

CEASE NOT TO THINK OF ME
The Steele Family Letters



Edited By
Patricia H. Ryan

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Huntsville Planning Department
City of Huntsville
1979

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Preface

When I began researching the Steele family almost four years ago, my purpose was singular—to document buildings designed and erected by George Steele, Huntsville, Alabama's most distinguished antebellum architect. Several frustrating years of searching led to the discovery of something else entirely: a collection of mid-nineteenth century letters written by members of Steele's family and stored in archives and attics throughout the South. After reading these letters for their architectural content, my interest shifted to their value as social history, portraying a small Alabama town as viewed by a wealthy and prominent family. The eighty-four letters included here span thirty-three years, from 1835 to 1868, and collectively relate the account of the Steeles and two other families that were related to them by marriage, the Fearn of Huntsville and the Tracys of Macon, Georgia. Their everyday lives, births, marriages and deaths, joys and sorrows unfold; and through their eyes, the prevailing medical practices, social customs, religious beliefs, and manner of dress are detailed to present a vivid picture of their lifestyle. From a concert by Jenny Lind to a tragic death in the Civil War, the characters tell their own story, sometimes humorously, sometimes poignantly.

Much of the correspondence is between two children of George Steele and their spouses, Matt Steele and his wife, Kate Fearn, and Ellen Steele and her husband, Edward Tracy. The letters were written when the parties were separated: Matt's occupation as a commission merchant required frequent traveling, and Tracy's business interests in his native Georgia, and later the Civil War, meant time away from Ellen. Fortunately, all four saved their correspondence, and through their descendants, the letters have been preserved, making this collection possible. The title, *Cease Not to Think of Me*, is the sentiment expressed on the small gummed labels that Kate used to seal her envelopes.

Several of George Steele's children settled in Mississippi, and it was there that I first located the family papers. It seems likely that it was Matt's granddaughter Tracy Steele who donated the bulk of the material to the Mississippi Department of Archives and History in Jackson (where it is filed as the Crutchfield-Fearn-Steele Family Papers). This material turned up many new leads to be contacted and sources to be explored, which in turn resulted in locating other Steele descendants and eventually discovering additional letters and portraits.

Those letters reprinted here without a raised character at the end of the title line indicate that the originals are on deposit in Jackson. Most of Tracy's correspondence is owned by his granddaughter, Miss S. Rossetter Collins of Macon, Georgia, and these are marked with a superior *m*. The location of the other originals is designated as follows: *eg*—in the possession of Mr.

Matt Steele, Coral Gables, Florida; *e*—in the possession of the editor; *h*—in the files of the Heritage Room, Huntsville Public Library. All letters have been reprinted by permission of their respective owners.

While transcribing this correspondence, several editorial questions arose as to the manner in which the material should be presented. The first concerned whether or not the individual letters should be abridged; this I have decided against for fear it would distort the character of both the letter and its author. Although no passages have been deleted, many letters were totally eliminated for varying reasons, but principally because they were repetitive or did not contribute to the storyline or characterization. The correspondence of secondary characters and non-family members has also been kept to a minimum, as well as those letters which interrupt an otherwise normal flow of events. While most of the originals are in excellent condition, a few are so deteriorated with holes and frayed edges as to render them unreadable.

The organization of the letters was somewhat simpler: they have been divided into chapters, each one ending with a major event in the lives of the writers. The decision to conclude the book in 1868 was not as arbitrary as it would appear. The frequency of the correspondence between the principal characters was dramatically reduced in the ensuing years, and thereafter no cohesive narrative emerges. For all practical purposes, the letters of this generation ceased with the deaths of Ellen and Edward Tracy and with the end of Matt and Kate Steele's long separations.

The letters have been painstakingly transcribed and reproduced here exactly as they were written over one hundred years ago, with a few exceptions made for the convenience of the reader. The majority of the writers were highly educated, but they never dreamed their works would be published, so errors did occur, mostly from writing in haste and often under unfavorable conditions. I have italicized all of the original underlining as well as the names of newspapers, books, ships, and foreign words and phrases. Raised characters used by the writers to indicate abbreviations have been lowered and an apostrophe inserted. Spelling has been corrected only when a letter was unintentionally and obviously left out and otherwise has been reproduced as written. An exception was made with one gentleman, George Steele, whose handwriting was so illegible that proper spelling was used when his was undecipherable. It was exceedingly rare that the first word following a question mark or exclamation point would be capitalized, and this has been corrected according to modern custom. The nineteenth century usage of punctuation can only be described as bizarre by today's standards, and several writers apparently devised their own systems. This also has not been changed, but periods and commas have been

silently inserted where they were obviously omitted or when needed for clarity. To facilitate reading, I have supplied words inadvertently omitted; these are found in brackets in the regular typeface. Italicized words in brackets indicate an illegible passage, which I have inferred from its context within the sentence; a question mark in brackets generally denotes an ink blot or hole in the paper.

While compiling the material for this book, I have read innumerable deeds, wills, obituaries, court records, and newspapers, and have written hundreds of letters tracing descendants and seeking information. It would therefore be impossible to acknowledge every individual for his contributions, but I would like to name a few. I wish to thank Annwhite Thomas, Rané Pruitt, and Cecelia Thorn of the Huntsville Public Library for their assistance; Dr. Stanley R. Hauer of the University of Southern Mississippi for his encouragement and valuable suggestions; and Linda Bayer of the Huntsville Planning Commission for her countless hours of proofreading, deciphering, and advice. And to every one of those wonderful Steele descendants my deepest appreciation for their cooperation and enthusiasm, especially Mrs. Lawrence Abney, Mrs. Robert Fuller, Mr. James S. Himel, Mrs. James Milner, Mr. Kirk R. Morley, Mrs. John Sawyer, Miss Martha Scates, and Mrs. Frank C. White. For providing me with letters and photographs, my sincere gratitude goes to Mrs. James McLeod, Mr. Hoffman Shackelford, and Mr. Matt Steele. I am extremely grateful to Mrs. Thomas G. Womack, Jr., for her continual support and research; lastly, a most special thanks to Miss S. Rossetter Collins, who singlehandedly made the inclusion of the Tracy letters possible and also made my work very enjoyable.

CEASE NOT TO THINK OF ME

Principal Characters

THE STEELES *at Oak Place*

George Gilliam Steele, *architect and builder*

Eliza Ann Weaver Steele, *his wife*

Their children:

Matthew Weaver Steele *and his wife, Catherine Erskine Fearn*

Their children:

Sallie Fearn Steele

Thomas Fearn Steele

Eliza Watson Steele

George Steele

John Frederick Steele

George Gilliam Steele *and his wife, Ada Fearn*

Sallie Fleming Steele *and her husband, Richard Winter*

Ellen Elizabeth Steele *and her husband, Edward Dorr Tracy*

William Angelo Steele *and his wife, Kate Murphy*

Susan E. Steele *and her husband, Charles Clarke Shackelford*

THE FEARNs *at 517 Franklin Street*

Thomas Fearn, *physician*

His children:

Mary Eleanor Fearn *and her husband, Gustavus Lyle Mastin*

Arabella Mastin, *their daughter*

Sarah Leeanna Fearn *and her husband, William Sullivan Barry*

Catherine Erskine Fearn *and her husband, Matthew Weaver Steele*

Ada Fearn *and her husband, George Gilliam Steele*

Maria Eliza Fearn *and her husband, William Willis Garth*

Berenice Shelby Fearn

Lucy Lee Fearn

Mary Fearn Patton, "Aunt Polly," *his sister*

Robert Fearn, *his brother*

Eliza Maria Henderson Fearn, *Robert Fearn's wife*

Elizabeth Fearn Patton Coles, "Cousin Eliza," *his niece*

THE TRACYS *of Macon, Georgia*

Edward Dorr Tracy, "Lit," *lawyer*

Ellen Elizabeth Steele Tracy, *his wife*

Their children:

Susan Campbell Tracy

Georgia Eliza Tracy

Ellen Tracy

Philemon Tracy, *his brother*

Ann Clark Tracy, *his sister, and her husband, William Butler Johnston*

Campbell Tracy, *his half brother*

Harriet Tracy, "Hattie," *his half sister*

Introduction



George Gilliam Steele
Courtesy Hoffman Shackleford, Jr.



Dr. Thomas Fearn
Courtesy Mrs. James McLeod

The nineteenth century was an age of travel and relocation. As new lands were opened by the government, people flocked to establish new towns such as Huntsville, Alabama, nestled at the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. A part of the Mississippi Territory, it was settled by John Hunt in 1805 around a natural source of water that is today known as the Big Spring. The rapid influx of settlers into the area brought about the creation of Madison County in 1808 with Huntsville as the county seat, and land sales began the following year. LeRoy Pope, a planter from Georgia, became the principal purchaser of land in the heart of the city. At his suggestion the new town was called Twickenham after the English estate of Alexander Pope and remained so until 1811, when the legislature changed the name back to Huntsville in honor of its original settler. At any rate, a tract of sixty acres was laid out by Pope and the city commissioners in 1810 that was bounded by Holmes Street on the north, Lincoln Street on the east, Williams Street on the south, and Gallatin Street on the west. A two-acre tract near the center of town was reserved for the courthouse, and businesses tended to locate around it. Residences were often erected outside the city limits, with many wealthy citizens constructing their homes south of Williams Street along Adams Avenue and Franklin Street.

The town limits were rapidly expanded as the population increased from 300 persons in 1808 to over 1300 in 1822. Many inducements were offered to attract lawyers, doctors, and merchants to Huntsville. Although the Big Spring supplied water for town consumption, the Tennessee River, ten miles to the south, was important as a means of transportation, and it was soon connected to Huntsville by a turnpike. Among the amenities the town offered were Green Academy, chartered in 1812, and three newspapers. As planters moved to the area in search of fertile soil, cotton gins were opened. A bank and courthouse were erected, and the various county courts established. Mrs. Anne Royall wrote in a letter of January 1, 1818, that Huntsville contained 260 houses and twelve stores around the Public Square; she also noted that there was no church, but the people worshiped in the courthouse.

In 1819 Alabama was granted statehood. For the previous two years since Mississippi became a state, the area had been known as the Alabama Territory. So important was Huntsville that the Constitutional Convention met there in July of 1819 to draft a constitution for statehood, and Huntsville was the capital of Alabama until that November. The town continued its growth, attracting men who would leave their mark on both state and local history. It was to such a prosperous region that George Steele was attracted, and he arrived on February 11, 1818.

He was born April 1, 1798, near Liberty (now Bedford), Virginia, the fourth child of George Steele and his wife Sally Gilliam. Shortly after his birth, his mother died, and his father remarried. Steele's early life remains a mystery, although according to family legend he disliked his step-mother and left home at an early age, walking to Huntsville to live with Mrs. Sallie Lewis Fleming, a friend of his mother. However, since the Flemings also arrived in Madison County from Virginia in 1818, it seems more likely that they traveled together.

There is no evidence that Steele was formally educated; no university in Virginia has records of his attendance, so it seems probable that he was self-taught. It is likely that he followed the traditional custom of serving as an apprentice to an experienced builder to learn the construction trade, either in Virginia or Huntsville. There were no architectural schools at this time, and his architectural talents apparently developed from his building experience. At any rate, by 1824 he had developed some means of independent support, for in that year he purchased about nine and a half acres of land, paying \$1,000 for it. The tract was bounded roughly by Clinton Street on the north, Calhoun Street on the east, Randolph Street on the south, and Lincoln Street on the west; and here Steele would erect seven structures, six residences and a college. One of these residences, located at 519 Randolph Street, was for his own family.

In December of 1823, he had married Eliza Ann Weaver, the daughter of Matthew Watson Weaver and Lucy Jude. Born in Campbell County, Virginia, on January 1, 1808, she removed to Madison County with her family about 1814 where she was educated at the school of Mrs. De Vendel. Eight children were born to the Steeles: Matthew Weaver (1824), John Frederick (1826), George Gilliam (1828), Sallie Fleming (1829), Mary Eliza (1832, died 1834), Ellen Elizabeth (1833), William Angelo (1836), and Susan (1839).

Only a few structures can be creditably attributed to Steele during the 1820's, but he surely must have designed and erected more. Still, financially he was struggling and found himself in court almost thirty-five times during this decade, mostly as the defendant over non-payment of debts. He lost over half the cases, with about nine being dismissed, including one strange case in which Steele was accused of cutting down and carrying away an odd assortment of 385 trees. With the advent of the 1830's, however, he began to prosper, and with his reputation grew his fortune. He began to purchase real estate throughout the city and served the community as a trustee of Green Academy, a director of the Northern Bank of Alabama, and as city alderman from 1837 until 1841. More than any other individual, he helped shape the physical

appearance of Huntsville through his numerous public and private commissions.

The second Huntsville family detailed in the letters is that of Dr. Thomas Fearn, whose family was linked to the Steeles by marriage; Kate Fearn married Matt Steele in 1848 and Ada Fearn married George Steele, Jr., in 1854. Dr. Fearn was born near Danville, in Pittsylvania County, Virginia, on November 15, 1789, the son of Thomas Fearn and his third wife Mary Burton. He received his early education in Danville and enrolled in Washington College at Lexington, Virginia, in 1806 and graduated from the Old Medical College at Philadelphia in 1810. After his arrival in Huntsville that same year, he began to amass a large fortune, one that would total almost \$175,000 by 1860, through varied and highly successful business enterprises; however, his national acclaim resulted from his contributions in the field of medicine.

Dr. Fearn began his practice in Huntsville and served as surgeon under General Andrew Jackson during the war with the Creek Indians, and later was appointed "Surgeon's Mate" in charge of the military hospital at Huntsville. In 1818 he traveled to Europe to further his medical studies at the Royal College of Surgeons in London and at St. Thomas' in Paris, returning to Huntsville in 1820 to continue his medical practice. Locally Dr. Fearn is remembered as the man who named Monte Sano Mountain; family legend relates the story of a sick child who was cured only after Dr. Fearn moved her to the mountain. It was at his suggestion that it afterwards became known as Monte Sano, the "mountain of health." His greatest renown came from his research on quinine, which he made from the bark of trees and used to treat typhoid fever. When his findings were published in medical journals, his reputation spread throughout this country and abroad. During his years of practice, he was offered, but refused, the chair of surgery at four universities, and in 1827 he received honorary degrees from Rutgers College and Transylvania University.

His business ventures were equally successful. Thomas Fearn began buying land in Madison County about 1815, and at his death he owned almost 1100 acres. After discovering the healthful benefits of Monte Sano, he attempted with his brother George to turn it into a health resort, which they named Viduta. This mountain-top spa was incorporated in 1833, but its potential was not fully realized during his lifetime. The Indian Creek Navigation Company, with Dr. Fearn as president, was another of his undertakings. The goal was to connect the Big Spring Creek with the Tennessee River at Triana by clearing and enlarging the streams along the way; this would allow cotton bales to be floated to the river on flatboats rather than hauled overland on wagons. The improved waterway,

known as Fearn's Canal, opened in 1828 and operated profitably from the collection of tolls until about 1845. Dr. Fearn also served the community as a director of both the Northern Bank of Alabama and the Madison Turnpike Company and as a trustee of the University of Alabama and of the Green Academy in Huntsville. He was an organizer of the Huntsville Female Seminary and a representative to the state legislature in 1822-23 and 1828-30.

In the early 1820's Dr. Fearn purchased from his brother Robert between two and three acres on the east side of Franklin Street on which to build his home (now 517 Franklin). In 1822 he married Sallie Bledsoe Shelby, the daughter of David Shelby and Sarah Bledsoe of Sumner County, Tennessee. The children born of this union were Mary Eleanor (1823), Sarah Leeanna (1824), Catherine Erskine (1828), Ada (1830), Maria Eliza (1832), Berenice Shelby (1834), and Lucy Lee (1841). In addition three daughters and one son died in infancy.

Throughout the letters one theme prevails, and that is religion. No other institution exerted a more profound influence on nineteenth century life than the church. It was not only the religious center but also the social focus of community life, for here the members congregated to witness baptisms, bury their dead, and discuss the news of the day. The church of the Fearns and the Steeles was the First Presbyterian Church, located at the corner of Lincoln and Gates Streets. Active in its formation, Dr. Fearn saw that his daughters also became devout members; likewise Eliza Ann Steele, her daughters and, eventually, Matt joined. George Steele apparently worshiped at the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The Coles, Coltart, Erskine, Figures, Hopkins, Pleasants, and Watkins families also attended the First Presbyterian Church.

The Steeles and the Fearns were highly intelligent, well-educated people with a strongly developed sense of civic pride and duty. These were people with the courage to settle new frontiers and establish there the institutions of civilization. They believed fervently in religion, education, science, and art, but especially in hard work to provide a better life. That they also upheld the system of slavery only indicates that they were the products of their age.

The Civil War may have destroyed their world as they knew it, but it did not dampen their desire to create a better one. George Steele's sons left Huntsville for new frontiers where they continued to provide the leadership, not to rebuild the old society, but to fashion a new one based on the realities of railroads and industry. They readily embraced new ideas and new challenges: they were part of the vanguard that struggled to reconstruct the South in the second half of the nineteenth century.

I
The Steeles
1835-1848

The first chapter serves as an introduction to the principal characters and spans thirteen years, from 1835 to 1848. It begins with a letter written by George Steele while on his first visit to Washington, D. C. This was an educational trip to study the new architectural styles emerging in the North, and upon his return, he was awarded the contracts to design two major structures—the Branch of the Bank of the State of Alabama at Huntsville (First Alabama Bank), for which he was also the contractor, and the second Madison County Courthouse (later demolished). About 1840 Steele began work on a new residence for his family, as they had outgrown the house on Randolph Street. The new house was erected on 320 acres of land east of Huntsville and named "Oak Place."

Its design was unconventional, deviating from the traditional floorplan of a central hall with rooms off either side. Instead, Oak Place had an L-shaped first floor hallway on two levels and two separate staircases. The rooms on the first floor were on different levels also, thereby creating an early split-level house. Steele's home was designed for entertaining and featured an immense drawing room on the first floor and a banquet hall in the English basement. To avoid any talk of scandal among overnight guests, the sleeping quarters for the men and women were totally segregated, and the men's dormitory could be reached only by an elliptical stairway which rose from the entrance hall.

One of the most lavish social events in Huntsville's history took place at Oak Place in March of 1845. Reputedly four thousand invitations were extended to celebrate the election of James K. Polk as President. Originally planned for the previous campaign when Van Buren was the Democratic candidate, the gala event was postponed by his defeat, but a young ox was selected and fattened for four years. The ox was barbecued whole and served with a cake four feet high surmounted by a figure of President Polk, for which Steele had sent his wagon to Nashville to insure its safe delivery. Each gentleman present received a cane cut from Monte Sano hickory, while the more prominent guests were given canes with silver heads. Matt, just home from college, delivered the welcoming address.

Matt Steele had entered the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa in 1842; his brother John enrolled the following year. Nothing is known of their previous education, although they probably attended Green Academy in Huntsville. Matt received his A.B. degree from the university in 1844, then studied law and was admitted to the Alabama bar in 1846 but never practiced as an attorney. John received his A.B. degree in 1845, his A.M. degree in 1848, and then studied law at the University of Virginia.

Meanwhile, the business concerns of Dr. Fearn were steadily diversifying. He owned and operated, at first with his brother George, the city water works from 1836 until 1858, when the facility was purchased by the city. Then in 1837 Dr. Fearn gave up the practice of medicine and became a principal in the partnership of Lockhart, Fearn, and Donegan, general commission merchants, which later became Fearn, Donegan, and Company. But tragedy was to strike—in May of 1842 his wife, Sallie Bledsoe Shelby, died, leaving her husband with seven daughters to raise.

Dr. Fearn was determined to educate his daughters well, and Kate began her formal schooling at the Huntsville Female Seminary, a Presbyterian school located on Randolph Street. In 1843 she was sent to New York City to the boarding school of Charles and Adele Canda; her unhappiness there is revealed in two letters from her father, dated July 18, 1843, and January 29, 1844:

It has been not without a sacrifice that I have determined to afford you the pecuniary means of rendering yourself a more accomplished young lady, than the schools of our town would effect, and it does seem to me, but little short of derangement, that you should just enter upon your course of instruction there and then in the full tide of your progress fly home again and sacrifice all. I did wish you to remain until you could be returned to me as accomplished and as polished as the intellect, which I know you possess.

I am sorry to see from the tone of your letters, that very few of your studies are agreeable to you. Heretofore you complained of English Grammar &c. Now, you don't like singing, nor astronomy, nor Italian. Why what do you like? It seems that you would cut down your studies almost to French alone.

By 1845 Kate had returned to Alabama and spent much of her time traveling and visiting relatives. She was courted by Matt Steele, and in 1847 they became engaged. The final letter of the chapter, written to her father, details purchases she wished him to make in New Orleans for the wedding.

GEORGE STEELE to DR. THOMAS FEARN

Washington Cty Mar. 21, 1835

Doct T. Fearn

D Sir

I have been here three days and after visiting the University and Monticello at Charlottesville, as I passed on - I had thou't that I would be prepared to enter this cty, with less excitement of feelings - but the reverse has been the fact - and to describe to you, what I felt when I first arrived where, the Capital, and the President's Manse, with all their sublimity, broke upon my view, would be impossible. I have since however visited them several times, and whatever my admiration might have been at the first sight of them, It was, far short of what it really was, on my entering these glorious monuments of our national pride - for I was ready to fall down, and worship, the genius that composed them - this no doubtly we will smile at, be It so, you sir, you have *traveled* I have also visited the department of State, Patten office, Navy yard, public graveyard &c which I found to be of much interest. I think I shall leave here in a day or two for Baltimore, which I would not do, but for want of time - and a belief that I shall derive more practical benefits there, than here, as nothing is doing here at the present in the way of improvement. I am fearfull, should I visit all the [?], and stop long enough to be of much advantage to me - It will delay my return till the middle of May or 1 June - in which event you might not be willing to defer leting out the contract for the bank till my return. If It should be consistent with your views however to wait till that time, you will confer a favour on me by using your influence with the other directors. I must also request you to pay some attention to your Brother's work - for which I will take pleasure in reciprocating your kindness on my return - with much respect I remain your ob St

Geo Steele

N.B. please to say to Doct Irby, that he will much oblige me by urging the delivery of the Lumber which I engaged before I left home - particularly the cedar Lumber - and the plank.

G.S.

MRS. ELIZA A. STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Oak Place [1842]

Dear Son

I have intended writing you ever since you left but have failed to do so, knowing that you are anxious to hear from me. I have embraced this pleasant opportunity of sending you these few lines by Mr Acklin. It afforded me much pleasure to hear that you were satisfied. You then of course will apply yourself much better to your studies knowing that it will give your mother the

greatest pleasure on earth, to hear of your rapid progress. My Son, it is my sincere prayer that you may excel all in your classes, yes I might say all in college, I know there is nothing that could be more pleasing to your Father than to have a son that excelled in every thing. You spoke of forming some acquaintances with the young Ladies. I hope you will not make a practice of calling on them. Your cousin Mary was here last night and we had quite a concert, at least Mary said so, your tune was frequently called for, and then wondering what you were about, some would say one thing, and some another. I received a letter from your Aunt Harris, some few days after you left. They were well except herself, she occasionally has chills. Eliza was married to a Dr Simkins about two months ago. He is a widower with one child. You say you saw the apple geranium and would have got it for me but had no way of sending it, I am happy to say I have it and that beautiful silver leaf geranium you spoke of, together with many others that are very pretty and rare. Your Father bought of an old gentleman forty dollars worth, I have twelve arborvitae. He has concluded to extend the back portico the full size of the drawing room of which he intends building a green house so that any person may step out of the drawing room into the green house. I would like very much for you to get a slip of the Arabian jasmine for me, if you can. I have nothing interesting to write you. We are all well, Sally will write to you in a few days. Your Father and all join me in love to you. I want you to write me often as I feel anxious to hear how you are getting on, you must be a good boy and keep no bad company. Take care of your clothes and when you write, write something that will be cheering to the feelings of a Mother.

Farewell Your Affectionate Mother
Eliza A. Steele

P.S.

Dear Brother

As it is worth while to add a little more, I will put it in my own name. Mother has told you of the health of all, and I will tell you a little more. Father has tried to procure, those instruments for you but there was none in town. But he has enclosed \$10 for you. Hudson and Perryman have joined schools at last, and learning now like any thing. You must write to me. I intend to write you a whole letter some of these days.

Your affectionate Brother
John

MATTHEW W. STEELE to GEORGE STEELE

University of Ala
July 18th, 1842

Dear Father

Yours of the 12th was duly rec'd and I have snatched up my

[pen] to write you a few lines in answer but I must do it in great haste as I have very little time before now. I have already passed through one sub. and escaped with credit to myself. I am now awaiting to stand the test of another and I shall endeavor to acquit myself in my various studies at the present examination with honor. I am sorry indeed father to find that you have impeached me with prodigality, you have been too hasty in your conclusions, you are doubtless aware that I cannot have the first thing done without paying for it, that cannot obtain any thing without paying for it. I am naturally exposed to my little expenses that you have never considered, which from your own experience you are able to form some conception of. Therefore I shall not say much to vindicate myself on this score, but let it be decided in future. You seem to fear that I have some debts that I do not wish to let you know of, now though this is perfectly natural, yet it is not so. I have a little debt that cannot be well paid until next session, it is as follows - during last session I was desirous of purchasing some articles of clothing viz a couple of pocket handkerchiefs and a pair of shoes. There being none at Mr. Hogans I purchased them on John Lowes ac't at another place, the amount is \$6.50 cts, the reason I did not mention it to you in my last was because I did not think it would be worth while to settle it until next session when J. L. settles his acct. This together with some little I owe at Mr. Hogans which does not exceed 10\$ is all the money I owe in this place and I do not think it will be necessary to pay until next session. I have further been as economical as possible not even spending money for fruit, I have not purchased any thing except such as I was in absolute want of. I mentioned to you in my last that I would be home on monday 25th. John Lowe does not wish to leave until monday, but as Mother is indisposed I shall endeavor to persuade him to leave on saturday, if not I will be home on wednesday. I have devoted my self with assiduous application during this session and I shall be able I think to acquit my self with credit. I would not send you this in this dress but I shall have to go in to be examined in a few minutes therefore you must excuse this penmanship. I am very anxious to get home and hope to be with you in about ten days so farewell.

Your affectionate
Son Matthew

MATTHEW W. STEELE to GEORGE STEELE

Univ of Ala
July 14th 1844.

Dear Father.

As our session is now drawing to a close, I will write you a few lines relative to our returning home; giving you a statement of the amount of money that we shall want to pay our debts and

defray our expenses. You are doubtless aware that the session has been longer than three months by some ten days, for which excess we will have to pay for board and washing about ten dollars. For procuring music at the junior exhibition, printing bills, and furnishing a party about \$8, articles of clothing that brother John is having made for the coming exhibition, together with a few for myself, and an account that we owe at the shoe store about \$35, also some minor expenses with the servants. To settle which and defray our expenses home will require \$100 which I would thank you to send as soon as is convenient.

I will here take occasion to notice a remark made by you, in your letter by Maj Walker, and which, was again repeated in your letter of the 1st ultimo. It is as follows "you have expended more than eleven hundred dollars for the year ending the 1st of April, making more than \$550 each; besides the clothing you bought whilst here." Now I protest against your commencing and ending the year (in calculating our expenses) at any other time, than that, at which, the civil year begins and ends, and, for reasons which I will proceed to give. By way of illustration, let us suppose that during the year of 1844 I should spend in the month of June the sum of \$500; that I had spent from the 1st of Jan to that time \$100 and about \$100 from that time until the last of Dec. making my annual expenses \$700, but suppose that in the following year in the month of June I spend \$500 again; and had spent \$100 from the 1st of Jan to that time. Now should you commence the calculation of my expenses from the month of June in 1844 to June 1845 you would make my expenses \$1200 whereas my real annual expenses would only be \$700 reckoned from January. Thence I do not see why you did not commence the calculation of our expenses from the month of January since we both came here about the 10th of that month. Should you do this I do not think you would find our annual expenses to exceed one thousand dollars. Again, in regards to the clothing, that I have purchased at home I will make this statement, and, though it may surprise you, yet I am satisfied, that I can at any time convince you of its truth. I have been here near three years and during which time, I have not spent for clothes in the town of Huntsville, more than \$85, making less than \$50 a year. Hence you have been wrong in, repeatedly alluding to my having spent so much for clothes up home. Now it has been more than ten months since we were at home, consequently every article of clothing that we have needed, we have been compelled to purchase in this place, and to some extent our expenditures of this year have exceeded those of last year. I had designed, not to take notice in an epistolary manner, the complaint made by you in your letter against us; but, I intended to have awaited until my return home and then to have talked the matter over with you: but, forsooth, I find in your last, that you have inferred from my silence in that respect, that I admitted the justice of your complaint and only found fault with

the manner in which it was made. I hope you will see from this that you were mistaken. Now I do not pretend to deny but that I have spent more money than I should have done, that I have purchased many things that I should have left unpurchased and thus in many respects I have been prodigal; but I do ask of you not to place me upon an equality with old and experienced men, for I have not the lamp of experience, to guide me in my dealings, neither am I possessed of that knowledge of foreseeing events, that is the characteristic of the business man - and oft, for a want of this knowledge and experience, I have doubtless been exposed to the craft and cunning of dishonest men. We shall get through here on the 26th, on which day we will probably start home. I shall however write again letting you know on what day we will be home. It has become quite sickly here and several are down with the fever, we, are however both in good health. It is rumored here that Polk is dead, though I do not believe it. We have had a great deal of rain lately and they anticipate a very sickly fall. Give my love to Mother and the family at large.

Your affectionate
Son Matthew W.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MISS CATHERINE FEARN

Mr. Steele in sending to Miss Fearn the boquet that he promised, regrets exceedingly that a scarcity of rare roses and other flowers at this season, prevents him from sending such a one as he would desire, he trusts however that it will be equally as acceptable.

Oak Place
August 25th/45.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to GEORGE STEELE, JR.

Huntsville Ala
June 14th 1848.

Dear Bro.

From your letter to Sister Sally which was received to day, I learn that you have not for some time received one either from Bro Jno or myself.

I was not aware I was in your debt, else I should have written some sooner. You and Sister Sally seem to have been at "loggerheads" about some allusions in her letter. I am deposed to defend her in one respect at least, viz, where she hints that you are too apologetic in your letters generally. It is a fault that every young man away from home seems to have fallen into. I, was even worse than yourself, and after this acknowledgement on my own part, you will doubtless appreciate my motive when I tell you that it is

a too great a fault with yourself. Rarely, if ever apologize for neglect in epistolary correspondence, because rarely is the apology ever beloved: further you will contract a habit that will require great effort to get rid of, and a style that seems greatly of the *school-boy*.

You should always write in a conversational style, and write upon some subject improving to yourself and your correspondent. But I did not commence this with any design of lecturing you upon style &c, and none whatever of practicing what I preach. I simply write to you that you may know that we are all well at home. I have had a few chills and am somewhat reduced, but I am rapidly regaining. Father and Mother design taking a trip up the Tennessee River next week, as far as Chatanooga. I am living in the new house that Father last put up in town, but I expect soon to make an *agreeable change of quarters*, and I hope you will be here about the *middle* of July.

You have doubtless learned of the death of Col J M McClung, through the *Democrat*. I regret very much his death at this time, and it is indeed a severe loss to the community and State.

Father wrote you not long since remitting to you some money, and I think you ought to have received his letter before the date of yours to Sister Sally, without some accident. I trust you will pass a creditable examination, and that you may come home with the proud consolation of knowing that you have spent profitably your time.

You have greatly improved in spelling, but you are too elliptical (if you will allow the expression) in your language, you omit both words and letters, this you should pay especial attention to, for recollect that your writing will always be for the eyes of others and an individuals professional knowledge is always judged more or less by his writings. Never in your compositions use slang or cant phrases; never use common place similes and never, unless very appropos, quote a latin phrase. Avoid all technicalities, both in writing and in conversation but particularly in conversation. I saw a young *medical*, the other day very much cut, by being asked to explain the word *luxated*, which he used frequently in his remarks. But these things I barely hint at, hoping that your own good sense will prompt you to rightly see them. Hoping to see you soon I will close

Your Brother
Matt.

MISS CATHERINE FEARN to DR. THOMAS FEARN^{cg}

Huntsville June 14th 48

Dearest Pa

I have just received your note enclosed in Dr. Watkin's letter. We all think it is not at all essential that Ada should be

at home, and that it would be pleasanter for all parties, that the fuss should all be over before she gets back. I would have asked you during the winter to let her come home with Ellen Lewis, but thought she would rather take a trip with you this summer. Sister Mary is very anxious to get home again and will not hear of anything else. Mat Steele wished to be married before you left last winter and I put him off until your return, and have allways spoken of it, as taking place then and it seems to me that it would appear rather strange to be putting it off from time to time, and if he were willing to put it off any longer, it would seem to me, that he was very indifferent. Another thing. It is the town talk, as I have been having my underclothes made up, making purchases etc. I assure you that I am in no hurry to be married, for it would be the first time, I was ever in a hurry about anything. Indeed, I have not proved myself in much of one. I have been engaged ever since last September, and partially so for 2 years, and more. Now, Pa, for my purchases. First I suppose, the wedding dress. I think, that an embroidered tarleton or crêpe would perhaps be the thing for the summer. A handsome silk muslin and nothing but a beautiful and elegant one, something etra [*sic*] will do, as there are some who have very pretty ones in town. I believe the girls dress more this summer, than I ever knew them to do. I wish a handsome light silk. A dark muslin something like the piece I send. Please get enough of each and trimmings to correspond. I wish 1 dozen pair of white kid gloves, as there are none in town to fit me no. 7. I want three pair of pretty garters no. 4½. My bonnet must be of white crêpe or chip, or if cousin Ann selects it, I will leave her with this merely as a suggestion. A *thread lace* veil, not a large heavy veil, but with merely a pretty border to it. A large handsome worked cape. I expect that handkerchiefs could be bought much cheaper there than they could be got in this place. I want ½ dozen with just a little hem, stitched around and ½ dozen with a severe border or a flower worked in the corner, or something. Now you say Mrs. Martin, but I never admired her taste. I remember, that if her daughter dressed after her taste, when I was down there, that it struck me as peculiarly gaudy and anything but pretty. Please charge whoever does select them, to get everything strikeingly *chaste* and elegant and bride-like. I would greatly prefer cousin Ann's selection. Do at least, get her to select the wedding dress and my *bonnet* and a *head-dress*. They say, that the bonnets in Mobile [are] much prettier than those in N. Orleans. And charge her to have no orange buds about my bonnet, but something exquisite. I had like to have forgotten. A handsome parasol, I must have, and a beautiful fan. I wish a crêpe shawl, unless you will get me a shawl at the North next and let me have some kind of drapery this summer lighter and more suitable for the season. I reckon one could be gotten on much better terms at the North, at any rate. Maybe you think, I am taking advantage

and asking too much, but I never have had anything extravagant in the way of dress. And as for drapery I have never had a decent article of the kind. I have been staying up in Jackson 3 weeks and succeeded in bringing cousin Eliza back with me. She brought her little Kate and Eliza with her, but I believe, she is getting a little homesick now, which is a very bad complaint. Don't imagine, that the reason this letter is written so badly is because, I am so much agitated. Oh! I do want a pair of coral earrings, long ones, not round, with a good deal of coral about them, I would like a breastpin to suit. I have had my ears pierced since you left and have been wearing Sophy's coral earrings for some time. You promised me last summer to get me a new mattress, as I never had a comfortable one to sleep on. Pa, you had better get me a bureau down there. I think sister Mary's bureau, the prettiest one at the cabinet-maker's and I do not like hers. You think before this, that there is no end to my wants, but I am trying to make up for not being able to take a fashionable jaunt this summer. Sis Sarah says she does not care who selects her wardrobe. She says, she bore the loss of her bonnet like a philosopher. She expects to get it again shortly. She is a little inclined to get down sometimes about my stepping off before, but I will not allow her to give. The other night, after we went to bed she commenced talking quite low-spirited about it and before she stopped we both got to talking and laughing loud and so continued until rather late, I must confess, for it was 1 or 2 o'clock before we went to sleep. But I have learnt to be quite an early riser, since my visit to Jackson. Sis Sarah proclaims me a nuisance. There is no news afloat. Everybody wants to know when you will be back. Cousin Eliza joins me and the rest of the family in much love to you.

your affectionate daughter
Kate

Sis Sarah will write in a day or so.

II
Matt and Kate
1849-1855



Matthew Weaver Steele
Courtesy Matt W. Steele



Catherine Erskine Fearn
Courtesy Mrs. James Upshaw

Catherine Erskine Fearn and Matthew Weaver Steele were married on July 13, 1848. Their union was a long and fruitful one, spanning fifty-nine years and producing nine children. Matt soon found himself supporting a rapidly growing family, and in his own words, "The great object of my wishes is now to be at work, and working in such a manner as will render me comfortable and independent." Although a member of the bar, he found law "a laborious and beggaring profession" and chose instead to engage in the commission business with his father-in-law's firm, Fearn, Donegan, and Company.

The responsibility of the commission merchant, or cotton factor, was basically to sell cotton for the planter, buy his plantation supplies, and advance him money, for which the factor received a commission of two and a half percent. If the planter wished to purchase items locally, he often did so by a draft on his factor, making cash transactions rare. To receive the best and latest prices for their clients, Fearn, Donegan, and Company maintained offices in Huntsville, Florence, Memphis and New Orleans, to which latter city most North Alabama cotton was shipped. Matt was required to travel throughout Mississippi and often into Arkansas to solicit new accounts and review existing ones; he also visited Memphis and New Orleans, where he would order supplies and pay the drafts of his clients. His frequent hotel stays were uncomfortable, and in a letter of 1852 which has not been included, he described the problems with his roommate, T. Bibb Bradley, a fellow commission merchant:

I must say I had rather have a room to myself, for I cannot move my hand without coming in contact with a jar of Pomatum, or head grease of some sort or other. He spends about an hour of a morning applying his cosmetics; blacking his eyebrows, oiling his hair &c. He carries at least six different kinds, and his pillow looked this morning as black and dirty as if a boat hand had slept on it for a week.

Another commission merchant with whom Matt frequently traveled was Arthur Mosely Hopkins, often referred to as "Mr. H."

Matt's financial success as a cotton factor appears limited. By 1853 he had become a full partner with William Atwood, James H. Donegan, and Judge James Harvey Weakley, using his savings as the necessary capital for making loans. But bad weather, a depressed cotton market, and over-extension of credit were the hazards of the factorage system; Matt's business suffered in 1854 and 1855, when heavy losses erased the year's profits, and the partners barely regained their investments.

But it was for another reason that Kate bitterly objected to her husband engaging in the commission business, namely their necessary separations, which, in her opinion, were too long and too frequent. She constantly worried that Matt would become ill, and incessantly pleaded with him to resist temptation and avoid sin. To her fell the responsibility of raising their four children born during this period: Sallie in 1849, Fearn in 1851, Eliza in 1853, and George in 1854. At this time she lived alternately with "Father" and the Steeles at Oak Place and with "Pa" and the Fearn on Franklin Street. Only once did she accompany Matt on his travels, and that was in 1851 to New Orleans, which she afterwards referred to as "that Sodom."

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE
Memphis Tenn
Feb'y 20th 1849

My Dear Kate

In my letter to your Father I enclose you these lines. I have been sadly disappointed in not receiving a letter from you in [this] place. If I do not get one this evening, I may not hear from you in some three weeks more, as we think of leaving tomorrow for Missi. Since writing to you, I have been a little sick, but I have entirely recovered; indeed I thought when I was first taken that the cholera had me. I was walking on the side-walk, and was suddenly seized with great giddiness and sickness, accompanied with vomiting, L. Penn was with me and soon brought a *doctor*, who assured me that I was in no danger whatever. I was not at all alarmed, nor have I scarcely thought of cholera since I left home. I am trying however, to be abstemious and prudent in my diet. It was so cold last Sunday that I could not turn out to church, but kept [to] my room. I thought a great deal about you that day, and wished a thousand times to be with you, but contented myself with the hope that you and all are well. I sometimes regret not bringing you with me, but then, I should be absent in the county so much, that I expect it is much the best as it is. The great object of my wishes now, is to be at work, and working in such a manner as will render me comfortable and independent. The anxious, restlessness of expectation as to the result of my present undertaking, keeps me constantly excited; it seems at times to swallow up every other thought, and precludes the indulgence of any other feeling unconnected with that one deep anxiety, that so engrosses my whole mind. I frequently strain every faculty to see the end; yet, I am doomed to wait a certain time before I can see the accomplishment of my wishes, perchance, even in the end have to suffer the pangs of disappointment. I sometimes almost wish that some heavy pecuniary calamity may befall me, that I may see if I possess that elasticity and strength of mind, that could bear me up and resist it, I think I have, yet it is, to test it, that I so wish; it is, a strange feeling I know, but one that I cannot help, occasionally indulging. My Dear Kate, it is your own happiness that I am anxious and labouring to secure, and I feel bouyed up and encouraged to go on. I know the responsibility that is resting upon me, and I shall endeavor to faithfully discharge my duty. The only reward I claim, (and that I am certain I shall have) [is] your constant love.

I indulge in no fearful forebodings; I know that my path through life must at best, be occasionally rugged, yet I endeavor to keep the bright side of the picture all the time up. Mr Hopkins has just sent me out to transact some business, and I had the exquisite pleasure (very unexpectedly) of meeting Mrs Kate Temple, Miss Kate Maltry that was, and also, her *charming little daughter Adrian Temple*. I am rather a poor judge of children, but consider this

rather a poor showing (but mum).

Tell Sister Sarah, that, from what I can hear of Mr Hardin, she has made a complete conquest of him. I am anxious to hear from Bro George, write me a true account of his health. Remember me to Aunts Maria, and Polly, and Cousin Sally L. My love to Mother and Father, and to all the family. Tell Ada not to marry until I get back.

You must write often.

Good Bye
Your affectionate
Husband
M. W. Steele.

