Why I Wrote It.

by Louise W. Barker

MESSRS. EDITORS,—A few weeks since I sent you a story, and yesterday it came back to me with "compliments and many thanks." Ah me! as if compliments and thanks, however numerous and however courteously expressed, could warm, and feed, and clothe baby and me. But I am not complaining. I didn't tell you that the story was written with the view of obtaining food and clothing for myself and baby. I can not expect you to feel personal sympathy with every person who sends you a contribution. Still I have thought that if I should tell you the circumstances under which that story was written, you might think them worth publishing.

In order to do that I must tell you something of my own history:

I am by birth a Tennesseean. My father married a penniless girl. He had no profession, was unused to work, and possessed little idea of the value of money. Fabulous accounts of the beauty and productiveness of Texan lands were firing the imaginations of young and old. Leagues of fertile prairie land, rank with the finest pasturage, and needing only the plowshare to fit it for the culture of cotton and sugar, to be had for the asking, as it were! The very thought of vast bodies of unbroken land of which you can become master at a trifle is inspiring. Among Southern planters there seems a kind of mania for fresh lands. No sooner do their plantations begin to speak of the reckless drains upon them than the planters begin to think of new lands. They are haunted by visions of black loamy acres. Every poor red hill, with its dwarfish cotton-stalks, looking sickly and yellow, suggests by contrast valley-lands and plateaus where gigantic white pyramids stand in regal beauty, and where every acre cheerfully yields its bale.

So it was that parties of emigrants were daily leaving the neighboring States for the new Republic of Texas. My father attached himself to one of these emigrant companies, leaving his wife with the promise that she should join him as soon as possible.

"Should I never come back," he said, "and you should be forced to ask advice and assistance, go to John. He is cold and hard, I know, but he is just and reliable; he'll be honest with you."

My father's plan was to invest the little money he had in horses and cattle, and engage in stock-raising.

"It will cost me nothing to keep them," he said to my mother. "I shall need only to put my mark on them and turn them on the prairies, and in a few years I shall have a thousand head of cattle ready for market. Then as I have money to

spare I shall invest it in land, and one of these days," he added, with a teasing smile, "we'll have a fortune for our boy."

Had my father lived—oh how many times have those words been wrung from me! How the might-have-been has haunted me! But he died without a chance to try his plans. He was attacked with inflammation of the lungs, which, from the absence of proper medical attention and nursing, proved fatal. He died at a settler's log-cabin, where his comrades had left him, and was buried on the prairie. The boy for whom my poor father was to make a fortune was born after his death and proved to be only a girl.

I shall endeavor to pass briefly over my childhood, for I do not love to linger on it. It was not such a childhood as—please God—my child shall have.

One of my earliest remembrances is of being taken from my bed one autumn night, and conveyed by my colored nurse to my mother's sick chamber. The scene which met me in that sick chamber rises at this moment as fresh as do the transactions of this morning, while months and years which followed are buried from memory. A high mahogany bedstead, with its white muslin curtains looped back to the carved posts by broad, green ribbons; the tall physician, with his white hair in curls on his shoulders; two neighboring women, Aunt Dinah with arms akimbo and head drooping, and the figure propped by pillows with haggard face and skeleton hands, and vacant, staring eyes—that is the tableau which memory has repeated a thousand times. My mother was dying. As her large sunken eyes rested on me and recollection slowly dawned a faint smile transfigured her face and she feebly held out her arms. I wonder that I did not shrink from her as from something unearthly. How glad am I that I did not! The sweet memory is mine of having nestled with a child's trust and love close to her dear bosom—of having passed my fingers tenderly over her brown hair, and of seeing her smile at the loved caress. I remember some brooding words of love which have ever since lain soothingly on my heart, and then of being taken from her and restored to my lonely bed.

From the mention my father had made of his brother John, the latter seemed to consider himself obliged to provide against my becoming a vagrant or the inmate of an orphan asylum. My father had given a correct summary of his brother's character—hard and stern, but reliable and just—just but never generous; a man of strong and obstinate will, deliberate in forming an opinion, stubborn in clinging to it. He had, years before my birth, buried, in one summer, his wife and four children. His affliction—so said his old acquaintances—did not soften his character; his sternness settled into hardness.

I have always believed that a place in my uncle's heart was worth possessing—that there was strength and endurance in his affections when once secured, but I never felt that I had secured a place there. "I will do my duty toward my dead brother's child," he seemed to say. I was provided with all

necessaries, and my uncle paid my bills; but he never made me a present. No toy or book came to me at my birthday or on Christmas to tell me that I was lovingly remembered. Yet by no word or act or look of my uncle's was I ever reminded of my dependence. Had I not learned it from others, I should never have known that he did any thing for me.

My uncle placed me with his wife's sister, one of the few women whom he condescended to esteem. And now let me guide my pen carefully, for 'tis of the dead I write. Mrs. Patterson—by this fictitious name I choose to designate the woman with whom the greater portion of my childhood was passed—was the wife of a wealthy planter and resided on a plantation. I half suspect that I was unreasonable, for surely cleanliness and order are commendable; yet I hated the system, and precision, and cold elegance of that establishment. A little dust or an occasional cobweb in the house—a weed or spray of grass on a flower-bed, a stray tendril or independent branch which dared to grow except after set rules, would have proved a relief. Mrs. Patterson never meant to be unkind; but my life with her was miserable. She was childless, and in that fact, since I became a mother, I have found the explanation of her failure and its excuse. There is nothing like maternity to call out the good and beautiful in woman. She rarely comprehends a child's nature and wants until she has studied them with a loving, deathless interest in her own darling. Spotless dress and apron; immaculate face and hands; hair smooth and braided; two hours devoted to knitting, ditto to sewing, ditto to studying, ditto to walking in the garden; elegant meals taken with silver fork and napkin; slumbers taken between snowy linen sheets. There is nothing, I allow, like hardship or misery in the picture. But take from childhood its dolls, and toys, and picture-books; its fairy stories and nursery rhymes; its Santa Claus, and Christmases, and New Years, and birthdays, and—ah me !—what is the remainder worth?

