

THE DIARY OF ALICE VIOLA PHIPPS¹

1865

Allendale², December [31], 1864

After a cold but bright and pleasant day, the last sun of 1864 is now gilding the western horizon with his departing splendor, to rise on the morrow, just as it has done since God said "Let there be light"; all unconscious and unmindful of the changes of the past year through which it has lighted us to the eve of '65. Since the 25th (which was spent quietly at home), we have had visitors more or less every day. Sisters Ruth and Lena and myself left Magnolia³ on Christmas Eve after spending the evening previous very pleasantly with Henry⁴, J. Johnson, father, "Tucker" and Cousin E. On account of our proximity to the enemy "Santa Claus" did not venture to pay us a visit. Ah, boom sounds the evening gun of the enemy stationed at Natchez. Will the sinking glory of another year be heralded by the same? Georgie B.⁵ has been spending the week with us and much of the time since the 12th, has been sharing our Christmas frolics, one of which I must grace with the title of a "possum hunt". On the night of the 27th we thought to vary the monotony of our usual manner of spending the evening by a ramble in the woods. "Jim" with a brilliant pine torch announces with a satisfactory grin that he is ready to act as pilot to the ladies who wish to participate in the rare sport of a possum hunt. Sisters R., L., George D., little brothers, and myself eagerly accepted the invitation and enjoyed the novelty of spending a December evening in the woods; after tumbling over logs and broken brush, falling into several sink holes, deluded by the treacherous carpet of the fallen leaves, we succeeded in flanking a poor possum, whose only signal of surrender was his proverbial grin, but not so tamely did Mr. Raccoon submit, though we affected his capture after a heavy skirmish; gathered fern leaves and moss "by the brookside" to decorate the parlor on our return.

January 1, 1865

A bright cold Sabbath ushers in the "New Year". Last night while we were seated around the fire in our own room we were startled by a rap at the door, the author of which proved to be Henry with his comrades, Tom⁶ and John, whom we had been expecting all day. After giving them a hearty welcome and sound scolding for their delay, we spent the evening very pleasantly notwithstanding the absence of the Sargt⁷. Today being the Sabbath we were at a loss how to spend it as we have been long deprived of the privilege of attending church; our Minister, Mr. Wat.⁸ being confined within the enemy's lines; but we managed to enjoy the day I believe. The boys remain tonight with us, intending to leave early in the morning. We took our supper (which consisted of sundry remains of dinner) in the parlor, the rugs serving as table.

January 2

Another bright mild day. The boys left us before breakfast. Father and Brothers accepted an invitation to dine at Mr. Gibson's today. C. and A. came home rivals both having "fallen in love" with little Miss Gibson. Much to our regret Mr. B. came for Georgie, dined with us and left us to spend the evening quietly alone.

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Alick insisted upon perching himself upon the piano stool in the center of the room for "comparison" after several ludicrous comments upon his person and qualities he dismounted, satisfied with the game. I had all my shrubbery and flowers removed from "parterre" to the vegetable garden as they were threatened with demolition where they were. The horses of the Yankees as well as the Rebs have injured them very much. I intend having shade trees planted in their stead where my flowers once bloomed. I cannot get my consent, however, to remove one favorite rose which grows beside the step in front of my door. I must leave it to cheer me by its bright flowers and delicate fragrance. Oh, how cheerless the home where no flowers grow. They are like friends and companions to me. I am delighted to find that my bulbs have multiplied so greatly. Learned through Mr. B. the cause of D.'s absence. Someone had relieved him of his horse and he had gone in pursuit. I knew there must be some good reason for him overstaying the furlough I was liberal enough to grant him. I am selfish enough to want him to spend his furlough at Allendale but of course that would not be right as so many others have claims upon his time and attention. Mr. E. Calvit has just called in to inquire about a valuable horse some of our "brave defenders" have appropriated. Horse stealing is the order of the day. Fortunately our stables now afford no inducements for such characters. Two afflicted old mules fill our list of "stock."

