

CHAPTER XX

A Return To History

Draper Correspondence

Exile's Retreat Near
Salisbury North Carolina
February 1, 1870

[Mr. Lyman C. Draper]
My Dear Sir,¹

Your friendly letter of December twenty-seventh was forwarded to me from Knoxville and only reached me yesterday. Before I opened it I recognized your well known *chirograph* and was reminded—how painfully the present answer can but feebly express—how pleasantly none but congenial spirits and similar tastes and pursuits can estimate.

¹ Although Dr. Ramsey closed his Autobiography on a note of resignation and in the apparent belief that his days were drawing to an end, he had almost a decade and a half of life and usefulness left. Just before he finished writing his Autobiography, he heard again from his old friend and fellow antiquarian, Lyman C. Draper.

In a lesser way Draper, too, had suffered from the Civil War. He had been sympathetic with the South—or, at least, opposed to the "Black" Republican regime which had begun by ousting him from his post as superintendent of public instruction in Wisconsin, and had followed this by reducing his salary as corresponding secretary of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. He remained true to his Democratic Party principles, and was, therefore, opposed to the coercive policy of reconstruction in the South. No great ideological gulf separated him from Dr. Ramsey, while their common interest in Tennessee history was a firm bond of union between them.

During the war Draper had continued collecting materials on the "old border" of Tennessee and Kentucky. In 1863 he made an extensive trip into Kentucky gathering manuscripts and lore of the Revolutionary period. The next year, he purchased the papers of another antiquarian, Reverend John D. Shane of Cincinnati. Among them he found a large number of notes and clippings relating to agriculture and domestic economy. Contemplating them, he conceived the idea of compiling a "family encyclopedia" of useful information for farm and home which, he hoped, would support him while he pursued his historical collecting and writing. He first wrote Dr. Ramsey to inquire the names of agricultural leaders in Tennessee.

Dr. Ramsey welcomed the renewal of his contact with Draper, and the two men mutually influenced each other to return to the historical studies which neither had ever completely forsaken. For a dozen years they wrote to each other. Soon Draper was on a search for the papers of South Carolina's Thomas Sumter and his men in the Revolution. Then he turned his attention to the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, and after that he completed a manuscript on "Border Forays and Adventures." Finally, Dr. Ramsey induced him to write a volume on the Battle of King's Mountain. On each of these subjects, Dr. Ramsey was a valuable source of information, and Draper essayed to draw him out on innumerable aspects of the Revolutionary period in North Carolina and Tennessee.

You addressed me *Mecklenburg Near Knoxville Tennessee*. Troy was—Mecklenburg has ceased to be also. In August (29) 1863 I, a depository of the Confederate States and president of the branch Bank of Tennessee at Knoxville took my assets on the approach of the Federal army under Burnside, to Abingdon, Virginia and to Atlanta, Georgia for safe keeping—leaving the ladies of my family at our old home in the *tender mercies* of the vandals of the Union enemy. My five sons were all in the Confederate States army which, as I conceived, constituted the defence of my country and of freedom. Each one of them had the opportunity to show his gallantry and his patriotism and nobly did. They all suffered in the unequal conflict. My first born son, General J. Crozier Ramsey and my youngest boy (17 years old) Arthur Ramsey, our Benjamin, fell victims to the cruelty and violence of the bloody strife—and are mourned by us as martyrs to a great and glorious cause. The three remaining sons came out safe but not without wounds and imprisonment and (almost) starvation in Camp Morton and other prisons.

My wife and daughters occupied the old mansion for a few days only after I left them. Threats were made that the house would be burned as belonging to a confirmed rebel and a high officer in the rebel government (I had disbursed nearly fifty million in the Confederate service and in all my official acts never lost a dollar). My family therefore thought it prudent to leave the old place and did remove to Knoxville, taking with them little more than their wearing apparel. Everything else—including my museum (which I believe you saw), my private papers, my correspondent's letters, my three libraries (historical, medical and miscellaneous), the second volume of the *History of Tennessee* (from 1800 to the close of the American war) all ready for the press—not to mention the crops on several farms, my large stock of every kind, furniture etc., etc.

