niggers gone, cousin E. and I went to Huntsville. We did not see Mr. Dox, and Capt. Bond told us that he was mad as the Devil with some of his officer, so we got mothering out of him. Roubler [?] gave us 5 lbs.



flour apiece. Mr. Otey took no pill last night, says he feels a little better this morning. Gave Mrs. Dox, Mrs. Dr. Patton, Capt. Bond and Charly Hereford apples. Maj. Stout gave cousin E. and myself half a quire of paper, 2 pencils and a pen holder apiece. I called on Mrs. Chadie. We were out of meat so I had to buy some. I was too late so only got a soup bone, had to pay 50 cts. For it.

Thursday 20 Oct., 1864.

This morning early, Johnny Russel rode up and said his uncle John said if I wanted to go to Neaves's, to have his horse put in the buggy and go up there, and he would go with me. So after consulting with Mr. Otey I concluded to go. I got off about 8 o'clock and got there about 10, found them up, but not well. Carried Mrs. Neaves a little Sugar and Tea, and some Turnips. She had ready for me 8 and $\frac{1}{2}$ yds. Grey jeans for Will, 2 yds Brown jeans and 2 yds. Checked cloth. I was very glad indeed to get the cloth. Mr. Otey said he felt right

smart this morning, and after I left, he went to picking cotton, and to night he says his bowels feel unpleasant and ill at ease. I bought a pair of yarn socks to day, gave \$1.00 for them. Left some cotton thread for negroes at Mrs. Neaves. Stopped at sister Maria's this evening. Matt Wyche keeps very unwell, I think he is having chills again. I gave him Calomel to night, I will have to give him Quinine tomorrow. Brought home money and jewelry to night from N.'s.

Sunday Oct. 23rd, 1864.

This is a beautiful day. Bro. Bone preaches in Meridianville to day. One of our mules balks, so Kinly borrowed an old mare from cousin E. and Will, cousin Eliza, and Ellise and I went to church in our carriage, thankful for any chance to get there. Our team is quite a contrast however, to our beautiful blacks of "long ago". I should feel quite glad if I had two old horses to



pull me, that no one would take from us. John Ford took dinner with us, rather a scant one, a real Sunday dinner, for we are out of meat of any kind. We have had no meat on our table since Friday morning, and God knows where we shall get any from. We do not know our blessings until they depart. Mattie taking Quinine to day, he seems clear of fever and better.

Monday Oct. 24th, 1864.

Mattie appears better this morning, but Imogene has taken a violent cold, and is very unwell. Cousin Eliza sent over to see if I would go to town with her. I did not know what to do, but Imogene thought she was well enough to take care of the baby so I went. I was anxious to see if Capt. Bond would pay us for our cattle. I found the officials in good humor and done better than I expected. Got some sort of protection for our corn, and 50 lbs. of meat and 17 dollars, were paid on my beef act. by Capt. Bond, and I thank my Heavenly father for it. We

went to three or four stores, they have a good many goods in town by very high. I got two pair of shoes for the children, had to pay \$4.75 apiece for them. We were very late getting home we had so much to do. I found the children all very unwell when I got home. Mattie with some fever again.

Tuesday Oct. 25th. This is a beautiful day, one ought to stay out of doors to enjoy it. I have been very busy all day. Weighed out meat this morning and the rest of the day cutting out Will's coat and lining. Poor little Mattie is quite sick this morning, right smart fever. Imogene's throat very sore, this evening I sent for Dr. Searcy. He fixed medicine for Mattie, and cauterized Imogene's throat. Mr. Otey killed a bird with a rock this morning, he says they were whistling all around him. It will be nice for Mattie in the morning. He went fishing this evening and caught a mess of Suckers. Mr. Otey appears to be better since



the cool weather began. I hope he will have no more boils this winter. Commenced Will's coat to day.

Wednesday Oct. 26th. It has been raining most all day. It held up late this evening and Mr. Otey and father went out with the net, but caught nothing. I bottled my boiled Cider this morning and gave Father, Mr. Otey, and Will a fresh bottle. Raining so that I have not done much to Will's coat to day. Mr. Otey commenced taking "Nitro Muriatic Acid" to day. Poor little Mattie has been quite sick today. I have given him Quinine to day according to directions and I think he has had fever all day. I think he is a right sick child. I am afraid the disease will run into Typhoid fever. I sent for Dr. Searcy this evening, but he did not give him anything, says he will be by early in the morning. Dear little Mattie has held me reading to him the last two nights in my Testament. He seems to love it, and to understand,

and it is really a comfort to him to pray. Imogene has been quite sick to day with her throat. Made some yeast to day. Maria made some leaven today also.

