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“ROGUES AND BLACK HEARTED SCAMPS”:
CIVIL WAR LETTERS OF WINSTON AND
OCTAVIA STEPHENS, 1862-1863

edited by ELLEN E. HODGES AND STEPHEN KERBER*

AT THE OUTBREAK of the Civil War, Winston J. T. Stephens and his wife Octavia lived on a small plantation, Rose Cottage, near Welaka on the St. Johns River. In 1861 Stephens, although a Whig and not a proponent of war, joined and was later elected lieutenant in a militia company. He was later its captain. The letters which passed between Winston and Octavia during the war years are replete with personal, social, agricultural, racial, and military observations. Portions of the Stephens letters dating from 1861 to January 1862 were earlier published in the *Florida Historical Quarterly* (Vol. LVI, No. 1, July 1977, pp. 45-74). These earlier letters dealt with family anxieties and political conflicts during the first year of the war. The letters published below contain much more military information.

Secession and the war did not go at all the way militant Floridians had hoped. The Union commands at Fort Pickens near Pensacola, Fort Taylor at Key West, and Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas failed to surrender to the Confederates, and the bombardment of Fort Pickens in late November 1861 produced no results. On January 6, 1862, Federal sailors made a successful raid against Cedar Key, which was the forerunner of future raids and a progressively more effective Union naval blockade. The failure to take Pickens, coupled with the need for reinforcements in Kentucky and Tennessee, led the Confederate

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government to remove most troops from the state. By the spring of 1862 many Floridians felt, and with some justification, that the Confederate government had abandoned them to the tender mercies of President Lincoln's armies.

The Stephens letters written between March 1862 and April 1863, reflect a steadily-increasing awareness on the part of both husband and wife of the dangers accompanying insurrection and conflict. Winston has become disenchanted with the pettiness and political maneuvering that exist in the military. He also resents the heavier discipline and tedious regulations to which he and his men have become subject. He misses his family and worries about their safety, as well as his home and property. Winston is concerned about his wife's health while she is carrying a child, and he is desperate to be with her when her time comes.

Octavia also has become thoroughly unhappy with the course of the war. Appalled at the cost in human life and suffering, she is terrified her husband will be killed. Now that the true consequences of secession have become evident, both Winston and Octavia are looking for a way out. Unfortunately, there is no easy solution to their problem. Despite a succession of bloody defeats, Lincoln holds the national government together with grim determination. Union gunboats control Florida's coasts and rivers, while Union soldiers occupy Fernandina, Jacksonville, and St. Augustine. Slaves flee or are seized by force. There are shortages everywhere. Confederate military and civilian government apply many restrictions and yet cannot protect the population from invasion.

In the midst of public disruption and danger, private sorrow strikes the Stephens family. After a difficult pregnancy, Octavia gives birth to a daughter, only to lose the child to disease within six weeks. This tragedy, coming in addition to many other problems, severely tests the couple's relationship. The way in which they respond to it demonstrates a great deal about their marriage, their hopes, and their courage.

Portions of the letters dealing with personal matters have been deleted due to space limitations. Punctuation has not been altered. Persons or events identified at length in the first selection from these letters have been given only a very brief description below. The following group of letters begins on March 10, 1862,

after Winston Stephens has become company commander of Company B, 2nd Florida Cavalry, replacing Captain Benjamin Hopkins, who had died of fever in February 1862.

Volusia March 10th 1862

My Dear Wife

I arrived in camp last night from Ocala & found all well but considerable excitement. The Hattie arrived from below soon after I landed & brought the intelligence that the enemy were expected every hour in Jacksonville & thought it unsafe to go so far down.¹ Now my Dear I cant come in several days more but will as soon as I get everything organized & ready for the reception of the enemy if they come up this far-If they come up the river & stop any where about you I want you to take the mules & get back from the river²-I dont think they will stop but if they do I dont want you where they can insult you . . . I am nearly crazy to think of what might happen to you take the woods, anything but disgrace by the poluting touch of those scoundrels-We are going to plant some guns on the river & scatter the company on the bank and I think if they will give us a few days to mature our plans that we will stop them. I think if you & your white family could get back out of their way that Burrel can carry on the farm and make his escape when they approach.³

March 11th 1862

My Dear Wife

. . . I think you all had better get as far back from the water as you can. as I feel sure they will not go out in the country-I'll trust Davis & tell him to save you Rosa Mother & the boys & if he cant save the rest to let it rip⁴-save all the pro-

1. The *Hattie Brock*, a small freight and passenger steamer owned by Jacob Brock and named for his daughter, transported cotton from the Oklawaha River up the St. Johns River to Lake Harney during the height of blockade-running.
2. The river is the St. Johns. The Stephens lived close enough to the river to see some of the larger ships, and they could hear the Union gunboats fire their weapons.
3. Burrel is slave foreman on the Stephens plantation.
4. Davis H. Bryant (1839-?) is Octavia's brother. Rosa Stephens (1860-1883) was the infant daughter born October 17, 1860. Rebecca Hathorne Hall Bryant (1813-1864) was Octavia's mother, who lived with her until her death in 1864. The boys are probably Octavia's younger brothers, Henry H. (1847-1930) and George P. (1849-1876), who also lived with her.

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visions you can-as they will be scarce plant no cotton but all corn and tell Burrel to keep out their way-Oh how much I want to see you & good by & God bless you all-I will be careful & try to live to see you all. . . . If the enemy lands divide the powder among the neighbors & let them fight-if they wish

Wednesday March 12th 1862

My own dear husband

. . . I think you may as well give up & come home as to try & keep the enemy back for they have a very large force. Mr. Lewis Roux stayed on Fernandina a day or two as a sort of spy, & passed himself off as a union man, & the enemy told him they had 25000 men & 21 gunboats that they expected a hard fight & came prepared to conquer all Florida & establish territorial government.⁵ I suppose you have heard that the Government has abandoned this State & the Governor has ordered all the regiments that are mustered into the Confederate service away from East Fla.⁶ What is to become of us. I think we will have to leave or be made Lincoln's subjects. I forgot to say that Mr. Roux left just as the Yankees began to find him out, but left two or three more spies there. I think we are safe enough here if the Gun boats come up for they can not see us from the river, & they probably will not come from Welaka here.⁷ I think there is no fear of my being insulted, if any attempt should be made I think whoever did would rue it. if they come we intend to be civil as long as they are so. Mother thinks she will not be insulted that she is too old & she will be "spokesman." We have taken care of a small portion of the corn & a barrel of meat, & *the bale of cotton*. Burrel thinks that some of the corn that we thought killed will yet come out. he is getting along finely. I would not like to leave the negroes if I should leave, for it would give them more of a chance to be unfaithful, & if faithful would not like to leave them. . . . I hate to stop writing. God bless my husband. . . .

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5. Probably L. F. Roux, sergeant in Company K, 2nd Florida Cavalry.
 6. The military crisis in Tennessee in the spring of 1862 led the Confederate government to remove most troops from Florida. John E. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War* (Gainesville, 1963), 114-15.
 7. The Federal navy used gunboats of about 500 tons armed with from four to seven guns throughout the Civil War for blockading and fighting.

