"REMARKABLE...MORGAN REMINDS US THAT THE BEST HISTORY IS HEARTFELT AND HEART-SHARED. *SARAH MORGAN* WILL RIGHTFULLY TAKE ITS PLACE NEXT TO MARY CHESNUT'S *DIARY* AS A THOROUGHLY AUTHENTIC VOICE OF THE WAR." —KEN BURNS

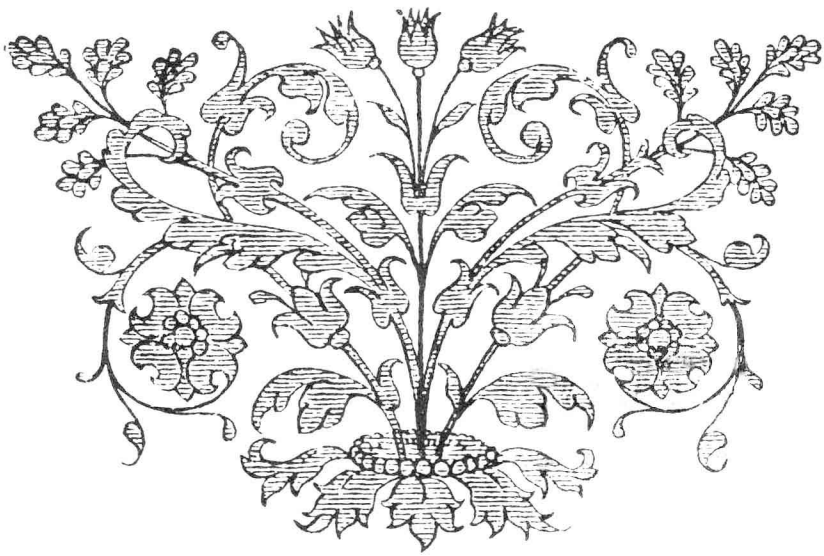
Sarah Morgan

THE CIVIL WAR DIARY OF A SOUTHERN WOMAN

EDITED BY
CHARLES EAST

Sarah Morgan:

The Civil War Diary of a Southern Woman



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Critical Acclaim for *Sarah Morgan*

"Sarah Morgan's diary will henceforth be linked in value with the diary of Mary B. Chesnut. . . . Miss Morgan's personal feelings and intimate thoughts eclipse even [Chesnut's]. . . . Always, throughout this work, are the inner thoughts, dreams, and conflicts with reality that daily consumed a young lady who, in so many respects, was above the intellect of her times. . . . It is deserving of all the praise, and of all the use, that it will receive."

—*Richmond News Leader*

"The diary of Sarah Morgan, at last available in its complete form, is both a delightful read and an invaluable source for southern, women's, and Civil War history."

—Drew Gilpin Faust,
Annenberg Professor of History,
University of Pennsylvania

"A remarkable diary. . . . As she writes of her hopes, fears, and sadness, Sarah Morgan emerges as an extraordinary person forced to grow up fast in the crucible of the Civil War."

—*The Orlando Sentinel*

"Morgan's diary should rank alongside Mary Chesnut's famous wartime journal as one of the most important personal records of the Civil War. Highly recommended."

—*Library Journal*

"Adds immeasurably to an accurate portrait of life on the Confederate homefront. . . . Intelligent, sensitive, and well educated, [Sarah Morgan] could put into words what her eyes saw and her heart felt. . . . An extraordinary account of how one family responded to the war and suffered the consequences of its decision."

—*The Charleston Post and Courier*

"Sarah's diary evokes the city and the deprivations of war with remarkable clarity and detail."

—*The Memphis Commercial Appeal*

"A remarkable portrait of a family caught in the turmoil of war . . . [but] also, a fascinating portrait of one woman's clear observations on what was happening and why."

—*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

For Sarah—
and for Rachel and Katie

CONTENTS

PREFACE

MY ACQUAINTANCE with Sarah Morgan goes back more than thirty years, to 1958, when James I. Robertson, Jr., approached me about identifying people and places in the diary he was editing—a Civil War diary kept by a Baton Rouge girl and long out of print in its 1913 edition. Robertson, a student of historian Bell I. Wiley, was teaching at Emory University in Atlanta while completing work on his doctorate and would shortly become editor of *Civil War History*. At the time he wrote me, he was researching the notes for the new Civil War Centennial Edition of *A Confederate Girl's Diary* that Indiana University Press would publish in 1960.