Monday, Nov. 28th.

1864. It has been now a month since I wrote any in my book and a retrospect of the past month will be sad and difficult also to make. Mattie Wyche had a long tedious spell that required nursing, and no medicine. Will, sick with jaundice and bad cold, and in fact all of [us] have been sick, but we all seem to be better now. How shocked and distressed we were to hear of poor, dear little Octa's death, I do not know when we will get over it. And Arthur also, it made us all very sad. Then right around us, old Mr. Berry Wade, [and] Fulton Ford died within a few hours of one another, and a week afterwards poor Nugent was murdered. Oh, we have had an awful time this month, sickness, sorrow, and trouble. I don't believe I can even give an inventory of



what we have suffered this month. It is useless to try. We were most starved for a while, no weather to kill meat in, and before it turned cold, someone stole every hog out of the pen, but two. Mr. Otey was sick at the time, and it made him a great deal worse, and poor Nugent's death aggravated his disease also. So, one Sunday while he was sick I found myself without a pound or scrap of meat. Lard or butter to save our lives. We had not had a pound of meat last for seasoning a week. The very last little scrap gave out on Sunday. I had half a chicken for breakfast also two birds, and for dinner the other half chicken I sent that to Mr. Otey and Will, who were sick in my room. And then sat down to the table and looked around. The children were waiting to be helped, six of them, and Father had helped himself to stewed fruit. Potatoes, and bread, no milk, but water. And I looked at him and then at his plate, and it seemed so

unreal and ridiculous that I burst out laughing, but other thoughts soon sent me from the table to finish a hearty fit of crying. I passed it off to the children as a fit of laughing hysterics. And poor things, they did not know that their Mother was crying for them. I never saw starvation so close to me before. I took violent cold, waiting on Mr. Otey when he was sick, and that combined with my hearty fit of crying, put me in bed for 4 or 5 days.

[At this point, Octavia ceased writing again for about two months, not resuming her journal until February 5, 1865. However, on December 12, 1864 she answered a disturbing letter from her sister Ella, who had taken refuge from the Yankees in south Alabama (perhaps Mobile), along with her husband Dr. Burke and the John Robinson and James B. Robinson families. Madison's sisters, Caroline and Frances, were the wives of John and James,



respectively. Ella had written to Octavia about how distressed she was upon hearing that Octavia had taken the Yankee "oath". Following is Octavia's reply, starting with a postscript that was written at right angles across the heading of the letter to Ella]:

We did not dare to write our situation while the Yank[ees] were in here for fear the letter would be captured. Rest assured my dear sister, our subscribing to their oath was a perfect sacrifice of my self to our family.

Green Lawn

Dec. 12th '64
Mrs. Ella Burke.

My dear sister,

Your letter was received to day through Johnnie [probably the son of John and Caroline Robinson of Oaklawn], who called here and staid several hours. I was very glad to hear from you, my dear sister, and has so much rather have seen you in person.

I am very sorry you have had your feelings hurt by those representations of my taking "the oath". I should have guarded against it by telling you of it long ago, but had no idea that any one up here would think it worth their while to chronicle my acts.

I have never felt like I had taken the oath, as though I have signed my name to such a document, which was all that was required of me, and I have no idea that the person who wrote about it wrote any thing but "guess work," as it was taken in April or May, and the person who wrote about it, no doubt thought it was taken to buy goods, as no one could buy goods without taking it. Your Brother [in-law] Matt's health was such that he could go neither North or South [to flee the Yankees], and he did not want to take the oath. I was violently opposed to his taking it, and if I had not taken it, he would have done it, and my pride was for my husband more than myself, and



believe me my dear sister, it is only a matter of pride.

We who are in the enemy's lines, with their clutch, as it were, on our throats, can do our cause no harm by taking their oath. And it is generally understood that it lasts only while they hold possession of our part of the country. So I subscribed to their oath to keep my husband, brother, or Father from taking it, and to keep my family of 10 whites ones from beggary or starvation. We did not have a cent of money that would buy us a morsel of meat, and they had taken everything from us but our cattle, and this fall have taken them, except one milk cow. And we had vouchers for [al]most 100 dollars, and we could not sell them, even, unless we took the oath or got a strong Union citizen to certify that we are loyal to the U. S. government. We could not do that, and I thought it more honorable and less degrading to take the oath in the manner I did, than to

