

1977

Children of Honor: Letters of Winston and Octavia Stephens, 1861-1862

Ellen E. Hodges



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Historical Quarterly by an authorized editor of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

Recommended Citation

Hodges, Ellen E. (1977) "Children of Honor: Letters of Winston and Octavia Stephens, 1861-1862," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 56 : No. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol56/iss1/6>

CHILDREN OF HONOR:
LETTERS OF WINSTON AND
OCTAVIA STEPHENS, 1861-1862

edited by ELLEN E. HODGES AND STEPHEN KERBER*

WHEN THE Florida secession convention voted in January 1861 to withdraw the state from the Union, it made a fateful decision, the consequences of which its members scarcely understood. The lives of Floridians, white and black, would be fundamentally altered—at first almost imperceptibly, then with increasing speed and force—by the action of the delegates. Typical in many ways of those citizens whose lives would be completely altered by secession and civil strife was a young couple from Welaka in Putnam County—Octavia and Winston Stephens.

Winston J. T. Stephens, a Georgia native, the son of Dr. P. G. Stephens, had moved into Florida with his mother in 1846. He served with distinction in Florida's Third Seminole War (1855-1858) as a militia colonel. Thirty-two years old in 1861, Winston, and wife Octavia, lived on a small plantation, Rose Cottage, near Welaka.¹ Located eighteen miles south of Palatka on the east side of the St. Johns River, Welaka is opposite the mouth of the Ocklawaha River. The St. Johns River was a focus of commerce for East Florida at the time, serving as the main artery of transportation in the Florida wilderness.

Octavia had married Winston Stephens against her father's advice in November 1859. Colonel James W. Bryant, a successful northern businessman, had wanted his daughter to make a more

* Ms. Hodges is a graduate student in United States history at the University of Florida, Gainesville. She is currently writing a history of the Stephens family. Mr. Kerber is a doctoral candidate in United States history at the University of Florida, and is editorial assistant on the *Florida Historical Quarterly*.

1. Plantations in Florida, as elsewhere in the South, varied in land size and in slave holdings. In 1860 Florida's population included 61,750 slaves out of a total population of 140,500. Out of the over 1,000 plantations in the state, only 400 employed thirty or more slaves. Julia Flord Smith, *Slavery and Plantation Growth in Antebellum Florida, 1821-1860* (Gainesville, 1973), 27.

suitable match. Octavia had been educated in Boston, and she had grown up as a pampered, genteel young lady. However, she also possessed a strong, stubborn, independent spirit. In spite of her father's misgivings, Octavia persevered in her desire, overcame her father's objections, married her young planter, and moved to his small Florida plantation, Rose Cottage.

Although politically a Whig, and temperamentally averse to war, Winston Stephens found it impossible to remain aloof from the conflict that erupted in the spring of 1861. Later that year he became a member of Benjamin Hopkins's company of militia. The men immediately elected him first lieutenant of the company.

The letters of Winston and Octavia Stephens which follow give an unusual, even rare view of conditions in Florida, both civil and military, during the early months of the Civil War. The couple wrote each other frequent and lively letters which reveal much about life on the farm and in camp. Their correspondence also reveals a good deal about the two authors, their personalities, their hopes and fears, and their feelings for each other. Winston, an active, practical, ambitious, but level-headed man with a sense of humor, grew in character and capability as his responsibilities mounted. Octavia, only twenty in 1861, also had to grow in response to the challenge of maintaining her child, home, and property—including slaves—during her husband's absence. That the pair shared a deep, reassuring, and passionate love is manifestly evident.

The editors end this selection of the Stephens letters just prior to the death of Winston's commanding officer, Benjamin Hopkins, in February 1862, and on the eve of the Federal invasion of East Florida. Winston subsequently became company commander of the St. Johns Rangers. The letters are published as written. No changes have been made in spelling or punctuation, but portions of some letters have been deleted because of space limitations.² These are personal references which seem to have limited historic value.

2. The Winston and Octavia Stephens letters were a gift to the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville, by Winston B. Stephens, Jr., of Riviera Beach, Florida. The editors wish to thank Mr. Stephens and the staff of the P. K. Yonge Library for permission to reproduce the letters and photographs.

Jacksonville Sept 7th 1861

My Dear Winston

. . . Well I began this this morning directly after breakfast so that I would not have to hurry, or have interruptions this afternoon & when I had written a few lines Tina came and has spent the day with us, after she left I dressed Rosa to go visiting, & myself and now it is getting quite dark and this must be in the office before nine o'clock to night. ³ so you must excuse all deficiencies.

. . . I am very sorry for your sake that you are lonely, but I must say I am glad that I am missed by you, but then the worse people are sometimes the more they are missed. I hope you will not look for me next Monday. it has rained every day but one since I came down. I have been out to church twice, to Mrs Reed's once, & across the street once. ⁴ Rosa has made more visits than I. she is much admired, she is the prettiest baby I have seen, nearly everyone asks whose baby she is, dont you feel proud? She received a present of a ring this afternoon from Henry Houston, he gave me a small bottle of cologne for *you & I*. ⁵

Georgie is playing the flute, & Henry is playing with the machine. ⁶

There is a great deal of sickness every where, I hope you all will keep well. we have both been well, Rosa had the colic the night before last from eating potatoe just before night.

There was a report here the other day that there was a fleet in

-
3. Tina is Augustina Alexandrina Fleming Stephens (1831-1900), wife of Clark Stephens and sister-in-law of Winston Stephens. Tina was the youngest child and only daughter of Louis Michael Fleming and his first wife, Augustina Cortes. She married Clark Stephens, a Marion County planter, at the age of fifteen and in later years lived in Welaka. Gertrude N. L'Engle, *A Collection of Letters, Information and Data on Our Family*, 2 vols. (Jacksonville, 1949), II, 71. Rosa Stephens (1860-1883), infant daughter of Octavia and Winston, born October 17, 1860.
 4. Mrs. Reed is probably the wife of a Jacksonville merchant who had lived across the street from Octavia when she was a child.
 5. A black barber named Henry Houston lived in Jacksonville in 1860. U. S. Census Office, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, original population schedules on microfilm, Duval County, Florida, copy in P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History.
 6. George P. Bryant, youngest brother of Octavia, was born in 1849. Henry is Octavia's second-youngest brother. The Bryant children were William A. (1837-1881), Davis H. (1839-?), Octavia (1841-1908), Henry H. (1847-1930), and George P. (1849-1876). Henry Bryant lived with his sister throughout most of the Civil War. In 1875 Henry married Mary Jane, the daughter of Clark and Tina Stephens.

sight of Fernandina, & every body, or a great many are beginning to think of leaving, if times get "scary" Mother may go home with me, but I believe most of the reports are false, storekeepers are even packing up goods.⁷ The men have been drilling right here at the Court House. this afternoon, I declare it made me feel dreadfully to think what they were drilling for, you do not know how glad I feel when I think you are not in any company and I hope & pray you may never be in any.