After a few days spent in a rented house in town my ladies received the expected information that the whole was stolen, confiscated or burnt. I and

Dr. Ramsey's letters, preserved in the Draper Correspondence and in the Draper Manuscripts in the library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, serve to supplement the *Annals of Tennessee*, to recover—through Dr. Ramsey's memory—some of the material lost in the destruction of Mecklenburg, and to enrich the record of early days in Tennessee by the memories of the "nursery tales" which Dr. Ramsey recounted in his letters. Moreover, the personal matter in the letters helps to round out and complete the doctor's Autobiography.

In the following chapters letters from the Draper Manuscripts are designated by the symbols under which the collection is classified. Those which do not carry these symbols are from the Draper and Wisconsin Historical Society Correspondence and are filed by date. For an account of Draper, see William B. Hesseltine, *Pioneer's Mission: The Story of Lyman Copeland Draper* (1954).

my sons were with the army in Georgia and Virginia. I, as a financial agent by day and a surgeon after business hours in the field, camps, or hospitals, doing all I could for the wounded Rebels—falling back before the victorious enemy. I made in all eight remarkable higeras and almost miraculous escapes but was never captured and did not lose a dollar belonging to the Bank of Tennessee nor to the Confederate treasury. Hopeful and true to the last, the surrender found me at Charlotte in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina—constant, loyal to the Southern Confederacy, and defiant to its enemies. So also were my wife and daughters in Tennessee. In 1864 our youngest daughter was sent south for “disloyal acts.” The enemy would not indulge her in the wish to be sent to Atlanta where I then was but sent her under flag of truce to the mountains of Virginia. There I met her and soon after I met also Mrs. Ramsey and another of our daughters Mrs. Breck sent out for their well-known and candidly expressed sympathy with the South. They had come out in June 1864 so as to see and provide for our wounded son who survived 10 days the disastrous battle of Piedmont, Virginia. Noble boy! He fought like a soldier and died like a Christian. Thank God! I have the happiness to believe that my two heroic and patriotic sons are in Heaven where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

After peace came—such a peace—the joint capital of Mrs. Ramsey and myself was \$42.00 all told of available money—left in a strange country, exiles and houseless in the midst of a community nearly as impoverished as ourselves. We had nothing here or elsewhere. I bought at least 37½ cents worth of medicine, borrowed my son’s cavalry horse and saddle and from another, borrowed a pair of medical wallets and, still wearing the Confederate grey, fell back on my old profession. My wife became the tutoress in one family and my daughter, Mrs. Breck, the governess in another. Three of our sons came to us and thus have we continued to live comfortably. I have also recovered after tedious and vexatious delay and litigation two of my farms and one house and lot in Knoxville where some of us may probably return next fall. Others of us can never go back in safety. I have never heaved a sigh for the loss of property. That we can do without or can make another fortune. But I often do sigh for my lost children; two excellent daughters and two chivalric and patriotic sons, my manuscripts, my books and my museum. These can never be restored. But they were lost in a righteous cause though not *lost cause*. Our rebellion was a success

—is a success in this that it has disintegrated the union forever and forever. I do not believe that there is virtue enough left in the limited states ever to heal the wound inflicted by the *coercive* policy of the Lincoln dynasty. I speak deliberately the sentiments of the whole South.

Do not suppose me egotistic for this auto-biographical sketch of your old correspondent. In your letter you invited it and you have it.

My health is good—perfect at 73; see as sharply, hear as acutely, sleep as soundly, eat as heartily and love my friends as ardently as ever before. I write history as earnestly though not as hopefully as in ante-bellum times. I write for the secular and religious journals—"The Land We Love," "Christian Observer" and other papers. *Mnemonika* is my general pseudonym, sometimes an *Exile* and sometimes a *Tennessee Refugee* and occasionally *Agricola*. I am glad to see you have turned your useful attention to that greatest of all services, farming. But you must not let border biography cease to be your chief object. What has prevented you from publishing? Do not delay any longer. Others may write about fields and planting and stock raising but no one but Mr. Draper can write of Boone, Clarke, Robertson and Sevier but you. Finish and publish at once. I do not know who are the officers of the state or county agricultural societies in Tennessee for whose residencies you inquire. Address for this purpose Reverend C. W. Charlton, editor of the Knoxville *Whig* or General J. A. Mabry & Co. publishers, Knoxville, Tennessee. By the way, they have the best publishing houses in Tennessee and it may be the best place to issue your forthcoming works. The paper is the successor of Brownlow's *Whig*—union radical and Federal—but Charlton was in our Confederate army and is all that he ought to be. I will put you in communication with him soon.