The result of Mrs. Patterson's training and tuition was that I learned to knit and sew neatly—a knowledge scarcely worth, in these days of sewing-machines and stocking-looms, what its acquisition cost me. I acquired at an early age considerable facility in reading, writing, and spelling, and before I was nine years old could recite all the rules in Murray's Grammar, and all the coarse print of Olney's Geography. Had the time been devoted to learning the story of Mother Hubbard and her wonderful dog would it not have been better improved?

Then until my fifteenth year my education was sacrificed to save a debt. I do not think my uncle intended it so—there was nothing niggardly in the provision he made for me. I believe he meant to deal kindly by his dead brother s child, but he erred gravely.

At fifteen I was sent to a boarding-school. My advantages here were not of the highest order, but they were fair. I made little advance in music or the languages, was above the average in composition, and pre-eminent in mathematics. If we had a difficult lesson I was called to enact the part of pioneer

to the class, was the first to be sent to the board. If I confessed my inability to master a knotty point every member of the class was immediately set at ease; all took shelter behind my failure. If we had visitors I was called to the board, and the credit of the class thrown upon me; and at examinations the most difficult problems were somehow sure to come to me.

This sounds like egoism, but surely it is little I claim; a superiority over some twenty girls in a science where the female sex is proverbially weak. But I mention this superiority because it first drew to me the attention of one with whom my destiny must be forever linked.

Charles B— was reading medicine in the village where I was at school. After a public examination in which I was conscious of having won honors, a gentleman asked my permission to present a friend, and soon after I found myself conversing with Charles B—. The acquaintance thus begun was prosecuted at rare intervals as opportunity offered, for we girls were subjected to the boarding-school espionage. So it came that in less than a year I was promised in marriage to Charles B—.

Then followed eighteen months of bliss, made up of stolen interviews, smuggled letters, and all those little nothings so dear to lovers. I don't know how it was discovered, but at the end of these eighteen months my uncle was in possession of all the facts of the case. I had never desired to conceal the matter from him; it was the vigilance of my boarding-school guardians I had wished to elude. I had never thought of my uncle's caring any thing one way or the other about the matter. But it seems he did care about it, for he took measures, of what nature he would never condescend to inform me, to interrupt the engagement. This I set down, perhaps too hastily, as an unwarrantable interference with a most sacred right. We quarreled; I should say rather that I expressed my mind quite freely. Charles B— went from the village without seeing me or sending me a line, leaving no clew as to his destination, except such as might be gathered from a vague rumor that he had gone to Florida.

I was at just the age when such a disappointment is a blow, a blow square in the face, for I loved Charles. I accepted a home kindly proffered me by a friend, and secluded myself from society and every thing of a cheerful nature. Soon my health began to fail, and the following summer my physician pronounced me in a decline, and advised a trip North. I awaited my uncle's decision on this advice with deep anxiety, for I knew he hated every thing pertaining to the North with all the intensity of his strong nature. I shall never forget the feeling of refreshing relief with which I received the announcement that I was to spend a year in a Northern school. There was hope and promise in it. I believed that some opening would present itself by which I could achieve my independence. At the South a woman can not teach or engage in any work without losing caste; but at the North work is acknowledged. There was

inspiration in the thought. A few weeks later I was steaming up the turbid Mississippi.

In a few days I had entered, in a Northern city, my last school year. My school duties were not heavy, leaving me a fair margin of unappropriated time. This was spent in discussing the ever-present question: What can I do? How can I earn a living? How can I achieve an independence of my uncle?

Two avenues invited me. Of course I thought of teaching, every educated woman seeking employment thinks of it. But this could not be entered upon for a year, and, in the mean time, my dependence must continue. I shrank, too, from applying for a teacher's situation, as such a step would have compelled an explanation, and started troublesome questions and surmises. I was aware that already my schoolmates wondered at the absence of style in my wardrobe— at my old-fashioned dresses; I knew they suspected me of a mean parsimony that I did not return some of their numerous kindnesses forced upon me in the way of suppers, fruits, rides, etc. Ah! those were days of heart-burnings, of impatient longings. It was hard when I was called on for a contribution for some picnic or festival, or for a present to a teacher, to say that I could give nothing. They didn't know that every penny I spent had to be taken from the hand of a man whom I sometimes feared that I hated.

The other road to independence of which I thought the oftener was the higher and more ambitious way which authors tread. I thought I should like my old friends and acquaintances, my uncle, and Charles to hear of me as famous. It would be pleasant to know that they were reading my articles, thinking and talking about me. I wrote some things which delighted me during the excitement and glow of writing and disgusted me two days after.

After reminding myself a great many times that I must make a beginning, I one afternoon started to the publishing-house of a daily newspaper with a MS. in my dress-pocket which had been re-written and re-read more than once. It was a short article of a humorous character on a local topic with a fictitious signature attached. When I left the Seminary I felt brave enough for almost any enterprise, but my courage diminished as my distance from the printing-office diminished, and by the time I had read the formidable sign in gilt letters over the door, and had caught sight, through the window, of a tall, pale, literary-looking youth I had no more courage. So I walked on by the office. But when those formidable gilt letters, and that pale, literary-looking youth were no longer in sight, I felt my courage rapidly reviving, and soon I had retraced my steps and was again at the door. On it was the word "Push," and by a desperate effort I obeyed the behest and found myself in the counting-room, face to face with the tall, pale youth. He stared at me, walked a few steps forward, and inquired by his looks my business.

"Are you the editor?" I asked.

He replied, waving me to a staircase, “No, I am not the editor; the editors’ rooms are on the next floor.”

I made my way up a dark, worn, dirty stairway, and came suddenly upon youth No.2, who stood at a desk, pen in hand.

“Can I see the editor?“ I inquired of him.

“Which editor do you wish to see?”

I was puzzled by the question, for I was ignorant of the adjectives which distinguish the members of an editorial corps.

