

# JOHN DOOLEY'S CIVIL WAR



## An Irish American's Journey in the First Virginia Infantry Regiment

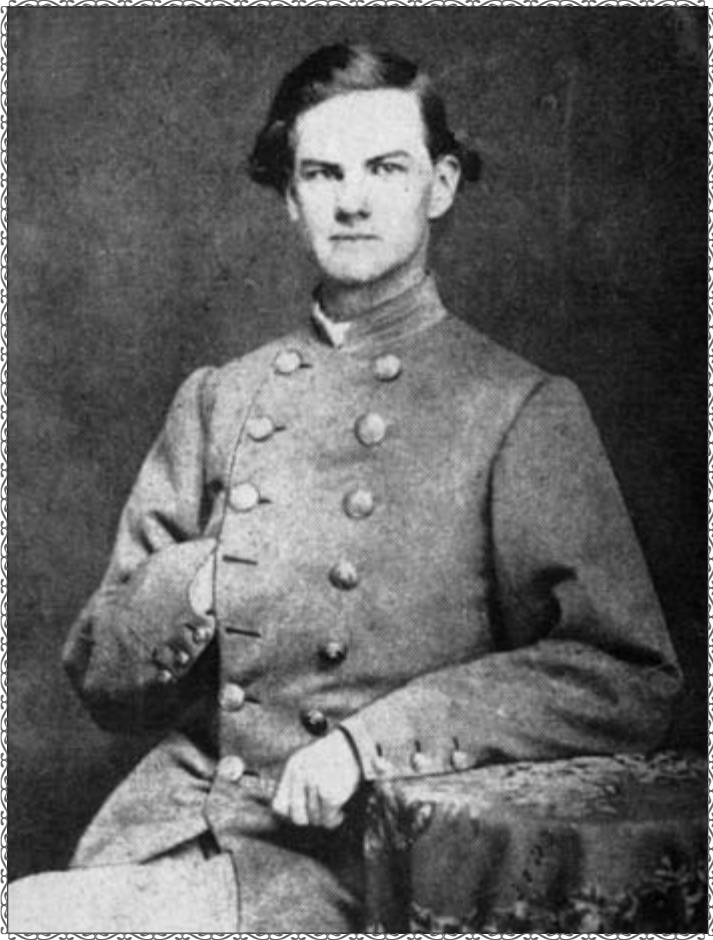
Edited by Robert Emmett Curran

*Voices of the Civil War*

Peter S. Carmichael, Series Editor



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The University of Tennessee Press / Knoxville



The Voices of the Civil War series makes available a variety of primary source materials that illuminate issues on the battlefield, the home front, and the western front, as well as other aspects of this historic era. The series contextualizes the personal accounts within the framework of the latest scholarship and expands established knowledge by offering new perspectives, new materials, and new voices.



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*Frontispiece:* John Edward Dooley, 1842–1873. Courtesy of Georgetown University Special Collections.

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*To Joseph Durkin, S.J.,  
who discovered John Dooley's story  
and began its telling*



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# INTRODUCTION

## History of a Journal

In the early 1940s Joseph Durkin, S.J., discovered the papers of John Edward Dooley in the archives of Georgetown University, where Dooley had been a student and, later, teacher. In 1945 Durkin published *John Dooley, Confederate Soldier: His War Journal*. Excerpts from this edition have been widely used by historians, particularly those relating to the Maryland, Fredericksburg, and Gettysburg campaigns. Durkin presumed at the time that he had reproduced virtually all of an original diary (so it was thought) that Dooley had kept from August 1862, when he joined the First Virginia Regiment at the Orange Court House, to July 1863, when he was captured at Gettysburg. Durkin supplemented this from what he described as “Series 2,” reflections on his wartime experience that Dooley had put down in the years after he entered the Society of Jesus in 1865.

The “War Diary,” recent events have shown, was not Dooley’s original diary but a partial, modified copy of the original that Dooley made, most likely in the summer of 1865, before he entered the Jesuits.<sup>1</sup> The original, we now know, ran from August 1862 to March 1865. It came into the possession of Dooley’s youngest sister, Josephine, probably just after Dooley’s death in 1873 (Josephine, along with her mother and James, Dooley’s brother, had been at his deathbed at Georgetown). It almost certainly was still in her possession when Joseph Durkin interviewed



Sketch of Josephine Dooley Houston, Dooley's youngest sister, who retained possession of his original diary for many years. Courtesy of the Maymont Foundation.

her in the early forties. Josephine gave him access to various artifacts of her brother, including letters written from prison and a photograph, but for some reason, perhaps loss of memory (she was well into her eighties at the time), she did not show him the diary. That, along with much other Dooley family memorabilia, eventually became the property of a great-great-grandniece, who, not realizing what she had (her great-grandmother had been estranged from the rest of the family), virtually gave the diary, along with many other Dooley Civil War artifacts, to an auction house that in 1997 sold the diary to a still unknown buyer for \$6,000.<sup>2</sup>

Among the Dooley papers at Georgetown are well over six hundred handwritten pages, including the fifty-five pages of "The War Diary," related to his war experience. In a precomputer age, it was virtually impossible to reconstruct the order of Dooley's writings. Large segments of his "War Notes," as much as two-thirds of the total corpus, Durkin simply omitted, which raises the question of whether he ever had access to all of Dooley's writings. The Georgetown archives were not professionally organized until the 1970s, nearly thirty years after Durkin discovered Dooley's papers. Even now, the papers, as originally put together after Dooley's death in 1873, are in what can only be described as a helter-skelter arrangement, with pages concerning one campaign, for instance,

promiscuously intermingled with those of several others. The result is to render Dooley's writings on the war a nearly impenetrable maze.

Durkin's absolute reliance on pencil and paper in copying Dooley's massive notes also had several unfortunate results, including a tendency to produce synopses of Dooley's material, which he presents as the original text itself, and the inconsistent use of ellipses to indicate omissions in the text.

The 1945 edition fails, in the end, to capture the full scope of Dooley's wartime experience, the oscillating rhythm of life on the campaign trail, in camp, prison, and on parole. It also does not recognize Dooley's utilization of his reminiscences as a testament to the Lost Cause. Too often the result is the re-creation of Dooley's experience as a series of snapshots. Lacking an adequate body of literature, particularly on Civil War prisons, the edition also falls short in putting Dooley's story within a larger context.

## **Experience and Memory**

Dooley's diary originated as a journal. Early in 1863, while in winter camp around Fredericksburg, John Dooley began to recapitulate, in quite general terms, what he had experienced over the past five months. There are few dates. Dooley is recalling the main features of the three campaigns (Second Manassas, Maryland, and Fredericksburg) in which he had been a participant. There is nothing recorded for January. In mid-February, when the First Virginia moves from Fredericksburg to new winter quarters below Richmond, there begin to be entries for a few specific dates. Then on March 5, Dooley writes: "commence a diary in order to keep the data, of various events, always at hand." The nature of the record changes dramatically, and dates, weather details, correspondence received and sent, books he is reading, etc., suddenly dominate the text. Still it is overall a bare-bones diary, recording mainly what he did on any particular day. There is, unlike his later "reminiscences" or "prison notes," virtually no commentary about the events of which he is a part. Dooley notes, for instance, in the entry under May 10 that, "having obtained a pass," he walked to his parent's home in Richmond. The next entry, May 16, mentions that his commanding officer, having warned Dooley's father that if he did not get back to camp by the previous evening he would place him under arrest, does precisely that later that day. Nothing more is heard of this until the twenty-second, when Dooley notes, "Released from arrest," the last we hear of this puzzling occurrence. Only in what Dooley calls his "Reminiscences of Pickett's

Division,” which recalls his experience from fall 1862 to the end of spring 1863, do we learn that Dooley’s commander gave him leave to visit Richmond in order to obtain funds for the regiment from the city government. In those later notes, Dooley explains that he decided against returning to camp on the afternoon that he concluded his business in Richmond and instead accompanied his family to the theater, where he encountered his colonel, who then informed Dooley’s father that his son absolutely had to be back in camp that evening. His arrest ensued upon his failure to do so.

As mentioned earlier, during the summer of 1865 Dooley copied and modified slightly the portion of the diary that covered events from August 1862 to July 3, 1863, when he was captured. There seems no doubt, given the specificity and dated detail of his notes on his prison experience, that Dooley brought his original diary with him to Frederick, Maryland, where he entered the Society of Jesus in September 1865. Internal evidence from his prison notes points to his having begun them sometime in the late sixties. Working from the original diary, Dooley expounded on the basic record of events and minimal commentary to give a much fuller portrayal of prison life at Johnson Island, how it changed over the course of the year and a half that he spent there, and how he reacted to the steadily declining fortunes of the Confederacy as Dooley tried to follow them, filtered as events were through the lens of Northern newspapers.

We know now that the original diary ended in mid-March 1865, when Dooley was paroled at City Point. From the notes that he later wrote about his war experience following his release from prison, it is clear that Dooley began a second diary to record his journey to western Virginia and North Carolina in the last days of the war. It seems also highly probable that Dooley brought this diary into the novitiate at Frederick and had it with him at Georgetown, when he continued to rework and interpret the narrative that he had recorded as a member of the First Virginia, from the onset of the Second Manassas campaign to the collapse of the Confederacy in April and May 1865.<sup>3</sup>

A hemorrhage, the first symptom of a tuberculosis Dooley had incurred during the war, forced Jesuit superiors early in 1867 to cut short his novitiate and return him to Georgetown, where his illness could be better treated. By 1868 he was increasingly in the infirmary as the maturing disease worked its pernicious will with him. In the Georgetown infirmary, working from the original diaries, he began to craft his “War Notes,” which, not counting the manuscript on his post-parole doings,

were ultimately five times the length of his original 100-page diary. From internal evidence, “My Trip to Gettysburg” seems to have been the initial manuscript he put together, followed by the four series of prison notes and then the “Maryland Campaign,” “Reminiscences of Pickett’s Division,” and “Trip to Lynchburg etc.,” in that order.