P.S. My Dearest Kate

I have just read your *sweet* favour in the P. O. I wish I could express the joy I felt when I got it from the box. I had a Daguerreotype taken, but I do not think it is a good one. I intend however to send it to you. I shall send it by mail. I shall send it to Mr Mastin, and request him to hand it to you without letting *any* one know it. I leave tomorrow for Ponola [Panola] and had I failed to get a letter from you this evening, I should have gone with a very sad heart. May heaven bless you my sweet wife. Good Bye.

I have written the above in the [?] the [?] in a few minutes.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Ponola Co. Missi
March 1st 1849.

My Dear Kate.

I acknowledged in a P. S. written in pencil, in my letter to you from Memphis, the receipt of your long and *affectionate* letter; had I left Memphis without receiving it, I should have left with a heavy heart: I cannot express to you my great joy and pleasure in reading it. It has been quite a companion to me whilst traveling, and I am afraid you will think me childish when I tell you, that I read it nearly every night; and frequently when I ride up to a house where I expect to stop, I frequently say to myself well now I will whilst resting, read Kate's letter. You wish me to state whether, I think you "deal too much in particulars," indeed you do not, I understand your feelings, and it would be a pleasure to me, to even read a repetition of the same thing. I agree with you, that putting our thoughts and feelings upon paper is not like pouring them out to a dear friend; but really my letters always read cold to me, I hope they do not to you, for I assure you my, "poor girl," that I fully appreciate and value the treasure I possess in you as my wife, and if I can only render you happy, my own is the consequence. I sent you my Daguerreotype through Father. I feared Mr Mastin had left for the North (and I hope he has that you may have

sister Mary to sympathise with you). I do not know that it is a good one, but of that you must be the judge. Last sunday night I thought much of you and remembered our readings on that night. I read the 6th and 8th Chapt's of Luke and 11th Chapt of 1st Corinthians but it was not like reading with you holding the candle by my side. I admire the last clause in the 6 and 7th verses in 11th Cor. but not the ethics taught in the 30th verse of 6th Luke. You thought fit to allude to my religious principles; my dear Kate you did me injustice - no one has a higher regard for the Christian religion than I have, and though I may not exactly agree with you, be assured that I would not for any consideration have you change your opinion on my account. I believe the true essence and purity of the Christian religion consists in a belief and practice of the divine lesson taught by Jesus Christ "Love thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thy self."

In regard to your *Uncle*, I am proud to see the indignation that you feel for him, and should I go where he is, I shall not countenance any attention he may be disposed to show me.

I was at the house of Col Frazar to day, whose wife claims kin with you, he is a very jovial fellow, and told me that I would find, if I have not already done so, the Shelby blood to be mighty high metal. The old lady is a thorough going woman and quite a lady, she is very large. I saw her daughter up in Deso Co. She is *tolerably good looking*, but there is most too much of her. She is just from Nashville, where she has been at school. I passed Miss Sophy's Mother in law's plantation yesterday (Mrs Hunt I mean) every thing looked snug and comfortable. I saw Mr Hunt in Memphis.

I met Mrs Jno Thompson a few days since, she is quite glad to meet with me, and asked a thousand questions about the people of Huntsville. She says Sis Sarah and yourself were the last of her friends she saw before she left Huntsville. She is looking well, though I do not think she is contented with the country. The judge is sober and it is thought he will do well after awhile.

My Dear Kate this is but a short letter and written in great haste; and though it cannot express to you *how much I love you* and think of you, yet it will at least acquaint you with my where abouts. I shall send it from here to Memphis, at which place you had better direct your next, as I shall be there in a few days. I expect to find a letter from you at Ponola and also one from your Pa.

I shall write to him from that place in a day or two. Tell Sis Sarah that I think it is about time that something *funny had taken place*; and Ada that I will look for a beau for her among the rich planters of this country.

Give my best love to Miss Row and Miss Sophy.

Remember me to Aunt Maria and Aunt Polly and Cousin Sally L. My love to Sister Mary and tell her if Bro Gus has not left to drive him away.

Write me *every thing* in relation to yourself.

My love to Mother. I have not been up to Somerville yet and do not know that [I] will, but if I do I will call to see your aunt.

Good bye

Your affectionate
Husband

M. W. Steele

P.S. I may not send this to Memphis, but put it in an office that is near here. I am at Mr R W Brahans. You write to me however at Memphis.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Memphis

March 9th 1849.

My Dear Kate

Your most affectionate letters of the 21st and 28th ultimo have been received, the one in Ponola and the other in this place, where I arrived on yesterday evening after a hard days ride. As you are solicitous about my health I must mention first of all, that I am in as good health as I have ever been in my life. My trip into Missi was a much more agreeable one than I had anticipated, yet on an exceedingly rough riding horse and through a rough country. I was constantly moving during the day and not unfrequently a portion of the night. You correctly judged my feelings in regard to hearing from you often, and I trust, that you will enlarge your liberality and write twice a week instead of once. I shall write as often to you. In the country I could not find it convenient to do so, but whenever I can I will write. I may not remain here longer than this week, on monday next I expect to leave for Marshall Co Missi. I am afraid my dear wife that you will so far indulge your antipathy to my engaging in the Commission business, that when I shall have qualified my self for the business, I will not have your consent to engage in it. I know the grounds upon which you object to the business, and if it were possible to strengthen my love for you, your objections would tend to do it. But you must recollect, that the profession of the law, is at an exceedingly low ebb, particularly so in Huntsville. It is a laborious and beggaring profession and he who succeeds at it must stick for ever at it; become like a mill horse constantly in a circle with no end but death. Tis time I am one of those, who believe, that if a man is honest and industrious, he will succeed in making a living at whatever he undertakes.

You say that you do not covet riches. I cannot say that I, would sacrifice all for riches, but my dear Kate, there is a difference between a poor man and a rich one that you are wholly ignorant of. If I engage in the business, I do not expect for ever to keep the harness on. I hope at some day, to be able to remain with you and never to leave you; indeed, if I engage in this

business I shall endeavor to arrange, to have you with me frequently when I leave Huntsville. Mr Hopkins has just come in and announced that I am invited out to tea, and that he must hurry off to a little girls party, it is 4 o'clk. He exclaimed that he was really glad that the days labor is over, that he may have a chance to go among the women, and requests me to communicate the same to you, and through you to his worshipful mistress in the East, that she may take due notice thereof and govern herself accordingly. (Masonic) Your Pa was certainly right in saying that I will be embarrassed when I meet your Uncle. If I can manage to control my feelings or indignation rather, I may act my part well, but if not, I cannot say what may be the result.

I have laughed a good deal about those *little tricks* that you spoke of, and I would give any thing to see you working on them. I fear you were some-what piqued, that you did not receive a letter from me at the same time that Mrs H. did one from her husband, had I been acquainted with the mails as he was, you would have received one; he wrote on the boat and put his letter in the office as soon as he landed. I wrote that night and the mail did not leave until two nights after.

Mr H. received a letter last evening from his wife, she spoke of you as being very disconsolate and distressed at your separation from me. I am truly sorry that it grieves you so much, but you must bear up under it and try to overcome your feelings, we will see each other before a great while.

There was indeed a very great difference in the length of the letters of Father and yourself, he rarely ever writes more than a page. I hope as you have plenty of time that you will not curtail the length of yours. I cannot always write you a very long letter as I cannot have the time. I am writing now in such a hurry that I scarcely know what I am writing. I hope you received my Daguerreotype. You have not as yet sent me a lock of your hair, I should much like to have it. You say that Sister Mary wholly misunderstood my character when we were first married, and I flatter myself that the change of her opinion is in my behalf. Give her my best love and tell her to take good care of you. It may be two months before I can return home, you must try and make up your mind to bear it well. I very frequently think of you when I see your *star* in the evening. One night I was riding late and had it before me all the way, it caused me to indulge in many pleasant recollections of you, yet it made me sad. I shall write to you sunday evening, again, there are some things in your letters that I wish to notice. I have now two more letters to write. One of them to Father in which I shall enclose him \$505.00. I mention this, so that should he fail to get it, I may be notified. Give all a kiss for me and tell Sis Sarah and Ada, I would like to have a letter from them. My respects to Miss Hodges and tell her to reserve the bier puddings until I get home. Do not forget to write two letters a week. I shall tell

you in my next where to direct your next; perhaps you had better write immediately to Holly Springs, I may get it if I go there next week.

Good bye
Your affectionate
Husband

M. W. Steele

My love to Miss Row and Sophy. Tell Fearn I shall look for a present for him. I have one now for Lucy. I read last sunday night, 48 Chapt Ecclesias and 6 Solomon Songs, 17 and 20 St John.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Memphis Tenn
Mch 11th 1849.

(Read first to yourself)

My Dear Kate.

Since yours of the 28th ultimo, to my great disappointment I have received no letter from Huntsville. Mr Hopkins however, received one on the 10th Inst from his wife, which mentioned that you were well and at that time out at my Fathers, where she says, they *pet* you a great deal and are very fond of you. I know that my father has the same love for you, that he has for his own children, but it certainly must be an exceedingly awkward part for him to play, that of attempting to *pet*, for as I well know, he is a perfect stranger to the art. I hope *he* will not make a *spoilt child* of you. As for myself, I really feel no difference between our families, I entertain the same feelings for your Pa that, I do for my own father, and the same affection for your sisters that I do for my own. By the way, tell your pa, that I think it is time for him to write to me. The fact is, I believe he would like to see me in deep water, to know if I could get to shore by my own efforts; now if energy and determination constitute any thing like a life preserver I would certainly reach the bank in safety. Do not entertain any apprehensions about my health; nor allow the idle stories of Genl Lowe, or any one else to disturb you about the danger of cholera from eating an apple. There is no cholera in this place, and my health is good. I am not quite as heavy as when I left Huntsville. I think Mr Hopkins is growing fatter every day, but do not tell his wife of this. But for a fat man, he is the best working man I ever saw; and when released from his business duties, visits his friends or attends the Lodge. He is completely carried away with masonry. I went down yesterday to put some letters on a boat that was about leaving for N. Orleans, and to my utter astonishment I found on board Mrs Bode with her family and Mr Misner. She appeared delighted to see me, and I must say that I was equally so to see her, in hopes of hearing something from you and my friends. She says she sat in the choir with you on last

sunday. She told me that she was bound for Europe, that her Brother was in N. O. who was going with her. Misner looked like a lost child, not knowing where he was going or what he was doing.

I have discovered from the tone of your letters that your objections to my engaging in the commission business, are becoming stronger and stronger. I hinted to you in my last, that I feared you might indulge your antipathy too far. You look at it in only one view, and all your objections arise from the belief, that I shall have to be away from you a great portion of every year; this with ~~me~~, is a serious objection, and the only one I have to the business; yet when I weigh this with the advantages that I may derive from the business, through the kindness and influence of your father, with the impoverished and impoverishing profession of the law, I believe it to be a duty that I owe to you, to undertake the one and drop the other.

You have intimated to me that if I consult your happiness, I will not engage in the business. My Dear Kate I am sincere, when I tell you that I desire only to secure your own happiness, for upon that depends mine; if I fail in securing it, then I shall most effectually have secured my own *unhappiness*.

Should I continue in the profession of law, I would necessarily be absent from you a great deal in attending the courts. I have then on one hand inducements held out to me to engage in a business, which, if properly conducted will render me independent and comfortable; on the other the practice of a profession all the while laborious and for a long time unprofitable. Under these circumstances, I believe then, if matters can be arranged agreeably to all parties, that I had better engage in the present business. I know that you do not consider wealth, nor an exalted position in life as indispensable to happiness. I believe, that if it were necessary that you could cheerfully go with me into the humblest cottage, and that the reflections of lost comforts would not cost you a sigh. I have studied well your disposition; and understand well the attributes of your character. I know your heart to be in the right place; and, that your many virtues and good qualities far overbalance the little weaknesses you may possess in common with others of your sex. I say not these things to flatter, but to console you; they are the honest sentiments of a confiding husband. I esteem you [a] treasure in yourself, and should be doubly treasured for the [*sincere*] and unselfish devotion with which you regard me. I appreciate [and] reciprocate the fond, trusting love you so lavishly bestow [*upon*] me, the chosen of your heart. And God grant my dear wife, that your pure and devoted love, may be rewarded by the fulfillment of your proudest hopes. But let us not expect too much in our success through life, I am no philosopher, yet I know that in youth we are all hope, and doubt not the accomplishment of our desires, be they ever ardent or to others even unreasonable, let us not my dear Kate fall into this error;

and whilst we need not anticipate difficulties, yet let us be prepared to meet them and my word for it, we will come out in flying colors. I have thought it would be more pleasure to me not to go to church to day, but to stay in my room and write to you and Mother. I intend to write Maria also. I dreamed all last night of you and I should be happy to have my dreams come true in regard to your present situation. I scarcely know at night what to do with my right arm, which when at home is your own pillow. Direct your next to this place. I do not know yet when I shall start for lower Missi and N. O. Mr H. sends his respects. My love to all. Good bye.

Your affectionate

Husband

M. W. Steele.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Holly Springs Missi

Mch 19th 1849.

My Dear Kate.

My last to you from Memphis, informed you that I would leave that night for this place, I was prevented however from doing so by the weather and bad condition of the roads and did not leave for two days afterwards. Mr Hopkins accompanied me and we had also the company of Mr Brinkley. I have heard of bad roads, and seen many such, but I have never seen or travelled over such a road as the one between this place and Memphis. We were placed in a rough mud wagon, and required to walk a great portion of the way and work a great portion of the time in prizing the wagon out of the mud holes. Mr Hopkins complained a good deal, but to me it was really fun. I don't think though, that I worked as hard or as *cheerfully* as I did the night you were going from Mr H C Chamber's wedding, to get your carriage out of the mire, the night I became so vexed with the stuttering negro. Mr Hopkins and myself went out and spent last night with Mrs Williams, a cousin he told me of your Pa's. I found her a very pleasant and hospitable lady, very well fixed in this world, indeed I might say elegantly fixed. She has a beautiful place and very handsomely improved, and has things done up in bon ton style. I attended yesterday the Episcopal church, I should have gone to the Presbyterian, but Mr H. was anxious to go to the other, to see some *female friends* who attended that church. The sermon *I am told* was a good one, I did not hear it, as my mind was "brooding o'er other thoughts deep treasured in my heart." I knew you would not have time to have written to me at this place, so that I was not disappointed in not getting a letter here. I have not received a letter from you since the 28th Feby. I do not complain my dear Kate, for I know you have written, and I expect before long I shall get them all together. I have changed my plans since I last wrote to you, and shall leave this place to night for Grenada in Yellow-

bushy Co. where, if I can find any thing to do I may remain ten days, continue to direct your letters to Memphis. I shall be there in not more than two weeks from this, and shall leave then for N. Orleans. The evening I got here it was raining and dark, after supper I walked to the door and observed your star shining most beautifully, notwithstanding it was raining and cloudy. I continued to watch it as cloud after cloud flitted by it; for a moment it was partially obscured, but immediately shone out and then a dark and heavy cloud passed over, completely obscuring it; but after a long struggle it came out with apparently increased brilliancy. You know that I am no willed visionary, I indulge none in the alluring charms of fancy, I build no castles in the air, I am a plain matter of fact man, believing in the simple doctrine, that "time, patience and perseverance overcometh all things" and that man to a great extent controls his own destiny, yet I was forced to ask myself, is such to be *her* destiny? Is any portion of *her* life to be overshadowed by dark misfortune! And I involuntarily exclaimed, shield and protect *her* kind heaven from the evils and misfortunes of this life! But be of good cheer my dear wife, we cannot expect this world to go just to suit us, and if we start and stop at the scratch of every briar that impedes our way we will never get along with success; let us determine to fight right through, and if we meet with difficulties, go to work and remove them and not try to dodge them. It is hard indeed to be for a moment away from you, and my feelings sometimes almost overcome me, but I know it is better, far better to be away from you a part of the time and doing something, than to be at home doing nothing.

I met Mr J C Bradley here who informed me that you were all well, but I doubt if he knew, when he left.

I may not go to Jackson at all this trip, if so I shall not I hope, meet your uncle. To determine how I shall act towards him, has been a source of deep consideration with me; policy would prompt me to act as though I knew nothing of his _____ [sic] but my own feelings I know could not pursue such a course. I promised you, to write a long letter from this place. I fear I cannot fully redeem my promise, for you have doubtless discovered from the penmanship of this, that I have written in a galloping gait. I wanted to have devoted last night to writing to you, but could not do so. I must close this now as I may lose the mail. I shall write you again in a few days. Give my love to each and all. Mr Hopkins begs to be remembered to you, he gave me a history of your trip to Somerville and your long walk with him when you were down there. Good Bye

Your affectionate
Husband.

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Huntsville March 28th 49

My Dearly Beloved Husband

Just 7 weeks have elapsed since you left. Now is this not a long time for us to be separated. It is a long time take it any way or view it in any light you please but it seems to me that the wheels of Time have been clogged. I always thought and have found it so heretofore in my life and Pa insinuatingly to me threw out the same opinion the other day, "that time would fly fast to any one, who was occupied. I have endeavored to keep myself so. I have not been able to do much work this week, as I have been sitting in the room with Sally. She has had quite a severe attack. Last evening she was very much frightened and low spirited, as well as Father. He sent off for Dr Erskine at dark. Sally thought she might die if she went to sleep. The Dr came and stuck the lancet in her throat again and laughed at her fears, telling her that her throat was not near so bad as it was two or three years ago. Brother George and I sat up until 12 o'clock or one, when Father came up stairs, notwithstanding he was complaining, and sent me off immediately. Brother George staid until 2 o'clock when brother John came up. Sally's voice has been very good today and she has forgotten her fears, so much, that it is constant watching to make her take the same care she did in not exposing herself by raising up in the bed and throwing off the cover etc. She has been talking and laughing very cheerfully. I have been joking with her about that, said silk dress she commenced turning last winter and which she had finished the day she was taken sick and expected to wear the next Sunday. I told her Spring would be so far advanced by the time she could wear it that she would have to keep it until she could go with us to N. O. I think there is no fellow in the world, who could be better suited for a doctor provided his health stands it, than Brother George. He is so kind and patient. He wanted to know tonight, if it could be possible, that I was going to write to you again. He says he will get me to write to him, the next time he leaves home. He little knows however, how much easier it is for me to write to you and how much more pleasure it affords me, than to write to any other mortal being. He says you will have as much as you can do to read my letters and answer them when you get back to Memphis. I told him that I wish to fill up your leisure moments, that I had to read yours over a good many times to fill up mine. I received your note enclosed in, Father's letter, from Holly Springs, of the 21st inst. I again wrote to you on the same day, on which you had written to me. I was truly much gratified that you received a letter from me before you left there, but sorry that you had been detained by anything longer, than was necessary for your business for even one hour. I am anxious for you to do all you have to do, but as quickly as possible. I think, if you don't mind that Mr Hopkins words will be verified, "that *he* would not be done with you *himself*

in three months, the time length which you were saying you would be absent. I saw Mr Mills the other day and he told me he was to be off for New Orleans and would pick you up at Memphis, take good care of you, and to bring you back here by the 10th of May, provided I would give him a party. I told him, I certainly expected you back anyhow in that time, but that if he would guaranty your safe arrival here in that time, that I would give him anything he would ask. *I talked* to him about taking care of *you*. I expect he would be as poor a hand to take care of one's morals in a city in some certain ways, as anyone, I could desire. But most positively you must not risk anything by going below, for although it might be better for you to go, it would be folly to risk your life or health in the least degree. Remember now to whom your *life is doubly dear and precious even as her own*. What *would* my life be without you? The other evening I went home from Mrs Hopkins about twilight and found Pa (in the midst) Cal Fackler, Sophy, Sis Sarah, Ada, Charley McClung, and a young man, a new introduction from Virginia, all sitting on the front steps. I sat down by Cal Fackler and Sophy. For about a moment every one seemed to be thinking when Sophy drew a long breath, and said, so that Cal and myself heard it, "I wish I was in heaven." Cal F. said he did too and asked me if I did not wish, I was. There has been a time, when with all my heart, I would have answered "Yes." I told him "No." He immediately spoke aloud and said, "Miss Kate says she don't wish she was in Heaven, unless Mat Steele was there too." Pa, to teaze me, said, "*Now Kate*" did you say that, and upon my saying no, he wanted to know if I did not feel it even if I did not say it. I told him, I could not tell him all I thought. I have been reading, Flowers, Fruits and Thorn pieces this week, of which you remember, I read the 1st volume before you left. There were so many places in it, which I thought I would have marked and pointed out to you had you, been home. I want we should read it together some day. There was one sentence, which no doubt would accord with your sentiments beautifully, which was about a married pair, who had no children and runs thus, "Like Phoenixes and grants, they had no children, and they stood apart, like separate columns, not united by any garland of fruit or flowers." When I have been doing any little thing for Sally this week, especially whilst bathing her head and hands, how often have I thought, that although, *that gave* me pleasure, how much more would it have given me to have done it to you when you were sick, and I have thought that you, my dearest husband, would have known that it gave me pleasure and this would have added to it, and *you* would rather have me near you, than anybody else. Last week before I came out here, I took tea with sister Mary (she is dear and kind to me) and I was almost frantic to see how happy she looked and how happy brother Gus was, sitting at the foot of the table opposite his wife, with Arbela in a high chair alongside, she as happy as anybody, seeming by her many playful actions and beaming face to

know that some new cause of delight had lately sprung up. I used to think, (but don't let sister Mary know what I used to think, although such like thoughts may have entered her own head), that a little town merchant could not satisfy my aspirations. But such vain feelings of ambition have long since vanished. I could be perfectly happy, as happy as mortals can be, anywhere, where my dear husband *was*. I once thought, that cousin Eliza Coles had great cause of low spirits and misery, shut up on a plantation where she seldom saw any white person save her own family. Now, I see no reason, why she could not be happy. *She* has not however as dear a husband, as I have. Brother Gus says, sister Mary and I could never again pick up two such fellows as he and you are. I sometimes have sweet dreams about you, as night before last, I thought, you were in the bed with me and gave me many kisses. Then again, they are not so pleasant, I dream often, that you come back sick, or that you stay away from me much longer, than is necessary. But, I love to dream of you, if I even have these last kind of dreams. You mentioned in your last having seen Mr Marshall, I wondered that you had not mentioned him before, for Mr Hopkins had written to his wife, that you had seen him. You saw my star, once in a while obscured by light clouds. I hope, we will have but light clouds ever to obscure our pathway, and but for a few moments, and that we may always seek for and have light from heaven to lead us onward in the paths of duty. I hope that better days will dawn on us yet. You never mention going to see anybody in Memphis. Mr Hopkins writes word to Mrs H. that this visiting is the only way he has to employ his leisure moments. He says, if he did not do this, that the young men would be in his room late at night carousing, having oyster suppers etc. Do let me know something of Mrs Dunn. You mentioned in one of your letters being invited out to tea but did not say, where it was at. Brother John requested me to let him put in a little, in this letter, but I refused. He wanted to write you word that some man in Mississippi would give him a Berkshire pig if you would get it from him. I saw your letter to Mother and read it, although it had been written so long ago. I do not actually know where to stop when I commenced writing to you and after I conclude a letter and send it off, I can't help wishing I had it to do over again. Aunt Penny is the only member of the family who has been to see your uncle John. He says, you staid several days with him. I have been trying to get brother John to go to see him ever since he came, but he always finds some excuse. I hope the one who takes this letter in, may bring me one out. Write often my *dear dear* husband. Look over all my letters and answer them satisfactorily or as much so as you can and think of me often and much as your own dear wife

Kate.

Brother George, says "give my love to Mas Matt and know all join me in love.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Grenada Missi

Mch 28th, 1849

My Dear Wife.

The hasty note I wrote you from Holly Springs, informed you that I had been detained there by the high waters between this and that place, I effected my escape from there however the following day, and by a good deal of wading, walking and working I made safe this place, and, am now here, indulging in all the business of a *Missi town*, were I to give you a description of my most *luxuriant* looking Land lady, and the various styles in which she has flour and meal fixed up, and the rich toughness of her meats, and father should hear of it, he would say, well that boy thinks of nothing else but eating; whilst *pa* would say, well Matt knows nothing as yet of the rough doings of wild new countries, but I certainly have tried some meals that I think it would be hard for a cormorant to manage, but I assure you upon the whole, that I am not much annoyed by the style of cooking, nor robbed of much sweet sleep by the peculiar flavour of the beds through this country, for I am not ignorant of the maxim "*Le present est pour ceux qui jouissent; l'avenir pour ceux qui souffrent.*" Now I have you. Well my dear Kate the tone of this letter will at least convince you that I am in good health. For the last three days I have been riding round through the country to see the planters and solicit their business for the house. I shall leave tomorrow for Memphis, and from there hasten to New Orleans. I hope to get your letter to me at Holly Springs, here tomorrow as I left directions there to have it forwarded to this place. I am sorry, my dear wife to see that you sometimes allow your mind to indulge in fearful forebodings about my health, and even the danger of losing my life by some sad accident; remember that I am robust and possess a remarkably strong constitution, and for *your own dear sake* I endeavor to be careful and prudent; do not then suffer your mind to be the least uneasy about my health; but rather go under the pine tree at fathers where we have spent so many pleasant hours, and there, let your mind fondly anticipate the happiness we shall enjoy when we meet again. Many a time have I before we were married, sought the shade of that tree and indulged my mind in anticipating the happiness I should enjoy when married, and which pleasing anticipations I have already so fully realized. You spoke of the great consolation my letters afforded you. Indeed I sometimes imagine that I can see you when you get a letter - with what a trembling hand the seal is broken - with swimming eyes the well-known writing is perused! What sweet transport you seem to enjoy, upon seeing your name coupled with words of tender regard, which told, that though I am away from you, yet still do I fondly love you; and you my dear one in the joy of the moment dropped a kiss and a tear at the same time upon the insensible paper. To any other this would appear all sluff, but to you I know it is a pleasure,

and it is equally so to me to write as I feel. And though I would be wholly indifferent about the opinions of others yet I write for your eye only. You spoke of Mother's kind attentions to you, I know you can but love her, and she will do all that she possibly can to make you comfortable. Give her a kiss for me, tell her that I am just from her Brother Tom's and when I get home I will give her a full account of all her relations. He almost cried when I left him, I being the second one of his relations that he has seen since he has been in this country. I am glad that you have a good appetite and have no sick stomach. Mr Hopkins told me the other day that if he did not get home in July he would not be present at an *important* event. I told him that I must be home long before that time and he asked me in surprize if you were "in that situation." I replied I should not wonder. He laughed heartily. At Holly Springs he was invited out to tea at a widows some two miles in the county and because I would not go with him (though uninvited) he was quite provoked with me and attempted to read me a lecture upon the customs of "High life" but I stopped him short by telling him that I had been as well raised as himself, and that I had certain notions that I never sacrificed for any custom. I never saw his equal to visit. It is to him a real pleasure, but to me a great annoyance. I shall write to you as soon as I get to Memphis and let you know what I shall do &c. I hope to be with you about the middle of May, try and keep up cheerfully till then. Don't neglect to take exercise. Remember you promised me that I would find you much improved in *your face*. I shall have to get me some needles and buttons and go to work on my shirts. I don't think I have one but what has some off. I shall also write to your pa when I get to Memphis. I worry? How does he take it, when I sometimes sign my letters to him, *your son* &c. I hope he does not feel any older. Does he know your situation? I feel that I should have acquainted him with it before I left but I reckon he has found it out before this. Give my love to all. You did not mention Aunt Polly and Cousin S. in your letter. Are they still with you? If so give them my love, also Aunt Maria, Cousin Sally, Mr and Mrs Erskine. Write to me at Memphis.

Good-by

Your affectionate
Husband

P.S. This county is spelled Yalla-busha not Yellow-bushy as I wrote it to you.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Holly Springs Missi
Ap'l 1st 1849

My Dear Wife

With much joy I received at this place your favors of the 17th,

23rd, and 26th ultimo also two from your Pa and one from Father which had been forwarded to me from Memphis. I got here yesterday evening and shall remain here until wednesday morning, when I shall be off for Memphis. In my last to you from M. I requested you to write to me immediately at this place, I have not received that letter if you wrote, but I hope I shall before I leave. There is quite a difference of feeling in your last letter, in [*regard*] to my engaging in the commission business, and [*which I am*] truly happy to see. In your letter of the 23rd you avow in very decided terms, that you can never give your consent for me to engage in the business, and beseech me to disregard your Pa's and Mr Hopkin's advice, and incline to that of Father, in this matter we have swapped positions, for I assure you that I have a very "great leaning" your Pa's way. In your last however, after having a free talk with your Pa, your objections, if not entirely removed, are at least very much softened and you say to me, "go on, I will endeavor to bear you up in whatever you undertake." This last sentiment you expressed to me the first night we were married, and will well recollect what I said to you and requested of you on that night in relation to my future course. I have never my dear wife expressed to you fully my views on the subject, nor can I do so now, but suffice it say, that if I do engage in the com. business, if I can succeed your Pa, there is nothing that I *could possibly* engage in that would if properly managed, more advance my worldly interests. You say that it is in the mouth of every one that I have already engaged in the business; that I have saved the house thousands by my knowledge of the law. Knowing the gossiping disposition of our town, I am not so much astonished as vexed at such reports. You know that my object was simply to look into the business and see if I would like to engage in it, if matters could be agreeably arranged for me to do so. In regard to my having saved the house any thing by my knowledge of the law, I have [*simply to*] remark that credit has been given me for [*some things*] I never rendered. I have just ousted from my room at an alarm of fire, but fortunately it was simply a chimney on fire.

It is the 1st of April and at my fathers I expect rather a gloomy day, it is his birthday, but also the day on which his sister died last year. On which occasion my dear Kate you had the kindness to ride out through the rain; which little circumstance, though I have never heard father mention it, yet I know it made a lasting and favourable impression upon him.

You say, from the slaps I have made at females in my letter, that I must have been keeping bad company. Now my dear wife I saw when I wrote that women measured a letter by the number of its words and not by the weight of these words, that I would get myself into a difficulty and immediately begged pardon, disclaiming any application of the remark to yourself; but like sis Sarah when I told her that I had seen her at times when she looked coarse, you will not allow me to retreat, nor receive any apology. You ask me to

state what I consider the weaknesses peculiar to the sex - I must refer you to "Walker on women." One thing my dear wife I will say of yourself, if I was asked to tell your faults or point out your little weaknesses I should be forced to say that you have none, and I honestly feel that I have been *peculiarly blessed* in my selection.

Speaking of my being away from home so much, or rather the prospect of it, you say that perhaps I already bear the separation better than at first. My dear Kate never [*let that*] idea enter your mind again; to be away from [*you is*] a source of many unhappy moments to me; but I had better be from you a part of my time engaged in doing something to take care of ourselves with, than to be with you *doing nothing*.

I attended the Presbyterian Church in this place to day, the sermon was a good one but I do not think that the preacher felt what he spoke. In answer to your inquiry about the Presbyterian Church through this country, I can say, that wherever I have been the Presbyterian denomination seems to be the predominant one. Mr Martin you say has resigned his pastorphism. I really think it is a good thing for the church and tell Cousin Sallie if she don't get a good preacher next time, I shall join the Episcopal Church when I get back. You really alarm me by the occasional fears that you express about your situation &c though you say that you have no grounds for entertaining them.

Take care of yourself, be prudent, and I trust before long, you shall have your *favorite pillow* to sleep on at night. I cannot express to you on paper, for it would read cold I know, how much it thrills my heart with joy and love and pride, when I read your affectionate letters and see the fond and devoted love you bear for me; and certainly a great change will have to come over us, should the assistance of a "third party" ever be needed to interfere *between us*.

You misconstrued my remark in my letter to your Pa, in which I stated that I should like to be with him a short time &c before I went out again, it was only a wish expressed without any intention of going [*off again*]. Indeed I would be treating you something [*like ?*] Hylton in the novel of "Now and Then" after he obtained a respite for Adam Alyffe, he feared that he had only inflicted death twice upon him, without any prospect of his final release, I know that you would not let me return soon, neither would I desire to do so. I read the Bible last sunday night, it was the chapter in Kings, giving an account of the building of Solomons Temple. I have not a bible to night, so that I must consider writing to you, in a sacred point of view, next to reading the Bible. I have as room mates, two very decent and clever young men, who served in the war with Mexico and they passed off my time very pleasantly by recounting many humorous and thrilling incidents that occurred during the fights; one of them was in the same* mess with Jas Somer-

* The remainder of this letter was a loose, undated page which appears to belong here.

ville, an old friend of mine and who was tutor in college when you were in Tuscaloosa.

I cannot see why you are so certain that a *little unborn one*, should have black eyes. If my hopes are fulfilled I hope it may have black eyes but if the female side of the house is still to predominate I hope it may have blue eyes. What nonsense for me to be writing in this way, but as you say if we were together I should doubtless make the same remark.

I observed your star last evening from the same place that I gazed at when I was here before. It does really make me quite sad, when I see how much you are distressed by my absence from you and my heart will leap for joy when I turn my head towards home, but, which may be some time yet I do not know. I shall write to your Pa as soon as I get to Memphis answering his favours, I cannot do so before. You should not suffer any uneasiness in regard to the cholera. As for myself I have no fears whatever but I shall be prudent and not place myself in a situation to run any serious risk from it. I know that the reports in this place about it are very much exaggerated.

You say that you wish to know whether I regret your having told me about your Uncle. My dear Kate I do not think it right that any thing that concerns your self should be concealed from me, but a knowledge of this circumstance, has made me dread a meeting with your Uncle. I am not very far from being in the least suspicious, we will have a talk of this when I get home. You never mention my old friend Mr Davidson. When you see him remember me to him. I know his wife feels indebted to you, for whilst I was single, I robbed her of many an hour of her husbands company - well he is a capital fellow, I shall always befriend him, I know he would risk his own life for me. You did not mention Bro George in any of your last letters, I hope he is still mending. I am sorry to hear of Sister Sally's illness, I trust she is well by this time. I do not think there is any truth in the report of Mr Brinkley marrying Miss Julia. What has become of *your old friend* Miss Sophy. Give her my love and tell her not to marry until I get home. I have not fat-tened this trip like I did the trip I took to Missi before we were married, indeed I have fallen off.

You must give my love to all, write *immediately* to Memphis. I shall not visit Texas at all this spring. Try to imagine that I have given you a kiss and blessed your sweet soul.

Your affectionate
Husband

M. W. Steele.

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Huntsville April 1st 49

My Own Dear Husband

I staid in the country all last week and had to come out of my own sad thoughts, being in the room with the sick all of the time, and I came in this week certain of getting one of your *ever welcome dear letters*. I could not help laughing at what you said Father and Pa would say when I would read to them what you said of your fare etc. and at your going to work in bachelor or student style upon your shirts sewing on buttons. I was thinking today whilst in church, that I reckoned, you would have to go to work in this time. Never mind you will not I hope be away from me so long next winter that I cannot do it for you. I had all the old shirts washed, the starch out, mended them and put them away. But there is one part of your letter which rings in my heart. You say you hope to see me by the middle of May. I had not put off your return farther than the 1st and it seems to me just as I am trying to grasp this time in my mind that it is pushed farther off. I hope *now even* to see you *my darling husband* before the 1st. Pa and Father both think it would be out of the question for you to run any risk from cholera in N. O. and I know it would be. Now you certainly will run a risk, since it has broken out there afresh, and James Donegan has sent word to his Father not to come down and he does not intend going. Don't let Mr Hopkins persuade you to go or don't be induced to go by thinking it would be far better to do so and don't be governed unconsciously to go, by feeling, that it will be thought you are afraid of cholera, or some feeling of this kind. Mrs. Hopkins says her husband wrote word, that you would stay a week in Memphis and then go to New Orleans. He certainly knew this last news from that city. And what would keep you a week in Memphis? William Atwood has been sick you know and when they last heard, J. Donegan and Seymour Longly were both complaining. Sophy says her Father intends leaving the city. *Now will you go*, my dear husband? Cal Fackler came to the front door where I was sitting today and said, have you seen Mat by way of an April fool. I told him that wouldn't do. He nailed a counterfeit dollar down on the square this morning and had a great many stooping to pick it up and the negroes, he says would make several attempts. *You* have sad recollections, connected with this day. I did not hear anyone speak of it at home, excepting one of the children mentioned at the table last night, to Father, that today was his birthday. I know they all thought of it today. Mother did not come in this morning. Father is still complaining and taking quinine. Sally has been sitting up yesterday and today. She is a bad hand to take medicine and cannot be gotten to take anything at all, since she commenced getting better. Yesterday, which was the first day she has been up, Mother and myself were sitting in the room, when the smoke blew down the chimney and filled the room full. Sally was lying down and she jumped up and went into the other room, as if she thought we ought to do something for it. She came back in a few

minutes and finding smoke still there, went down into the drawing room and played several tunes on the piano. She was saying this morning that she did not rest well last night and I told her, that she took too much exercise. I hope, never to make such a slave of myself for my children, as your mother has or as *my* poor mother did before her death. I went out to the graveyard the other day and I thought of the many vows, I had made at so sacred a place as my dear mother's grave, and one in particular, a broken vow, I used [to], whilst standing there, vow that I would devote myself more than ever to my God if he would only grant, that I might be joined to the *best beloved of my heart*. And *he* has graciously granted this petition, and how have I come up to my vow. You have drawn to life the picture of your own wife when she gets one of your dear letters. But you cannot know all her feelings or how much she has, and how she dwells on your words of *love* and tenderness. Pa has this second, come up stairs and told me to write word to you "not to run into the mouth of the Lion," that there is no necessity. Mr Martin preached for us this morning and every one says it was decidedly the best sermon he has ever given us. Pa was speaking of it coming along home and old *Mrs. Caldwell* turned around and expressed the same opinion, without I believe, knowing what Pa had said. Mr Martin, as I wrote you word sent in his resignation. Last week however there was a meeting of the congregation, and a resolution was passed to request Mr M. to withdraw his resignation. The names of those who did and of those who did not desire that he should do so were put down and handed to the gentleman. Not many had the boldness to express it or they did not wish him to depart. Pa, uncle Robert, Dr Erskine, Mr Davidson, Mrs Irby, Mrs Mastin, Mrs Hopkins, Wallace and his wife are all I have heard mentioned who put their names down for his resignation. There were some others I reckon. He seems to have been spurred up at any rate. The first thing I saw this morning when I came in was brother Gus on the pavement with Arbela. Sister Mary did not go to church and (of course brother Gus did not), because she had been kept awake by Arbela last night. I sent her word that this was only an excuse. She has sent for me to come down several times today and has just now sent me word to put on my bonnet and come to straight along. I will go down soon, but I love to sit in this lonesome room and give myself up to aching thoughts and *still some pleasant ones* when I anticipate the time when we will sit here together again. I staid in town this week, because sister Sarah went out to spend the week with Mattie Pope and I wished to go see Mary Eliza, who has been here nearly a week. They say she looks worse than she ever was seen to look. I am not surprized if she is in the same unenviable condition that I am. But, she will like the anticipations of a little pledge more than I do, for she was always exceedingly fond of children (babies). I can tell you more about her perhaps when I have seen her. I forgot in my two or three last letters to send Eliza Lewis's respects. She met me over at Mrs

McClellands the other day, (where I had gone to call on Miss Strickland a niece of Mrs Mc) and said she must kiss me, she had not seen me for so long a time, inquired very particularly when I had heard from Mr Steele and told me to send him her respects when I wrote next. Ellen has returned. Laura Ers. expects to make a visit to Virginia this summer, and is going with Mrs. Dr Moore who will be on her way to the North. I anticipate much pleasure in travelling with you next winter, notwithstanding I expect to have some trouble such as I never had before. I have always thought it would be so delightful, for us to travel together. Pa thinks Mr Hopkins will move to Memphis. I succeeded at last in making brothers John and George go to see your uncle John. He said he was surprized to see you engaged in the cotton business and would do all he could for you. I told Pa, that I thought between your kinsfolks and ours that you ought to do well in North Mississippi. If you come immediately home, you might come through Somerville and see aunt Lucinda, but we will see her any how next winter, I hope. I am sorry my own dearest husband, that you will be disappointed in a letter at Holly Springs. You remember, you wrote to me in your letter of the 9th of last month to write to you at that place and in the one of the 11th to write to Memphis, and I got them both the same day. I have regretted ever since not directing a letter to Holly Springs.

I left this open until today to write a line or so. Sister Mary has come up with Arbela to spend the day. She sends her love. I hope my *dearly beloved husband* to see you in two or three weeks, let me hear from you often in the mean time. You must not go to N. Orleans, unless things are mightily changed but come along home. I had a grand hunt last night for my bag with your letters and daguerreotype in it. I had laid it on the bed when I went to church and Julia had put it away under some things and I could not give it the usual last look at night and a kiss. I found it bright and early this morning. Good bye.

your own affectionate
wife Kate.