beg, to fawn on our enemies, or borrow, when we saw no way to pay our debts. We have heard that everything is gone [on our plantation] in Miss. But the land. They have taken everything here, almost, except the house and furniture. Every Negros we had, had been taken from us or [the negroes] left us, but two women and one little boy. Your brother Matt was sick and nearly distracted about how we were to live, no one to make us any bread. Will was sick, and Willie Walter had never been strong since he had the pneumonia in the spring, and it was distinctly understood between me and the "provost Marshal" that I took it "because my husband was sick, and I had to attend to his business, and that it was for business purposes". No one can with truth say that I did it willingly. It was the hardest task I eve did, but I made it subject of prayer and asked my "Heavenly father" to help me and give me strength to do what was



right, whether I wanted to or not. And I feel confident he will fix it all right with those whose good opinion I care for. As for the rest, well, let them alone. My reporter must have had their "hands full," [since] it would be an easy matter to name those who have not taken the oath, but to name all who did, would have kept them very busy.

The people of South Ala., as any other place, where they have laws to protect them, a plenty to eat, and to wear, secure in the midst of friends are not competent to judge of what is right and *proper, for a people oppressed as we have been, to do, some with starvation staring us in the face, some shot down in the midst of their families, some taken up on mere suspicion and thrown in to a loathsome jail. And others with their houses burnt down, only because they may have a soldier friend or relation, who they cannot punish, so punish their friends. All this and more we have borne for the last eighteen

months, and instead of the sympathy of people farther south, who have never known the terrors of Yankee rule, we get only execrations and malicious slanders. I have not heard it from you my dear sister, but have heard it from others that by the people farther south, we of North Ala. Are spoken of with great bitterness and contempt. But I think if ever they are tried the same way, they will not come out of it any nobler than we have. Of course, we think we have the sympathy of our refugee friends, but none of you can know what we have suffered, though I think our family have suffered more than any of our acquaintances because we have had no cotton to sell to get money to buy the necessities of life with.

We are all very anxious for all of our kinfolks to come back. I am afraid they are too well fixed to be in a hurry about it. Ella, I won't deceive you, we are living very hard, but if you and Dr. Burke can stand our



fare, we will share all we have with you. I don't want you to think we are living as well as we were when you left, but you might come and try it and see if you can stand it. No Yankees here now and we are beginning to straighten up and feel free once more. We are all very anxious for you and Dr. Burke to come up. Imogene and I are afraid to fix a room for you, for fear you won't come. Mr. Otey has been a little better since the Yankees have left. He has brought his rifle to light and has killed squirrels and duck already. There is plenty of game all around. Father too, has his traps, he has caught several rabbits and 6 partridges. Will had the jaundice this fall, and they left him in a weak state of health, which caused him to have chills. I think though, they will soon leave him.

I received a letter from dear sister Frances by Johnie, which I must answer. My dear sister, you must not grieve too deeply for dear little Octie. You never heard

the dear little "angel" begging for something to eat, or have to eat dry biscuit for her supper. Whenever I hear Lucy begging for milk of butter, I would think of dear little Octie, whose wants are all supplied.

Our poor children have all run wild, they are perfectly uncivilized, and I have no heart to manage them, or do anything. I strove for so long to be cheerful and pleasant when I felt like my heart was breaking, that my spirits have given way, and I do believe if the Yankees had staid here a month longer, it would have most killed me. Give a good deal of love to sister Caroline and family for me. Tell them I am very anxious for them to come back, but I do not know what they will do about living in that house. [Oaklawn had been used as Federal officers' quarters]. I should think it could be cleaned out entirely. I am in hopes you will [meet?] this letter. If you do, and sister Caroline has heard the same things about me that



you have, you can use your own judgement about sending it on to her, by Johnnie. I hope I have satisfied you, but it is hard to explain any thing satisfactorily by letter. Mr. Otey sends his love to you, Dr. Burke, sister Caroline's and sister Frances' families. Will, Imogene, also. Give my love to Dr. Burke also. I hope to see you all soon, and may God bless and take care of you, is the prayer of your affectionate sister,

Octavia A. Otey.

[Another postscript]
Come up as soon as you can. We are none of us well. Will has to stay in bed half every day to keep off chills. Tell sister Frances I would answer her letter by Johnnie, but have been very sick ever since I received your letter. Just able to write to you.

O.