I suppose you know all communication is broken off between the North & South, but Mother was fortunate enough to get a letter from Aunts Kate & Mary last week, & they had heard from Father since Mother had, he was better.⁸

. . . I suppose Mr Gardner did not come last week, as Davis could not find him on the boat.⁹ so you can have the pleasure of Miss Gs company another week if you wish it.¹⁰ dont run off with her or Mrs Sams before I get back.¹¹

There is a Sunday boat, but Tina seems to think it will cost more to go on her, then too you have arranged for my passage on the Darlington, so I guess we will leave here on her next Saturday, & I think Capt Brock will let us stay on board.¹² Since writing the last sentence I have been thinking if I have to go off the boat

7. Octavia's mother is Rebecca Hathorne Hall Bryant (1813-1864). She married James W. Bryant in Boston in 1836.

8. Aunt Kate is Octavia's aunt, Mrs. Richard Parker. As a young girl Octavia attended the Parker's seminary for young ladies in Boston, 1856-1857. Aunt Mary is Mary Francis Bryant (1822-?), wife of Dr. Samuel S. Adams. Father is James William Bryant (1812-1867), an attorney and merchant in Massachusetts, New York, Cuba, and Jacksonville, and the father of Octavia. During the war years Bryant (evidently a Union man) moved to the North, visiting his family in Florida at intervals under flags of truce. An importer-exporter, Bryant also speculated in land. He founded the town of Welaka in 1853. While in Havana he established and edited a bilingual newspaper called the *Cuban Messenger*. In 1864 he purchased the *American Gas-Light Journal* in Bloomfield, New Jersey, and edited that publication until a short time before his death.

9. Gardner is Winston's tenant, and a man not highly regarded by the Stephens family, possibly because of his inability to control his slaves and his political activities in Welaka. Davis is Davis H. Bryant, Octavia's brother.

10. Miss G. is unknown.

11. Mrs. Sams is unknown.

12. Jacob Brock, one of the colorful captains on the St. Johns River, built the Brock House at Enterprise in the early 1850s. He owned several St. Johns steamers, including the *Darlington*, which saw service both in the Confederate and later the Union causes. Patricia P. Clark, "J. F. B. Marshall: A New England Emigrant Aid Company Agent in Post-War Florida, 1867," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, LIV (July 1975), 57-58n.

seems to me it would be cheaper to go up on Sunday. I wish you would ask Capt Brock all about it and write me word next week, I suppose he would charge some more, as he would have to have cooking done for us. I dont know what to do so please dont forget to see Capt B- & write me what to do.

Well my dear I must close for fear this may be too late for the mail. Give my love to Ben, and accept lots for yourself from ¹³

Your ever affectionate
Wife

P.S. Tell Sarah & all howdye, that Rachael is well, Janes "daddy" came to see Rachael today. Big Jane's sister is well again. ¹⁴

"Rose Cottage" Sept 10th 1861

My Dear Wife

. . . I have been in the Swamp all the morning getting out some Cypress blocks for the mill & this PM I have got out a lightwood shaft & after that I have taken up the pen to write you as I have to go out to Mr. Tyners in the morning to see if I cant get a beef, Clark is to go with me. ¹⁵ We want to get one between us and drive it up & kill it. I shall pickle my half if we get it. Our fish give out last week and we have been on pickle pork ever since I shall leave room for a P.S. when I return tomorrow.

We are all well to day & the most of us have been well since you left, but on last Thursday morning Sarah was announced on the sick list & was sick until Monday. Jane had to cook & on Friday she washed & all the back sets together has put me behind some the cotton opens fast. to day before dinner Jane got 60 Tom 60 Mose 45 Joe 40 & Jane 24 which will show you how the cotton stands, but if we have no more sickness we can get over this week. I had nothing done in the ditch last week & think the cotton

-
13. Ben is Benjamin Gaines, Winston's half-brother through his widowed mother's remarriage to Lewis C. Gaines of Middleburg, Clay County, Florida.
 14. Sarah, Rachael (1840-1882), Jane, and Big Jane were Stephens slaves. Other slaves owned by Stephens included Tom (1846-?), Mose (1848-?), Joe (1848-?), Jess (1855-?), Polly (1862-?), Toady, Burrel (?-1884), and Joe's wife (?-1881).
 15. Mr. Tyners might be John G. Tiner, a farmer; L. B. Tiner, a farmer; Simeon Tiner, an overseer; or lessee Tiner, a farm laborer. Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Putnam County, Florida.

pickers will not do any more in it but Burrel will have to finish it.¹⁶

Mr. Simmons has not come yet but I saw him on Saturday & he told me he should come Thursday & stay until Saturday evening.¹⁷ You have surely forgotten My Dear when say you feel so glad that I do not belong to a Company. dont you remember I signed Genl Hopkins list some time ago?¹⁸ Well, that same company was organized on Saturday & 45 men were present & elected their Officers. Genl Hopkins Capt, Myself 1st Lieutenant, Capt Gray of Palatka 2nd Lt, and Mr. Peter Peterman of Palatka 3rd Lt, I could have been elected Capt If I had allowed by name in opposition to Genl Hopkins but I thought the Genl entitled to it & would not suffer the men to use my name.¹⁹ I had an opponet for 1st Lt - a Mr. Braddock he got 12 votes & I got 33 which is a nice majority.²⁰ You remember this Company is for home service & is not to be sent to any part of the State but on the coast near our homes, say from Indian River to St. Augustine, unless some point near by is invaded when we offer to go & help drive back the invader & then return to our usual range. Now My Dear I dont intend to Join any other kind of a company but I do think it is the duty of every man to help drive back the invader when they come so near as is contemplated in the organization of this company. Clark was sick & did not participate at all & Mr. Smith had three chills that day but voted before he went to the house poor fellow he has a hard time of it.²¹

It is after 5 oclock & Sarah has just come in from the cotton field & is going to get some grub. thats propper is it not? as we have *ticle* tea or *sas-fac*. I hope you will get Mother to show you how

16. Burrel is the slave foreman on the Winston Stephens plantation.

17. Mr. Simmons is unknown.

18. Benjamin Hopkins, an attorney and Welaka neighbor of the Stephens, was mustered into the Confederate service in November 1861, and died of a fever in February 1862. Upon his death, Winston became commanding officer of the St. Johns Rangers, Company B, Second Florida Cavalry. Florida Board of State Institutions, *Soldiers of Florida in the Seminole Indian-Civil, and Spanish-American Wars* (Tallahassee, 1903), 263.

19. H. A. Gray belonged to the St. Johns Rangers. Mustered into the Confederate army in April 1862, he served until May 20, 1865. *Ibid.* Peterman was a merchant from Palatka, and a native of Germany. Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Putnam County, Florida.

20. John, Joseph, or William Braddock. *Soldiers of Florida*, 263.

21. Mr. Smith is probably F. B. Smith. *Ibid.*, 264. The 1860 census lists S. B. Smith as a clerk for H. R. Teasdale in Palatka. Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Putnam County, Florida.

she makes good coffee out of corn as I *never* saw any.²² I am glad you like it hope you'll not complain when you get home. The first chicks are doing well, the last hen only hatched 2 & they are growing fast. I get about an average of one egg a day. Ben & Louis had a letter from Banah & she said Ma had improved & the baby had no more fever Jess & Mary were well.²³ My Dear you wanted me to say about stopping on the Darlington. I do want you to stop on it as Mr. Gabriel Priest left Palatka on Saturday & he told me he was confident Myzells oldest son had measles & I don't want you to run any risk.²⁴

Your aff husband always Winston

. . . P.S. Wednesday 11th I am well & have returned from Mr. Tyners & he came in with us I suppose we will get the beef. You will see by this that I have not run off with Mrs Sams & Mrs G has her Mother here & I have no showing. I want you to pay Willie for that paper & caps.²⁵ You know Mother had something on the 3 dollars for that purpose but I don't know if it was enough lots of love to all, be sure to come or I'll go to *firgivea*.

P.S. No. 2.