January 3

Concluded the removal of my flowers this morning; planted the border of hyacinths, snowdrops, tuberoses, dahlias, gladiolus and amaryllis, what a gay fencing they will present next spring. I have reserved one amaryllis bulb to plant in a box so as to have it placed where I can enjoy its beauty from my room. Father is so partial to this gay flower that I will always prize amaryllis more for his sake. Oaks and locusts already fill the grave of my resurrection flowers. I am so glad C. and A. are fond of flowers; I shall endeavor to have them cultivate a taste for all things beautiful and pure. They have a little flower bed of their own, but are very impatient for the flowers to bloom instead of looking so brown and lifeless. They commenced their studies today after having a holiday for two weeks. I was amused at Alick's comment upon his lesson, the subject of which was the "consequences of bad spelling". He thinks Miss "Emma" exceedingly "ignorant". After bidding the family goodnight and refreshing ourselves with broiled sausage, bread, pickles, cake, etc., we seated ourselves around the table to spend the remainder of the evening quietly to ourselves. Sister Ruth is writing to her friend Lucia. Lena is sorting out the washing while I write. D. has not yet returned. I hope he will come tomorrow as his furlough will soon be out and then he must be "off to the wars" again. When will this cruel war be over? I cut out for C. and A. this afternoon two little linsey overcoats for my work in the morning.

January 4

The day has passed quietly, no visitors (a very unusual occurrence). Father spent the day in the neighborhood of K.⁹ Heard very unfavorable accounts from Gen. Hood's army, also that Steve Foules was mortally wounded and a prisoner. C. and A. recited their lessons well and have been amusing themselves since dark by building "camp fires" in the yard. Poor little fellows. I wonder if it will be their lot in reality to gather round the camp fire in the capacity of soldiers. D. is still

in pursuit of his horse, has not been heard from since he left. I feel very anxious about him for he will have a set of desperate characters to contend with if he overtakes the thieves. Sister Ruth has persuaded me to promise her that I will engage her situation as teacher for next year. I hope however ere the time comes she will conclude to remain one year at least with us after leaving school for I am so lonely when they are both absent. How the war has altered our arrangement for life! With some assistance from Ma¹⁰ I finished the boys' coats today: they are quite proud of them though they are made of Confederate linsey. Dear little brothers, may God bless them.

Monday, January 23

Home again after absence of two weeks. Left Magnolia amid clamorous declarations that I'd "freeze to death" before I could reach Wayside¹¹ where sisters R. and L. were patiently awaiting the return of the "bus". We contrived not to freeze quite but had a very cold ride, the cold north wind blowing in our faces all the way; found Sgt. Ducker's squad waiting for dinner. A sad anniversary today is to us. Six years ago our dear mother¹² was taken. I was absent at school¹³, ignorant of the great misfortune that had befallen our dear father as well as ourselves, until the 25th when the dispatch summoning us home to look upon her lifeless form for the last time was handed me. Oh! too well can remember the shock and often wonder why it did not kill me - how distinctly I can recall my feelings of utter despondency as I lay alone in my stateroom listening to the mournful dashing of the waves, and how I wished they might sweep over me and bear me on to her I had lost. Upon me resolved the duty of supplying her place. How poorly have I filled it. I remained with father and little sisters and brothers, the latter were infants as it were until the following October when sister Ruth returned to school with me. What a sacrifice it must have been for father to give us up to be absent so long at such a time but for our good he made it. We made a short visit to our desolate home in May and in July '60. I came home to remain; sister Ruth to continue her studies at Wayside. God has mercifully spared the remaining links of our family circle, and though the number is now complete, there is a void in our hearts none can fill. Find my flowers doing well. My snowdrops are blooming as though they had not been moved. Cuttings putting out beautifully. Sgt. Ducker's squad dined and spent this afternoon with us. Wil Wat.¹⁴ will remain to recruit his horse.

Tuesday, January 24

The weather still continues freezing-cold, which keeps us close around the fire. Poor soldiers coming in constantly "almost frozen".

Wednesday, January 25

Still very cold. Wil still with us. He met with quite an accident last night - wrapped himself up comfortably and laid down in front of the parlor fire and about midnight was aroused by a "rap on his knees" from the hot hearth where he crept nearer the fire to keep warm, waked and found his covering all in a blaze. We tease him considerably about it. Our friend Lou P.¹⁵ stopped in to see us this afternoon - found sister Ruth her elbows in candy. I have been very busy

fitting Charlie a "military jacket". He has taken quite a fancy to be a soldier and I am fitting him out.