Feb. 5th, 1865. This is Sunday night. Time passes sadly with me, with all of us

I think. Mr. Otey lies on the "tete tete" before my room fire, and Will on another one before the parlor fire, both sick, or quite unwell. On last Friday night, Mr. Otey's bowels got out of order, again, for the first time he thinks since the attack he had in the Christmas. [sic] I do hope this one will not be a sever one. He has been laid up about 10 days lately with boils, very bad ones indeed, two on his arm and one on his breast, and during that time his bowels were better, had only one action during the day. He is very weak and not able to do much. Last Wednesday Mr. Otey felt so much better than usual, that he went fishing with Mr. Strong, and Thursday he went fishing also, and Friday him and Father went bird netting, but caught nothing, and I think over exertion may have brought on this spell. Poor dear Will has had a hard time also. The jaundice left him in a weak state of health, and for two weeks or more during the



last of Dec. and first of Jan., he had to lie a bed half the day to keep off rigors and fever. I think he is better in some respects now, but very weak. He appeared stronger to day I thought than he had been for several days.

Feb. 6th, 1865. Cold and unlikely this morning and trying to snow to night. Mr. Otey a little better to day. This evening he got his old violin and fixed it up, and played on it for the first time in two years. I hope he will keep it up. Will is better, also, today. He says he feels stronger, I do hope he will continue to improve. Ella plays a good deal on the piano now, Mr. Sullivan calls for it every day now. He seems quite at home. Father caught a duck in his trap yesterday, and one again to day. I cut out Willie Walter's new pants to day, and gave to Parthenia to make. The poor boy is in rags, he has worn one pair ever since November, and they are now nothing but rags.

Feb. 7th, 1865. This morning the ground is covered two inches deep in snow, and every limb of tree, twig, or leaf covered with snow, it did look beautiful. Mr. Otey and Will still about the same, both complain of great weakness, and lie down a great deal. Will missed his rigors and fever to day. Mr. Otey's bowels are not checked yet. He played on the violin again to day. It is so hard for me to attend to other duties, and my mind on them all the time, and harder still to appear or be cheerful when I don't feel so. I do wish I could give them something to strengthen them. Nina commenced ripping my black silk dress to day. I am going to turn it.

Feb. 8th, 1865. The ground is still covered with snow, it has melted very little. The baby, Lucy is very fretful and irritable, I hope she is not sick. I think I am tired on every side now. It is so hard to be truly patient, and submissive to the will of God. My daily prayer is to



feel and to say "thy will Oh! God, be done". Will seems better and stronger to day, has had no cold chills or fevers. He and Mr. Otey were working on Willie Walter's old gun most all day. I know if fatigued them both. To night, Mr. Otey is very unwell, complaining of a gnawing sensation around his navel, and pain in his bowels. He is very low spirited also. He is not asleep on the "tete tete" before the fire. My poor dear husband, I wish he could get well.

Feb. 9th. Snow still on the ground but melting a little. Quite cold also. Mr. Otey and Will about the same, I do not think any worse. Will is cheerful but quite weak, but Mr. Otey is very low spirited. I feel quite heart broken about them. Ella is quite sick to day with Neuralgia in her head. Father caught in his and Mr. Otey's traps this morning three wild ducks, and this evening, three more. I sent two over to cousin Eliza. Mr. Otey had

one action to day and 1 more to night.

Feb. Sunday 12th, 1865.

Two days have passed since I wrote any. Friday, I forgot why I did not write, and yesterday I went to town with cousin Eliza, and came home with a very bad sick headache, and was very sick all night. Gen. Kimbal gave me an order to get some sugar and whiskey. I was very glad indeed, as we can get things cheaper at the Commissary stores than we can anywhere else. I got two gallons of whiskey for \$4.30 cts. And sugar for 21cts. A pound and got 20 lbs. Gen. Kimbal is very kind to the citizens, and God knows we need a friend. Capt. Bond lost my receipt from Bellew [?] for 40 dollars. Gen. Stanley says if I will write to Col. Anderson, that he will endorse it and send it to him. Will has seemed better today than usual, but Mr. Otey has been quite sick to night. He went with Father up to Meridianville this morning and staid all day, and came back feeling very



badly and got worse after dark. He complained of being very sick at the stomach, but did not throw up. He had an action and has seemed easier since then.

Feb. Sunday 19th, 1865.