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Huntsville April 5th 49

My Ever Dear Husband

I cannot retire tonight notwithstanding it is rather late, without attempting to tell you the joy which fills *my heart*, and answering the dear and affectionate letter I this day received from you. You said nothing about coming home soon, but I build my expectations upon seeing you at least as soon as week after next. I was awake this morning by daylight, thinking of this delight, until I could not go to sleep again but continued to lie there, until it was time to rise. You will wonder perhaps, what has caused these hopes to arise within me. Why, the firm conviction, that you will

not think of going to New Orleans after Pa's last letter. You can but come home. Pa told me today that there were 6 or 7 deaths by cholera in Memphis. You are a nice one to talk to me of your robust constitution after having already had an attack, away from me. One day's sickness for you, seems worse to me, when you are away from me, than six would be when I could be by your side. I looked for a letter from you today or even on yesterday and thought, that it would be from Memphis. Oh! How do I hope that your next may confirm my fondly cherished anticipations. I have not yet mentioned, what has kept me until, this late hour at night from writing. I went up to the church to hear Mr Martin's letter to the congregation read. He persists in resigning. A committee was also appointed to look out for some one to fill his place. I have not laughed as much since you left as I have tonight. The whole meeting was a farce and once Dr Erskine got up and said he was disposed to make a serious matter of the business. Uncle Robert tried himself, offering resolutions for his own amusements and disputing about nothing; and Mr Davidson was not much better excepting sometimes *he* was quite in earnest. The first committee that was written down, neither Mr Coltart's nor Dr Watkin's names were put on it. Some one got up and proposed, that Mr Coltart's or Dr Watkin's names should be put down instead of theirs, and his example was followed by several others. Dr Watkins begged to be excused but Mr Coltart got up and said that such a thing had never been heard of in the annals of the Presbyterian church, *he* supposed, as the elders refusing to act under such circumstances, and the old man seemed to feel deeply. There was a long dispute on the subject, Mr Davidson rose and said that Dr Watkins ought to be excused, if his reasons were good, as he said they were and he, Uncle Robert, Mr Umphreys, etc had between and Mr Coltart of course. It ended by Dr Watkins saying, that he had not wished to be forced to the point, but that he now said that he would not act. What I laughed at as much as anything during the evening was Mr Coltart. He got up once during the dispute, with a face in a position as expressive of awkwardness as anything you ever saw, (and by way of commencement as sis Sarah told it, with his coat skirts both poked in his pockets), and said, "I feel in a very awkward situation." If you had seen the position and all it would have struck you as exceedingly ludicrous. But, I really felt sorry for the old man. I know he feels more for the church, than almost any one else, and seemed to think that it was not right. I looked for Mrs. H. certainly expecting to see her but she was not there.

I got up this morning especially to walk up and see how Mrs Hopkins was before breakfast, and I finished my letter, but Pa walked with Ada and myself and we went down to his plantation, as the negroes called it, at first and we kept it up. It is the place he bought from Mr W. Pope's estate, at which he has had Albert Alich, and the horses all the Spring. Uncle Robert is so taken up with his operations down there, that no matter what topic he commences

on now, he always ends on that, and he comes over here regularly every night, and stays about an hour talking about "*his* farm." He sent up here to me yesterday morning, and when he saw me, said he wanted to read your letter. I told him, that one for his inspection had not come yet. He asked me, if I would let him read your letters if you were to send me word to that effect and I told him, "no."

I succeeded in getting out to see Mary Eliza yesterday evening. Aunt Maria had promised to take me out every evening, when she went out to ride, but had not been able, to have the carriage until yesterday on account of the ploughing. Day before yesterday, I wrote a note out to brother John to come in and take me in the buggy, to which, I did not get the reply until last night. He had given it to Angelo to send over to the Seminary, and Berry forgot to give it to me. I sat here all the day thinking it very strange, that Brother John had sent me no reply. Aunt Maria sent me word in the evening, that she had her carriage for a wonder, and I dressed and was in the carriage going off, when, who should appear, but brother John in his buggy. I had a few moments converse with him, found out, they were all well at home, and went on with aunt M. as it was too late then, to make her get other company to ride with her, leaving brother John to drive sis Sarah out, which he did. I was sorry it happened so, but it could not be helped. He went out home again. He stays at home more than he did, so he and brother G. are knocking about together since the latter got well. Mary Eliza looks thin, as though, she might be in the first stages of the "9 months consumption." I was delighted to see her, and she was to see me, I think, and I felt somewhat elated, the little while I was with her, but my heart sunk soon, after I left the house, when I commenced to think more, that she had her husband with her and I had not mine and had been so long from him. You have no idea, how I am effected thus, it was something like the feelings had, when brother Gus came. I don't think, it can be the envy of my neighbors happiness, no, but it makes me feel more forcibly, perhaps, how happy I could be too, if my own dear husband was only with me. Mr Davidson walked with me down to Mr Turner's, (where *he turned off to the Square*) and we talked of you all the way. I told him, you wrote word, that I should make him remember you, and he said I must do the same for him with you. He said he reckoned, that every week of your absence was a month to me, but that he didn't reckon I minded it, as much as I did at first. I told him if there was any difference, that I minded it more.

Today is good Friday and Ada has gone to church, and by the by, the idea has just this moment occurred to me, why she ate no breakfast, because the Episcopalians keep it, as a fast day. Mary Anne Cruse is to be confirmed today. I expect, they have hopes, of getting the bishop's hands on Ada, whilst he is here. One thing I know however, that she is much more full of the beaux at present, than anything else. She has been running to singing school every night

for some week or two past, and has declined an invitation to cousin Sally's tonight for an exhibition at the Methodist church of the singing school, and for which the children are all employed down there today in wreathing the pillars with garlands and dressing up the church. I rather think, I shall decline my cousin's invitation myself. Pa and myself are invited amongst the married folks *to tea*.

There was a sad death in the country the other day, that of Mrs. Dr Young who you remember lived at Mr Skillern's place. Her daughter Mrs. Ward the only child and never been separated from her mother in her life, is large, *enceinte*, (and I cannot help feeling for any one, who is in this situation under any circumstances) and is since her mother's death insensible. The physicians remain with her. Dr Young has had several fits, and they say plays to die "since she who was not only his companion, but counsellor has been snatched from him," she with whom he had lived 30 years exactly the day after her death. I always think as you have often said, that I would like, that we should die together. Pa said this morning, that he would not be surprized to see you at any time. He said that Mr Hopkins was so social that he might keep you for company and persuade himself as well as you that it was necessary that you should stay longer. Write me word that I will see you next week. We might go down to the landing and meet you if you come that way and we knew when you would be there. Tell Mr Hopkins I say not to keep you down there for company because he can't come home yet. I know "misery loves company." I have found it out this winter. Come home my dear dear husband. I am glad you cannot go to New Orleans. Let me tell you again that I am so happy at the thought of seeing you soon, and I would sincerely pray, that I might never be away from you again in this world nor the world to come. I believe this is the worst letter I have ever sent you, but I cannot write all I want to write.

your own affectionate wife
Kate.

DR. ALEXANDER ERSKINE to DR. THOMAS FEARN

Huntsville Ala. July 2nd 1849

Dr. Thos. Fearn

Dear Sir

When you left on Friday, you requested, that if any thing, of interest, occurred, to drop you a note, giving you the information.

We had on yesterday a *fine rain* commencing about 12 o'clock, and continuing, in fine showers until 4 or 5 in the afternoon. In the midst of the rain I was requested, to visit *Kate*, and upon entering her room, found, there Mrs Geo. Steele, Mrs Patton, Mrs Watkins, and Mary E. Mastin.

I very soon discovered, the nature of the indisposition. At 4 o'clock she presented her Husband, with a *fine plump* little - *Daughter*. Shall I say, "yes" *Daughter* it is - I felt for *all concerned*, for

although not much was said in the way of regrets, yet I discovered great disappointment, manifested in the countenances of most of them.

Kate and the Babe, are both, doing quite well this morning. I will not attempt to describe the *appearance* of the little stranger. It weighed 7½ pounds (scant) and after a few days will, I think, be recognised, by most of the family, as one of their number, although *it be a Daughter*.

We had no New Orleans mail on yesterday, and indeed no mail of any consequence from any quarter.

Mrs Moore, and her Brother Wm L Robert together with Miss Ewing, will be at Gunters Ville on Tuesday night, on their way to Richmond, and the Virga Springs.

A petition is circulating this morning for a daily mail from this place to New Orleans.

In haste your friend Dr
Alex. Erskine

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

I make little Sallie kiss your daguerreotype every day and call your name.

Huntsville Oct 4th 50

My Own Dear Husband

Every one about the house almost has retired, our little Sallie is asleep in her crib, whilst, I am engaged in the pleasant although unsatisfactory employment (when compared with a good talk by your side) of writing to you. I am seated on the lounge in front of a table with your daguerreotype, a long looked for letter open before me. I say long looked for letter, that is I have expected it *some* ever since Tuesday, and it *has* been a good while getting here. I have read it over until I know it almost word for word, and I made Sallie kiss it. She tore it some, but not any of the writing. I must urge one objection to your letter, that it was rather short, but I suppose you would think it useless to try to satisfy me in this respect. It is true that I would never get tired of reading what you would write, if you would only write over and over again that *you love me*, for you know full well, that your devoted love is the greatest blessing, that I can possess in this world, at least what I most desire. You say that you read one of the letters, which I wrote when you were absent before, as you had none other. You can without any fear of the contrary, take the most affectionate of the pile and read it over at any time, and feel, that *my* sentiments are therein expressed. I was glad to learn that you might stay in Memphis longer even than Tuesday, so as to give my letter a longer time to reach there although it was written only two or three days after you left. I wrote on the Thursday after you left. You mentioned

that you did not see bro. John, Father had a letter from him yesterday mentioning the same fact. The day after I wrote to you, Pa had a dining party of 21, entirely gentlemen, no lady present. I wished all day that you had been there. I thought of you all the time, but I do *that every day*. I try however to think of you with hope, that a "better day's a coming." If I thought it my certain doom to be away from you six months a year for ten years, my heart would sink too low ever to be raised again to even a tolerable height of cheerfulness. On Saturday we spent the day with Sophy McDonald sure enough and I returned time enough to come out here. I rode in town Sunday morning, but forgot to carry in my bonnet, and could not go to church, so sis Sarah and myself took the carry-all and came out to entertain little Sallie, leaving the children to come after church with Mother. I went in Monday and spent the day at cousin Eliza's, as I thought aunt Polly would probably leave on Wednesday. I staid in town that night, and went visiting with sis Sarah. Amongst other places, we went to see Mrs Hopkins. Found Mr H. had not left in the morning on account of another sick child. I said something about your being gone, and Mrs H. said, "I thought you didn't mind it." I told her that, I minded it very much, but that I saw no use in talking about it. She said, well she had kept her tongue for ten years, and that over, she intended to talk. I told her, that I would not talk for I know that if I did that I would say something I ought not. She admitted the philosophy of the thing, but did not say that she would not talk. Mr H. left this morning.

To go on with my diary, I came out Tuesday evening and staid out all day Wednesday, it being the first day I did not go to town. Wednesday evening Dr Erskine came out to see Matilda and informed us that Mr Zivley and his wife had come, so that the next morning Mother and I went in to call on her besides making a good many other calls. Mrs. Zivley is not beautiful but has a pleasant face, is exceedingly modest and quiet. Mr. Zivley is the most contented, the happiest looking man I have seen lately. We had little Sallie in with us, and the ride in the sun and dust or something she had to eat made her sick. She vomited and purged a good deal after we got home and kept me awake a greater part of the night. She is a little complaining tonight but there is nothing serious the matter. She has been quite lively and well today Mother says, and indeed I know she was the time I have been here. She was so well this morning that I went in to spend the day with aunt Polly and all of them down at home. She expected to have gone tomorrow, but I suppose she will not get off, as they have heard nothing of a boat, and are waiting to hear of one. It is now late and I will bid you goodnight and try to go to sleep after I have given ourselves and all that we have in to the hands of our God.

Saturday. I have just heard that the Florence mail left this morning, which distresses me, as I fear the Tuscumbia mail does not go at all since the river is so low. I tried to find out about this

yesterday evening and thought that the Florence mail left yesterday morning. I always like to give you the very latest news, I can from me. I have not got the run of the mails yet, but will try and get them soon. I came in town in the carry-all this morning and have pretty nearly got through with my visits, and after I am through I will feel at liberty to stay in the country and lead a quiet life. I do not know but what it is of advantage to me however, this riding backward and forwards, as I take more exercise than I otherwise would. The foreign beaux, amongst the rest Mr. Atwood are flourishing here yet. Tis said that that poor fellow Piggers is crazy to get married, and that he has been discarded by Josie Horton and Miss Mills and is now going to try Sallie. He has been out to see Sallie almost every day for a week or more. This morning and yesterday, both days, he was out, and missed Sallie, she being in town. I told Sallie, I was in hopes she would not have a chance to discard him, as I was afraid he would not send his cotton to the house, if she did. There was a party at old Col Reads the other night, what do you think of that. Most of the girls declined the invitation to it in order to go to prayer meeting, as Mr Zivley has just got back, and they were very much disappointed, as he was sick. There was also a party at the Lewises last night. They sent out to Father's for ice, but it gave out some days since. What care you for the parties? I dreamed last night of seeing you dancing and waltzing. I wish I could dream of you every night. Please let me hear from you often. I know you would write to me every opportunity and that you could not write long enough letters, if you only could know the pleasure it gives me to hear from you. The difficulty with me in writing to you, is not, as it is with some people in writing, how I shall commence, but how *can* I stop. But I will stop, and may God bless you, and take care of [you], and soon restore you to the one who loves you more than words can express. Do write whenever you can. All join me in love, Sister Mary, Aunt Polly and cousin Eliza and all.

your devoted wife
your Kate

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Union Co Ark. Oct 7th 1850

My Dear Wife

I write you from Mr Davis's, where I arrived yesterday in as good health as I have ever enjoyed in my life. My journey from the Missi river here was a very lonesome one, though having a fine horse and the roads being good I got on very comfortably. Col Davis had just got home a few hours before I got here, from a long visit to Texas. Mrs Davis I think is an exceedingly clever woman; reminds me very much of cos Sally Watkins and if she had half a chance in these wild woods would show that she had been accustomed to good

living and (as it is, she does astonishingly well), she expresses great affection for your Pa and family. You were the baby when she left Huntsville, she recollects Sister Mary well. I find this country thickly settled and I shall have work plenty for some three weeks. I have not yet made up my mind where I shall go after I get through here. I have some idea of riding from here to Vicksburg and seeing the planters between here and there at some few points. I shall have to get back to the Missi river in order to go down to New Orleans as the little streams here do [not] rise sufficiently for the boats to come up until about Jany. I find our house is thought very favourably of in this section of country and I will try and keep alive the good feeling that exists for it and extend our business, and in order to do so I will have to take my time. I very much fear that I shall not hear from you until I get to New Orleans as the mails are very irregular and very slow coming to this country. Just think, that I shall be more than five weeks without hearing from my own dear wife and my darling little Sallie. I shall endeavour to bear it. You will not get this perhaps in a month from its date. I shall get to New Orleans about the 15th of next month and I think you had better come down by the 1st Dec if you *can leave* and can find any acquaintance coming down, perhaps you can go down when Mrs Goodrich goes; at any rate come down if you can. I will go back with you. I do hope that fortune will grant me success in business and that the day is not far distant when I shall be able to be with you all the time; but until then let us be resigned, and bear our separation as well as we can. It is now nearly sun set and what would I not give to be just one hour with you walking in the garden at fathers. The whistling of the wind through the pine trees, reminded me of the many pleasant moments we spent under the pine at Father's.

But my dear wife if I can after a few years of even this sort of life, be in a situation to throw aside the harness and hunt some shady spot in the pasture, where I can have you by my side, I feel that I can stand it and will be fully compensated. You must keep a constant watch over little Sally, teach her to call my name and don't let her forget me. And you must take the greatest care of yourself and write every thing in relation to yourself. I am twelve miles from the Post Office and do not [know] when I can get to send this, so I will stop here and close it when I find a chance to send it.

Oct 9th. My Dear Kate. I have just met with an opportunity to send this to the office, it will be mailed at Eldorado, when you will get it I cannot tell. I have just read over what I wrote on the 7th, it is a miserable scrawl and it seems cold and almost wanting in affection, too much so I am sure to send to one whose heart is without guile; but I have not time to write you as I feel (for words cannot express that) but I know it will, poor and miserable as it is, be a great comfort to you, to know that I am well and

doing well. I have a slight hope of receiving a letter from you at Eldorado, the one you wrote to Camden, I requested a gentleman going to that place to forw'd any letter that might be there to Eldorado.

You must write to me immediately at N. Orleans. I am anxious to hear from you all and particularly your Pa, for I feel very great solicitude about his health. Kiss little Sallie for me and give my love to Mother and family, Sister Mary and all the girls. Good bye.

Your affectionate husband

M. W. Steele

P.S. Say to your pa that I am making my time profitable in this place, I will start in a few moments on a electioneering visit in this neighborhood, and on the 12th I will be in Eldorado. Court will then be in session there and I hope to do something profitable for the house whilst there.

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Friday

Huntsville Oct 11th 50

My Own Dear Husband

I feel, as if Time is advancing as we have now got in the second week of October, and I cannot help rejoicing, although I feel that it is wrong to rejoice, when I am improving it so little; but I do feel glad, that the time, when we shall be again together is approaching. I received your sweet letter on Saturday last, but as I had just sent one to the office, I did not answer it immediately. I have a few minutes ago read it over for once amongst the many many times, and especially dwelt on the parts of it most dear to the heart of your wife, whose love can be exceeded by none on this earth. You say you read on the first Sunday after you left the first and second chapters of Matthew. They were the same, which I read, and last Sunday, I read the third and fourth chapters. The last thing I do at night is to look at the daguerreotype of your own dear self, and then place it under my pillow. I keep the smallest one by me, the one you had taken in Memphis, as it is a more convenient size to carry with me in my bag, which I have again brought into requisition to carry my pen, your daguerreotype and letters from one place to the other; and I like the expression of the smaller one best also, although it looks sick, but you know you always love me best when you are sick. I hope you may not be sick again whilst away from me. I was very sorry, that you did not get my letter in Memphis, but my dearly loved husband, never imagine, when you do not receive letters, that it is because I have not written them. I know, I write a poor letter, and that it would interest none but those who really wished to hear from me, and I can write to you my beloved one, because I do not stop to write beautifully or compose pretty sentences, but write the gushings of my heart, and try to pour them out, as though

you were by my side. I confine myself to one sheet, since the hint which you remember you once gave me. You need not follow my example in this respect, as the longer the letter from *you* the more to my taste decidedly. You urge it upon me to keep of good cheer. Do you not think, I write as though I were a little more so than I was when you were absent before. I do try to be more cheerful, and never allow myself to talk about you or to think much, except *with hope*. I am getting ready to go to New Orleans in December, and Pa speaks of it whenever I see him. He says he is going down at that time with me. And another thing he speaks, is of your being settled in New Orleans, so that we can be together. He told Mr Atwood that he thought the Office business would suit you. This looks brighter for me, and keeps me up. What think you of our travelling expenses? They will be pretty heavy, but will we not be compensated, by being together for two months or more? Pa seems at least to think so. Mother throws the only damper over me, that is given. She says, that I will find it very uncomfortable to travel, she is afraid, and that she does not much think, I will go. But, I can stand almost anything to be with you, and the expense is the only trouble I have. I have said nothing about this to anyone else. *You may* watch my star about dark in the evening or before, and always feel sure that, the thoughts of your absent wife are on the same thing, and with you. I am generally in the garden, at that hour when here, or on the front pavement, if in town. Sallie and myself walked together this evening until called to supper, up and down the walk leading straight from the house to the arbor, where you and I have so often walked, talking she of her beaux, and I of *my husband*, and our courting days. I say of our courting days, that is before marriage. The garden looks beautiful now, the roses are in all their glory. It has not rained as yet, excepting a few drops this evening, but the weather is rather cool than otherwise, and not therefore so parching. Father sent in a tremendous bouquet of lovely roses, as his card to Mrs. Zivley yesterday. You need not be uneasy about our little Sallie falling off of the front porch, as Mother has put away the key and lets no one have it. But she needs a great deal of watching to keep her from falling off other places. She is in all sorts of mischief. Mother I believe becomes more and more attached to her every day. She goes to Mother and catches hold of her, and screams, whenever she wants anything. I don't know how Mother will ever give her up. She tries to say everything, she hears any one say, and when we are talking, she will very often catch the last word and try and repeat it. I appreciate her much more since I have you not with me, and I feel badly when away from her. I staid at cousin Eliza's a few nights since, thinking that aunt Polly would leave in the morning and I felt right lonesome without Sallie. Father said to me when I got back last evening, "Kate I do believe your Mother was crazy about little Sallie last night." He said, she carried Sallie in his room and waked him up

out of his sleep, to show him how much she looked like "Matt." He said he was really frightened when she first awakened him. Mother, said yes, Sallie was asleep and her little nose was turned up and her mouth stuck out and she looked more like Matt than she ever saw her. Big Sallie was away last night and little Sallie and myself slept in the bed by ourselves. How, I wished, you were here, and how often I wish it every night that I could but turn over, and give you one kiss and put my arm around you. Little Sallie *will* get in the bed now every night when, she awakes, the first time and sleep there all night. She gets close up to me and puts her hand up on my neck or face. She is Mommy-like, is she not?

We sent in for cousin Sally Lyle to come out today, and spend the day with [us] and they sent us word that they were off. Now I have a piece of news to tell you, which I know will please you, *you dear old fellow*. I was in town last Saturday, but returning in evening, whom should I find here, but your uncle John. I had known that Mr Gus Ford was to dine here, but was surprized to find your uncle Jno here. He staid that night and Sunday night. He said he would leave on Wednesday, as he was in a hurry to get back to his wife. I like the manner in which he spoke of his wife so much, and seemed to dwell on her. It made me think more of him, than anything. Mother says, when your uncle Jno. came in with your, [*sic*] that her heart almost burst, but she restrained her tears, for that she knew it would make Father right mad. Sallie saw him at first at the table and she says, she was so much surprized that she forgot to speak to Mr Ford, until she was asked if she was going to speak to no one else. I will now say, good bye, and will write in a few days more, something of the sale of Mrs. Mead's place etc. and how I am coming on. Do write my *beloved husband whenever you can*. May God bless you and he will bless you my Dearest husband if the prayers of your wife can avail anything, and may he keep you from evil, and grant you before long a change of heart. May we meet soon.

your devoted
wife Kate

MISS SALLIE F. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Oak Place. Dec. 10th 1850

My Dear Sister

Presuming that you are now safely landed in New Orleans, and knowing how delighted you would be to hear from all of us, particularly *little Sallie*, I have determined to write you a few lines to that effect.

Sarah received your letter written from Tuscumbia, and shortly after the reception of that, a letter written by Bro. Mat to Father came duly to hand. We were very sorry indeed to hear of his continued, bad health; I hoped that the little jaunt he took to the "Great Hardin Springs" would have produced an effectual cure.

Since you left, every member of each family has enjoyed perfect health. Little Sallie has been under mother's charge and is now as fat, rosy, and saucy, as she can be, I think she looks better than I ever saw her. She appears to get along just as well without a mother and Father as with them; and never thinks of you, at least never calls your name, until she goes to the bureau and catches a glimpse of your yellow lawn dress; then she commences calling Kate, Kate, and if asked where Kate is, replies "Nare now, Kate's dome." To day mother had one of Bro. Jno's coats hanging on a chair near her, and Sallie came trudging along and catching a glimpse of the red sleeve lining called out directly, Mat! Mat! She is just beginning to form sentences, and amuses us all very much with her unsuccessful attempts. However she made us understand her very clearly the other day. I was fluting some collars and she wanted to take them away from me and when I refused, picked up a walking stick, and marching up to me banged away saying, "I'll kill you!" I have come to the conclusion that what Dr. Fearn says of the Sallies is quite true, viz. "that every one is a devil," for as young as Sallie is, she makes every thing around her walk chalk. To morrow we intend taking her in to spend the day with the girls. Rowe Webster is staying with Sarah; Ada has not been out to see me yet, but says she will come home with me to morrow.

After your departure on Saturday Ada and myself took a good long nap, and after waking up concluded to have Sallie's daguerreotype taken to send by Burton on Sunday, and accordingly sent up to Bruckner to know whether he could take it for us, he sent us word yes, but it was too late to take a very good one. Now you can imagine how long we slept, and we thought rather than not have a good one, we had better wait until some other time. We received a letter from Bro. Jno who was anxiously looking for your arrival; I hope you delivered safely that pretty little epistle I sent him, as I wouldn't like for it to fall into any one else's hands, especially the elegant and accomplished Mr. Robinson.

Little Pattie Davis still lingers, continuing about the same; it is the opinion however that as she has endured it this long, she will more than probably recover. Anne Eason is convalescent. The health of the town in general is good, I hear of no sickness, except colds, which are always prevalent during the winter. The town was thrown into quite an excitement to day, by Mrs. McClung's house catching on fire. It caught from the chimney, fortunately not much damage was done. I had three beaus to call on me to day, Mr Clay, Shepherd and Wallace, and from them learned a piece of news which I know will astonish you; the marriage of Mr. M. A. King, Attorney at Law. He has just arrived with his bride, formerly Miss Babe Bealle, who Bro. Mat knows well I presume and if her brother's account be true of her size (who said she weighed 300 lbs.) there must be a little contrast between her and Mr. King.

The young men have organized a Thespian corps, and will soon

favor us with a performance, but judging from the material of which it is composed, I think it will terminate in a grand failure. Huntsville is just as dull and stupid as it is possible for a place to be; I am constantly wishing to be with you and have some fun. You must catch a nice beau for Ada and myself, I want him intellectual, agreeable, handsome, and just suited to my mind, and if he happens to be well endowed with worldly treasures, I will not offer the slightest objection.

I do not see any preparations for a merry Christmas, unless you call putting away backbones and spareribs and making sausage meat preparations. Bone season has now commenced with all its horrors, and to think you have escaped it all, ah! You are a lucky woman. Every where I go, I see a big smoke rising out of the yard, and somebody hammering away on sausage meat, in fact, the town is more hoggish this winter than ever before. I will have to stop now, as Sallie has commenced her first nightly warbling. She behaves much better at night than she did before you left, scarcely cries at all, on the second time waking up. You musn't feel the least uneasiness about her, for I'll promise you to take all the care possible of her, and you know mother will neglect every thing for Sallie, I think she is more wrapped up in her than any creature I ever saw. Since you left, she is worse than ever, you can't conceive how she doats on her. Sallie has become very fond of Father, calls him Fady, and runs after him every time he goes in his office. Mother is asleep, but I know if she were awake, she would send her love, as she has been wishing all day to see you. You must give my love to your Pa and Bro. Mat and be sure to answer this on its reception, and I will try the next time to write you a better letter.

Yr affectionate

Sister Sallie F. Steele

GEORGE STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE^e

Oakplace Feby 2/51

Dear Matt

I have rec'd all of your letters regularly, except the note you wrote on the evening of the burning of the St Charles. This I did not receive till this morning.

We had learned by Telegraph, of the destruction of the St Chas. and knowing that you and Kate were boarding there, we were quite uneasy about you. Indeed your Mother imagined everything for the worst, Kate must certainly have been frightened to death, and lost *all* that she *had* in the world, and she had already taught, little Sally to say that Kate had lost her pretty [coating] &C.

You will therefore see how opportunely , your letter arrived to dispel all of her fears.

And I will add that it afforded all of us, much satisfaction to learn that you escaped so fortunate.

Little Sally is quite well, and looking well, and your Mother and sisters, say that she is very sprightly, and the best little thing that ever lived.

To this I will add that she is a [whit] spoiled, by being too much petted. But as she is a poor little thing abandoned by her natural parents I must bear with her.

I would have ans'd the letter which you wrote, and mentioned a matter of business, but that I did not think it would reach N. O. before you started home as you said in the same letter that you would start about the 20th ult, I have signed the note, and enclose it in this letter. It seems that you have determined to remain in O. for the season, this has started up a thousand fears in your Mother's mind about Kate, and I would not be surprized but that she is at least half right in regard to this matter. I sent your Bro Jno. to Miss. relative to my business, down there, he returned yesterday, after closing all except, that Dr. Simkins only p'd \$350.00 on his note, though he promised to go to Memphis and arrange the bal. in a short time, Jno sent the note to Mr. Hopkins. I got a letter from your Bro. Geo a short time since, he was well and doing well. I have no news to write about, all of your friends are well. I believe that Mr. R. Fearn has gone to Memphis. I filled my Ice House last friday and saturday. I have been making some good improvements in the way of [ditching] in the Bottom grounds. We are well except some of the servants. Matilda still lingers. I hardly expect that she will ever have any more health. We have had four children born within the last few weeks, Charolene, Macklin, Polly, and Mary Shields 3 girls and 1 boy, they are all doing well &C.

It is raining at this time, and looks as tho'h, it might continue a week.

Give my love to Kate, your Mother and sisters send theirs also, except for yourself my best wishes.

Geo Steele

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to JOHN F. STEELE

New Orleans Feb 19th 51

Dear Brother John

I am just in receipt of a letter from Sally, which was truly most welcome. Your brother Matt had one also from Father last week, which I think he has answered. We had begun to think it was about time we were hearing from some of the Steele family. Pa gets letters from home pretty regularly, but then you *know*, they don't say as much of our little Sallie, as I, myself, or any of us here are willing to hear, as those in town do not see, as much of her, as you all do. Aunt Sally's account of her was very interesting to us, and none of us were at all tired of reading it. But really I am afraid, that she is growing smart too fast and will exhaust the fund before my return. They all complain at home of my not writing, when Sally's letter is the first I have received in answer to letters written to Mother, Sally, sisters Mary, Sarah, and Ada. I

must say, that they have all been somewhat excusable for not writing to me, until they knew my determination, as to my movements. I had determined before getting Sally's letter, that I would wait no longer, but to write to brother John, and see what could be made out of him. How often do I wish, that I could [be] nearer to old Huntsville, than letters can bring me. Whenever we have a bright, sunny day, I think, how I could enjoy the pure air about our little town. We have had some days here really unpleasantly warm. There has been scarcely a day, since I have been in the place, that a thin barêge dress could not have [been] worn. Particularly did I wish to be with you all one day week before last, when Pa and I took the car, and went up to Carrolltown, where everything looked so fresh and green. You can't tell how I disliked to return to the cramped close air of the city. The gardens at Carrolltown were full of roses in bloom. They were mostly common roses, but still they were roses. I saw one or two of the "cloth of Gold," which were quite pretty. But there were beautiful flowers enough, Camélias etc. to be seen in the Green-house.

This city, as you might suppose, is crowded to overflowing, with persons drawn by the same magnet Jenny Lind. The Theatre in which she gives her concerts is of course filled always, as full as can be, and after that there are people enough to fill up all other places of entertainment or amusement from the church, to the circus. And this last mentioned place is by no means so unfashionable in this Southern country, as you might imagine. We were quite amused, whilst we were in Mobile, at Mrs. Judge Hopkin's account of a visit she made to the circus. Now the idea of Mrs. H's being at such a place was novel enough in itself and no doubt would shock her good friends in Huntsville. The show was given for the benefit of the Orphan Asylum or some such benevolent purpose, and Mrs. Walker and the girls persuaded Mrs. Hopkins that she ought to attend. She went, and got one of the lower seats in the house, where she says she was frightened nearly out of her wits, all the time, for fear the horses would jump on her, and thought, if she ever got out alive, that it would be the last time she would ever be thus caught. I thought, perhaps, whilst you were in Memphis that you would have run down to New Orleans and given the Nightingale a hearing. You would have the pleasure also of meeting numberless acquaintances and college mates. Mr Matt stumbles on them frequently. A few Sundays since, he stepped into one of the Hotels and found a whole raft of them.

20th. I thought I would not close this until I had been to hear Jenny Lind. I cannot say anything in her praise, which has not been said many times by those who have heard her in this city. But I was disappointed in her personal appearance, that is in her form. The bones in her neck and arms show rather too much. I was not prepared for this, as I had never so much as heard that she had any bones. I thought, after she had sung her first song, that

I was disappointed in this too. But she gained on me, as she proceeded, to the last song, which was "Home Sweet Home," and of which she seemed to feel the sentiment. I could enjoy it fully, if I could hear one or two more concerts. We think however than [*sic*] ten dollars a ticket is rather too great extravagance to indulge in often for *poor folks*. The hatters carry the day in these United States. You know a hatter paid the highest sum in this city, as well as in one of the Northern cities. The same hatter in this city has been lucky enough, to get by raffle, "The Greek Slave." I will refer you to Julia Pleasants letters home, for further accounts of Jenny Lind, as she is carried away completely. I have scratched this off in fine style, and will try and write before long, more *particularly* to Mother or sister Mary. Tell Sally she shall not be forgotten, but she must not wait, and I know she would not, if she knew how much good her letter did me. Kiss Mother and little Sallie for me, and give them all much love at both homes. And that Spring may join us all in good health is my sincere prayer.

your affectionate

sister Kate

We have been some weeks without letters from them in town. They give us a feast and then a famine. We want to know, if Burton is at home safe, and if he is happy. Burton and I appreciate a city life somewhat alike. Pa says that you promised to write to him, after you had finished your surveying.

MISS SALLIE F. STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Oak Place Feb 20th 1851

My Dear Brother

Accept ten thousand thanks for the elegant present which you so kindly sent me. I am at a loss for words to express my gratitude for the reception of such a splendid gift; you could not have made a happier selection, as it combines richness, beauty and utility and it will serve for both an evening and day dress. Burton arrived home safely on Sunday evening, though we have not seen him yet to inquire after the health of yourself and Sister Kate, but take it for granted that you are all well.

I wish you could have seen little Sallie's capers when she first caught sight of her doll. She was the most delighted creature I ever saw; hugged and kissed it time after time, then put it down on the floor and sang "Lance Boatman" while she jumped it about, trying to make it dance. I have just dressed it for her in a red dress and pantaletts, and now she wants me to make a "sack" as she calls it and put some "shoes and stockings on it." She has named it Kate, and will pick it up sometimes and say "Poor Kate, go to sleep baby, your sweet heart come bye, bye." As regularly as she drinks tea, she has poor Kate hauled up to receive her share, and after she has finished eating at the table sits Kate up in her

chair and tries to feed her, with her knife and fork. The stockings fit her very well that you sent, but the gaiters are entirely too large; however they will answer for her next summer. After I tried them on her, I could scarcely prevail upon her to let me take them off again, she wanted to go to town and let Bela Mastin see them. I never saw such devotion as exists between Bela and herself - but Sallie always exacts Bela's admiration of her pretty dresses and stockings. Directly a dress or anything is made for her, she begs to go to town to show it to Bela, and if Bela don't notice it she will call her attention to it. I intended sending her in to day to see Sarah, but the weather is so inclement, that her visit will have to be deferred until a more favorable day.

I suppose you have heard of poor Miss Bassett's death. She died on last Thursday morning; quite unconscious of her approaching end, that is she had no idea at the time, that she was dying. Her Brother left a few days before and on parting from her, told her candidly that she could never recover, but on the day she died she thought she was a little better, than she had been. Dr. Bassett's health is so much impaired that he has taken a trip to Florida, but from accounts I have heard of him since he left, I do not think he will live to return home. According to Miss Bassett's request, there were no funeral tickets issued and no funeral, and I also heard that she wished no one to attend the hearse except her relations, though several carriages followed the corpse to the grave. These were the directions, that she gave to Dr. Bassett on the eve of his departure.

Sue Wiggins was married last night, but I did not attend the wedding as it is nine miles in the country. Tell Sister Kate, I wrote a long letter, five pages to her last week, but owing to the disastrous fate that the *News* met with, I am fearful she will never get it. I am not certain yet whether my letter went by that way, but fear it did. The *News* sank between Ditto's and Gunter's landing. Mother had everything fixed up, that she wrote for, but no one has left yet for New Orleans and of course that has prevented her from sending them. Sue sends many thanks to her, for the pretty bottle she sent her, and says she intends to write her a letter. I forgot to mention the oranges and pineapples. We all felt very much obliged to you for them and enjoyed them very much. The pineapples came in very good order, but the oranges were a little spoilt. Sallie would grab up an orange and bite through skin and all, and seemed at a loss to account for the difference between the peel and pulp. She had an orange the first thing in the morning and the last at night. All the family are well and send their best love. Don't be uneasy about Sallie, she is as healthy and fat as she can be. Her little cheeks look as if the blood will gush out. Give my best love to Sister Kate, and you must answer this as soon as possible, and let me know whether she has received my letter.

your affectionate
Sister Sallie

MISS ELLEN E. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Oak Place March 4th [1851]

Dear Sister

No doubt you have been waiting very patiently for my promised letter, and be assured I would have taken great pleasure in writing to you ere this late period had I not been prevented by many things too trivial to mention. One however I will tell you which I think can sufficiently atone for my delay. And that was the examination which took place a few weeks ago, and as I was anxious to be prepared I had to study very hard and therefore could [not] spare time to write. But it is now over and you can well imagine my great joy, perhaps you would like to know if all your sisters did themselves credit or not. I am glad to say I can answer in the affirmative without any exaggeration. Lucy and Berry are still going to the Seminary and are both quite well. Miss Sarah and Miss Mary Spotswood walked out here yesterday and spent the day and though Miss Ada has not been out here for sometime I saw her Sunday and she looked very well also. Mother had a slight sore throat for a few days but it is now entirely well and she is very anxious to see you. And now I will tell you some thing about your *sweet* little *Sallie*. She is as pretty and smart as she can be, every day when I return from school she does or says something new that she learnt that day. I could not begin to enumerate all her smart sayings or tricks. She sings, dances and does a variety of other smart things to the greatest perfection. I think when you return home you will find her quite an accomplished "Little lady." She also mocks your walk and calls the doll you sent her *Cattie*, but calls herself "little *Matt*." Mother has taken her to see the cows and she is just coming back, you cannot imagine how busy her little tongue is now telling about them. But I am sorry I am obliged to close *Sallie's* smartness for I could fill at least two pages about her if I had time. I must ask you to excuse the length of this letter as I am necessarily compelled to be concise as it is quite late and I have my lessons to prepare for tomorrow. Next time I will promise a more lengthy letter and will tell you more about your darling little *Sallie* as I know you are anxious to hear all about her. I would hold her hand and make her write to you but she is just gone to sleep. Sue sends her best love to you and says she is very much obliged to you for the beautiful present you sent her, she will however write to you in a few days herself and thank you for it. You must excuse the penmanship of this letter as it is written in great haste. Write to me immediately on the reception of this as we are anxious to hear from you and brother *Matt*, tell him to write also. All the family send their love to you and Bro *Matt* and receive a due show of your

Affectionate Sister

Ellen

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Huntsville Nov 3rd 1851

My Own Dearest Husband

Perhaps *you* might come nearer imagining the pleasure which your sweet letter gave me, than any one else, but I do not believe that even your own dear self can know the delight which thrilled through my heart, whilst reading it. I could not refrain from kissing it. It was indeed a kind sweet letter, just such as I love to receive from *you*. I received it on Saturday. I was in town the most of that day, having been kept there much longer than I had intended or wished to stay, as I did not think my little boy very well, and in the evening whilst returning and thinking of you, I became rather blue. But I came home, found Fearn had done very well without me, and after attending to him, returned to town, to attend a meeting at the church, where Pa gave me your letter, which as soon, as I had read, acted like exhilarating gas. It was not written in the company of Cal Fackler and Sol Andrews. Was it? I *was* more than a week without hearing from you excepting through your dispatch (and this was kind and thoughtful too) which did not reach here itself until Tuesday evening a week from the time you left. Your first letter, which I was exceedingly glad to get, did not come to hand until Thursday night. For this you had prepared me, before you left, although I had sent to the Office and to Pa several times before I got it to see if I had one. And last but not least, must I thank you for that sweet little piece of poetry, which you enclosed in your last. And my husband that we may be the actors in such a scene, is my hearts desire, and that before very long I *would* be satisfied with less than six little rogues however. We have two sweet little ones now. They are both out at present, Sallie somewhere near her "mama" and Charlotte has just taken Fearn out for an airing. He has been sitting down on the floor before the fire, a good while, in a great glee some time playing with a spoon and a bunch of keys, and then again lying down on his back and kicking with all fury. I thought as I looked at him, that I did wish his father, could see him, that he would give up, that he was about the finest looking fellow he ever saw. Both of his little upper teeth are through and he has been very sprightly for the last two days, and as frolicsome, as a little lamb. He and Sallie are both well with the exception of coughs which I must watch. Sallie has been a better child than common for a week past. She has corrected some of her bad habits, without the switch to awe her into it, and she has been obedient and affectionate. Maria came out, and staid all night with us last week and the day after she took little Sally home with her, promised to keep her only one night. So the evening she had promised to bring her home, Pa and all the girls, sis Sarah, Ada and Maria came out, Pa having Sally in his lap, asleep. They said she had behaved beautifully, and that they would not have thought of bringing her out had not the scarlet fever been in town.

Little Ginne has it, and one of Antoinette's children. They did think Bela was taking it, but it proved a false alarm. Yesterday morning Sally said she had two "Faders, one big Fader in the bed, and a little Fader, who was Matt; and a Papa." Pa says her old affection seemed to revive for him whilst she was in town. I am sorry I cannot take the children in town to see Pa. Maria wished to keep Sallie there anyhow, she said Dr Erskine said he would rather children would have the fever now, it is in such a mild form, and she said that should Sally take it, that she would promise not to leave her room, and could nurse her, as well, as I could, if I was afraid for Fearn to have it, and therefore could not be with her myself. I still hang on to your old daguerreotypes, as Bruckner did not pretend to keep the one he took. I did not send up for it, but went up to look at it myself, but he had rubbed it out. You have not yet been gone two weeks, and yet it does seem to me a long, long time and I grow actually sick, when I think, how small a part of the allotted time of absence this two weeks is. And were you, as I know some men, the time would be prolonged much more than necessary. I sincerely hope, that I may be spared, as I *have* been thus far, the pain of feeling that my own loved husband would permit anything but duty and imperative necessity to keep him from his wife and family one moment longer.

Your slippers I saw after you had left and mentioned to some one present, that I was sorry you had not carried them. But inconvenient as this may be, I would be glad did I know, it was the greatest you would meet with.