You enquire for Putnam. Poor fellow, he is dead. So is Judge Reese, president E. T. H. & A. Society. Its corresponding secretary is the only one that survives of the executive committee except Honorable J. H. Crozier and Reverend T. W. Humes, D.D., Knoxville.

I have a sore finger and can scarcely write legibly. Write me again and command me

Yours Very Truly

J. G. M. Ramsey

Perpetual Sec. E. T. H. & A. S.

This is mailed at Charlotte but address me at Salisbury Post Office Box 87.

Exile's Retreat Near
Salisbury, North Carolina
April 28, 1870

My Dear Mr. Draper,

I was delighted to receive your favor of the twentieth. I have already written to General D. H. Hill introducing or rather endorsing you to him and through him endorsing to Honorable Thomas D. Sumter of Statesburg, North Carolina your thorough adaptation to the performance of the pious and patriotic duty of writing the biography of his illustrious ancestor, General Sumter of South Carolina. I have the pleasure of knowing and of being known to General Hill and I know he will act promptly and intelligently in the matter. I went so far as to ask him to suggest to me the name of someone who could accompany you as pilot and cicerone in your visit to the Palmetto State. At home I was called at first *The Duke of Mecklenburg*—more recently, *Old Palmetto*. I supposed that it might possibly become your duty and your pleasure to visit and examine and perhaps make drafts of the places signalized by the valor of Sumter and his men first at Towers, Vegrassee, Fort Prince George—then at Hanging Rock and other battle grounds of the Revolution. I suppose you have read my footnote on page 55 of my *Tennessee* as well as the text. I had all the local histories of South Carolina at home but cannot say which of them (though I think Hewitt) furnished me the details of the arrest of Johannes as there stated. Sumter sprang upon him like a tiger and held him to the ground till he was tied and taken to Charleston. If General Hill gives me a name I will at once communicate it to you. If I were sixty I would seek the privilege myself of being your companion on this route. In some of these local histories—perhaps Drayton's—I found a map of Williamson's celebrated campaign against the Cherokees. It gave the towns, rivers, battlegrounds and encampments from the Saluda to Chota on the Tennessee. If I were younger and less impecunious than I am I would yet survey that whole route as I once fondly anticipated.

“Did you know *Colonel* Robert Campbell,” etc., etc.? Yes and well. He was never colonel, only Lieutenant Campbell, at King's Mountain and in several Virginia campaigns against the Indians. All I know of him is given in my *Annals*. He was a brave soldier and quiet good citizen. Two of his sons, David and Edwin Campbell, lived at Knoxville, went to Arkansas and died. A son of the former, Robert H?, I believe, was working

last May in Peoples Bank, Knoxville, there. A letter to him care of _____ Mitchell, cashier, will reach him.

Last May I came over the very route you propose to reach Salisbury. My daughter, Mrs. Dickson and her two boys came with me. Come from Knoxville to Morristown on E. T. & Va. R. R., then to end of the railroad near the Warm Springs, North Carolina then by close connecting stages to Asheville, North Carolina, and then by close connecting stages to end of railroad fifteen or twenty miles west of Morganton, then by rail to Third Creek depot or station sixteen miles west of Salisbury. Third Creek is five miles from me. Ask Mr. Allison or Mr. Clarke to bring you to my house early next morning where from the senior to the junior we will give you a Tennessee welcome. I came in two and one-half days. Be sure to come. You must come and stay at least a week.

Yours truly,

J. G. M. Ramsey

P. S. The stamps in your second letter were received and inclosed to General Hill. Be sure to come. I will take you to Salisbury.

