

PUGH (JOSEPHINE N.) CIVIL WAR ACCOUNT

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Dark days  
A woman's record.

It was October, our most beautiful month, but this Saturday noon, the wind in unison with our feelings waivered fitfully or burst in angry gusts - dense rain fell - it was very Churlish, and our hearts were heavy with the tidings just received, that the Yankees had landed at D - about twenty miles distant.

Their army would soon be upon us, and war with all its attendant horrors. Heretofore we had suffered privations and discomforts, but had easily reconciled ourselves to them, having in the beginning of the terrible struggle determined that all superfluities should be dispensed with to aid our Country's needs - not called on our foes gathered the surplus.

Several nights the wind increased in violence, blowing shifting to the Nor. West towards night, which <sup>a</sup> was sleepless <sup>night</sup> to most of us. We knew not, what the morrow would bring forth - our small, poorly clad, <sup>+</sup> more armed force, almost destitute of ammunition, could scarcely contend with Gen. Maitz's <sup>company of</sup> thoroughly equipped troops - a well disciplined infantry and cavalry mounted on horses, but lately the pride of Southern Stables. Coming thus with the pride and Circumstance of war, they were well calculated to inspire awe, and terror, in the inhabitants, but I think indignation was the predominant feeling, with a sense of <sup>the</sup> deproportion at the helpless condition in which ~~we~~ <sup>they</sup> were placed.

There was great confusion on Sunday - hurrying to and fro - our men fell back - poor fellows they were ill fitted to ~~resist~~ <sup>resist</sup> that despoiling army - ~~even~~

<sup>their</sup> ~~the~~ officers <sup>even</sup> were coarsely dressed and showed no uniformity of attire.

On the black race, show and glitter exercised the strongest influence - no wonder then, that drawing outward comparison, they yielded religious belief to Yankee Supremacy. They saw their masters leaving this land - they knew not with what prospect of return - their faith could not stand the test, and numbers flocked to the Yankee Standard, forming a motley, grotesque, and increasing ~~army~~ <sup>multitude</sup>.

Many of our planters, in anticipation of such an invasion had left with their negroes for Texas - after reflection we had decided to remain, knowing the aversion of the negro to breaking up and moving to a new country - thinking too that their demoralization would be less complete at home.

Most of ours were inherited - we hoped at least a majority would ~~remain~~ <sup>continue</sup> with us. If there was confusion and hurrying without, there was none the less within - many planters even at the last moment collecting all their household goods, started to escape with their families. And there were sad, brief partings - we were <sup>sure</sup> ~~worried~~ that our husbands should leave us. Why remain to fall into the merciless hands of Butler? to be hunted we knew not whether, nor to what fate. Rumor heralded the arrest and imprisonment of some men near St Orleans - ours might still escape, or conceal themselves for a time until their <sup>enemies</sup> ~~policy~~ could be known.

We were not afraid to stay behind, and so it was our large household for the first time in a season of affliction ~~that~~ <sup>it</sup> was bereft of its proper head - his stay could only have added to our distress, and so he parted from

us that Sunday afternoon, while the army lay encamped a few miles off. Thus the responsibility rested solely with me, for within a few hours, the owner becoming alarmed, also left. Of this I was immediately informed by our Confidential man who came to receive instructions. He had ever been implicitly Confided in, but was somewhat timid; however, I thought in his Character of preacher he would exercise a good influence over his people.

I instructed him to keep them together, if possible, and call them to their usual avocations in the morning.

We came at daylight to inform me that some of the young men had left during the night, and he feared others would follow - but a large number were still working under the direct direction - one of their own color who was popular among them.

At breakfast on Monday our dining room servant, a young man, whose ancestors had been in the family for generations, told me the army was approaching and a squad on advance in a chimney had shot down and killed one of our neighbors - a young man who had been discharged from the ~~Confederate~~ army on account of ill health from the so called Confederate army. He was on horse back, ~~having~~ <sup>having</sup> left his wife and children to a neighbor's house - ~~hoping~~ <sup>hoping</sup> still to ~~make~~ <sup>find</sup> his way out of the Country. Before he was aware he was surrounded by soldiers and summoned to surrender - when being suddenly, he plunged <sup>his</sup> ~~himself~~ into his horse and dashed off - a dozen rifles were discharged, raising himself from his saddle he fell among them and fell dead. His horse was captured and mounted by one of the troopers, who with others rode into the next yard, where on the gallery stood the wife awaiting her husband.