Clark told me he had written to Tina that he would perhaps meet her in Palatka and come up from there in a small boat but

-
22. Octavia in later years recorded a recipe for making coffee out of corn: "Coffee from parched 'riddlings' of corn or hominy. (After grinding corn for hominy put it in a flat wide kind of basket & shake & remove the husks-or bran-& parch that-) Also from slices of sweet potato parched (corn the best)." Genealogy and reminiscences folder, Winston J. T. and Octavia L. Stephens Papers.
 23. Lewis Gaines is the third child of Lewis Gaines and Mary Stephens Gaines. Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Clay County, Florida. Banah is Rebannah Gaines. The 1860 census lists "Rebannah" as a twelve-year-old male white. Winston is obviously referring to a female here, however. *Ibid.* Ma is Winston's mother, Mary Stephens Gaines. The baby possibly refers to Alabama Gaines, daughter and youngest child of Lewis and Mary Stephens Gaines, six years old at the time of the 1860 census. Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Clay County, Florida. Jess is possibly Winston's slave of that name. Mary is Winston's half-sister, the oldest child of Lewis and Mary Stephens Gaines. Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Clay County, Florida.
 24. Priest may be either Gabriel W. Priest, a bugler in Winston's company; or Gabriel Priest, aged seventy-seven, of Welaka; or Gabriel C. Priest, a farmer, also of Welaka. *Soldiers of Florida*, 264; Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Putnam County, Florida. Myzell is probably John Mizell, a "farrier" (blacksmith) in Company B. *Soldiers of Florida*, 264.
 25. William A. Bryant (1837-1881), the oldest Bryant child, four years Octavia's senior.

my Dear it is so hot & the load would be so heavy I think I will not come & I guess you will amuse yourselves in some way to pass off the day. ²⁶ I cant do without you any longer & do come & bring Rosa & Mother if she will come. Gardner carried off a negroe to sell & Davis has as well make him pay for 6 months as it will be due the last of this month Winston

Tuesday night Nov 5th 1861

My dear Husband

I wonder if you have received my little scrawl and are two feet deep in your papers tonight. I took great pleasure in sending them, knowing you are so fond of them, although I make such a fuss about your reading them at home. but would you not like to look in upon us to night and see how we do without you! & what we are doing! Well I can tell you what we are doing now. We have a nice cheerful fire with the horse in front of it drying Rosa's socks &c, and a table out in the middle of the room & Mother sitting opposite me writing. Henry & George sitting a little one side studying. poor Ben in bed where he has had fever this afternoon. Rosa asleep, now if you were only here our picture would be complete, though we would rather have Ben with us too. As for getting along, we do that pretty well but I assure you I miss you sadly, but I can not help thinking that you will be home soon to stay. I can not realize that this is only the beginning of worse. Rosa has not yet forgotten how to say Pa Pa, though she is too often reminded to forget how to say it, if she does not forget to whom it applies. The first night you were away when I took her into bed Mother had not yet got in and she looked all around and kept calling for Pa Pa and made me feel right sad, she has been very cross for two or three days and nights. I am quite certain that there is another tooth coming, she has been better to day, and slept quite well last night. just as I finished that sentence she awoke, I took her up & she went right to sleep again I guess you think yes those folks sit up late & sleep late & every thing goes on wrong. All have been behind hand in the morning but are getting better, it was not our fault, & this morning I called the

26. Clark is William Clark Stephens (1827-1904), Winston's brother. Clark married Augustina Alexandrina Fleming.

negroes a little before six, and told them they must get smarter.

Burrel began digging potatoes after dinner yesterday. I do not know how near done he is, he said he wanted to get the hogs in & get those from town before he went on the coast, which will be Friday morning, but I think he will not for Clark wants him to come over Wednesday night to help him kill his beef early Thursday morning. Tina spent to day with us. I had beef enough for half ration, & we are entirely out of meat, have had chicken for dinner twice, no fish to be caught by *any body*. The boys started before breakfast the other morning for the Ocklawaha & did not return until afternoon, & got a mud fish & cat. ²⁷ I one little squirrel & a brim, I assure you they came back disheartened and hungry, for they carried only four "chokers" for their breakfast which they roasted Sunday night, the tide is so high that no one catches any fish.

Last Saturday night Gardners negroes took the rounds, one came here (early in the eve) one at Clarks & two at one of the Priests, for potatoes Burrel had been to Clark's & saw the fresh track in the road & got over in the patch (*by the lot*) & sure enough they had grabbed the best hills of three rows. I sent the measure to Mr. Allen & I hear he had found out who it was, but I do not know yet of the punishment, the one that went into Tina's chicken house has been laid up a week, one of them came here Sunday morning but Burrel made him leave. ²⁸ and Sarah says he took a good look around before he left.

Joe had a chill to day the same time that Ben had his. & Sarah says Rachael had one yesterday. I have some stew already for the next. the cotton is very thin a *buggy*. I hear that the wild sow is becoming tame. the mules have not yet given trouble, but this afternoon they and Charley jumped the fence & went to Clark's but Mose was soon behind them. ²⁹ Well my darling I must say good night, it is nine o'clock half an hour past our putting up time & Mother says I must not write any more, for I have been saying yes'm only one more sentence. Good night. God bless you.

. . . Tina says tell Mr. Parker that his wife & grandchild have been very sick, the latter is still & that they are in a state of starva-

27. Ocklawaha River, a branch of the St. Johns.

28. Allen's identity is unknown; he may have been a law officer or a member of a patrol.

29. Obviously an animal, Charley may have been a horse.

tion, he had better come home, she Mrs P- went begging to Tina for a few potatoes & was going to Mrs. Hopkins the next day.³⁰ Mr. Smith did not send me the oil.³¹ Henry is going to carry the letters & will ask him about it.

Will you please try and get me four knitting needles a size smaller than the piece I send? . . . Mother sends her love. I wont send mine, for you have it already, provided you are a "good boy."

Very affectionately
Your Wife.

I think you were nice to take all the envelopes off with you.

Camp Porter Nov 10th 1861

My Dear Wife

. . . I hope this may find you as well as when your letter was written, but let me caution you about Rosa, dont let her have fever in cutting her gums for any length of time before you cut her gums with a sharp knife. It looks cruel but my dear sometime life itself depends upon it. I would come home some day & be with you but I must put up with my camp for this reason. if I should come home it would give the men an excuse to do likewise, & in that case we would not have our company together when the Officer came to muster us in. We are not mustered yet, but Capt Hopkins started this morning down on the Darlington to Jacksonville after the Officer to muster us. I have 38 men in camp with me & there is about 20 in the neighborhood ready when the Officer comes & we are receiving recruits every day. Capt Nauton failed to organize his company yesterday & we have some of his men & expect to get more.³² Mr M^cLeod of Palatka will

30. Mr. Parker is probably John Parker, aged seventy-three, a laborer with a seventy-year-old wife named Mary. Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Putnam County, Florida. Mrs. Hopkins is Susan D. Hopkins, wife of Benjamin Hopkins. *Ibid.*

31. The 1860 census contained the names of M. Smith, merchant, aged twenty-six, of Welaka; and S. B. Smith, a clerk for H. R. Teasdale in Palatka. S. B. Smith may have been the F. B. Smith in the St. Johns Rangers. *Ibid.*; *Soldiers of Florida*, 264.