In the beginning of “Reminiscences of Pickett’s Division” Dooley notes that his purpose in writing them is “no more than to recall to memory, in as far as I can, whatever interesting circumstances attended our Fall, winter and spring campaigns of ’62 & ’63.” But he did have more in mind than interesting recollections. As historian David Thelan has noted, memory is not an automatic but rather constructed act. One’s contemporary need tends to act as a catalyst for memory; it determines how one selects, organizes, shapes, and interprets one’s recollection of experience.<sup>4</sup> For Dooley, the pressing need in the late 1860s to early 1870s was to resist Reconstruction, that baleful consequence of the South’s failure to secure its independence. The Lost Cause was the rhetorical means of resistance, and Dooley wove it through his hundreds of pages of war recollections to pursue his latest campaign.

It is clear that his writing was not simply for cathartic purposes. He had an audience in mind and no doubt hoped his notes would eventually find their way into print. Certainly there was ample reason for this hope by the time he began composing in 1868 or 1869. Memoirs by former Confederates of their war experiences had begun to appear well before Appomattox. One of Dooley’s Richmond friends, Anthony M. Keiley, published in 1866 *In Vinculis*, recounting his four months in Federal prisons. Dooley had good reason to believe that his plea for the Lost Cause would someday gain an audience. It would have surprised him, I suspect, that seven decades would elapse before his story began to find its way into print.

## The Southern Irish

Of the nearly 2 million Irish who immigrated to America in the forty years before the Civil War, only about 7 percent of them settled below the Potomac. In 1860 there were about 85,000 persons of Irish origin in the eleven states that would shortly form the Confederacy; they were, in fact, the largest immigrant group in the South. Like their Northern counterparts, the Southern Irish settled primarily in urban areas. In the major Southern cities, the Irish constituted a sizable minority, nearly a quarter of Savannah’s and Memphis’s white populations, 17 percent of New Orleans’s, 14 percent of Charleston’s, and 10 percent of Richmond’s.

Many of these urban Irish, exploiting the labor gaps that existed in an economy dominated by “the Peculiar Institution,” exhibited an upward mobility that brought them both economic success and stature in the community. They became an important bloc within the Democratic Party, and Irish journalists edited several of the leading Democratic papers in the South. Their political standing enabled them in the 1850s to defeat outright the forces of nativism in Charleston and Savannah and to limit the Know-Nothings’ success in Richmond and other major Southern cities. They became staunch defenders of slavery and the South’s right to secede.<sup>5</sup> The two songs that became rallying cries for the Southern cause during the war, “Dixie” and “The Bonnie Blue Flag,” were both written by Irishmen, Daniel Emmett and Harry McCarthy, respectively, both prominent in the world of minstrel entertainment.

One of the leading Irish spokesmen for Southern rights was John Mitchel, the radical nationalist who had, as editor of *The United Irishman* in Dublin in the late 1840s, been the first one of his generation to advocate armed resistance to Great Britain’s genocidal occupation of his homeland. For his advocacy the British exiled him in 1848, first to Bermuda, then to Van Dieman’s Land (Tasmania), from which he escaped in 1853 and made his way to New York. Even before his arrival, his reputation as an uncompromising voice of Irish independence who had been unjustly silenced had made him the leader of Irish American nationalists. In New York he established a new channel for promoting Irish nationhood, the *Citizen*, which quickly found broad popularity in the Irish community, its circulation perhaps reaching 50,000. Mitchel also began to reevaluate his perception of America as a republic to emulate. Capitalism, particularly in the North, had seriously eroded the republican values of his new country. Increasingly, the romantic, hierarchically minded Mitchel saw in the organic society of the South the true heir of republicanism in the United States. Slavery he reckoned to be an indispensable part of that society. So Mitchel took up its defense and attacked abolitionists for their hypocrisy in condemning chattel slavery while condoning the wage slavery that prevailed in Northern industry. Mitchel argued that slaves in the South were better treated than were Irish cottiers or English workers. Capitalism, he was convinced, was the driving force behind the antislavery movement that was threatening to drive the South to secession.

In 1857 Mitchel moved his family to Knoxville, where he renamed his paper the *Southern Citizen*. Ideology was clearly a major reason for his uprooting. The inability to find an audience for his message of ecu-

menical nationalism in religiously polarized New York was another. The *Southern Citizen* became a fire-eating journal promoting the reopening of the slave trade and other extreme views intended to provoke hostilities between North and South. Mitchel viewed the coming sectional conflict in terms of a commercial, manufacturing, and “money-brokering power” attempting to dominate an agrarian system that did not fit their interests. The parallels between North/South and England/Ireland were obvious to him.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the Southern Irish tended to view the sectional crisis in the United States through the lens of the situation in Ireland, a viewing in which the North played the English role in attempting to occupy the Irish South. When war came, Mitchel’s age (upper forties), asthma, and extreme near-sightedness kept him out of the fighting, but his three sons, John, James, and William (“Willie”), enlisted. Mitchel himself, besides serving in the Ambulance Corps, promoted the war through the same means by which he had clamored for secession—newspaper editing, first of the *Richmond Enquirer* and subsequently of the *Richmond Examiner*.

An estimated 40,000 Irish served in the Confederate army and navy, a higher percentage of the Irish of service age than that of their Northern counterparts.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the percentage of eligible Irish in the South, as in the North, who fought in the war was significantly below that of the general eligible population of the region. Those Irish who did wear the Gray often fought in units of their own. In the Army of Northern Virginia alone there were at least forty-five Irish companies, including the Montgomery Guard (Company C) of the Virginia First Infantry Regiment.<sup>8</sup> The Guard, named for an Irish Revolutionary War hero, General Richard Montgomery, was organized out of St. Peter’s Church in Richmond in 1849. Patrick Moore, one of the principal founders, became its first commander. The Guard traditionally paraded in their bottle-green uniforms in the annual St. Patrick’s Day parade. In the mid-1850s the Guard became Company C of the venerable First Virginia. In September 1860 Moore was named colonel of the First Virginia. John Dooley, the father and namesake of the diarist, took over as commander of Company C.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Dooleys of Richmond**

At the age of twenty-two, the elder Dooley had emigrated from County Limerick in 1832, long before the Great Hunger sent more than a million Irish to America between 1845 and 1855. The son of a hat maker, Dooley chose to ply that family trade far from home, within the burgeoning economy of the United States. He landed not at Charleston, the port of



The residence of John and Sarah Dooley, the parents of the diarist, at 1225 East Broad Street, Richmond. Courtesy of the Maymont Foundation.

entry for most of the Irish who settled in the South, but in Baltimore, the northernmost Southern city where he had relatives. Despite the family connections in the Monumental City, by 1836 Dooley had moved below the Potomac, first to Alexandria, where he married his cousin, Sarah, then to Richmond, where he found his gold. His first work was as a clerk in a mercantile establishment, but he quickly utilized his hat-making ability by starting his own business, which became the Great Southern Hat and Cap Manufactory and Depot at 81 Main Street. As the Irish community in Richmond grew dramatically in the next two decades (reaching nearly 2,300 in 1860), so too did John Dooley's economic fortunes. The major market for his company was country merchants throughout the South, but its outreach included urban areas as well, stretching from Baltimore to Chicago. Dooley established himself among the economic elite in Richmond, where he was an officer in the Commercial Savings Bank and a director of the Virginia Insurance Company.

By the eve of the war the elder John Dooley had become one of the richest men in Richmond, with a net worth of \$93,000, including five slaves.<sup>10</sup> He was also a prominent member of St. Peter's, the first Catholic church in Richmond, established two years before his arrival in the city. His home near Capital Square at 1225 East Broad Street, where he and his wife raised a family of three sons and five daughters, became a gathering place for leaders of the Catholic and Irish American communities, which

highly overlapped. Although he was three decades removed from his native land, the currents of Irish nationalism still drove Dooley's political interests and allegiances. An ardent Democrat, he was a staunch supporter of Irish independence who followed closely the efforts to break English rule in his homeland, and he befriended nationalist exiles who found refuge in America, such as John Mitchel, whose Knoxville paper, the *Southern Citizen*, Dooley patronized through advertisements for his business.<sup>11</sup> The green uniform he wore as captain of the Montgomery Guards symbolized his abiding commitment to realizing Irish nationhood.

The First Virginia was in the earliest major fighting of the war in the East. At Blackburn's Ford near Manassas on July 17, John Dooley and Company C unleashed a Gaelic cheer, "Gaugh a ballagh!" (Clear the way!) as they counterattacked against a thrust that initiated the Union drive on Richmond. The company eventually formed a defensive line on a hill behind the ford that helped deter any further Union assault. Its bravery that day resulted in its bearing most of the casualties James Longstreet's brigade suffered in the skirmish. Following the Battle of Manassas two days later, John Dooley was promoted to captain.<sup>12</sup> Dooley continued to serve for the next ten months when, now fifty-two years old, he resigned in April 1862 and subsequently headed up the city's Ambulance Corps. A month later, his son, James, also of Company C, was seriously wounded in the right forearm and taken prisoner at Williamsburg during the Peninsula Campaign. After three months as a captive, James was exchanged, returned to Richmond, but his damaged arm (nearly amputated during his captivity) prevented him from seeing any further active duty. For the remainder of the war he served as a lieutenant in the Reserve Corps attached to the Ordnance Department.<sup>13</sup> The same month that James was exchanged, August 1862, his younger brother, John Edward, became the third Dooley to serve in the First Virginia when he enlisted for three years (nine months later his enlistment would be changed to the duration of the war). He had just turned twenty.

In 1856 John and James had entered Georgetown College, where they both excelled in studies and were members of the debating society and the cadet corps. John was also a leading member of the Dramatic Society. James graduated in 1860; John, who was in the class of 1863, apparently did not return to classes in the fall of 1861. Nor did he join his father and brother during the first year of the war. As his diary indicates, his health was considered too delicate to endure the rigors of active army life. A year later, in June 1862, as George McClellan's massive army was besieging Richmond and threatening to destroy the Confederacy,

John Edward Dooley joined the home guard. A month and a half later he took the train to Gordonsville to join the First Virginia as a member of Company D, not C.