Over the next several months, as I responded to Bud Robertson's queries, I came to know Sarah Morgan and the people who figured in the diary. But I wanted to know more about Sarah, and from the beginning I was intrigued by the fact that the diary had undergone substantial cutting—cuts that were not restored in the Indiana University Press edition, though the editor did briefly quote from some of those passages in his notes to the new edition. Indeed, except for the foreword and the notes, the 1960 edition was a facsimile of the earlier. It retained the introduction written by the first editor, the diarist's son Warrington Dawson, in which he explained that he had "taken no liberties, have made no alterations, but have strictly adhered to my task of transcription, merely omitting here and there passages which deal with matters too personal to merit the interest of the public."

It was not until I sat down with a microfilm copy of the diary provided me by the Duke University Library, first in 1975, when I obtained a copy of the first of the books in which Sarah Morgan kept her diary, then with more concentration in 1987, with the entire diary on the microfilm reader in front of me, that I realized the problems with the

text presented to us by Warrington Dawson. Aside from frequent and sometimes serious misreadings (in the entry of April 12, 1862, for example, Sarah says that the man who killed her brother Harry in a duel "is a wanderer now," but the editor reads it "is a murderer now"), I found a great many passages where the editing crossed the line into rewriting.

And there was the cutting. Sometimes words or phrases are missing; sometimes sentences; frequently whole entries, or parts of them, involving several pages of the diary. In a few instances an entry, or what appears as an entry under a single date, is in fact a composite of passages from two of Sarah's entries. Here and there throughout the diary the editor has used the ellipsis to signal an omission, but for every ellipsis there are perhaps ten, or even twenty, places where a cut has occurred with nothing to mark it.

When I completed my transcription I discovered that the published diary amounted to approximately half, a little less than half, of the original. The editing done by Sarah Morgan's son was not altogether misguided, though there can be no doubt that the diary suffered at his hands and that a definitive edition was badly needed. On the other hand, we should be grateful to Warrington Dawson for recognizing the importance of the diary and for persuading his mother not to destroy it.

Even in its edited version *A Confederate Girl's Diary* (the title given it by Dawson or his publisher) was recognized as an important wartime diary. Douglas Southall Freeman, the biographer of Lee, praised it in his book *The South to Posterity*, and historian E. Merton Coulter called it "one of the best war diaries relating to the Confederacy." Other historians—among them Francis Butler Simkins and Mary Elizabeth Massey, and more recently Anne Firor Scott, George C. Rable, and Randall C. Jimerson—used the diary in their studies.

Nor did the praise come entirely from historians. In 1955 literary critic and man of letters Edmund Wilson focused his attention on three Confederate women and their diaries in an essay for the *New Yorker*, and Sarah Morgan was one of them. (The other two were Kate Stone, another Louisiana diarist, and Mary Boykin Chesnut, the most famous of the women Civil War diarists.) In the essay, which Wilson subsequently brought into his book *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War* (1962), he called Sarah "unquestionably a

girl of unusual intelligence and character," and her diary, one "distinguished not only by naturalness and vivacity but by something of a sense of style."

I believe this new edition of the diary, revealing as it does more of her thinking and her thought processes, enhances that perception of her. My own research has confirmed what an extraordinarily good observer she was and how much we may rely on her, not only for an understanding of wartime events in her part of the world, but for a grasp of the life of the times.

I would know less about Sarah Morgan than I do had I not been given access to a number of unpublished sources, among them memoirs written by Sarah's nephew Howell Morgan. Fortunately I kept copies of my correspondence with Professor Robertson in 1958–59 and my research notes dating back to that period. I might also mention that an otherwise insignificant fact of my early life enabled me to visualize life in the Morgan home on Church Street (today Fourth) in Baton Rouge in 1862: as a college student in the mid-1940s I lived for a year in the house that had once stood next to the Morgan home and that had been, before he went away to war, the home of Sarah's brother Gibbes and his wife Lydia Carter Morgan. The two houses—and a third, all in a row—were built at the same time by the same family and were virtually identical.

I have also had the good fortune to become acquainted with Judge Cecil Morgan, dean emeritus of the Tulane University Law School, whose father was a son of Gibbes Morgan and a nephew of Sarah—indeed the nephew who for a time made his home with her. I am deeply grateful for my conversations with Judge Morgan and for the access he gave me to the materials in his collection. It has seemed to me little short of incredible that the gentleman with whom I was talking, still sharp of mind and quick of tongue at ninety-one, was the boy who in 1913 took the photograph of the Morgan home that his cousin Warrington Dawson used in the first edition of *A Confederate Girl's Diary*. Such is the continuity of history!