Volusia March 13th 1862

My Dear Wife

Again I have the opportunity of writing you by Lieut Gray, as he goes to Palatka to make some arrangements for the safety of his family.⁸ Oh! What a dark hour in this our Country and I fear we have not seen the worst by a goodeale-but I have hope even now when every thing is so unpromising. I think our cause a just one & I believe that the God of battles will yet crown our arms with more & greater victories & that the cause will yet prosper. Nothing of a common nature can be achieved without an effort and some sacrifice-& in this great struggle we must suffer in proportion to the benefit we are to derive from the struggle-One thing gives me more trouble about this matter than all others, & that is that this State is to be abandoned to the enemy & if true we will have a rebellion in this State, as the people are determined not to go out of the State & leave their families to the mercys of the enemy & fight for others. And your good for nothing *old Man* is one of that number. I will not abandon my family for any cause.-What I most fear is this that you my beloved wife should fall into the hands of the enemy & that they might treat you as they did a poor girl in Fernandina. A poor man that was left had a Daughter ten years old & the second day after they got possession three of the men took her in the scrub & raved her & when it was reported to the officer he merely made them mark time one hour-Now if that is to be the rule I want my family out of their reach-any where so you do not fall into their way. . . .

Wednesday Mar. 19th 1862

My own dear husband

. . . You can not think of the different plans &c we have had & thought of today. at one time I thought they would send Rosa & I to Ocala anyhow. as you have such fears for me, but all think it entirely unnecessary & in fact "jumping out of the frying pan into the fire" for the enemy will go there next for they know that Marion is the richest place. . . .⁹ if the enemy come I will hide, & they are not going to *hunt me up*. Mother & the boys will stay at home as long as permitted, every one thinks without being

8. Probably H. A. Gray of Stephens's St. Johns Rangers.

9. Marion County, Florida.

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molested, if they come to burn why they'll burn. but much quicker if no one is there. we will have to meet them at some place why not now & have it over, . . . We can not go to Ocala, & if your life is spared we will get together somehow & somewhere, so much depends on our crop now nearly planted, and it is left to us, we will get along for awhile, if not why then we will have to do the best we can, going to Ocala will not help, but *I* think make it worse. Oh if I could only talk with you, why did you not come yesterday, or the day Lt Gray got back if only for one night, the officers could have spared you that long. . . . Why do you not disband your company? I hear you have only one months provisions, & there is no govonor I hear, Pearson's company have mustered out.¹⁰ do give up come home parole & let us try and be happy here for the present at least. the State will be conquered anyhow, so give up now as many others have had to do, territorial government will be better than none & we have none now. Gov Milton took the State papers into Geo- & when he returned the people put him out of office.¹¹ My dear if you lay down arms now they will parole you *all* think, do my dear, think of our baby & me if you & my property should be taken away what would become of us, when if you should come home you might save all. You need not talk of the defence of your home & country for you *can not* defend them. they all too far gone now. so give up before it is too late. I fear it is now too late for I think they are on their way up the river now. we heard last night through *negroes* that two boats one the *Darlington*,¹² had gone up Dunns creek,¹³ but heard there were 10000 men on three boats which you know can not be so, so no telling how much is true, they seem to be stringing their boats all up the river. I suppose you know that the coffee the enemy took was not private property, it was government property. I have not heard of their injuring any private property yet. they say they will not. they have opened a store in Jacksonville I *hear* & selling flour at five \$ a barrel & coffee 8 lbs to the dollar. . . . I have tried to write in

10. Captain John W. Pearson, Company B, 9th Florida Infantry.

11. This was likely an unfounded rumor; Milton remained a devoted Confederate until his death in 1865.

12. Jacob Brock 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.

13. Dunns Creek connects Crescent Lake with the St. Johns; it intersects the St. Johns at Rat Island, south of Palatka.

good spirits to you, for I had some hopes of our State's being saved, but now *all* that hope is gone. I tell you I am miserable, & I say come to me, & let us bear what comes, *together*.

I think the negroes will run, then if the enemy burn why they'll have to burn, all think they will not burn the house if Mother is here, be sure my darling they shall have nothing to do with your wife, I will keep out of their way. . . . take care of yourself & come as soon as possible. the State can not be defended, so give up now while you have life and *quickly* to, for things are coming to a crisis. . . .

You speak of our going in the woods & not letting the negroes know where we are. it is impossible & we are afraid to go far for fear they may cross from Dunns creek & find us. No my darling I think it best as it is arranged. I dislike to leave home but will as you have such fears for me. . . .

Campt Hatley¹⁴ July 6th 1862

My Dear Wife

You will see that I have arrived in camps all O.K. My Camp is nearest Jacksonville & I am in two miles. I have a beautiful camp ground, but the water is not so good. We are near Mrs. Haddocks on the North side of the R. Road.¹⁵ The Regiment or a part of it is in half mile with a branch between us & Capt Row has part of his command near the Regiment but on the other side of the road.¹⁶ We number about 420 men and Capt Chambers is about four miles farther out but he is going up to Magnolia.¹⁷ We have the Most glorious news of the whole War. On the arrival of the cars yesterday I saw the Confederate flag flying & thought something good was coming-& sure enough We

14. Probably named for Colonel John C. Hatley of the 5th Florida Infantry.

15. Possibly Esther Haddock, listed in the 1860 census as a farmer, aged fifty-six and a native of South Carolina, with four children. 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, University of Florida, Gainesville.

16. Captain Samuel F. Row, Company F, 2nd Florida Cavalry.

17. Captain William E. Chambers, Company C, 2nd Florida Cavalry, commanded a cavalry squadron protecting the Confederate St. Johns Bluff battery. Charles F. Hopkins to Joseph Finegan, October 8, 1862, in U. S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 70 vols. (Washington, 1880-1901), Series I, XIV, 138-41. Hereinafter cited as O.R.A. Magnolia Springs, in Clay County, stood on the west bank of the St. Johns, north of Governor Creek and Green Cove Springs.

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have whipped the Yankees at Richmond capturing 30 thousand & no telling how many killed & McLelland had asked Lee for an armistice of two days to bury the dead & Lee had replied, let the dead bury the dead, the only proposition I will listen to is an unconditional surrender.¹⁸ I say well done Genl Lee, as the object was to gain time & get away & our good brave Genl has defeated his army & has now defeated his cunning & will likely capture the whole army. They are fighting at Tampa but no damage to our side the last news. . . .¹⁹

I think my Dear that you will have me with you before many months as the war is obliged to stop I was in Jacksonville the first day but did not see any one but Mr. Burrett & Gower & Col Hopkins.²⁰ Mr. Burrett has made a report of his trip north and will be in the papers & perhaps you will see it Capt Chambers was on the Isaac Smith a few days ago & thinks I killed all the officers but one & a great many of the men and told me the Lt on the boat was afraid to go up the river any more.²¹ We have no arms now but I expect them soon and then hope to have one chance before the War ends as I do want to shoot a Yankee. . . .

Camp Stephens July 24th 1862

My Darling Wife

. . . I have just returned from Jacksonville where I have been writing passes for the *Buckra* as the negroes call us.²² none are allowed to cross the river without a pass & as I am in Command have them to write. I hope to be relieved of the command soon. The men were waiting on me when I got to camps and I cant write you a long letter this time.

18. Probably refers to the Seven Days' Battles (June 25-July 1, 1862) in the Peninsular Campaign in Virginia. Lee removed the Federal threat to Richmond by forcing George McClellan to withdraw.

19. On June 30 and July 1, 1862, the Federal gunboats *Sagamore* and *Ethan Allen* shelled Tampa, inflicting little damage on the town or the Confederate battery. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War*, 73.