She recognized at a glance the noble animal—  
seeing this the soldier said "If you wish to bury the  
man, who rode this horse, his dead body lies on the ~~west~~  
road, a short distance back."

On came that martial host, proud  
and powerful, but I looked not forth on their ranks,  
glittering in the sunshine, when all was so dark to  
us—In sorrowful indignation, drawing my little ones  
around me, I sat in the library awaiting their  
approach. I might close doors and windows—shut  
them out from sight, but there was no closing the ear  
to the great tumult— that Babel of voices— that  
tramp of a thronging multitude.

Armed men ~~were~~ <sup>were</sup> every where— saw  
rounding the house— demolishing fences, trampling the  
flower beds— on to the negro quarters— to the stables— to the  
fowl yard— kitchen— but as yet they ~~had~~ <sup>had</sup> not invaded  
the house— I prayed fervently they might not— Should  
they attempt this, I would invoke the protection from  
their officers, which I could not bear to do in  
presence of my boy, a stripling of fourteen— he  
stood by me with swelling heart, flashing eyes and  
wraths only subdued from rash demonstrations by  
his love for me.

I <sup>was</sup> ignorant of the insignificance of  
rank, but an officer soon entered the room— some one  
said, he was a Major— I am glad he was not an  
American. Coming towards me without salutation  
he said "I want some coffee, get some for me at once"  
"I have none sir"— He retorted with "that's a lie"  
and walked out.

I could sit still no longer, but  
went to the kitchen, where sat old Hetty looking an-

=gaily at the soldiers who filled it - calling her to  
me, I was about giving some directions, when I saw  
a soldier and a youth riding toward the stables - in  
the impulse of the moment I called to them "Gentlemen  
if you are gentlemen" (the man turned slightly on his  
saddle and looked at me "is it customary for Union  
soldiers to pay in regard to ownership" there is no  
ownership <sup>here</sup> ~~now~~ madam, this place is confiscated"  
"What is yet to be ~~done~~ decided, Sir" "Might make  
right," he answered, "and I shall help myself from  
your stables" I have no power to resist - something  
more I may have added <sup>I do not remember my power</sup> - ~~however~~ the troops were  
excited; and he presented his cocked revolver at me -  
And Albert, my servant, <sup>in some alarm</sup> ~~precipitately~~ ~~mounting~~, putting  
his hand on my shoulder said "Come away, mistreat  
them now with heart, or insult you". A messenger  
now came and informed me that an officer de-  
sired to speak to me.

I will not say now I shall ~~remember~~ that  
interview - the weather was cold, but I did not  
feel it - I stood in the Gallery surrounded by  
ladies and children (for our family had been  
increased by refugees) a legion of frightened ser-  
vants, curious and eager to hear all that passed.  
<sup>pushed around</sup> Several officers advanced - ~~one addressed me~~ -  
"Is Col - at home" said one, giving me a military  
salute. "No Sir" "I knew it before asking" - "This Sir  
the question was unnecessary." With a sweep of his  
arm, ~~he rose~~ and in a loud tone, he informed me  
<sup>that</sup> (was the Provost Marshall of the whole Brigade"  
I bowed. Turning he pointed to two darkies.

"Madam, these men were arrested while stealing

your <sup>peculiar</sup> chickens - I have given you protection" at this I felt the dilation of my throat, the chord like swelling of its veins. Drawing myself up, I replied "I thank you sir if you have afforded it, saving a few chickens is a poor protection, when all the valuables belonging to the plantation have been taken - Your soldiers have seized the mules, wagons and every horse; see, even my little boy's pony with his fancy saddle is being ridden off, pointing as I spoke to the youth who had stolen them - "and there goes another with my daughter's side saddle". He responded with indignation "Madam, this is the first place, where any complaint has been made of the Union soldiers" "Others may have suffered less, or feared to speak - these ladies have seen several of ~~the~~ our <sup>men</sup> ~~men~~ knocked down, and pistols applied to their heads to force them off - Your soldiers have placed knapsacks on their shoulders - they had no option but to march. See I wish none to remain who desire to go, but there are many who will not do it voluntarily - do not permit force to be used against these, low and (read with us I think have said), but inadvertently used the word) educated". Educated.