“The commercial editor?” he asked, suggestively.

It did not take me long to arrive at the conclusion that my article could have no bearing on the commerce of nations or cities, so I replied in the negative.

“The financial editor?” he again suggested, trying his pen on his left thumb nail, preparatory to using it.

I had no finances to arrange with any editor, that was certain, so I again answered, No.

“The local editor is in there,” he said, pointing to a door, and then resuming his writing by way of dismissing me.

The local editor! My article pertained to a city matter. Yes, it must be that I wanted to see the local editor. “Thank you,” I said, and moved to the door and rapped.

A small man with sandy hair, and sandier whiskers, and very light eyes, answered my knock. The room he occupied was lighted by a single window—the dirtiest and cobwebbiest I ever saw—and was a trifle larger than the very large bedstead which stood in my chamber at the Seminary. There were a couple of chairs and a writing-desk piled with newspapers in this editorial sanctum.

I was so embarrassed that a momentary dizziness and blindness came over me as I stood, for the first time in my life, face to face with a gentleman of the press. Could I have improvised an excuse for my appearance there, my real errand would never have been revealed to him. But my wits seemed paralyzed, so I stammered out something about having written a short article which he could publish if he should consider it worthy a place in his columns, and I drew the MS. from my pocket, and placed it in his hands.

“Have a seat, ma’am?” he said, placing a chair for me, and proceeding to read the MS.

My impulse was to snatch it from him, and run away and hide myself in my chamber. As he perused it I also read it from memory. I could judge from the direction of his eyes just what passage he was perusing, and my cheek tingled afresh at each well-remembered weak point. Alas, they all seemed weak points as I sat there!

“We shall be happy to give your article a place in our Saturday’s paper,” said the editor, when he had finished its perusal.

How long it seemed before Saturday arrived! I wondered how long my article would be; how it would look in print; and, above all, what people would say about it. Saturday at length arrived. I knew the paper never reached us earlier than three P.M., but at one o’clock I seated myself at the front window to watch for it, that I might have the first reading. It is needless to say that time moved slowly, but after looking at the clock for the twentieth time, perhaps, I descried the news-boy with his bundle of papers strapped over his shoulders. I was across the veranda and at the gate in a moment. He handed me a paper damp from the press. I opened it, and ran my eye eagerly from article to article. In a conspicuous place I found my contribution, and with a beating heart I ran over it. It was not as long as I had expected to see it; there were some half dozen typographical errors which spoiled some of my finest sentences; then there were several solecisms and two glaring grammatical errors — there they were, staring me impudently in the face, all very plain now that they were irrevocably given to the public. I read my article again and again, and decided that the signature—which I give here as “Fanny France,” choosing to withhold my real *nom de plume*—looked well in print.

At the head of the local column I found a paragraph calling attention to a racy article from a new correspondent, “Fanny France,” and inviting farther contributions.

The Principal of the Seminary, Dr. W—, entered as I was reading this notice for the third time.

“Would you like to see the evening paper?” I asked, handing it to him.

He sat down to reading, while I took up my knitting-work—a blue Sontag—purposing to ascertain if he read my article, and to mark the effect. I soon perceived that he was perusing it. At the second sentence his mouth began to twitch, then a quiet kind of a smile overspread his features. He finished it with a low laugh, and inquired if I had read the article? And when I had answered with flushing cheek in spite of my efforts at composure, he said, “Pretty well done,

isn't it? Pretty well done," he continued, dwelling on the words as he turned the paper. "I wonder who Fanny France is!"

That evening I heard the article read by one of the teachers to the girls and the other teachers as they sat around the study-table, and found some difficulty in appearing unmoved amidst their comments and criticisms.

The next week I sent a second contribution to the paper through the Post-office, and the following Saturday had the satisfaction of seeing it in print. By the time a third contribution had appeared the school was alive with curiosity. A dozen times a day I had to evade the question, "Who is Fanny France?" I was alternately amused and vexed, elated and depressed, flattered and discouraged by the opinions of my school friends and of outsiders, as reported to me, or in my hearing. Soon the editor began to mail me letters left at the printing-office for Fanny France, and to send me papers into which my articles were copied.

One day on opening a paper I found an article headed "Fanny France." The editor said that he would state, in answer to the scores of letters of inquiry with which he was besieged, that Fanny France was a school-girl, a resident of the city. Of course this increased the people's interest—the school-girls' particularly. With a whole school of girls on my track I could not long escape detection. Then cards and invitations and calls began to pour in upon me. I was pointed at, stared at, talked about, and written about. Requests for autographs, letters complimentary, condemnatory, and advisory clogged my port-folio.

But my purse was no heavier for the laurels I was winning, and my wardrobe seemed poorer and more old-fashioned than ever, as I was brought in contact with the tea of the city. And here I must acknowledge a temptation which beset me, but which I had strength enough to combat. Had I yielded to it I should not, I fear, be so ready to publish it. I felt that a small sum judiciously expended would enable me to appear like a new creature, and I was tempted to draw on my uncle for the money; I knew it would be promptly furnished without a word of inquiry. But after an hour's contemplation of the advantage and pleasure which the money could procure, I invariably concluded to wear my old dresses rather than increase my indebtedness to him.

I went into the library one day, and my bills for board and tuition were handed me. They came earlier than I had expected. I was disappointed; for I had half hoped that by some means I should of myself be able to meet them— that I would be spared the humiliation of sending them to the man who had occasioned me the deepest sorrow I had ever known. I crushed the papers in my hand, and went up to my room. I sat down by the window, and looked out upon the night. It was in the autumn, and a cold rain, mixed with sleet, was falling. I looked through the waving, leafless branches to the lamp-lights beyond, and there came over me such a homesick, lonely feeling as I shall never forget. Why was I separated hundreds of miles from kindred, and friends, and every thing I had known or

cared for? Why were all those weary leagues dividing me from him who should have been my protector and support? Of course I wept — woman's eyes are her heart's safety valves—and I found relief in the act. Then my thoughts began to form themselves into a purpose; for my impatience at my dependence had grown with the hope of relief. I determined to see Mr. J—, the proprietor of the paper to which I had been contributing, frankly acquaint him with my situation, and ask of him employment and compensation. This resolution taken, I retired, but not to sleep. I went over and over what I intended to say to Mr. J ; but having thoroughly learned my lesson, doubts as to my ability to recite it when the moment of trial should arrive began to intrude. I felt brave enough being there in the dark, but I knew myself too well not to have some fears that I should prove the veriest coward at the moment when coolness and self-possession were necessary to a proper representation of my circumstances. At the best I was afraid that I should make a lame story, for I was never a fluent speaker. Concluding that my plea would be more effectually presented in writing, I wrote a letter, sealed and addressed it, and then went to sleep.