20. Probably Samuel L. Burrett, an attorney originally from Connecticut and a Union man. William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida* (New York, 1913; facsimile edition, Gainesville, 1964), 158; Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Duval County, Florida. Gower may be E. H. M. Gower. Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Duval County, Florida. Hopkins is probably Colonel Charles F. Hopkins of the 10th Florida Infantry.

21. The U.S.S. *Isaac Smith*, a shallow-draft vessel, had formerly been used as a ferry and freight boat. Virgil Carrington Jones, *The Civil War at Sea*, 3 vols. (New York, 1962), II, 358.

22. "Buckra" is slave vernacular for "white man."

I am well & my Company are in reasonable health. I returned from Tallahassee yesterday & find that we are certainly to be formed into a regiment & the Genl assures us we are not to go out of the State.²³ I cant tell what is the programe, but it has appeared to me lately that the object was to abandon the State to its fate & make a strong and determined stand near the border & especially near Richmond. We gained a Glorious Victory at Richmond but not such a success as we were led to believe at first-Curtis was not captured as I wrote you but escaped because we had no ammuniton.²⁴ Col Forest captured 1200 at Murfreesboro.²⁵ Killed three or four hundred & captured two Genls & destroyed half million of stores. We getting all the advantages in the late battles. Maj Genl Polk is chief in Command of the Northern forces & McLelland is in command only of one division.²⁶ This is going to act in our favor as it will get them to quarrelling among themselves-but I fear we are to have a few more hard fought battles before we can have peace. . . .

Jacksonville Sept 11th 1862

My Dear Wife I returned last night & can say to you that so far I am unharmed. I went down to May Port & carried out my orders & I was shelled for more than an hour with my men not over 1/4 mile but no one was hurt.²⁷ the sand was nocked in their faces but no damage done. they fired 62 shots at me & while I was keeping the Gun boats down there Genl Finegan crossed some cannon & had them mounted at St. Johns Bluff & this morning they opened the ball & have been fighting some four or five hours but no news as to results.²⁸ they continue to fight & God grant we may succeed. I am on my way to Tallahassee & cant be back before one week. I am now camped on the East

23. Brigadier General Joseph Finegan commanded the military department of East and Middle Florida. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War*, 71.

24. Possibly Newton Martin Curtis (1835-1910), lieutenant colonel, 142nd New York Infantry. Boatner, *Civil War Dictionary*, 214.

25. Nathan Bedford Forrest (1821-1877). Leaving Chattanooga on July 7, 1862, he led a brilliant raid into Tennessee. *ibid.*, 288-89.

26. "Polk" is John Pope (1822-1892).

27. Mayport Mills on the south bank at the mouth of the St. Johns River.

28. St. Johns Bluff, on the south bank of the river, between Mayport Mills and Jacksonville. In the summer of 1862 the Confederates erected batteries here and at Yellow Bluff on the other side of the St. Johns in an attempt to deny control of that vital waterway to Yankee gunboats. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War*, 73-74.

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side of the river about 7 miles from this place at what is called Tiger Hole.²⁹ I am to keep up a scout on the rear of the post to keep off a surprise & aid the command at the Fort.³⁰

. . . You will see from the news *sheet* that we are gaining complete victories & driving the Federals back & destroying their forces & every thing. I think we are obliged to have peace soon. . . .

Sunday Sept 21st 1862 In Camp near St Johns Bluff
My Darling Wife

On my return from Tallahassee I rec'd your two long & interesting letters & you may imagine how delighted I was to get them. I will answer your questions at the conclusion. I went to Tallahassee as a Witness in the case of Maj Barnwell but I was not questioned before the Court for which I felt obliged as I knowed nothing to benefit or condemn.³¹

. . . We have the game plaid out with the Gun boats on this river. the first fight you have doubtless had the particulars.³² the second took place on the morning of the 17th at 5 A M & lasted till 10 A M.³³ In which time the Gun boats threw as estimated between one thousand & 12 hundred shots & our guns replied very slowly only throwing some 50 shots. the boats then retired, our loss was 2 killed & 2 wounded. Capt Dunham lost one man &

29. Tiger Hole may refer to Tiger Ho, a plantation on Pottsburg Creek, southeast of Jacksonville opposite Commodore's Point.

30. Probably the St. Johns Bluff battery.

31. Stephens stayed fifteen days in Tallahassee at the general court martial of Confederate Major J. G. Barnwell. Major R. B. Thomas summoned Stephens as a witness on September 1, 1862. See the file on Winston Stephens in U. S. Adjutant-Generals Office, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Florida, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 1957, microcopy M-251, roll 12, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History.

32. Stephens probably refers to the morning of September 11, 1862, when the Confederate battery on St. Johns Bluff opened fire on the U.S.S. *Uncas*. Acting on information from a runaway slave, Acting Master L. G. Crane of the *Uncas* had fired on the bluff the previous evening without drawing return fire. The engagement between the *Uncas*, and later the U.S.S. *Patroon*, and the battery lasted four hours and twenty minutes. Acting Master L. G. Crane to Rear Admiral S. F. Du Pont, September 11, 1862, 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), Series I, XIII, 324-25. Hereinafter cited as ORN.

33. This second fight, September 17, 1862, involved the gunboats U.S.S. *Paul Jones* and U.S.S. *Cimarron*. Charles Steedman to Du Pont, September 17, 1862, in *ibid.*, 329-30.

Maj Brevard one, the bateries received no injury during the firing, but the shell & shot fell like hail.³⁴ It was certainly Providential that we did not have more injury on our side. The Enemy was hit several times & forced to retire. but returned the Friday next day after the 18th & fired 18 shot & retired before we fired a gun, & on Friday one boat came up in long range & our big gun was about to open on her when I asked the Capt to hold on & not let them get the range of his best gun which he did & after looking at us for a short time she turned around & went back & then all the boats went out over the bar but two large side wheel steamers. Some think they have gone for reinforcement & others that they have given up. but I am of the first opinion, as they feel it a burning shame to have allowed us to mount guns in sight of them & drive them back when they try to pass-The only fear I have is they will get guns of longer range than we have, which will allow them every advantage & we may lose men & not be able to retaliate-Capt Chambers & myself are about three miles & a half from the boats acting on the rear to prevent a land attack which I do not fear as they have not got the land force to spare for this place. Genl Finegan is down here looking at the positions & sc, he has asked for a regiment from Georgia. I am not a favorite as I am a Whig & I came near offering my resignation as he refused to give my men good arms. . . . The old Granny thinks I have done a little more than I should have done & he is afraid I will get more credit than some of his Democrat friends, & I think he would like to see me whiped. I shall try to prevent such a disaster as I will not expose my men until I am armed. We have 38 inch guns or Columbiads two 32 rifle two 8 inch short siege guns mounted ready for action & the last fight we had none of the 8 inch ready.³⁵ We have over 300 infantry in the Batallion & one Independent Co of 117-Chamber & My Cavalry 227. men besides about 150 that work the guns making our force now 794

34. Captain Joseph L. Dunham, who commanded the Confederate battery on Yellow Bluff, had raised the Milton Light Artillery in Apalachicola in 1861. *Soldiers of Florida*, 303-04; Hopkins to Finegan, October 8, 1862, ORA I:XIV, 138-41. Major T. W. Brevard, of the 11th Florida Infantry Regiment, commanded the infantry protecting the rear of the St. Johns Bluff battery. Hopkins to Finegan, October 8, 1862, ORA I:XIV, 138-41; *Soldiers of Florida*, 236.