You will not be astonished when I tell you, that poor Dr Bassett is no more. He died night before last. I have heard no particulars of his death. It has not been a week since there was a little party at his house. On Friday, he had a fainting fit, and all, even himself thought him dying. On Saturday Pa and Dr Erskine told me, they thought him better, but before another day dawned his eternal doom had been decided. And none of us know, how soon, we may be in the same situation. I beg of you, my dear, *dear* husband, sometimes to think of it and learn to trust in the *merits* of a Saviour. Read the word of God, believe and think of it reasonably. Think not that religion is made only for children and women. Oh, become as a little child, humble, and teachable and learn of Christ and lean on him. You are but a worm of the dust, as it is too much, that you must ask wisdom from on High. And if you will only ask it you will be guided right. Oh! That I have transgressed my limits in writing to you this time, but hope it may be as pleasant to you, and the same from you would be to me. Sally persuaded me not to go over one sheet, that, that was enough in return for your three pages. I hope you secured mine written for and sent to Vicksburg. Father had a letter from brother John today. He was at the University and discontented on account of uncomfortable lodgings. Nothing has been heard from brother G. We are all in usual health, and

spirits. A note however from Ada today said that Pa was not so well. Pa wished to know, if you said nothing about business and he wondered that you did not write to the House. I saw Mrs Hopkins in her carriage a day or two since. She was all smiles. And I might be too, if I had my husband with me. A kiss is continually on the lips of our little ones for their father and the flame of devoted love, for my dear husband ever kindled in the heart of his own loving,

Kate.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Lake Providence 25 Nov 1851

My Dear Kate

I reached this place to day after one of the most uncomfortable rides that mortal man ever endured. I have completed my trip sooner than I expected when I left home, but as the Red river was too low for Boats, I determined not to go through by Texas, but return to the Missi River. I have been constantly on the move and at work all the time and hope that my trip will turn out one of profit to our house. I left El Dorado for this place, last wednesday. Yesterday and to day I have been tugging hard to get through the Missi swamp, which I found absolutely dangerous to both horse and rider. Once this morning my horse in crossing a boggy slough, mired down to his very head and stuck fast. I had of course to get off and wade out, and then to help him out, and at one time I thought he would drown, but by calling and clucking to him, I encouraged him to make another effort and he got out. I never in my life saw, and hope never again to see such roads. I met a family of movers from Ala; their wagons completely buried in the mud, and no chance to get them out, for they had to cut loose their horses to save them. There has been an immense tide of emigration to the west this fall. In going I passed hundreds on the roads. I have had quite a rough time of [it] I assure you. You cannot imagine, nor can I tell you how rough and rude are the people living on the roads through Arkansas. Indeed the best of them are very poor livers. They raise nothing but cotton and New Orleans is there smoke-house and Granary. Their crops, this year are very poor indeed, and finding them mostly in debt I played quite shy, as I do not wish to inherit any little legacies in that country. My Dear Wife, it is Sunday night, and I know of no holier occupation to engage my mind, than in holding communion with the *object*, my heart most sincerely worships. I know my letters are gladly welcomed, and it is to me a pleasant duty to write them; and if I do not express in them that warm and affectionate regard, that you desire, you know that I am sure that it is, from no lack of it. Your letters, I suppose are on the chase after me, but I have not had a line from you, since your letter to me of the 27th ultimo, at Vicksburg, and which I

shall read before I go to bed to night, instead of the Bible as I have not the latter with me. You must write to me at New Orleans (care of F D & Co) immediately upon receipt of this, and give me all the news. What has poor Sarah done? Married I reckon, and if so, I truly hope she will find her husband all she desires. What has Mrs Hopkins done for her country? I hope a *vast* deal, as she has not permitted her husband to do much for our business this season. What of Bros John and George - in fine omit nothing, as I am a good ways behind. I shall endeavor to get off from here, for New Orleans in the morning, or sometime during the day. From N. Orleans I shall write to make arrangements for board for us at our new home. I think it will be best for us to furnish our own rooms, at least, so far as bds &c, and if you prefer it, in every respect. I am now resolved, that if I have money enough to rent or buy a house after next year, I will go to housekeeping. How is Sister Mary and Gus coming on. I never see a fat woman without thinking of her. I wish she would divide with you, for if you are as poor when I get home, as when I left, I won't stay with you. I hope, you have continued your exercise on horseback, for I can say from experience that there is no better exercise. I never was in better health, and have fattened until I have to "*put a loop*" in my drawers to make them meet. I hope Fearn has by this time a mouth-full of teeth, and has recovered his good looks. Little Sallie you must kiss for me, and tell her not to run out of doors this winter and let Jack-frost bite her. I will buy her something pretty in New Orleans. Give my love to all of both families, and bless your own dear soul, with many kisses for yourself, and the hope of hearing from you soon. I bid you good-bye.

Your affectionate

Husband

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Huntsville Dec 13th 51

My Ever Dear Husband

I have just finished the second reading of your sweet letter dated the 5th, and as I ended and read the signature, I could but exclaim to myself, it may have been half-aloud, for I was alone, yes you are an "affectionate husband," and I also wished that I might be with you particularly if you are sick. You speak of the many attractions to which you have closed your door, and senses, in order to devote your leisure moments. Now my dear husband, I have thought, you had not written too often since in that city of "Vanities," a week and more having elapsed since the date of your last, and might I not be excused, if the idea should cross my mind that already many moments, nay hours, had been devoted to its amusements, to gazing on the face of Mrs Howard, and Miss Julia Bennett until your soul was wrapt up in admiration, hours I say, one of which at least might more profitably, and certainly more charitably

employed in penning a few lines to one, who, as you know, is always made most happy by hearing words of *love* from *your own self*. You need never fear being thought at all sickly or too sentimental. Expressions of love my dear husband can never come too often from your dear lips, or pen, or can they contain too much to meet with a similar response in my heart. I was saying, what might occur to my mind [to] know the company you are in, and the place, and I was going on to say, that it might occur to me, that you were indeed at the time you were writing to your absent wife, making a sacrifice of your feelings, and had been compelled to resist temptations to go to some places of amusement, or that you had visited them until you had been somewhat surfeited for the time. But, far be it from me my *dear, dear husband* to cherish *such thoughts*, or even to believe them for one moment. I will believe, and nothing shall make me disbelieve, for the sake of my own happiness if nothing more, that you love me, more than all the world besides, and that if when absent you do not write, as often, as *I think you might*, that it be not because you have leisure moments otherwise filled up. You speak, as though there could be any doubt that we would go to Tuscumbia next year. I have almost set my heart upon it, and have been going on, in my usual unsettled state, my child here, and there and nowhere, her clothes scattered hither and thither, myself pretty much the same, all with considerable contemptment, looking forward to the soon approaching time, when I can be a little more settled, and when I thought my husband could have a little more pleasure, than he has as yet had in his family. I could even have some better arrangements to stay at one place or the other, but this I can never do without annoyance, and unpleasant feeling arising. I think that Charlotte could do better, and feel better. She seems to be a good deal put out by our changing from one place to the other, and continually something that the children need at the other place, where we are not. I have given her several talks since you left, and have been very guarded not to show temper towards her, and she is a good deal improved. As I told Pa, it is surely a discipline for my temper. She has been on a high horse, and a very high one several times, and I have had to encounter considerable impertinence to talk to her, and with calmness, for it would have done no good, I am confident, if I had lost my temper. Oft such times, I have thought that *I could not stand* her. She certainly is the strangest negro I ever knew.

Our little boy last week was bright and lively, and as good, as need be, and I *often* wished that *his Father* could only see him. This week he has not been so well, and kept us awake a good deal at night. He has just cut another tooth, and I suspect he has more coming out soon. Sallie, I very much fear, unless she can soon be put under some training will be ruined, for when in the country, she takes advantage of her mama's indulgence, and cries for everything which is denied her, and when in town, they make her cross

by constant teasing. She staid all night with Bela last night (who is sick tonight poor little creature) and brother Gus, and sister Mary say, they never saw a better, or a happier child, that she did not fret once whilst there. Brother Gus, says, he never saw a prettier picture than Bela and Sallie asleep in each others arms. He wished, that they were both his. Sister Mary *says she* "is falling off." I don't know, that I am picking much of it up, although Pa and others have told me that, I am looking better. I thought so myself, until I had these colds, sore throat, and cold in the head, which have been very uncomfortable. Sis Sarah is not married yet, still looking forward to the next week. She had a second note this week, in which Mr B. stated, that he did not think he could be here next week, that the day would of necessity have to be indefinitely postponed, and that he could not say even whether he could be able to leave home this winter, and that he might have to go to Jackson before coming here. Pa had begun to have his doubts about him, and knew not exactly what to think of him, whether to think he really [was] as sick as he made out, or whether he was anxious to keep his engagement (but of this last, scarcely breathe it to yourself, for Pa did not express these things to Sis S. or to any one, I believe but myself). Today however all things are bright again, and Sister S. is very happy in anticipation of soon shining out in all her finery. She had letter today, and a telegraphic dispatch two days later, stating that Mr B., two of his sisters, and a Mr Sherman would start for this place, Sunday, and reach here on Wednesday. I will be glad, when the fuss is all over, and everything quiet once more, for I expect to wind up with sore throat and to be completely worn out.

Monday morning. I have left this open until this morning in order to give you the latest intelligence from us, your wife and children. I have been kept from it so late, that I fear I will be too late for the mail, and I am so bewildered, that I shall have to cut this short soon. Sister Mary has just come up, and I have but a moment or two ago come out of the next room, where sis Sarah had got me somewhat excited, although I said not a word, she is telling Mrs Erskine, that her family care nothing for her, and she don't know, what she would do if it were not for friends etc. She got Mrs E. so much excited once before that she was sick after she went home. I have not been home very long either, having been down this morning to tell Sally Swan, goodbye, who left in the Nashville stage, to go as far as Memphis with Mrs Turner, and there to be taken care of by Mr Hopkins, to whom Pa wrote last night to take her to Vicksburg himself, if he could get no other escort. She was delighted to get off, as she has been so anxious. Pa gave her a telegraphic dispatch to send off at Columbia, as she had written home, without Pa's advice, for them to come for her. And last but not least of the concatenation of circumstances to make me nervous and fidgty, this morning is our own little Sallie, who was in the

other room with Berry and big S. a few minutes since, before I came in my room to finish this, and she took her seat on some coals between the andirons, and scorched herself. If Sally and Berry had not been in the room, she would probably been burnt up, as it is she is not badly burnt. I put some turpentine on her, and afterwards painted her with some white paint, they were using about the house. She is very quiet now. I hope it will be enough for a warning to her, and keep her from fire. Our little boy is quite well at present, and very sweet. I went to church in a great hurry yesterday morning leaving some clothes in front of the fire, and Fearn asleep in the crib, with no one in the room. I rang the bell, as I left, the summons of which Charlotte told me, when I returned she answered immediately. But in church I felt so uneasy, that I could scarcely sit still and thought several times I would get up and come home. Nothing happened however. And now my much loved husband, I say goodbye with kisses from myself and our little ones. The blessing of God be with, and keep you in health, and from sin. Come home soon, and do write often. I will try and write you a few lines very soon again. You have the constant prayers of

your own wife
your Kate

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Huntsville Dec 22nd 51

My Ever Much Loved Husband

I am once again seated at the occupation, which of all others in your absence gives me most pleasure, or *always has* done, because I had thought, that there, I could more than anywhere else pour out thoughts, and feelings, which I have kept pent up, until almost bursting through some other channel, and would have doubtless done so, had I not looked at this, as I have conceived safer outlet. And are there feelings which one must keep from their very selves. And if a wife has troubles, and anxieties, and moments of sadness, must she never mention them to an absent husband? Certainly she *should* refrain, when she expects them to find him in a *tolerably* affectionate humor, a humor certainly which I had never *thought* of finding *my husband* in, but finding him thus, it does not astonish me, that her letter containing *these* or any other thoughts should have been received with *tolerable joy*, and read with *tolerable pleasure*. But should the wife be astonished at her letter finding her husband, in a *tolerably affectionate* mood, when only a few leisure moments in a week are devoted to writing to her, and probably to thoughts of her, (who *loves him continually* with all the *ardor*, and *affection* that humanity is *capable* of) the remainder of his leisure moments spent in being a tolerable visitor to the Theatre particularly when the countenance of a *particular* woman is to be seen, or in occasionally spending a long winter evening at Mollan's Restau-

rant. Saturday in the midst of late rising, entertaining company, preparing to go to a dinner party, and all kinds of occupation and bustle, I looked anxiously, for a letter from my dear husband, which I felt must come that day, which did come, and was received with *much* more than *tolerable* joy, by a *much* more than *tolerable* affectionate wife, and which has been read, reread, and reread since, and been much thought of with bitter tears in the eyes, flowing from an aching heart. I should like again to see the letter which should have given you an occasion in the reply to it, to let me know, and so keenly to feel, that your affection for me was only *tolerable*. I have yet to receive the one from you, my beloved husband, which will make me *only tolerably* affectionate towards you. I feel quite sure that I could not have evinced, in that letter, what I have never felt, a want of affection towards you. There was nothing in it which did not show or prove (now overlook it, and see) that to you alone, I looked, for support under the trials of this life, and to you alone I looked for happiness in it, and that in my love for you, and a return of it *is* my *life*. I was unhappy, but not, as I am now, and my thoughts and feelings were confused, and troubled. I would not have written to you at the time at all, *I must confess*, but more than a week had elapsed since, I had written to you, and I feared you might have some uneasiness, or doubt (which I would not have you do for one moment even) the warmth of my love. I do not say that I would not have written to you at the time, because I did not think it *proper*, that you should know my every thought, trial, trouble, and feeling, but because, I felt as though they were in too confused a mess, and circumstances by which I was surrounded were such that I could not untangle them, so as to convey them to you. Now my dear husband, am I to believe that the flame of love, and affection has been permitted to become at all dull in your dear heart. *I will not believe it*, until I have stronger proofs than I have yet had. And, if it is so, I will hope, that it may soon be kindled into a brighter, and stronger one and that it may have only been smothered awhile to light up with renewed vigor. Words of *unkindness*, or *indifference* should never pass between two, who have linked their fates together, as man and wife, particularly when absent, no not even the shadow of unkindness should appear then, not even the faintest suspicion, for they must rankle so very long, until perhaps cause an incurable disease which can *never be rooted out*. And my *own beloved husband*, in this, or any former letter, or any of which may come, let me beg of you to take nothing put down, as meant for unkindness, or indifference, or *want of the deepest and purest affection*, that can glow in a woman's heart. I cannot feel, that I have ever written anything, which could justify you in any other opinion, and oh, I would pray, that it may not be the change in your own heart, which has caused you to take the view of my last letter, which you did. If sadness *could* kill a heart, it seems, to me that mine could die tonight. You know my dear dear husband, that I much fear, the temptations, and the

place by which you are surrounded, and that I have much feared the time, when your affections should be weaned, from your Kate, and absence from her could be borne with much composure, and even with pleasure, in pleasure. Have I any reason to believe, that time is approaching or has come. The thought to me is *maddening*. If my husband, in thought, word, or deed has proved unfaithful to me, let us say never meet again. It seems to me he tarries long in Sodom, it is to be hoped that the fire may not descend, before he shall have left the place.

Well Sis Sarah is married and gone, and we are somewhat quieted down. The labor of the past week or ten days, for Sunday was not even a rest day with us, has left me with a sense of fatigue pervading all of my limbs, and senses, just such a feeling, as I have experienced after a tiresome journey. I had determined however, if I was able to sit up this night, that I would not deny myself the gratification of writing to you. I wrote to you the night before the wedding was expected to take place, or since I think of it, I wrote the night before it did take place. At any rate, it came off on Friday night, hangman's day. It was to have occurred on Thursday evening, but Mr B. staid here so late Wednesday night and kept them waiting to know when to date the tickets, which were all written for "tomorrow night" so that they might be in readiness to be sent off early the next morning, as there were a good many places, one ten miles off to send to, cousin Polly's. Sis Sarah did not like much the idea of being married on Friday night, but after provoking Pa somewhat about it, she had to knock under. Mrs Irby says, *she* was married on Friday. I told her, that I would be willing to be married over again, and the same night to meet with the same good luck, in one respect. I did wish, after we had set the table that night, and *many times* since that you had been here, and I drank to your health *many times*. Sis Sarah's dress was too tight, and she came near fainting before she went down stairs. The company were invited at half after seven, and she was married before many of them got here. Mother and Sallie were here, as I wrote them a note in the morning, informing them. Mr Barry wished to be married before the company came, as he was a stranger. Many were much disappointed, none louder in their expressions of disappointment, then Jeannie Clay, and Miss Mary Howard. Speaking of children, that night, Jeannie said she would tell me how to prevent having them, if I would tell her how to have them. She said she wished, I would have a pretty brown eyed little one, and give it to her, that your eyes and hers were the same color. She said moreover, that she did not believe however, that you had any love for her, a charge which I did not deny. Of course the bride looked beautiful. She was dressed in a thick watered white silk, which Mrs Robinson in her letter called an antique silk, and had on my wedding veil fastened on with flowers. She had on pearls which she received from Nashville the day previous. Her bridesmaids were, Ada (*first*) Sophy, and Julia P. The groomsmen, Mr

Sherman (a little dried up, old bachelor, but seemingly a clever fellow, and I believe intelligent) Bob Fearn next, and Mr Carr. The bridesmaids were dressed in blue with blue thistle veils on. Ron did not come. The bride had not been well for some days, had a chill, and was willing to retire early, and did so before the company left. She did not feel like *entertaining either*, as Mr Barry had been up stairs, almost all the evening. He stood up for about an hour after the ceremony, and became so much fatigued that he was obliged to go up stairs, and lie down. He was invited down to supper, but went up again afterwards. The little room had been prepared for the gentleman to go into and Mr Barry went in there. Ada's room was fixed up for the bridal chamber, the large new bedstead, and *my bureau* being the principal articles of furniture in it. Mrs Irby proposed to me during the evening, that she, and I should go up stairs and see Mr Barry, which we finally made up our minds to do. He thanked us kindly, and we sat with him a few moments, and left him. The morning after we were all up, and dressed, and waited about until eleven for Mr Barry, and he not making his appearance, by Pa's suggestion, I sent up to know, how he was, and if he was able to come down to breakfast. He sent word he would be down soon. He was in the dressing room at the time. He looked much revived that day. We all went over to uncle Robert's that day, and sat down to an elegant dinner, from which we arose after candle-light. After we got up from the table, at which Mr Young had drank the most wine, and been the jester, and punster, after we arose, I say, Mr Barry announced that he would leave at ten the next morning in a private conveyance to Decatur, so as not to be dependent upon the boat. So all of the family soon left to come home, leaving behind quite a party, which had become very pleasant and sociable, the ladies of which were Sally Steele, Sophy, Julia, Laura, and Miss Caperton. The next morning, Sunday, brother Gus was up here packing Sis Sarah's trunks, two large trunks, and part of Mr Barry's which he left open to them. All were busy, and the neighbors were coming and going. But they did not get off until evening, and then in the Florence stage, which went at two o'clock. They took dinner with us, and we had some neighbors, and relations not a few to eat with us. Thus you see what a day Sunday was. Sis Sarah left us in the midst of considerable weeping, for it cutted us much, to send a sister, and daughter off amongst strangers, and I may say with a stranger. We all love Mr Barry very much, he is affectionate, although very reserved, very polite rather too much so, it seems stiff. He was very prudent, when asked to drink wine, scarcely touching it. He went into dinner with me, and at the table did not drink a whole glass of wine, he said ardent spirits did not agree with him. Sis Sarah was opposite us, and *many* were the glances, she threw across. I could but think of our honeymoon, and drew comparisons, not that I have no glances of love now to bestow upon him, who is mine, and mine, beloved, had I the chance to throw

them. I remembered also the looks of love, I once received, and hope again to receive, for they would thrill through my heart and warm it up, as much now *I can truly say*, as ever they did. Many expressed a wish the night of the wedding, that "Matt" could see "Kate" to which wish I always heartily responded. Father, said I looked beautiful, and was the handsomest lady in the room. He not only said it to me, but to several others, and after he went home. He seems to have been quite struck. I suppose I must tell you how I was dressed, must I? I had on a white tarleton with a white wreath on my head. Little Sallie had on a white *mouslin de laine* braided with red, and looked very sweetly, although not so much so as she might have done in consequence of sore eyes. Much notice was taken of her, and Bela running about the room. Mr Cruse said that it seemed like a fairy scene when he entered those elegant rooms, and saw the little children running about them so lively. Poor little Sallie has suffered right much from her scorching. Mother has had her ever since, for the night of the wedding, although the child was in bed, and asleep, and I told Mother I was afraid, for her to take her home, still as Mrs Irby, and others told her, that we were all going to a dining the next day, might not be able to attend to her well, she wrapped her up and took her home with her. And cousin Mary Lee! She died and was buried on the very day that had been set for Sis Sarah's wedding day. Sally Swan was in Nashville the last news we had from, and did not [?] when or how we leave there. [*sic*] A cousin of hers had received a dispatch from her husband telling the sad news. Cousin Eliza also got the news, through a letter from Sallie. Uncle Robert got a letter out [of] the Office directed to Sallie, on Friday, and told no one of it until Saturday, and would not have said anything of it then, had not cousin Eliza received a letter from Sally herself.

Now my *dear husband* I will close, with the hope, that this may find you with the love that you *have* felt for your poor wife, whose love *never never wanes* towards you. I am sorry we cannot spend Christmas together, and I cannot wish, that you may have, a very happy Christmas, when absent from me. May it not be long, I sincerely pray before we again meet. And I pray God that you may be kept from evil, and that he may watch over you and preserve you. I send kisses from our children, from your devoted wife

your own Kate

Do if you please write *soon as you receive this*, and write often to me for pitys sake, and if not for the sake of the love you bear me, at least for that which I bear for you.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

New Orleans 20th Jany 1852

My Dear Kate

I fear that this letter unlike most of my letters to you, will

rather sadden than cheer your dear heart. Upon looking into our business, I find that there are several accounts, (and some of them large) up in Arkansas, which I will have to go and look after. I rather objected to going, but, Atwood seemed to think it necessary, and I am myself most anxious that at the end of this season, we may have as few unclosed accounts as possible. I shall leave on the 22nd, there being no other boat before then, and will be gone not quite three weeks, and I hope not more than two. I shall upon my return take the first boat bound towards home. I had hoped my dear wife, to have been with you by the 1st proximo, and to have cheered your loneliness; I say loneliness, because I know that in your present situation you are lonely, and I fear desponding at times. Nothing I assure you but a stern sense of duty and interest could prompt me to visit that out of the way country again. And when I think of extending my absence from you, my heart really feels sad. But you must bear it cheerfully. I trust your good sense, and your philosophy will induce you to believe that, whatever I do, I am influenced alone by the desire to promote the welfare of my family.

I have not yet come to any definite understanding with Atwood and James Donegan relative to the formation of a firm to succeed the present one. I shall however upon my return. If, I do not associate with them, I shall try and form a connexion, with some other house, and if I cannot do that satisfactorily, I am pretty well determined to try my fortune in the county of my first love. I have ever felt a strong presentiment that I could do well there, and I am perfectly satisfied that I could place you in a position to realise much more happiness although you would be separated from your family; a matter however much to be regretted, would be fully compensated by being never separated from me; at least without the interposition of Providence. Upon this subject however, you must keep perfect silence. I have made no visits since I have been here. I learned to day that Row Webster was here, I will try and visit her tomorrow. I intend upon finishing this, or rather upon finishing the next page (as I intend to keep it open until tomorrow hoping to get one from your dear self) to go and spend the evening with Mrs Meux. I will try to see Corinna Acklen also before I leave. I will write to your pa in the morning apprising him of my intended trip. He will I fear be somewhat provoked, at least the girls will, but business before pleasure. I shall write to your pa to come along down and not wait for my return home. Could you not get some suitable person to stay with you in their absence until my return, which I hope yet, will not be longer than the 20th proximo? If not you must go in the country, and remain until I get home. T Bibb Bradley expects to accompany Mr Wm Acklen and family home. I am truly tired of him. Tell Mother, that if she wishes me to purchase her groceries to send me the order down to meet me when I get back, and to do so, she must write it immediately. I will write to you, again day-after tomorrow the day I expect to leave. Answer this

letter immediately and direct to this place. As soon as I get back I will telegraph you and you must then write *immediately* to me at Memphis, as I will stop there to take the Nashville boat. Since thinking about it I believe I shall be able to get back here by the 5th of next month, and possibly reach home by the 15th proximo.

Jany 21. My dear Kate, as I did not this morning receive a letter from you this morning, I fear I shall not hear from you, until I get back from Arkansas. I hope however, that I may hear from you tomorrow morning. I shall get off tomorrow evening on the Rock-away. I must again implore you to be of good cheer, bear my absence patiently. Take the best care of yourself and our children. Should you wish any thing from here for yourself, or the children advise me in your next and I will get [it] for you. My pocket book was stolen from me on my way down the river. Taken from under my pillow whilst I was asleep. Fortunately my money was in the waistband of my drawers, but I lost the little sample by which I was to purchase your braid. There was nothing in the pocket book of any value whatever. I felt truly grateful that the rogue did not steal your watch, which was also under my head. I visited Mrs Meux last night, she is the same in every respect. I saw for the first time her son Tom. He appears to be the connecting link between the monkey and man. I have not forgotten your little bible, and have continued on in Job. I will take it with me. I could not find Row Webster yesterday; I will try and find her to day. Now good-bye. Kiss our little ones for me. And God bless you, is the sincere prayer of your

Devoted Husband
M. W. Steele

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Huntsville March 26th 52

My Ever Dear Husband

It is only necessary for me to tell you that your dear letter, from Nashville has been this day received by me, for you to know that my heart has been gladdened, for when the time comes, that words of affection from you, and hearing of your safety and health, do not thrill through my bosom with emotions of pleasure, then indeed will, I think that all happiness in this life is for me, at an end. I am seated in the old parlor, the sitting room, not as I should like to be, shut up in my own room, for I always wish to feel that we are alone, when writing to you. But, as I have said, I am in the parlor, as company for Pa, who as usual is engaged in reading, and the girls are in the drawing-rooms with beaux, and Sister Mary, who is still with us, to all appearance cheerful, and contented, is with her boy up stairs. So were I not in the room with Pa, he would be alone. What an inexhaustible source of comfort, and pleasure reading is to Pa, he seems never tired with it, and

what a *pure* pleasure it is. Pa had a letter from Jackson today, saying that Sis Sarah would return home by New Orleans and Mobile, but you will be down too late, unless you would go over to Mobile to see her. Brother Gus writes word, that he has declined filling her order, on account of its keeping him longer by a week, and then the difficulty of pleasing Sis Sarah, which Sister Mary says he has tried several times before and failed to do. We were wondering, if he would write them the true reason for not filling the order. We have also had letters from Berry and Ellen since you left, both complaining terribly of the prison, and both of course exceedingly homesick. Berry writes her complaints, as though Pa had not heard the same before, all from me, as though she could tell *me* anything new of the school. Pa can laugh at them knowing, that no bad effects were produced upon my health by these privations, but Father, and the others in the country do not take it so easy. Father is very much put out, and says he never wanted Sissy to go there, and he does not like it. Sister Mary, and myself took the children, and spent the day with Mother, yesterday. I brought Sallie back with me, and I disliked to do it too. She has been my sole bedfellow since you left, except when Fearn would be on the other side of me. She is a right good little one too, lies up close to me, and generally quite still, when well. She mashed her finger one day, which caused it to rise, and that night she was wakeful. We all think, she is fattening in the last few days. She looks very healthy and rosy, and she and Bela are as happy together, as can be, and take a considerable quantity of exercise. Our boy is well, as he always is. As for myself, I think, I am well having had no pain today, but am still using that *stuff*. I have had no appetite for several days past, which has made me fear, that a *worst sickness* may be upon me. It may however be occasioned by the warm weather, we have had. James Coles got me the brush from the Office, and it is a tolerable brush. I miss the little one you took more than, I had any idea, I would. He can find no traces of Demoville's account. It just this moment occurred to me to look amongst those accounts of yours, that [you] gave me, that perhaps Demoville's account might be there, and sure enough it was about the first one I saw. I will decide by the time you return to New Orleans, whether or not I want a summer bonnet, for if sickness, is to keep me at home I will not want it. If you have any money to spend for me, do not spend so much on a dress, as you did when there before. I should prefer some thing more lasting, that were you to leave me alone in this world, I would have it *as your precious gift*. Little Sallie says, I must tell you she is a good girl, and yesterday she told me I must pray for you to come home. And I do *pray for it*, and that as speedily as possible. You tell me in your letter not to forget my promise to you. I say the same to you, don't forget that you said you would chew no more tobacco. Please don't put *another piece* [in] your mouth. You said moreover, that you would not go to the Theatre on *Sunday*. I would

beg of you to go to church and read some in your Bible, if not for your own sake my *beloved husband*, then for the sake of your dear wife. And would to God, that his Spirit might be with you, and soften your heart to receive his truths.

Give my love to all of my friends, that you may see, to Dr and Mrs Meux and tell Eliza that her little gift was most acceptable, and that I keep it on my bureau, and never look at it without thinking of the giver. And now *my dear husband* in conclusion let be beg you to write to [me] whenever and wherever you can, and on *Sunday night*. That God may protect and keep you from evil is the prayer of her, who *never* has been able, to find words to express her fond *love for you*.

your own, Kate

Please, *please* don't forget me whilst in New Orleans. And whilst there don't spend your money foolishly. I have no ambition to be rich, but only wish, that you may get enough to stay at home. I send you kisses from our children, and many from myself.

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Huntsville May 10th 1852

My Own Dear Husband

I received your most welcome letter on last Friday, and as has been the case several times lately, I had written only the day before so I did not answer it immediately. I say your most welcome dear letter, for never, was one more so, my dear husband for I was getting very uneasy about you, not having heard for more than two weeks. It does seem to me sometimes, as though, I cannot stand those long and continually repeated separations. It appears to me that your trip this time has been unusually slow. In the first place, you staid much longer in New Orleans than, I had expected you would, and then you certainly had a tedious trip, as you said, on the boat to Arkansas, so that you will get back to New Orleans a week or two later than I had calculated. I cannot help feeling my *beloved*, that you are detained in that attractive city of New Orleans longer than necessary, and not much against your will. But if you knew *anything* of the sadness, which your absence causes me, you would not be there one moment longer, than absolutely necessary. I am glad you mentioned Kate Temple in your letter as Julia Pleasants says, she heard, she was dead. As for the Miss Hough you spoke of, Ada has no recollection of her. You, do I must, admit, however silly, it may appear touch a tender chord, when you even jestingly speak of making love to any one besides to her, who I think has the only right to hear such sentiments fall from your lips, to her whose very life is yours. When, I reason with myself, I know it to be foolish ever to feel, that you my dear husband, should love any thing else, or permit such sentiments to pass your lips, yet there are feelings, which will often come unbidden. One thing, I generally

feel, that I am sure of, and that is, that I am loved supremely, but you know, what, a dread I have that, frequent separation or any-think else should ever make this love less mine. On the day, on which, I last wrote, as I mentioned, I intended doing, I went to Mrs. Fackler's to dinner, and we had a very fine dinner. I go to all these places, in order to see if seeing so many nice things before me, may not tempt an appetite, as I desire very much to fatten up before your return. But I fear my wishes, nor yours in this respect will be gratified, for not withstanding my health is very good, I cannot muster up an appetite. They do say however, that I have fattened some. I had intended writing to you last night, but Mother and myself went in to a hen-party - a five o'clock party at aunt Maria's. Bob being absent in Nashville, where he has gone to buy negroes, and uncle Robert gone, aunt M. invited only ladies, about thirty in number. We had supper between five and six, which was rather early, but it was a very pleasant party. Mother and I returned about nine o'clock. We got home in the rain and it has been raining ever since until within a half hour or more, and it now seems to be clearing off beautifully. We had our old church opened on last Sabbath, and I have rarely ever seen, the building so full. There was no meeting at the Cumberland or Episcopalian churches. Even Mr Donegan and wife were there. We had a good practical discourse from Mr Halsey, who came, here I presume, to recruit, and visit his parents, but was told, that we were starving and he must preach. In the midst of the whole, who should step up into the pulpit and stand behind the preacher for a minute or two, until ordered down or shown the way down by Mr Figures, who but Mother's little negro Lucy, which of course caused a titter and smiles. She said in her *long* way, that a man pointed that way. Pa said he was the cause of it, that Lucy entered the door and he pointed her towards the gallery, he was sitting in the free pew. We have at last, that is Pa has received a letter from Sis Sarah, in which she says, she was prepared for the neglect of her family, and that she does not think, that we all ought to wait for her to write letter for letter, and that Mother Barry and all the family are the loveliest folks she ever knew etc. etc. She is at present indebted to Ada, sister Mary and myself and was also to Pa until she wrote this letter. She does not so much as mention, that she has ever received letters from Ada and myself. She invites and insists that Pa shall come down and as many more as please. She said, she had seen a few days previous a little girl who looked, so much like little Sallie, that any one might have taken her to be crazy, that she kissed the child until she cried. Poor woman, I very much fear, that she will ever be as a thorn pricking the hearts, of those who would love her, if she would permit it. Her being removed far from us cannot remove the sting. It makes me sad, most sad. And Laura Erskine is certainly to be married on next Tuesday night. There is now no doubt of it. Tell Mr Kendall, that he had better come up anyhow, this summer and

court Miss Laura's friend, Miss Jane Clarke, that I think he might stand [a] chance, and she certainly would make him a first rate wife. Laura, I expect will leave soon, after marriage for the North. I understand, that even after Dr Erskine gave his consent, that it was some time before Mrs. Erskine could give hers. It is universally believed here, that Laura had the refusal, already, of Mr Kendall. Sallie and Ada will be bridesmaids, after Jane and Sarah Carpenteron. The girls have returned from Mr Lea's, where they had a very pleasant time and saw all the country beaux, among which numbered our three cousins. They are much in love with the affectionate, respectful and considerate manner of Mr and Mrs Lea towards each other. What have I said of our little ones. They are quite well. Sallie coughed a good deal last night, I suppose from taking a little cold, coming home late with us. She kissed her father dear and went to sleep with him in her arms. She has improved some in character, I think, of late. There is only one thing, which, I whip her for and that is some of her bad habits. Fearn cares nothing for anyone, only so far, as he can make use of them, to give him something to eat, or take him out of doors, walking or riding. He does not care much to ride inside of a carriage, but would rather be out with the driver. I send you kisses from our children and many from your affectionate

wife, your own,
Kate

And my *dear husband*, forget not that you promised me, that you would not go to the theatre on Sunday, and that you would not put any tobacco in your mouth. And if it would be the means, of taking you from your business and thus keeping you an instant longer from me, I would beg you not to go to the theatre at all. Give my love to Mrs Meux, Mr Martin, Greenfield, Goodrich, Oakford, and Mrs. Woodruff, the last of whom be certain to bring up with you. Will you not?

Please come home as quickly as you can, and whilst absent forget me not. Go to church when you can and don't neglect the reading of the Bible altogether. And God be with you, my own darling husband, for he alone can keep you from evil and preserve you from harm, and I would that you would pray to him and rely on strength from him alone. I must say, that a part if not all of this [is] miserably written, for I have a very mean ink, and wrote the first of it with a most miserable pen. Write as often, as you can to
your Kate

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Memphis 26th Nov 1852.

My Dear Kate

It was long last night after I had gone to bed, before I closed my eyes in sleep, my mind was wholly occupied in thinking of you;

in pondering over your very gloomy letter of blank date, which I rec'd yesterday morning, and which I reread just before retiring. You know how much I always encourage you to be cheerful; but, you little know how much it distresses me to know that you are not so. You were not only much in the blues, but were some-what in a scolding humor. But above all, it distressed me to see that you even suspected my integrity, in the excuse I had given for sending you such a hurried letter, as the one which you say afforded you so little satisfaction. I know what were your feelings; you *feared* that I had written simply to perform a duty, not to correspond with a loving wife. Well my dear wife, I have only to say, that, you sadly misunderstood my motives. I had written to you only two days before at Oxford; and, on that day, after finishing several letters of business, I looked at my watch, and found that I had a few moments to spare before the mail would close, and as you had complained of my not writing before upon my arrival here, I thought I would write a few lines merely to say that I was here and well. After telling me some things concerning yourself you say "I cannot write to you all my little sufferings, if you were here I might trouble you with them, and, even then would you get tired of hearing them."

When I read the above again last night I thought I would write to you, not to trouble yourself writing about yourself any more, but only write to me about my children. I felt mortified to think that you doubted the anxiety and interest I feel for you, in your present situation. Certainly, I would not have *begged* of you, to write me more concerning yourself, if I had not felt the greatest anxiety for you. But my dear wife I fear you will consider me as scolding; but I did not so intend. I wish if possible to cheer you up, and rid you of the horrible blues, which you unfortunately sometimes permit yourself to get into.

You know there is no one else from whom you can expect the same sympathy in your troubles and sufferings as from me. And I do assure you that as far as my nature permits me you always have that sympathy. Then cheer up, do not let envious feelings at the apparent happiness of others disturb your own peace of mind; rather compare your lot with that of those, whose sufferings and misfortunes in life are an hundred fold greater than your own. You ask, how I occupy myself after tea until bed time. I answer most generally, I go to my room and read or write. Occasionally, I meet with some friends, and spend the evening in their society. But let me again assure you, that I never forget you, matters not in what company I am. I send you by Doct Pickett, (brother in law of Gov Chapman) the breastpipe you wrote for; also "The Cabin and Parlor" a very good novel. I shall give up my trip up the Arkansas River, and go down to New Orleans, as soon as Hopkins returns. I will stay there a few days, and then leave for home. I shall try and be with you on the 1st of Jany at furthest and sooner if I can. If you will reply to this *immediately*, I will get it here but if you are going to put

it off "*several days*," why then direct your letter to New Orleans. If you want any thing purchased in New O. let me know. And now my dear wife I hope to hear that you have recovered your cheerfulness, and that, anticipating the pleasure of our being together before very long, will keep you cheerful. I am sorry to learn that you are growing so fat. Bless me, *a pair* would ruin me. Poor Sarah, I am sorry, she failed. I should like to see her very much, With a baby. I have half suspected that she was not happy myself. She has been writing to your cousin Priscilla at Nashville, of the bad treatment of her family, so cousin Sallie told me. In this respect she is certainly wrong if not foolish. Give my love to all. Kiss our little ones, and remember I am anticipating a more pleasant time with you this winter than usual, so take good care of yourself. Good bye.

Your affectionate
Husband
M. W. Steele

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Memphis 6th Jany 1853.

My Dear Kate

I reached here late last evening, in good health, excepting a cold. Mr Hopkins has just informed me that James Donegan is now on visit to Grenada to attend to the business which called me from home. I think it probable that I will go direct from here to N. O. although I [*cannot*] now determine, until I hear from [*the*] house. You know I am anxious to [*get back*] as soon as possible, yet I feel [*compelled*] to go to N. O. and see about [*the*] formation of a new firm to [*succeed*] the present one. If I do [*not*] connect with them I shall [*go to*] Texas, as I have before [*indicated*] to you. We would then be alone, to ourselves, and I would be more independent, in any business that I might engage in than I am now in or could engage in. I feel a strong presentiment that in Texas I can and will succeed. My only regret would be leaving your pa, and I know he will not consent, though he may not oppose. Of one thing I am perfectly certain, your situation or rather, your comfort will be greatly improved. I mean, that I will not engage, in any business that would require me to absent myself so much from home. But if, I can connect myself with the firm to succeed the present one, in a manner suitable to myself, I shall continue awhile longer in the Commission business. After writing to you in Nashville, I went [*on*] to Doct Shelby's. I did not [*see your*] aunt, she was in bed sick. Mrs [*Williams*] was there, and looked very well indeed. [*She has*] fattened a good deal, and has, she [*told me*] the advice and attention of a [*?*], recovered from those severe attacks [*of*] neuralgia. Mr Williams is in New Orleans, but she says, has not [*written*] to her for eight weeks, and she does not know whether she will go down or not. Gen'l Barron and Mrs B

are on a visit to Bayou Sara to see their grand child. Hopkin's family are all well. I will drive with them to day and stay their to night. Tell Maria that T Bibb Bradley is here, and was to have delivered a lecture last evening on the "True mission of woman," but could not get an audience. Hopkins family and Cal Fackler were the only persons there. I think it was shabby treatment to Tom. The request was made through the papers, signed by several friends, but even they did not attend. I have heard that he will make another effort to get an audience. I hope he will succeed. Cal Fackler is to be married on the 12th Inst, and will leave next day for Huntsville. Tell Bro John, if he should not come [*down here*], that he must be sane and give [*him a*] party. I went down with [*him*] last night to look at the rooms in [?] cabin of the boat I came [*on.*] He asked me, after seeing them [*if I thought*] there was room enough for [*two*]. I told him that if the weather was [*nice, it*] was large enough; that you and I could [*sleep*] comfortably in one of them. Hopkins has just entered, and requests me to give you his best love, and hopes you will improve through life as his wife has done.

I have written this hurriedly, and with the meanest pen that a mark was ever made with. I will now go out, and see if I can find you the bunch of braid of the kind wanted. Well my dear wife the braid cannot be had in this place, I will find it however, if it is in New Orleans. I will advise you in my next, where to write to me at, in the mean time direct answer to this here, care of A. M. Hopkins, and it will be forw'd to me. Say to Pa, that James D. has gone to Grenada Missi. I will write to him tomorrow. Give my love to all. Kiss the [*children*] for me.

Your Affectionate
Husband

M. W. Steele

P. S. You must [*not scold*] at the writing or penmanship of this.

M. W. S.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

New Orleans 22nd Jany 1853.

My Dear Kate

Although I wrote to you on yesterday, yet I promised to write you a short note again before leaving for Arkansas, and I do it the more cheerfully as I have just rec'd and read your dear letter of the 11th Inst, directed to me at Memphis. I am truly glad to learn that you do not suffer much now from cramps and, I hope you will be able to escape them when I *am again with you*. From my conversations with James Donegan, I am inclined to believe that our next house, will be composed of Atwood, James, myself and Judge Weakley in which event, I will doubtless have to live in Memphis. I am delighted to hear that little Sallie and Fearn continue well. Are you continuing to fatten? I have myself fattened a good deal since I left home. I

am sorry to learn that your Pa is not so well, and I hope my absence will not prevent his leaving at the time he expected. I would be glad if Sister Sally would come down here this winter, though the place does not appear to be very gay.

But I must close this note. I have nothing in the way of news to communicate. Kiss the children for me, and give my love to all. Take the best care of yourself for the sake of your husband, whose every thought is of you. Good bye.

