

Letter 1: From Robert E. Lee
General - Commander of the Confederate Army
January 23rd, 1861

Dear Son:

I received Everett's "Life of Washington" which you sent me, and enjoyed reading it. How his spirit would be grieved could he see the wreck of his mighty labors! I will not, however, permit myself to believe, until all ground of hope is gone, that the fruit of his noble deeds will be destroyed, and that his precious advice and virtuous example will so soon be forgotten by his countrymen.

I see that four States have declared themselves out of the Union; four more will apparently follow their example. Then, if the Border States are brought into the gulf of revolution, one-half of the country will be arrayed against the other. I must try and be patient and await the end, for I can do nothing to hasten or slow it. The South, in my opinion, has been aggrieved by the acts of the North, as you say. I feel the aggression, and am willing to take every proper step for redress.

As an American citizen, I take great pride in my country, her prosperity and institutions, and would defend any State if her rights were invaded. But I can anticipate no greater calamity for the country than a dissolution of the Union. It would be an accumulation of all the evils we complain of, and I am willing to sacrifice everything but honor for its preservation. I hope, therefore, that all constitutional means will be exhausted before there is a resort to force.

Secession is nothing but revolution. The framers of our Constitution surrounded it with so many guards and securities, if it were intended to be broken by every member of the Confederacy at will. It was intended for "perpetual union," so expressed in the preamble, and for the establishment of a government, not a compact, which can only be dissolved by revolution, or the consent of all the people in convention assembled. It is idle to talk of secession. Anarchy would have been established, and not a government, by Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, and the other patriots of the Revolution.

Still, a Union that can only be maintained by swords and bayonets, and in which strife and civil war are to take the place of brotherly love and kindness, has no charm for me. I shall mourn for my country and for the welfare and progress of mankind. If the Union is dissolved, and the Government disrupted, I shall return to my native State and share the miseries of my people, and save in defense will draw my sword on none.

Yours truly,

Robert E. Lee

Letter 2: From Sullivan Ballou to his wife, Sarah.

Union Soldier

Washington, DC. July 14, 1861

My Very Dear Wife:

Indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days, perhaps to-morrow. Lest I should not be able to write you again, I feel impelled to write a few lines, that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more.

Our movement may be one of a few days duration and full of pleasure and it may be one of severe conflict and death to me. Not my will, but thine, O God be done. If it is necessary that I should fall on the battle-field for any country, I am ready. I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in, the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American civilization now leans upon the triumph of government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and suffering of the Revolution, and I am willing, perfectly willing to lay down all my joys in this life to help maintain this government, and to pay that debt.

But, my dear wife, when I know, that with my own joys, I lay down nearly all of yours, and replace them in this life with care and sorrows, when, after having eaten for long years the bitter fruit of orphanage myself, I must offer it, as their only sustenance, to my dear little children, is it weak or dishonorable, while the banner of my purpose floats calmly and proudly in the breeze, that my unbounded love for you, my darling wife and children, should struggle in fierce, though useless, contest with my love of country. I cannot describe to you my feelings on this calm summer night, when two thousand men are sleeping around me, many of them enjoying the last, perhaps, before that of death, and I, suspicious that Death is creeping behind me with his fatal dart, am communing with God, my country and thee.

I have sought most closely and diligently for a wrong motive in this hazarding the happiness of those I loved, and I could not find one. A pure love of my country, and of the principles I have often advocated before the people, and "the name of honor, that I love more than I fear death," have called upon me, and I have obeyed. Sarah, my love for you is deathless.

Sarah, I have unlimited confidence in your maternal care, and your development of their characters. Tell my two mothers, I call God's blessing upon them. O Sarah, I wait for you there! Come to me, and lead thither my children.

- *Sullivan*

Letter 3:

**From Francis Fletcher, high-ranking African-American soldier in the Union Army
May 28th, 1864**

Dear Mr. Sanford:

I have received your letter bearing date May 8th. I hope this may find you sister and the rest of your family in good health as it leaves me.