35. Columbiads refers to the large cannon developed by Colonel George Bomford, and first used in the War of 1812. Boatner, *Civil War Dictionary*, 167-68.

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& we will have one company more next week on this side & two companies on Yellow bluff on the opposite³⁶ You see by this that we are pretty strong & if we get the Georgia Regiment we will be ready for anything. but I dont like sending our men out of the State & then having to call for help from some other State. Finegan is trying to force an appointment on the Cavalry but I think we will have a chance yet to vote for the Field officers. & your boy Winie will be one of them. . . . I send the 3 pr needles & hope the size is right. some one went in my trunk while I was gone but did not get much as I had Valise with me & that had all the valuables but clothing. Mr. Greely got me a course uniform for sixty dollars which looks tolerably well. . . .³⁷

“Rose Cottage” Welaka Sunday Sept 1862

My dear husband

Mr Smith arrived at last with two letters from you. I received them last Friday. you cant imagine what a relief it was to my mind to get those letters, for I was in a great state of anxiety about you. for I had heard of your trip down the river & your fight with the boats, and that six men were killed on our side. & I thought if you were not among that number you might suffer in a few days after. I was so glad to hear from your letter that you were going to Tallahassee. I exclaimed “I’m so glad I wish he would stay there a month.” What a narrow escape you and your men had from the shells of the Gunboat. Oh how thankful I am & you ought to be that you escaped. I shall be in constant fear the whole time now that I know you must have returned from Tallahassee for I fear that blocking the Gunboats will not be such an easy thing as you think, for the fifteenth time I say will we ever have peace? When I feel that you are not in danger I do not realize the troubles half so much I suppose I have my share of the anxiety to bear. You say we must certainly have peace soon. God grant that we may but I have but little hope, for that has been said so many many times. if it is true about Pope & McClelland there are plenty more men in Yankeedom that may make better Generals than them. We

36. Yellow Bluff, site of a Confederate battery opposite the St. Johns Bluff battery, defended by Captain Joseph L. Dunham’s Milton Light Artillery. Located on the north side of the St. Johns.

37. J. C. Greely of the Rangers, or B. B. Greely of Palatka.

have certainly gained a great many victories (if we can believe all) for which I am very thankful, but, oh such loss of life & seems to me to no purpose if we do ever have peace how few there will be to realize it. and how many of them will be desolate and unhappy. God grant that I may never be one of that number. . . .

You ask me what I think of your uniform. I think it a great pity that the wives of *Confederate officers* have to wear unbleached *homespun* chemises, when their husbands can afford to buy uniforms.³⁸ You told me to manage things to my liking. I have sent with others to buy some factory thread. Clark & I counted it all up &c, & it would be cheaper to buy the thread & have it woven at 10 cts a yard than buy the cloth at 50 cts, & we are obliged to have the cloth. & the Winter will be over before we can get our cotton ginned, & spun at home, and having it spun elsewhere is not very cheap. I hope it will be to your satisfaction, I could not wait to hear from you again as I am behind the others in sending already. Mr. Fleming is to buy it at Monticello at 2.50 cts a bundle. . . .³⁹

In Camp Near St Johns Bluff Oct 1st 1862

My Dear Wife

. . . I give Lt Gray a permit to go home yesterday & he got down to the bluff & Col Charles Hopkins turned him back saying he could not allow any officers to go home now.⁴⁰ & I presume you have seen me the last time for several weeks & perhaps months. as a matter of course he must go before I can expect to. Lt Shedd started home this morning under orders so as to make a chance for him to get off.⁴¹ We are now being drawn more & more under a rule of Despotism every day & sometimes I fear we are to have hard rule until this war is over. Civil law is thrown by the board for military dictation & some men seem to forget their obligations to their fellow man after getting in position. I

38. A loose, straight-hanging dress.

39. Although there is no Fleming listed in the Jefferson County census for 1860, this might refer to Louis Michael Fleming, Tina's father, or her brother, Louis Isadore Fleming, a Jacksonville attorney and former resident of Monticello.

40. Lieutenant Colonel Charles F. Hopkins, commander at the St. Johns Bluff.

41. Lieutenant William W. Shedd, Company B, 2nd Florida Cavalry. *Soldiers of Florida*, 263.

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hate to write with my feelings that I have at times but I must let it out & I suppose you will make allowances for me. We have been treated badly in some respects since we were moved on this side of the river. I had on my yesterdays report 15 men on sick report & one Lt. which is McLeod.⁴² I have but six tents for 90 men & the rain falling nearly constantly. I sent some men after lumber & Genl Finegan had them turned back & they have to sleep in the woods with a blanket over them & their clothing all wet sometimes a plenty to eat. & then again nothing. this morning we got a beef but for the last two days we had nothing but dry bread. The men look to me & you may imagine my feelings with a hungry crew & as hungry myself with them calling for something to eat. I dont complain of my men for they stand it as well as men can & all of them know I do all I can, but it makes my position unenviable. It is a weakness of the Commissary department & Maj Canova cant get any votes in this section.⁴³ I think he is like the rest of Manaucians when he gets in power he feels he is of more importance than he should.⁴⁴ Our whole Commissary & quartermasters business is managed badly & all have more or less favoritism to show & thats spoils every thing, and to cap the climax my Dear Wife has given me a cut that I don't think I deserved-When I was at home you laughed at my coat & made all sorts of fun of it & I supposed you would take a pride to know that I had changed to a better one when thrown in Company-but instead of that you censure me for getting a new suit when my Wife has to wear yellow homespun-I ask you the question did you ever ask me to get you any thing that I did not get if I could? you asked me to get you some yellow domestic & I got it & left money with you & told you to get any thing you wanted. I have cautioned you about my debts & only asked your cooperation with me to get clear of debt but I have never intended you should not have what you wanted, but on the contrary I have taken pleasure in getting you what you have asked me & you have been one of the most equinomical women

42. Lieutenant R. H. McLeod, Jr. Ibid.

43. Major A. A. Canova. Brigadier General Joseph Finegan, General Orders No. 17, April 18, 1862, ORA I:XIV, 477; Chief of Staff and Assistant Adjutant General Thomas Jordan, General Orders No. 127, December 19, 1862, *ibid.*, 726-27. See also Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*, 192n.

44. Probably a corrupted popular phrase for a Minorcan.

I ever saw & you have asked for as little as any one could get along on. I have often thought you wanted things & would have anticipated your wants but I don't know enough about womans wants to know what you required. & I hope you will always make your wants known frankly & they shall be gratefied if possible. I have sent after some flannel & will send it if it is in Jacksonville. . . . I am satisfied with your arrangement about the thread & hope you will be when you get it but fear you will have to wait some time for it. I will send you some rice by the first chance. I have it in Jacksonville. . . . We have some days six boats & some days five & some of them very large, they are about four miles from the bluff but we sometimes go in one mile while on picket duty. I think one of these days or nights they will try us again but if they dont come with an overpowering land force they had just as well stay away as we have good guns & a plenty of them & then we have a batery on Yellow bluff to keep them back if one or more should pass this bluff. We are not as strong as we wish to be but we can kill four to one in these woods. . . .