"Educated Madam", he said with a sneer - you hesitate at the word "fully as well," I unreservedly responded, "in morality and principle as your men who are perambulating every where, stealing all they can lay hands on. When my husband left me, he thought there were gentlemen in the Union Army who would protect ladies from insult" - Do you mean to insinuate that there

are we gentlemen in the Union Army?

I'm not so unjust for - there are gentlemen in your army, as there are some who are not so in ours.

As dancing still nearer and speaking in an with an  
extremist he said "Madam your sex alone protects you"  
"Sir I do not claim the prerogative, and casting off the  
shawl thrown around me by some friendly hands, I  
looked at him with imploring eyes - it might have  
been wiser to have spoken differently but it was not in  
me, surrounded by that rock-like soldier, <sup>thus</sup> violating the  
sanctity of my home.

The Dutch Major now approached  
and supposing that I was asking for protection said  
"This lady claims protection don't she get when I asked  
for coffee, she refused saying she had none, when  
she had it"

"Sir I only ask protection for my household against  
insult, and Sir, (turning to the Provost) language  
such as this, is considered as an insult by a Southern  
woman."

Let me pause to do justice, several of the officers  
felt for me, and seemed somewhat ashamed ~~at~~  
~~this Provost's~~ ~~the~~ ~~speech~~ One now spoke and said  
"Such language is insulting - if Mrs - said she had  
no coffee, ~~she had it~~ ~~and~~ you should have believed  
her" "Sir" I have it Sir but not for him, an invalid  
my husband procured some for me, with difficulty  
and at great expense - no Southern man would  
touch it - but if you gentlemen desire to do, order  
one of my servants to prepare it for you." The officer  
answered deprecatingly, and said "we do not wish it"  
And turning their horses heads they galloped off  
<sup>the army with</sup>  
taking <sup>the</sup> eight or ten mules, wagons, harness, horses and saddles



and all the men, they could lay hands on.

I soon came to this scene, without laughter, when I contrast my fragile form, comparing the Provost Marshal of the whole Brigade with his pompous manner and the burly Dutch Major with his guttural tones and long sword, and marvel was now, that the excitement has passed away, how I could have the courage - or impudence if you will, to talk to them so plainly, but probably my weakness counteracted my strength.

Turning an instant from myself ~~which in a laughing mood~~, I will relate the retort of a friend <sup>at which he</sup> to ~~the~~ <sup>then</sup> some officers, ~~at~~ <sup>who</sup> stopped on their way down. They asked for something to drink "I have neither brandy or whiskey," she replied, but if you will partake of Southern wine (blackberry cordial) made by noble ladies, I can give it to you - of course they could - it was brought out; - filling glasses they ~~pledged~~ <sup>instead</sup> pledged the ladies "health and happiness" and a speedy return to our homes, promptly added my pretty young friend drawing his glass - in which with the other ladies present cordially united.

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The army moved warily forward - they knew not our weakness, and found four battalions in ambush in the long spreading fields of waving corn.

By now our principal body of men had collected a few miles below this, and being reinforced by the 18<sup>th</sup> La, the Crescent Regiment and Ralston's battery amounting in all to about 350 men - added to these were Sumner's battery of four pieces, three militia from the lower parishes and some Companies of Parker's Rangers. With this force, Gen<sup>l</sup> Mouton determined to

make a stand, and an engagement ensued which for gallantry and heroism will bear comparison with any of the war. Here fell Col M. P. Heesters of the Circuit Regiment fighting bravely at the head of his men. <sup>vainly</sup> contending with expended ammunition, the day was lost. <sup>slowly and in order and then made good their retreat - the gun had stopped in the battle itself.</sup>

We were very wretched that night and morning brought no reprieve - with its early hours came Addison the preacher, saying the servants yet remaining dissatisfied and sullen, refused to work - seeds of discontent had been sown - they deemed themselves forsaken by their master, were doubtful of us - the most preposterous stories were afloat among them - that I intended either to force them off, or abandon them to their fate.

Accompanied by my children, I went to the quarters - the scene had already changed - life's busy sounds had ceased - not many women or children were to be seen - a few men idly lounged on the street - calling on I bade him call the people from their homes - I desired to talk with them, and going to the census house I awaited them in the hall. They came slowly and reluctantly - I saw before me now those dark and ~~stolid~~ stolid faces in which I read nothing - I was among a strange people, and was unprepared for a change so great - I looked vainly in familiar faces for the old expressions. They listened attentively - there was no response - not a sound - it was ominous in the excitable people.