There is no local news of any importance about here. There were some operations on James Island but amounted to only a raid as far as I have been able to learn. At the front everything is quiet.

You take a far more liberal view of things than you could in my situation. Just one year ago today our regiment was received in Boston with almost an ovation: in that one year no man of our regiment has received a cent of monthly pay all through the glaring perfidy of the U.S. Gov't. Even so, should we have received pay, we would only earn \$7 each month, while white soldiers earn \$13.

I cannot any more condemn nor recite our wrongs, but console myself that One who is able has said vengeance is mine and I will repay.

All the misery and degradation suffered in our regiment by its members' families is not atoned for by the passage of the bill for equal pay unless our year-long non-payment is corrected. For all the glorious notions for which this war is fought, including the freedoms of enslaved people, the issue of pay show where your hearts lie.

Remember me to your sister and family and believe me.

Yours truly

Francis H. Fletcher.

**Letter 4: From Lillian,
Wife of a Confederate Soldier.
1862**

Dear Catherine,

I am writing to let you know I have had to leave home and am now staying with Joseph's parents. You will find enclosed in this letter the address where you can write to me, for as long as mail continues. I fear we will soon be cut off from each other in every way.

After the fighting at Fort Sumter, Joseph felt he had to join in. But he did not want me to be alone at our home. When we heard that President Lincoln had called for thousands of Northern men to enlist, we knew the future was grim. I cannot believe it has come to this. Now our state has seceded from the country, and there is sure to be terrible death and destruction in my beloved South.

Each day life becomes a little more desperate. Northern forces have blockaded our ports. Now we are unable to ship our goods and make a living. Most people around here plant cotton and tobacco to sell. We depend on those sales. We are doing our best to get by, but it is getting harder and harder. Northern states are no longer shipping us goods, of course. And the goods Europe tries to ship to us are being stopped by the Union blockade.

Joseph's parents have a small vegetable garden, so we are not hungry. We have meat only once every two weeks, but we consider ourselves fortunate. Some of our neighbors are getting by with much less. We share what we can, but the lack of goods will soon create terrible shortages. The blockade seems cruel.

I know, dear Catherine, that you believe passionately in the Union cause. But surely it is wrong for soldiers to come onto our land and force us to change the way we live. We want nothing more than to raise our children, work our land, and preserve the life we love. Now, the Union seems determined to put an end to the South. I love you dearly, Catherine. But I do not understand how you can support this conflict to destroy our way of life. I want only for you to be happy, living as you like, and wish that you could want that for me and mine.

Yours with a burdened heart,

Lillian

**Letter 5: From CF Boyd, Sergeant, Fifteenth Iowa Infantry
October 15th, 1861**

Dear Mildred:

Today I took my little squad of boys who are left of the Lincoln campaign to Indianola. We have made up our minds to enlist for the War. Times are dull at home and many have gone at the call of the President and joined the different Regiments from the State.

Our company was composed of about thirty boys all on farms in the immediate neighborhood. We attended rallies in our County and some outside and when our man Lincoln called for men to suppress the insurrection, we did not respond the first time. But at the next call, we left the colts at home and went - almost to a boy.

A long and lonesome Winter is coming on and the War may be over by spring and we should feel as if we had lost a great deal by not going. If the war should last longer, we will have the credit of not waiting until we were pushed out. Everyone seems to be actuated by the purest and most patriotic motives and those who are going seem to be motivated by a sense of duty.

Before our way out, we attended a Unitarian Church and heard Rev. Mr. Whitney preach. His subject was the War and its Cause. It was a good sermon. He said that human slavery was the Cause and we should have no lasting peace until the Curse was wiped out.

Tomorrow, we head out and join the Union Army. For my Union, my bretheren, and for you, pray for us.

Yours,

Cyrus.