Well, all this week I have been sick with Neuralgia, my is [sic] still swollen with it. On last Friday I was very ill with a spell with my heart more violent than usual. I think Will continues to improve. Mr. Otey has been very unwell and very weak all this week, and as low in spirits also. I think his spirits have great effect on his health. Yesterday morning he laid down on the "tete tete" too weak apparently to move, and I at last persuaded him to ride out in the buggy. He was gone until 12 o'clock and when he came back he found bro. Saunders here, who spent the day here, so instead of lieing down as usual, he had to set up and talk, and Dr. Searcy and Cornelia came and spent the evening and Mr. Otey played on the violin, so he

had to rouse him self and I thought he was better for it. I made him strong Red Oak tea, and that with Johnson water seemed to check his bowels. He slept well last night and got up this morning and dressed, and said he felt better, eat a couple of eggs, two rolls, and drank a cup of coffee for breakfast, and about half an hour afterwards, he complained of being very sick, his head swimming, and it is now two o'clock, and he is lieing here sleeping quietly, his sick spell seems mostly to have worn off but he lies here and appears to sleep.

This evening got up and sat out in the gallery about and hour and a half or two hours, but complained a good deal all the time. About dark, he had a very consistent, and I thought, good action, but untill he went to bed he seemed quite sick.

Feb. 28th, 1865. Since I wrote last, Mr. Otey and I have both been quite sick, I with my heart, he with his bowels, but thanks to our



Heavenly Father, we are both better now, after a very sick day last Saturday, we are both better. Mr. Otey's bowels are in a better condition than they have been in, in some time. He is drinking Red oak bark and Johnson water, they seem to control his bowels. To day he was well enough to take me in the buggy to Charley Thomas's, he came back quite tired however. Last Saturday, I feared he never would drive wagon any where. Some one stole my Turkey gobbler. I tried to day to swap my hen for one, but could not find one.

Bought 3 gallons of Coal oil last week and have used two lamps full already, had my lamp filled fresh last night. Came home to night and found Willie Walter with a sore throat and some fever, gave him Blue Moss [?] and Calomel, and rubbed outside his throat with Liniament, and Ella touched his tonsils with Turpentine. I do hope the poor child is not going to be sick much, just exactly a year ago, he was taken

violently with Pneumonia, and Will aos; he [Will] seems better the last two weeks, he is now taking Halls Balsam for the Lungs, he thinks it does him good. Left some money with old Mrs. McCoa, she says I can get 75 cts. worth of butter by next Saturday, namely 1 lb. and a half.

March Sunday night

14th. My poor dear husband quite sick again to night, oh that he could be spared to us. If it were not for our poor children, I would want to die at the same time that he does.

[That was the last entry Octavia made in her journal untill the day her husband died, June 2, 1865. One can imagine the pain and anguish they both went through during those last two and a half months of his life, she finally admitting to herself that he would not be spared. As if it were not hard enough for Octavia to see her husband suffer terribly and know that he would soon die, all the while caring for her ill brother, she had to bear the



pain of losing her father during the final weeks of her husband's illness. John Kirkland died April 4, 1865, just a few days before General Lee surrendered at Appomattox. In the midst of all her personal sorrow, it is not surprising that Octavia did not write about the end of the War. When she again picked up her pen and put ink to paper, she wrote in detail of Madison's final hours:]

June 2nd, '65. Oh my God, what shall I do, my poor dear husband is gone, he has left me and his poor little children here all alone, how can I live without him. No early being can sympathize with me like he did. He has been confined to his bed about two months and a half, and bore all his sufferings with patience and fortitude that I never saw equaled. He has left an example to his family and friends that I hope his children and myself may be enabled to follow. Yesterday I talked to him about his situation a little. I told him I knew he was very sick,

and asked him if there was anything I could do for him. He said I could pray for him. I then asked him if it should please God to take him from us, if he would be willing to go? He said yes, without any hesitation. I told him how hard it would be for me to give him up, and not to disturb him self about the children, that I would take as good care as I could of them. I understood him to say that God would take care of us, but it was hard to understand him sometimes, for he could not swallow for two days before his death, except with great difficulty. Last night he would not rest at all untill I lay down by him and went to sleep. He thought of my comfort to the last. This morning he asked me to give him the bed pan. I gave it to him, and after a while he called me to take it.... I leaned over to him and helped him arrange his pillow. In a little while I saw him fix his eyes intently on [?]. I bent over him and asked him what he was



looking at. He did not answer me, but once I felt him press my hand. He passed away in less than five minutes, without a struggle, without a sigh, and was at rest. "he giveth his beloved sleep". When I was talking to him that morning, I tried to tell him (what words could not express) how much I loved him, how dear he had been and was now to me, that he had been the dearest, best husband in the world to me, my all. my everything; and asked him if I had ever worried him, or displeased him in any way, if he would forgive me. He said immediately "Oh yes' with such a touching, comforting manner.