Your affectionate
Husband.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Memphis 30th July 1853

My dear Kate

I reached here yesterday evening, and found your sweet and affectionate letter of 21st Inst in reply to my letter to you from Vicksburg. I had some-what expected to find a letter from you at Holly Springs. I also rec'd father's letter of 26th Inst in which he says you are looking a little worsted from chills. I am truly sorry that your good health, should have been interrupted by chills, and just too upon the eve of my departure for home. But I am in the same unhappy fix. I had a chill evening before last, quite slight, although I was for a few hours very sick. I have taken quinine freely, and feel this morning quite well. I am greatly provoked (and I am sure you will be as much so) at Uncle Tom Weaver's tardiness in meeting me here. I had written, and telegraphed him to be here on this 27th and upon my reaching here I found a letter from him dated 26th, acknowledging recp't of my letter but stating that he could not be here under ten days, and begging me to remain here. I absolutely feel not only provoked, but desparate, for he certainly knows that I am very anxious to get on home. I had intended staying two or three days here, but to stop ten days, is out of the question. I shall telegraph him to day to come right along, that I am exceedingly anxious to get home. I have not been able to find your letter to me, directed to care of Mr Hopkins. I will try and hunt it up. Mr H is not here. I saw Mr Seabrook last evening, he is well, and informed me that he had a letter from home mentioning that Aunt Polly was not in good health. I am sorry to hear that she is sick. Say to Mother that I staid all night at Aunt Lucinda's on my way here and found there Cousin Eliza Simpkins in wretched health (chronic affection of the bowels) on her way to the Springs. She reported her mother and sisters all well. On my way from Macon I stopped at a little place called Crawfordsville to see my old friend Austin W. Richardson, who is married and has charge of a flourishing school there. You will remember him, as one of a picnic party to [the] river when you were in Tuscaloosa. His wife was not at home, having left that morning on a visit to her father's. I had rather an

uncomfortable travel from Macon here, it was so oppressively hot. I am thankful that my health continued good up to my arrival here, and I do not think I shall be even sick here, I have not taken to my bed, and feel this morning much like a well man. If I could only get off for home, I should improve *every mile* on the way. I am growing very impatient to be with you "once again." Father mentioned that you thought Fearn was taking the whooping cough. I know it will annoy the little fellow greatly. I reckon I would not know little Lilla, to see her out from home. She has grown and fattened so.

I sincerely trust you may get rid of that lump in your breast, and that your fears may not be realized. I shall certainly go out to see Mrs Dunn before I leave for home, and if I have to remain and wait for Uncle Tom, I think I shall go out and see uncle John, and perhaps may extend my visit into Panola County, not however more than a days ride from from [*sic*] this place. I wish to see Mr Camis our ag't, here, before I leave, and he will not be back for a day or two, being now out in the country on a electioneering tour for us. But I hope yet [to] be with you by the 15th August. I gave a Mr Tremble a letter of introduction to brother Jno. He lives in Nashville and is a widower. I think his stop in Huntsville is mainly to see Sophy Lowe. I am greatly provoked to think that Mr Brady, blabbed what I said to him in reference to Sally and Mr Winter, and I hate it the more because I am not acquainted with Winter. Brady is an old acquaintance of mine, and when I first met him, I made some general inquiries concerning Winter and, afterwards the rumor of his engagement with Sallie was alluded to, when I told him that I had made inquiries of him concerning Winter, because I believe it likely a match would be effected between him and Sally, and he asked me when, it would come off, I told him not before October. I particularly requested him not to mention it, and not to think he should run and blab it to Winter's brother is enough to cause me to insult him when I meet him again. I should have answered your long and affectionate letter to me at Macon, at some of the towns which I passed through on my way here, but I did not stay at night in but one, Houston and there I had no opportunity to write. You had better answer this to me at Purdy, as I may get off from here some sooner than I now expect. If you do not speedily recover I think a trip to old Bailey's would do well, and if I can go there without much loss of time I will do so. But I think when I get home I can soon cheer you up, and restore your health. The accounts here from New Orleans represent the yellow fever prevailing dreadfully, and fearfully fatal, not one in fifty recovering. I have not heard any thing from Sis Sarah since I left. I reckon some of you have. Her physician expressed some fears to me, that she had some disease of the womb. Did you write to me at Vicksburg? If so, I will get the letter here before I leave.

Tell father he is altogether mistaken as to the age and size

of Uncle Tom's son Jno. He is about twelve, and quite a good looking boy. If I find him and myself too much for old Ben, I shall ship him aboard the stage, as I [do] not want any hindrance, whatever when I turn my head towards home. You must try and be at yourself, by the time I reach you. Keep cheerful and take good care of our little ones. Give much love to all.

Your affectionate
Husband

M W Steele

P.S. As usual I must apologize for this letter, the penmanship at least, but I am so impatient to be off for home that I can scarcely write. Good-bye. I hope to give you a kiss before very long.

M. W. S.

ANGELO STEELE to GEORGE STEELE^h

University of Ala. Dec. 26th 1853.

Dear Father,

As we have a very short Vacation, I find that it is necessary for me to write to you for *means* to pay for my Tuition and Board. I have tried to be as economical this Term as I possibly could be and I think I have succeeded, I have incurred no debts at all. The amount which I will need, will be about (\$60) Sixty Dollars. My Board and Tuition amounts to \$62.50 but I have \$20. now which, together with the Sixty dollars will be amply sufficient for me next Term.

There was a very heavy Snow on the 24th and it is now very cold. I hope it is cold enough for you to get *Ice*.

Mrs Childress and Family are all well. She requests me to remember her kindly to you.

My Love to Mother and all the Family and accept the same.

From your affect Son,
Angelo.

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE^e

Huntsville April 20th 54

My Own Dear Husband,

I received on yesterday your very welcome, and dear letter of the 21st, and would certainly have availed myself of the night time, my favorite hour, to answer it but was prevented by a late supper, and some household duties, and not feeling very well, I retired somewhat earlier than I would otherwise have done. I took a large blue pill last night to see, if I would be benefitted by it, but *alas* I fear, blue pills will not reach *my case at present*. I am apprehensive that I am in the first stages of the disease, of which, I presume, Mrs. Hopkins is now in reach of the goal. You, of all others, know my feelings, in view of this *consumption*. I was extremely

sorry to hear of Mrs. Hopkin's afflictions. Mrs. Watkins told me yesterday, that at the time Mr. H. received a telegraphic dispatch telling of the death of his little son, that he was very unwell, and being much fatigued from travelling, his friends in Charleston persuaded him not to start immediately. The next day after, he heard again from home, that his wife was sick. I wonder, if she will take his excuse for tarrying?

Ada had a letter from brother George a day or two since saying, he had received hers naming the time for their marriage, as sometime the first of June, and that he would get to New Orleans about the middle of May where he would tarry a few days, (I suppose to get his wedding suit) and then come straight on to Huntsville, reaching here the last week in May. Mother was telling me, that he wrote to Father that he did not wish to stay here long. I reckon you will meet with him in the City. I was out home yesterday evening - found Mother somewhat complaining, another of those headaches, with which she has suffered in the last few months. She told me, that Father was not so well, affected a good deal like he was before he went to Baileys, more so than he has been since he returned from there. He came home before, I left and told me he was not so well. He was complaining very much last Friday, when I was out there spending the day. Sallie is a great cause of anxiety to him at present. Poor Sallie! Mr. Winter wrote word to Father, the news coming to hand yesterday, that she was quite a sufferer, and that he had been waiting for the Physician to make an examination with the Speculum, before he would write. The examination, which he said was very painful had been made, and an ulcer found to be the cause of her suffering. I was shocked to hear this of Sallie, who when a girl had as fair promise of health, as any one, I ever saw. He mentioned that there was great engourgement of the womb, and said he would be up, as soon, as the physician thought it right for Sallie to travel. He said that Mrs. Greenfield, and Oakford had been exceedingly kind. I wish you would call on these ladies, when you go down, and tell them, that I insisted that you should. Say to them also, that we are all extremely anxious, that they would make us a visit this summer - they have both promised us to do so, Mrs. Oakford very often. They have been invited by all the family often, and all would be glad to see them. It has just been raining a few drops, after a few flouting clouds for some days past, and lightning in the North and West. It is thundering, and we may hope for more. Pa had a letter from Sis Sarah last week, finished by Mr. Barry, on account of Sis Sarah being taken sick, with pain in bowels and womb. She wrote that if Pa thought Baileys would improve her health, and the girls would go back with her to Old Point Comfort, that she would come out with Mrs Moore perhaps. Mrs. Clay wrote word, she would come with Mrs Moore. So goes the world. We hear of sickness and death all around, and yet live on as if all unconscious. Oh, my darling husband, I could be so much happier, if I thought you were

preparing for another world. Don't overlook your little Bible, whilst you are gone. The next chapter you had to read in our Sunday night course, was the 5th chapter of Mark. And, will you please go to church on the Sabbath, and maybe you can hear some preacher, who suits you better than Dr. Hall.

Have you seen cousin Sally Lyle as yet. Aunt Polly came by here, as soon, as she heard, I had received a letter from you. And have you written to aunt Lucinda to be ready to come home with you, or will you probably come up by Mobile. Mrs. Walker wrote word, that uncle Richard, doubtless finding it lonesome at home, had gone on to New York to meet Walker. Pa's boy Jim, whom, I believe Pa had sold to Mosely before you left, is at present in the jail at Winchester. It seems, he had found out, that he was sold and took his departure. He told, when asked to whom he belonged, that he was owned by Mr. Mosely, who was a little ways behind with the wagons. Mosely has sent for him.

Don't forget to purchase a brush for me like the one you got last summer. I think, you said you purchased it in Memphis. Have you come across my Daguerreotype, as yet. You see I was determined you should not forget me, if you wanted to. I put it between your shirts. I hope before this you have seen Mr. Carnes and are in a state of certainty, as to what you have to accomplish, ere I have the delight of seeing you again. I join most heartily with you in the wish that you may yet [come] through this term of partnership successfully and that we may yet, live together.

God be with you, my darling husband and preserve you in health is my prayer and soon restore you to your wife.

your own Kate

Do write whenever you can, if it is just to say that you are well, and thinking of me. It is an undoubted fact that Miss Sue Turner and Mr. Williamson are to be married next month on the 10th.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

New Orleans 20th May 1854

My Dear Kate

I have been here since monday last and as yet have no letter from you. I am much disappointed although I do not attach the least blame to you. Bro George left yesterday for home via Mobile. He expects to find Mr Winter and Sally in Montgomery, as we had the day before a dispatch from Winter inquiring if Geo had left, and if not to urge him to go that way that Sally was quite sick. Poor Sally, I feel great distress on her account, whilst it is a source of the greatest consolation to me to feel that I have a dear wife who, as yet, is free from those distressing diseases so common to females of the present day, and God grant that you may never fall a victim to any of them. I send by Bro Geo three Dresses for you, the muslin collars &c ordered, and also the goods to match the piece

sent me. It was not possible to find a silk muslin of the kind you ordered, so I was forced to select just such as I thought would hit your taste. I think them beautiful myself. I had the assistance of Mrs Coffee in making the purchases. You Huntsville people are under great obligations to her, in taxing her so heavy. She told me she was three days hard at work for Ada. You should try and discharge the debt by kindness to her family at least. I also send some shoes for the children, I could only find one pair of kid gaiters, such as you wanted for little Sally, and I fear that pair is too large. I send you a pair of worked slippers made here and said to wear better than that kind generally does. I send a hat for little Eliza; a plume for Maria and the frisettes for Sister Mary. You must keep the bills, as I paid for all and have not made any charge for them here. Mrs Levy is now making Maria's riding dress, but I do not think it will be done in time for me to take up with me. I feel quite sure you will be pleased with the dresses, as they are of very chaste colors, and such as you most admire. Mrs Coffee had sent your bonnet up with the articles bought for Ada. She showed me the kind she bought for you, it is all the rage here at this time. I hope you will have them all made up by the time I get home. Our business has been very unfortunate this season, and I am so much dissatisfied with the course Mr Atwood has pursued, that I shall insist upon rending it up. Our losses are very heavy, although I feel confident we can pay up. But it is hard to have the profits of four years labor thrown away by one foolish act. I am now examining into our business, and will write to your pa tomorrow. I have strong hopes that we will escape suspension, although there is great danger of it. Mr Atwood without any authority whatever loaned our acceptances to Kendall York & Co for \$30.000 - all which is a clear loss, and besides having greatly impaired our credit.

I think I will leave here in a few days, make a short stop in Memphis, and perhaps in Purdy and Florence, and then shall hurry to meet my best of wives. I have not yet made a call upon Mrs Oakford. I will try and do so although I don't feel inclined. Mrs Greenfield is not here. I saw Dr Meux yesterday. I have not seen the old lady and don't think [I] will. I hope to have letters from you tomorrow. I have [not] heard from you since the 6th Inst, and in your last you expressed the desire to have the time shorter between our letters. This is my third without having one from you. When does the wedding take place. Geo purchased all his tucks here. He looks very thin, and I don't presume matrimony will tend to fatten him any. I fear he will be a long time getting home on Sally's account. I trust father's health is better and also Mother's. I am anxious to hear whether your own fears as to yourself have any foundation or not. I hope not. I expect much pleasure, in being with you all this summer and I hope your health will not interfere with your own enjoyment. Answer this and direct to Florence care J H Weakly Esq. I long to be at home although I may have to delay

some time on the way. I am no nearer being in a condition to retire from business now than I was at the commencement; indeed I do not know that the concern will even pay back my capital. But I am not desponding, and you should not be so either. Kiss the little ones, and give love to all.

Your affectionate
Husband
M. W. Steele

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Huntsville June 22nd 54

My Own Dear Husband

I am at the beginning of the fourth day of absence, an absence which will be fraught with anxious fears on your account, as long, as it may continue. Nothing but a confidence in an all-wise overruling power, could keep me from the most miserable forebodings, that you might be snatched from me, before we should again meet. But God grant, that you may yet be spared, at least until you have made some preparations for that great and awful change through, which we have all to pass, so that we may have the hope, when parting forever in this world, of meeting at last in one far happier, never more to say goodbye. You will think perhaps on opening this that Kate has not written, as soon by one day, as you requested her, but when you hear her reason for deferring, you will readily excuse, I know. I went down to Mrs Jones to the burial of her daughter Lou, starting at seven o'clock. Pa would not let us have his horses and driver, on account of hay-making and so I sent over, to engage a seat in the carriage with Dr and Mrs Erskine. The Doctor went down on account of the sick, a son about fourteen, and Mrs Jones herself, who had a stroke of paralysis, when her son was buried last week. She is a most miserable looking object. She has buried three children in less than three weeks. She says the last was the worst blow of all - that, she could stand the death of her sons better far, than that of Lou, who was the greatest comfort of her life. Her son Dr Albert is with her at present and says, he will stay until they all get well. Of course, I came home too late to write by the time the mail closed on yesterday, and of course with a headache, after riding in the hot sun, and was lying down almost all the evening. Late in the evening, I was sitting up in my chair feeling so blue, that I determined to rouse myself sufficiently to go down to Sister Mary's. So taking Sallie and Fearn, I went down. As we started back it dropped a little rain. I thought however, that I could get home before it came down hard, but in spite of tugging and pulling Fearn over the rocks, until almost broken down, the shower came on so heavily, as we got up to Mrs Facklers, that I had to call in and get an umbrella.

Monday, soon after dinner Mr. Winter called in to say good bye.

You will have seen him before this reaches you. I sent your cloak, which I spied soon after you left, and was distressed to see, you had left behind. Mr Winter looked, as though he had been shedding tears, at parting from Sallie. He said he did not know how we could stand parting so often. I told [him], I could not stand it, but was compelled to do so anyhow, altho I believed, that it kept me poor. There is no doubt but that it is wearing me out. Pa and I drove out to the plantation in the buggy, the same evening, taking Fearn with us, and Eliza too, as far as Mother's. I stopped a minute to put Eliza out. Mother came down from Sallie's room to the door, and took her: she said Sallie was "taking on terribly." I happened to mention it to Pa when I got in the buggy, (for which I know, altho innocently done, Sallie could not that me did she know it) [*sic*] and he thought, of course, that it was, all stuff, nonsense etc. that he had been much disappointed in Sallie since her marriage. I had the advantage over Sallie this time, for you left me, at night, and betrayed myself only by not being able to answer, when Pa bid me goodnight from the other room. He wished to know the next morning, if I had cried all night. I suppose you had no time for tears or sad reflections, with your "fair charge" to attend to I reckon. If you had wished ever so much to give yourself up to thoughts of home, and your wife whom you had left, that you would have been kept from it by such a rattle box, and giggler, as I have an idea that your charge was. Did you think of me with much of sorrow at parting. Yes, I know you did. I hope you will be successful in your business, even more so than you could dare expect, and get it speedily straitened sufficiently to return home, and stay some time. Whilst you are making new arrangements, do not forget an arrangement, to move me to *some spot*, where I can be nearer to your field of work. Pa would be for keeping me tied here in spite of everything, but let me *die, I say, rather* than live on, as I have lived since my married life. If you can enjoy it, or even stand [it], I cannot. Miss Kellogg and company, amongst which, was Maria Watkins left on Monday. Mr Winter had to go down in a buggy, on account of the crowded coach. Pa gave him a note of introduction to them. Sallie however said, that he expressed a wish to remain unnoticed by them, before he left her, but of course of this Pa knew nothing. I called on Pa night before last to speak to Laura, who tried to see how indifferent she could appear when spoken to by me. She had carried the children up stairs to bathe them late in the evening and when they came down, they spoke of something which had scared them, and Sallie said Laura had scared them. When Pa called her in the sitting room to him, she moved so slowly that, he got up and jerked her by the hair and gave her some pretty good boxes. She went off after supper and staid until late, but after trying to put on a few more airs the next morning without getting any notice from me, she recovered. Did you tell Mr. Novell, that we would want her after this month. I invited Judge and Mrs Weakley on Monday night,

but she declined on the plea that they would have to travel the next night, and she wished to sleep, that night. They had not however left on yesterday. Miss Easley and Lambert were married on Tuesday morning by a Catholic priest, the ceremony commencing at five in the morning, and continuing until six. I send kisses from the children. And that God may be with you, keep you from sin, and preserve you in health in the prayer of your devoted wife

your own Kate.

Father and Sallie were better the last I heard. I intend trying to get out in a day or so. I hope no one will get a glimpse at this writing for I never wrote with a worse pen. Remember me to Jim Donegan.

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Oak Place June 28th 54

My Dear Husband,

I received on yesterday your letter for which I had been so anxiously looking. I read it over hastily and then sought my room, where I read two or three times more, looking for the words of sweet affection from which my heart seeks the sustenance necessary for its existence, but in spite of my reading and my tears, it seemed a cold, indifferent letter, merely a short business affair. I read it again last night the last thing before going to bed, and again this morning, but I believe it is the same. You did not mean, that it should be so, oh no! It came involuntarily, as out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. One thing, I was glad to be assured of, that you are in good health, and I hope you may be able to keep it up, down the river and all the time until you get back safely. You speak of Aleck Lanier's reports about cholera and yellow fever in New Orleans. I have heard from every other source this summer that the city was very healthy, which consoled me, at the thought of your having to go there this summer, and Sallie had a dispatch today from Mr. Winter saying, that it is healthy.

You see I have at last gotten out to Oak Place, leaving them a small family in town. I came out on yesterday. My first night was spent in sleepless, nervous tossings from one side of the bed to the other, and in consequence feel anything but comfortable this morning. Notwithstanding, I was up quite early this morning about half after five or earlier.

There are some cases of scarlet fever in a mild form in town, one on Sunday at Mrs. McClelland's, and last week there was one at Mr. Neal's. Pa said yesterday that, he would bet that three days would not pass before some of my children would be sick out here, and I much fear they will, for I have no one to watch them and keep them out of the sun, and from green fruit. The weather has been excessively hot for some days past, I never suffered more from heat in my life.

Sister Mary and myself went down on Monday to see poor Mrs. Jones. I carried her some nice jelly which I made in the morning. We found her, and her son both much better. She talked of her children, crying, almost all the time, that we were there, and begged several times that we would excuse, her want of control over herself. I wrote you, that I had gotten rid of Laura. Father says, he tried to hire Margaret for me, for the rest of the year, but Mr. Bibb says she has an infant only six weeks old.

Will you, if you please, have a good daguerreotype taken of yourself for me, and send it up if you can get a good opportunity. I have looked in vain, for the one, I had. I strongly suspect that Ada has taken it off. Do it the first thing, and you will oblige me much. And when you have it taken look *at the instrument*, for then, when I look at it, you will appear to have your eye on me. Could you not throw off business cares long enough to think of something *agreeable* to you and have a *kind* expression. Don't think of *your last visit home*. Hear it was thoughts of this, which dictated your last letter, although had you not mentioned it, I could never have imagined, that you left with any unpleasant feelings. *My* heart was filled at our parting and has been ever since with the pain of absence. Had it not been for this one expression, I could have passed by any appearance of indifference in your letter, by accounting for on the score of troubles in business matters.

29th. Varying from my usual custom of late I commenced this one day and put off finishing until the next. I rode in town yesterday evening in the carry-all, to look for a book, *Mat Ward's Trial*, which Judge Wallace had sent to me twice for. I am astonished that you did not leave me some charge concerning it. What did you do with it anyhow? I could not find it anywhere. I was driven in town by Wash. who hearing me tell Pa, when I got out of the carry-all, that I had come in to look for *Mat Ward's Trial*, drove home without me, telling them when he got back, that I was looking for Mas Matt, and added on without any foundation, that I had told him to drive home. I sat on the front steps until dark waiting for the carry-all and at last could come to no other conclusion but that I was left, so Pa ordered the carriage. I found them all in a state of bewilderment, not knowing what to think, when I got here.

Poor little Eliza was quite sick with her bowels, yesterday evening and last night, and has been this morning. Sallie, who had gone to bed with Sue, when I returned last night says, she had the stomach-ache last night, but I have heard nothing of it this morning. Fearn, I believe is very well, and very much taken up with "Bud," as he calls him. Father is better, and old Sallie I think is getting better also. And now good bye, my dearest, for notwithstanding all, you are my dearest, the dearest of all others to me, still - and when you cease to be, then earth will no longer contain a tie strong enough, (I hope) to bind me to its vanities, and sordid cares. God the almighty, and merciful be with you, and grant

unto you that "peace which the world can neither give, nor take away." I send kisses from our little ones.

your aff. wife

your own Kate

Write to me, and if you can, tell me that you *love me*. I will not write again until I hear from you where to direct my next.

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Huntsville July 7th 1854

My Own Darling Husband

I know not where or how to begin to tell you, the pleasure caused me, by the reception of your precious letter of the 29th, received today. Although my anxiety to hear from you had reached a pretty high mark, yet my desire to get a letter from you, so that I would know, where to direct this, exceeded the former feeling. The mails are certainly very tardy in their movements. This morning, I was up in Sallie's room when a letter, a magazine, and a paper from her husband were brought up to her, and seeing the pile brought in, I thought, I had letter amongst them and when told not, I could not keep back a few tears. They were dated the 28th and so I concluded, and it seems rightly that you must have reached the city too late on that day to write to your anxious wife. After having stifled back the tears that I could restrain, and wiped away those which would come, an hour or so afterwards, Angelo whom I had requested to go in for me, and who, I thought, had already come, and was the bearer of Sallie's, came up and as good fortune would have it, brought the wished for letter. If I had have been in town, I would have received [it] in time to answer by the returned mail. I much fear you will not receive this until you return home. I delivered your message to Pa, whom I saw today. Pa has been out several times of late, in the last few days, to see our little snow bird, who has been sick ever since, I came out, and indeed before, and in the last five or six days in a very weak state, for three days she has been languid lying stretched out, and sleeping, generally, on the floor. The weather has been so warm, that she will sleep nowhere else, either on the bed, or lap, either day or night. She can only be induced to get up occasionally, when some gentleman friend makes his appearance and offers to walk her about, and sometimes, she will fret considerably, if they will not do so. Brother John has sought the cool (if cool there can said to be anywhere) of the country during the last week, and Eliza taxes him, often more than he desires, and sometimes gives him occasion to change his clothes. How I have wished, you could be here to perform this task for the little thing, which you always do so willingly, particularly in sickness. Now, I do not write you this to cause you, the least uneasiness, for I do not consider her at all in danger. I have not felt the least uneasy myself, excepting one or two

days when she threw up every-thing, she took upon her stomach, and then it was, and only then, that I sent for the physician. She has had more appetite, fewer actions, and looked brighter today, and I was in hopes she will get better, although I have no doubt she will be more or less sick, all through the summer. Uncle Robert says, he reckons, I will have to take her to the mountain. One thing, her sickness has made her talk a little more - when she gets impatient, she astonishes me occasionally - today, she wished for tea and I called to a servant, to bring her some water, and she cried out "no" distinctly with an impatient look, and the other day, she told Mother "go long" and frequently says "I won't." Very often, I get down by her, when she is awake, and call her sweet etc. and she makes a motion with her lips, and puts up both little hands, on my cheeks, and pulls me down to kiss. She is a right sweet little patient. I only wish you were here to see her, and help nurse her. She cried because Pa wished to give her up yesterday, and would leave him only to go to Father. Sallie and Fearn keep well. I have not seen or heard of their eating any green fruit since, I have been out here. I gave Fearn a sound whipping today for crying. I ought to have given Sallie one too, I reckon, and am not so sure, but I shall yet, for going outside of the yard, which I have positively forbidden, and going over to Polly's house, which we found out by her returning, with her clothes nearly torn off, by the dog. Mother insists, that the fright, she received was all sufficient, without the whipping. I still have headaches, although not so severe, as I had. But I can't get myself aroused enough to take exercise, alone. Father had given me two buggy rides. Every morning, I think well, I *will* take some exercise today, and every day passes without much being taken. Father says it is too hot to think of walking, and as you are not here to walk with me, I am rather willing, to fall into this opinion myself.

Ellen and Sue have been quite disappointed tonight, after having dressed up for a party at Mrs. Horton's, that a rain should have come up and kept them at home. They have had warning since sundown by lightning and thunder. It is now, after ten, and has ceased raining, and Sue is extremely vexed that Ellen would not go, as she wished to do. Last night they went to Dr. Wharton's to the wedding of his daughter, who was married to Bruckner. Next week, Miss Watkins and Mr. Spotswood are to be married, and in about two weeks Miss Carrie Hinkle and Mr. Ben Matthews. It is currently reported and believed, even by the girls at home, that Sophy is engaged at last to Nick Davis. To think, that Sophy should come [to] this at last. Bankhead, I understood, went on some weeks, and I suppose by this time is married to a young lady in Virginia. Well, my dearest, as it is getting late, and I rise these times at five or half after, in the morning, I must close, until morning, bidding you a sweet goodnight, hoping that God will be with us both. And could I but have one kiss, and lay my head, where I take so much

pleasure in placing it, with my husband's love beating warm and true for me, then would I not be happy. A pleasant day, I wish you, if not comfortable weather, a comfortable one in the way of good health, and business matters.

Father's health is still improving, last night he said he did not rest so well, having taken a long ride with Gen. Patterson (I think, he said) away down in the country, which occupied the day, and drank mean water etc. He used our buggy, with a top to it.

But poor Sallie, alas for her, she could hold on no longer. She had a miscarriage on Monday last. She had herself carried down stairs on Saturday night, on Sunday morning, and again on Sunday afternoon came down, as far as my room, having started down the steps alone, when I was going up, and perceived her, and assisted her. She complained of heaviness in the lower part of her stomach, and at late bed time she had herself carried up to her room, having felt some pain. I went up to her room, before going to bed to see how she was, found her still complaining, but thought it would pass off, and so retired. I had no sooner however got to bed, than she sent for me, and I went up and did not come down again until morning. After doing all, I could think of, and she still was not relieved, I send down for Mother. We kept up until day light, when I told Mother I thought the doctor ought to be sent for. He came and tried by applying cold water, as I had done in the night, to her, giving her laudanum injections, and morphine internally, until dinner time to keep it off. The pains then getting very bad, he made an examination, and concluded to bring the thing on as speedily as possible, as Sallie by this time had a high fever, and was much prostrated. She had a big boy, almost as large as Eliza was, I do believe, and the doctor thought it was only three and a half months old. He said, he did not see how she made out to carry it, as long, as she did, and that he thinks probably, the miscarriage at this time was the very best thing, which could have happened to her, and that he thinks it would have been inevitable at some time. Sallie said afterwards, that she would not care if she could not see Mr. Winter again for six months, and that she does think men are so selfish to bring such pain on their wives, for a little pleasure to themselves. She much dreads the idea of getting so again, when he returns home. Yesterday morning, however, we all thinking Sallie was trying to sleep, and knowing how the least noise disturbed her at that time, left her, a little longer than she thought we should. On going up, we found her crying, and much vexed, and wishing much that Mr. Winter was here to give her his "kind attentions." She distressed Mother greatly, for she has nearly broken herself down for her. Well, my dearest, I can truly say, there has never been a time yet, when I felt as though, I wouldn't be but too glad to see you. Sallie has been doing very well, all the week since her mishap, and been very happy at the thought of being relieved, and at herself again so soon. My tears of deepest sympathy flowed over

her freely on Monday, and when she got to the worst I thought it most wise and prudent, that I should leave. Your uncle was here this week, coming down one evening, getting here at night, and leaving early the next morning. He said Margaret was still very ill having relapsed, and flighty all the time. He does not think she will ever recover, says, as soon, as she gets able, if she ever does, that he will take her to Winchester Springs. I must thank you for your telegraphic dispatch, for you know how acceptable it was to me. Sallie has crowed considerably, about the number of letters, and then the dispatch, she had received from her husband. But it made no impression upon me, for I knew well, that it was not your fault, that I had had no letters. And now my darling husband good bye, write whenever you can. I send kisses from our little ones. And that God may watch over you, and soon restore you to your loving and loved ones is the prayer of

your devoted wife.

Eliza is still better this morning. I wish you would burn *this half sheet*, after you have read it as much as you wish.

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Huntsville June 23rd 1855

I have at last a chance to seat myself after a long week of silence, towards my darling husband, a week mountain high with care, toil and labor. I commenced hard work on Monday morning and have been on my feet from morn until night. I never was more completely done up in my life, for added to the trials of the day, I had, but little refreshment in the way of sleep at night, George being quite unwell all the week. He has had St. Anthony's fire for two nights past. Notwithstanding, he has been pretty lively during the day, as a general thing excepting one day, he was fretful all day, would stay with no one at all, but Harriet or myself. Old Dine has been very complaining, and I had to nurse and let Harriet bake cake and wait on sister Mary and those at work. Sister Mary says, well she is glad it is all over and through with, but I tell her, it is not all through with me yet, for I have the house to clean up and straighten up the store room pantry, etc. etc. Maria is married anyhow, and I think, as Sophy said, not married yet either. She does not know all. She was married, as she expected on Thursday night, and after all our work and preparations, it was a stormy bad evening - however although not half, who were invited could come, we had a good many present. Many of the ladies had the dresses and shoes drenched coming from the carriage to the house. Some of our nearest neighbors say that they staid dressed up until a late hour in hopes of coming, but could not venture. Ellen came, but Mother did not. Mother was here today to call on the bride, and staid to dinner. Eliza got into one of her frets, and I gave her a whipping until I conquered her. Mother brought in a letter from Father to

brother John. He wrote that he arrived at the Springs Thursday morning about 11 o'clock, very much fatigued although he made very easy drives - that he had not succeeded in getting a good room, and that he thought that his prospect was bad for getting one, that everything there is running fast to ruin - the fall is also miserable, but Duffey had promised to have things more comfortable. He said that he found a Mr Haywood from Tuscaloosa, who had left, but that Dr. Guill was there, visited him several times a day - told him that he knew you and brother John well. He said that he had not tried the water, he supposed long enough to test them fully, that the swelling had subsided somewhat, and that his kidneys were acted on, but to make the waters act on his bowels, he had to assist them with a little salt or some thing. He mentioned, that, he had always intended giving Maria a nice party, when she married, that Ellen, and I must look for a present for her something appropriate. You know he expressed his wish on this subject before he left, and Ellen went up before she was married and sent down several articles for me to decide between, and she gave her a very pretty pair of silver candlesticks, which were much wanted. Mollie Garth sent her a tête a tête, of china. She and Mrs Sykes and Winston, and Dr. Dancey were the representatives of the family. They say the old General never has witnessed the marriage of one of his children, and did not come over until the next day. He came down yesterday evening and took tea. He could not so much as kiss Maria, and as soon as he finished his supper, he jumped up and left the house *sans ceremoni*. Pa however had left before. They had sent for him twice from the church, where he gave the diplomas to Miss Kellogg's graduates. They had an address, which delighted the audience, from Dr. De Shields. Pa was captivated - says that it was full of wit and eloquence, that in giving the diplomas afterwards, he felt that he would break a spell by any remarks of his. They all adjourned about nine to the seminary, where the young men gave a ball. Everything went off finely - the hall was elegantly lighted up with chandeliers, and looked beautiful - of course, I am only mentioning, what others tell me, as I could not possibly have gone. I could not even go to church tonight, and I must soon retire now, for I am completely used up. I was introduced to two gentlemen friends of yours who were here the night of the wedding - Mr. Walker, and Mr. Tate - the latter informed, that you had given out the idea of going to New Orleans, and I have been anxious to hear from you again, to know the truth. Mr. Tate said he saw you on the 19th and your dear letter, which came to me day before yesterday was dated the 18th. I do not at all fancy the idea of your going down anyhow. I shall not rehearse to you any of Mr Walker's remarks, as you have once given me my orders, on this subject Cousin Sally Lyle and Mr. Seabrook arrived on the evening and were up here. She says, you came to her room one evening [?] sweating and blowing and that she [was] seated in a rocking chair before the window with a

fan. You will begin to think that my letters are "short" and maybe "sweet," but I must commence preparations for bed, and as my earnest wish I will beg of you to try and spend your Sabbaths profitably to your soul, in meditating on the character of God, of the salvation, which he has offered us, and the simple conditions of that salvation. Will you not my own precious husband bestow some thoughts upon it and will you not begin to pray. Go to church, read at least a chapter in your bible on Sunday, and oh may God *be with you*. I send kisses from our children and the devoted love of
your affectionate wife.

I have written hurriedly and most of the time with unceasing chatter in the room.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

New Orleans 30th June 1855.

My dear Kate

I had hoped before writing again to have the pleasure of acknowledging the receipt of one of your dear letters, but I am not much disappointed knowing how little time you have had for writing, and indeed for even thinking of your absent husband. I trust however to find a letter from you in the morning when I come to the Office. I am preparing to leave here on Monday (2nd July) for Jackson Missi, and shall hurry from there to Memphis as soon as I can accomplish my business, which this time is chiefly with Dr Watkins. I feel so much incensed at his course towards us that I shall have but few words with him and I expect those few will sound strangely in his ears. I shall instantly put our claims in suit if he does not comply with my demands. I shall not remain long at Memphis, but get through and start towards home. I will have to go by Purdy to see after some delinquents there.

Business is now dull here, and but few strangers in the city. The old cry of the news-boy "here's the *Picayune* and *Delta*" is the first that greets my ears of a morning. Mrs Greenfield and Mrs Oakford have left. Mr G is still here and speaks of paying a visit to Huntsville with his family this summer. I wish they would. We have fine peaches, pears and all kinds of melons in abundance. I am trying however to redeem my promise to be prudent and I therefore eat sparingly. I believe the city is free from epidemics, although there are a few cases of cholera and fever. Our business, is dragging along slowly and will require some time to close up entirely. I fear we will have nothing left after paying our debts; indeed I will be satisfied to get out even. I must then make a new start, and try and profit by my dearly bought experience. I am quite anxious to hear from father, and from your dear self and our little ones as it is now two weeks, since I have received your only letter since I left home. I hope you have recovered from the fatigue and bustle of the wedding, and trust you will be able to take

some exercise, and pick up a little flesh. Could you not get out in the country and spend a few days with Mother.

Dick Winter left here a few days before I arrived. He is going to continue in the commission business another term, and will make his home at Canton. They will leave for Virginia, next week, going up the Ohio. Mr Carroll told me that Sally's health had greatly improved. I have just this moment read a letter written by your pa under date 23rd, acknowledging receipt of my letter from Memphis apprising them that I would come here, and written a day after I wrote to you to same effect. He mentions that Maria was married on 22nd. How was this, I thought all was arranged for 21st.

He also advised that you were all well and that father had been heard from and was doing well. I shall have all the news when I get yours, which I know is now on the way. You must direct your reply to this to me at Memphis. I shall write you from Jackson, and perhaps again on monday morning from here. Give love to all and a hearty congratulation to Maria and Mr Garth. Kisses to the children. Good bye.

Your affectionate
Husband

M. W. Steele

Since closing my letter my dear wife, your letter of 23rd has been handed to me. It was not put in our box at the time of opening the mail, or I would have rec'd it at the time your pa's was brought in. I had thought it rather hard that you had not written, but I did not complain for I knew full well the labour and trouble that had been upon your hands. I suppose the Mr Walker you saw was Sam'l Walker of Memphis, but I did not see him whilst in Memphis, and I do not see why Sam Tate should have told you that I was not coming down here, for he knew that I was. I was truly delighted to hear that father had somewhat improved in health and shall hope to hear of his continued improvement. I trust you will soon recover from your fatigue. Has Berenice got well. I hope she has at least got over her crossness. How comes on Sarah and Miss Pattie Barry. And you had a stormy night for the wedding. Well I hope it was an omen of a prosperous voyage for Maria through life.

I trust our little George has got over his sickness, and will begin to grow. How comes on old Fearn and Sally. You must try and keep them straight. I am sorry Eliza is so self willed and high tempered, but I reckon she will get right after awhile.

Well again good bye.

Affectionately
Your husband
M W S

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Vicksburg 4th July 1855.

Though far away from you my dear Kate on this the greatest day of our country's history my thoughts and hopes are of your dear self and ours, and I have seized this the first opportunity since reaching here to assure you of my safety and continued good health.

On my [trip] up from the wharf I met a party of ladies who at once hailed me as "Brother Matt," and I verily believe had I pressed it I might have had a kiss and hearty embrace. You will of course understand that the ladies refer'd to were Kattie and Jane Grey Bradford, who each had an arm of Gen'l McMacken of hotel notoriety. Behind them followed Robinson and his wife and Mrs Richardson upon whose cheeks the big drops of perspiration told how uncomfortably it was to be forced to propel her own self along. After reaching my hotel and ordering a room Gen'l McMacken came in, and taking me by the arm walked me a few paces, remarking that he had not walked with ladies to the boat for many a day, but in the present instance he could not decline the pleasure, "as the one upon my right arm is soon to become my daughter in law." Ah said I, does she marry your son - no he replied but my son-in law who is widowed, having lost his wife about five years ago. Anselm I think he called him. Miss Jane Grey was the young lady alluded to. They *are* all now on their way to Huntsville. Why I should be particularly designated as Bro Matt by them I have never clearly understood.

I expect to get off for Jackson this evening, and be back on saturday to take a boat for Memphis.

I hope I shall meet with Winter and Sally in Jackson, as they are to go up on the *R J Ward*, which will be here Friday and I expect they will reach Jackson tomorrow to take the cars. James Donegan came with me as far as the mouth of Red River, on his way up Black river to attend to some business. I am anxious to be at home. I know you will not take much exercise in my absence, and I am quite certain that you will not have the pleasure of many rides in the buggy. I hope all is now quiet with you at home, and that the house-hold cares are not so irksome as to annoy you. Maria has of course crossed the Jordan, and perhaps tasted of the fruit. How comes on Sarah? I hope she has had a pleasant time as well as Miss Pattie Barry. I think if I was there I could at least destroy the perpendicularity that must prevail amongst you at this time. What is Brother John at? Nothing I fear. I shall expect letters from you at Memphis. As yet I have had but two. I hope mine have been rec'd by you in good time.

The weather continues warm, and I find it very uncomfortable travelling, but I am living in the increased hope, that I shall soon quit this constant running away from home. I feel that I could be supremely happy, if so situated as to be with you all the time, and in a snug home of our own. All which I shall strive to bring about more than ever. I shall hope to hear that father's

health has improved, in my next letter from you I sincerely hope he may yet become restored to good health. I shall also hope to find my pet sister Berry in good health and pleasant humor when I again reach home. I may write you again from Jackson, if not I shall not write until I reach Memphis. I hope you have had time to pay Mrs Graham a visit concerning my shirts. I told her that the collar and waistband of the one made were rather large and instructed her to make the waistband square. See that the bosoms are neatly made &c.

Give much [love] to all. Kisses to the children and believe me as ever

Your devoted husband
M. W. Steele

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE

Huntsville July 9th 55.