Over the next eleven months the First Virginia participated in three major campaigns—Second Manassas, Maryland, and Gettysburg—and one minor one, Suffolk. John Dooley's notes capture the warp and woof of campaigning and camp life: the marches in punishing heat and drenching rain, the importance of song as morale booster and consolation, the ever-present vermin, the utter tedium and monotony in the stretches between campaigns, and the living on the edge regarding food and habiliments as the Confederacy increasingly struggled to maintain its fighting men. He catches the creeping anxiety that pervaded on the eve of battle, the never fading dread of "seeing the elephant" in the chaos of battle. Here is no attempt to romanticize war, to gloss over the horrors one encounters on the battlefield, whether it be the unspeakably maimed or one's comrades robbing Union corpses.

The only Catholic in his company, and a devout one to boot (the Irish-born Willie Mitchell was, like his father, Unitarian), Dooley regarded as exotic the revivalism that broke out both in camp and in prison among the culturally evangelical soldiers. Putting his college rhetorical training to effective use, he is very polemical in defending his own religion against his fellows who consider it a tool of the devil and papist conspiracy. In prison he naturally takes the initiative in arranging for the celebration of Mass and the hearing of Confessions by a priest in Sandusky.

His social status, marked by the body servant who sets Dooley apart from all other nonofficers, eventually gains for him, through a controversial election, a leap in rank from private in Company D to lieutenant of Company C (the former Montgomery Guards). The residue of his election, brought about by pressure openly asserted by the colonel of the regiment, is the resentment of many of his fellow enlisted men who, Dooley suspects, are convinced that class was the crucial factor in securing the rank for him. Proving he deserves the position is just one more burden that Dooley carries into the Gettysburg Campaign.

Wounded during the climax of Pickett's failed charge and subsequently taken prisoner, Dooley finds his vantage point drastically shrunken to the confines of the prisons that will house him for nineteen months. Cut off from all one has known in an institutionalized state of suspended animation, prison forces its inhabitants to cope as best they might to preserve their humanity. The more entrepreneurial seek outlets in barracks industries ranging from the crafting of ornaments to shoe

making. Others cheat the boredom of seemingly interminable days by card playing and chess. For Dooley, whose injuries keep him from fully entering into prison life for the first several months, cards are a vulgar activity that propagates emotions unbecoming officers and gentleman; therefore, he opts to make chess a prominent part of his daily routine, both at Fort McHenry and, at least for his first six months, on Johnson's Island. He also becomes a prodigious reader of novels, histories, and classical Latin texts. And, pursuing his love of theater, he joins the Island thespians in the presentations of their farces and minstrel shows. The chances for surviving Johnson's Island may have been the best at any of the Federal war prisons, but its inhabitants find life there trying enough. Some plagues of Confederate army life resurface at Johnson's Island—especially the lack of food, the exposure to the elements, and vermin—and become perennial torments during his stay there. Getting food becomes the major problem, as those imprisoned resort to changing authorization orders for purchasing victuals from the sutler, trapping rats as an alternate source of food, and, for some, scouring the garbage heaps.

Escape and the hope of being exchanged are the two chief potential avenues of salvation from their present situation. Few, eleven in all, manage individual breakouts. Attempted general breakouts orchestrated and triggered by outside forces come to nothing. Exchange fever waxes and wanes among the residents of Johnson's Island over the course of Dooley's stay there. He himself manages to avoid it, early coming to the realization that the Lincoln administration, knowing that the number of active combatants is increasingly in its favor, has no intention of making available to the Confederacy any additional troops through parole or exchange.

Deprived of any real hope of deliverance, Dooley finds himself tracking all the more the fortunes of the Confederacy. To do that means deciphering the news that northern papers, mostly partisan Republican, report. Thinking initially that the most consequential theater of war is in the East, Dooley through the winter and spring of 1864 follows the maneuvering of the armies in Virginia with rising anxiety. At first the outcome of the brutal fighting around the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House bolsters his confidence that things will continue to go well for the Confederacy in the East, as they generally have over the past three years. But the depth of his confidence is really rather shallow. By the end of May, he is admitting "that we are on pins and needles nearly all the time," as Lee, following stands against Grant, steadily retreats toward Richmond. By June anxiety has been replaced by resignation to

the ugly reality of a siege of the Petersburg-Richmond area that Lee had always felt would be fatal for the Confederacy. But as the summer wears on, Dooley's optimism partially returns as Lee seems to be able to continue frustrating the grand plans of Union officials to bring the war to a close, particularly in initiating a new invasion of the North, with Jubal Early leading an army down the Shenandoah Valley and across the Potomac. Dooley begins keeping tabs of the price of gold as a barometer of Northern morale. Its steady rise during the summer, to Dooley (and he was hardly alone, even in the North), reflects growing Union despondency about the war's prospects.

Amid this renewed hope about conditions in the East, a gnawing suspicion begins to grow with Dooley in the summer of 1864 that the war will finally be won, or lost, in the West. By September, when Atlanta falls and Early's army is reeling in the Valley, Dooley is reduced to reporting that "the bad news is raging." He finds himself trying to insulate himself from outside events by losing himself in his books. Three months later he confesses that "everything goes on so badly now that I have no spirit to write anything in my diary." Some of his fellow prisoners, he reports, including a majority in his own room, are attempting to learn Spanish in order to seek a new life in Mexico.

When release from prison finally comes in late February 1865 and Dooley returns to a besieged Richmond, in a daily shrinking Confederacy, he finds that those at home are even more despondent about their fate than he is. The Grand Review of Pickett's Division that Dooley attends outside of the city seems a surreal spectacle in the backdrop of the imminent catastrophe that the converging Union armies bode for the heart of the secession nation. Still refusing to believe that Richmond is in any immediate danger of falling, Dooley and a fellow parolee take off to visit another former Johnson's Island prisoner at his home above Lynchburg. Cut off from any communication with Richmond, Dooley and his friends are planning a picnic when Richmond falls. Coming to the reality, with extreme reluctance, that the capital has fallen and Lee has surrendered, Dooley and a shifting group of fellow soldiers make their way southward in search of the Confederate government that has now become peripatetic. In this gesture, Dooley and his comrades give ultimate expression of their unshakable faith in the South's cause, which, Peter Carmichael has shown, sets apart the junior officers in the Army of Northern Virginia from the vast majority of Southerners, military or civilian, in the latter days of the war.<sup>14</sup> Their status as officers in the soon-to-be defunct Confederate service enables them to utilize the Southern

tradition of hospitality for securing food and means of transportation. So they lurch southward in a series of borrowed buggies and other conveyances, amid stragglers, runaways, and the last refugees of the war.

For the young females they twice encounter, there is much romantic bravado for these displaced soldiers of the Confederacy to show. Even here reality intrudes, if only in the purple flower one girl hands Dooley. Devout Catholic that he is, he cannot miss, particularly on the eve of Good Friday, that purple is the liturgical color for suffering and death. The abandoned and mangled guns of a dissipating army that they come upon shortly afterward stand as the starkest evidence of the death knell of the Confederacy, a kingdom and an institution collapsing. His anxiety and despair come to a climax in late April in Charlotte, the latest place the Confederate government calls home. There, seeing the fatalism setting in among the people and troops as well as the madness of a President Davis conjuring up phantom armies to deliver them yet, he is forced to admit that “the smash-up is inevitable.” He sadly heads home to discover a city in ruins, including his father’s business, and “the hated and triumphant army of our malignant foes” parading through its streets.

### **The Irish and the Lost Cause**

The last sentence in Dooley’s “War Notes” is “And here the curtain falls.” An apt ending, for Dooley in his exposition and reworking of his war experience had, at some level, constructed a morality play in which the South had the role of tragic victim. Dooley, in crafting his notes, became part of what David W. Blight indicates was a collective effort to define and commemorate the tragedy that had been the war, an effort that would produce the literature of the Lost Cause.<sup>15</sup> Dooley himself was familiar with early manifestations of this literature, such as the eponymous book published in 1867 by the former editor of the *Richmond Examiner*, Edward A. Pollard, in which he instructed his readers that all they had left was “the war of ideas,” that it was incumbent on them to frame the history of the war in such a way as to make abundantly clear that its outcome was a denial of a people’s just attempt to secure its independence.<sup>16</sup> In Dooley’s “War Notes” can be found virtually all of the elements that would form the nucleus of the Lost Cause: a decent, honorable community seeking independence to preserve its way of life; God-like military leaders and their courageous, fallen soldiers, defeated only by superior numbers and industrial might; a collective identity as victims who ironically survive; and the hope that God in His providence will someday bring their cause to fruition.<sup>17</sup> To these Dooley adds some distinctive

elements of his own, from his vantage point largely shaped by a consciousness that primarily identifies itself with Irish heritage and interests: that the South's enemy was a craven people who prevailed only by cynically hiring foreigners to fight the war that they who had instigated it had no stomach to fight themselves; that these foreigners, particularly the Irish immigrants who took up arms for the North, were the crucial factor in the war's outcome; that the Southern Irish embodied the heart of the region's tragic quest for independence; that the fruit of Northern victory was a change, for the worse, of masters for the slaves, and an American civilization controlled by selfish and corrupt commercial interests.