The next morning, which was Saturday, I mailed my letter, expecting to hear from it in the course of the following week. That evening I went to prayer-meeting. When I returned a card was handed me, and I was informed that the gentleman awaited me in the parlor. With a rising heart I read the name to which my letter of the previous evening had been addressed; he was giving it prompt attention.

The result of my interview with him was an agreement on his part to pay me one hundred dollars per year for my contributions, the number and length to be left to my choice.

"Here are twenty-five dollars," he said, as he rose to take his departure, "and remember, you are to send us an article as it suits your convenience. I am sorry I can't offer you more for your very acceptable articles, but a daily political paper can't very well sustain a' literary department."

Twenty-five dollars! Here was a chance to take a breath; but a hundred dollars would not meet my tuition bills for the year, and there was my board, beside other expenses. I was not yet independent, but my success was encouraging.

My next step was to withdraw from the English department of the Seminary, and to pursue my English studies in my room without the aid of a teacher; then I made arrangements with the French teacher to give her English lessons in return for private tuition in French. By these retrenchmentsI should reduce my expenses some twenty-five dollars per term. Through my Latin recitations I continued my connection with the Seminary.

About this time our Principal spoke to me about taking charge of two classes, one in geometry, the other in spelling, for which it seemed no teacher in the Seminary could find time. Nothing was said by either of us in reference to compensation; I thought that perhaps my Latin tuition would be given me for my services. I devoted an hour and a half each day to these two classes, besides attending to my own studies. I did all my own sewing—I was not able to put out any—and prepared a weekly article for publication. It will be seen that I had little time for farther literary efforts.

So time passed, and the academic year drew ‘to a close. I passed the examination, being the successful competitor for the composition prize, and was voted a diploma.

And now a serious disappointment awaited me; my bill was presented. Nothing was allowed me for my services in teaching the two classes before mentioned, and I was charged with English tuition. Ah! no eyes saw the bitter tears which I shed over that little scrap of paper. How I had worked to save that twenty dollars! and here I was unexpectedly called to pay it. I made several resolutions to speak of the matter, but postponed the unpleasant subject from time to time, and finally abandoned it. Two years later the mistake was discovered and rectified.

And now the vacation had arrived, I had my diploma, and I determined to seek a situation as teacher. I naturally thought of the Seminary in which I had passed the year. After some negotiating, I was placed in charge of a department of some twenty little girls from nine to thirteen years of age, with the vague promise in reference to compensation that they would do as well for me as they could. I acknowledge that my effort in this department was not a marked success.

As a pecuniary speculation, an estimate may be formed of it from the following facts, premising that my relation with Mr. J—, the publisher, remained unchanged: I purchased one spring dress for eight dollars; a bonnet for six dollars; a pair of gaiters for a dollar and a half; a pair of kid gloves for one dollar; gave three dollars to the missionary cause; and fifty cents toward a present for our Principal’s wife. I did not spend during the year another penny, yet when my account with the Seminary was closed I was four dollars and seventy-eight cents in its debt.

Opportunities for teaching in other places offered, but I was chagrined at my failure in the Seminary, and anxious to vindicate myself. The next year I had charge of the composition department with a few classes in mathematics, at a fair salary. I think all acquainted with the facts will admit that my success in this second effort was unusual. The following year I held the same pleasant position with the same salary. For a third year it was at my disposal, but I chose a like situation in another city.

During those years of labor and trial I had heard nothing from Charles. Time, the skillful, kindly physician had done much to soothe, but there were memories associated with him which haunted and saddened all the days. At times I felt a glad sense of freedom in being removed from the scenes of my disappointment, but oftener I was possessed by an unutterable yearning to revisit the places consecrated by my intercourse with him.

As to my uncle, I received from him during the first year of my absence an occasional letter on business. At the end of that time there came a peremptory summons for my return South, with a remittance to defray expenses. I returned the money with a declaration of my independence, and the information of my purpose to engage in teaching.

My residence at the North had shown me how erroneous the opinions, and baseless the prejudices of the Southern people are in reference to their Northern brethren, and my convictions I endeavored in my letters to communicate to some of my Southern friends. As mildly and gently as possible—for I understood the depth of their prejudices and the bitterness of their hatred—I told them some truths, and endeavored to disabuse their minds of some errors.

During the three years in which I was engaged in teaching numerous efforts of various characters were made to procure my return to the South. In the mean time the rebellion was inaugurated at Sumter. We are none of us likely to forget the hurricane of denunciation from the loyal press and people which swept over the great North. It was purely sublime in its might and majesty so long as its fury was directed against the ambitious, informed politicians, with whom this fearful work originated. My heart gave its Amen and Amen. I said let them be Anathema maranatha. But after a time people and press began to indulge in a wholesale, indiscriminate denunciation of every thing pertaining to the South. It was Nazareth, and no good could come out of it. I frequently heard this said in so many words. Ah! I knew better. In answer to these things, honest faces, lives beautiful and noble, and characters fair as the morning— the generous, the chivalrous, the brave, appealed to me to speak. There were times when it seemed that to keep silence was to be false to my absent friends. I used to remain silent until my heart was ready to burst with its scorn and indignation at the injustice and ignorance which the speakers betrayed; then I would pour out some vehement words of refutation or apology, and, when opportunity offered, seek relief in tears. Yet in my calm moments I could scarcely find it in my heart to censure the most violent. Theirs was but a most righteous indignation going beyond bounds. As far as I was personally concerned there was no abatement of the affectionate courtesy which every where met me, and assurances of sympathy were frequent and repeated.