My Own dear husband,

I hasten to answer your dear letter, which it was my good fortune at last to receive this morning, and most welcome it was, for I had been looking for one from you, for a week past. The one from Vicksburg did not come at all, and I felt sure that you must have written from there or Jackson. My uneasiness would have been worked up to an extreme, from not hearing from you by letter, had not Catty Bradford seen you at Vicksburg, and so I knew you were safe that far. I have been anxious to write to you but knew [not] where to write to, not knowing, that you had to go out of your way home, after reaching Memphis, and return to that place. You know, you merely wrote me from New Orleans, that you would go to Jackson, then to Memphis, stop at Purdy a few days, from which I inferred you were on your way home, and night after night counted up the time and thought, you would be here by the last of this week, but Pa happening to hear me express my opinion or the point of your arrival read me a part of your letter to him saying that, you had accounts enough to occupy you until the last of this month. Still, I could not imagine where you were going, and did not dream, that you would have to return to Memphis, after leaving it. If I had received your letter from Vicksburg, I should have felt very sad to have thought of your absence continuing until the middle of August, for it seems a long time to look through to the first. You will miss seeing Maria and Mr. Garth, and I fear Sis Sarah also, for she is expecting Mr. Barry this week, and does not think he will be able to stay more than a few days. Pa may or he may not wait for your return before he goes to Blount. D. Matthews and his party got off the night I wrote you and promised to write after they had been there two or three days. The day after they left Pattie Barry and myself with Harriet and the children went out to Mother's, Sis Sarah taking the keys until my return. I staid until

Saturday evening and then with regret came back. I never enjoyed a holiday more in my life than those three days. Sis Sarah and Maria came out on Friday evening and took tea with us. Maria would have staid all night, but was afraid Mr. Garth, who [had] gone over to Decatur on business might return that night. Father took tea with us and seemed in pretty good spirits, as he was all the time, I was out there. He was and is yet stronger, than before he went to the Springs, but Saturday night he did not rest so well, and his feet and ankles swelled again, and yesterday he was feeling very unwell. He came in this morning and came down here to hear from you and to see me about other matters - he had stopped and Pa's office [*sic*] and knew I had a letter from you. He told me, when I came in, Saturday, that he would like to hear from you, that he wished to write to you the next day and I promised to let him know by Albert. He told me he was better this morning, and that I must say to you, that he would have written to [you] yesterday, but was too unwell. Pa and Mr. Garth went out to see him yesterday evening. He was engaged in town about that case in court all the week. He says it is pretty well settled, but they talk of taking it up to Supreme court. Father speaks of trying the mountain - says he will take Mother up in the morning early, they will stay all day and see about arranging things, that he will go up and try it a week and see, if he improves, and having heard me say, that I would like [to] spend the summer up there, (at one time I thought maybe little Georgy's health might require it) he came down to see, if I would be willing to go up. He told me, whilst I was in the country that he would go up there to spend the summer, if I would go up and keep house for him. I told him today, that nothing could please me better, but that [I] was afraid the ride would be rather too much for you. He said, he hadn't thought of that. He is in some trouble now about Ellen's case. He found a letter here from Mr. Tracy, when he returned from Blount, and did not open it until yesterday. He knows nothing of Mr. Tracy scarcely, not so much as personally acquainted. Ellen had a letter at the same time from Mr. Tracy, and has not answered it, as she told him, she would not write until Father had sanctioned their engagement. If you should happen to see any one from Macon Georgia, you could speak of Mr. Tracy, of the Comer family, that Lawson Clay married into. Father consulted Pa this morning, and Pa went over to see Lawson Clay, (whom he seems to think very honorable, but I do not feel quite so certain) it was concluded, that Lawson should write to his Father in law. Please get for me in Memphis two bottles of the Extract of Peach - it comes in little flat vials, for seasoning ice cream. I am anxious to get one vial to return to cousin Eliza, for some she gave me. How I wish that we could have been together on last Friday - little did we think that day seven years ago, that we would have to be separated as much, as we have been, and how earnestly do I wish that it may have an end [to] these separations,

and that it may [be] so that you can engage in some business, which will not take you off. How independent Mr. Garth is - can lie when he pleases, and as he pleases. They speak now of boarding next winter, at Mrs. Fleming's perhaps. I told Maria, it was not worth while for her to make arrangements, until we had determined, what we would do. She and Mr. G. have gotten to be quite old fogies. Sis Sarah has been in distress for more than a week past on account of Mr. Barry accepting candidacy for legislature in Mississippi.

The children are all, I believe quite well now. George had two teeth to cut through last week, the first one making its appearance, the morning after I wrote you he had none. He seems better since. Sallie had headache for two or three days last week and fever at night, but quinine stopped it. I fear you have been sick since writing to me. I dislike to hear of your bowels being out of order. Do come on home as soon as you can. I feel almost beside myself at times to be near you, or rather to have you near me. I would that it was the last time. Sis Sarah says she wishes you were here. I hope you received my letter written on last Tuesday, before you left Memphis. I send kisses from the children, and you well know that the best and purest and deepest of my own heart's love is yours. May God bless you my darling husband and keep you in health and preserve you from sin. May we yet have some happiness

your devoted wife.

I send you a sample - please look and see, if you can find any goods, just like this, for making underskirts, only instead of the stripes, which you may observe in the piece running up and down the cloth, they shall run across it. I wish about fifteen yds. if you can find it. Give my love to Mrs Fackler, Hopkins and Co. Write often. I will write to Purdy in a few days - say on Friday.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Memphis 17th July 1855.

My dear Kate.

Since writing my last to you I have rec'd your dear favour of 11th Inst. I know that I led you to believe that I would be longer reaching here than I was and therefore do not in any way complain that you did not write earlier. I missed your last letter to me at New Orleans. I suppose it will be forw'd to me here. I have some hopes of receiving one from you this evening. I was quite sick two days last week with disordered bowels, and for awhile apprehended something like an inflammatory attack, but I am now entirely well and will leave this evening down the river for Friar's point, to be gone three or four days. On my return I will spend a day or two here and then go up to Purdy, from which I shall invoke the spirit of good luck to bear me with all speed to my good wife. I saw my Aunt Lucinda Weaver yesterday and she was going up

to North Alabama next week, but on learning that I would be going up so soon, has concluded to wait and go up with me. I regret exceedingly that there exists some unpleasant feeling on the part of father towards my Aunt which will forbid her going at once to Oak Place. I believe I have before told you the cause of this estrangement; her marriage with her cousin. I have always coincided with father in his views of that matter, but as he could not prevent it, and a long time has elapsed since and she is now a widow I would be glad to see him forgive and forget. You may tell mother of her expected visit, and she may bring it to father's notice if she thinks it proper. My Aunt goes up mostly on business, and expects to make her stay with her Uncle Geo Jude. I would be glad at any rates that mother would have her carriage sent in to take her out to Mr Jude's upon her arrival, of which I will try and advise the day. I shall also try and let your Aunt Lucinda know when I go up, so that she may if she desires go up. I received yesterday a letter from Dr Fearn, in which he mentioned seeing you that morning in the country. I am glad to learn that you are trying to take a little recreation and hope you may be able to make a long stay in the country. He also mentioned father's return, and that his health was somewhat improved. I am sorry that you cannot recover some flesh, you must from your account be thinner than ever before. But as your health keeps good I am content. I trust the country air will give some impetus to the growth of our little George. If you will give immediate answer to this, directing to Purdy I will get it there.

I am really more anxious to get through my business and get home I believe than I have ever been, and it will require very urgent business to induce me to make another such stay away from you. I must and will stop. I am getting on tolerably well closing up our business and I am working hard to reach home in the early part of August. What are you going to do about your teeth? Had you better not have those taken out which are decayed, so that you can in the face have them put in. But I should dislike too, for you to have them taken out in my absence. What has become of Berry, you have not mentioned her in any of your letters, and when I left she was sick. I hope she has got over her crossness.

There is great political excitement here, on the Know Nothing question, and I fear the K. N.'s will carry the day. Give love to all. Kisses to the children, and receive the assurance of continued love and affection from your devoted husband.

M. W. Steele

MATTHEW W. STEELE to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Memphis 22nd July 1855.

My dear Kate

I returned here this morning and with much pleasure found your letter (the last written I suppose) dated 9th Inst inside, but

post-marked 17th, a mistake with you as to date. I am in good health, although I believe to continue another week riding in the hot sun as I was the last would bring on sickness. The weather was oppressively hot and I was on horse-back during the most of every day.

I shall leave here for Purdy in a day or two, and hope to take the stage this day week for home, if so, and I shall get on without accident I shall be with my dear wife Tuesday evening.

I should like to see Maria before she gets off, and likewise Sis Sarah, but if they leave as soon as you mention, I shall not have the pleasure.

Your communication in regard to Ellen and Mr Tracy, is news to me, I have never even had a hint there was the least thing of the kind burning. I sincerely hope, she has not mis-judged her lover, although she should not hurry herself into an engagement, and I have no idea that she will. I am sorry to learn that father's dropsical symptoms, still prevail. I think I shall urge him to go again to Bailey's. I wrote you two letters from Vicksburg and hope you have ere this rec'd them. This being Sunday I cannot say how long I will be detained here or what days, the stage leaves and returns from Purdy, but I have, set my heart upon seeing you on Tuesday (31st) and I will make every effort, short of sacrifice of business of importance to be with you; should however any-thing prevent I will write and advise you.

I will try and find the articles you wrote for. I have never rec'd the letter you wrote last to me at New Orleans. I got along very well with closing our business in Missi and hope not to be soon required to leave home. Tell Maria that she must not think of boarding at Mrs Fleming's, that we will keep house, if there is a shanty in the place to be had.

I shall try and make some arrangements with father to let us have the little house next to Figures. So you might (without letting it be known begin preparing for house-keeping, by making up sheets, pillow cases and such things as you know will be required. I must now close to be in time for the mail.

Give much love to all, kisses to the children and for your dear self all the love of your affectionate husband.

M. W. Steele

MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE to DR. THOMAS FEARN

Huntsville Aug 24th 55.

My Dear Father

We had been looking for some intelligence from the travellers several days, before your letter of the 17th which was much longer on the way than necessary, was received by me. It was handed me, whilst out in the country spending the day. I had only my children with me - Lucy and Nett had gone to spend it with Miss Kellogg,

taking their dinner with them. You speak of our quiet household - although Berrie is with you, you have left considerable noise behind you yet. Nett you know is a host within her little self. She and Lucy have been quite industrious. I have been spurring Lucy up to be industrious and persevering. Nett's spirit of industry has been mostly spontaneous, as I have concluded to let her have pretty much her own way, as she has not much longer to stay here. Mrs. Robinson with whom they expect to go thinks she will be off week after next. Notwithstanding Lucy's and Nett's industrious habits in the general, it is still very hard to rise in the morning, and this morning they breakfasted on soft peaches, not saving their distance, as usual, but getting down after the table had been cleared off. Manan has been kept busy, as she was before you left. Berrie knows how this was. She has sometimes the luck of five or six beaux a day. She and I (tell Berrie) have both stood in need of the patterns which she carried off with her. Mr Steele has been an early riser, but the exertion, as you prophesied proved too much for him and he was in bed one day last week. He thought, it was a chill case, and took quinine freely. Antoinette was in bed on Saturday and Sunday with sore throat and headache. Monday, she was out, being moved thereto, I think, by the fear of a dose of Ipecac, which I told her, she must and should take, and which she said, she *could* not and *would* not take. Sister Mary's children have all been sick with disordered bowels, and some fever. They are now tolerably well. Cousin James had a severe hemorrhage night before last; the family being considerably alarmed. He is better today. Brother Gus and Mr. Steele rode out to the plantation day before yesterday, and found a number of complaining ones, amongst them Washington, Delia, and Betsy. Mr. Hodges intended working the road two days this week, as Court sits here next week, and some of his friends across the mountain have threatened to report him. Brother Gus promised to write and I suppose can give you more plantation information that I can.

From your letter, I should suppose, the girls were enjoying themselves very much, rather too much for improvement in health. I should not be surprized, if Berrie had not better gone to Bailey's. Kattie Bradford says, however that, that place is crowded, and they had some dissipation there. Her health, she says, was perfectly restored by the waters.

Ellen was quite startled on yesterday, whilst out shopping, by the announcement that Carrie Tracy and a not less important personage, her brother, were at the Hotel. She had received a letter some days before from Carrie saying that she would start for Huntsville this week and might be looked for any day after Wednesday. She wrote, that she might stop a few days at Caloosa and Ellen thought that Berrie would keep her there a week or so, perhaps, Ellen went over to the Hotel and took Carrie out home to dinner. I am afraid that times will be rather dull out at Oak Place for her.

Angelo and Sue are both sick - Angelo in bed. Brother John did not make his appearance last night, says he has rheumatism in his shoulder. Mr. Tracy is rather unfortunate in not being able to see Father. We had letters from him at Bailey's the first of the week. He did not speak of any improvement in his health but *thought* he *would* rally. My love to Berrie and the girls. All join me in love to yourself. George has not forgotten you yet but jumps around and squeals, when your name is called, particularly in connexion with a [horse]. He has come near calling your name himself several times.

aff. your daughter
Kate.

Don't let any one but Berrie see this scrawl.

MATTHEW W. STEELE to DR. THOMAS FEARN

Aug 25th 1855.

My dear Sir.

Mr Benj. Tiller was in this morning to see you, stating that he was about "trading" for another place and that if he did so (of which he seemed to feel very certain) he would sell to you as before promised, that little neck of land which so disfigures your place where it adjoins his, and he wishes to know *immediately* if you want to buy. The terms the same you gave for the Harris tract. Please advise us if you wish to purchase it. Dr Erskine paid me yesterday one thousand Dollars, which I credited upon his note. What shall I do with it?

James Coles had another slight hemorrhage this evening. The first was not so copious or violent as Kate supposed.

The weather is rainy and unfavorable for fodder. Mastin has doubtless given you all news of the plantation &c. George, Washington, Byrd and Delia were in sick day-before yesterday. I have not heard from them since. Love to Berre.

Yours truly
M. W. Steele

GEORGE STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE^e

Bailey's Springs August 28/55

Dear Matt

I wrote you yesterday, that Gov. Collier, was extremely ill.

But at the time of closing my letter [at] 12½ o'clock, that there had been some reaction and his physicians, had some slight hopes of his recovery. This continued through the day. Till about 7 o'clock P.M. when he was taken with severe paroxysms of pain which continued through the night.

Consequently he was a great deal worse this morning and it was feared that he was sinking. He died at 6 o'clock P.M. His remains

will be buried in the Florence Grave Yard, day after tomorrow.
After which his family will proceed directly Home.

Owing to some excitement, and the disagreeable humidity of the atmosphere, I am hardly as well as I was yesterday. Tho' upon the whole I believe that there is some improvement in my health. Let me hear from you frequently. Give my love to all.

yours Geo Steele

GEORGE STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE^e

Bailey's Springs Sep 26/55

Dear Matt

I rec'd your favour of the [?] Inst and regret that you have to serve on the Jury in the case of [State] vs [?].

I have always been exceedingly averse to serve on Juries, where life and death was involved.

You say that Mr. Donegan wishes me to build for him on the terms that I gave the Rail Road Co. I am much disposed to give Mr. Donegan the most liberal terms. But [must] pay my current expenses, Buy Pork, and some debts that must be met.

You say If you [resume] that probably you could pay some part &C. If I knew what J H Scruggs would pay I could tell better about it. You must remember, that the Depot is not all of the work for the Rail Road. It expected to build some offices or, something of which will necessarily, consume more lime and Brick, nevertheless we must try to fix it up for him satisfactory.

Dose he expect to have it done this fall. Has he the Lumber &C. You must, If I agree to the brick work undertake plastering also.

Speaking of plastering, in your last you said, you had undertaken to plaster a frame building for Mr. Wortham. My price is forty cents for all such work, the parties in all cases, to furnish Nails.

I would [finish] some of [his] rooms better than he proposes &C.

What have you done with Mr. Calhoun in regard to the ground I purchased in the rear of the Lot on the Square, remember, that he must deed to the Line of the alley, and not to the line of T. White's Store House which dose not get back to the alley.

On reflection, I am not willing to let Mr. Coltart have the Store for less than \$400.00. I would rather take the chances to rent to some one else.

Say to him that I will not rent hereafter to any one who wishes to make a grocery of it. This will make it a better stand for a goods store &C.

I rec'd a letter from Mr. Tracy which, I will enclose. I also rec'd one from Sissy. They seem to assume that their union should take place some time in Dec. I shall make no objection, indeed as my health is precarious it may be best. See Sissy, and then ans.

Mr. T's letter. In regard to health I can say it has most certainly improved. But still I remain feeble. I have to take operant medicine frequently however. I [am] heartily disgusted, and worn out here and I may leave, and go over to Taylors, and stay a week or so. It is a nice place and I believe that the water would suit me quite as well. Now I have to use dirty brown sugar in my tea. There is not more than 25 or 30 persons here at present. It has been raining almost constantly since I have been here. I will keep you advised as to my whereabouts. I may return by Robinson's well which is Giles Co. Tenn as I return home.

Mr. Simpson of Florence [is] here. I find him to [be] a jolly old gentleman, we have some hard hits at Backgammon. He has kept me on Bread pretty much since the death of poor Gov. Collier. It would be impossible for me to tell you how badly we fare here. I have not been to the publick Table for 3 weeks.

Raw shrimp, raw bread, dirty brown sugar for Tea, and the whole so infernally filthy, that the old Scratch himself, would sicken and die If he had been here.

I have forgotten to say that I would not be willing to take \$3000.00 for the cottage. If there were any other building required, I think it best not to put any price on it as yet. It will sell better, after it is finished than at present (wait). Give my love to all.

Yours affectionately
Geo Steele

III
Ellen and Tracy
1855-1858



Ellen Elizabeth Steele
Courtesy Huntsville Public Library



Edward Dorr Tracy
Courtesy Miss S. Rossetter Collins

George Steele died on October 21, 1855. His obituary in *The Southern Advocate* of October 31, 1855, observed: "Captain Steele was of a warm, generous, impulsive nature. He was not free from faults, who that's mortal is? But they were mere specks in the pure gold of his character." The will named Matt as executor and requested that the estate be kept intact until the debts were paid. The seeming ease with which Matt was able to take over the brick-building business indicates that he must have been previously trained by his father and had gained professional experience working with him. Matt completed several residential projects begun by his father, took on numerous remodeling jobs, and in 1858 was awarded the contract to design and erect the Huntsville Hotel, a massive structure which stood on the corner of the Public Square until it was destroyed by fire in 1910. With his new, full-time occupation, Matt's days of traveling for the commission business—and thus his letters to Kate—came to an end.

A new romance serves to introduce two new characters—Edward Dorr Tracy, called "Lit," and Ellen Steele. Tracy was born November 5, 1833, in Macon, Georgia, to Edward Dorr Tracy, Sr., a prominent lawyer and judge, and his first wife Susan Campbell. Two elder children born of this marriage were Ann and Phil. In 1834 Susan Tracy died, and Judge Tracy married her younger sister Caroline, by whom he had three more children—Mattie, Campbell, and Hattie. Lit Tracy received his early education at private institutions and graduated from the University of Georgia in Athens in 1851. He taught at a school for boys in Macon and studied law in his spare time. He was admitted to the Georgia bar in 1852 and began his practice in Macon.

Ellen Steele was born on November 17, 1833, the sixth child of George Steele and Eliza Ann Weaver. She received the same formal schooling as Kate, beginning her education at the Huntsville Female Seminary and continuing at Madame Canda's school in New York City. It is unclear when or where Tracy met and courted Ellen, but they were married on February 19, 1856, at Oak Place. Four children were born to the Tracys, but only two survived infancy: Susan Campbell, born 1858, and Georgia Eliza, nicknamed "Dawdie," born 1860.

After their marriage the Tracys returned to Macon, but for reasons unknown he was unhappy in his hometown and began searching for a new place of residence. After considering Memphis and various cities in Georgia, he decided upon Huntsville, probably due to Ellen's homesickness. They moved to Oak Place in 1857, and Tracy set up his law practice with David C. Humphreys. He became an active member of the First Presbyterian Church and served on the board of trustees of the Huntsville Female Seminary. An

ardent Democrat, he actively campaigned for the party's candidates and acquired a reputation as a brilliant speaker.

With the return of the Tracys to Oak Place, most of the Steele family were united again in Huntsville. The Steeles did not travel extensively, and for all practical purposes their correspondence ceased for a period of three years. But with hostilities between the North and South growing, inevitable separations were forthcoming.

EDWARD D. TRACY to MISS ELLEN STEELE^e

Macon 31st Oct 1855

My darling Nelly

Your note of the 25th Oct containing the sad intelligence of your Father's death is received.

How shall I express to you my dearest, the deep and heartfelt sympathy which I feel for you in this your day of sorrow.

Would that I could alleviate your misery by sharing the burden of grief which oppresses you. That grief is natural - you have lost (after your Mother) your earliest and best friend - one who possessed both your affection and confidence - and one whose place can never be supplied. True you may love others as well, but you can never feel that same mixture of reverence confidence and love (which so beautifully distinguish the affection of the child for the Father) for any other person.

I know how vain it is to reason with grief, at any time: how insufficient are all the principles of philosophy to console us even under the slightest bereavements - and I know from my own bitter experience how irreparable is the loss which you have sustained.

At fifteen (Phil being at the North) I was left the head of the family, and from that day until now, I have never known the pleasures of boyhood or youth.

How frequently in the embarrassments which have beset us, have I sighed for the assistance and sympathy of my Father - how often have I longed for him as I have been oppressed with trouble - and how ardently have I wished that he might have been spared to witness my mature age. Sorrow then my precious Ellen, it is both proper and right - neither philosophy nor religion would prevent the child from weeping for the Parent.

Religion would teach us this lesson - that grief is both natural and right - that despair is wicked and infidel. Grieve then, but not as one without hope - remember! That "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" - and that while you weep over him who hath departed, there are those in life who look to you for happiness.

Endeavor Nelly to lighten your sorrow, by bearing it with patience and fortitude - do not make me miserable, by surrendering yourself entirely to grief.

Death is dreadful when at a distance, and appalling when it strikes it's victims from among those we love; and yet we ought not to be surprised nor overwhelmed. It is appointed that all our race must die - and sooner or later the appointment will be fulfilled as to us all, ought we not then to bow patiently to a necessity of humanity - and recognise death, as but the fulfillment of the stern and irrevocable law of our being.*

*Although there is no closing nor signature, this letter appears to be complete.

EDWARD D. TRACY to MISS ELLEN STEELE^e

Macon 26th November/55

My darling Nelly

How terribly long it takes for your letters to reach me. Countless have been the denunciations which for the last three days I have heaped upon the mails, and (shall I own it!) with now and then a misgiving lest you had forgotten your promise.

Just to think of it's taking twice as long for a letter to arrive here from Huntsville, as from New York.

The conclusion to be derived from the above premise is, that since it takes so much time for the mails to carry our missives, we ought not to increase the time by delaying to write.

And so, "brother Fate" will not open his oracular lips, even to suggest probabilities; well "the Gods themselves do not war against necessity" and if your brother's presence is deemed by you necessary or desirable - it shall e'en be as you please.

Whether December or February be the month in which I can claim you, either will be sufficiently distinguished by that event, to make it remembered as the happiest and proudest of my life.

If the first, it will only make me happier, if the latter, the delay will I trust enable me to make myself less unworthy of your darling self.

For myself, I would not care for change, but when I think, that ere long you will commit your happiness to my keeping, I long for virtues, talents and riches, in order that I may the better discharge that sacred trust.

Would that I could assuage your sorrows, as I can not do that, I share them. After February (I hate to think that it will not be sooner) we will think no more of sorrows; for then God willing, I at least will have enough to make me perfectly happy in you my darling Nelly. Even pain will lose it's power, if you are by to sympathise and love.

And God grant my dearest that my affection may prove equally efficacious to preserve you from pain and make you happy.

Since my return I have been very constantly engaged in Court, and as the session is still unexpired, I continue busy - yet I steal time for a thousand thoughts a day of you, and the future. I sometimes discover myself (even in the Court House *bodily*) in dream land, industriously occupied now in rearing palaces and now building cottages - with but one resemblance in all my architecture - which is the presence of your sweet countenance as the light and life both of palace and cottage.

And as without that light either would be dreary and full of gloom, so with it either will be bright and happy.

Tell Sister Sallie, I will forgive her for the injustice that I have suffered at her hands, if she will make the "*amende honorable*," by remaining to the wedding - nay more, I will promise to be magnanimous and forego the revenge I threatened against Mr Winter.

This last however I only promise on the express condition that I shall hear no more of such passages as occurred in your letter this morning "Sister Sallie begs that I will not trouble you with a longer letter."

The idea of your troubling me with the length of your letter - as well might you speak of troubling bees with honey - birds with Spring, or the Gods with nectar. Nothing but the brevity and rareness of your communications troubles me - correct those faults and you will be such a charming correspondent.

Remember you owe me now three letters unless you sat down and answered the other two, as soon as I have yours of to day. So if you wish me to believe that my letters give you pleasure - you must answer them immediately.

Hereafter I shall measure your anxiety to hear from me by the above rule.

I send you a Macon paper, with two passages marked - the first gives you the result of the case of which I wrote in my last - the other pays a minted compliment to my old friend Governor McDonald who you will remember as the Author of one of the letters to your poor Father - relative to myself. For which service I promised him a fee which you alone can pay.

Much love to your Mother, Sisters Kate, Sallie and Sue - and kind regards to Brothers Matt, John and Angelo.

Good bye my darling and write soon and often to yours devotedly
Edward D. Tracy

Mama and Carrie send love to you and Mother, Sisters &c.

EDWARD D. TRACY to MISS ELLEN STEELE^e

Macon 7th Feby 1856

My darling Nelly

With this letter our love letter writing, will be exchanged for the greater joys of personal presence. I fear I have never succeeded as well in writing as in loving, which failure I hope you will charitably attribute to the difficulty of describing on paper, what is felt in my heart. But though I may have succeeded ever so ill in the expression of my sentiments, I am happy in thinking, that you very well know how beautiful my letters would have been, could my pen have borrowed the eloquence of my heart.

Notwithstanding the consciousness of my many shortcomings, and deficiencies (or as an Equity pleader would express it - "notwithstanding the manifold errors, uncertainties, imperfections, and insufficiencies therein contained") the correspondence has been to me very delightful - my only regret connected with it being that I so poorly repaid you for your charming letters.

Before the time of my next regular dispatch, I will be on my way to your home, and hope that you will be better pleased to see me than my letter.

At all events I am exceedingly anxious to put you to the test, so much so that I can hardly restrain my impatience.

One week from day I will leave Macon, "en route" for Huntsville, where I hope to arrive Saturday morning.

Phil having formed a legal partnership with a firm in the city and will I fear be necessarily absent on the circuit, at which prospect I am exceedingly chagrined.

I have taken the liberty since having been apprized of Phil's inability to accompany me, to invite my friend Tom Moffett to be a witness to our happiness.

I informed him that the wedding would be private - and only asked him for the sake of "auld lang syne," when Tom and I were college chums. I do not know whether he will accept the invitation, if not I shall as a *dermier* resort to prevent the "love and lorn" appearance of going entirely by myself write my valet de chambre to be my companion, and ask no odds of Phil, Tom, the world "or the rest of mankind." In a few days I will happily be independent of their society, and happy in yours.

You do not know how independently disagreeable or disagreeably independent the prospect makes me. My old sweethearts pronounce me dreadfully prosy, and tiresome - receive my bon mots with supreme imperturbability - do not resent my yawns - nor smile at my compliments - in a word I can neither amuse nor provoke them, and so endeavor to do neither.

I am determined that at least one of my letters shall be possessed of a witty merit, and as I know of but one virtue of that kind attainable by me - the possession of which becomes more difficult with ever line that I write - I shall here stop - and thereby entitle myself to the credit of brevity the very soul of wit.

With much love to Mother, and Sisters I remain my darling, with all love

yours Edward D. Tracy

Mama sends love, and desires me to assure you of her impatience to welcome and love you.

9th Feby 1856

My letter has been in Carrie's writing desk so long as to be almost out of date - *mais n'importe* - the delay enables me to say that there is a possibility of both Carrie and Phil being present at our marriage.

Sister and Carrie both dreamed of you night before the last - their several dreams will amuse you when they are recited.

Good bye again my precious sweetheart.

E D T

MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY to MRS. CATHERINE FEARN STEELE

Macon March 24th 1856.

Dearest Sister.

Having received positive orders from my Liege Lord to write home to night, I suppose *he* must be obeyed. So by way of fulfilling my parting promise I will now make you the recipient of my communication, hoping the perusal of a letter may afford you as much pleasure, as the writing of one does me.

Yesterday I had the good fortune of hearing from you all through our kind, and interesting friend Dr Davis, who is on a visit to our City with his charming sister Jennie. I have not yet had the pleasure of seeing the latter, but will do myself the honor to call tomorrow if nothing prevents.

How comes on your petite band the dear little cherubs. Are they still making glad the hearts of "Mother, Father, and Mama" with their charming little sayings and doings or have they become unruly affording you as of yore much room for "exercise in the way of whipping." Bless their dear little hearts I would give much to see them. Master Georgie has doubtless become quite loquacious and is now regaling your ears with many sweet, and interesting things. I flatter my self you have ere this taught him to lisp my name, and he does me the honor to call it at least once a day. But alas! My *cruel naughty* little birdling, my *pet*, my "mockie bird." I hear she has quite forgotten "her poor Ellie." Oh! The *ungrateful* little wretch. Do give her a kiss, and slap for me, and say to her Aunt Ellen will jog her memory when she comes with a good whipping. I presume she does not even mention me in her visions. Well unless she blesses the absent ones I will really disown her as my child so you had better remind her occasionally of her first love.

I learned from Sister Sallie's letter that Bro Matt intended going to New Orleans soon. I suppose he has already taken his departure. I am sorry you have to play old "Miss Gummage the lone lorn creature so often" but I suppose you bear with your usual fortitude. What would I not give to take a peep in at Oak Place this evening. I am not home sick as Bro Matt predicted, yet I am growing terribly anxious to see you all, and shall hail the approach of July with much delight when I shall return again, however I was requested by your better half not to mention this event until the time rolled around, so in *consideration* for his feeling, I will forbear. Mr T. is sitting near me, pretends to be diving deeply into the contents of some British Essayist, but he cannot be much interested or he would not interrupt me so often with his questions. Carrie is in the parlor screaming at the rate of "two forty," has a sweet voice and sings prettily but just at present I very much appreciate the feeling of the man in the *Georgia Scenes* when he heard the wonderful and accomplished Miss Trump (I believe that was her name) sing one of her operatic pieces, and like him I sigh and exclaim "will she never get done." I am fond of music but I must say

I do not enjoy it to night. How comes dear Mother and what is she doing with her self? She is doubtless busy gardening, every bright day I think of her worrying her self about getting her vegetables planted. Say to her this is the garden spot of the earth, it would really astonish her if she could see the beautiful and luxuriant hedges of cape Jessamin they have here - they are not quite in bloom yet, but ere long will be looking most magnificently. What has become of Sue? Has Bro Matt determined yet to send her off to school? She promised to write to me but I fear she is laboring under quite a delusion for I do not think she entertains the least idea of writing. Dr Davis told me that Bro John was about to commence another survey. I hope if true his services are not voluntary and free gratis.

Have you had any recent news from Texas. And how are the old folks? I have thought every week of writing to Ada but the fates seem against me as I am always prevented however. I will make another desperate effort to write tomorrow. What is Bud doing now, has he succeeded in getting into any business or is he still a gentleman of leisure? I hope the latter is not the case.

I was quite shocked to hear of the death of Mr Hallewell's little son. How is Miss Hodges? Always remember me kindly to her.

Minerva met with quite an accident the other day. She raised my window after sweeping the room but by some mistake used the wrong bolt to keep it up, which she discovered after having one of her fingers nearly mashed off. I was quite alarmed about it for I feared she had crushed the bone of her finger, but upon sending her to Dr Gun I was calmed to hear it was not as bad as I thought, and that she would only lose her nail. She is altogether disabled to do any thing, so you can imagine my predicament. All of my washing has to be put out, that is I have to hire some one to do it every week. And as for a waiting maid Mom Phebe now acts in that capacity, however to do her justice I must say she [would] make a better *fille de chambre* than Minerva. I think she is another old Aunt Nancy. I hope Amanda is preparing herself to accompany me when I return. I mean by that, she [is] learning to be a very smart girl. Tell Mother I wish her to make Caroline take charge of her over the Tub, as she will have to be my laundress some of these days.

I have not said one word about Georgie's affiance. Well bless her little heart I did not mean to forget her. She is quite a beauty and is as sweet as she can be. Sister is very anxious to see her future "son in law" Sue's betrothed, so if you can succeed in getting a likeness of him, do send it to me. I would like to have all of the children's. When do you intend sending me the promised patterns for Eliza's dress? I am anxious to make it now, and am only waiting for some guide to go by. Sister desires me to ask you for the pattern of that little apron your Cousin Sallie Watkins sent you for Eliza. She wishes to make some for the baby.

I forgot to tell you what a preacher I had married. Sunday afternoon he carried me to the "colored church" where he performed services, delivered a most excellent discourse - really it was the best sermon I have heard since I have been here. I think I have truly married a good Christian and shall endeavor to become a better one my self. I would write more but have not time to do so. Mr T. joins me in love to all. A kiss to Mother and the children. Write me very soon.

Your affectionate
Sister Ellen.

Wednesday Morning

I have just been to see Jennie Davis and as I heard a little piece of startling news relative to an engagement between Bere, and Fearn Erskine I open this to ask if the "*on dit*" is true. I will not give credence to it until I get it from a more reliable source. Say to Bere if she does not write and tell me all about it, I shall be highly offended. Love and a kiss to her, and much love also to Maria. What has become of Cattie and Kate, give them my love when you see them again. And kiss your Papa for me. How is he now? I hope quite well.

Yrs with love
Ellen.

Sister Sallie has at last left you all, how much you must miss her. Why don't little John answer my letter? Has Bro John fully determined upon the fair Julia for our "Sister in Law." Dr Davis in a "burst of confidence" told brother Phil he entertained some idea of going on to Virginia next summer for that purpose. Carrie begs that you will let her know, says if true, it is quite distressing and that "she is bending beneath her grief like a baby beneath the storm."

Carrie sends love to all.

EDWARD D. TRACY to TOM MOFFETT^m

Macon 3rd April 1856

My dear Tom

I have been intending to write you, ever since our return, but a variety of circumstances have hitherto prevented the consummation of that intention.

I have been to Court twice, have attended Court at home - transacted a good deal of business, read some law, and talked a great deal of love to my little wife.

Now if that record is not sufficient to account for my silence, I do not know how I could convince you that I have been very busy indeed. Not so busy though, that I have not thought of you a great many times - and spoken of you besides.

In which conversations my "frou" always enters with great

spirit - speaks of you with much affection and entertains precisely the opinion of my friend that I would have desired. If she had known you sooner I might have had an opportunity of offering you my congratulations instead of receiving yours.

You have no idea my dear old fellow, of how happy I am, in the enjoyment of Ellen's love; you remember De Quincy's beautiful discription (in the *Opium Eater*) of his life in the little cottage in Wales, with his little rooms eight by ten - his little wife "so tidy and dear" - his opium - and his books.

His life then, is mine now; after the business of the day I go home, certain that I will meet with an affectionate welcome - after tea, I enter my sanctum (upon which I permitted you to look with unhallowed gaze) take my seat in my rocking chair - with my little wife "so tidy and dear" before me - light my cigar and open my book - ever and anon reading some passage which strikes me as good - looking at the happy face before me - and always thanking God, that my lines have fallen unto me in such pleasant places."

Every day that I live convinces me, that up to my marriage, I but poorly fulfilled my destiny. In October we commence house-keeping, and innumerable are our plans with reference to that event.

Iago's advice to his friend was "put money in thy purse!" Mine to you is "put a wife in thy house."

Matrimony so far as my experience goes, abridges no pleasure, and adds many.

My wife is too sensible to expect perfection in me, and accepts my unbounded love in lieu of those many qualities which I lack. But I already hear you cry "have done with this stuff."

Pardon me, most worthy and crusty bachelor for having given you glimpses of an Elysium which you have obstinately sworn shall not be yours. Come over to Macon, and over a social you know what, we will spin yarns and build castles.

Dr Davis and Sister from Huntsville arrived here last week and are staying out in Vineville with the Comers.

I have not yet had an opportunity of paying my respects but will do so very soon. The Dr thinks of going to Columbus, where you can show him that Georgia gentlemen can be courteous if they choose.

I wonder if Miss [Loulie] has given the disciple of Esculapius any satisfaction with reference to the questions which he so delicately propounded to me.

We hear some rumors from Huntsville that Bere Fearn is to be married to Fearn Erskine - but as Ellen has heard nothing of the kind from head quarters - she pronounces all such reports as false - "*nous verrons*."

What are you doing with yourself - making money or studying law or both!

Write me immediately if you wish to convince me that you desire my correspondence - and believe me Tom I remain

affectionately your friend
Edward D. Tracy

EDWARD D. TRACY to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^e

Memphis Tenn.

31st March 1857.

My darling wife.

After a somewhat tiresome journey of thirteen hours I arrived in Memphis last evening at 7.45 o'clock. We had no adventures by the way, but suffered an awful infliction in the guise of a dinner at a place which boasts the classic and scriptural name of Corinth.

Tell Mother it exceeded in meanness the most execrable of Amy's efforts - it was in fact the "chef d'oeuvre" (I believe I spell the last word incorrectly so to escape your criticism I'll try again - "oeuvre" - if that is not correct I give it up) of bad dinner givers.

I am stopping at the Commercial Hotel - where barring the dust - the third story and a ricketty bedstead and a cracked bowl I am "doing as well as could be expected." I am rooming with Figures of the *Advocate* who has come up for the purpose of obtaining advertisements for his paper.

Capt Turner called around this morning to show us the town - from which interesting trip we have just returned - walked nearly to death.

We went to see the Navy yard an immense work erected by the national government at great expense and then abandoned for the very satisfactory reason that it was not needed; I will do things differently when my pretty darling, precious, own, dear, little sweet wife is mistress of the White House. Figures and I have an invitation to take tea with Mr Fackler which we have accepted.

But methinks I hear you impatiently exclaim - why does he not tell me what his impressions are of Memphis as a place of residence.

Be patient "*ma petite*," I have not yet given vent to my enthusiasm on first beholding the Mississippi.

And to tell the truth (which "*entre nous*" I regard very highly, I mean the truth and not the River) I feel no enthusiasm bubbling up. The stream at present is low not much broader nor half so pretty as the Tennessee at Whitesburgh - so I'll have done with *it* and proceed to tell you what I know you wish to hear. Well to commence, I am very well - well that is not what you wish to hear though I hope you are glad to learn it.

Memphis is a busy, bustling, fast town in this it's dullest season - from the signs, I perceive there are hundreds of lawyers here - gentlemen whose acquaintance I have made, say that a lawyer who will stay in his office and attend promptly to business will do well - notwithstanding the throng.

I was in one of their Courts this morning a few minutes - staid so short a time - that I can only say that the Judge is a pretty good looking man - and the Court room a very fine one.

I have not yet seen enough of the place to judge as to it's desirableness as a place of residence. I called on Mr L Knox Walker

this morning - he was out, so I left my letter and card on his table. I will deliver my letters to Messrs Cartwright and Dupree tomorrow. It is hard for me to think of commencing at the lowest round of the ladder, and climbing up - after I have spent five years of probation in Macon and am commencing to enjoy the fruits; but circumstances that you art of may decide me upon so doing. Figures says that there is a great opening in Huntsville, for a lawyer of talent and promptness.

I may not have time to write you again before my return - which I think will be on Saturday but be assured my darling and best beloved wife - your image is ever present to your "*beautiful husband*."

Edward D. Tracy

MRS. ANN TRACY JOHNSTON and MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY to EDWARD D. TRACY^e

My dear Lit

Your little wife is getting on finely, looks very well and *mighty pretty*, says her appetite has improved &c. We walk to the spring before breakfast, drink the water. I am rather discouraged, as the *poor old pepsy sticks to me* with relentless pertinacity. I do hope you have *quite* recovered from the scarlet fever. How is my little son? I long for a look at his blue eyes and proposed that we should all go home tomorrow, but my dear old spouse declined taking us. Do take care of yourself and continue to love your sweet little wife and dear sister. Be sure and eat at my house and take care of small Willie B.

Sunday Night June 14th 1857.

My *own* darling Husband.

What a long and weary day this has been without you, truly there is none that can lend a ring to the hours but your own dear self for when you are away time's whole machinery seems to be moved by a snail and its speed of course is intolerably slow to me. So I sigh to be with you, to have one look, a smile, a talk with thee my love. Every time I endure these unpleasant separations I make vehement resolutions never to suffer the like again, but now I do most solemnly declare I'll *never, never*, leave you again - this winds up my trips without you. I feel quite anxious to hear from you and shall not have one happy moment until a Bulletin comes saying you are quite well again. So do write by Mr Collier tomorrow and let me know. Sister commenced this letter as you will perceive and gave a very exaggerated account of me, that is regards my looks which are any thing than sweet or charming as I am a bird somewhat dependant on its plumage for its appearance. I am any thing else than a bird of beauty at present unless a buzzard or crow might be called on that style, I feeling somewhat like both and I fancy could

be taken for either, having all genteel apparel locked up in safe keeping and the keys thrown away. Did you receive my last dispatch and why did you not have a response conveyed to me as I suggested - the mails only bless us twice a week but I should think you could by some means, or way unknown send a few comforting words oftener. If you find my keys return them by Mr Collier (if not, come up after me) the latter is really the desire of my heart - but I suppose if I can possibly be of any service to poor dear Sister I must endeavor to stand it - though it will be almost more than I can bear. There are a very few persons here just now which of course suits the shabby *coutume* of your unfortunate little "birdling" or poor wife. Mrs Musgrove, Mr and Mrs Star, Gen Rutherford and Gen Gordon are all that we have. Mrs Musgrove seems to be made of common material or is as Mrs Patton would express, rather "small potatoes." Mr and Mrs S. are nice enough but from appearance sadly on the wane. Gen R's acquaintance I have not yet had the pleasure of making though he had quite a conversation with Sister this evening (while I was in my bed and quiet chamber reading a very good little book) she told me he discussed you, relative to your talents as a preacher having had glowing accounts of your abilities from as competent a judge as one of his slaves. Gen Gordon is a nice, kind, clever good old fellow I think from my limited acquaintance with him. So you have a slight idea of all who have come thither to partake of the fountain of health, who absurdly believe it can cure the blind, sick, and maimed. Has Amanda's baby taken the scarlet fever yet. And does she use that sovereign remedy for a preventive. See that she pays proper attention to it. And make her do every thing I left for her to do. Have the hall scoured nicely, also my dining room and do make aunt Amy scour the kitchen and all of her kitchen utensils. I want to find every thing a la Mr Price's. I also wish the yard and cow lot cleaned up. Tell Amanda she must try and get through the work I gave her and finish Dick's pants she commenced. I feel very much like making my return tomorrow and would give worlds to do so if I could with any propriety leave Sister. Poor little woman I know not whether she is on the mend or not, as she has scarcely given the waters a fair trial yet. She is considerably put out about the eating and was completely worried about it until she had her same old dish. She lives on at home some plain corn bread which she had for the first time to night for supper. Write soon attend to all commissions not forgetting to have the garden attended to as I will expect a mess of tomatoes by my return, which I hope may be in a few days. I pray God I have not committed a sin in sending you this bulletin though it be a business one as I could not refrain from availing my self of the opportunity of sending a few lines by Mr W. B. J. on his departure tomorrow, which is at an earlier hour than I could have written. Sister would join in much love to you and many kisses to the baby if she were only awake.