Middleburg, ⁴⁵ Oct 15th 1862

My Dear Wife

I send back these few lines to inform you of what the Enemy have threatened to do & I have no doubt they will do it if they have an opportunity-They say they intend to force the negroes to go with them. that they intend to pay the expense of the War with the negroes & that they will make us suffer in the destruction of our property as much as they can. They took some negroes by force in Jacksonville & they even took women that refused to go-I hardly know what to advise you to do but I want you at least to call the negroes together & tell them what they may depend upon & tell them when the Gun boat is about my place or Welaka they had better keep on the watch & run into the woods if they come to the house-If Sarah will cling to you they may not take her as they have allowed some to stay that did so. ⁴⁶ Several negroes have been shot in this neighborhood -one was killed last night. I wish Clark would kill the officers if they land & I think they will be afraid to come out-the neighbors

45. Middleburg in Clay County, near Black Creek.

46. A Stephens slave.

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should band together for mutual protection & I think they can keep them from coming out-I wish you were out from the river & I should not be alarmed-I think the mill had better stand awhile & let us see what they will do-let Burrel & Tom split rails & the rest can be employed on the new ground & finces-unless you can find a place back in the country & you think it best to move the negroes to it. ⁴⁷ I do not fear much for any thing but them & the provisions & cotton dont think they will disturb you or Mother but they will take all the property of mine they can get-as I am a Rebel Capt. . . .

Camp Finegan ⁴⁸ Oct 23rd 1862

My Dear Wife

. . . I am well, thats right so far. We are generally well but on short allowance which makes soldiers in bad humor, but I am in good humor as I have just had dinner-Baked beef potatoes (at one dollar pr bushel) and rice with a little sugar for desert. We have no syrup since the *run*. We have to purchase feed for our mess servants which makes bill of fare pretty high I have sent to Blk Creek for a load of grub & hope to get it cheaper than I can here. ⁴⁹ Swep & the rest of my extensive family are well with a few exceptions of cases of mumps ⁵⁰- We are in camps eight miles from Jacksonville & with the whole command under one rule-That rule is Col C. Hopkins. We are satisfied with his as our ruler but Finegan has made his rules quite *Military & formal*. Old Barny finds public sentiment changing in favor of Hopkins & against himself & he is in quite a fret & is trying to get up something sustaining for his case & he is like a drowning man he will catch at a straw & Finegan is drumming up every thing to throw blame on others & rid himself of part of the load. ⁵¹ Madam rumor says he intends to have me Court-martialed for going up the river but I dont believe it. ⁵² Enough of *Finegan & his*. The Yankees behaved more like rogues & black

47. Tom (1846-?) is also a Stephens slave.

48. Camp Finegan was west of Jacksonville. Davis, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*, 303.

49. Black Creek flows past Middleburg and empties into the St. Johns.

50. Swepton Stephens, Winston's younger brother, and a corporal in the St. Johns Rangers. *Soldiers of Florida*, 265.

51. Probably Joseph Finegan.

52. Winston attempted to go up the St. Johns to Welaka to visit his pregnant wife Octavia whenever possible.

hearted scamps in Jacksonville then they ever have on the river before. They sent out a man who represented himself as quartermaster and he took any and every thing he wanted for his department. then, came out the soldiers & rob'd what they wanted. then came armed negroe men & demanded what they wanted & swore & shined around in uniform quite extensively & last came the sailor & got their share of the spoils. They not only took things but they broke & destroyed furniture & smashed in doors & windows & SC to a great extent. And Col Garner told me Willis trunk was broken & every thing stolen so that he is one of the sufferers.⁵³ I guess they got all of his fine clothe. . . . Mr. Ochus told me he watched for two nights & that it was all he could do to keep them from taking every thing from him. They took all his poultry & pigs. I did not hear of any insult to the ladies. Only four or five negroes were left in Jacksonville. . . . It is reported that 10,000 men are coming down here & the Comissary is down here making arrangements to feed them. I expect you will be astounded with the news of the capture of St. Johns Bluff. . . .

"Rose Cottage" Thursday Oct 23rd 1862

My dear husband. . .

I hardly believe the Gunboats are going to pay us a visit for they have stayed away so long. I have concluded to stay here and run the risk of their coming, for I know of no place to go to & I thought by the time we could get moved the Yankees if they were coming would be here & do all the damage they wanted for there is no place near. No place at all around here where we could go without building & a complete break up here. & I think we have places enough now. & I thought getting to Marion impossible. The Negroes seem much afraid of the Yankees & keep a watch for them, & say if they catch them they will have to do it with a bullet. . . . I thought last Friday night and part of Sat- that my troubles had come, but no not yet. we spent the day Friday with Tina & I rode to town & felt quite sick that night and could hardly move about most of the next day.⁵⁴ I will now have to give up riding on horseback & stay at home until I get my buggy. which I have the promise of having soon.

53. Possibly Lieutenant John Garner, Company D, 15th Florida Cavalry. *Soldiers of Florida*, 282. "Willi" is William A. Bryant.

54. Tina is Augustina Alexandrina Fleming Stephens (1831-1900), wife of Clark Stephens and sister-in-law of Winston.

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. . . You may be sure Mother is anxious now as we have heard of the great battle fought in Kentucky.⁵⁵ The Savannah paper has begun again about the prospect of Foreign intervention but I have no faith in it, but I wish to heaven that something would stop the war. I begin to fear again that we will have to give up as I hear our soldiers in Virginia are so poorly off for clothing that if they do not have ready assistance they will, have to disband. there are some stirring letters in the Savannah papers about it, one from Aunt Julia.⁵⁶ Mother & Tina are high for doing something, but I think we can do no good worth counting, as I believe there is no such thing as stirring up these country people. & without their help we could do nothing but knit a few pairs of socks. Tina has not heard from Mr Fleming yet. have you heard how Our rice & *pans* fared at Jacksonville, whether the Yankees routed Lieut Caulk or not?⁵⁷ I hear they destroyed furniture & other things they could not carry off with them.

. . . I was sorry to see you did not enjoy your visit more when you were here, you did not seem yourself. I hope it was not my "crossness" altogether. I knew I was more cross than I used to be but did not know I had got so bad, I hope your next visit will be more pleasant. perhaps by then some of my troubles will be over and *may be* better natured. & you may have another little one to make you happier. I have heard that women in my situation are always more cross & I hope it may prove so in my case & that my husband will again love me as he used to. I hope you do not see so many prettier & more agreeable persons in your travels around as to wean you from me. . . .