I am of course grateful to James I. Robertson, Jr., for the opportunity that he gave me to get to know Sarah Morgan. And I am grateful to those who early helped me with my research, especially to Fred G. Benton, Jr., whose foresight and efforts over a period of many years re-

sulted in the preservation of the battlefield at Port Hudson. He shared his knowledge of the Confederate defense of Port Hudson as well as the manuscripts and other documents in his collection, including the useful Halbert E. Paine memoir.

Much of my research was done in the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections in the library at Louisiana State University, and I would like to express my thanks to Faye Phillips, Stone Miller, and Judy Bolton on the staff there. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Florence M. Jumonville at the Historic New Orleans Collection, and that of Virginia Smith and Judy Smith in the Louisiana section of the Louisiana State Library. I cannot overpraise the help given me by Gary Ferguson in the reference section of the State Library.

Over the time I was transcribing the diary at the Centroplex Library in Baton Rouge I received a great deal of assistance and—as important—friendly encouragement from the librarians on the staff there, among them Sylvia Walker and Clark Sudduth.

I am grateful to Robert Byrd, curator of manuscripts at Duke University, for making a microfilm copy of the diary available to me over a much longer period than I at first anticipated, and to Linda McCurdy, Pat Webb, and other members of the staff who were so helpful when I visited the Duke campus in the spring of 1990 to complete my research on the diary.

Lewis P. Simpson, who was for many years coeditor of the *Southern Review* and who continues to serve as editor of the Louisiana State University Press's Library of Southern Civilization, was as always helpful and encouraging. Author David Madden kindly gave me access to a group of Morgan papers which were at that time in his possession. Michael F. Howell was helpful in identifying some of the East Feliciana people mentioned in the diary, and Barbara Howell gave me much-needed assistance in reading Sarah Morgan's occasional excursions into French. Historian Arthur W. Bergeron, Jr., was generous with his knowledge of the Civil War in Louisiana, and his *Guide to Louisiana Confederate Military Units* proved to be an invaluable source for me.

I would like to thank H. Parrott Bacot, director of the Anglo-American Art Museum at Louisiana State University, for allowing

me to use two of the Adrien Persac paintings from the museum's collections.

And there are others whose help I gratefully acknowledge: Gregg Potts at the Port Hudson Commemorative Area, Harriet Callahan, Virginia Lobdell Jennings, Irene Reid Morris, Malcolm Cain, H. H. Forrester, Jr., the late John W. Loucks, Evelyn M. Lambert, Eugene Groves, Karen McCaskill, John B. Nolan, Scott Duchein Barton, Todd Valois, Tony Jenkins, Lynn Roundtree, Jean D. Streeter at the Missouri Historical Society, Dr. Norwood Kerr at the Alabama Department of Archives and History, Emily M. Clack, great-granddaughter of Eliza Ann Morgan LaNoue, and Jo Ann and Ed Hackenberg, the present owners of Linwood.

The Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities provided grant funds that enabled me to do research at Duke, and I am most appreciative of their support. I am also grateful to the University of Georgia Press, especially to Malcolm Call, Karen Orchard, Sandra Hudson, and Madelaine Cooke, for their enthusiastic response to the new edition.

Most of all I am grateful to my wife Sarah, whose interest in Sarah Morgan equalled my own, and without whom I would not have been able to complete the project. If it was I who sometimes labored over Sarah Morgan's words as I transcribed her diary, it was the other Sarah who labored over my handwriting as she put the diary on the computer. Indeed, my wife's contribution to this new edition of the diary from beginning to end was substantial.

INTRODUCTION

WHEN SARAH MORGAN BEGAN HER DIARY in the first days of 1862, she was nineteen—she would be twenty at the end of February. The year that had just passed into history had been an eventful one. Early in January of 1861 state troops ordered to Baton Rouge by the governor had seized the United States military post and arsenal. By the end of the month Louisiana, following the lead of South Carolina and other Southern states, had broken away from the Union. The break came after a lopsided vote of the secession convention that met in the House chamber of the State House, only five blocks from the Morgan home.[1] Three months later the two parts of a divided country were at war with each other.