P. S. Reading over your letter the third time I find I have omitted to allude, as I intended to do, to an expression in it about to this amount viz., that you do not see yet that you will make anything from your histories and biographies. How is this? Why in them I see a mine of wealth—now or hereafter or both. But it has cost too much time and labor to let your bantling suffer by no having an introduction to the present living age and peoples. I have wondered why you have not already published one of your subjects as an experiment. If Boone or Sevier or Clarke was before the reading public I know, impoverished as some of our western and southwestern states are, that would sell well. Suppose you, while at Knoxville, offer the copyright of one of these to Mabry & Co. of Knoxville, a very rich publishing house there and very *ambitious* of doing something large and enterprising in the book line. One of the firm is union, General Mabry; another intensely Southern or conservative, Reverend C. W. Charlton. Or suppose you finish Sumter and offer it in the Carolinas and Georgia. Evans & Walker of Charleston will buy the copyright. Poor as we Southern are, any one of us can pay for a biography of our Southern men. At least don't you get discouraged yourself. *Nil desperandum. Dum spiro, spero.* These are my mottoes. I would have died at twenty-eight if I had not been actuated by them. This gave me energy in the past and now

in my old age the Christian Hope—the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, supplies what the world fails to supply and makes me at once cheerful and contented and enables me to resign my future to God's goodness.

Our ladies recollect you and hope to see you here.

Very Sincerely,
J. G. M. Ramsey

July 13, 1870

Your ever welcome favor of the seventh reached me last night. I have not heard a word of or from Colonel Sumter. I have not received any reply from General Hill but I feel certain that as far as *he* could do so he would put the Palmettos (Sumters) in motion after I enclosed your letter (to me) and the stamps to him. At the same time I wrote a communication for his paper on the general subject of your letter and introducing you, your border biography, and your proposed work on Sumter and his men to Southern readers. He gave to my communication a conspicuous insertion and to make it move he dropped my assumed name and put down my own without any authority from me to do so. But soon after I was in Charlotte and several gentlemen and some ladies enquired when I looked for you, as it was determined that either Colonel William Johnson, President of the Charlotte and Columbia Railroad, or Captain Sydenham Alexander or Dr. Joseph Graham would accompany you into South Carolina and facilitate your labors. The former especially, Colonel Johnson, seemed to be very earnest and told me I must bring you right to his house, that you must be his guest, and he mentioned several persons and places you must see, that I must come along and we would be able to hear and see all that remained untold of Sumter. I was highly pleased with his enthusiasm and I know they will all be disappointed when I tell them that you cannot come this summer.

Allow me now to suggest to *you* (and to none else till I hear from you) to allow me to say that you will be at King's Mountain on the seventh October and will there and then deliver an address or read a narrative of that great and decisive battle and recount the deeds of Sumter's contemporaries if not of himself. Before the late war the seventh was always celebrated every year. The custom can be revived next October if you will consent to be there. You can make it also subserve your further purposes. I would like myself to go with you. I think you could *enthuse* even the

frigid Sumters of 1870. Don't say nay to my suggestion. I will have some of the Seviere and Shelveys there from East Tennessee. I finished last week my own Autobiography and wish very much to show some of its four hundred and eighty pages to you. It may be the last of my literary labors. Though I am at seventy-three very well—passing the evening of life *otio cum dignitate*, but in my exile I sometimes say “nunc domine tuum servium demittas.” If I only had a country to *love* as I once did love Tennessee and the old union—but this disintegration will kill me if it continues longer. Everybody else of my own age and even younger has gone before me: W. Gilmore Simms, Dickens, Putnam, Reese. You are one of the few links that bind me to earth and to letters. God's will be done! May Heaven be our next home and our portion forever prays your old friend. . . .

P. S. Do you read the *Southern Home*? I wish you may have seen my article sent to General Hill about your intended visit.

Let me urge you if you can to come right to our Retreat and spend several days with us. A bed and a plate will always be at your service and no people will ever give you a more cordial welcome than my good wife, our widowed daughter, and J. G. M. Ramsey, our son. This constitutes all of the old large Mecklenburg family. The rest are near us and in Tennessee.