32. Either Captain N. Norton, Company I, Seventh Florida Infantry, or possibly First Lieutenant Nathan Norton, Company G, Tenth Florida Infantry. *Soldiers of Florida*, 184, 230.

take the place offered to Davis.³³

The Darlington brought some exciting news yesterday, it reports the Yankee fleet of 32 sail had commenced an attack on Port Royal & that the Fort had sunk their best ship & the others had been obliged to retire for repairs, but there is no doubt - but it will be a long siege. But I trust the Fort can hold out. It was also reported that a fleet had fired on Brunswick [Georgia] but I could not ascertain what was the force or what the result. We have a force (so reported) of 20 thousand at the first & 30 thousand at the last named place & the forts were considered impregnable. The St. Johns & St Marys did not come as they conveying troops & sc to the relief of those two places.³⁴ I presume the next place to be tried will be Fernandina, but I sincerely hope they will get enough in the fights above mentioned to require them to return to some Northern Port for repairs, so as to give more time for preparation on our coast. I had a regular soldiers dream on Friday night. I thought I had returned & after saluting you Rosa called Pa Pa & smacked her lips for a kiss, but alas I awoke & had a soldiers bed & bed fellow. You may think I love this life better than my quiet home with those dearer than life itself, but you are sadly mistaken it is only two things that induces me to make the sacrifices I am making. One is a duty I owe to you & the other is a duty I owe my country. but if God permits me to return safe to my home after this term I will remain there only when I am compelled to assist to drive back the enemy from my State & then it shall be done as an independent Volunteer. I wrote a short & hurried letter by Capt Hopkins to Davis in answer to his which I rec'd the same time I got yours. I am glad Davis is not going to join us because I think some one of us should be free & as he can make it pay him better than any of us. I am glad he does so.

33. R. H. McLeod, a clerk who worked for merchant M. D. Cleveland in Palatka, and a lieutenant in Company B. *Ibid.*, 263; Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Putnam County, Florida.

34. The *St. Johns* (or *St. John*), a small steamer, slightly larger than the *Darlington*, was captured by the USS *Stettin* on April 18, 1863. All but four of the rebel crew escaped. Captain P. Drayton to Rear-Admiral S. F. Du Pont, February 24, 1863; Du Pont to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, April 22, 1863, in U. S. Naval War Records Office, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 30 vols. (Washington, 1894-1922), XIII, 684; XIV, 144. The *St. Marys*, another *St. Johns* steamer pressed into military service, was sunk by her Confederate crew to prevent capture in 1862. Branch Cabell and A. J. Hanna, *The St. Johns; A Parade of Diversities* (New York, 1943), 212, 239.

I send up by Darlington in the morning some bagging & in the roll there is a bottle of Castor oil, be careful when it is unrolled that the bottle is not broken. I want Burrel as soon as he returns to cut off 5 yards & make a bag & weigh 440 lbs of seed cotton & pack it in the bag & put it on the Wharf & write to Mr. Smith to mark it to Parson & Livingston, Orange Springs & send it by the first barge that goes up the river.³⁵ & I want you to have the potatoes by the lot dug as soon as possible & when the hogs roots out the first have them turned into the other, but the fence must be made strong first. I hope they will have good luck on the coast & bring you fish enough to last until the hogs are fat. I forgot to say while speaking of Davis to tell you to write to him for anything you want provided he can make arrangements to make a bill for 3 or 4 months when I shall be able to take it up, as there is no chance to get any thing here.

The papers you sent afforded me considerable satisfaction & I am much obliged to you for your thoughtfulness of me. I should indeed like to look in upon you & make one of the circle so as to fill up the picture. As soon as we are mustered I shall come home for a few days but dont expect to come before for the reason already given. Tell Ben to shoot Gardners negroes if they come about the place & I will be responsible for damages. By the three notes I meant three that was sent for some of the boys Parents, but all is right.

I saw a young man in Palatka from Middleburg & he sayed Ma, Jessup & all were well & Ma was stil at Jessups.³⁶ If Genl Hopkins succeeds we will be mustered the first of the week & then I will cross the River & be home in short order. Give love to Clarks family Mother & boys Ben & sc Kiss Rosa & accept for yourself, the rest of kisses & love from your aff husband,

Winston Stephens

PS I forgot to name we are now on the eve of moving our camp

35. Mr. Smith is most likely M. Smith, the Welaka merchant. The Livingston here may be J. L. Livingston, who, with a man named McBride, operated a large cotton gin at Orange Springs. Parson may be John W. Pearson, a developer-together with Yulee-of Orange Springs. Eloise Robinson Ott and Louis Hickman Chazal, *Ocali Country, Kingdom of the Sun, A History of Marion County, Florida* (Ocala, 1966), 51, 65. Orange Springs is about twenty miles west of Welaka, up the Ocklawaha River, in Marion County.

36. Jessup is unknown.

out to the five mile pond where we will have good pasture & sc give howdie to the negroes & tell them to keep up with the cotton & get it clean. I am a good boy.

Winston

“Palatka” Dec 1st 1861

My Dear Wife

After starting from home & getting nearly down to the clear water pond I had to return to give up the corn house keg. I delivered it to Jane as I saw no one moving about in the yard. The boys waited for me while returning. When we got to the river we found that all the boys had crossed but those with me, & we had to wait some time for the flat but eventually got over & arrived in this place about 5 P.M. all OK. I did not stay in camp that night but slept at Lt Grays, but on next morning we call'd the Roll & found we have recruits enough to make 74 rank & file. We have the men divided into messes of eight men in each mess fixed off with camp equipage & sc & they are all very well satisfied. We *hosifers* have formed a mess & Felix does the cooking & pays attention to our horses & we pay two dollars pr month for said services.³⁷ I think we will agree as well as could be expected some-things are not as I am accustomed to have them but I suppose I will soon be used to it.

While I think of it, I forgot the Muster Roll or they were left out of my trunk by some accident & I wish you would look them up & if Capt Hopkins comes up send the Rolls to him & if not be sure to send it down by Darlington. The last time I saw it was when you asked to see it. look all the likely places and if you dont find it then hunt the unlikely as it is of great importance.

It is now about 4 P.M. & I will tell you how I have spent the day thus far. At my usual time I got up and washed & dressed for breakfast which we have about 8 oclock, then Mr Connell came in & shaved me, after that I put on my sunday clothes & at $\frac{1}{2}$ past 10 oclock we formed the Company in lines & marched them to the Episcopal Church where half of the seats had been left for us, & there I listened to one of the best sermons preachd by Mr. Crane,

37. Felix is a servant, perhaps a black. He is not listed as a company member. *Soldiers of Florida*, 263-65.

that I have herd for a long time.³⁸ then we returned to Camp dismissed the Company & sat sometime with Mr. Gower & Capt Solee from Jacksonville, then walked up to Lt Petermans where we have an excellant dinner.³⁹ & now I have returned & am helping you to a dish of gossip or any thing you will have.

We have not received any orders yet, & now Gen¹ or Capt Hopkins speaks of coming up home for a few days as he has had fever since his return to this place. "Now see" he curses *Welaka* & says this is a healthy place but he runs from this to *Welaka* because he has fever here, how convenient. We have glorious news from Pensacola! On the 22nd of Nov Lincolns fleet of seven vessels commenced their fire on a steamer of the C.S. & Fort Pickens assisted them & the fire became general on our fortifications & Genl Bragg returned the fire slowly but with good effect & they fought through the 22nd & 23rd & the Federal fleet became so much disabled that they had to put out to sea & one of the vessels the *Magara* had to be towed out by a steamer & a breach was made in one of the bastions of Fort Pickens.⁴⁰ The report of Genl Bragg says they seem to have enough of it as two days have elapsed & no more appearance of an assault & Bragg says he can stand all they can send against him. Our killed & wounded in the engagement is put down at 16 men mostly Georgians Now this a glorious victory but I look for another tryal with a larger force before long.

The Yankees have taken possession of Tybee Island near Savannah & are fortifying it with the view of commanding the channel & the consequence thus far has been the stopping of the Savannah boats, but I think the Georgians will not allow them to fortify & I expect we will hear of lively times from there soon.