Baton Rouge, like other towns and cities across the South, was swept up in the spirit and passion of the times. Even before the first shot was fired in Charleston harbor, the sounds of fife and drum were heard in the streets of Louisiana's capital as military companies began forming. In the spring and summer of 1861 the young men of the town, among them three of Sarah's brothers, went off to fight in a war that no one foresaw would last four years and take such a dreadful toll in casualties.

But Sarah Morgan, although she was herself caught up in the fever of war, would remember 1861 most of all for the deaths of the two people perhaps closest to her. Sarah's first entry, that of January 10, 1862, in fact looks back at the tragedy that had come to the family in April of the previous year when her brother Harry, about to begin his medical practice, was killed by another young man of the town in a duel that took place in New Orleans. In her second entry, that of January 26,

1. The convention met on January 23 and cast its ballots on January 26. The vote was 113 to 17 in favor of secession.

1862, she recalls the illness and death of her father, Thomas Gibbes Morgan. Judge Morgan, a prominent Baton Rouge attorney who had served as both district judge and district attorney—and in the decade of the 1840s as collector of customs for the port of New Orleans—died on November 14, 1861, in the Morgan home on Church Street where Sarah now sat down with her diary.

Again and again over the next three years she would come back to these two events, one of which—the death of her brother—no doubt reinforced the questions she appears to have already had about Southern society and its code of honor. Clearly her relationship with Harry Morgan was a special one. He was, she says, "the one I loved best of all." It was Harry who encouraged her to read, and Sarah wrote that he "had read every thing, and could converse so well, no wonder every one called him intelligent." As to her father, he was a man of "clear judgement and understanding that has placed him above other men."

The culture that shaped Sarah Morgan's adolescent years was very much the culture described by Bertram Wyatt-Brown in his book *Southern Honor.*[2] In the typical upper-class Southern household the father was the patriarch whose authority embraced his wife and children no less than his servants. The mother's role was a subordinate one: she was expected to be loving and properly submissive to her husband, to raise the children and look after their early education, to occupy the domestic sphere. As Wyatt-Brown observes, Southern women were exalted in part to offset the disadvantages of their secondary status.

Southern fathers loved their daughters (Sarah believed she was her father's favorite) and were very protective of them, but expected them to play the role assigned them. Fathers assumed that their daughters were virgins and that until marriage they would remain so. They would marry and have children; they would define themselves in their mothers' images, which meant they would sacrifice their interests to the good of the men of the household. The sons were encouraged to take their fathers as role models. Manliness was a prime virtue, and the South's code—with its emphasis on courage—decreed that a man defend his honor by dueling to the death if necessary. Long after the

2. *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1982), 117–48. See also Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830–1930* (Chicago, 1970), 4–44.

practice was challenged, it was defended by many Southerners as the preferred way of settling arguments that might otherwise result in street fighting.[3]

It was a society that aspired to gentility and that prized those things—wealth was one—that gave it power and status. The sons of upper-class Southern families were educated, not infrequently in Northern schools. If they were to be lawyers, they studied the law in their fathers' law offices, as the younger Gibbes Morgan did.[4] Since there was no role for the daughters beyond that of wife and mother, formal schooling for them was not a matter of the same priority, though by the middle of the century voices were being heard in favor of education for women.[5] More often than not, however, education of the daughters was left to the mother or to older sisters.

This was the world into which Sarah was born and which her diary reveals she had already begun to question. If we look for an explanation for her questioning spirit, beyond the vagaries of personality itself, we should not overlook the fact that her father was not born into Southern society but came to it in his young manhood. A native of New Jersey, born at Prospect, his grandfather's estate near Princeton, Thomas Gibbes Morgan grew up in Pennsylvania. He and his brother Morris Morgan settled in Baton Rouge sometime in the 1820s. The brother's marriage to one of the daughters of Colonel Philip Hicky would give him a place in the planter society,[6] and Thomas Gibbes Morgan earned for himself a high standing in the community with his law practice and his successful pursuit of public office.

After the death of his first wife, Eliza Ann McKennan, he married in 1830 Sarah Hunt Fowler, also Northern-born, daughter of a former

3. In Bertram Wyatt-Brown's discussion of dueling he cites the case of James Stith, a Baton Rouge duelist. *Southern Honor*, 360. Stith is mentioned several times in the diary.

4. See document dated March 28, 1857, in Thomas Gibbes Morgan Sr. and Jr. Papers, Manuscript Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C. Judge Morgan certifies that Thomas Gibbes Morgan, Jr., "has studied in my office and under my direction upwards of two years."

5. Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 67–71.

6. For the genealogy of the Hicky family, giving dates of birth of Colonel Philip Hicky (1778–1859), his children, and his Morgan and Fowler grandchildren, see Philip Hicky and Family Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries. The name is sometimes spelled Hickey. See also Morgan Family Papers, LSU Collections.

officer in the British army, but orphaned at an early age and reared on a Louisiana plantation by her kinsman and guardian George Mather, who was connected to the Hickys by marriage.[7] Thus, the diarist's father, not of the planter class himself, was nevertheless allied with it and moved within its circles. He and his second wife were married at Belle Alliance, the Mather plantation in St. James Parish, and several of their children were born in the old "Hicky house," a home that the Morgans had acquired on a square overlooking the river, the future site of the State House.[8]

The years that Sarah's father lived in New Orleans may also have shaped the character of the family and have had an important influence on Sarah herself. Judge Morgan's job as collector of customs brought him into contact with the mercantile elite of New Orleans. It is no coincidence that many of the New Orleans people Sarah mentions were members of those families: wives or daughters of cotton brokers or commission merchants, if not lawyers. As one of the largest ports in the country, New Orleans looked beyond the South, to the world, and life in the Southern metropolis could only have been broadening.

In trying to explain Sarah's independence and her breadth of vision we must also not overlook her contact with the Baton Rouge arsenal. Insulated as the city was—and it was little more than a small town then—the United States military post and arsenal loomed large in the life of the community, and had since the 1820s. The military post brought Baton Rouge citizens into contact with men from other parts of the country, some of whom married into the community. Judge Morgan's sister Ann, for example, had met and married Captain Thomas Barker at the arsenal. And Sarah's oldest sister, Lavinia, had married Captain Richard C. Drum during the time he was stationed there. Many of the married officers had brought their wives with them. It is clear that a great deal of Baton Rouge's social life in the years before the war centered on the arsenal.[9]

7. Colonel Hicky married George Mather's sister Anna.

8. See Cecil Morgan, "A Profile of My Father, Howell Morgan, 1863–1952," unpublished manuscript in collection of Cecil Morgan. Also see East Baton Rouge Parish land conveyance records.

9. Among the officers who served at the military post was Zachary Taylor. Taylor left Baton Rouge for Washington early in 1849 to assume the presidency.

Undoubtedly Judge Morgan was a major force—perhaps the major force—in Sarah's intellectual development. But in the end the combination of mind and spirit and personality that we see in the diary likely came from within her. "Of my opinions," she wrote, "some I gained from father, some I formed for myself."

Sarah Ida Fowler Morgan, the seventh child and the youngest of four daughters, was born at the Morgan home on Esplanade Avenue on February 28, 1842, during the time that her father was collector for the port of New Orleans.[10] She was eight when the Morgans returned to Baton Rouge in 1850. In that year the legislature met for the first time in the new capital—in the new State House—and Judge Morgan's return was very likely motivated by the prospects of a successful law practice.[11] In any event, the judge seems to have been prosperous if not wealthy—or at least not wealthy in the manner of Colonel Philip Hicky, later described by the judge's youngest son as "a man of great wealth and unbounded hospitality."[12]

The Morgan home in Baton Rouge was a two-story frame house with upstairs and downstairs galleries—not the mansion it has sometimes been referred to as being, but a comfortably large mid-nineteenth century dwelling with outbuildings to accommodate the servants. When the 1860 census was taken, Sarah's father owned eight slaves, all of whom lived on the Church Street property.[13] All of his neighbors on the block were also slaveholders.

In the debate over secession Judge Morgan favored a course that would preserve the Union, and Sarah, who shared that view, would later write in her diary that "there never was a more unnecessary war than this in the beginning." But when the war came the Morgans cast their lot with the majority of their neighbors and became loyal, if not always unquestioning, Confederates. Not long before his death Sarah's

10. The Morgans lived at 191 Esplanade. Miriam was the first of the Morgan children to be born there, in 1840. See Morgan Papers, Duke University.

11. One project that engaged his attention in the 1850s was the annotation of the *Civil Code of Louisiana* and the *Code of Practice in Civil Cases*.

12. James Morris Morgan, *Recollections of a Rebel Reefer* (Boston and New York, 1917), 11.

13. By 1862 there appear to have been nine slaves. See entries of June 1 and August 29, 1862.