Your devoted wife

Ellen.

I have written this quite hurriedly you may know by the many errors.

DR. THOMAS FEARN to J. J. CHENAWITH & CO.

Huntsville Sept. 11th 1857

Mess. J. J. Chenawith & Co.

Cincinnati

Gent'm

Permit me to introduce to you Col. M. W. Steele, who will hand you this, and to beg for him your kind attentions.

Mr. Steele is a "Builder" and having undertaken some large houses in our town, which is showing some thing of the spirit of improvement, now that our rail road has connected us with the world - he visits your city, with the view of availing himself of your mechanical establishments, in the prosecution of his business.

Col. Steele is entitled to the fullest credit, for purchases he may desire to make, and I have no hesitation in holding myself responsible for any engagements he may enter into.

Very respectfully

Tho. Fearn

MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY to EDWARD D. TRACY^m

Oak Place Sep 17th 1857.

My dear Husband.

It is always a luxury to read a letter from you, but when it contains the happy news of your safe return after a perilous journey commenced on that *fatal* day Friday, an epistle then becomes a "well spring of pleasure" to me. Such was my enjoyment yesterday upon learning of your welfare. I cannot describe to you however my horror, and chagrin at the intelligence of the fate of my cans. T'was indeed quite a misfortune, and *quite* a shame after my trouble in putting them up and carefully packing as I thought, but alas! "T'was ever thus" - but to say the least of it, I am really provoked they should have been so naughty to explode before arriving at their several places of destiny for I thought a dish of Tomatoes would be such an addition to the Christmas dinner of the good people. You say your wardrobe suffered somewhat from the accident. I am sorry to hear it, but could not help laughing when I thought of your predicament after a long dusty ride to be minus some of the most essential articles of dress to change in, however you were not entirely destitute for in consideration of any accident of the kind I was wise enough to store away shirts, collars, white vests, pants, coat &c in the top of your trunk - which you doubtless had a benefit of. I went in yesterday to see Aunt Sallie Fleming and found her sick in bed. She seemed quite feeble indeed - I fear the poor old lady is declining in health. She evinced much joy upon seeing me, though I do not think she *exactly* recognized me at

first sight. Many questions were asked about you and much delight expressed by her to hear of your anticipated removal here. Every body seems enchanted at the idea and makes me feel quite happy and reconciled to the step you have taken, by "saying you will do well." The Presbyterian portion of the community keep up *quite* a rejoicing among themselves because you are coming, poor creatures they imagine they are gaining quite a pillar for the church - little knowing your aversion to act as a small rafter even. I was asked a few days since by one of our leading members if you were a praying and talking man in the church. I told her you sometimes served in that capacity at home but dared not tell her you were reluctant on one occasion to attend prayer meeting here with me lest you should be called upon for an orison. It is wonderful what a propensity we have for doing things we are strictly forbidden not to do (an *original* thought I know, but I did not give it for its originality but its truth and applicableness) so after this petit aberration in parenthesis, I will proceed to say I was about to forget I was a woman under authority and was going to suggest to you what you must or rather what you ought to do. A privilege which you say I shall not indulge in, and your word being the law I must forego.

Dr Ross reached home yesterday much to the delight of his congregation. He will favor us with a good sermon next Sunday I suppose.

We have had no tidings from Bro Matt yet but he has scarcely reached a stopping place to write. Sister Kate says I am *very* uneasy lest he should return before you. I imagine it must be quite warm in Macon now, as the weather has been rather oppressive here, for the last few days which of course has considerably debilitated me, but I fancy if I were with you I would be in perfect state of ebullition so I am glad on the whole that I did not accompany you. Mother wrote last Saturday and invited Mrs Dawson up to make us a visit so we are constantly on the alert (looking) for her. Mr Winter has not made his appearance yet but may come with her. Charlie Mastin has been quite sick since his trip up to Stephenson with you, the Mastin firm are very much incensed because he went. Did Bro Phil relieve you of our small lot of plunder and what kind of bargain did you make with him. Since the Tomatoes did not reach there safely you had best give out the cans of peaches to them. I am happy there has been such a happy change in Sister, give love and a kiss to her and to all the rest of them.

Don't make my letter public property.

EDWARD D. TRACY to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^e

Macon 26th Sept/57

My darling little wife

This is Saturday, and I will pay the very pleasant debt which I owe you in the shape of a third letter for the current week. You

may be sure that the weeks pass heavily enough, and if I did not have this privilege of communication with you, they would be intolerable.

God willing, I have little over a week more to remain - and then I'll hie me to my love.

When I left you in Huntsville this time, I did the most sensible thing that I ever did, except when I married my darling Ellen; you open your little eyes and pout your pretty little mouth at that, I dare say - but if I do not prove it, I will submit to any penance that you will propose.

So now for the proof. It is a sad thing to see one leave the home of his infancy - the graves of dear ones departed - to behold him sever the pleasant ties which bind him to the friends of his youth and manhood; to see him turn his back upon places hallowed by many pleasant associations and tender recollections.

'Tis sadder still, to be the one who thus cuts loose from his moorings, to try the voyage of life on unknown seas.

And I confess that it is with no little grief that I contemplate my approaching departure from the places and persons that I have known so long and loved so well.

Yet selfish wretch that I am, when most affected with such thoughts, the idea that my separation from all these, will be the cause of my reunion with a certain little woman, who is infinitely more precious to me than home, friends or kindred, suffices to drown my grief and make me positively impatient for the hour when I shall bid farewell to my birthplace.

Now if I had brought you with me, I could have had no such consolation - which proves that leaving you was very wise - is not that a pretty and good argument!

I took dinner with Phil yesterday and had quite a pleasant time - the night before I took tea with Dr Green - the old fellow vaguely threatened to come to Huntsville and look at the place; which proposition I successfully discouraged.

Monday is the day for our Auction, and I have made up my mind, that if our bed room furniture does not bring something approximating to a fair price, I will box it up and send it to Huntsville.

The few articles that I have sold has been at a great sacrifice. Politics is waxing very warm and the enemy seems confident of success - but "we'll see what we will see."

I write in great haste but in greater love to all at Oak Place and in greatest love to my darling pride, my sweet little wife

Your husband
E D T

EDWARD D. TRACY to PHILEMON TRACY^m

Huntsville Ala
6th March/58.

My dear Phil.

I learn from letters rec'd this morning from Mattie and Frank Bloom that my worst fears have been realised. I am infinitely anxious to console you my dear brother - but full well I know that all attempts would be futile. You have sustained in the loss of your dear wife an affliction so heavy - a blow so appalling - that I know you must be overwhelmed.

Your hopes have been turned into bitterness - your joys into poignant grief. She who loved you so well and whom you loved so tenderly has entered into the rest prepared for the pure in heart.

I know from my own experience that a heart smitten by God's hand is apt to attribute the blow to a relentless arbitrary and cruel power.

I know that you have thus felt - that you have rebelled against this most inscrutable and to us terrible dispensation of God's Providence. To suppose you had not, would be to suppose you more or less than human.

You thought it cruel that the bridal robe should so soon be changed into a shroud.

It *was* awful - little did I think when I was last with you - when I kissed your darling and called her Sister - that in so short a time I would have to mourn her loss. The heart knoweth it's own grief and a stranger should not meddle therewith. It is natural and right that we should mourn and grieve - it is impossible that *you* should not. In your dear wife you have lost your better angel. I will not say lost - for I am sure that her meek and gentle spirit will still hover o'er you. I believe that she is now in Heaven - making intercession and praying for you. I believe that she is happy, that she is among the saints made perfect.

I know you will believe me when I say, that I sympathise with your grief - ay in it's very depth.

I know that you will not suspect me of empty profession - when I tell you that I dearly loved and admired your sweet wife. I loved her not only because she was *your* wife and therefore entitled to my love; but I loved her because all her qualities were such as commanded my love. Her gentleness - her amiability - her faith - her goodness were not of and belonged not to this world.

Believing as I do that she is now in Heaven - I can not mourn for *her* as a Materialist.

I mourn for you my brother - I mourn for you because you have lost one who was so good - that she disarmed you of power to do yourself harm - because you were too noble to vex that innocent and loving heart.

I am not of the number who believe that God in his infinite power inflicts pain on one to do another good. But this I believe -

that dark clouds are often sent to hasten us on our way home - that objects of Love and joy are often taken from us here and held before us in Heaven to allure us to follow after. May God bless you and sanctify this dispensation of his Providence to your eternal good - "our afflictions which for the present seemeth grievous shall work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory to them that are exercised thereby."

My love to Mrs Rawls - may God comfort her.

I remain my dear brother in deep sympathy

Your brother

Edward D. Tracy

P.S. Ellen mourns with you - she is deeply affected by your loss and sends you her love.

EDWARD D. TRACY to PHILEMON TRACY^m

Huntsville Ala 18th Mch/58

My dear Phil.

I have been intending to write to you some days, and now that I put my intention into effect, I hardly know what to say.

I know that you are so grieved in spirit that any communication in a gay or lightsome strain would be unacceptable if not cruel.

And in truth if I thought otherwise, my own feelings would not permit me so to indulge. I think of you and your sorrow constantly: last night I dreamed that I was with you in Macon, and that you looked so heartbroken that my own heart bled at the picture.

Holding believers in dreams &c in utter contempt as I do, I yet can not divest myself of the sad impressions which such dreams make upon me.

Of course my dream of last night was occasioned by the desire to be with you and the conviction that you were as my dream presented you.

The indulgence of grief to one in affliction affords I know a sort of morbid pleasure, the mind loves to dwell upon it's sorrows and it requires great effort to break the habit. I have often thought that David's conduct upon the death of his child - and his reply to his servants as narrated in the 12th ch 2nd Samuel contains all of the true philosophy grief.

So long as the child lived he fasted, wept and prayed - but as soon as he perceived from the whispering of the servants that the child had died - he "arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his apparel and came into the house of the Lord and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required they set bread before him and he did eat."

His servants were surprised at this seeming inconsistency but mark his reply - which in my opinion is not less remarkable for

it's pathetic beauty than for it's perfect wisdom - "While the child was yet alive I fasted and wept; for I said Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me that the child may live! But now he is dead wherefore should I fast! Can I bring him back again! I shall go to him but he shall not return to me."

Of all neccesities Death is the most irrevocable - and every language I believe has some maxim to express the idea contained in the old Greek adage - "*anagke [oude] theoi [makoutai]*" - "the Gods themselves do not war against neccesity."

So I hope and pray my dear brother that you will not grieve inordinately - endeavor to submit humbly to the dispensations of Him who gave and who took away.

Seek relief from grief (from inordinate grief I mean) in study - in travel - in writing - in anything but Sin - for that will but add poigniancy to your sorrow.

I would be so glad to see you here but if you think that would not be pleasant to you, write me freely and often. I am not skilled in the art of expressing sympathy or love - but I know you need no verbal or written expression to convince you - that you are possessed of my tenderest sympathy and affection.

I purchased at considerable cost Miller's *Bar and Bench of Georgia* and am very much disappointed in it.

Authors are almost always egotists, but old Stephen's vanity is ridiculous. Apart from the sketches of a few distinguished lawyers such as Dooly, Early and a few others, the author seems to have lost sight entirely of the title of his book. Many of the characters were never even admitted to the Bar.

Blackshear to whom he devotes over 100 pages was a Justice of the Peace and so belonged to the Bench.

Lawyers of a third rate reputation of whom I never so much as heard are introduced, with no other reason so far as I can discover except that in some way or other in speaking of them the author enjoys the opportunity of speaking of himself - and the idea of lugging in and making his friends pay for the miserable platitudes with which he illuminated the Oglethorpe Lyceum - "*prob pudor.*" And lastly he has not designed to say a word about Pa - who to us seems to have been one of the brightest ornaments both of the bar and bench - the omission may have been the cause of my distaste to the book but I do not think so - for I believe I can say after the style of Bell in his neat retort to the brutal speech of Andy Johnson who said that he was *dead* "I would rather be dead than live to be such an one as my colleague - and when I see the commotions of the times casting up such men as he into the Senate, I retire with no great regret."

So when I see a book purporting to be sketches of the *Bar and Bench of Georgia* containing notices of such cattle as Seaborn - Delk - Crocker - Anderson - Paul Coalson - Black, Martin, Mitchell, Squire Blackshear *et id omne genus*, I feel no mortification that Pa

was omitted. I received a notice that our note to Ells was in Bank, I can make no arrangements whatever to pay it and I suppose you are in the same fix - so it will have to go to protest if it is a Bank note which I do not believe it is.

Give much love to dear Mama and the family and my kind regards to Mrs Rawls. I remitted Ma Fifty Dollrs the other day, ask her to write whether it was received.

With much love I remain

Your brother
E. D. Tracy

IV
The Civil War
1861-1863

Like all firebreathing Southerners, Tracy eagerly welcomed the prospect of war with the North, confident that it would end quickly and that the South would be victorious. When companies began forming throughout the state, he enlisted in the North Alabamians and was elected captain. The unit became part of the Fourth Alabama Infantry and was transported to Virginia for training. Shortly before the battle of Manassas in July 1861, he confided to Ellen "that the rascally invaders of our soil will not dare to risk a battle against an army so equipped." His prophecy, of course, did not hold true. Tracy soon had his first taste of war and, by his own account, "was not recreant in the dread hour. I stood erect in the front rank when men lying down were being shot at all around."

Tracy's military career was marked by rapid promotion, the first coming a few weeks after Manassas where he had proven himself brave, courageous, and a leader among his peers. He resigned his commission with the Fourth Alabama Infantry to accept the position of major with the Twelfth Alabama Infantry. While in Huntsville in the fall of 1861 on sick leave, he learned from Leroy Pope Walker, the former Confederate Secretary of War, of a vacancy in the Nineteenth Alabama Infantry. With Walker's encouragement, Tracy was appointed its lieutenant colonel in October of 1861. He saw action in the battle of Shiloh in April of 1862 and then spent the next several months with his superiors planning new strategy. During this period he learned that General Ormsby Mitchell had taken Huntsville by surprise and was occupying the town; unexposed to battle himself, he constantly worried about the safety of his family. His troops were placed under General Kirby Smith and ordered to Tennessee for reorganization. At Smith's recommendation, Tracy was commissioned brigadier general, again owing to his proven heroics and leadership on the battlefield.

By late 1862 the western campaign had shifted to Mississippi and the defense of Vicksburg. Tracy and his five Alabama brigades were sent there to reinforce the badly outnumbered Confederate troops, but his men saw little action during the spring of 1863. On May 1 Tracy and his 1500 men were positioned at Port Gibson, Mississippi, for a battle which proved disastrous for both Tracy and the Confederacy.

Matt's activities during the war were, at best, vague. He constantly traveled to and from Huntsville during 1863 and was arrested twice in 1862. According to a local diary, the second arrest came from pulling the tailor's whiskers for being civil to a Federal officer. In 1864 Matt was connected with the Red Mountain iron works near Birmingham, but it is not known in what capacity he served or for how long. He took the oath of allegiance

to the United States government on May 19, 1865, and his deposition stated he was a member of the Fifth Alabama Cavalry.

The Union troops remained in Huntsville intermittently throughout the war, driving citizens from their homes and taking possession of both public buildings and private residences for their own use. In 1862 a group of prominent citizens, including Dr. Fearn, was arrested for refusing to cooperate with the Federal authorities. According to some accounts, he contracted pneumonia while in jail, which resulted in his death on January 16, 1863.

EDWARD D. TRACY to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^m

Dalton Friday
3rd May 1861

My sweet darling.

I wrote you a letter by David Moore yesterday acknowledging the receipt of your thrice welcome letter and thanking you and God for it.

Yesterday we organized our regiment by the election of our friend Jones as Colonel, and are on the march today for Lynchburg. We leave in an hour or two, and I am of course much hurried. We will remain at Lynchburg a long time for the purposes of drill, and then in all probability we will be ordered back after a bloodless campaign. So my precious wife you must not permit groundless apprehensions to retard your recovery.

Be sure I will take care of myself and God willing return to you safe and sound.

I continue entirely well and so does John.

Give much love to Sue and Mother. A million of kisses for yourself and babies.

You and Sue must write to me at Lynchburg.

Entirely and devotedly
Your husband
E D Tracy

EDWARD D. TRACY to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^e

Camp near Lynchburg
9th May 1861

Mrs E D Tracy
Oak Place

My darling wife.

I am so hurried that I have but time to tell you that I am well, and love you better than everything in the world. With the exception of your sweet letter at Dalton, and Sue's billet written the day after I left I have heard nothing from you. I have written every day except Sunday. I pray God that you and our cherbus are well.

I am getting on tolerably. My company is beginning to be tolerably well drilled and in the main keep well and stand the exposure with remarkable fortitude.

I see Lawson every day or two - he is overwhelmed with work.

Goodbye my dearest and take good care of self and of our little precious darlings.

Love and a thousand kisses to Sue and Mother - and to all the family.

Remember me affectionately to our dear friends Mr and Mrs Clay.

Your devoted husband
E D Tracy

I send you a very consolatory confirmation of Slaughter's opinion in relation to the chances of war, from Marshal Saxe. Sammy Moore says please send it in to Mrs Barnard when you have read it.

EDWARD D. TRACY to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^e

In Camp near
Harper's Ferry Va
30th May '61

My darling wife

Here we are yet without a battle or any prospect of one. Mr Venable who bears this has promised me to call out and see you: from him you will learn everything relative to my position, health &c. He, as well as every other person who has seen me, says that I look healthier than when I left home.

These assurances will I trust allay your affectionate solicitude my precious wife, and make you stronger in heart and body. Be sure that I will not neglect any precaution to ensure my safe return to you and our babies. And that He who noteth even the sparrow's fall, will not be unmindful of me.

Everybody in my company gets letters from home but me; I know you can't write honey but dear Sue *must* take pity upon me, and write me, if not more than a line, telling me how you are all coming on. My mind is a prey to all sorts of fears, when I do not hear, and others do.

Don't be disturbed by the rumors of war here, or the tales of domestic disturbance at home: both are ridiculously exaggerated, and in my opinion *we* have nothing to fear from either. God is sovereign over us, and will order all things for the best with those who love and fear Him. Be comforted my wife with that thought.

When your health permits write me a little love note. Your first love letter, which made me happier than I ever was before, except when you *told* me that you loved me, was not more welcome than would a letter from you now be, giving the glad tidings of your convalescence, and of the well being of our pretty cherubs.

I take out your and their pictures innumerable times a day and derive great pleasure from the examination of my little family. When you get well, you and Sue must go in and have both your "*likenesses*" taken and send them to me in return for my present to you. When received I will pay you again by sending you a little daguerreotype of Captain Tracy. Do keep well my darling for my sake.

Don't let Susie and Georgia forget their "*favver*," God bless their souls; and teach my Benjamin of a daughter small Ellen to know, love, and kiss her hand at me. Before the last can be done however I expect to be at home and in peace and quiet take charge of that part of her education myself.

The climate here is very different from ours, and while you are all no doubt sweltering in the heat, I find my red flannel very

comfortable. This is the greatest grass country that I have ever seen: consequently we luxuriate in splendid beef and delicious butter. I wish Polly had a chance to show her skill with such milk as we have here. I say as *we have*, but must not be understood literally for we never see milk in Camp, but of butter of the finest quality we have an abundance.

Tell Mother, the banks of the Potomac at this place are covered with the most beautiful spruce pines and wild ivy. The latter is just beginning to bloom. Ask Mat to send our uniforms by the first opportunity that presents itself.

It is growing late my own precious sweet wife and I am very tired, having drilled as usual about six hours today besides attending to other matters. All your friends here are well. There are some few cases of indisposition but nothing serious.

Give my love to Mother and Sue. Kiss the latter and our three babies as many times as they are willing to stand.

Love to all the family and to Dr Fearn, Sheffey and Judge Clay and wife.

God bless and protect you my own sweet wife.

Good night and a thousand kisses

Your devoted husband
E. D. Tracy

Lawrence is well and doing well.

MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY to EDWARD D. TRACY^e

Oak Place June 1st 1861

My darling Husband.

Since last I wrote you, I have been through many trials and tribulations, almost enough to break my heart. But thank God my troubles are mostly removed, and I have much to be grateful for. All of our dear sweet children have been sick. Our darling *tiny* wee one, has been so ill we were in despair of her life. And I was miserable enough to die. Oh! I did not know how *dear* she was to me, or how *very* much I loved her until I thought she was about to be taken from me. And then, my darling, I was *so selfish* I could not bear the idea of giving her up, even to have her be a little Angel in a better world. I knew it was wicked to feel thus, and prayed earnestly to God to forgive me and to make me submissive to His will. And He heard my prayer and gave ear unto my supplications and was very merciful unto me. To day the precious one is *much* better, poor little creature she has struggled hard for life, and has been a great sufferer. But you would be amused if you could only see how badly spoiled she is already, to keep her quiet, I used to walk her when she seemed fretful, and now I have to keep it up, and sometimes walk her nearly all day, and night. I am quite willing to indulge the little lady - though it has broken me down completely. Mrs Clem Clay who came out to see me when I was in the midst

of my trials and perfectly overwhelmed with grief says if I take my troubles so hard, that instead of supposing there was so *great* a difference between our ages as *eleven* days that I will look *eleven years* older than you my precious, in fact she almost admitted I had reached that point now, and I dare say she is correct, for I am pale, thin, haggard, and as care worn, as a person could look to be. You bid me go to Bailey's and get rosy, and strong, but I cannot leave the little ones now my darling. Ada has gone down to Bailey's with Annie, and Fearn, I would have gone with her had it been possible. Susie was quite sick last Tuesday and we were much alarmed about her, she made herself sick by eating imprudently. And our own sweet little Napoleon has been quite unwell with disordered bowels, has fallen off a great deal. So you perceive my darling that your *whole* family have been ill, but I will make you happy by telling you we [are] all well or *nearly* well now. Mother predicts that the baby will now grow and fatten.

I am so delighted to hear that you and Bro John, keep well, and that camp life agrees with you so finely. Be prudent, and continue to improve and come back to me, a *strong* robust man.

June 2nd 1861

My dearest Husband.

I commenced this, Saturday evening, but was interrupted by the wail of my young one, which was only quieted by considerable walking. The little darling continues to improve - to day she is resting sweetly. Susie and Georgia are well. I received your kind letter sent me by Mr McLeod for which you have my thanks. I am glad my darling you give such good account of yourself, and am especially pleased to have you tell me, you don't think there will be any attack upon Harper's Ferry. I trust and pray there will not be my darling, but you must not deceive me honey. You beg me in your letter not to be alarmed unnecessarily about you. But if you could only know the horrible and exciting reports they get up in Huntsville, you would see I had much to alarm me. What rumor do you suppose they had about you and Bro John a few days ago? Well it was reported all over town that there had been a fight at Harper's Ferry, and that Bro John was killed, and you dangerously wounded, fortunately I did not hear of it until the report had been fully contradicted - but if I had my *own* darling, you may be *sure* it would have killed me.

We are all much gratified to hear that Lawrence continues to serve you faithfully. Tell him his kin are all well and send much love to him. Susie has just awakened from a nap and the first thing she said after opening her eyes was - "Never mind I'll tell my Favwer presently" so you see my darling you see the object of her dreams as well as her waking moments. She very often says she wants to see you *so* bad, and begs me to let her write you a letter. She sends love and kisses to you, and Uncle Johnnie and also Col

Jones. Mother, and Sue are quite well, and send love to you and Bro John. Sister Kate and family all well. I will see Bro Matt and attend to your little requests. Good bye darling. Write to me regularly.

Your affectionate
Wife Ellen.

P.S. I have quit nursing the baby. Are you satisfied?

Tuesday Morning.

Baby not so well today, rested badly last night.

EDWARD D. TRACY to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^m

In Camp near Winchester Va
13th July 1861

Mrs E. D. Tracy
Huntsville Ala
My darling wife.

According to my expectation, expressed in my letter to Sue, all our military preparations of the 9th again ended in smoke. Our tents were struck, rations corked etc. both on that day and the next: intelligence reached us that the army of Patterson was advancing, and would certainly attack us.

You have no idea of the effect of a Camp life even upon the most timid men: the monotony of eating, sleeping, drinking and drilling produces such intolerable *ennui* that even the prospect of a battle is hailed with pleasure as promising *change*. Accordingly on the 9th and 10th the men were in good spirits impatiently awaiting the fight, which each man supposes, is to make him illustrious. How we will stand the real shock when it comes, if come it ever does, remains to be seen.

Certain it is, however, that no enemy came, and so far as we can judge from present indications are in no hurry to win laurels at our expense. When last heard from, they were still in Camp at Martinsburg, about a day's march from here, sufficiently troubled by disaffection among their own men to satisfy their desire for active employment. We hear that two regiments whose time of enlistment had expired threw down their arms and insisted upon their right to return home, but were forcibly detained: and that diverse other regiments refuse to proceed further into Virginia.

Meanwhile we are energetically proceeding to fortify this place, with a view of giving them a hospitable reception when they visit us. Large reinforcements are being daily received together with considerable ordnance. "They say" that we have now more cannon than any army of similar size ever had in modern times.

But why do I worry you with these details my darling? I know that the only interest you feel in the maturity of our preparation, is the hope which such knowledge begets, that the rascally invaders

of our soil will not dare to risk a battle against an army so equipped. I doubt very much whether they can be brought up to that point: if they are, of course we can not do less than punish them severely for their presumption.

I think that God is manifestly on our side. This regiment has been out from home for nearly three months and out of the thousand which it contains only two members of it have died either from sickness or casualty: and yet we have done more hard duty I suppose than any other infantry regiment in the service. We have become well drilled and on every occasion of review bear the palm. Yesterday Gen Bee, our brigade Commander, witnessed our dress parade, and on its completion, said it was the best dress parade that he had seen in the Southern Army - he had seen nothing like it out of the regular Army and it reminded him of those etc etc. As in duty bound, we gave a General of such judgement, three hearty cheers.*

EDWARD D. TRACY to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^m

Manass Junction

23rd July 1861

Mrs E. D. Tracy

My darling wife

Yesterday, we had a bloody battle. Our regiment was in the foremost and thickest of the fight. My company suffered very severely. I have already telegraphed to Clay at Lynchburg to telegraph you the particulars. I need not tell you my precious, that your husband was not recreant in the dread hour. I stood erect in the front rank when men lying down were being shot all around. I rallied every time the word was given and at the last attack had only six of my company, the balance were shot, or scattered.

By the mercy of God neither I nor John were touched. I have only time and space to detail the list of dead and wounded. Our friend Col Jones, whose gallantry is in every body's mouth, was shot through both thighs, at first reported dead but now not supposed mortally wounded. He was taken prisoner, but rescued and now in our hands doing as well as could be expected. Our Lieut Col, and Major were both shot, one in the arm, the other in the leg - both left the field, or rather the poor Major (a very dear friend of mine whom I carried until I was about to faint) was left on the field. In my company there are Dead Wm Landman - Kees - W. Arnold - Preston - Geo Anderson - Buffington - Spence. Wounded mortally Forrester. Wounded severely but not mortally Fielding Bradford - Wm Lowe - Lee Hammond - John Hawkins Bailey. Wounded slightly Humphrey and Eldridge, wounded very slightly Alex Lanier - Henry Roper - Peter Fletcher and James Jordan. Very *very* slightly wounded Leslie Moore - Tom Douglas.

*The remainder of this letter appears to be missing.

Kiss my babies and trust in God. Don't fear for me. I will not die 'til my time. Daryll and Stephen Anderson telegraphed as not heard from - are now reported safe.

You are my darling sweetheart

Your husband

E D Tracy

Of course we won the victory. Those not mentioned are entirely unhurt.

Poor Kemp Turner was killed.

JOHN F. STEELE to MATTHEW W. STEELE^e

Army of the Potomac

Camp Bee near Manassas Battle-field

Aug. 2, 1861

Dear Brother,

Events have transpired within the last month so rapidly and changeful that I have had no chance to send you any-thing more than verbal messages, and our whole Brigade since the memorable 21st has been in such an utter state of disorganization that even now I cannot be as full as I desire. Lit has been promoted to rank of Major and assigned to duty in the Ala 12th Col R. T. Jones - his company was pained to give him up yet felt that the promotion was honorable and that he ought to accept - he left to-day surrounded by those who stood by him in the storm of battle and bid a sad adieu. Of course I follow - for to tell the truth the company led by such Officers as Sale and Spragins, will be a mere cypher - they have no *military* or *civil* sense and neither of them display gallantry or *true courage* in the hour of battle. Of course they are rec'd by the men with distrust.

Tracy acted throughout the day with marked coolness and courage and his voice was constantly heard above the din of musketry and the thunder of artillery exhorting his men to do or die. I had all confidence in him and I think he was the star of the Reg't on that bloody day. Of the battle you have heard all from various sources and from those who have visited the field - I will not attempt description. I was cool and collected - loading and firing with care and precision, yet expecting every moment to be struck down. Most who fell of our company were of my platoon and very near to me - the field after battle baffles description, for I assure you that I have never read of such - God forbid that you may ever see the like. I send you as relics some balls (Minie Musket) Canister, fragments of shells &c. They fired Round shot 6 s and 12 s - Belgian fuse spherical Shells - Parrot shot and shell for rifle cannon; Read shell for same; leaded Minie solid conical shot for same; together with a perfect storm of Canister - they fired no grape. Read's shell is a *failure* - it is a percussion shell but nine of ten fail and then the metal is so badly disposed that

it is not at all to be relied on. I had one for you but gave it to Mr Watkins who will show it to you. The Parrot ball and shell are beautiful but must be very expensive - the shell is percussion. Sherman's Battery is composed of the most beautiful guns both rifle and Howitzer that I ever saw - the R. Island battery is perfect - we took them in such a dreadful charge that not a piece was *spiked*. It is useless to speak of the courage of Southern soldiery. There was an Englishman who was taken but afterwards released on application, who was a witness of the Inkerman battle of the Crimea and the dreadful fight at Solferino - he saw how the Ala 4th stood the murderous fire poured upon it and says that nothing in History will show such obstinate resistance. I will draw you a map of the battle as far as the left wing is concerned - in fact *the* fighting was done on the left and some other time will give you details. I lost all my baggage, shirts, pants, coats in fact my valise with everything I had and I am now dirty and naked. I have sent to Winchester for some few underclothes and hope soon to be better supplied. Of course we hold our Qr. Master responsible for such loss - for it was his duty to see that our wagons promptly brought up the rear when we were on force march from Winchester, but you know what sort of man he is and I have nothing to say. I send to Robert 1 copper cent, that was given, together with a Catholic Medal, to me as a memento of the gratitude of a poor wounded prisoner who had his right leg entirely shot away. I gave him water and food and carried him a bowl of chicken soup - he was of the 69th N. Y. He was not a Catholic but says he found the Medal which was doubtless lost by some of his men. The copper was all the money he had, and I wish you to impress upon Robert and all your boys, the lesson of Mercy and Charity - the medal give to Sue. Say to her that her note and little gifts came like manna - for I had no hand-kerchief and no socks - the soap is acceptable and when I get a towel will use it. It has rained on us for several days and we are in a horrible condition. Say to Fearn, Geo. and Robert, that had they been here I could have given them a wagon load of pistols, guns, swords, knives, belts and in fact any-thing in the killing line. I want to get you a Sharpe's Carbine or Rifle. Most all the guns used by the enemy were Minie Muskets, and a splendid weapon it is. I could send you some shell and shot but they are so heavy that I dare not tax our friends with their care. I will write to Sue in a day or two. Camp rumor is that to-morrow we receive marching orders for Wheeling. I can't say what truth there is in it, but I suppose we shall move from this. I hope we will soon have an honorable peace and do sincerely trust that you will not be called out. Love to Mother, Sister K. and all. Tell little Sallie that she must get well soon as I am going to write her a long letter. Lawrence is now well and has left with Lit. You will hear from me should we move so that you may know what course we are going.

Yr. aff. Brother John

Respects to Dr F and hopes for his continued health.

P.S. Capt Arthur Beard sends his kind regards to you and Dr F.
I am writing in his tent.

EDWARD D. TRACY to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^e

Tuscumbia 16th Feby 1862

Mrs E. D. Tracy

My darling

We were detained at the depot at Huntsville 'til five and a half o'clock when we took freight train and got here yesterday at 12 M. We are stopping for the present at the hotel, the most miserable place you ever saw.

Lawrence got in this morning bringing the ham and cakes which dear Ada sent, and your sweet little note. Ada's contribution was very opportune and will keep us from starvation (our danger from which would otherwise have been imminent) for the present.

The people here are regaining their confidence and making themselves merry over their late freight. They say that except in very high water the gun boats can not ascend higher than Eastport which is twenty miles below Florence.

I am entirely well except a bad cold. I am getting more and more tired of war and its consequences, and more and more anxious to be at home with my darling wife and babies. But I must be content to endure as much for my Country, as her enemies submit to in order to do her injury.

The news last night was, that we had achieved a glorious victory at Fort Donelson. Thank God! Love and kisses to Sue and the babies from your devoted

Husband

EDWARD D. TRACY to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^m

Tuscumbia Ala

13th Mar 1862

My darling,

We are under orders tonight to leave for Corinth in the morning. The enemy are supposed to be desirous of occupying that delightful position, (a desire which merely corroborates my long entertained opinion, that they are as destitute of taste as they are of principle) and we are expected to make earnest remonstrance against their purpose. If it be my fortune to meet them, I will strive to do my duty as a good soldier and patriot, and to prove myself worthy of you and our incomparable babies.

I love you my precious wife, so tenderly that words are too weak to attempt its description; you already know from your own heart, the inexpressible, height and depth, length and breath and infinitude of that love.

Do not permit yourself to be disturbed by apprehensions. I am in the hands of God every where and He is able to protect at all times. I will give you intelligence of my movements as often as I can, but may be out of reach of the mails, so my silence must not disturb you.

Kiss Susie and Dawdy and wee Ellen a million times and bid Sue twice as often as she is willing. Love to Mother, Ada, Sister Kate and everybody who loves us. I will let you know where to write to me. Meanwhile you can risk a sweet letter to Corinth.

Entirely and devotedly your husband

E D Tracy

I am now entirely well.

MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY to EDWARD D. TRACY^e

Oak Place July [1862]

It is exceedingly painful my darling Husband after so long a silence, to send you a letter of sad intelligence. But God has seen fit to remove one of our little household treasures. Oh! Our little sun beam, sweet wee Ellie, the merry light of our house, is now no more. She died on the 8th inst. of scarlet fever, after an illness of six days. I need not tell you my dearest what a *great* trial it was for me to give her up, and what a struggle it cost me to bear up under the blow, suffice it to say, God has sustained me, and I only pray that *you* may be likewise sustained. Let us with submissive minds my darling endeavor in a right spirit to say, the "Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Little Ellie had grown exceedingly interesting, had a thousand little winning ways, and every day grew dearer, and dearer to us all. She suffered much during her illness, but strange to say notwithstanding her raging fevers her mind remained clear to the last, she knew every one, and seemed to understand all that was said around her. She was not the first to fall a victim to scarlet fever on the place, poor little Amy, and Rhoda's baby died with it. I trust the disease has now been checked, we used all the preventives that could be thought of, and have had no new case since my little darling's death, which has been nearly three weeks. Susie, and Georgia have thus far escaped, though they are not *entirely* well, having had disordered bowels - but be not alarmed about them, I will try to get them on the mountain which I think will quite restore them. As yet I have not been able to get a place to stay. Bro Matt promised to see Mr Donegan about getting me a room in his house, if he consents for me to take a room. I will go up next week. Now my own dear Husband I pray you be not cast down, but bear up, I have strived faithfully to do so, knowing my duty to *you* and the *little ones*. My trial has been great as you well know. Your presence would have done much towards comforting me, but since it cannot be, I will look only above for comfort. And you my

darling must pray to "God to be a very present help in this time of need." Let your religion support you *now*, and *always*, pray without ceasing, pray *earnestly* and *faithfully* and God will sanctify our affliction unto us.

Mother, and Sue are quite well and send love to you. Do you ever hear from Angelo, and Sister Sallie? Goodby, take *good* care of *yourself* and may God bless and restore you to us is ever the earnest prayer of your ever devoted wife -

Ellen.

EDWARD D. TRACY to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^m

Tullahoma Nov 28th 1862

My darling

I only write a few lines to assure you of my whereabouts and health.

I am here for a few days, after which I will be stationed for some time at Manchester to which point you will direct your sweet letters. I received yours, directed to Bridgeport yesterday and was delighted to know that you and the babies were well and happy. I persist in thinking Clara *comparatively* (I always said "comparatively" didn't I?) subdued, despite your's and Sister's opinion to the contrary - though I must admit that she is no lamb yet. Give her my love anyhow, and tell her that I would be glad to attend her nuptials. I will write to Sue and Mat tonight. My staff joined me yesterday and I feel more comfortable. At present I am in command of McCown's Division, and if the Yankees will come out of their holes I will have a chance to fight a Maj. Genl's command. That they will do this however I have no idea, so you need be under no apprehension that I will have the opportunity of risking your happiness either for public good or the private *bubbles* of reputation.

Lawrence left home Sunday, he reports all well but that Mother and Sue "miss the children mightily." Give my love to my dear Sister and tell her that I will write her a long letter as soon as I get the press of matters pushed off.

Take care of yourself and our children, teach them to be obedient *but don't beat them*. God bless you and them; I would be the happiest man in the world if I was Mr Tracy with you by my side and them on my knees, this cold night, after having made a big law speech and gained my case against Pope Walker and Bob Brickell. Wouldn't it be fine fun for you to listen to my narration of the smart things I had said, and enjoy the exhibition of my vanity. Well honey don't despair of the return of those days - we are stronger now than ever before and will I believe in a few more weeks collect sufficient provisions for the army for 12 months. We have already driven 100,000 hogs across the river besides transporting large quantities of flour, leather and other army supplies. The

enemy evidently dread to make the attack, and ere long the winter rains will set in, which will put the roads in such condition as will effectually prevent active operations off the water courses. In short I think this campaign promises to be very inglorious but very useful. Love to Ma and Hattie. Tell the old lady I have prayed God's blessings on her many times for her tender care and love of me, but never more fervently than I have, these cold nights under her splendid blankets. Remember me most kindly to my friend and brother Mr Johnston. Love to all.

Your husband
E D Tracy

Tell Thurston I delivered the bottle of wine to Gen'l Smith. By the way I am not transferred from Gen'l S's army.

Did Mr J. succeed in getting the coat from Kennedy? Write very often.

EDWARD D. TRACY to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^m

Chickasaw Bluffs, near
Vicksburg Mar 23rd 1863

My darling little wife

The week just past, is the only one which has elapsed since our separation, during which I did not write to you.

This omission was occasioned by the removal of my command, from the left, to the extreme right of our line, which involved the necessity of my acquainting myself thoroughly with the topography of my position, its defenses, its weak points etc.

I am now in position in rear of that portion of our lines where the late battle was fought, about midway between V.Burg and Snyder's Bluff, which latter, is a fortified position held by us on the Yazoo about fourteen miles from its mouth. At the present stage of water, my line is not only impregnable, but unassailable, so, while I spare no precaution which would be proper were I entirely exposed, I yet feel no harrassing anxiety. We are all in high spirits at the recent failures of the enemy to turn our position. The repulse by my old commander Gardner at Port Hudson was a brilliant success, and makes us quite easy in regard to the safety of that place. The expedition which came across from the Mississippi (some hundred and fifty miles above) through Yazoo Pass down the Coldwater and Tallahatchie with the Yazoo River, with the objects of burning our boats on that stream, and then assaulting Snyder's Bluff, and making a landing there and marching across our line of communication with Jackson, has also been defeated. Our latest advices from Gen Loring at Greenwood (a short distance above Yazoo City) represent the fleet in full retreat backing up the River (for it is too narrow for them to turn) and his forces in pursuit. Another fleet was sent by the adventurous Yankees up Steele's Bayou through Black Bayou into Deer Creek and

thence through Rolling Fork into little Sunflower, which would have carried them into the Yazoo also above Snyder's Bluff. Featherstone Brigade was detached to resist their approach and we hear that, two of the gunboats are aground and the others surrounded if not captured. So on the whole God has been very good to us, and we feel renewed confidence in our ability to hold this Gibraltar, if we can only keep supplied with subsistence. I have written you a real military letter, which you will understand if you will take Colton's Atlas and examine the position of the various streams mentioned.

Campbell got in yesterday in fine health and spirits. Ten million thanks my sweetest darling for your beautiful present. Your ambrotype is the best I think that was ever taken of you and though not perfect, it is yet the most acceptable gift in the world, except the original. I rejoice to see that you look so plump and healthy. Susie and Dawdie stand out of their pictures like things of life and beauty, as they are. I feasted my eyes with the three, the last thing before sleeping, and the first on awakening. I have them now before me, and would not exchange them for a Major General's commission.

I love you and my babies more than life, honors, or pleasure. Indeed of the latter I have really none without you. I thank you too for the towel and Susie and Dawdy for the pretty yellow handkerchiefs. Thank dear Mama for her nice present of a cravat. It was the very thing I needed - she always understood my wants. I was sorry to learn that dear little Carrie was not well, but pray that she has entirely recovered before this. Tell Mr Johnston that I have sent in, to purchase the sugar, as I intended to do before Campbell told me his wish. He must accept it as a present from you. It will be shipped by Express in a day or two. Love to dear Sister, Hattie, Ma, and all. Kiss Celeste for me.

Your devoted husband
E. D. Tracy

EDWARD D. TRACY to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^m

Camp near Vicksburg Miss
April 20th 1863

My sweetest wife

I wrote you, this morning by Mr Jno Cole of Macon a few lines enclosing \$300.00, and in accordance with the promise therein contained (more precious than the *pecunia* wasn't it honey?) I now proceed to write you a long letter of love.