In the summer of 1862 I received intelligence that a party of Southern friends were in Canada just across the frontier, and desired a visit from me. As they sent the money to defray my expenses there was nothing to prevent my

joining them, and I gladly did so. There was in the party a well-known Confederate official, whose name has figured in the papers. From the fact that all the party were wearing false names and hailing from Northern localities, and that my own arrival was registered under a fictitious name, and from various suspicious movements and remarks, I was persuaded that they were not in Canada simply to avoid the inconveniences of war, or to escape the hardships of a beleaguered people. I have since learned, what I then suspected, that the gentlemen were on business for the Southern Confederacy. One of them, with his wife, was en route for Europe, and offered to defray my expenses if I would accompany them. This I declined, not wishing to incur so heavy a debt of obligation.

Those of the party who contemplated a return to the South exerted their powers of persuasion to induce me to return with them. It was not without some effort that I resisted the pressure which was brought to bear upon me; many times, half ashamed of turning my back upon the South, almost persuaded that I was mean and false in so doing, I was on the eve of yielding—of casting my lot with the South, for better for worse. But however my heart vacillated my intellect was clear enough. I knew the right was not with the South. Yet I returned from my visit to my Southern friends homesick, my heart yearning over the South. I loved her—loved her in her pride and wickedness and suffering more, it seemed to me, than ever before. In my calm, unprejudiced moments I wished for the triumph of the Northern cause. I know I did. Yet when the news came of a success of the Federal arms, and I heard the booming of cannon and the ringing of bells, saw the waving of flags, and witnessed the rejoicings of the multitudes, I thought of my people shamed, and defeated, and sorrowing, and then I doubted where my sympathies were. I knew not whether to rejoice or weep. But I must not linger here.

Shortly after the visit to my friends above mentioned I received a letter from one of the number whose husband had been suddenly called to return South, stating that she had just learned that my uncle was sinking with consumption; that he could not possibly live through another winter, and was in need of my care. Would I go to him? If so, meet her and husband on Monday afternoon at N—.

I had but an hour in which to make my decision, for it was necessary if I accompanied them that I should take the next train. I saw a lonely old man dying with, perhaps, none to minister to him, and in a moment after reading the letter, even as I read it, my heart pronounced his forgiveness. I remembered how he had through all the helpless years of my childhood provided for me, and perhaps, I argued with myself, he consulted what be considered my good in breaking my engagement with Charles. It did not take me many minutes to decide that I would go to him.

Some little matters were arranged, and shortly after I was on my way to my old home. How the journey was accomplished, by what means the obstacles in our way were surmounted, I might, could I speak with definiteness, consider myself in honor bound to preserve in secrecy. But these things are a profound mystery to me. After some strange movements, but without any annoying adventure, I found myself amidst familiar scenes. No, I recall that phrase. I should never have recognized the once familiar spots, they were so changed. The country had been ravaged by two armies, wasted by fires and guerrillas, and scourged as by a sirocco. Twenty-three engagements, of more or less importance, had taken place within a circuit of twenty miles of the plantation where my childhood had been passed, and one not two miles removed. The country with its deserted plantations, its tenantless negro cabins falling to decay, its fenceless gardens and fields overrun with rank weeds, all proclaimed some unusual state of affairs. Go where I would I met no young men, except an occasional soldier on furlough. And the old men were organized into Home Guards, with their drills and regular military duties. No young woman or child over six years was found who was not a member of some military company.

I had heard much of the Union sentiment at the South. I found no evidence of its existence in this locality; an unmitigated hatred of Northerners, and a determination to endure all things before surrender, was the universal sentiment. "Fighting to repel invasion," "Defending our hearth-stones," was the language of every lip.

Our homes and our firesides! Nothing will rouse and fire a people like that cry. The watchword of our flag and the Union are fireless in comparison. There are multitudes who comprehend nothing of the nature of our Government, to whom the Union was but a sounding word, and the flag but a patchwork of bunting. But when leaders cry "Our homes are in danger: the invader is upon us!" all understand the call.

If my heart had burned because of the ignorance and injustice of the Northern people concerning the South, the ignorance and injustice of Southerners toward the North was enough to make the very stones cry out. And in this mutual misunderstanding between the sections may, in my opinion, be found the cause of all our troubles. The Southern people would never have sustained their leaders in the secession movement had they not been misled as to the feeling of the North concerning them. A single example will give some idea of the delusion prevalent among the people.

I was conversing carefully and cautiously— for I knew that in their excited state an imprudent word would be like a spark on their freshly-ginned cotton—on the all-absorbing topic with a company of intelligent ladies, when one of them asserted that before Fort Sumter had been fired upon the churches of New York, and Mr. Beecher's church in Brooklyn, had flaming placards above the pulpits headed, "Beauty and Booty," containing a call for men to go South —that the

officiating ministers took their texts from the placards, and gave flaming harangues, which, eliminated and reduced, meant that the South was to be sacked and pillaged, and Southern women given up to outrage. To my indignant denial of this she replied that Mr. G— was in New York at the time and saw and heard these things. The said Mr. G— is a New Englander by birth and education. His story had received universal credence in the place. As I looked into this woman's honest blue eyes my heart sank. Not until that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed will the masses of the Southern people be convinced.

We have received at the North conflicting statements relative to the condition of the Southern people, some accounts reporting an abundance of all necessaries, while others would had us to believe that the people are on quarter rations. I can speak from observation of a single locality as I found it in the autumn of 1862. If the North, with its wealth and its numerous laborers and artisans, its open ports and unrestricted commerce, feels the pressure of the iron hand of war, how must it be with a people whose fields and plantations are deserted, whose soil is invaded, and whose ports are blockaded? A few cases of which I was cognizant may give some idea of the condition of affairs.