Charlotte, North Carolina

February 6, 1871

Your two letters of January 25 were received last mail—having been *forwarded* from Salisbury to this place. We were all sick in Rowan County. Sixty white and black lived on our plantation—fifty-nine of whom were sick of fever, leaving one Negress alone to hand us a gourd of cold water. Not one death occurred, but the malaria was so intense and persistent that we determined to go elsewhere—perhaps to Knoxville, Tennessee. If Mrs. Ramsey gets able to bear the fatigue of the cars and if this inclement weather moderates we may leave Charlotte this spring and possibly reach Knoxville to spend our golden wedding there March 1, 1871. I mention these things so as to let you know as far as I can my probable whereabouts when you set out on your southern trip. From your long silence I was afraid my last had failed to reach you. All of your friends were expecting to *greet* you and facilitate your objects in regard to Sumter and his men. Everytime I see any of them they inquire for you and desire to serve you and advance your objects.

Of *Thomas Sumter*—a Revolutionary pensioner in Knox County in 1840, or of James Sumter in some part of Tennessee I know nothing. This is strange as to the former. I was almost every day in Knoxville. The pension office was near my Bank and on the fourth March and seventh of September of every year dropped all other business to linger around the pension office for several days, take the old and feeble Revolutionary soldiers home with me, take down their services and their recollections of the past into my note book; and yet I [never] knew Thomas Sumter or heard of him. He must have been superannuated and probably drew his pension by proxy. If I go to Knoxville this spring I will investigate him in person. If I stay here I will write to my correspondents about him and James Sumter too and inform you fully hereafter.

I am glad to hear that you have made such progress in your Sumter researches. General Hill, myself, and others tried to stimulate his descendants and those of his men to aid your inquiries. I hope you will take me on your zig-zag route—either at Charlotte or Knoxville. I would live a year longer if I could see you and you would live ten good years longer in St. Augustine or almost any other point in Florida. Chronic catarrh and diseased throat are remediless where you are. Both become more tolerable and more curable in Florida. Get nearer to the sun as you grow older. Longevity is the natural result of this maxim of the Fathers in Medicine and Hygiene. Besides this, I hear from your own pen for the first time of another affliction of a different kind but common to us both—*impecuniosity*. On the St. Johns or on Indian River—indeed any place in Florida almost, east or west—a ranch costs you nothing. Your homestead is a gift from the government. An orange orchard is almost the spontaneous gift of nature. Deer, turkeys, aquatic birds, fishes of all kinds, oysters and all your necessary meats are cheap, abundant and easily procured. Rice and other breadstuffs cheap, too, and very procurable. What *labor* is needful for you is cheap as dirt. Our cook costs us from two to four dollars a month and they prefer cast off clothing to money. Their labor is often unsatisfactory and unreliable, but when one leaves you another is easily substituted. If they are well and justly treated by us Caucasians they never scruple about our supremacy. None of them aspire to equality. They are savages and barbarians, know it and submit to the inferiority it implies. Keep their stomachs full and with plenty of feed and sunshine they are more contented and less vicious than the white servants of the North. Many of our Carolina neighbors have gone there and

I hear are doing well every way. St. Augustine is no better than many other places—only Tallahassee has the better climate of the two. Several of my children have become fixtures in Carolina and Tennessee or I would have been settled in the everglades of the Floridas. Put yourself in reach of the United States mails and railroads of the South and you can live in Florida till you are four score. Go there by all means and stay.

I will today write to Dr. John H. Logan—still at Talladega, Alabama introducing you to him. He shall know you like a book and I will *make* him write to you at once, inviting you to call at Talladega and investigate him and his manuscripts thoroughly. I think he is the son of my old friend Logan of Charleston, South Carolina who in 1828 first introduced me to the Charleston Library. If so he will know me at once. This letter will have time to reach you before March first. I will suggest exchange of manuscripts and other matters in full. Did you receive the *Southern Home* containing an introduction from me to you to the Carolina people? I sent it to you. God bless, guard, guide, protect and defend and save you prays yours. . . .