Even before the war John Dooley had made his case for Southern secession. Reflecting on the implications of Lincoln's election in 1860, Dooley had come to share the conviction of many of his generation of Virginians that the Republican advent to power left Virginia with no choice but to join her sister states in the Deep South in forming a new nation. Although removed from the colleges in his home state, which became the center for the movement for secession during the winter and spring of 1860–61, Dooley, at Georgetown College, which by 1860 had become very much an institution dominated by Southerners, made his own modest contribution toward the promotion of a new confederation of states.<sup>18</sup> As a "Poet" (sophomore) at the college, probably in the winter of 1861, Dooley wrote a brief arguing for the South's constitutional right to secede. (It is reproduced in part 1 of this volume.) He contended that nothing in the Constitution itself prohibited secession and that the passage of unconstitutional laws by New England states (liberty laws regarding runaway slaves) alone was justification for the South's withdrawal from the Union. The attempts of tools of the Republican Party, like John Brown, to seize the property of Southerners by freeing slaves through insurrection simply reinforced the necessity of the South's secession, as did the elected president of the United States' declaration "of excluding the Southern people from the territories" by banning slavery from them.<sup>19</sup>

The "War Notes" of Dooley reflect the recasting of his experience in the promotion of the Lost Cause. The difference in treatment of Confederate leaders between the "War Diary" and the expanded notes is one indication of this. Whereas Lee has been virtually always "General Lee" in the diary, in the notes written after the war he often becomes "Uncle Robert" or "the Noble Lee." Jackson goes from "Stonewall" in the diary to the "indomitable Jackson" or "the Great Stonewall . . . with the brilliancy of Napoleon the 1st" in the notes. Longstreet, who proved a traitor to the cause by supporting the Reconstruction Acts, becomes in

the reminiscences the one whom Dooley wishes had been among those captured at Gettysburg.

The arcadian portrait of slavery that Dooley paints of the Bethels' plantation below Danville, even as the institution is collapsing all around, points out the North's folly and injustice in the bringing down of this essential pillar of Southern culture (see chapter 16). The point is made, in a somewhat different way, in Dooley's visit with India Fletcher, an icon of the Old South who presides over a ghost plantation and a civilization that her soon-to-be freed slaves realize has "gone with the wind," as the ensuing fire on the grounds makes clear (chapter 15). "Cuffee," standing guard on the banks of the James River as Dooley heads home after nearly twenty months in prison, may have gained a uniform and gun from his Northern liberators, but he is worse off than before. The future of the freedman is depicted in Dooley's proleptic encounter in the woods with the suspected runaway as Dooley is returning to the Bethels, which points to the way the white South would increasingly paint the African American as a threatening beast.

One sign of the justice of the Confederacy's cause is the way in which the war has acted as an equalizer for the men in the ranks. Sharing the same experience in field and camp has essentially caused the barriers of class to collapse, to bring high- and low-born to the realization that blood is thicker after all. The jokes that Dooley reports throughout his notes are indicators of this leveling that the war has induced; invariably, they are all stories of the insouciance common soldiers displayed toward their commanding officers. The war, in brief, was the catalyst for the emergence of a *Herrenvolk* democracy, united by race and transcending class, which Southern apologists and politicians increasingly celebrated in the postbellum years. The North had not known this transformation precisely because hirelings and the working class dominated its military forces.

Despite overwhelming odds, this radically democratic Confederate fighting force miraculously managed to succeed almost continuously during the first two years of the war. But brute numbers eventually prevailed. The Union had not only a four-to-one advantage in population but also an unlimited reservoir of "hirelings." The Irish and German immigrants whom the North was recruiting to fight its war were the modern Hessians.<sup>20</sup> Even though the German and German Americans in the Union forces far outnumbered their Irish counterparts (750,000 to 150,000), Dooley, who had a rather basic contempt for the Northern Germans (they seemed to him the quintessential mercenaries; for their

Southern brethren in Confederate ranks he had a warmer, if patronizing, regard), considered the Northern Irish to have been the critical factor in the outcome of the war. For Dooley, as a proud Irish American committed to self-rule for both Ireland and the Confederacy, this was a maddening reality. It was inconceivable to him that any Irishman, so in search of independence for his own country, could take part in an effort to subdue another people seeking independence, “to side with the strong against the weak, with the usurper against the struggling advocates of freedom, to crush out the very vitals of self government and place us bound hand and foot at the feet of a master whose scorn and revenge may be only equaled by their hate” (chapter 8). He need not add that this “master” is as bad, if not worse, than the British Crown itself. He can only conclude that the Irish in the North have been victims of deception: of thinking that there was a Confederate plot to invade the North, that the South was on a mission, not of defending their freedom but of enslaving the North. The Northern Irish, in a word, had been “duped” (chapter 4).

Other factors that determined the outcome of the war include the pusillanimous behavior of Northern Democrats, who shared the basic values of their Southern counterparts but would not act upon their convictions, and the barbaric methods the North resorted to in waging the war, including the bombing of cities such as Fredericksburg, the raping of the land they occupied, and the terrorizing of the Southern people caught in their brutal path.

If the Northern Irish were the crucial factor in the ultimate Union victory, the Southern Irish became, for Dooley, the embodiment of the Lost Cause. The Mitchels are emblematic of the Irish struggle for the cause. It is surely no coincidence that Dooley begins and ends his war’s journey riding the tops of trains with one or more of the Mitchels. The Mitchels figure prominently in much of his experience, at least as he remembered it (in the “War Diary” they are minimally present). In Dooley’s first battle, Second Manassas, it is James Mitchel, the middle son, whom Dooley assists from the field after he is wounded (for the second time in the war). Willie Mitchel, the youngest, becomes his best friend in the army in the nine months that he and Dooley are together in the First Virginia. Willie, whose fate at Gettysburg Dooley spends a good deal of his captive stay seeking to learn, becomes the archetypal fallen warrior. For these Irish, the South has become a surrogate Ireland; fighting and dying for its independence is a testament to their commitment to a free Ireland as well.

In Dooley’s final judgment, the responsibility for the fall of the South lies with the people themselves, who have failed to support, to the end,

their fighting men as well as their civilian leaders. They have ultimately shown a lack of will, of heart for the cause. But however large the role of the people of the South has been in the defeat of the cause, redemption is still possible, Dooley hints in chapter 16; indeed, it is in the South's future, if only they can make the only peace that truly matters, peace with the Lord. In God's providence, the South can have hope for liberation from their occupiers and the fulfillment at last of the cause for which they have given so much of their fortune and blood.

### **Reconstruction and the New South**

In the fall of 1870 Dooley returned to the versifying that he had taken up in prison. This time his subject was not his fellow prisoners or developments in the war but the current sociopolitical scene. Addressing himself to the Goddess of Liberty, the statue that graced the dome that had finally completed the Capitol building in the last year of the war, Dooley portrayed Reconstruction as what Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner would three years later label the Gilded Age. For Dooley, Reconstruction revealed the rotten fruit that an unjust war produced: the manipulating of the Constitution in the pursuit of self-interest, the demonic punishment of the South, the overturning of the natural order by elevating blacks and "worthless whites" above the natural aristocrats who previously ruled, and the corruption of low-born public officials who shamelessly pursued wealth and conspicuous consumption. The victors made a god of money; virtue, honor, and the glorious deed were all left in the dustbin of history. The *res privata* now reigned, one for one, and none for all. In the old order in the South, honorable men, the natural aristocracy, held office as a trust for the people. Now venal carpetbaggers plundered the region. The Northern ruling class had exposed the utter hypocrisy of inveighing against Southern slave owners while treating their own laboring classes far worse than slave owners had ever treated their workforce. Both freedmen and poor whites in the South could now expect to have this harsh treatment accorded them from a "Puritan" North, where "climate and heart" go hand in hand. But Goddess, he concludes, "Thou knowest it all from thy lofty height." She has no choice but "to view each shameful sight" of the "free" society over which she presides. There is no redeemer in sight.

Redemption, in the white Southern understanding, *was* on its way, although John Dooley would not live to see its full arrival. Tuberculosis, the consequence of prolonged exposure of a delicate constitution to primal elements in the field and in prison, progressively weakened

Dooley from the late 1860s on. He died on May 8, 1873, in the infirmary at Georgetown, where he had written most of his “War Notes.” During the last years of Dooley’s life, corruption, expensive social programs, a loss of Northern interest, and brutally effective white Southern violence steadily undermined Reconstruction. Three years after Dooley’s death in 1873, Federal occupation ended in the last three states of the former Confederacy—Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina—and neo-Confederate governments there completed the “redemption” of the region. If the South, economically, became a colony of the North, it emerged from Reconstruction not as an independent republic, to be sure, but as a quasi-autonomous region in its politics, race relations, and culture. Home rule, debt peonage, and Jim Crow, for all effective purposes, represented, by the end of the century, a cause won for the South.

In the making of that new South, the Southern Irish played a significant role in forging the new political and economic order. John Mitchel was no longer leading the way. He had become one of the first Confederate carpetbaggers when he moved in the late spring of 1865 to New York City to become editor of the *New York Daily News*. His past as an important abettor of Southern independence quickly caught up with him, however. He was arrested for aiding rebellion and sent to Fort Monroe, where his cell neighbor was the recently captured Jefferson Davis. Released in October through the lobbying of the Johnson administration by Irish nationalists, Mitchel became the representative in Paris of a new Irish revolutionary organization, the Fenian Brotherhood. For the remainder of his life, the pursuit of Irish independence became John Mitchel’s consuming occupation.<sup>21</sup>

But there were others to carry on his work for Southern rights. In Virginia two friends of the Dooleys, James A. Cowardin and Anthony Keiley, were redeemers of note, Cowardin through the political power he exercised as editor of the *Richmond Dispatch*, and Keiley in becoming the first Catholic mayor of Richmond in 1871. James Dooley, John’s older brother, carved an even larger place in the New South. Dooley served for six years in the state legislature during the 1870s, but his achievements in the emerging commercial and industrial landscape far overshadowed his political success. Few exploited more adroitly the niches in the economy that arose from the turmoil of Reconstruction than did James Dooley, who, through his shrewd investments in real estate, in developing and consolidating transportation, including railroads and street railways, and iron/steel production in the South and upper Midwest, became one of the wealthiest men, not only in the South, but in the nation by the end of the century.<sup>22</sup> As a boy, James had written inside his