Thursday, January 26

I am still working on Charlie's military suit. No visitors today except Wil. Lena is faithfully knitting on socks for Mr. Foley. After putting aside our work for the day we took a ramble in the woods and I think a sketch of our adventures would serve as an illustration in Port Crayon's travels. We attempted to cross the creek on the ice but our wet and muddy shoes show how we were deceived in the crossing; we refreshed ourselves however with the beautiful but treacherous service and double quicked home "under arrest". A hillock of frozen mud proved quite a formidable obstacle in our way but we descended in military style much to the credit of our drill master W.W. I am growing very anxious to hear from D. Have a long long letter all in readiness to send by John on his return.

Friday, January 27

Cousin Eliza, Katie¹⁶, Tone F.¹⁷, Hal F.¹⁸, John J. and D. Cory¹⁹ came up this morning on horseback; quite a merry time we had too. Tom and Mr. C. left late in the afternoon. The rest remained all night. I have finished Charlie's military suit of which he is very proud. Put a solferino plume in his little black felt hat and when mounted on Bonnie looks quite soldierly.

Saturday, January 28

This morning after our guests all left Sgt. Ducker and a squad rode in with five captured horses. After dinner Lou Pipes came and is to spend the night with us.

Sunday, January 29

Lou and I rode up on horseback to Mr. Dip's this morning and returned home to dinner.

Monday, January 30

Brother Charlie and I absent.

Tuesday, January 31

A few hours ago Brother Charlie and I in company with several soldiers of our acquaintance reached home dripping wet having been on horseback in the rain since 12 o'clock this morning. Went on an errand of business for father yesterday - a distance of 13 miles. Spent the night at Magnolia, left in the rain as our return was necessary. Dined at Wayside and on our way home overtook several of the scouts going in the same direction so I was promoted to captain with W.W. as my first Lt. We led the brave band in the charge against Allendale fortifications, demanded an unconditional surrender of the fort and supped on friendly terms with the garrison.

Wednesday, February 1

It has continued to rain all day. Lt. Lindsey with his whole scout has been with us since morning. I have thought so often of our absent soldier friends who are exposed to the hardships of the tented field. My heart ached this evening to see two soldiers on foot who had walked a long, long distance to spend their few days furlough at home. We could not prevail on them to stop with us and refresh themselves; they looked contented and happy though they were plodding along through mud and rain. Oh! how sad to see our brave and good soldiers in such a condition.

Thursday, February 2

Still it rains! Rain and mud and Rebs! How I long to see the sunshine. A rainy day is a luxury sometimes but too many at once is not so pleasant. How often I think of our soldier boys as well as many others who may be without shelter. The creeks being swollen J.J. has not been able to cross and is still with us. Wil W. has been with us since Monday as well as a number of the scouts. They have been re-escorted by a band of "Jawhawkers" who are very troublesome to this portion of Adams County. I trust Gen. Martin, who is now in command of the department will have such characters dealt with as they deserve.

Friday, February 3

A bright day has at last dawned after almost a week of gloomy weather but the dark days heighten our appreciation of the sunshine and teach us that "Spring would be but gloomy weather if we had nothing else but Spring". John, as well as the rest of our guests left us this morning and we took advantage of their absence to clear the galleries and hall of mud. My working costume which I donned before John left, afforded him a good deal of amusement. He said, "a short dress, worn shoes, and scrub broom will figure in the scenes he has treasured up to picture to the 'boys' on his return to camp". Sisters Ruth, Lena, and I have been practicing over our songs since supper. Brother Charlie committed to memory the words to Faded Flowers, while Eck slept on the sofa and father smoked his pipe and paced the floor. Only a few nights and the girls will be gone from our little circle. How I will miss them.

Saturday, February 4

We have both sunshine and showers today. Sisters Ruth, Lena and I have been very busy all day preparing for their departure. Seven soldiers dined with us today, but we spent the evening alone in the parlor playing and singing together. The last time perhaps for many weeks. We are hoping the rain may detain them for another week but we should feel thankful that such privileges of attending school are still ours.

Sunday, February 5

Another rainy day. No visitors. We are all glad of the rain today as we can be together a little longer in consequence. The children have amused themselves since dark playing "I spy" and singing their favorite songs -- with us around the

fire (Faded Flowers, Just Before the Battle, and Who Will Care for Mother Now). How pleasant it is to spend the evening thus.