Charlotte, North Carolina

April 6, 1871

I found this morning in my box 32 your kind favor of the second and now at 4 P.M. I am seated to reply to it. I have not yet gone to Knoxville and will remain here till May—say the fifteenth—perhaps a little longer. I will postpone our journey even at some inconvenience to us, for I must see you. I think you would hardly be repaid for the trouble of going by Knoxville to see Jack Anderson Bayless and Martin Cline Sumter. And I will (if you agree to my not unselfish advice to come on at once to Charlotte) undertake to see these Knox County Sumters and procure from them all they can furnish about their ancestor and his men. This I will do soon after I reach Tennessee and will communicate it to you by mail if after looking at our South you do not conclude to return by Knoxville. After I read your letter I called at General Hill's office and presented your respects. He lives in the country but comes to town every Tuesday P.M. and stays here till Saturday A.M. I mention this that if otherways practicable you may reach here Tuesday or Wednesday. If I hear the day I or Colonel Johnston will meet you at the depot and make you our guest. They and other friends are very desirous to make your acquaintance and

will make your stay here very agreeable. I called to see Colonel Johnston but he is not at home, but on a former occasion he told me to take you right to his house and that he had sent you a *frank* on all his roads. We all received Judge Walker's address and thank you for it.

When I see you here as I hope to do in all of April I will in person modify the advice I gave you about Florida by enlarging the field from which to select your future southern home. In point of health, cheap living, cheap lands, good society, books, and educated gentlemen, Aiken, South Carolina ought to have been made prominent. But more of this when we meet. So then the matter is settled that you will write me, a few days before you leave Madison, when you expect to be at Charlotte, the route you prefer to take south of this, etc., etc. General Hill has already selected a Mr. Stowe to accompany you if you need or desire a cicerone. I have a little practice in Charlotte and have to *nurse* it for a living. Now seventy-four years old, but still active, vivacious, buoyant and feeling an unwavering trust in God's Providence as being the wisest and best for us. I got the other day your Hand Book, your Encyclopedia. How *do* you find time to work so much? *Omnis in hoc* has been always my motto, but I can't keep up with you.

May God bless, prosper, guide, direct you prays your old friend.

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Knoxville, Tennessee

May 6, 1872

Your favor of the fifteenth ultimo reached me soon after its date. I immediately walked over into North Knoxville to see Captain Jack Anderson and his wife. There I learned that he had removed somewhere over on the river at an inaccessible point to any but pedestrians. I wrote to him requesting him to come to my house. He did so today. I find he is not the Captain Anderson I once knew and promised to see. He died while I was in exile five or six years ago. This Captain Anderson is intelligent and truthful. His father-in-law, the nephew, was uninformed and illiterate, left no records. Even his family Bible is now beyond reach. Captain Anderson remained in my office today till after our dinner and has just now, three P.M., left. I am sorry to say that after referring to all the questions and points in your letter I could not succeed in gleaning any-

thing more from him or his wife than the few gleanings which you will find on the other side of this sheet. I put a copy of my *Annals* in his hands to discipline or indoctrinate him on such matters. He will read it all and promises me that if anything further suggests itself to his recollection he will come back and communicate it to me and I will at once send it forward. I wish, my dear Mr. Draper, that I could have done you more service.

You inquire kindly how I am doing in mind and body. I am seventy-five years old since March 25. Am eight pounds heavier (118) than my usual weight, have not been sick an hour since we left the malarian region of North Carolina, am buoyant, hopeful, trustful, resigned, submissive (not to despotism, I mean, but to God), have as much practice as I can perform, at peace with all the world and especially with myself—*mens conscia recti*—a little impecunious comparatively but plenty to eat and wear. Though not able as formerly to establish literary institutions, steam-boats and railroad lines, or erect churches and bridges and all that but about as well contented as at any period of my life, enjoy my *otio cum dignitate*, plenty of borrowed books to read, some very few and appreciative friends and no enemies that I know of, an increased taste for history, biography, and literature in general, a cordial invitation from Governor J. C. Brown to examine and cull from our state archives—so as to supplement my burnt volume in manuscript from 1800 to end of war with Mexico and, if life and strength last, to close up with the surrender in 1865. My autobiography is completed up to May 1871, the date of my return from an honorable exile. I must not ask you to write often but occasionally send me something in our line to read. Am glad you succeeded so well in South Carolina *Festina lente*, and let me see your work finished. And then I will say *Nunc Domine tuum servum dimittas!*