I am very glad and thankful that I talked to him, and I feel that it was sufficient, but my heart's constant cry is, how can I give him up. The evening before he died I went into the next room, and he sent for me directly. And when I sat down on the bed by him, he said to me, "Real, don't leave me." ["Real" was his

pet name for Octavia—from her middle name Aurelia.] I know now that he was expecting death constantly, but oh my, I still had hope.... Two evening before his death, I was leaning over him or was by him, and he said "Real, I never shall get well." Then in a little while he said twice, Oh Real, Oh Real. I have no doubt now, but that then, the bitterness of death was passing. Would to God that had I known his death was so near, my eyes would not a moment have left that dear face. I regret now even the sleep I took the night before.... If I had known it was death, I think I should have told him, but could I have stood it, if I had known he would certainly die? I think I should have died myself, if I had fairly comprehended his situation. Oh my darling, may darling one. Would to God, I had died for thee.

June 3rd, '65. 25 verse, 18 chapter of Genesis, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right." Bro. Bone also read from 52 to 57 verse of



1st Corinthians. Sung Old
Hundred, and at the grave,
How firm a foundation.



¹ John Ford, a neighbor who lived about a mile and a half southeast of Green Lawn in the house now known as the Countess House on Countess Road.

² Kinley, a negro who belonged to Will Kirkland but also worked for the Oteys.

³ Parthenia, a negro who earlier in the war apparently had been conscripted by the Yankees to work for them; she returned to service at the Oteys in June 1864 and worked mainly as a seamstress and house servant.

⁴ Nina, a negro who served as a house servant and helped with the sewing.

⁵ Cook Maria, a negro who served as the family cook and was in charge of the family laundry.

⁶ Ella Kirkland Burke, Octavia's younger half-sister who, with her husband Dr. Burke, had moved to South Alabama temporarily for the sake of safety from the war.

⁷ Cap Robinson, Madison's nephew, was the son of Madison's sister Frances and James B. Robinson. Their plantation Forrestfield was near the intersection of Meridian Street and Oakwood Avenue. The house no longer exists.

⁸ Charles W. Strong, a neighbor who lived about a mile south of Green Lawn at what is now the intersection of U.S. Highway 231-431 and Cedarama Drive (the present Mount Charron area). Strong built the house in the mid 1830's, and although it still stands, its appearance has been modernized and changed completely.

⁹ Mrs. Pleas Strong, sister-in-law of Charley Strong.

¹⁰ Bob and Farmer Strong, probably brothers of Charley Strong. He had brothers named Robert and Hopson.

¹¹ John Pruitt, Madison's brother-in-law, was married to Madison's sister Maria. The Pruitts lived in Meridianville and owned a store there.

¹² Sister Maria, Madison's sister, married to John Pruitt.

¹³ Mrs. Searcy, probably the wife of Dr. Searcy of Meridianville who treated Madison.

¹⁴ Sister Caroline, Madison's sister, wife of John Robinson. Their plantation was Oaklawn. The house, still standing, is on Meridian Street at U.S. Highway 72 East.

¹⁵ Davis Battle, probably the son or grandson of Cousin Eliza; she had a son named Davis.

¹⁶ Mr. Dox, a judge in charge of giving out local travel passes at the courthouse, among other duties.

¹⁷ Wash, a negro belonging to the Oteys.

¹⁸ Tom, a negro belonging to the Oteys.



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- ¹⁹ Harriett Wade, an unmarried neighbor who lived about two or three miles southwest of Green Lawn (on what is now Bob Wade Lane). She lived with her unmarried sister Amanda on the plantation they inherited from their father David Wade. They, in turn, willed it to their nephew Robert B. Wade.
- ²⁰ Franky, one of Parthenia's eight children.
- ²¹ Anderson, a negro belonging to the Oteys.
- ²² Otey Pruitt, probably the son of Sister Maria and John Pruitt.
- ²³ Amanda Wade, sister of Harriett Wade. (See 19 above).
- ²⁴ Zenia, a negro belonging to the Pruitts.
- ²⁵ Orleana, one of Parthenia's daughters who was probably about Mollie Beck's age.
- ²⁶ Fannie Strong, a daughter of Charlie Strong.
- ²⁷ Bill, Ed, and Chimp, negros belonging to John Pruitt and Dr. Searcy.
- ²⁸ Armssie [?] Otey, a nephew of Madison. Madison had a brother named Armistead. Perhaps Armssie was his son.

SOURCES

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