Genl Lee commands in Fla & he has been to Fernandina & after a careful inspection of the premises he has instructed the commander to hold it at all hazards & ordered considerable more work in the shape of fortifications erected.⁴¹ I would not be

38. James R. Connell, a private soldier, served throughout the war. *Ibid.*, 263. Mr. Crane is E. P. Crane, age twenty-eight, a native New Yorker and a Presbyterian minister in Palatka. Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Putnam County, Florida.

39. Gower is unknown. B. F. Solee, quartermaster, Tenth Florida Infantry, served from 1862 to 1865. *Soldiers of Florida*, 219.

40. Bragg is Confederate Brigadier General Braxton Bragg. The *Magara* is unknown.

41. Robert Edward Lee at this time commanded the coastal defenses in

surprised if this company is ordered some where near that we can assist if necessary, but this is only my supposition. I will however keep you posted if possible & I dont want you to make yourself unnecessarily uneasy about me if you fail to hear when you should I will write by evry opportunity I see but it may be as before & then you know it is not any fault.

I am in good health & the prospect is that we will remain so as the season is so far advanced. The Company improves finely in drilling We drill twice a day at 10 AM & 3 PM and it occupies with other duties nearly all the time. Be careful with your meat this warm weather!

I send you a letter from Sister & I want you to see that Ben answers it or please do it if he does not & tell them about the box. Tell Mother I have the papers & I hope she will not be disappointed. has Symmons arrived?⁴² If not & he wants the cart sent for his tools send it. has the Sows pigs?

. . . PS Dr Mays told me that one sour orange juice & a teaspoon of salt eaten three times a day before meals was a certain remedy for chill & fever.⁴³ try it if you have any more in your family. The Darlington goes up tonight - at 10 oclock & Genl Hopkins will go up on her & he will let you know if he returns before Wednesday.

Good night & God bless you all
Winston

Camps near Fernandina.

Dec 22nd 1861.

My Dear Wife

I take pleasure this morning to inform you that I am well & no one sick in camps. We arrived at this place all safely on Thursday night about 11 oclock & found Capt Hickman to receive us & deliver us 16 Tents & poles, which is enough for our Com-

South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. John E. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War* (Gainesville, 1963), 61.

42. Symmons, who had been hired to run the sawmill on Winston's land, never showed up.

43. Dr. R. G. Mays, prominent Democrat in St. Johns County, was a cotton planter from South Carolina. E. A. Hammond, University of Florida, Gainesville, to editors, February 21, 1977; Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, St. Johns County, Florida.

pany.⁴⁴ The day I left I got down to the flat before any one else & had it bailed out before any one arrived, & then had to wait until about ten oclock before we started over & it was twelve before I landed, I then got on Pet & rode in Town as soon as possible, When I arrived I found Cpt H [Benjamin Hopkins] quite sick & the Company was to be gotten ready by ten that night, so I had to fly around as a rapid rate, soon after I arrived Ben & Lewis arrived & Jessups boy was waiting for them & I was called off & they got ready & left before I knewed it, Ma wrote to me & I did not have time to do what she asked.⁴⁵ I am so sorry but it cant be helped now & could't be then. They were all tolerable well but Dick had not arrived, & I fear will disappoint her. To resume my travels, We left Palatka at 10 oclock that night & arrived in Jacksonville at 4 am & at about 7 I walked up to Mrs. Maxeys & found Davis in the land of Nod (*where you know he was to meet Mrs. M*)⁴⁶ I had him up in a short time & they (him & Mrs. M) were suprised to see me but appeared glad & *I think were*. I took a cup of Coffee butter & bread with pleasure & considerable comfort. After which Davis walked down Town with me & We left on the Cars at 9 a m & left Capt H [Benjamin Hopkins] with Mrs. Smith.⁴⁷ I arrived at Baldwin at 11 am & had to wait until eight PM before the cars left for this place & we arrived here 11 oclock. We had our Tents all up & baggage & supplies stowed by 12 or one oclock & then I went to the land of *Nod* - We are on the main land half-mile from the draw-bridge and I think six miles from Fernandina. I like the place better than on the Island & in fact I like it better than in Palatka, only I would like to be that near you. We have the sand flies here when it is warm & no wind blowing, but that is seldom now - The object in our being placed here is to protect the Rail Road & the bridge, as it is supposed the Yankees may attempt to land on the main & take possession of the Road which would cut off all communication with the Island & by so doing they could starve the forces into a submission, as they could at the same time

44. Hickman functioned as quartermaster with the Third Florida Infantry. *Soldiers of Florida*, 102.

45. Jessup's boy is unknown.

46. Possibly Lida Maxey, who in 1887 ran a boarding house in Jacksonville at 183 E. Bay Street. *Richard's Jacksonville Duplex City Directory* (Jacksonville, 1887), 379.

47. Mrs. Smith is unknown.



Winston Stephens.



Octavia Stephens.

blockade the water communication with their War vessels - two rifle eight pounders are being mounted at the draw bridge to prevent the approach of Gun boats up from Nassau bar.⁴⁸ If we have any fighting to do, the rail road will afford us considerable protection as it will make a good breast work. If any of the Yankees attempt to take the bridge by land I think they will have something to do - Yesterday I walked in Town to make my report to Genl Trappier, but could not find him but left a written report at his office.⁴⁹ I was surprised at the size of the place & its general appearance - I saw a number of my old friends from Marion & while at Capt Fletchers camps we herd heavy firing toward Brunswick & it lasted from about 8 am to 12 m-.⁵⁰ Mr. Eulee telegraphed to Savannah & they had not herd any thing of it there & sayed all was quiet in Brunswick when last herd from, some suppose one thing & others other thins.⁵¹ I suppose we will hear in a few days. Davis will give you all the news about the bar & the capture of that vessel, as I supposed at first Capt S was not to blame as they could not see the Vessel from the Fort.⁵² We heard firing down that way this morning but supposed they were practising - We have 68 men here & left 15 in Camps at Palatka to take care of our horses till our return. I wish I had known it & left Pet at home. I hope you may all have a fine time Christmas, and that Davis may not be allowed to have the blues while there. I ordered my shot gun home & I want you to ask Henry to keep them all clean & loaded so they will shoot & tell Clark & you can tell your Mother but I want it carefully kept, but carefully watched. I heard just before

48. The Florida Railroad had been incorporated in 1853. Construction on the road began westward from Fernandina in 1855, and in March 1861 the first train reached Cedar Key. Charlton W. Tebeau, *A History of Florida* (Coral Gables, 1971), 191; George W. Pettengill, Jr., *The Story of the Florida Railroads, 1834-1903* (Boston, 1952), 21. The dock of the Florida Railroad was located at the western terminus of Fernandina's Centre Street on the Amelia River's eastern bank. From this point the tracks ran south down the island for approximately six or seven miles and then crossed a bridge or trestle to the western bank of the Amelia River. *Map of the State of Florida Showing the Progress of the Surveys, 1857* (1857 PKY 318); and *Map of Fernandina, Amelia Island, Florida, 1857* (1857 PKY 319), in P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History.