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Mecklenburg Place,²

Knoxville, Tennessee

October 3, 1872

Yours of September 11 duly received. Have waited this interim to learn

² After his return to Knoxville in March 1872, Dr. Ramsey occupied a small colonial house on East Main Street which he christened "Mecklenburg Place." His subsequent letters carried this name at their head. (Cf. McClung Papers, vol. XIV, Part 3, p. 545. Lawson McGhee Library.)

something and inquire more extensively about *Coffee*. I am to hear hereafter more minutely and from more accurate sources, but today I hasten to say that a Mr. Coffee did marry a daughter of General Sumter's sister and once paid a visit at a very early day to Beaver Creek settlement eight miles north of Knoxville, but as my informant thinks, did not settle there but passed on to *Pulaski*, Kentucky. Don't know whether that was the name of a town or county. His wife was a cousin of Mrs. Jack Anderson, of whom I once inquired and wrote you. Coffee never returned to Beaver Creek but it is believed remained permanently in Kentucky; is thought to be related to the Coffee associated with General Andrew Jackson. But I hope before long to see Colonel William Griffin, once sheriff of Knox County, and familiar with the old Beaver Creek settlers, and some others who may be able to help trace out the Sumter family; and when I hear anything material and reliable I will not fail to communicate it.

Soon after your letter, came also the welcomed and highly appreciated volume VI, 1869-72.³ How have you achieved so much in the inauguration and erection of your historical society and in the accomplishment of so much other historical labor? If any living man should be proud, vain, or boastful of what he has done for that society, for Wisconsin, for the republic of letters, for *history*—that man is L. C. Draper. May I hope to live long enough to see and read your *magnum opus*? Do publish soon. If I were less impecunious than I am since the war, old as I am I would next summer come to Madison to see and converse with you.

Of (my) The East Tennessee Historical and Antiquarian Society of which I was perpetual corresponding secretary only *three* members survive and all our collections, transactions, cabinet, etc., burned or stolen and destroyed. What a wreck!—the Sevier and Blount papers, executive journal, private correspondence—all lost.

I reciprocate heartily your wishes for Greeley's election. Not that I like all his political antecedents. But Greeley and Brown now represent the press, journalism. That has become at least the *Third* Estate in our government—the leader and manufacturer of enlightened public sentiment, the educator of our masses and in some considerable degree the instructor and evangelizer of our young people—a function of no small importance in the welfare of the country. Greeley and Brown represent that great organization which may promote the conservative principle that may still

³ Draper regularly sent Dr. Ramsey the volumes of the *Collections* of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin as they appeared.

preserve liberty, law, order and right. That ticket I believe will be elected. Here in Tennessee the Democratic and Conservative party is a unit for them. Elsewhere at large our prospects are encouraging. The attempt by Andrew Johnson to disorganize our friends will signally fail. General Chatham will beat him as representative of the state at large.

I am half through your volume and am greatly obliged to you for it. I enclose you a genuine Confederate States treasury bill—that cost me par. I hold many such and like my two patriotic grandfathers who had trunks filled with Continental bills in profusion and left them as legacies to their children, so I have more than \$10,000 besides as much of Confederate States bonds. I am proud of these wrecks of a fortune honestly acquired and gloriously lost in a patriotic devotion to independence and self government. Present this bill to your cabinet. When you can do so please send me more of your biographical and historical labors.

Did I heretofore send you a copy of my *Tennessee Annals*? Let me know. I have a few copies on hand. I am well and am making a comfortable living by practice, have a small circle of learned, educated and Christian friends near and around me and hope to go down to my grave in peace without one feeling of ill will to any human being. Our two sons, victims of the war we propose to reinter this fall in our Confederate cemetery—one of them from the Piedmont battlefield in Augusta County, Virginia.