As Mr C. travels with a cargo of sugar I expect the last will be first, and you will enjoy the letter before you hear of the promise.

You have learned from Campbell's letter to Hattie of the unfortunate result of my debut into the fashionable society of Vicksburg, but no description of his, could convey an adequate idea of my

disgust on the occasion. For four months, I have uniformly declined the numerous invitations which I have received to parties etc until my constant absence seemed an affectation and I determined to make the experiment and be governed in future by it's success or failure. Accordingly on the evening of the 16th accompanied by my Aid and Jr Master I essayed the deep of gay life in the beleaguered Gibraltar of the West.

Bryon's magnificent description of Brussels the night before Waterloo, will give you a better idea of the scene than I can.

"There was a sound of revelry by night
And Belgium's Capital was gathered there
Here beauty and her chivalry" etc etc

There was indeed no lack of fair women or brave men; even I, recluse that I was, had begun to thaw under such genial influences, when in the midst of it all there fell the sound of our signal gun. And then there was hurrying to and fro, rapid partings and mountings in hot haste. I hied me to my command at a rate of speed far more expeditious than dignified, with the mental resolve which John's story illustrates where his hero exclaims, "I pledge you my word ladies it was the first time I ever *teched* the instrument and I never will do it again." As my road to Head Quarters led me along the longer part of the line of our batteries, I enjoyed an unsurpassed opportunity of witnessing the splendid spectacle of a bombardment by night. The boats seemed to move slowly and sullenly, ever and anon opening their port holes and pouring shell and grape into the town, while our batteries played with incessant and tremendous fire upon the audacious intruders. As boat after boat passed me, and I distinguished some transports among them, I thought that it might be, that the long looked for attack in front had commenced. But it was soon apparent that their object was to pass below, in which eight out of eleven succeeded, the remaining three being sunk or burnt.

The river was illumined by a burning house, fired by our pickets on the opposite shore, as well as by the blazing boat, and so there was nothing lacking in the grand panorama. I soon knew that my troops would not be needed and felt relieved on that score, but I felt towards the party as the Catholic (that Pa used to tell of) did of the rasher of bacon and eggs that he was about to partake of on Friday, when disturbed by a terrific peal of thunder he pushed his plate away, saying, "Pshaw! If all this fuss is to be made over one plate of ham and eggs, I'm done before I begin."

You perceive honey that my experiment was not such as to tempt me to it's renewal, and I have relapsed into my quondam character of a quiet, country general, caring for no pleasures that Vicksburg can furnish, except when it's post office contains a letter from my darling wife.

I have heard nothing further from Wheeler and argue from his silence the failure of his plans relative to my transfer. I am

quite indifferent on the subject and would have rejected the proposition in the beginning, but for the prospect of seeing you my precious sweetheart sooner than I can otherwise hope to do.

This is no time for officers to seek leave, and an application for it except under most urgent circumstances is irreconcilable with a delicate soldierly honor. But I do not think it will be very long before I will move my darling Mahomet to the mountain.

I am entirely well and so is Campbell, who sends love to you and all.

Kiss my dear little daughters a million times for "Favwer" and give much love to all.

Your devoted husband

E D Tracy

Tell Stump that I received the Special Order from Col Weems Com'd Post, dated Apl 15th extending his leave of absence for sixty days, and regret to learn from it that his wound continues so painful and disabling. I had not heard otherwise than verbally from Campbell that he had been ordered to report to me.

CAMPBELL TRACY to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^e

[Telegram] Received at Macon, May 3, 1863
By telegraph from Vicksburg. To Mrs E. D. Tracy

Your Gallant husband is dead, fell mortally wounded on the first inst. I have escaped unhurt. Will try to come home.

C. Tracy

MRS. ADA FEARN STEELE to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^m

Huntsville June 5th 1863

What can I say to you my poor darling sister to soothe your deep anguish. I am a poor comforter; still I cannot withstand the great desire I have to tell you how much my heart bleeds for you and your precious little ones. My dearest sister, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," and oh how often I read in that sacred volume His promise to be the widow's God and Father to the fatherless. The ways of Providence are dark and mysterious, but all will be revealed in that better day when we are again united to our loved lost ones. "A little while" and we too will follow to that blessed abode where there is no grief or sorrow. Bear up dear one for your little children. You must live and be all to them. I pray the many prayers which have unitedly ascended the Mercy seat in your behalf will be answered by giving you a patient resigned spirit to the will of our Heavenly Father. I feel as you do in crying out in the bitter agony of my heart. Why could *he* not have been spared to us? Oh Ellen I too have lost all in this world to whom I could look;

still Jesus is left to us, and as our hearts bleed so sorely, He speaks "Peace be still." We must pray for that Faith to say "Thy will be done" though He slay me yet will I trust in Him. Strive to look up from this vale of tears, and see those we love "glorified spirits" entered into that rest prepared for them since the foundation of the world.

I wish you were with us all, yet I know kind relations and friends do all they can to solace and comfort you, and you feel as Job felt "Miserable comforters are ye all." It would be sweet to die if God would call us, but we are left to fulfil our Mission. God has a work for you in His vineyard. You must be a light to shine for His glory. If our departed friends are ministering spirits sent to watch over and guard us in this life, it must give them joy to see us bearing up under our trials, and living in preparation for another world. As the good are called, so much more is left for us to do, by endeavoring to fill their places. Our church and community have lost a bright example in the life of your precious husband. He was indeed a Christian that combined everything to make man noble, honorable, great, and good; but God needed him more in Heaven than earth, and when we have reached that standard of perfection that he won, God will remove us to a better sphere of usefulness above.

We have not heard from you dear Ellen since Sue left you, and we begin to feel very anxious. Ask some of your friends to write, for I know you do feel as if you could not. Mother and Sue are well, also all other members of the family. Sue is busy on the children's clothes and is trying to get a box ready to send you next week. All are asleep or would send love. Give my love to all your relations. I have never met any except Hattie, yet I love them. Kiss the children for me. God bless and strengthen you under this great trial is ever the prayer of your truly attached
sister Ada F. Steele

ANGELO STEELE to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^e

Canton Miss. June 7th 1863

My Dear Sister.

Your kind letter has just been received, and I answer it with a sad - sad heart, tis a severe dispensation of Providence, but my dear Sister, know that God's will must be done, and endeavor to bear up against this severe trial - we all have sad hearts, the Country mourns for the loss of such a gallant, courageous and Christian Soldier. You are not alone - true, to you the loss is greatest. You feel it more severly - try and become reconciled to this fate - he died gallantly defending the rights of his country, and obeying the orders of his superior commander. Whilst at V/Burg he made many friends - "none knew him but to love him" - complimented and spoken of in the highest terms by all who had any transactions with him.

Kate's letter to you informed you of what I wished to do - but alas all my wishes were thwarted - the enemy advanced so rapidly I could do nothing. Mr Winter and I consulted what to do - his Staff were telegraphed, and no answer - at last I telegraphed Maj. Fearn (Tom Fearn) at V/Burg - and he confirmed the first report. When I dispatched you - I had hopes of his being alive - but have since heard that he was killed almost instantly, not speaking - was taken to the house of Judge L. N. Baldwin, and decently interred - this comes from a young man, a friend of mine, who asked Gen'l Bowen all about him. At present My Dear Sister I can do nothing - the enemy now occupy that whole country - Vicksburg is entirely surrounded, all communication cut off. Should we (God grant it) be fortunate enough to make a decisive battle and relieve V/Burg, I will do everything for you - will attend strictly to all that you ask. His Brigade is now commanded by Gen'l Lee and are at V/B - at least we have heard so. I will not say that he was sacrificed - but I will say this much, that this department has been exceedingly unfortunate in Commanders - none have had sufficient capacity. At one time Gen'l Pemberton could not have gotten a Corporal's Guard (among the Citizens and Planters I mean) to have executed any order. All confidence was lost in him - they believed that he had sold us - but his noble defense of V/Burg has given them sufficient evidence that he is not disloyal. Gen'l Johnston's headquarters are at present here - he is doing all he can, and as soon as communication is established, I will attend faithfully to all that you ask.

Sister Sallie's health as usual - her children are all very well. Kate and children quite well, and send much love. And now My Dear Sister may God's blessing attend you and your dear children - teach your children to know they had a father beloved by all, a christian and true follower of the divine laws. My Darling Sister this one consolation, that he was a good christian - ought to show that God doth not willingly afflict, but for some good cause - try now and be resigned to this severe trial. I would write you more, but my heart is too full - suffice it - I will divide the last thing with you, and feel no hesitation in asking whatever you want. Would I could give you all particulars of his death - but cannot - all that I could gather, was that he was almost instantly killed - the ball entering near the heart - was carried to Judge Baldwin's house - dressed and decently buried in Port Gibson - his papers, Trunk and horses, I can give no information of but my hopes are that they are taken care of, and you will get them. Judge B. I understand is a perfect Gentleman, and stands high in the estimation of the people. Rest assured My Dear Sister that I will do everything in my power to carry out your wishes.

Ever Your Loving brother
Angelo

P.S. Sister Sallie has written you, giving about same information as I have written you. Kiss the children for me.

Ever Your devoted Bro.
Angelo

HENRY M. SMITH to MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY^e

Jackson Miss.

July 5th, 1863.

My dear Madam,

Your letter to Mrs Baldwin enclosed to my care, has just come to hand and has been at once forwarded. I trust you may receive a speedy and full reply, but lest the information you seek should be delayed by the irregularity of the mails, I send you some facts which I have gathered from one of the Surgeons present on that sad day for the Confederacy and for you. Dr Powe tells me that Gen'l Tracy was wounded on the first of May, between two and three o'clock, while leading a charge. A minnie ball entered the left shoulder above the clavicle and penetrated the right lung. It occurred about 4 miles from town, to which he was at once removed and cared for there but it was unavailing. He survived his wound only two hours. He did not speak after leaving the field. Next day, with all respect and love and sorrow, he was buried in Judge Baldwin's lot in the Cemetery, where his grave is marked, and known to all in Port Gibson.

In common with a bereaved nation I mourn with you this sad and heavy loss. God alone can enable you to bear it, and while in coming years the memory of the noble and honored Christian gentleman, we now regret shall be a precious heritage to his children, doubt not that the God he served will fulfil His promises to you and be your wise protection and unfailing friend.

Very respectfully

Henry M Smith.

Please command my services in any way they can be useful to you.

V
Epilogue
1866-1868

MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY to MRS. ANN TRACY JOHNSTON^m

Oak Place Dec 4th 1866

My dear Sister.

I am happy to inform you the excitement of the season is over, and our household is now enjoying a most delightful state of quietness.

Sue's nuptials took place last Tuesday night, she was to have been married in the morning, but owing to a change in the schedule postponed it until the evening. All went off pleasantly on the occasion, though we had quite an inclement, and unfavorable night, which prevented many friends from coming. However the crowd was sufficiently large to be agreeable. We had quite a nice supper which was appreciated by all. Sue was married in her traveling dress, as she expected to leave at 12 o'clock, but did not get off, owing to the rain she remained two days with us. She seemed *perfectly* happy and we now feel quite reconciled to the match. Maj. Shackelford improves wonderfully upon acquaintance. I think he will make a very good, kind, and indulgent husband. He is foolishly in love, and says Sue shall have every wish of her heart gratified, and that nothing shall be left undone, that will add to her comfort, or happiness. He presented her with a most magnificent diamond cross, and ring, as a bridal present, and endeavored to play the agreeable to the family generally. Was quite affectionate and cordial in his manner, and gave us *all* a most pressing invitation to visit him. Did you get the box of cake I sent you by express? I should have written at the time, but was so fatigued, and worn out by the entertainment I was really sick. Kate is still with us, but expects to leave in a week or ten days. Angelo has rented a nice little house, and is waiting for her. I dislike very much to think of her departure, she has been such a comfort, and help to me, I know not how [to] get along without her, besides I hate to give up the darling little children, particularly her baby boy, who is the *sweetest*, and best baby in the world, bless his little heart, you will be glad to hear he has two teeth, and has also *quite* a nice crop of hair now. You will also be pleased to hear Nita's eye is entirely well, for which we *cannot* be *sufficiently* thankful.

Ada came out and spent a few days with us last week, and her bad children liked to have run us crazy. Oh! If this be a specimen, how will we stand the constancy? I expect I will go clean daft to say the least of it, not to speak of my own children, who will not be improved by such unruly associates, but I shall strive to do my duty to them under all circumstances. I must say however, I sometimes feel disheartened and think myself unequal to the task. Pray for me my darling Sister that God may strengthen, and direct me aright. Susie and Dawdie are quite well, they wore the red dresses you gave them the night of the wedding and looked quite handsome. I made them pointed yokes, and plaited waist, and trimmed the skirt with three rows of velvet and then cross in bunches. I

wish you could see them, they are beautiful. I was quite sorry to hear that Carrie and Mary Ellen had been sick, but most delighted to know of their recovery. I should have been very miserable, if I had known it without hearing of their convalescence. Kate, and Mother send you a great deal of love, we would have been most happy to have had you come up to the wedding. Kate says you must be certain to send her the photographs of yourself, Mr J. and children, as you promised. She has quite a handsome album and is waiting most anxiously to get them. You ask about Sue's dry goods. I have neither time nor space for details on the subject, suffice it to say she had quite an elegant outfit. Give a great deal of love to all, and kiss my precious nieces for me. Susie, and Dawdie send kisses to all. Remember me to the servants. Tell Adaline I wished for her very often during our cake baking. Also thank her for the pepper seed. I have been to church once since you sent me my veil. Good-by. Do write soon.

Your affectionate
Sister Ellen Tracy.

MRS. ELLEN STEELE TRACY to MRS. KATE MURPHY STEELE^e

Oak Place Feb 12th 1867

My darling Kate.

You know that I love you too much, to neglect you willingly. I need not say therefore, that my delay in answering your kind letters, has been unintentional. The truth is, I have not been entirely well, and have had the blues dreadfully, and worst of all, have suffered with a sore eye which has made me some what afraid to use them at night. You can well imagine this has been a great deprivation to me, as I have no other time for letter writing, and reading, not to speak of the sewing, which is always abundant, and heavy on my hands. So you see, though "the spirit has been willing, the flesh is weak." Susie is just in receipt of Nita's letter, and Mammy Coat, of Coatney's. Fearn brought them out this evening, and I cannot tell you how much delighted they seemed, and how glad *we all* were to get them. Tell Coatney her Mammy is very proud of her picture, and says she means to keep it always. I must say however, I was rather disappointed in not getting my darling boy's, and Nita's. Do send them along. I am *very* impatient to see them. Tell Nita, Susie thought her letter was mighty sweet, and pretty, and says she will answer it, just as soon as she can get me to write for her.

Last Wednesday being a most beautiful day, I sent Mrs C.'s carriage home, and concluded to take a fare well benefit, and make a few calls. So I dressed myself, and children in all of our good clothes, and made quite a visiting tour. The children had on their high day holy day suit, which you know consists of their red dresses, white Zouaves and their Christmas gaiters, so you can well imagine

they looked uncommonly well in all their finery, received many compliments, and were the cynosure of all eyes. I went to see Aunt Ellen, and Aunt Kitty and they treated me with distinguished cordiality, indeed I may say, they made quite a fuss over me, and mine. They kissed the children many times, and said they reminded them of some other little ones, they wanted to see. Aunt Ellen, and Kitty seem as happy as two Queens - and it would be a treat to you to see their nice, sweet, snug little home, every thing looked so comfortable, and showed the perfection of neatness, and order, in short, they are fixed up in their house, as no body in the world could fix up but your Aunts. Among the visits I made, I called to see Aunt Sallie Fleming. Poor old lady, "her sands of life are nearly run out," she is now confined to her bed, and I fear will not survive long. She seemed much gratified to see me, but could talk but little, as she was very feeble. I dined that day with Mrs Garth by invitation, which I accepted, as Ada was along. We had quite a nice dinner, and *all* made themselves unusually agreeable. Mrs G. insisted upon my doing the like again. Bere Fearn, Lucy F., and Laura Bassett, came out not long since, and spent the day at Oak Place. So you see we are getting quite intimate with the Fearn family, *entre nous*.

Have you commenced your garden yet? The spring like weather has been quite suggestive of it. Mother has planted a few of her seeds - though I think she need not be in a hurry, as we had quite a sleet, and snow last Saturday. Friday evening Theo Temple, and Charlie Ross came out, staid all night, and next day, and owing to the inclemency of weather, remained until Sunday morning. I always miss you my darling Sister, but whenever we have company, then I feel *most painfully* that my right hand man is gone - my kind help meet, and dependance, indeed, I scarcely know how to get along without you. Dan was out Sunday to see us. He is looking remarkably well, and seems as light hearted, and cheerful as ever. He told us Mayor S. passed through Huntsville last Thursday on his way home. I was very*

Woodie Withers came down last week, and spent a day or two with Bro John. He is looking most wretchedly.

We received Sister Sallie's box of presents, which was very acceptable. Have you heard from Sister S. since she left, and how is she? I wrote and enclosed her letter to Angelo. Did he forward it to her?

Good-by again.

Yours Ellen.

*The second sheet of this letter appears to be missing.

MRS. ADA FEARN STEELE to MRS. ANN TRACY JOHNSTON^e

Oak Place May 23rd 1868

My dear Mrs Johnston

Your kind letter of sympathy to dear Mother was received about ten days since. You should have had an earlier reply, but my duties have been pressing and my little daughter has been quite sick. We have felt deeply for you in this our sad bereavement. Her love for you was that of an own sister.

Our darling sister was sick only ten days and confined to her bed only three. The day after Mr Johnston left she had her first attack of neuralgia, and remarked "she was so glad she was not sick while he was here," she seemed to be so much delighted with his visit. I was quite sick with sore-throat and Ellen would often come in my room and tell me what he would say, with such a bright happy face. These attacks lasted two hrs, she tried various stimulant, but nothing gave her permanent relief. After suffering for a week Mother insisted upon sending for the Dr. He came on Tuesday morning and said these attacks were caused by indigestion. Ellen asked if he did not think her heart was involved and he laughingly replied, it was only sympathy with the stomach. He gave her an enema of Morphine just over the heart and under the skin which acted like a charm; gave her instant relief. The Dr left a dose of calomel and Dovers powders to be given at 4 o'clock that evening and that night Quinine with valerian, also bismuth and Dovers powders, alternately every two hrs, her stomach was too irritable to retain the medicine, and it made her very sick all night. The Dr found her free from pain in the morning, but she was unable to take any nourishment and had taken none since Monday; that evening (Wednesday) about three o'clock, another one of those terrible spells came on. We sent for the Dr and he gave another enema of Morphine which quieted her until 11 o'clock at night; and from that time till day - she was suffering excruciating agony; exclaiming frequently she must die if not relieved. Owing to some misunderstanding of the servant the Dr did not get here until daylight. Poor Mother she constantly reproaches herself for not sending for other physicians that night, but she thought every moment Dr Erskine would come, and he said he thought he understood her case thoroughly. The Dr gave her another Morphine enema, which quieted her all day, she slept very sweetly and was enabled for the [first] time for several days to retain any food. We gave her frozen cream. Sister Kate and I sat by her bed and made Mother lye down.

Our dear sister had very little to say that day, remarked once or twice "how delightful it was to be free from pain." The Dr gave her a dose of Prussic acid that morning and that night she had taken Quinine by injection. We all thought she was so much better and when the Dr came at five o'clock, he thought she was decidedly better, measured more Quinine to be given and was about to leave, when Ellen said, "Don't leave me Dr, I fear one of those attacks are

coming." He gave her an injection of brandy which she did not retain, she asked the Dr for more Morphine, he hesitated and she begged so earnestly he gave her one in the same place and manner. Feeling her pulse it was gone and only a few moments before it was 76. Dr E ordered mustard plasters to be put nearly all over her body and gave her brandy freely, which she asked for incessantly. Poor Mother was almost frantic and could not stay in the room, she came in the room about an hour before our darling one breathed her last, and asked how she felt, she said "a great deal better, don't you think I am Dr?" He said "Miss Ellen you are very ill, very much prostrated," she asked why they did not give her a hot foot bath and as I bathed her, she moved them about in the water as if excited. She prayed about two or three times; "if it were God's will to send His healing power and save, if not give her resignation to His will." Sister Kate asked "if she did not wish to see her children," she said "Yes." They were brought to her side, she put her arms around them and spoke to Susie, but she was nearly gone and hardly conscious what she said. I don't think our darling knew she was going to die until she asked the Dr, and she seemed to make every effort to bring on a reaction. Today four weeks ago she was with us and we thought resting so sweetly. I never witnessed a calmer death-bed. We could not believe she was going to leave and sometime after the breath left the body we continued to warm her. Our house is left desolate and lonely. The poor little darling ones do not realize their heavy loss. "Mother says she knows you could do better for them but oh she cannot give them up yet." They are a great comfort to their Ma-Ma, and are good and obedient children. Mother says, "she cannot leave home, but would love to see you and talk with you. Can you not make it convenient to come and see her."

The children are very well and send a great deal of love to you, Mamy and Carrie, Mr Johnston and all their relations. Mother sends much love to all. Remember me kindly to your relations.

With much sympathy and love
I am your true friend
A. F. Steele

Conclusion

With the deaths of Ellen and Edward Tracy, their two young daughters, Susie and "Dawdie," were taken to Macon to live with Tracy's sister Ann Johnston and her husband William. Because of Johnston's great wealth and his prominence in the community, the girls were afforded many luxuries, and both eventually married successful Georgians.

The affairs of Matt and Kate, in contrast, were anything but prosperous as Matt struggled to keep his father's estate solvent during the war and the lean years immediately following. Contributing to his downfall were both the war and the factorage system: the prevalence of the latter made cash transactions rare so that debts could be accumulated rapidly and thus credit overextended. When George Steele died, his estate was believed throughout the community to be abundantly solvent and was valued at about \$73,000, but his debts totaled \$45,000. In Matt's own words:

In consequence of the bad health of said testator for about two years prior to his death, his income had diminished, and his stock of implements of trade (such as horses, mules, wagons, farming tools, and farm fences &c) had greatly depreciated in quantity and condition and said testator left no money on hand.

To continue as an architect and builder, Matt was forced to borrow additional money. Shortly before the Civil War, he had invested heavily in woodworking equipment and erected a machine shop, thereby enabling him to do the carpentry in structures he contracted to build. Under normal conditions, this probably would have been a sound investment. Instead, his machinery was confiscated by the Confederate government, and he had the misfortune to be reimbursed with Confederate money, which was soon worthless. When President Lincoln freed the slaves, Matt lost his source of labor. Many of his slaves had been trained as skilled mechanics, brick-layers, plasterers, and carpenters, and they comprised much of the remaining value of the estate. To add to this, his mother and brothers and sisters continued to spend lavish sums of money, money which the estate did not have. Matt was taken to court in 1869 to give an accounting of his expenditures, and an incredulous judge noted that two of the Steeles had spent over \$16,000. Various tracts of real estate were ordered sold, and in 1881 Oak Place was auctioned to satisfy the creditors. When her home was lost, Eliza Ann Steele moved in with Matt and Kate, who were living at 519 Randolph Street in the first house that George Steele had built for his family.

In the 1870's Matt embarked on his third career—that of public official. In 1876 he was elected city assessor and collector and served a total of four terms in this capacity and one as city

inspector. In 1878 he was a candidate for mayor, but withdrew before the election. For at least one year, in 1881, Kate taught at the school of Miss Kate Erskine. The following year Matt was commissioned to prepare plans for a new city school building, which stood on the site of East Clinton Elementary School. In March of 1883, dissatisfied with Huntsville, he and Kate moved to Avondale, Alabama, where he advertised as "Architect and Superintendent of building." His eldest child Sallie and her husband John T. Newman accompanied them. The only work credited to Matt there was the Avondale Presbyterian Church. He was elected the third mayor of Avondale and served as a justice of the peace from 1896 until his death on July 24, 1907. Kate survived him by only a few months and died December 5th of consumption.

When Matt and Kate left Huntsville, Mrs. Steele moved to Canton, Mississippi, to live with her youngest daughter Sue, and there she died on June 18, 1891. The previous January Sallie Winter, the eldest Steele daughter, had also died at Sue's home. Sue was widowed twice; her first husband Charles Shackleford died in 1878, and four years later she married Robert Hoffman. She died July 28, 1913, of apoplexy.

John Steele had a long and successful career as a civil engineer for the railroads and was the first person to successfully demonstrate that north and south Alabama could be connected by railroad, a feat others had pronounced impractical. He never married and died in July of 1903 in Florence, Alabama.

Sarah Fearn Barry was widowed in 1868 and lived out her days in Columbus, Mississippi, dying June 5, 1895. Her sister Ada Fearn lost her first husband, George Steele, Jr., in 1859. She lived in Huntsville until 1871 when she married Robert Hooke, and they moved to Chattanooga. After being widowed a second time, she removed to Avondale and lived with Matt and Kate. She died February 19, 1894, "at a hospital in Baltimore where," according to her obituary, "she had a surgical operation performed."

Who's Who

ATWOOD, WILLIAM, commission merchant, was the son of William Atwood. He was a partner in Fearn, Donegan and Company and resided in New Orleans.

BAILEY SPRINGS, a health spa, was begun by Jonathan Bailey in the 1840's and was located nine miles northeast of Florence, Alabama. The popularity of the resort grew as physicians advised their patients with dyspepsia, sore eyes, scrofula, and dropsy to use the mineral waters.

BARRY, WILLIAM SULLIVAN (1821-1868), lawyer and politician, was a native of Columbus, Mississippi, and returned to his home after graduation from Yale University to practice law. In 1851 he married Sarah Leeanna Fearn. He was elected to several terms in the state legislature, including one as speaker of the house, and to one in Congress.

COLES, ELIZABETH FEARN PATTON (1810-1896), eldest child of Dr. James Dodderidge Patton and Mary Fearn, removed from Jackson County, Alabama, to Huntsville about 1850 after the death of her husband, Dr. Robert Thompson Coles. She and her seven children resided at 614 Franklin Street.

COLES, JAMES PATTON (1828-1859), son of Dr. Robert Thompson Coles and Elizabeth Fearn Patton, married Maria Cruse in 1853.

COLTART, SAMUEL (c.1794-1873), merchant, was born in Scotland. He was a bookseller and insurance agent, and his office was located on the Public Square.

DONEGAN, JAMES H. (c.1830-c.1867), commission merchant, was the son of James Joseph Donegan and Elizabeth M. Weakley. He worked for his father's firm, Fearn, Donegan and Company, until the formation of Scruggs, Donegan and Company in which he was a partner. He resided in New Orleans.

DONEGAN, JAMES JOSEPH (1800-c.1879), commission merchant, was born in Ireland, arriving in Huntsville about 1822. He was one of the owners of the Bell Factory, a textile mill, whose products were sold through Fearn, Donegan and Company of which he was a partner. Elizabeth M. Weakley became his wife in 1827, and they resided at the east end of Randolph Street.

ERSKINE, ALBERT RUSSEL (1827-1903), physician, was the son of Dr. Alexander Erskine and Susan Catherine Russel. Upon graduation from the University of Pennsylvania in 1851, he began his medical practice in Huntsville. In 1854 he was married to Maria D. Matthews.

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ERSKINE, ALEXANDER (1791-1857), physician, a native of Virginia, settled in Huntsville in 1817. Three years later he married Susan Catherine Russel, and they resided at 515 Franklin Street with two of their children, Laura and Albert.

ERSKINE, LAURA (WILKINSON) (c.1830-?), daughter of Dr. Alexander Erskine and Susan Catherine Russel, was married in 1852 to Algon L. Wilkinson, a local dentist. The Erskines resided at 515 Franklin Street.

ERSKINE, SUSAN CATHERINE RUSSEL (1805-1892), was born in Virginia, moving to Huntsville in 1816. In 1820 she married Dr. Alexander Erskine, and they lived at 515 Franklin Street.

FACKLER, CALVIN M., commission merchant, lived at 518 Adams Avenue with his parents, John J. Fackler and Elizabeth M. Turner. In the early 1850's he removed to Memphis, became associated with the firm of Bradley, Wilson and Company, and served as city alderman. He married Anna S. Kirk in 1853.

FEARN, ADA (STEELE) (HOOKE) (1830-1894), fourth daughter of Dr. Thomas Fearn and Sallie Bledsoe Shelby, was educated at Mr. Phelps' school in Baltimore. She was twice married: in 1854 to Dr. George Gilliam Steele and in 1871 to Robert M. Hooke of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Two of her three children by Dr. Steele survived her.

FEARN, BERENICE SHELBY (1834-1920), was the sixth daughter of Dr. Thomas Fearn and Sallie Bledsoe Shelby. She was educated at the Huntsville Female Seminary, Madame De Falk's school in Mobile, and Madame Canda's school in New York City. A lifelong resident of Huntsville, she never married.

FEARN, CATHERINE ERSKINE (STEELE) (1828-1907), third daughter of Dr. Thomas Fearn and Sallie Bledsoe Shelby, was educated at the Huntsville Female Seminary and Madame Canda's school in New York City. In 1848 she married Matthew Weaver Steele by whom she had nine children. She died of consumption in Avondale, Alabama, having moved there in 1883.

FEARN, ELIZA MARIA HENDERSON, "Aunt Maria" (1799-1865), a native of Tennessee, became the wife of Robert Fearn in 1818. She was the mother of Robert Fearn, Jr., and lived on Williams Street.

FEARN, LUCY LEE (MILLER) (1841-1920), was the youngest daughter of Dr. Thomas Fearn and Sallie Bledsoe Shelby. In 1874 she married George Miller; they resided in Florida.

FEARN, MARIA ELIZA (GARTH) (1832-1917), the fifth daughter of Dr.

Who's Who

Thomas Fearn and Sallie Bledsoe Shelby, was educated at Madame De Falk's school in Mobile. Returning to Huntsville she married William Willis Garth in 1855. They had one son and resided at 517 Franklin Street.

FEARN, MARY ELEANOR (MASTIN) (1823-1903), eldest daughter of Dr. Thomas Fearn and Sallie Bledsoe Shelby, married Gustavus Lyle Mastin in 1846. They had six children, the eldest of whom was Arbela, and resided on Franklin Street.

FEARN, ROBERT (1795-1856), planter and commission merchant, a native of Virginia, was married in 1818 to Eliza Maria Henderson. Their home was located on the site of 210 Williams Street.

FEARN, SARAH LEEANNA (BARRY) (1824-1895), the second daughter of Dr. Thomas Fearn and Sallie Bledsoe Shelby, removed to Columbus, Mississippi, after her marriage to William Sullivan Barry in 1851. They had one son.

FEARN, THOMAS, "Pa" (1789-1863), physician and planter, was born in Pittsylvania County, Virginia, and arrived in Huntsville in 1810 after completing his medical studies. In 1822 he married Sallie Bledsoe Shelby; they had seven daughters and resided at 517 Franklin Street. He was a partner in Fearn, Donegan and Company, commission merchants of New Orleans and Huntsville, but is best remembered for his medical contributions.

FIGURES, WILLIAM BIBB (1820-1872), was editor and proprietor of *The Southern Advocate* and also served three terms as the mayor of Huntsville. He resided at 423 Randolph Street.

FLEMING, SALLIE LEWIS (c.1796-1870), widow of William Fleming, was born in Virginia and settled in Madison County about 1818. She lived at 401 Holmes Avenue.

GARTH, WILLIAM WILLIS (1826-1912), lawyer, was a graduate of Emory and Henry College and the University of Virginia. He moved from Morgan County, Alabama, his birthplace, to Huntsville in 1855 and that year married Maria Eliza Fearn. He practiced law and served one term in the U. S. House of Representatives.

HOPKINS, ARTHUR MOSELY (c.1818-c.1867), lawyer and commission merchant, was the son of Judge Arthur Francis Hopkins and Pamela Mosley. A graduate of Yale University, he entered the commission business with the firm of Fearn, Donegan and Company and moved to Memphis and later to New Orleans, where he died. His wife was Eliza Parmelia Bibb.

Who's Who

HOPKINS, ELIZA PARMELIA BIBB (c.1822-?), was the youngest child of Governor Thomas Bibb and Parmelia Thompson. She was married to Arthur Mosely Hopkins by whom she had ten children.

JOHNSTON, ANN CLARK TRACY (1829-1896), was the elder sister of Edward Dorr Tracy. A resident of Macon, Georgia, she became the wife of William Butler Johnston in 1851, and they had five children, three of whom died in infancy.

JOHNSTON, WILLIAM BUTLER (1809-1887), jeweller, settled in Macon, Georgia, in the 1830's. In 1851 he married Ann Clark Tracy; they had two daughters of their own and adopted the two daughters of Edward Dorr Tracy and Ellen Elizabeth Steele. His business interests were varied, ranging from a director of a railroad to organizer of Georgia's first ice factory.

LOWE, SOPHIA (DAVIS) (c.1829-1896), the oldest child of Bartley M. Lowe and Sarah Sophia Manning, was married in 1854 to Nicholas Davis, Jr., by whom she had four children.

MARTIN, JOSEPH H., was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church from October, 1848, to March, 1849.

MASTIN, ARBELA (1848-1903), was the eldest child of Gustavus Lyle Mastin and Mary Eleanor Fearn. She was a lifelong resident of Huntsville and never married.

MASTIN, GUSTAVUS LYLE (1815-1880), merchant and planter, was born in Virginia and raised in Tennessee, settling in Huntsville in 1827. A graduate of the University of Alabama, he engaged in the merchantile business until 1858, when he became a planter. In 1846 he married Mary Eleanor Fearn; they resided at 615 Franklin Street in a house previously on the site.

PATTON, MARY FEARN, "Aunt Polly" (1792-1857), the younger sister of Dr. Thomas Fearn, was born and died in Pittsylvania County, Virginia. In 1810 she married Dr. James Doddridge Patton.

PATTON, SALLY LYLE (SEABROOK) (1822-?), daughter of Dr. James Doddridge Patton and Mary Fearn, was married in 1851 to William Henry Seabrook and settled in Grand Junction, Mississippi.

PLEASANTS, JULIA PAMELA (CRESSWELL) (1827-1886), author, lived with her parents, James Jay Pleasants and Emily Julia Bibb, until her marriage to David Cresswell in 1854 when she moved to Louisiana, eventually settling in Shreveport. She wrote four volumes of poetry and two novels.

SHACKLEFORD, CHARLES CLARKE (1813-1878), attorney and judge, was married in 1866 to Susan E. Steele. They resided at his home in Canton, Mississippi, and had two children.

STEELE, ELIZA WATSON (1853-1877), the third child of Matthew Weaver Steele and Catherine Erskine Fearn, was born and died in Huntsville; she never married.

STEELE, ELIZA ANN WEAVER, "Mother" (1808-1891), was born in Campbell County, Virginia, and removed to Madison County, Alabama, in 1814 where she was educated at the female boarding school of Mrs. De Vendel. In 1823 she became the wife of George Gilliam Steele by whom she had eight children. The last years of her life were spent in Canton, Mississippi, where she lived with her daughter Sue.

STEELE, ELLEN ELIZABETH (TRACY) (1833-1868), sixth child of George Gilliam Steele and Eliza Ann Weaver, was educated at the Huntsville Female Seminary and Madame Canda's school in New York City. In 1856 she married Edward Dorr Tracy; they had four children, two of whom died in infancy. She died at Oak Place of neuralgia.

STEELE, GEORGE (1854-1905), the fourth child of Matthew Weaver Steele and Catherine Erskine Fearn, removed to Avondale, Alabama, with his parents in 1883. He was killed in a railroad yard accident in New Orleans where he was employed.

STEELE, GEORGE GILLIAM, "Father" (1798-1855), architect and builder, was born in Bedford County, Virginia, and moved to Huntsville in 1818. He designed and erected many public buildings and residences in Huntsville, including his own home Oak Place (808 Maysville Road). In 1823 he married Eliza Ann Weaver and they had eight children, seven of whom reached maturity.

STEELE, GEORGE GILLIAM (1828-1859), physician, the third child of George Gilliam Steele and Eliza Ann Weaver, graduated from the medical schools of St. Louis and removed to Travis County, Texas. In 1854 he married Ada Fearn, and they had three children, two of whom survived infancy. He died of consumption in Huntsville.

STEELE, JOHN FREDERICK (1826-1903), civil engineer, was the second child of George Gilliam Steele and Eliza Ann Weaver. He received his A. B. and A. M. degrees from the University of Alabama and studied law at the University of Virginia but chose to become an engineer and railroad surveyor. He served in this capacity during the Civil War and is credited with suggesting the name of Birmingham when the town was being laid out. He died in Florence, Alabama, having never married.

Who's Who

STEELE, KATE MURPHY (1840-?), daughter of Timothy Murphy and Ann Donegan, married William Angelo Steele in 1859. She was the mother of ten children and died in New Orleans after settling there in the 1870's.

STEELE, MATTHEW WEAVER (1824-1907), commission merchant, architect and builder, was born in Huntsville, the eldest child of George Gilliam Steele and Eliza Ann Weaver. He studied law at the University of Alabama and was admitted to the bar but did not practice; instead he became a commission merchant with Fearn, Donegan and Company. In 1848 he married Catherine Erskine Fearn, and they had nine children: Sallie Fearn (1849-1922), Thomas Fearn (1851-1918), Eliza Watson (1853-1877), George (1854-1905), Robert Lee (1856-1914), Berenice Shelby (1859-1898), Matthew Forney (1861-194?), Edward Tracy (1865-1937), and Kate Willis (1869-1936). After the death of his father in 1855, Matt undertook to manage the family estate as an architect and builder but failed when the Civil War intervened. In 1883 he removed to Avondale, Alabama, serving as a justice of the peace and third mayor of that city.

STEELE, SALLIE FEARN (NEWMAN) (1849-1922), the eldest child of Matthew Weaver Steele and Catherine Erskine Fearn, married John T. Newman in 1873; ten years after her marriage she removed to Birmingham.

STEELE, SALLIE FLEMING (WINTER) (1829-1891), eldest daughter and fourth child of George Gilliam Steele and Eliza Ann Weaver, became the wife of Richard Winter in 1853 and resided afterwards in Canton, Mississippi. She was the mother of two children, both of whom died during a diptheria epidemic while still young.

STEELE, SUSAN E. (SHACKLEFORD) (HOFFMAN) (1839-1913), was the youngest child of George Gilliam Steele and Eliza Ann Weaver. She married twice: in 1866 to Judge Charles Clarke Shackelford, by whom she had two children, and in 1882 to Robert Hoffman. She moved to Canton, Mississippi, after her first marriage and lived there until her death of apoplexy.

STEELE, THOMAS FEARN (1851-1918), planter, the second child of Matthew Weaver Steele and Catherine Erskine Fearn, was born in New Orleans and died near Morgan City, Mississippi. In 1879 he married Mary Love Sproles; their union produced eight children.

STEELE, WILLIAM ANGELO (1836-1912), accountant, the youngest son of George Gilliam Steele and Eliza Ann Weaver, attended the University of Alabama but did not graduate. In 1859 he married Kate Murphy and shortly after the Civil War removed to Canton, Mississippi. He eventually settled in New Orleans where he was employed by the

Queen and Crescent Railroad.

SWAN, SALLY (McGEHEE) (1835-?), the granddaughter of Dr. Thomas Fearn's sister and the daughter of George T. Swan and Mary Lee Patton, married Archie McGehee of Jackson, Mississippi, in 1853.

TRACY, CAMPBELL (1840-1868), was the younger brother of Edward Dorr Tracy. His occupation is unknown.

TRACY, EDWARD DORR, "Lit" (1833-1863), lawyer, was born in Macon, Georgia, received his early education at private schools, and graduated from the University of Georgia. He began the practice of law in Macon and continued it in Huntsville, where he removed in 1857, the year after he married Ellen Elizabeth Steele. He fought with the Confederate Army, being rapidly promoted to brigadier-general, and died of wounds received at the battle of Port Gibson, Mississippi.

TRACY, GEORGIA ELIZA (WADLEY), "Dawdie" (1860-1921), second daughter of Edward Dorr Tracy and Ellen Elizabeth Steele, was raised in Macon, Georgia, by her aunt after the death of her mother in 1868. In 1883 she married George Dole Wadley of Monroe County, Georgia, by whom she had two children.

TRACY, PHILEMON (1831-1862), older brother of Edward Dorr Tracy, graduated from Yale University and briefly practiced law before becoming editor of the Macon newspaper. He attained the rank of major in the Civil War and was killed at the battle of Sharpsburg. His wife was Caroline Walker.

TRACY, SUSAN CAMPBELL (COLLINS) (1858-1912), eldest surviving child of Edward Dorr Tracy and Ellen Elizabeth Steele, lived with her aunt, Ann Tracy Johnston, in Macon, Georgia, after her mother's death in 1868. She married Dr. Appleton Collins, also of Macon, and they had two daughters.

WATKINS, MILES SELDON (?-1855), physician, arrived in Huntsville in 1819 and was married in 1829 to Sallie Shelby, a niece by marriage of Dr. Thomas Fearn. He was a native of Mississippi and returned there about 1850. While in Huntsville he lived at 558 Franklin Street.

WEAKLEY, JAMES HARVEY (1798-1856), judge, was surveyor-general of Alabama until 1851. At this time he became a commission merchant and moved from Huntsville to New Orleans, where he died. He was married to Ellen Donegan in 1830.

WEAVER, DANIEL THOMAS (1813-?), planter, the younger brother of

Who's Who

Eliza Ann Weaver Steele, was married to Amelia Ann Hines. He settled in Yalobusha County, Mississippi.

WEAVER, JOHN (1806-1876), was the elder brother of Eliza Ann Weaver Steele. He was married twice and died in Shelby County, Tennessee.

WINTER, RICHARD (1821-1870), commission merchant, married Sallie Fleming Steele in 1853, and they resided in Canton, Mississippi. He was the father of two children, both of whom died young.

ZIVELY, JOHN HENRY (c.1828-1905), clergyman, a native of Tennessee, was minister of the First Presbyterian Church from May, 1850, until February, 1852.

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*Huntsville Planning Department
City of Huntsville
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