Camp Finegan Oct 29th at night 1862

My Dear Wife

I will write you only a short letter to night as I have to start on a scout soon tomorrow and I must write Ma a short letter as Swep will start up there tomorrow.⁵⁸ I received orders this eve to go down to Yellow Bluff & scout that section for the purpose

55. Perryville (Chaplin Hills), Kentucky, October 8, 1862.

56. Julia Maria Bryant Fisher, Octavia's aunt.

57. Lieutenant William Caulk, Company A, 3rd Florida Infantry (Jacksonville Light Infantry). *Soldiers of Florida*, 103.

58. Mary A. J. Stephens Gaines, Winston's mother, who lived near Middleburg, Florida.

of preventing the Enemy from killing Beeff &c. I will take 40 men with me & return in three or four days & I do not expect to see a Yank while I am gone as we are confidently told only one Gun boat remains in the river & they have removed the guns from the "St Johns Bluff" & nothing remains but the Earth works-I had the pleasure of meeting Genl Finegan yesterday & we had quite a tongue lashing and every one standing by said I got the best of him. At any rate he stoped talking and said there was no use of talking more about the matter & today he met me in a good humor & seemed better pleased with me than I have ever seen him. so I suppose my independent talk did me some good that time. I had my mind made up to make him respect me or I would not respect him. The Genl blames the Commanding Officer & some spicy articles have appeared & the Genls side has so far got decidedly the worst of it. I will try to send you "Fair Plays" reply to "Justice" by next letter and you will see a true statement of facts.⁵⁹

We have now in this camp one Squadron of Cavalry 'two companies' which I command. Capt Dunham's artillery & Maj Brewards Batalion of Infantry (three Companies) & one Company of Col Hopkins Batalion & Col Hopkins in Command but he goes tomorrow & Maj Brevard will command. I suppose we have 500 effective men in all, perhaps not quite so strong. We entertain no expectation of a fight here. In my last I think I told you we were expecting 10,000 men, but now it appears doubtful as they have given notice both at Savannah & Charleston to have the women & children removed & the City Council determined to leave the Cities in ashes before they would surrender. They have already had a fight on the R.R. between the places & drove them back to their Gun boats. Beauregard is there & I have great confidence & him & the troops will fight well under his command.⁶⁰ & If we can drive them back at those two points I think our cause will gain considerable strngth & they will be more & more discouraged. I am sorry to see that our men are in

59. Evidently pennames used by authors criticizing and defending the actions surrounding abandonment of the St. Johns Bluff artillery position. Colonel Hopkins abandoned his position because he felt Union troops advancing upon him from the rear could not be successfully resisted. He chose not to sacrifice his men in what he regarded as a hopeless fight. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War*, 74.

60. Pierre G. T. Beauregard (1818-1893).

such bad plight, but I dont want you to have any thing to do with it. not that I am not willing to give to the soldiers but I know you cannot do any thing of yourself & the means of transportation would prevent its reaching Richmond before the winter is out. Try and clothe those under your immediate controll & you will do well. I think I wrote you about all I know of your friends in my last. I have not been in Jacksonville but when I return I will call on Mrs. Foster & see if I can render her any assistance & learn more of your friends. . . .

I was glad to get your long & interesting letter this evening by Henry Hopkins, as Lt Grays party came in.⁶¹ I am sorry you have to stop your riding but my Dear I am glad you think it best as I have thought so some time but I would not say so as you would perhaps think I did it to stop your going to Tinas so much. . . . My Dear as to not loving you as much as ever I say if it is possible I love you more than I ever did not because you are sometimes cross but because I know that no one is perfect & you can compare creditably with any wife & I have hoped you will get rid of your little bad humor & then we can be so happy-It is our duty to try & cheer each other & get the other in a good humor when the other is out of humor. We are all frail creatures & subject to err & the best of us will do wrong at times. Never let it cross your mind that I will ever be drawn off by any other woman or women. You know the promise I made you before the alter & rest assured that vow is sacred with me & if I am cool at any time it will not be that I love you less, but that something has troubled me when I was home last I was not aware that I was not myself, but I do admit I was troubled about many things & my mind was constantly trying to plan for the future for you & those that are dear to me. remember my situation when I was last home & I must think you cannot blame me for being troubled & perhaps I appeared changed. I am well with the exception of a cold which troubles me some but I think camping out will fix things up again. The company are not so good as some 10 or 12 are on sick report. I am glad you have the facilities of mail matter & presume Mr Smith will continue it. I want you to let me know again when you look for an increase & I will ask for a furlough at that time & if I

61. Henry T. Hopkins, Company B, Second Florida Cavalry. *Soldiers of Florida*, 264.

am refused I will resign & come any way as I must be with you if possible on that occasion. I want you to have some Dr with you and I must say I had rather have some one besides Dr Currell. . . .⁶²

Camp Finegan Nov 4th 1862

My Dear Wife

. . . I called on Mrs Foster & Daughter on Sunday & found them in delicate health, Mis Foster does not look like the same person. I think of the Winter is cold & she is disturbed much by the War that she will fail & die. though with quiet & good care she may live longer. I found them alone & doing all their house work, making fires cooking & sc. Some Man in Town does their marketing & Mr Burret & others visit them & assist them as much as possible. They told me only about 12 families were in Town besides Jews & Manaucians. Miss Foster told me to tell Mother that W^m Livingston had been paroled & that he saw your Father in New York but did not know what he was doing.⁶³ but said he was well. W^m Livingston has been back about two weeks so that it must have been about a month since he saw Col Bryant. I hope he is taking sides with the Democrats North & that they may cause a cessation of this War.

I went into Mrs. Maxeys house & every thing was torn up side down, two trunks had been broken open & everything gone. I saw the picture Mother sent down for old Mother Bryant & gave it to Capt Mitchel take care of until otherwise ordered.⁶⁴ I saw some books with Mr Tidings name in them, but every thing but the furniture was carried off by the Vandals & negroes.⁶⁵ Mrs Douglas went up to the Reads for a short time but is now living in Jacksonville by herself & doing all her work. . . .⁶⁶ Mrs

62. Dr. Thomas Currell was a Marion County physician who died in the summer of 1865.

63. Probably Lieutenant William A. Livingston, Company E, 5th Florida Infantry, *Soldiers of Florida*, 143. A Confederate Lieutenant Livingston, who had been wounded in Virginia, returned to Jacksonville on July 30, 1862. J. W. A. Nicholson to S. F. Du Pont, August 4, 1862, ORN I:XIII, 220.

64. Ann Andrews Bryant, Octavia's paternal grandmother. Either Captain Henry L. Mitchell, Company K, 4th Florida Infantry, or Captain Thomas Mitchell, Company B, 7th Florida Infantry. *Soldiers of Florida*, 134, 173.

65. R. M. Tydings, a Jacksonville minister, married Lou Reed, a childhood friend of Octavia in Jacksonville, in 1860.

66. A. M. Reed, Duval County banker, and his wife Harriet, had two

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Foster said the chaplain of one of the Yankee Regiments did more harm in Jacksonville than any one else, as he was an abolitionist & allowed negroes to take any thing they claimed, no matter who they claimed it of. & they striped every house that was not occupied by its owner. I think if the families had remained nothing like the damage would have been done. . . .

Tallow is worth 75 cts & hies 80 cts pr pound.

Camp Finegan Nov 15th 1862

My Dear Wife,

. . . I want the cotton gined at once if Mr Priest can gin it and I want the hogs from Mr Braddock.⁶⁷ Clark tells me he is going after some as soon as he gets home & you can send Tom if he will do it if not send Burrel, it will not require but one of them. If Tom drives the hogs Burrel can haul the cotton. I hope you have it all picked by this time, send me how much you made. I am going to try to sell it down on Indian river as they are offering 50^{cts} for it at that place. If I can sell, it will more than put us out of debt which will be a relief to me. I want you to have pet & the colt put in the Pea field & then if the colt dont improve you must have him fed. I hope you have killed some of the hogs as the weather has been very good. Caution burrel not to use more than salt enough to save the meat & to rub that well in. tell Sarah & Jane to make some sausages nice as they know how & I hope to enjoy some of them with you.⁶⁸ Keep the sides to use last as they will keep best. I want you to give Burrel the new pants you made for me & fix up the old ones for the boys as they will be warmer than any cloth you have & caution them to wear them only in the coldest weather. I have sent for some cloth for pants by Swep & he will return this evening I think. do the best you can to get the clothes made for them. Clark will assist or get the cloth & assist you in getting a wheel or any thing of that sort. . . .