Mr. F—, one of the wealthiest men in that section of the State, whose property has been estimated at nearly two millions some twelve years since, had a daughter born unto him. Two hours after her birth he had two hundred bottles of wine buried to be used at her marriage supper. Last spring he had it unearthed and sent every bottle of it to the hospitals for the sick and wounded soldiers. During my stay at the South I dined at this gentleman's house by invitation.. We sat down to a dinner of chicken, corn-dodgers, and sweet potatoes. No dessert and no drink, except cold water.

When I was at boarding-school one of my classmates had become enamored of a black-eyed, mustached clerk in a shoe-store. He had a small, delicate hand, and wore the daintiest of boots—"the cunningest things in the world," she used to say. On the contrary she wore gaiters number five; but once in five weeks she would purchase of her clerk a pair of number one gaiters. Arrived at the Seminary, not being able to wear them, she would present them to some girl who was fortunate in possessing a smaller foot. Yet this girl, who could afford to give away twenty-five dollars' worth of gaiters per year for the sake of creating the impression in a single mind that she had a small foot, I saw wearing a pair of shoes of her own manufacture made of her brother's old coat, and put to soles cut from the legs of his cast-off boots.

The last case I shall mention is that of a gentleman, who, it was said with his little daughter, was living on a plantation with nothing to eat except ash-cakes, as the negroes call them. These are made of Indian meal solely, and wet into a dough with water. This is moulded into a cake about the circumference of a tea-plate, a spot in the fire-place is cleared of ashes, on which the little mound of dough is deposited, its greatest elevation being some three inches. This is then

covered with warm ashes, coals are heaped on the top, and it is left to bake or roast some forty minutes. It is then taken from its bed, the ashes brushed off as thoroughly as possible, when it is well washed in clean hot water. The result is a cake of delicious flavor and sweetness, a piece of which, surreptitiously conveyed to me by some colored sympathizer, used to delight my childish heart more than Mrs. Patterson's most delicate pastry. This man lost his right arm in some engagement, and was discharged from the rebel service. During his absence his slaves had run away en masse. There were over a thousand acres of land in his plantation, yet the only living he could afford was as above mentioned. The following anecdote is told of this man. At seventeen he enlisted without the consent of his parent or guardian for the Mexican campaign. He wrote to his mother, a wealthy widow, for money. She sent him three hundred dollars a few days previous to his departure for the seat of war. Indignant at the small amount, with childish impatience and spitefulness he chewed up the bills and spit them as far as his indignant lips and tongue could send the mass.

I could multiply such cases as the above, but I must return to my story.

I found that the story of my uncle's illness was much exaggerated; indeed, that it was but little better than a ruse to procure my return. He had a cough, it is true; but I found him Captain of a company of Home Guards, and working day and night for "the Cause." The rebellion seemed to have waked him from his selfish repose. I was chagrined at the imposition which had been practiced upon me; but I did not regret the opportunity of revisiting my friends, and of ascertaining for myself, amidst the contradictory accounts, something of the feeling among the people.

By one of those inexplicable coincidences which transpire in almost every life, and which startle and awe, Charles B—, on furlough from the rebel army, was visiting for the first time, since his unexplained departure, the home where I had first known him. I knew nothing of his presence in the place until I accidentally met him at the house of a friend. I pass over the manner of our meeting as well as other particulars of this unexpected interview after a separation covering five years. I was then made acquainted with the measures which my uncle had taken to separate two loving hearts. I was surprised at the revelation; his course was such as I should never .have anticipated from my knowledge of his character.

When Charles asked me to marry him I did not hesitate a moment. I was of age, there was no one then to interpose. I remembered that he was a rebel; but I couldn't make it cause any difference in my feeling for him. I listened to my heart alone, and that called for him. He wished to have our union consummated at the earliest practicable moment before my uncle should learn of his presence in the village. So the very next day I stood up with him, though he wore the rebel uniform, and promised to love and honor him till death should us part. Thank God that I did so.

A period of happiness for fifty days, despite my uncle's displeasure, followed our marriage; and then, my husband's furlough having expired, he bade me farewell and rejoined his regiment. Then came months of anxiety relieved by frequent letters breathing the deepest love to me, and for the South a zeal as unfaltering and as unquestioning as that which animated Marion and his men. Of course I read with avidity all the war news that came within my reach; Northern papers frequently fell into my hands. I had occasion to remark that in most engagements both sides claimed a victory more or less decided.

One day the dispatches brought the tidings of a desperate battle having been fought, in which my husband's regiment was engaged. I was locked in my room all that day, with my heart torn and divided in its desires. I did not wish the Southern cause to triumph. I had no question now as to where my sympathies lay. But that day I could scarcely bear to think of my husband as among the defeated. In my hopeful nature it did not occur to me that any thing worse than defeat could overtake him.

After a few days of anxious waiting we had some reliable intelligence in reference to the battle. I had gone out to the gate and stood leaning on the fence, waiting for the news-boy. I was thinking that when the Union should be restored—as I had no doubt it would be some day—I should persuade Charles to go North, or, if he should he forced to leave his country, I thought of Canada; that we would settle just across the lines, where I could sometimes see my Northern friends. They would love him, for he was noble; and he, cured of his errors and prejudices against the North, would love those who had honored and fostered his wife.

My reverie was interrupted by the news-boy's whistling "Away down South in Dixie." He handed me a paper over the palings, and went on. I remember looking after him, and thinking that he probably had a father or "big brother" in the army, whose old soldier-clothes he was wearing; for his pants were very long in the seat and very short in the legs, and both they and his coat were very baggy. Then I opened the paper and turned, of course, to the telegrams. The Confederates had been driven from the field, leaving their slain and wounded in the hands of the Federals. Then came that dark and bloody record, which the stranger can run over so carelessly, but which women who have loved ones in the ranks read with a fearful dread. I ran over it, thinking I might find a familiar name; it met me in my husband's— "Killed."