While endeavoring to disabuse their minds from false impressions - in adventuring to the past as a criterion from which they should judge the future - the fever of desolation - of the miserable contrast of the present with the past, overpowered us - my voice faltered - tears ~~welled~~ welled up ~~in my eyes~~ unbidden. I could not be mistaken

There was expression new - pleasure, triumph, he who saw  
might read - a new phase of negro, perhaps human nature  
was open to me - they mistook me - thought I was making  
an appeal - suffering humanity, diverted of proud spirits  
to them in an unknown ~~power~~ tongue - in an instant I brushed  
back the tears - there was now, no tremor in my voice, and  
with a countenance as hard as their own, I continued  
"I have told you the truth, believe it or not as you choose -  
you say the Yankees have told you if you work for me  
they will kill you - you believe them - I exact no work  
but that of inc. pit. - let the crop perish, we can live  
without it, but provide for yourselves and my family you  
must - potatoes must be holed - meal ground, and the  
stock left receive the necessary attention. The choice is yours  
exercise it as you please, but these duties must be performed  
if you remain. With these <sup>and</sup> I turned and left them <sup>rejoicing</sup> -

Rejoicing in my morning's act - I had in the presence  
of several of them ~~and~~ turned the facets of the  
bottle of brandy and old Bourbon - I had no fear of  
them, but was possessed by this evil spirit, then came  
than had no appeal to "Alexander Selkirk" - and this  
was the people, who had known me, but as benefactors, to  
whom my coming hitherto had been a jubilee - who  
had ever flocked about me; to receive with eagerness  
small presents of tea for the sick, and the little  
luxuries so prized by age. There were the children with  
their offerings of eggs, maypops and sweet gums for the little  
ones - receiving in return jackets gay with bright brass and  
gold buttons, in which the little favorites proudly strutted  
- was our relationship so soon severed - had an untimely  
news already arisen - the scepter had departed - "was  
so poor to do me reverence". I did not know that I attached  
importance to my kingdom - snatched from me, I felt

sight in my own room, the little  
I could hear the voice of my  
this excitement had not passed  
passed quiet, calm deep peace  
D with care and grief, I could  
in this last ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~frail~~ <sup>frail</sup> ~~constituting~~  
bility, I had and saw guardian  
row me with its full weight -  
bore it alone, but another way  
D - One who for lightness than  
bride maid, if he would but see  
holden". In my great sorrow  
and was left - strength firm.

the lips of the true hearts, and faithful subjects in whom  
I had believed.

\* <sup>The morning</sup>  
The next morning all had left save our united  
family, with its Centenarian Grandson and a young man  
- minor of Constantine - who remained with his sick wife to share  
our adverse fortunes. The household host did not then leave  
averse to leaving pleasant hours. <sup>For an uncertainty</sup> did not then leave, but like  
Irish retainers, were Constantines, not producers - several as with  
us still - ~~of~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~field~~ <sup>field</sup> banks after a short interval some  
returned - more perished from camp diseases and exposure.

Left not their motes, nor blame them too  
severely for the part. Their sheltering banks driven by fierce  
blasts from <sup>the</sup> quiet harbors and smooth waters in which  
they had long slumbered were shattered and wrecked - leaving  
them exposed to the pitiless storm - <sup>cast</sup> ~~launched~~ on an  
unknown sea, doubtful and apprehensive they strug-  
gled to gain the fair land of Liberty - once reached,  
eternal sunshine is theirs - basking in green pastures  
resting by still waters on whose margin bloom trees,  
whose mellow fruits wait no gathering - labor ended,  
limitless indulgence begins.

Fellow sufferers, ye have gathered  
the forbidden fruit from Freedom's stately tree - how do ye  
revel in its tatters? ye have discovered your nakedness,  
do the clothing bestowed satisfy and warm? are there  
no languishing introspective glances to the old state of  
happy ignorance?

Alas! I fear me much that like  
your prophets, ye soon discovered that knowledge is  
not wisdom, nor freedom, the ever best existence  
of your dreams.

J. N. Pugh.

Faith