49. Confederate Brigadier-General James H. Trappier.

50. Captain William L. Fletcher, Company G, Fourth Florida Infantry. *Soldiers of Florida*, 129.

51. David Levy Yulee, former United States Senator from Florida.

52. Captain S is unknown.

I left Palatka that six of Gov Moseleys negroes had been heard to say if Lincoln did not free them by the 20th of January they would free themselves.⁵³ Now My Dear dont let this give you unnecessary uneasiness but I want you to be safe, & to be so, the guns must be loaded and Henry & George can do all the shooting - Tell Clark that the men may establish a patrol & be on their guard, dont let the negroes hear of it dont say anything before Jane. I am not afraid of my negroes, but Mr. Gardners negroes may take a notion if they are consuled, to Join in the fray. If I forgot to tell you how long to give the negroes give them from - Wednesday to Monday morning - I owe your Mother 5^c as I handed Davis the letter & spent the money - Give her & the boy love also Clark & family & I would be glad to hear often from some of you. Kiss my Dear Rosa & accept much love from your aff husband - Goodbye & God bless My Dear Wife

Winston Stephens

PS The United States has consented to give up Mesrs Mason & Slidell - *The Cowards*⁵⁴

Fernandina Dec 26th 1861

My dear Wife

I have not seen a line from you since I left & I begin to feel quite anxious to see your *fst* on paper - I have just finished a letter to Davis, though short & uninteresting, I sent the letter to him by Henry Hopkins & he returns in a few days & I presume I shal have a letter from Davis giving some details of his Christmas at "Rose Cottage" & hope to have a favorable report.⁵⁵ I did want so much to be with you on that occasion but it was decreed other-

53. William Dunn Moseley, first governor of the state of Florida, 1845-1849. In 1851, he moved to Palatka, where he became a planter and fruit grower.

54. On November 8, 1861, the *USS San Jacinto* stopped the British mail steamer *Trent* at sea. The Federals seized two Confederate commissioners -James Murray Mason and John Slidell-who had been sent on a diplomatic mission to France. In the face of British outrage and the threat of foreign war, Secretary of State Seward freed the pair on January 1, 1862. Mark Mayo Boatner, III, *The Civil War Dictionary* (New York, 1959), 516, 765, 857.

55. Henry T. Hopkins, Company B, Second Florida Cavalry. He was mustered into service April 1862, and was captured by the Union forces at the Battle of Olustee. *Soldiers of Florida*, 264.

wise & I submit as cheerfully as possible. We were ordered to this post on the morning of the 25th & the Cars were sent out for us & it took us all day. to fix up camps - so you see my Christmas was not an idle one if not a pleasant one, If I live I will see the next is differently spent - We are now quartered with the fourth Regiment, Col Hopkins commanding⁵⁶ - We are only temporarily attached to this Regiment, Capt Hopkins [Benjamin Hopkins] thinks we will not be here more than one month & if longer I can get a furlough of one week each month - This is a dry & apparently a healthy place & I feel contented at present but the insects will be desperate here in warm weather. Some of the Companys have mumps & measels, but we have given orders for our men to keep themselves seperated & I hope by precaution to avoid these diseases -

Capt Hopkins will start to Tallahassee in the morning to get our State pay which is for 26 days. The pay in this service is not so much as it was in the old by about 25 or 30 dollars & I will not make so much by a good deal as I expected. My pay is \$100 pr month but out of that I have to pay for my rations, servant hire, washing &sc which will reduce it to about \$85 pr month. I shall be as equinomical as possible & try to clear all I can & if Burrel makes a good crop we will come out all right. I hope you are not alarmed about what I wrote in my last but you know it is best to be on the look-out, keep those boys at home or about home on Sundays.

We have about three thousand men on the Island including the Mississippi Regiment who are incamped near the Draw Bridge about six miles from Town.⁵⁷ Maj Hopkins took tea with us to night & told me there was eighteen cannon mounted ready for action & they are erecting more on their batteries, he thinks he can keep the Yankees back or sink their vesels,⁵⁸ If they land they will have a hard road to travel as the ground is favorable to our ambuscade & movements both of Infantry & Cavalry, but I really dont think we are to have the fun of whipping the Yankees

56. Edward A. Hopkins, colonel in the Fourth Florida Infantry.

57. Colonel William F. Dowd's Mississippi Infantry Regiment, later transferred by General Lee to the Tennessee line in 1863. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War*, 74.

58. Most probably Colonel Charles F. Hopkins of the Tenth Florida Infantry. *Soldiers of Florida*, 219. Hopkins commanded the Confederate battery at St. Johns Bluff. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War*, 74.

at this place for these reasons - 1st when Connant left here & went on to Washington we have no defences & he made a report to that effect & then was the time for them to strike.⁵⁹ but they have waited until we are ready to receive them & they know it & is hardly worth the lives they would spend in taking it - The Blockader came up near the fort a few days ago and they sent some small shot at them & drew them on until in range of the heavy guns, they then turned one of the by guns on them & they were off in Bull Run time -

I went out to the light house late yesterday & took a look at the Blockader & she looked as large as life but did not come in reach of our guns.

If anything happen worth writing you can write by the Sumpter - .⁶⁰ I hope you all had a merry time this week with Davis - We dont see any of the fiminnie here only once in a while & then it is good for soar eyes - You can see the men stand & look at them as far as they can be seen - *poor fellows I feel sorry for them.* You may rest easy on that score. I hope when this reaches you that Mr. Simmons will be at the mill hard at work & hope Clark will hurry up fast as I want Burrel with those chaps or they will not hurt themselves at work.

Sergt McLeon who is one of our mess received a box to day full of fixings for Christmas, such as pies pound cakes sweet cakes sausages & all the good things too tedious to name & had like to have foundered myself to night -⁶¹

I give in the War Tax before before I left Palatka. - I hope you have heard from Mrs. Bradley before this - Write to Mr. Smith & ask him to send my letters here.⁶² See Clark & ask him to see Mr. Tyner & get a barrel of syrup & I will pay him the money when I come if at 50ct pr gallon. Give my love to Clark & family, Mother & family - & say to them we are fat & saucy - . . .
- Your aff husband

Winston Stephens

59. Possibly either Sherman Conant or Simon Conant, both federal agents after the war. William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (New York, 1913; facsimile edition, Gainesville, 1964), 382n, 624, 627, 640.

60. Probably a river boat on the St. Johns.

61. Sergeant McLeon is unknown.

62. Mrs. Bradley is unknown; perhaps a Welaka neighbor. Mr. Smith is probably either M. Smith of Welaka or S. B. Smith of Palatka. See footnote thirty-one.

Tuesday night Dec 31st 1861

My own dear Husband

I was mighty glad to receive a letter from you this week for it seemed a "coon's age" since I had seen or heard from you. I miss you more every time you go away, the weeks get longer I dont get used to it one bit. Why did^{nt} Old Lincoln keep Mason & Slidell a little longer & let England challenge him, & let us have peace. Oh my hopes were so much raised when I heard that they were demanded & were not going to be given up, & that they would probably have a war, but as usual my hopes were blasted. . . . I am sorry you had such a dull Christmas seems to me I have missed you more than ever since the boys have been here. I am afraid you will be kept at Fernandina a long time & can not afford to come home often. I suppose it will cost 12 or 15 dollars. Willie says you might take two weeks in two months and then you would be able to stay a decent time with us, but that seems a long time between visits, but I suppose I would then be much better off than some folks, and may thank my stars if I see you that often. Oh well I will hope again that something will turn up to change the order of things. I am sorry you are disappointed in the sum of your pay. I feared it would be so, & Willie told me of it after he came. every-one must go for patriotism. With so little I dont see how we can come out straight as you say, and I have been thinking lately of your horse business, and think worse & worse of it. the boys went to see the horses when in Pilatka & said "Pet" was a little sick I suppose you left the horse doctor with them. as I heard that eleven men were left with them.

I suppose from your telling me to keep the darkie boys home, that you wrote me about some insurrection or some such thing. Please tell me again, I dont like this way of our letters crossing each other, and having to wait two weeks for an answer to any question.

We have not had a very merry time but very quiet, Willie is much more quiet than he used to be, I think him much changed.

So you think the women worth looking at, perhaps by being in the service a good many will learn to appreciate their wives, *you too of course*. do you think you appreciate your good (for nothing) little wife! never mind you cant get one who would appreciate you more. . . .