I do not know just what I did and said when this thunder-bolt burst upon me. I should not write it here for the public eye could I recall every particular. Let the writers of fiction display their skill at dissecting the human heart and in analyzing a sorrow. I choose to be forever silent concerning those days of anguish.

I found numerous comforters, the burden of whose condolence was that my husband had fallen in a holy cause. "Miserable comforters are ye all!" was the answer of my heart. One day my scorn burst forth. "It is not true!" I exclaimed, with passionate impatience. "It is not a holy cause to which he has been sacrificed. My husband was honest, but he was deceived. The South is duped, and will be brought to shame. Your leaders—" I checked myself, remembering too late that such language there was treason.

From that time I was conscious of being the object of distrust, and felt a relentless espionage pursuing and overshadowing me. My warmest friends cut me to the heart with their coldness. If I went out it was to feel that the finger of scorn was leveled at me, and that the eyes of persecutors were upon me. There can be nothing worse than the desolation I felt then. I should have wished to die but for the sweet hope of solace and love which centred in my unborn babe. In that was my comfort. I counted the days which must elapse before the desired event, and each morning jealously deducted the past day.

The time was at length accomplished, and a winsome, helpless baby lay in my bosom. I had wished for a boy, whom I could call Charlie; but they brought me instead a baby-girl, with dainty limbs and a noble head, and eyes so like her father's that I cried until I thought I should never cease crying; I teased them to let me keep the baby in my arms the first night, for I was not very sick; so, while all the others slept, I waked and watched with my darling with a deeper happiness in my heart than had ever been there before. There was a love in my bosom which I knew to be deathless for my orphaned girl. I said then—oh! so honestly and so believingly—that I could never have a feeling of impatience, or anger, or weariness toward my baby; that I should always be good for her sake; that I would strive to eradicate every thing from my nature that was not noble and beautiful; that I would consecrate every hour of my life to her. As soon as I was able I should begin to bathe and dress her. No menial hands should rob me of the sweet labor. From me she should learn to walk and talk; and when the time came there was a world of happiness for me in the training of her mind and character. I thought it all out that night as I lay there with my baby softly sleeping in my arms. That was, despite my loneliness and helplessness, the sweetest, happiest night I ever spent.

I had received the necessary attention during my sickness, because a woman in child-birth is an appeal to every other woman. But when I grew convalescent I was conscious of the old coldness, and I felt that I must get away from the stifling atmosphere. As before, the star of hope and promise hovered in the North. So, when we were able, baby and I, I went to a friend who had influence in high Government circles, and through his assistance succeeded in reaching Wilmington, North Carolina. The English steamer, the *G*—, was lying in port, and the rumor was prevalent that she was taking in a cargo preparatory to running the blockade. I consulted a tried Confederate official, and by his advice and through his agency I found myself a passenger on the *G*—, a long, low, side-

wheel steamer of great power. I found some thirty passengers on board, three of whom were bound for Europe, the others for the Northern States and Bermuda. It was currently believed on board that one of the three above mentioned was a courier bearing dispatches. The steamer had a cargo of 450 bales of cotton, several boxes of tobacco, and a few barrels of turpentine.

I felt lonely enough amidst the strange faces which met me on every side; then, too, I was naturally anxious for the result of this new movement. The utmost cheerfulness and apparent freedom from apprehension prevailed among crew and passengers. If our captain had expected to get to sea without attracting the attention of the blockaders he was doomed to disappointment. We had scarcely got under way when the heavy boom! boom! boom! of the Federal guns smote to our hearts the presence of danger.

"No damage done yet; the firing is too high; shots go over her masts," were the words which were soon passing from mouth to mouth. Even as they were on our lips the thunder of cannon was again in our ears, and the steamer quivered from bow to stern.

"Three men are knocked down, the windlass is broken, and the bulwarks are torn away!" was now the information which anxious men retailed.

Boom! boom! boom! The firing was thick and fast; our steamer bellowed and shrieked like some wounded monster, but moved straight onward, piling the waters right and left. Boom! boom! again, and a shot came whizzing directly through the cabin, two feet above water-mark, creating a commotion among crockery and chandeliers. I hugged my baby closer. It seemed as though wings had been lent our steamer, so arrow-like were her movements. "We are gaining on our pursuers; the distance between us is steadily widening; the shot fall far in our wake!" was the welcome intelligence which was being rapidly telegraphed from one to another; when suddenly the welkin rang with a shout of triumph from our victorious steamer. We had successfully run the blockade!

We made the voyage from Wilmington to Halifax in four days and twenty hours. As we came in sight of the latter place the *G*— ran up the Confederate flag amidst the shouts of the passengers. She rode gallantly into port, greeted by the huzzas of the multitude that thronged the wharf.

Eager for a re-union with my friends at an early day, I took passage on the *C*—, which cleared for Boston. There were some English gentlemen and several Canadians on board, among whom the American war, the acts of the Administration, and kindred topics, were frequently discussed. Military arrests, the restrictions upon the press and upon the speech of the people, the excited feeling at the North, were dwelt upon at large. From these things doubts began to enter my mind as to the reception I should meet from my Northern friends and acquaintances. What welcome could I expect from them when I was weeping

behind my sable veil for a rebel? How did I dare go to those who had given their dear ones to crush the rebellion, while their graves were, yet fresh, and ask them to countenance and aid the widow and child of a rebel? Would they believe me when I should tell them that my love for the old flag is stronger than ever, and that my prayers follow the Federal arms? And even if those who know me best should trust and sustain me, will not others be found ready with the cry of “traitor” and “spy?” All the intolerant are not of the South.

So the questionings and doubts grew until, to my lonely and dispirited heart, the world not only appeared cold and without a friendly face, but arrest and imprisonment for myself and destitution for my child seemed imminent.