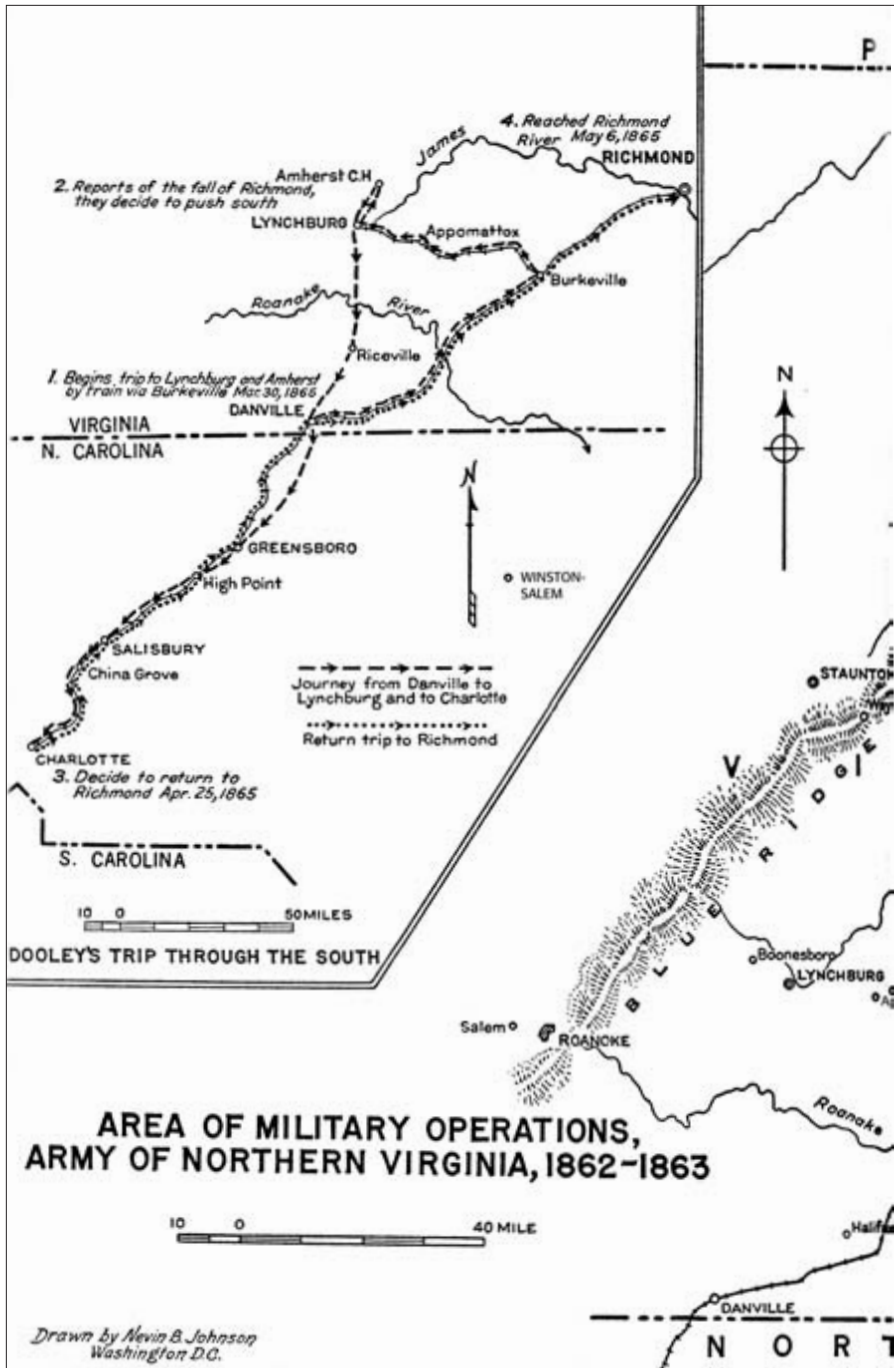
Latin dictionary: “When I have \$5,178,360, I will stop making money.”<sup>23</sup> Why that particular figure, he never said. But he more than realized it and never stopped making money. His brother, had he lived, despite his scorn for the business community, presumably would have had no quarrel with James’s economic success. After all, their father had himself set the path for the older brother. And James’s philanthropic bent, which eventually consumed all of his estate, would have reassured John that this was wealth properly gotten and utilized.

Reconstruction proved a key period for the integration of the Irish within Southern society. There were virtually no Irish scalawags. As the Southern Irish played their role in shaping the New South, region increasingly replaced ethnicity as the chief marker of their identity. By the 1880s the Irish had fully become a part of mainstream Southern white society. The Lost Cause, stripped of the Irish factor, which had figured so prominently in John Dooley’s interpretation throughout his “War Notes,” became the major heritage of the Southern Irish even as they assumed their part in rendering it irrelevant.

## Dooley as Writer

If sensitive observation is a prerequisite for effective writing, Dooley was well qualified. He had a naturalist’s eye for detail and rendered it in clear prose. To be sure, his prose at times lapsed into the poorer conventions of Victorian writing: melodrama, purple patches, bathos. But the lapses were relatively infrequent, the clean prose more than balancing it out. In places where his text was particularly redundant, I have omitted the text, using bracketed ellipsis dots ([. . .]) to indicate the omission. I have also footnoted occasions where Dooley himself omitted or crossed out text, supplying that text in the note.

Dooley was also something of a wag, which he made no effort to conceal, and an irrepressible punster. Certain peculiarities of his writing should be noted. Proper names he almost universally put within quotation marks. I have omitted all of these. His use of capitalization was erratic and unpredictable, his punctuation minimal and arbitrary (most common is his use of dashes to separate text). As much as possible, I have attempted to apply normal punctuation and capitalization. There are virtually no paragraphs in Dooley’s original writings. For coherence’s sake, I have introduced them. For that reason, too, I have organized his notes into chapters. Dooley was a prodigious italicizer, which tendency I have respected. He also tended toward the English spelling of words (“traveller,” “favour,” etc). This too I have left unchanged.



The eastern theater of the Civil War, where John Dooley participated in major battles during 1862–63. The inset at the left indicates his travels in Virginia and North Carolina in 1865–66 following his release from a Union prison. From *John Dooley, Confederate Soldier: His War Journal* (1945), ed. Joseph T. Durkin. Copyright 1945 by Georgetown University Press, www.press.Georgetown.edu. Reprinted with permission.



Chambersburg  
GETTYSBURG  
Hanover  
Emmitsburg  
Susquehanna R.  
POTOMAC RIVER  
Martinsburg  
Shepherdstown  
Hagerstown  
Williamsport  
Sharpsburg  
Middletown  
Frederick  
Monocacy Sta  
Buckeystown  
Harpers Ferry  
Winchester  
Rockville  
BALTIMORE  
MARYLAND  
WASHINGTON  
ALEXANDRIA  
Fairfax C.H.  
Thoroughfare Gap  
Gainesville  
Manassa Jct.  
Warrenton  
Rappahannock Sta  
Brandy Sta  
Stevensburg  
Raccoon Ford  
Falmouth  
FREDERICKSBURG  
Verdierville  
Spotsylvania C.H.  
Port Royal  
Guiney's Station  
Tappahannock  
Hanover Junction  
Taylorville  
Ashland  
Hanover  
Mechanicsville  
RICHMOND  
York River  
JAMES RIVER  
Williamsburg  
Portsmouth  
HAMPTON  
NORFOLK  
PORTSMOUTH  
Suffolk  
Franklin  
Littleton  
Five Forks  
Prince George C.H.  
Chester Sta  
Malvern Hill  
PETERSBURG  
Burkeville  
Rico  
Prince Edward C.H.  
Appomattox C.H.  
Appomattox Sta  
Ft Powhatan  
James River  
CHARLOTTESVILLE  
GORDONSVILLE  
CULPEPER  
Fisher Gap  
Thornton Gap  
New Market  
Luray  
MASANUTTEN MTS  
SHENANDOAH MOUNTAINS  
ORANGE - FREDERICKSBURG  
ORANGE  
VERDIERVILLE  
SPOTSYLVANIA C.H.  
GORDONSVILLE



PART ONE  
**SECESSION**



## A FEW WORDS UPON THE RIGHT OF A STATE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE UNITED STATES

*The right of an individual state or collection of states to secede from the union created by the Constitution of 1787 had been an open question virtually from the establishment of the republic. In 1798 one of the nation's principal founders, Thomas Jefferson, had, through his Kentucky Resolutions, implicitly raised the question by insisting upon a state's right to nullify any federal legislation it deemed unconstitutional, with the unspoken assumption that a state's final recourse, in the face of oppression, was secession. Less than two decades later, New England leaders called a convention of their states to consider the possibility of seceding from the Union in protest of the war against Great Britain. In 1828 new threats to secede arose, now in South Carolina, over the imposition of a tariff considered ruinous to the state's economy. John Calhoun, seeking to temper the climate created by the incipient fire-eaters, formally proposed, in his anonymously penned "South Carolina Exposition and Protest," nullification as a constitutional means by which an individual state could defend itself against unjust legislation. But there were deeper implications in Calhoun's argument that the Union was a compact of the states, who alone possessed sovereignty. As such, they had the*

*power, individually or collectively, to unmake whatever they had made. In a special constitutional convention, South Carolina actually declared the tariff of 1828 null and void. President Andrew Jackson declared the action treasonous but took measures that led to a new tariff that significantly lowered rates. In response, South Carolina rescinded its act of nullification. Nonetheless, in the next three decades nullification became a weapon in the arsenal of would-be Southern secessionists. The crisis over the disposition of the territory gained by the United States from the war with Mexico led to the first full-throated cries for Southern states to secede as a bloc. The Compromise of 1850 temporarily muted those voices, but a series of events, beginning with the Kansas-Nebraska Controversy of 1853–54 and culminating with Lincoln’s election in 1860, convinced a critical mass of Southerners that they could no longer remain in a union with those whose principles, interests, and values were totally alien from their own.<sup>1</sup> Dooley’s “few words”—the above title is his—are an attempt to supply a logic to that conclusion.*

*This essay originally dates apparently from Dooley’s college days, most likely in early 1861, when Dooley was a “Poet,” or sophomore, at Georgetown. During the academic year of 1860–61, the debating society at Georgetown scheduled a number of debates on the topic of secession and its ramifications. These remarks might well have served as the basis for arguing the affirmative of the proposition that a state had the right to withdraw itself from the Union. The last sentence—“Other reasons might be added but enough for the present”—suggests especially that this might have been a position paper for a debate presentation. The sentence in which Dooley expresses his preference for being a “traitor a thousand times to the contemptible force of a government now in the hands of corrupt Yankees and negroes, than once, to our dear old Virginia, the mother of statesmen and Robert E. Lee,” indicates that Dooley had reworked the essay years after the conclusion of the war.*

1st The government of the 1st Confederation of the States of America should have been perpetual according to the words of its constitution,<sup>2</sup> and the people of the states united by the said constitution were solemnly pledged not only to its support, but to its perpetual endurance; yet after a few years of trial we find the states of this same confederacy

seceding from it one by one and yielding adherence to a new form of government, leaving the old government and the old constitution to those states who were unwilling to adopt the new.