Monday, February 6

C. and A. commenced geography. The rain and slush today prevented the girls from starting down to school. Mr. B. Calvit dined with us. The children have gone to bed and sister Ruth is preparing to make some candy. Lena has lain down to sleep after confining herself to mending all day. What an industrious little old woman she is.

Tuesday, February 7

The girls left this morning. I have busied myself all day putting the house in order, hearing the children's lessons and sewing a little. Lou came in about dusk and we spent a nice quiet evening together. He told me of all his little troubles and love affairs. Father went with the girls and has not returned.

Wednesday, February 8

By my lonely fireside sitting here. No other save its flitting, flicking light is nigh. What a world of dreary fancies as each little bright flame dances keeping time with memory -- the vacant chairs, the silent room impress one with a feeling of loneliness. Last night having company I did not miss my sisters so much but tonight I'm all alone and feel their absence terribly. Father returned tonight. Spent last night at Magnolia in company with Dr. Watkins and Will; by him I received a note and an orange from Will which with the one Lou brought me will be a treat to the boys tomorrow as we have for sometime been debarred the privileges we once enjoyed of receiving them by the box and barrel. Lou left this morning about 9:00 hoping to bring us glad tidings of Peace when he visits us again.

Thursday, February 9

Mr. and Mrs. B. Calvitt called this morning. A lady visitor is quite a novelty now that horses are so scarce; and a carriage at the door (except our own) would no doubt alarm us, so seldom does such a vehicle make its appearance in public. How many, many changes a few fleeting years have wrought in our once social little neighborhood. Our neighbors, one by one, have left us to mark the rapid changes. Some are in Texas, some in Arkansas, some have been led to the altar, some borne to the tomb. But a mile distant stands a deserted homestead, where joy and beauty once reigned. The once fair and lovely farm so fondly cherished in the hearts that once welcomed us there, now sleeps in her narrow home. Cut off in the bloom of her youth, a gentle frail and lovely being, she left many hearts to mourn her loss. Dear Carrie, how often have we met under the old pine tree, half way distant from our home. Sisters, Carrie and I -- how often have we donned our romping costume and with our little basket of luncheon, and fishing tackle, have we spent whole days in some shady nook on the moss covered banks of the little stream that divides our pastures, or gathered the wild flowers of spring, or chased the squirrels from their feasts in the Chinquapin trees to procure for ourselves the smooth bright nuts to grace our childish limbs with jewels "rich

and rare". "Still oe'r there my memory wakes and fondly broods with music call -- Time, but the impression stronger makes as streams these channels deeper wear."

Friday, February 10

Another bright cold day has closed -- several soldiers called. One dined with us. I have been busily employed all day making Eckie's military suit. He too has the brass button mania. I was amused at one of his original remarks today while he was studying his geography lesson. The muscles of his leg began to draw from cramps I suppose and the pain was so sudden and severe that he startled me with screaming. "Oh Alice, I've broken the hain strings of my leg". He is full of mischief and hard to manage while gentle, quiet Charlie gave us no trouble at all. They both have bright minds and if properly cultivated will, I trust, make smart men. How anxious I feel that they should be intelligent, honorable, and good men. If a sister's prayers and efforts are of any avail, they will not be otherwise. Charlie's health is not good and I fear his constitution is weak, he has a cough now that distresses me very much. I made him some candy tonight hoping to relieve him.