The nearer I approached my destination the more I doubted, and the greater was my shrinking from a meeting with my former friends; and when the cars stopped at —, I stepped off, many miles short of my original destination. Estranged friends I did not wish again to encounter. I could not settle down in idleness. Economize as I would, my slender purse would soon be empty unless replenished. How could this be accomplished? My baby was at such an age that I could not go into the school-room even if I could have obtained a teacher’s situation in a strange place. I naturally thought of my pen. I was soon at work on a story—a very quiet, simple story about a young soldier who died at Fortress Monroe. I wrote at odd moments while my baby slept, or as she lay on the bed looking at her little hands, and softly cooing her admiration of her dainty pink fingers. I used to watch the clock, and I don’t think I ever secured fifteen consecutive minutes for my writing, except when baby slept, and she seldom in the day slept half an hour. Every few moments I was obliged to throw aside my pen—in the middle of a sentence, perhaps, and just as I was becoming engaged with my thought, and felt that I was expressing it with some felicity. There would be an interruption of an hour or two; and when I returned to my writing, cold and weary, I felt that all warmth and enthusiasm were gone. Often I had lost the word or illustration, and sometimes the thought itself had escaped me.

But the story was at length completed. Then I borrowed a little carriage from a neighbor, and having tucked baby in it, she and I went to the post-office. When we arrived there she was asleep, so I left the carriage on the sidewalk while I ran in and got the MS. weighed. Twenty-three cents was the postage on it, and a very large sum it seemed, as I took it from my scanty purse. I hadn’t learned the new postal regulation concerning MSS. passing between publishers and authors. I mailed the story to the editor of a Philadelphia magazine.

Every few days I drew baby to the Post-office. It was ten days before I heard from my story. At the end of that time, as I inquired at the little square office-window, I saw the clerk, as he ran over the letters, pause at a huge document in a yellow envelope. My heart sank; I felt that my story had been returned.

“Where are you expecting letters from ?“ he asked.

“From Philadelphia,” I replied, remembering, with a lonely kind of feeling, that I had no correspondents elsewhere. He handed me the package; I put it in my dress-pocket and left the office.

“Little darling!” I murmured, as I stopped to tuck the shawls around baby before starting home with her; “we must look somewhere else.”

When I reached an obscure street I drew the carriage to one side, and taking the rejected MS. from my pocket, with a feeling of pity for the poor slighted thing, I broke the seal. I found a kind, courteous letter from the editor, which brought the quick tears to my eyes. The story was written with feeling and ability, he said; but, owing to the stringency of the times, he was restricted by the publishers in his purchase of MSS., and was compelled to return my story.

Being ignorant, as I have said, of the new postal bill, and feeling that I could not afford to throw away postage-stamps, my next move was to address a letter to the editors of a New York paper, inquiring if they had room for new contributions, provided, of course, there was merit in them. In a few days I received a printed reply, to the effect that they had all the matter on hand which they could possibly use (I do not believe they said through all time), and concluding with, “We herewith return your MS.”—not quite applicable in my case, it seemed to me, since I had sent no MS.

A few days after I mailed the story to another Philadelphia magazine, with a note stating that the editor of so and so had been pleased to express a favorable opinion of the story. A few days brought me a letter from some member of the editorial corps, acknowledging receipt of MS., complaining of the deluge of contributions with which they were afflicted, and concluding with the question, “Why did not Mr. — accept it?” By the next mail I sent stamps to pay return postage.

Somewhat discouraged by these repeated failures, a few days of irresolution succeeded. During this time I met with the statement that, owing to the hard times, many off the best writers in America were out of employment. If this was true, it was, I decided, most ridiculous for me, who had no name, perhaps deserved none, to expect success. It was folly for me to attempt to live by my pen: I had no gift, no talent; my vanity had led me astray. So I went to work one day, and prepared a package for the flames. I put into it all my published articles, and all MSS. prepared for publication; all those delightful complimentary notices I had so carefully cut from the papers publishing or copying my articles; all the letters I had received encouraging or commending my efforts—all so dear to me once. I had condemned them to be burned as a meet punishment for the deception they had so long practiced upon me; but their familiar, loved faces made such an appeal that I commuted their punishment to

imprisonment. So I deposited the at the very bottom of an old trunk, under books and boxes, etc. •

That night my baby was attacked with inflammation of the brain. Then came weary days and nights of watching and agonizing suspense. With medicines, and the doctor's bill, and fuel, and lights, there was a fearful drain on my purse. Every few days I would steal off and count over its pitiful contents; for I thought I should probably lose my baby, and I could not endure that her little grave should be in the Potters' Field.

But my baby was spared me, and I felt strong again for work. I began to think of asking for work at the shops, for something which I could do at home; for I would not listen to the suggestion of leaving my baby to the care of others.

A few weeks since an old number of *Harper's Magazine* fell into my hands, in which the editor invited contributions, and promised to read and pronounce upon them. I somehow felt encouraged by the kindly tone to make another effort. I resurrected my story, and re-read it, pen in hand, now dotting an i or crossing a t, and now making some change in the punctuation, or altering the structure of a sentence. The three introductory pages I rewrote; they were fictitious, and seemed cold and formal as I read them with a secret fear that the editor might condemn the story before getting through with them. At the earliest opportunity I mailed the story to *Harper's Magazine*. I stated in the beginning that it was returned.

I thought I would tell you why I wrote that story; that I would like to have you know that I was writing that I might live, and that I might keep my baby with me. I fear that I have made my story too long, and that it teems with faults. But think how it has been written: a line at one time, a half-dozen lines at another. I have never been able to get off more than a half-page of MS. without an interruption. I have sometimes written with my baby on one knee, reaching for my pen and paper. I used to think that if I could dress her up, and lay her away on a shelf, as I used to do with my doll, for a single morning, so that I could give all my mind to my writing, that I might accomplish something worthy your acceptance.

You may say that, circumstanced as I am, I should not attempt the part of an author; that I should seek a livelihood by other means. What means? I ask beseechingly. What can I do?

Barker, Louise W.; "Why I Wrote It," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine,* Volume 29, Issue 169, June, 1864; pp. 94-104; New York: Harper & Brothers