2d The delegates chosen by the several states of the Confederacy (Rhode Island excepted) adopted by unanimous assent a constitution as the supreme rule and guide for the government of as many states as should ratify it: The new government to go into effect as soon as nine of the states should ratify the said Constitution.

3d Each state through a convention appointed by its people, separately and at different times approved of the constitution: and as each state entered the new union the old one was abandoned, the states, still in deliberation and holding aloof, not complaining of wrong or a breach of faith because the old union, that was to have been perpetual, was hereby dissolved and a new one entered into—Thus in spite of binding themselves to perpetuity we find that each sovereign state when its best interest was concerned, dissolved its connection with the former government and chose one more conformable to its wishes, no other state crying out against the rightfulness of such proceeding. The rejection of the new government or its acceptance, and the abandonment of the Confederacy were alike optional with each state; and the states were as independent of one another in the formation of the new federation as would have been the kingdoms of Europe and each particular state in a similar agreement.

4—That one or two members of the general convention were in favour of the said constitution being submitted for approval to a convention of the *entire* people of the United States instead of to conventions of the people of the separate states but this idea was not countenanced and it was determined that the convention of each state separately should decide whether or not it would accept the proffered Union.

5th That so jealous were all the states of the powers granted to the general government that two years afterwards the 10th amendment was annexed to the constitution by which they declared that the general government has no powers, but those *expressly* delegated to it, and that all other powers are reserved to the states or to the people.

6 That not only did all the states manifest anxiety concerning the powers entrusted to the general government but two of them in particular, New York and Virginia, made it an expressed condition of their acceptance of the Union, that they should retain the right of withdrawing therefrom in certain contingencies.<sup>3</sup> Here, had not the right of these states to withdraw, when they thought their interests required, been

acknowledged by all the other states, some would have at the time raised objections to any such right being reserved—but no state objected; and this condition of two states being acquiesced in by all the states, was as surely implied in the acceptance of each state since all entered the Union upon equality.

7th That the greatest men of our early Republic, and those who laboured in the formation of the new constitution regarded it [in] no other light than that of a compact or agreement between sovereign States dependent for its duration and entireness upon the good will and good faith of the component numbers. See Madison, John Q. Adams, Jefferson, Josiah [sic] Quincy<sup>4</sup> etc.

8th That some of the states and especially the New England states asserted again & again their right to secede from the Union, and not only their right but even their determination to do so, should it prove to their disadvantage to remain in fellowship with their sister states. Hartford convent[ion], 1815 etc. Resolutions of New Hampshire, 1790

9 That during forty years it was not publicly denied that the states had the right to withdraw from the union; [ . . . ] in debate with Mr. Calhoun Mr. Webster took the extraordinary grounds that according to the words in the preamble of the Constitution “We the people” etc, the Union was formed by the *whole people* in the aggregate and was not a federation of sovereign states. Which opinion he clearly revoked years after, when addressing the people of Va. at Capon Spgs. he declared that if the Northern States persisted in violating the Constitution (as they had been doing for years) the South would be justified in not observing their part of the “Compact”; for a *bargain* broken on one side was a bargain broken on the other.

10 That it is no sound argument against the sovereignty of the *states* to say that they cannot wage war, coin money, make treaties etc for these powers have been placed at the disposal of the general government for the common benefit and as long as the states remain in the union *they* deprive *themselves* of the use of these powers: and in international law it is a well understood fact that several independent states may by mutual assent enter upon a coalition, by which each state agrees to forego the exercise of its acknowledged powers for the common benefit, without by so doing weakening in any degree its sovereignty—and this is exactly what each state of the American Union did.

11 That the words in the preamble of the Constitution, “We the people” etc are falsely interpreted to mean that the constitution was adopted by a majority of the people of the united [states] and not by a majority of

the people of each particular state: the historical fact is evidence of the utter falsity of any such assertion, and were it not a historical fact that each state as sovereign & independent of all others did choose the constitution as its guide and rule, still the inference could be clear by natural reasoning. For if a majority of the whole people or the people as an aggregate body could have formed the union then some of the states might have been forced *nolens volens* to accede to the wishes of a majority of the whole people. But we know that such was not the case for North Carolina and Rhode Island did not unite with the other states until they saw that their interests clearly required it; moreover Mr. Madison, the father of the Constitution, when explaining the Constitution and the nature of the government about to be accepted, clearly shewed that it was in its formation—*federal*—*not* national. In the sources from which the ordinary powers of the government are drawn—*partly federal partly national*. In the operation of these powers it is national not federal. In the *extent* of its powers it is *federal* not national. And in the mode of introducing amendments partly federal and partly national.

12 That the individual's 1st allegiance was to his state, nor could he be a citizen of any other government his state being unwilling, unless by leaving his state. Thus those states that did not at first enter into federation with the United States might have formed an union with other powers and would thus have transferred the allegiance of their people to another government: Thus the citizen's allegiance depended entirely upon the action of his state and as long as the individual claimed to be a citizen of his state he also was obliged to conform to the action of his state. If the citizen acted against his state and for another government he was guilty of treason to his state. Now if we suppose a citizen to cleave to the general government in direct opposition to his state he is plainly acting an inconsistent part and is guilty of treason to his state that has withdrawn his allegiance from the said government. If it were treason for a citizen to adhere to the state instead of the general government he would then be a traitor whichever side he should choose. Could those wise men who framed the Constitution have wished to place the people of the United States in so awkward a dilemma?

When Virginia seceded from the Union (1861) she withdrew the allegiance of each one of her citizens from that union in precisely the same manner that she gave their allegiance to it in 1788; and I, for one, would rather be traitor a thousand times to the contemptible force of a government now in the hands of corrupt Yankees and negroes, than *once*, to our dear old Virginia the mother of statesmen and Robt E. Lee.

13. That we do not look in the constitution for the right of a state to secede, but we do look for an express prohibition of that right. If the right of coercion cannot be shewne nor the right of secession be proved prohibited then according to the Constitution the state has never given up her right to govern herself or citizens.

14. That some of the causes that led to the secession of the Southern states were: the laws enacted in all the New England and many of the northern & western states in direct opposition to the Constitution.<sup>5</sup> 2d The continued vituperation & vile insults heaped upon the South by the press and public of the North. 3d The persistent efforts of an influential and widely organized party in the North not only to rob the southern people of their property but also to excite insurrection among the negroes, inciting them to murder, plunder, burn, & outrage their owners and furnishing them with the means of carrying into execution these hellish designs. The denunciation, by the same large party, of the Constitution as a “league with death and a covenant with Hell.”<sup>6</sup> The adoption, by the Republican party rising to power, of the “higher law” motto and the right of private judgment as regarded the application of the “higher law” in the government. The avowed declaration of the President just elected, and his whole party, of excluding the southern states from a participation in the common territories, and the open declaration of the same party in power to emancipate the negroes of the South which their owners held as property under the Constitution.

Other reasons might be added but enough for the present.

PART TWO  
**WAR**

August

COLLEGE ARCHIVES.

Upon the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 1862 I left Richmond to join the 1<sup>st</sup> Regt of Virginia Infantry then stationed near Gordonsville. I had only been in the Confederate Service one month and a half, but tired of remaining in the City - Catching diseases & Conscript I resolved at once to enter the field which I considered at the <sup>best</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>time</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>my</sup> <sup>young</sup> <sup>man</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>be</sup>. Altho' repeatedly warned that I was doing a rash thing that I would never be able to undergo the fatigues & hardships of a Soldiers Career, and that I would come back in a very few weeks 'kilt entirely' nevertheless I was resolved to make the experiment out what it might be, and on the morning of the above said 12<sup>th</sup> of August I started. This day was boiling hot, and my Companion Capt James Mathews, and I were obliged to clamber to the top of the train the Cars being completely 'packed' by Gen Roper's Brigade who were being transported to Gordonsville - My wardrobe consisted of a change of clothing wrapped in a blanket and my weapons, for I had but one, was absolutely respectable Springfield musket. We arrived in the evening within a few miles of the Camp of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Commanded by Gen Kemper and proceeded at once to the Regt. The Brigade had just returned from a most harassing since Gen Chase having <sup>held</sup> the hot Sun nearly all day, without any apparent object, and then returned to Camp. Darkness closed around us as we entered Camp and we were <sup>greeted</sup> <sup>and</sup> <sup>welcomed</sup> heartily by many old <sup>young</sup> friends. The Regt was at this time quite small the larger than it had been since the battle of Shiloh Pond: it now consisted of about 60 men, and of course my acquisition to the number was properly accepted -

First page of Dooley's "War Diary," composed in Richmond in the summer of 1865. Courtesy of Georgetown University Special Collections.