Saturday, February 11

The celebrated Berthea called a few minutes this morning and this afternoon two gentlemen stopped for supper on their return from the pickets, with supplies of all kinds for the sake of comparing present prices with those of former times. I mentioned flour \$30.00 per barrel, whiskey very inferior \$500.00, and everything else in proportion. Eck has splurged in his military suit this afternoon which I finished today. After playing mother to two little orphaned chickens they adopted this morning he imitates the cluck of a hen so perfectly that I believe he thinks he really is one. The little chicks seem to think so, at any rate. He and Charlie have amused me very much today with their new protegees which I have permitted them to tuck snugly in a basket and place in a corner near the fire. I set two hens this morning hoping to have some early chickens if their mothers don't meet the fate their granddames did, viz - to fall into the hands of a Yankee raid. Charlie and Eckie are delighted with their success in catching birds, in their traps which they made and placed in the garden. Sometimes they trap as many as ten in a day. Their traps, little axes, ball and marbles, chickens are about the only means of amusement the little fellows have now, but they are just as happy and contented as tho' they had any amount of toys. Father recently purchased them a little pony of which they have the entire care and they really surprise me with their attention to her. They call her Bonnie in memory of a dear little pony the Yankees took from them. Poor little fellows, how they cried to see her haltered and led off with all the other horses they took from us, leaving us to the extremity of grinding with oxen. Well do I remember that day how my soul was tried. They drove the hogs into the front yard to slaughter them hanging them upon the shade trees to dress them leaving the offal and garbage as insulting memorials of their work of destruction; collected in the parlor and boisterously read and ridiculed southern songs, wrote obscene remarks in my album, and did in fact carry out their fiendish propensities to an extent beyond description. Two soldiers, Mr. S. and H. narrowly made their escape, having just left the house as they descended the hill leading to the gate. They learned of their having been

here that day and traversed the woods on hearing of the two hunted Rebs all day, but in vain; never dreaming that a loyal rail pile concealed the object of their search.²⁰

Sunday, February 12

A heavy rain fell this morning around daylight but cleared about 9:00. Father met with quite a serious accident this morning as he and Charlie were riding over to Dr. Johnson's, his horse fell, throwing him off and dislocating his knee. I have missed the girls so much today. Wrote to them and have thought of them constantly. Five soldiers are with us tonight. Oh, if we could only have peace, but I fear there is no hope of it soon. We hear that our commissioners to Washington have returned without agreeing upon any terms of peace. I used to wish that I had brothers to bid them to the battlefield, but now I feel differently, though if my brothers were older I would blush to own them elsewhere, than among the defenders of our land, but am truly glad their age debars them from the honors of the one case, or the shame in the other. I love my country, but I love my kindred and friends better. I know our rights have been trampled upon and spurn the idea of submission, but could we not have done better without war; had we not acted too hastily. Ultra politicians and factious demagogues have set us adrift in this tumultuous stream of blood to find the harbor as best we may - I am no Spartan woman to buckle on the armor of loved ones and bid them go. No heroine of '76 to fill their places at the plow, or -- no, no my heart crieth for feared wars and rumors of wars are an abomination to my soul. What will life be to us when we have sacrificed all that is dear to us! What is the past but the charmed house of our fondest hopes and our brightest dreams. The present is but a synonym for dread suspense, the future a monument to mark the spot where all our hopes in ruin lie!!!!

Monday, February 13

The children have just finished reading their psalms, sung their little songs, and are now amusing themselves. Eck is looking over his geography which he has not yet learned to look upon as a "school book". Charlie sits on the rug relating his adventures with two soldiers today who halted him as he was going on an errand to Mrs. Carter's for me. Five soldiers breakfasted with us, and fifteen dined. I received a nice long letter by one of them from my friend Mrs. Swayze²¹. Nothing I believe could estrange her from me and I prize her friendship highly; in adversity as in prosperity, she has ever been a true friend. Father's team was impressed today to haul some confiscated cotton to headquarters. I am thoroughly disgusted with the cotton trade. We are annoyed so much with storing the cotton seized on the route to Natchez. The Confederate authorities are very stringent in regard to trading with the enemy. All articles of trade going toward or coming from Natchez are seized by the scouts and driven to headquarters. Some are successful however, in running the blockade. Running in cotton seems to be a mania with almost everyone.

Tuesday, February 14

St. Valentine's Day! How many pleasant associations are recalled by this merry anniversary. How many anonymous little "billet deux" are dropped in "box

no. ____". How many Cupids are sent out on missions of love, and how many darts are thrust at unrelenting old bachelors and blooming old maids. How many eager fingers are trembling with wistful excitement or breaking the seals of huge embossed envelopes to read the vows of some enamored swain, but of course, in entire ignorance of the "devoted Valentine" can be; notwithstanding the inverted initials slyly traced in an obscure corner, or the revered name placed where of course one does not see it. Ah, the merry times we have had at school on Valentine's Day. The day has been dark and cloudy and I have spent almost the whole of it in working buttonholes (a prosy way to spend St. V. Day). Twenty eight! I have worked in coats and jackets and pants. Father is still unable to walk without the aid of his stick.