I will not say anything of Mr. Simmons as Clark (alias Tina) has written. I am sorry that the mill is to be a "bust" up, but Burrel says he dont care so much, for he will be put back so much with the crop. he seems very industrious & trying hard to do his duty, but is greatly troubled about Jane. We have not heard from Mrs. Bradley yet. Willie will go to the office in Pilatka again. We heard the other day that Mrs. Bradley's Amos was drowned off of a pole boat going to Jacksonville for things for a wedding for Francis.⁶³

I am glad you had *some* good things for Christmas. I often thought of you & wished to send you something, Tina had a fine dinner on Christmas. Willie & I rode over to Clark's this afternoon Tina had the toothache. she sent over your note this morning. I asked Clark before I got your letter to get me a barrel of syrup as he was going to get one & I thought you would take it, but Mr. Tyner has risen again to 65 cts. Davis says it is a dollar a gallon in Jacksonville.

When did you tell me to bed the potatoes? the Hayties are decaying too. Our baby seems very restless to night I hope it will prove to be only a tooth coming. she is not *very* fretful and has no signs of fever. I have not had any return of the chill & fever since the night before you left.

I guess I must close, every one else is either in bed or going there. this is a little better than the scrawl I sent last week. I have been writing to Julie too.⁶⁴ Oh I hear that Mr. Tydings & Lou are to be in Jacksonville this year.⁶⁵ Mother sends love and wishes you a "Happy New Year" & hopes the next New Years night you will be seated at your fireside, & your storehouses & barns full.

Good night my darling May the Lord grant Mother's wish

Ever affectionately

Your wife.

63. Amos is a slave. Francis [*sic*] is seemingly the daughter of the woman mentioned in footnote sixty-two above.

64. Julie is probably Octavia's cousin Julia A. Bryant (1844-?).

65. R. M. Tydings is a Jacksonville minister. Lou Reed lived across the street from Octavia in Jacksonville when Octavia was a child. In 1860 she married Tydings.

Fernandina January, ^{2nd} 1862

You can boil the beef
brine over and keep it
for hard times

My Dear Wife

I received your short but interesting letter by Cars in due time with a long PS by Davis, which made the letter all together a long one. I was glad to hear that you all had been so agreeably surprised by Davis & Willie's visit & glad to hear you had such a good time generally. I am in fine health with the exception of a cold, which is very common in camps. My cold is much better than it was yesterday, some few of the men have fever with their colds & some of the Regiment have pneumonia, mumps, measles & a variety of other contagious diseases too tedious to mention - one death ocured in Capt Martins company last night. ⁶⁶ A man by the name of Morrison from near Ocala ⁶⁷ - We try to keep our men seperated as much as possible from other Companies to avoid the various diseases - We have itch in camps but I shal hold myself aloof from the men as much as possible to avoid catching it if possible. ⁶⁸ The general health has improved in the last few days - Dr. Mathews told me just before dinner that he had less than half as many on his sick list than he had three days ago, & no serious cases. ⁶⁹ We have only two men on our sick list. Perdum, & Glisson & they walk about Camps. ⁷⁰ This has the appearance of a healthy place. We have to drill about four hours every day which gives us exercise enough to keep us from getting lazy - & the company has very much improved since our arrival here. The Cars did not arrive last night & the supposition is that some accident has befallen it & if so I fear our Capt has had his share as he was expected, A train went out this morning & we will not know the particulars until the return of that Train - A small sail craft came in by the blockade on Sunday from Nassau loaded with salt & ask twelve dollars pr sack, but I think they will have to curtail the price before they sell.

66. Captain John M. Martin of the Marion Light Artillery. *Soldiers of Florida*, 300.

67. Daniel, John B., or William J. Morrison. *Ibid.*, 302.

68. Itch is a contagious skin eruption caused by a mite.

69. Dr. Mathews is unknown.

70. James Purdam, and D. W. Glisson or W. Riley Glisson. *Soldiers of Florida*, 264.

On Sunday I went down to the Fort & sand bateries below the Fort & I feel more convinced than ever the Yankees will have their hands full if our guns are used well - I saw Judge Brain & he looks worse than I ever saw him, I also found Mr. Holliday there & they went around & showed me all the guns & the position of the channel & sc all of which I found interesting & satisfactory, as I think they (I mean the Yankees) will have to land on the Island somewhere else & not at Fernandina, & if they should effect a landing on some other point we could whip them as we have several advantages from the position of the country, but I am at ease on that subject as I feel sure that they will not come here.⁷¹

If this letter is disconnected you must not blame me as it is impossible to write a letter in camp without having interuptions every few minutes - I think I told you not to transplant the peach trees unless you had good seasons, but I want you to have it done at once & have them *well watered* about sunset every evening until you are sure they will live. Also the Plum the three large trees by the old place you can let stay, but transplant all the rest, & if this dry weather continues until you receive this tell Burrel to examine the new ground & if the bushes are dead he had better set fire in it & burn it off & let Tom haul the sails before the woods are burnt, tell him to try & get a windy day as it will burn better & be careful & not let the fire burn him out when there woods gets afire. I enclose a ration table & if you will overlook my letters you will find this is the third time since I left & I give it to you this time so you can keep it in your Journal. It seem a long time to wait for a letter, from one Saturday to the next but I suppose I should feel thankful to have one that often. Does my Darling Rosa stil lisp her Pa name or can she talk plainer. I would give any thing to see you both & have the pleasure of your society - if only for a short time. but I cant tell you when that will be as Lt Peterman has the promise of the next furlough. I think we will be removed before very long & perhaps to Smyrna, if so I will come home, I will perhaps be able to tell you more about the change in my next - Kill the black hog as soon as he will do to kill as Gardners negroes will kill him if he gets out. . . .

71. Judge Brain is unknown. Mr. Holliday is Solomon Halliday, the husband of Mary Fleming, who was the sister of Tina's father. L'Engle, *Collection of Letters*, 117.

CHILDREN OF HONOR

69

Your loving husband
Winston Stephens

PS Capt H [Benjamin Hopkins] has arrived & no money but we will get in a few days by one of us going after it

Your ever
Winston

Fernandina Jan 4th 1862

My Dear Wife

. . . I have an opportunity of sending this by Steamer St. Marys & you can get it with the one sent by the Cars yesterday. We have news by Telegraph that a fight commenced near Charleston on yesterday & the Yankees were driven back, but had gotten reinforcements & have commenced the fight - over. We are looking constantly for news but as yet nothing has arrived - also we have news of the fight at Pensacola & hear we losed one many by the busting of one of our own shell - but dont know the damage done on their side.

When I wrote you my first lesson which it appears you have not received I mentioned that Capt Moselys negroes had threatened to set themselves free on the 20th of this month if Lincoln did not do it for them. I asked you to name it to Clark that he might have patrole & prepare against such an event. Tell Henry to keep the guns in order & keep them out of the way of the negroes & ready to use in the event they should try to do such a thing - dont talk of it where they can possibly get hold of it - I do not think my negroes would Join in such a thing but Gardners might.