As to war news we have none, only Genl Cobb is to command

children - Louisa and Harriet. The Reeds had been Octavia's neighbors in Jacksonville.

67. Possibly either Gabriel W. Priest of Winston's company, or Gabriel Priest of Welaka, or Gabriel C. Priest, a farmer, also of Welaka. John, Joseph, or William Braddock.

68. Jane is a Stephens slave.

the Middle & West & Finegan the East & South I was in hopes that we were to have a change but we are to have our same commander. Genl Cobb is from Ga.⁶⁹ I think by having two Genl in Fla. that we are to have more troops-You know the Yankees say they intend colonizing Fla & Texas this winter, & this may be a preparatory move to prevent it. . . . The Yankees are getting quite saucy about this part of the world. they go out in the creeks & some of them have gone out on land. I think they will be interrupted soon. I intended to go up to Jessups but an order is out prohibiting any one being absent without the consent of Genl Finegan & I will ask no favor until I want to come home and then I will perhaps be allowed to come.⁷⁰ I had a man by the name of Livingston desert last night he had not been absent from home more than three weeks & did not ask to go.⁷¹ I have sent after him & If I get him he will be punished severely. . . . Rest easy on one score & that is about my being with you for I *will* come unless they put me in irons. Keep in good heart you know how easy your time was with Rosa & that was the first & likely to go the hardest with you. . . . I forgot to mention that the Yankees have burned St Marys down.⁷² the cause as stated to me was that they sent 150 negroes out near there to burn a mill & they were caught & killed & hung & they retaliated by burning the place. . . . We have been in the service one year to day. that is Confederate service. You will see the Democrats have carried the most of the North & they will speak out for Constitutional rights & conflicting opinions will have a tendency to bring about peace. Swep got me a pair of gloves but no cloth you may give the pants any how & I will do the best I can the negroes must have the clothes or they may go off on that account. . . .

69. On November 11, 1862, General Howell Cobb (1815-1868), former Georgia governor and congressman, assumed command of the Department of Middle Florida, extending from the Suwannee to the Choctawhatchee rivers with headquarters at Quincy. Adjutant and Inspector General S. Cooper to General H. Cobb, November 11, 1862, ORA I:XIV, 677. See also Beauregard to Cobb, November 21, 1862, *ibid.*, 684.

70. Jessup, possibly a son-in-law or relative of Ma Gaines, lived in Middleburg.

71. Morgan, Warren, or William Livingston. *Soldiers of Florida*, 264.

72. On November 9, 1862, the U.S.S. *Mohawk* drove the Confederates out of St. Marys, Georgia. The Federals fired some of the buildings, and also a large mill down the river. Lieutenant Commander A. K. Hughes to S. F. Du Pont, November 11, 1862, ORN I:XIII, 442.

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Camp Finegan Jany 27th 1863

My Dear Wife

Yours of 17th has just been received and the contents noticed & I cannot express to you the anxiety I feel & shall continue to feel until I hear again from you. I shall trust in God who giveth & in whose hands our dear child must rest. If I should lose her I shall think it a punishment because I have been so much taken up with my Dear family that I have not paid the devotion to him that I should. I know how much you & Mother must have suffered during the time you write about in your letter, & oh how much that dear babe must have suffered. I would that I could be the sufferer & not my babe that cannot express its want & explain where are its pains. but Gods will be done & not mine. I hope the crisis has passed as you thought & that dear Belle is now recovered & that I may see her lovely face again. ⁷³ I fear for her safety as Dr Merideth tells me the disease is hard to manage with one so young & that it is contagious & Rosa will be sure to have it & perhaps all the family of children both black & white. ⁷⁴ I wish I could be with you so that I could divide the watch necessary in such cases. I do hope you may not have any more cases. I am quite well & doing as well as circumstances will admit. This wicked war is the means of so much unhappiness & distress & yet our Enemys appear disposed to try every means of subduing us to their will but so far they have failed and in all the recent moves they have been foiled & defeated. In the West they are defeated & at Richmond they were defeated with terrible loss, but from last accounts they are gathering their strength for another on to Richmond & we may expect to hear startling news from that place soon. & at Murfreesborough they are confronted & another desperate battle is inevitable & I feel confident in our ability to defeat them at both places. North Carolina is also to be a place of much importance & a large force is threatening us in that direction & our forces from Savannah & Charleston have been sent to the help of our force & they will be able to drive them back. The weather has so crippled the fleet of the Enemy that they cannot do any thing at Charleston & Savannah for some time so that we can spare our forces for the present

73. Isabella Stephens lived only a few weeks, December 14, 1862, to January 23, 1863.

74. Dr. Merideth, although unknown, probably belonged to the company.

very well. Some of the Military think the attack or demonstration at Fredricksburg to be a mere feint & that the real attack is to come from some other point.⁷⁵ Our Cavalry in the West have won imperishable laurals by their deeds of Heroism! Wheeler has captured 4 transports & sunk one Gun boat & captured 400 prisoners on the transports besides destroying Millions of dollars worth of Gov property.⁷⁶ One of the Kentucky Genl made a speech to his force & told them to go home & if Lincoln did not recall his emancipation proclamation in 20 days he should join the Confederates.

I feel that we are obliged to have peace during the Spring & God grant it may soon come. The disposition appears to be to place us on an equality of Regulars & they take it regular giving new orders each day & they grow more & more strict & I pay but little attention to some of them & would not be disappointed to be called to account & I dont care as I will not make Regulars out of my men & they will not accept a Resignation & I dont care much what happens. I am doing my best to get rid of Genl Finegan & We hope to succeed & then I will be satisfied. Catholic religion has controlled the organization of this Regiment & other denominations have been tolerated only where it could be used to elevate the other Church. Now I am for rebelling against such things. I do not believe in bringing Church matters in this trouble & I will fight it to the death. . . .⁷⁷

"Rose Cottage" Welaka Saturday P.M. Feb 14th 1863

My dear husband

. . . Your latest letter spoke of going on the scout to Kings Ferry.⁷⁸ when will all these scouts end? seems to me the war is no nearer the end now that it was months ago. seems to me we have as well live together under Lincoln's Government than to

75. Lee chose to contest the Federal crossing of the Rappahannock River on the south bank at Fredericksburg, Virginia. The Union attack on December 13, 1862, resulted in 12,700 dead and wounded. Ambrose Burnside withdrew his men on the night of December 15.

76. General Joseph "Fightin' Joe" Wheeler (1836-1906), Confederate cavalryman. Stephens here refers to Wheeler's raid of October 1-9, 1863, against General William Rosecrans in Tennessee.

77. The editors have been unable to determine whether Finegan was at any time a Catholic. His funeral service took place in Jacksonville's Newnan Street Presbyterian Church, and he is buried in a Protestant cemetery, Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, November 6, 1885.

78. King's Ferry, site of extensive lumber mill activity, in Nassau County.

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live separate most of the time under this Government, & are you now much more free than negroes, and the discipline becoming more & more strict. I suppose before long none of the soldiers will be allowed to go home at all. that will be great doings. . . .