Wednesday, February 15

Charlie and I rode up to see Mrs. Dix this afternoon. I never go there, but I think of the many happy days I've spent in that pretty sweet little home, when Mrs. Sharpe occupied it. I saw this evening Emma Carradine (who makes it her home now) and her dear little boy baby, she spoke of the pleasant times we have had together there - I am glad to have Emma so near me, for I know she will be a pleasant neighbor.

Thursday, February 16

I received a letter from D. today, dated Jan. 30, the first I have had since he left, though he has written, he tells me before. Mabry's Brigade is now camped 16 miles east of Canton, Miss. expecting to move below Canton soon. Two soldiers are with us tonight.

Friday, February 17

Left home today.

Tuesday, March 21

Returned home today with Kirk. I have had a very pleasant visit as well as a much longer one than I intended when I left; as I expected to be at home on the following Monday but Will did not meet me at Wayside as he promised, and as cousin is so lonely when I am away, I contented myself at Magnolia where I'm always at home. Cousin says my cozy little room always suggests my image to her when I'm away, and she opens my drawers to look over my wardrobe and inspect my numerous boxes of sundries. What would I do without this dear friend of mine! She is half the world to me.

Wednesday, March 22

Brothers C., A., and I with old uncle Jim to drive us, went today to the Y.²² picked post on the Washington road at St. Catherine Creek bridge. At least where our beautiful bridge once stood, but now a blackened ruin; having been burned by Confederates to prevent Yankee raids from coming out; but they have learned how effective a preventive work of destruction has been. I saw while there, a number of negro infantry plunders returning from a raid in the country. A varied scene

was presented at the post. Here stood a sentinel as black as midnight, in his becoming suit of blue, with musket bright and new. There an officer of lighter skin, engaged in converse sweet with brother in arms. People in all kinds of vehicles, on horseback and on foot are to be seen; all come to sell cotton, and receive in return "family supplies". Families are once more united around a refreshing luncheon spread under some friendly oak; where they have the satisfaction to know their conversation is listened to, their every action watched, and if suspected of rendering assistance to the Rebel faction before Gen. Davidson they next find themselves. Cotton buyers engaged by the Federal Government are allowed to exchange supplies for this much sought for article. 30/100 is the usual price given. 1/3 in supplies at most exorbitant prices. A lucrative business for the Yankees. I made no purchase, not being pleased with the manner of trading. Dined at Mr. Pipe's in company with Mr. and Mrs. Birch from Fayette. Mr. Truley, Mr. Dave Mickey, a wounded soldier and the family -- I regret very much that Mrs. Sharpe, a married member of the family and once a neighbor of ours left to return to home in Arkansas soon after I arrived.

Thursday, March 23

Today I have been busily engaged making a riding habit of green merino trimmed with a facing about six inches up of black merino and large black cloth buttons up the left side. I finished the skirt - the waist I shall have made out. Received a letter from D. dated Jan. 27, very late but it was company for me, old as it is. I felt quite lonely this afternoon having been with so much company for a month past but I will resume teaching tomorrow and will have no time for ennui.

Friday, March 24

I feel depressed and cannot account for it. Nothing particularly troubled over, but anxious and unhappy feelings cling to me whatever I may be doing. I hope no shadow of coming evil has fallen over my spirits; but that it is only a cloud behind which the sun is still shining.

Saturday, March 25

This afternoon about dusk Mr. Jasper Segrist, a member of Lt. Lindsey's scouts bearing with glad tidings that they had all been sent back. They will receive a hearty welcome for in their absence we learned to appreciate them. Soon after Mr. S. came, Lt. Brawley, with four men from Co. Griffith's regiment were added to our number of guests for supper.

Sunday, March 26

A long quiet day. I received a long letter from D. written on Feb. 25 near Raymond, Miss. I can't tell why my letters are delayed so long. "Better late than never." Father and little brothers rode over to Mr. Carter's this afternoon. Eck will no doubt long remember the ride as he had a fall from Bonnie. Father has purchased Charlie another nice little pony and Eck has gotten heir to Bonnie. I fear they will not be able to keep them long as it is rumored that the Yankees are preparing to raid out in the country for the purpose of mounting the negro infantry. I was very fortunate in not starting in with cotton on Friday, as I