I rec'd a letter from Willie with yours giving a description of some part of his visit & sc. I wish I could have been there as his time perhaps would have been spent more to his satisfaction, partly in the woods and ducking. I cant tell how long we will be here but Capt H [Benjamin Hopkins] thinks we will return to our horses in the first of February - if so I will see you then if not before - If it was not for the boys that came in on my account & the horses I am responsible for I would resign my Commission & come home - but my Dear I was the cause of several men coming in the service & it would not be treating them right

to leave them, by remaining I am not afraid of losing any thing in the horse business. I have purchased a barrel of syrup & it will be landed at the wharf by the first barge down the river. My wife I have & do appreciate your worth & have ever done so & you may rest assured this will leave me the same as ever & hope we may ever be to each other as we have been. You say you cant see how I am to come out of debt this year. This I can say, If I am spared my life & my family I shal fell thankful & be satisfied. If I am left any poorer than now I hope my Wife will not love me the les & with health & your love I can support you & my dear Rosa any where - This difficulty if it lasts will be the means of the sacrifice of much property - & I may be one of the sufferers, if so, we must learn to bear it. I can bear anything, but it will be hard to see you any worse off than you are - We must hope & trust for better times. You cant say more of Rosa than I like to hear & you must give me in each of your letters the particulars of our home & those so dear to me. You can bed the potatoes now but put them deep & the first of next month have some of the dirt taken off. We have Dr. Verdier to dine with us yesterday & a young Dr. Andrews who was in the battle of Manassas ⁷² Dr. V was in the Port Royal engagement & they gave us many interesting incidents of the two engagements - Mr. Burges is here also ⁷³ - The Mr. Haliday I spoke of in my last is the man that raised Tina. Keep the shirts - love to all & many kisses to you & Rosa. I wish so much I could give them.

Your ever affectionate husband over

P.S. I wish old simmons had to dig in that branch for the next year then he would know what work is worth I cant tell yet what to do about the cotton but keep it locked up till you have other instructions from me. I will not gin it this spring unless I can sell it - Mr. Greely returned from Palatka this morning or last night & sayed the horses were doing well and he brought a box full of good frigs. ⁷⁴

Your Cross old Man

72. Dr. George Verdier of Fernandina and Dr. John W. Andrews. E. A. Hammond to editors, February 21, 1977.

73. Mr. Burges is unknown.

74. J. C. Greely of the Rangers, or B. B. Greely of Palatka. *Soldiers of Florida*, 264; Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Putnam County, Florida.

PS ^{2nd} Make burrel moove the cypress sticks that were got out for the mill & left in the swamp & put them out of the weather. get Clarks advise about anything you may not understand.

Tues a.m. Jan 7th 1862

This is Father's 50th
birthday

What are you going to do for
cotton seed?

My dear Husband

I was doubly glad to receive two such nice long letters from you this week. I suppose Gen Hopkins brought one as I heard last night that he had come and brought me a letter. I also heard that Mrs H- & Bella are going to Pilatka on Thursday in Mr Gardner's boat on their way to Jacksonville ⁷⁵

I hope your cold is well by this time, and that you may not have any of the various unpleasant deseases you speak of especially the itch. You had better wear a *big piece* of asafotida around your neck as you used to in old times, or something. ⁷⁶ You will surely fall a victim to some of them. I have never heard you say that you had had the mumps so think you have not.

. . . Henry & George transplanted two rows and a half of peach trees last week, and we had a nice rain on them Saturday night and Sunday. I will not put out the plum trees until next week as we have so many peach trees to attend to some of those in the back year were dying but perhaps we can save them. Burrel burned off the new ground a week ago after rolling *my* logs, he is now hauling rails himself & put Tom to cutting logs with the others until he gets some rails hauled then they are to "follow behind him with the fence." they have not finished the cotton stalks the new ground is so green that I told them to cut logs awhile and see if they would not die & Burrel had thought of the same thing, he says he thinks he will be ready to start ploughs in three weeks.

75. Mrs. Benjamin Hopkins and daughter Isabella. Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Putnam County, Florida.

76. Asafetida is a gum resin, used as a repellent against insect bites.

You are mistaken about the rations, you wrote me once about corn and potatoes, and left me the rations of beef & fish but never told me of pork.

. . . The black hog got out Christmas week and was gone some days but Burrel at last found him & he is improving in flesh. last week two of the sows went off & left seven pigs were with the white sow & shw would not nurse them so we fed them. Henry hunted one or two days every where around & could not find the sows, but they at last came home & have been about ever since. My pig went & came with them, he looks better too.

I hope the negroes will not try what you wrote about, perhaps they know that their intention is known & they will not try it at least for some time. Last Sunday Mother had them all up here our negroes Sandy & Jacob too came & read a chapter in the Bible &c and intends continuing it. They have not given the least trouble so far. and Burrel seems bent upon his duty. Please write to Mrs Bradley or Dr Heard again for I dont want to & we ought to know what is to be done.⁷⁷ tell her to direct to Welaka.

It seems a long time to wait until Feburary to see you, but I will wait patiently counting each day. It seems as though you had been away twice as long as it really is.

I wonder what made my "Old Man" cross. I hope he will not be cross with me if I close now. I received a letter from Loulie in Jacksonville, & I want to write to her & ask her to come up before sandfly time, & she is going to house keeping in five or six weeks.⁷⁸ The boys are going to town this afternoon and our letters have to go before night. so they will take them.

Sarah is up here again after fevers since Thursday. Joe & jess had a fever but castor oil put a stop to that. all are well now.

Mother sends lots of love & says we are looking anxiously for your next furlough. Oh Taylor's howling reminds me a tree fell on him on a hunt the other night & nearly finished him but he is recovering. two weeks ago Clara ran into a light wood stick or something, & made a *terrific* gash under her fore leg but she is getting well, as I told Burrel of it & he put tar & grease on it immediately.⁷⁹

Your loving Wife.

77. Dr. Heard is unknown.

78. Lou Reed Tydings.

79. A horse, or perhaps a cow.

Fernandina January 10th 1862.

My Dear Wife

Once more I am seated to write to you. Though I have but a short time to write as the St Marys will go up to Palatka now in a very short time & this is my only chance untill the Cars go out & I fear they will not connect wth the River Boat & so I write now.

I am very well neigh 158 lbs which is more than when I left home by several pounds - The men are not so well as we have about 6 or 8 sick with cold.

I presume you get all the war news in the papers, but I will give you what is the latest news here. At 1¹/₂ OClock Wednesday the Telegraph was that a fleet of 6 vessels was off Green Island & near there arranged in order of battle & a short time after one was rec'd from Brunswick which Stated heavy firing was heard in the direction of Green Island & was supposed to be at that places ⁸⁰ - Also that we have had an engagement in Virginia (I have forgotten where) & that our forces had captured 500 & killed a great many. Our latest intelgence from England is that they look upon the sinking of the Stone fleet as a declaration of hostilities to the whole world & I have no doubt it will bring on a collision with the U.S. ⁸¹ I see from the Northern papers that the fleet destined for this place has been recalled to watch the Northern interest in *commerce*. Capt Hopkins and Peterman have not returned but we look for them to night & then Lt Gray will come & when he returns then perhaps I may get a chance next. but I dont want you to look for me until you see me. We are to be paid for one & half months next week by Maj Teasdale for our Confederate service. which will help some. ⁸² let me know when you get the

80. Green Island is south of Savannah.

81. On December 20, 1861, the Union navy attempted to sink a number of old ships in Charleston harbor, as they had done in the channel to Savannah three days earlier, in order to close those ports. However, the ships, loaded with granite, broke up under the action of the sea, and undercurrents cut new channels. A second attempt on January 26, 1862, also proved unsuccessful. Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, U. S. Naval History Division, *Civil War Naval Chronology*, 6 pts. (Washington, 1961-?), I, 39; II, 12; Virgil Carrington Jones, *The Civil War at Sea*, 3 vols. (New York, 1962), I, 322-25.

82. H. R. Teasdale, quartermaster for the Third Florida Infantry. *Soldiers of Florida*, 102.

syrup & be careful when you have it opened. Tell Burrel not to get behind in his cleaning up but to make those boys moove about with life. has Mr. Gardner gone out on the lake?

Give love to Mother & boys also Clark & family, & kiss my Dear Rosa & accept many & much love from your *Old Man*