I fear you have been very anxious about Rosa since I wrote by Mr Shook that she had fever, for I think from one of your letters that the Dr must have thought out little Belle had scarlettina, & I fear you have thought Rosa had it.⁷⁹ I watched her anxiously for many days fearing it might be the same. I suppose by this time you have received my last letter saying she was well with the exception of a cough. She seems very bright now, & her cheeks are as rosy as ever. she has seemed to miss the baby only once. my thoughts are more easily turned from the thoughts of her but seems to me I am not much more reconciled. for at times it does seem soo hard. she would have been two months old to day. sometimes it seems as though the six weeks she was with us was a dream. I know it wrong to wish her back in this wicked world, but seems to me I would give all I have to have her. I mean all my possessions, not my relatives for I often think that if one of our relatives had to be taken it was better to have her taken who was as pure as pure could be, and we know will go to Heaven, she never knew a wicked thought even. What a sweet little angel she will make, but will we ever meet her again?

I received the vaccine matter which you sent, and Clark came over on Thursday and vaccinated all on the place except Mother & I who Mother thinks safe, me especially. he vaccinated his children too. we heard the other day that it was not the small pox, but chicken pox.

Please do not be so dont care about your military matters, for if you should be called to an account for disregarding orders I would care, and what would you make by it. you say you can not resign your commission, so you had better be resigned where you are and not make things worse by disobeying orders, for I fear you will get yourself deeper into trouble than you think you might be put out of office & made a private and then I am sure you would be worse off. I fear you are not going to have such

79. B. F. Shook, a blacksmith, Company B, 2nd Florida Cavalry. *Soldiers of Florida*, 264.

quiet times down there as you have been having, as you say the Gun boats shelled so much, I guess from that too that there is no communication & that Mother's and my letters will not go to the North. It is almost time Father was carrying out his plan he spoke of. I am afraid for him to try it. . . .

While I think of it, Clark heard that Dr. Ashurst sold medicine at Middleburg at the old prices and when you come home you had better try and get some medicines, we need paregoric, camphor blue mass, & oil.⁸⁰ and please bring a bottle of Creole Liniment with you, and if you want any more eye water you had better get some from the Doctor, for we used all yours trying to cool our dear little babe's face when she was first sick. . . .

In Camp at Mooneys place 5 miles out from J.⁸¹ March 16th 1863.
My Dear Wife

I can feel this morning how very anxious you must be for my welfare, as you have no doubt heard ere this of the fight at Jacksonville with all its exaggerations that follow such events.⁸² I wish I could send this direct to you & I did ask to be allowed such a thing but was refused & now I have to trust to the slow process of mail. On Tuesday the Yankees & negroes in transports accompanied by three Gun boats came up to Jacksonville and Lieut Gray & the pickets barely had time to get out before they had landed & were going in every direction trying to capture all they could. Lt Gray lost his sword uniform & papers & SC. He then sent an express out to camps & I was sent with my Company & the rest followed. Nothing was done that day of any consequence, but that night Genl Finegan with some reinforcement arrived & Wednesday morning we were thrown in line of battle & the Cavalry went on the north side & the Infantry on the three mile branch so as to cut off the retreat of the enemy & we were to charge them so every thing went on quietly until we got to Mr Jones place approaching the plank road when the Yankee pickets fired upon Lt Gray who was thrown out in advance.⁸³ I then

80. Dr. Josiah Asherst lived in Middleburg at the time of the 1860 census.

81. Either the residence of Hugh Mooney, or of George Mooney. Eighth Census, 1860, microfilm, Duval County, Florida.

82. Around March 10, 1863, Union forces occupied Jacksonville for the third time during the war. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War*, 74.

83. In 1859 the Alligator Plank Road started at Bay and Newnan streets, extended up Newnan to Duval, and then went on towards Alligator (or Lake City). Otis L. Keene, "Jacksonville, Fifty-three Years Ago. Recollections of a Veteran," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, I (January 1909), 14.

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formed my Company under the hail of bullets & moved up & fired upon them & they ran off. I then noticed two Companies in front & about two hundred yards out on the same street that Col Hopkins built a house. I then moved up near the road pouring a fire into their lines & they began soon to give way and & Capt Chambers about this time formed his Company on my right & across the road & they broke like wild animals. not waiting for a charge. The Infantry had not moved up fast enough & consequently all of them got away except those that were killed. Mrs. Younge who came out yesterday says we killed one officer & 15 negroes.⁸⁴ We lost Dr Merideth who was shot through the head & two horses killed & one wounded. Mr McLeod a brother of Lt McLeod was struck with a spent ball on the thigh, but was not hurt much.⁸⁵ Jessup had the stripe of his pants on the thigh cut into by a ball. Poor Dr Merideth did not know what hit him, he lived about five hours after he was shot but was not sensible nor apparently in pain. We have lost a good friend & a valuable Phisician.

3 P.M. I was cut short by an express man riding in to Camps stating the Yankees were advancing, but after getting ready and going down we learned that after exchanging a few shots they returned to Town. I am to go down this evening to ambush them & I hope to get some of the scamps. Capt Dickerson is coming up & has offered to send this up to you.⁸⁶ I want you to arrange so that the negroes can go at once into the woods if they come up as high as you are & get Clark if the Yankees stay up there to try & get the negroes across the river & send them up on the road, to me. but I hope it will not be necessary to break up, tell Burrel al about it & tell him I shall depend upon him to take care of the rest of the negroes. The negroes in arms will promise him fair prospects, but they will require him to take up arms against us & he will suffer the same fate those did in Town that we killed, & the Yankees say they will hang them if they dont fight. I think it a good plan for Clark & Henry to secrete some provisions where no one knows of it but the whites, that is the older ones & not any of the negroes, or perhaps if

84. Probably Harriet Young, a dressmaker, listed in the census as coming from Massachusetts.

85. D. C. McLeod, private, Company B, 2nd Florida Cavalry. *Soldiers of Florida*, 264.

86. Captain J. J. Dickison, commander, Company H, 2nd Florida Cavalry.

they were to do such a thing it might create the suspicion of the negroes.⁸⁷ I want Burrel to see that I have the utmost confidence in him. Tell him to keep something hid away so that if they are forced to take the woods they will have something to live on. & you had better consult Clark about the cotton. I want you to take care that none of the negroes or the mules fall into their hands. I hope Capt Dickerson will be able to keep them from going up above Palatka as his Company will return to that point. The Yankees or negroes went up to Doctors Lake and captured Col Bryant & three of his negroes and three horses & killed some of his stock.⁸⁸ They threaten to do big things but they will not fight and if they come up a few resolute men can drive them back, they will steal every thing they put their hands on so you had better get Henry to bury every thing some place & what money you keep put it around your body. I would not wear any Jewelry or show any thing that will tempt them. I hope your Father may come out & keep them from injuring any of you. The famous Kansas Montgomery is in Command of one of the negroe regiments & your Mother knows his character.⁸⁹ We are getting strong as we have some 16 Companies & some Cavalry is now arriving from Ga I think God being our helper that the Yanks & negroes will be cleared out of Jacksonville in a few days. We look to God & trust in him to sustain us in this our just cause. I want you to put your trust in him & he will not forsake you. If I fall it will be in defence of a just cause. I hope very soon to see you when we will be fearing no enemy. This I regard as our greatest tryal. . . .

87. Henry H. Bryant (1847-1930) lived with his sister Octavia throughout most of the Civil War.

88. Doctor's Lake is north of Fleming's Island on the St. Johns River. Probably named after Dr. Thomas Stirling.

89. James Montgomery, a Kansas Jayhawker and radical abolitionist. Montgomery's black 2nd South Carolina Regiment raided up the St. Johns.