## INTRODUCTION TO JOHN DOOLEY'S “WAR NOTES”

Over the course of some eight years, from 1865 to 1873, John Dooley revised and expanded his two original diaries in nine distinct manuscripts. Shortly after his death at Georgetown in May 1873, John Early, the president of the college instructed the librarian to bind together “Mr. Dooley’s War Notes . . . and preserve [them] carefully . . . so that [they] may not be lost . . . [E]ntitle it Notes on the U.S. war of Secession.”<sup>1</sup> What the librarian bound together was but one-half of Dooley’s revisions, including fragments of several manuscripts, with no effort made to impose any order or sequence on the various texts. Within the individual texts was an abundant scrambling of pages. Whether the bound volume was the entirety of the material that President Early had given over to the librarian, we will never know. We do know that by the early 1970s all nine of Dooley’s war manuscripts were part of the Dooley Papers in the Georgetown archives. The portions not included in the bound volume had survived mostly as discrete fragments of the “Maryland Campaign,” “Reminiscences of Pickett’s Division,” “My Trip to Gettysburg,” and series 1 of “Prison Notes.” The only integral manuscript was the “War Diary,” which had been composed by Dooley in a copybook.

In attempting to reconstruct Dooley’s war writings, it was necessary to transcribe individually the more than 530 pages and then to piece them together from their context. Remarkably, all the parts of the

disassembled manuscripts had survived. His "War Notes" could be restored to their original order. Once that reconstruction was complete, there remained the challenge of weaving an integral narrative from competing texts. The "War Diary" covered the same period as a whole that several manuscripts respectively covered in part, from August 1862 to July 1863. For the most part, the memoirs complemented rather than duplicated the "War Diary." On the relatively infrequent occasions where there was a convergence, my method was to choose the better written or more informative text, which was usually the memoir rather than the diary.

Dooley gave the following titles to his constructed reminiscences, with the dates attached indicating the best estimate, according to the internal evidence of the manuscripts, as to when they were composed:

1. War Diary (1865)
2. Maryland Campaign: 2d Manassas—South Mountain—Antietam (1871)
3. Reminiscences of Pickett's Division, October 1862—June 1863 (1872)
4. My Trip to Gettysburg and What Came of it (1869)
5. Prison Notes: Fort McHenry & Johnson's Island, July—November 1863 (1869)
6. Prison Notes, Series 2: Johnson's Island, 18 November 1863—31 July 1864 (1870)
7. Prison Notes, Series 3: Johnson's Island, 1 August—9 December 1864 (1870)
8. Prison Notes, Series 4: Johnson's Island, 10 December 1864—27 March 1865 (1871)
9. Trip to Lynchburg, Amherst C.H., Danville, Va, thence to Greensboro, Salisbury, & Charlotte, NC, thence home again (1872–73)

Dooley gave no general title to his discrete memoirs/revised diaries. I have chosen "War Notes," the name the Georgetown president gave the manuscripts he thought worth preserving for posterity.

At the beginning of "Reminiscences of Pickett's Division," Dooley notes that his chief source for his depiction of the "interesting circumstances [that] attended our Fall, winter, and spring campaigns of '62 & '63" is his own memory. The "War Diary," that is to say half of it, or twenty-five pages, forms the core of Dooley's recounting of these campaigns.

The "Reminiscences" themselves comprise over 150 pages. Five-sixths of the material is new, garnered essentially from Dooley's recollection. The ratios between the "War Diary" and his writing on the Maryland and Gettysburg campaigns are smaller but still show the diary as providing but a core engulfed by embellishments added from 1869 to 1873. The campaigns of August and September 1862 (Second Manassas, South Mountain, Antietam) make up about a fifth of his war diary, or ten pages. The manuscript "The Maryland Campaign" runs more than fifty pages. The Gettysburg Campaign makes up another fifth of the war diary. "My Trip to Gettysburg" runs more than thirty pages. The ratio of Dooley's "Prison Notes," running over 220 pages, to his treatment of his prison experience in the original diary, approximately 50 pages,<sup>2</sup> falls rather in the middle of the ratios for "The Maryland Campaign" and "My Trip to Gettysburg," respectively.

Within the text, I have used abbreviations in boldface, small-cap type to indicate the manuscript from which a particular section of the "War Notes" has been taken. Those abbreviations are:

<b>WD</b>	War Diary
<b>MC</b>	Maryland Campaign
<b>PD</b>	Reminiscences of Pickett's Division
<b>GT</b>	My Trip to Gettysburg
<b>P1</b>	Prison Notes: Fort McHenry and Johnson's Island, July–November 1863
<b>P2</b>	Prison Notes, Series 2: Johnson's Island, November 1864–July 1864
<b>P3</b>	Prison Notes, Series 3: Johnson's Island, August–December 1864
<b>P4</b>	Prison Notes, Series 4, Johnson's Island, December 1864–March 1865
<b>LT</b>	Trip to Lynchburg

When one of these abbreviations appears in brackets (for example, **[wd]**) within the text, this means that what follows comes from that particular source; the next bracketed abbreviation indicates the introduction of material from a different source; and so on. For the most part, these passages from different manuscript sources consist of complete sentences, single paragraphs, several paragraphs, and even longer stretches of narrative, including entire chapters. In a few instances, however, a single sentence might be pieced together from two sources, as in the following:

**[MC]** We now leave the turnpike and make a detour upon a dirt road (the old Hagerstown road) **[WD]** around the base of the mountain making a circuitous movement; **[MC]** after marching some distance we ascend an abrupt but lower ridge of the mountains.

In this sentence, the opening words come from Dooley's account of the Maryland Campaign; the phrase beginning "around the base" is drawn from the "War Diary"; and the final clause in the sentence, beginning with "after," returns the reader to the Maryland Campaign manuscript. For the most part, the abbreviations will not cluster together so closely, and even when they do, the reader, hopefully, should have no trouble matching a particular portion of the text to its original source.

## CHAPTER 1

### “OH HOW SCARED I FELT!”: THE SECOND MANASSAS CAMPAIGN, AUGUST 1862

*John Dooley joined the First Virginia Regiment in the interval between two of the most successful campaigns of the Army of Northern Virginia in 1862, that of the Peninsula and Second Manassas. In the early spring of 1862 George McClellan brought his massive Army of the Potomac to the peninsula formed by the York and James rivers in a bold move to capture Richmond, some fifty miles west, at the head of the peninsula. For weeks the 100,000 man army had inched its way toward the Confederate capital. Joseph Johnston, commanding the Southern forces, fought a strategic delaying action at Williamsburg, then retreated to the trenches guarding Richmond. At the end of May, as McClellan was in the process of getting his siege guns into position for the final assault against the capital, Johnston launched a preemptive strike at Seven Pines that stunned but failed to break the Federal lines. The First Virginia was in the thick of these first two battles of the campaign and suffered such heavy losses—thirty-five at Williamsburg, fifty-four at Seven Pines—that its strength was reduced to company level. During the brutal Seven Days' Battle that ensued at the end of June, the First was kept in reserve for all but one day, being engaged at Frayer's Farm on*

*June 30. By the end of the campaign the regiment, like the army itself, was badly in need of reorganization and reinforcements. Dooley became part of the reorganized regiment as it prepared for a new campaign in early August in the Shenandoah Valley.*

*In late June 1862 President Lincoln, in the wake of Federal military disasters in the Valley in the spring of that year, had created a new army for the region, the Army of Virginia, and named John Pope, who had had modest success as a commander in the western theater, to head it. This new federal army was intended to complement the effort of the Army of the Potomac to take Richmond. Pope's initial charge was to prepare to move his force against Gordonsville, a key rail center for the supply of Richmond from the Shenandoah Valley and the West. Appreciating that threat, Lee in mid-July ordered Jackson to move his wing of the reorganized army to the Gordonsville area. On August 7, Jackson, learning that part of Pope's army, the Second Corps under Gen. Nathaniel Banks, had moved beyond Culpeper, decided to strike. The two forces met at Cedar Mountain, eight miles southwest of Culpeper on August 9. Jackson prevailed, driving the Federal Corps from the field with heavy losses (2,400 dead and wounded), although Jackson paid a steep price himself (1,400 dead and wounded). Four days later, Lee, convinced that McClellan (either on his own or by force) was abandoning his campaign on the Peninsula and was no longer a threat to Richmond, ordered James Longstreet to move his wing from its trenches outside Richmond to the Gordonsville area to join Jackson's other wing to deal with Pope. As it happened, the First Virginia, assigned to Longstreet's wing in the new organization, was already there.*

*This chapter consists of portions of two of Dooley's manuscripts—the War Diary and the Maryland Campaign. In both he is relying on memory, not immediate experience, to describe the Second Manassas Campaign. The War Diary highlights the initial challenges he faced in becoming a soldier in the Army of Northern Virginia, culminating with the terror of “seeing the elephant” for the first time in battle. The Maryland Campaign, as the title suggests, has little to report about this second battle to take place on the plains of Manassas; instead, it concentrates on the trials that a soldier in the ranks endured when the army was on march. It also points out the losses that the Army of Northern Virginia suffered in the recent Peninsular Campaign, as well as the immense*

*difficulties of supply, communication, and transportation that the army had to overcome in mounting a new campaign, making all the more impressive its ultimate resounding triumph at Manassas for a second time.*

[wb] Upon the 12th of August 1862 I left Richmond to join the 1st Regt of Virginia Infantry then stationed near Gordonsville. I had only been in the Confederate Service one month and a half, but tired of remaining in the City catching deserters & Conscripts, I resolved at once to enter the field where I considered it the imperative duty of every young man to be. Altho' repeatedly warned that I was doing a rash thing, that I would never be able to undergo the fatigue & hardship of a soldier's career, and that I would come back in a very few weeks "kilt entirely," nevertheless I was resolved to make the experiment cost what it might, and on the morning of the aforesaid 12th of August I started. The day was broiling hot and my companion, Capt. James Mitchel<sup>1</sup> and I were obliged to clamber to the top of the train the cars being completely "crammed" by Gen. Pryor's<sup>2</sup> Brigade who were being transported to Gordonsville. My wardrobe consisted of a change of clothing wrapped in a blanket and my weapon, for I had but one, was a tolerably respectable Springfield musket. We arrived in the evening within a few miles of the Camp of the 1st Brigade Commanded by Genl Kemper and proceeded at once to the 1st Regt.

[mc] The bloody battle of Cedar Mountain (VA), Augt 9 1862 had just been fought and won by the Confederate forces under Genl Stonewall Jackson and the boastful Pope was taking position for a new stand against the army of Gen. Lee which was being rapidly concentrated in the vicinity of Orange C.H. [. . .]<sup>3</sup> The first sight that attracted my inexperienced eye upon approaching the bivouacs of our army, was the burial of some of the heroes who had fallen two days before at Cedar Mountain. It was anything but encouraging to a heart which *naturally* shrank from deeds of blood and scenes of death to behold these mangled heroes dropped carelessly into the graves prepared, and the cold earth flung by colder hands upon their mutilated forms. I turned half sick from this ghastly spectacle and thought that I too, before another day passed by, might be numbered with the dead and rudely thrust beneath dear mother earth.

As we left the cars we met our Brigade returning from what had proved a wild good chase for having marched twelve or fifteen miles in quest of the enemy they were now coming back worn out by their march and almost parched by the intense heat of the day. Some of the members

of the Regt. guided us to our place of bivouac and we were cordially welcomed by the remnants of the 1st Regt. I call them remnants because at this period the regiment was reduced to the paltry number of 66 men, less than the number of a good company. At first the Regt had (I think) 1100 men and eleven companies. 5 companies had been removed, three for special service and two being composed of Marylanders were sent elsewhere. Out of the six remaining companies many of the members, being mechanics by trade, had been detailed by the government for special duties. Many had enlisted but for one year and many had been killed and wounded in the various battles from Bull Run down to the present day. These sixty-six soldiers were already veterans in a noble cause and loved oftentimes to dwell on the scenes of their past warlike adventures, Bull Run, Yorktown, Williamsburg, Seven Pines, Mechanicsville, Cold Harbor, Frazier's Farm, and Malvern Hill were inscribed on their tattered banner and these fields, red with their own, and the blood of their comrades in arms, might furnish inexhaustible matter for chat as they gathered around the blazing log of the camp fire or lolled on the green grass or in the pine grove bivouac during the slowly creeping hours of the summer night.

We were heartily welcomed, as I have said, and told all about the day's march and the futility thereof, and asked many questions about the "latest" from Richmond etc. etc. and soon after partaking of some bread and make-believe coffee we prepared to retire to rest. I felt strange enough I assure you upon lying down this my first night in camp: the strange faces and forms, the near and distant sounds of an army of men talking, shouting, singing and all upon different subjects, the croaking frogs & cries of the whip-poor-Will, the glare of the camp fires and the neighing of horses and the deep shadows of a dark night overhanging all, were not calculated to allay my uneasiness of mind or lighten my heart of its cares. But others were sleeping and why should I not do likewise; so kneeling for a few moments I said some brief prayers and lay me down in peace and quietness for my Guardian Angel was watching by my side, and though I little suspected it then, bore me through many a dreadful peril even to this hour. Two years afterward Lieut. K[eningham]<sup>4</sup> of my Company told me that he watched me the next night to see if I would again go down on my knees and when he did not see me do so he conceived rather a poor opinion of me and also of my religion. I, of course, felt exceedingly mortified and my only excuse was that I did not wish to appear too singular in my habits so I deferred saying my prayers until I lay down. He was not satisfied, however, nor was

I with myself, although I had that portion of the Scriptures on my side where our Lord counsels his followers to pray in secret.

The next morning after laving in a neighboring brook and having taken some army breakfast I felt more at home and was “duly” installed in my new position of Soldier in Company D., Capt. Geo. Norton [commanding], 1st Va. Infantry. [. . .] We began our march upon the 16th of August. My baggage was light, for my effects were few. I had no knapsack; but with one change of under clothing & a colored linen shirt which I rolled up in my blanket I set off with the rest, wearing my blanket rolled up and thrown over my right shoulder, passing under my left arm and the two ends tied together by my side; usually resting the hammer of my gun upon that portion of the blanket on the right shoulder, thus obtaining an admirable support for the musket and suffering no pain or soreness and but little fatigue even upon the longest day’s march. It was some little time before experience taught me the mode of carrying my musket and at first I bruised and chafed my collar and shoulder bones very much by carrying it with the muzzle horizontally to the rear or after the manner of right shoulder shift: but after I came to rest the hammer as I have described with the muzzle pointing upward I was but little fatigued in my arms and shoulders, no matter how weary my legs and feet might be.

**[wb]** I knew that being a raw recruit in the ranks my fellow comrades naturally thought I would not be able to withstand the long fatiguing marches, the dusty roads, hot broiling sun, sleepless nights, the mountain dews, the slender rations and drenching rains. I knew also that my delicate appearance would naturally beget suspicions of weakness on my part and I suspected on theirs that there was a certain feeling of jealousy which all or nearly all brave soldiers felt toward those whom they suspect of shirking duty in the field or even in the least degree seeking their comfort at home when they might be useful elsewhere. Seeing or thinking that I saw such suspicions and feelings among my fellow soldiers (altho’ outwardly I was treated with the utmost kindness by all with whom I associated), I would rather have dropped dead on the road side than to have broken down in the midst of our hardships and fatigues, or have missed the first glorious battle in which we so soon became engaged. Day after day & night after night did we tramp along the rough & dusty roads; neath the most broiling sun with which the month of August ever afflicted a soldier; thro’ rivers and their rocky valleys, over mountains & thro’ rocky glen—on, on, scarcely stopping to gather the green corn from the fields to serve us for rations. Oh how often when the

mid day sun poured down his fiercest beams, how often when my weary legs, feeling like lumps of bruised flesh, mechanically as it were, moved one after the other (at the dead of night). How often was I tempted to lay down my musket and acknowledge myself conquered by the numberless hardships and terrible fatigue of the Campaign. But I felt it my duty to endure every thing and above all my pride sustained me, and from the bottom of my heart I was wont on occasion of such temptations to ask of God to give me renewed strength to enable me to complete that arduous campaign.

[MC] Our army moved slowly along the dusty high roads and the scorching rays of a midsummer sun played fiercely on our heads and blazed straight in our dust bespeckled faces; as we passed near Orange Court House, Gen. Kemper's<sup>5</sup> mother is sitting on the front porch to greet us as we go. She is bent with years and silver are her tresses, bound up in neat simplicity, but she waves her kerchief to her son's brave troops and bids them God speed against a relentless and unprincipled foe. Twelve miles were all we marched to day and it was enough for me being my first march, and I was glad, when the shades of evening gathered round to throw my wearied body beside the road and prepare for rest. A piece of fat bacon thrust into the fire by means of a two pronged wooden fork, a piece of tough bread and some army coffee were disposed of with astonishing relish and after some little chat, folding my jacket over my shoes and cartridge box for a pillow I rested in unbroken slumber until the morning sun flashed down from the eastern hills and sparkled in millions of dew drops that [ . . . ] glistened [ . . . ] from the drooping foliage of the forest trees. A voice almost in my ear is shouting to Sergeant Jennings<sup>6</sup> (the Commissary Sgt.) to rouse himself for the day has broken into a *thousand little pieces*. It is Capt. Harney<sup>7</sup> (Commissary) who thus appeals to his sergeant to rise and deal out the rations; he is loath to abandon his recumbent position but necessity urges and he needs must be quick.

After snatching a hasty repast we are on the dusty high road again and the sun grows hotter & hotter. During the marches the men are oftentimes unrecognizable on account of the thick coverings of dust which settle upon the hair, eye-brows & beard, filling likewise the mouth, nose, eyes and ears, and the poor victims very much like hard toiling millers although *much more so*. Sometimes the road leads through the woods and then how delightfully cool we feel, how lustily we cheer and sing our chorus with redoubled enthusiasm: for one of the chief helps in our company towards keeping up gaiety and a cheerful heart is to march in time to some popular air which we all sing in chorus and repeat over

and over again. I really think, nay I am sure, that half the fatigue of a march may be avoided or unfelt if the men have music to cheer their drooping spirits and enliven their lagging steps. Steger<sup>8</sup> or as he is more usually known "Heavy Steger" is the leader of our company band, as he is in fact of every noisy demonstration which may be effected by the tongue. Bud Craig,<sup>9</sup> Sam Winston, Lem Winston, Phil Winston, Ziek Priddy,<sup>10</sup> Pete Keiningham, Nat Wheat<sup>11</sup> are some of the principal and most energetic members and many a mile did we pass over unfelt, while we kept step to our *own admirable music*.

Some times we would march many miles before reaching any woody shade and to leave the coolness of the woods for the glare of the noonday sun was a terrible sacrifice which we felt the more on account of the little enjoyment we had previously snatched. Scarce a stream that we passed on our march but that furnished a temporary relief to the parched and aching throats of hundreds; even the smallest rills were muddied by the approach of eager mouths and canteens. This excessive thirst was but natural but our men except in few cases did not know how to moderate their eager desire for water and by excessive indulgence augmented the evil they sought to allay. Oftentimes we turn aside from the dusty road into the fields, where large bodies of troops have passed preceding us. Miles upon miles of desolate track may be seen every day through fertile fields which should be teeming with rich harvests of luxuriant grain, but now alas they are trodden under foot by ruthless foes whose retreating steps are scarcely more destructive than the march of their avenging pursuers. Here the fences thrown down and the rails half burnt: the smoking homestead and the houseless, breadless orphan appeal to heaven for retribution upon a wanton cowardly foe whose brutal orders have been but too faithfully executed.<sup>12</sup>

This contemptible apology for a general (Pope) kept us following upon his heels for ten or twelve days, and it was not until Jackson's little army had gone round him, intervening between his army and Washington that he could be induced to stand his ground.<sup>13</sup> These were days of toil and hardship to our army for they were hot beyond sufferance and our marches were constant and nearly almost always prolonged into the night. Well do I remember the night we reached our bivouac near Stephensburg Va:<sup>14</sup> we had marched all the day, from day break until midnight: weary and worn we rested by the roadside, waiting our turn to go into the fields where like so many beasts we were to sleep a few hours, unsheltered from the rain which was already beginning to descend. Anderson's Brigade of Georgians are approaching for they are to be provided for,<sup>15</sup> before us tonight, and as they draw near an impudent wag