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October 28, 1872

I received by last mail a letter from Mrs. J. K. Polk covering a communication from yourself to her making inquiries concerning Captain *James Knox*. I have today replied to Mrs. Polk, mentioning that during my exile in Mecklenburg County I had contributed in 1867-8 to the "Land We Love" an article headed *Charlotte and Mecklenburg* and other similar reminiscences of Revolutionary times, but that I had not today that magazine before me or in my reach but that perhaps these articles contained something of Captain Knox. I cannot recollect distinctly but think they do. Nothing though very specific. You may have that magazine in your collection. If so, you can examine for yourself. I also wrote, at the earnest request of the pastor and members of *Hopewell* Church a history of that congregation in which Captain Knox and his services are men-

tioned favorably. That is not yet published. When it comes out I will send you a copy. In the meantime I will send to a friend near Charlotte, North Carolina to procure for me an exact copy of the inscription on the gravestone over Captain Knox. I saw it myself and brightened it up and made what was illegible at first from moss and debris perfectly legible. The masonic emblems on it are finely sculptured and I suppose it to have been imported from abroad from its style and execution. I copied it in 1866 and sent to Mrs. Polk. As I never heard that it came to hand and as at that time there was an espionage on the letters of rebels, traitors, refugees and exiles, and some irregularity of the mails and post offices, my letter may have not reached its destination. The copy may contain place and time of his nativity and of his death. I know the traditions of the times in which he lived lead me to suppose that he emigrated from Pennsylvania with that large wave of population, principally Scotch Irish Presbyterians, that about the middle of the last century, 1750 to 1765, that came to the country lying between the Yadkin and Catawba who formed the infant settlements, founded churches and schools and embraced the cause of the colonies ardently in 1775, and with their co-patriots and co-emigrants in the co-terminous country a little further south in South Carolina helped to retard the invasion under Cornwallis, Tarlton, Ferguson, etc., joining Sumter, Shelby, Sevier, Davie in all their campaigns. Amongst these were Rutherford, Captain Knox, Captain William Alexander (known afterwards as Blind Bill), Ezekiel Wallis and many others.

Mecklenburg was truly designated by Tarleton the "Hornets Nest." Captain Knox was, I believe, one of the fourteen who under George Graham met and repulsed at *McIntire's Branch* a large foraging detachment September 1780. (See *Land We Love*.) He resided in that immediate neighborhood and was buried in Hopewell cemetery where his grave stone is still to be seen. In the same yard lie the remains of General William Davidson, Captain Frank Bradley, and many other Whigs, soldiers and civilians. Captain Knox has left in Hopewell the savor of a good name. He was remarkable for his piety, his extreme care and fidelity in the religious education and culture of his children in the doctrine and order of the Presbyterian Church. To this has always been ascribed the well known familiarity of his daughter (the late Mrs. Polk—mother of James K. Polk) with the creed and usages of presbytery. Her theological acumen, her vigorous and masculine intellect, her great tenacity of Presbyterianism made her a model in all the relations of life. The Bible, the

Confession of Faith, the Psalms and Watt's Hymns were her chief employment and her religious and spiritual aliment. Captain Knox was at once a hero and a saint, a patriot and a Christian gentleman. I lived four years in Hopewell and will write today to my correspondents and friends there for more minute information about him, his wife, his children. A kinsman Knox lives near [illegible] Ch. Rowan City, North Carolina. Another Knox lived before the war in Monroe or Polk County, Tennessee, Madisonville or Benton P. O.

I hear nothing further about the Coffee family. I wish to visit Nashville to examine state archives this fall or winter. Can't you drop down there and let us shake hands? My good wife is suffering from dropsy and for the first time in my long married life I feel apprehensive of the result. Lord God help us—have mercy—have mercy.

Send me occasionally something (of your own) to read. Have you in your collection Foote's *Sketches of North Carolina*, large octavo? It contains much history and biography. . . .

P. S. President Polk was specially proud of his maternal grandfather, J. Knox; of his record as a brave soldier, officer, patriot. He often spoke of him to me and when I last saw him in the White House he drew from me a promise that Mrs. Ramsey and I should accompany him and Mrs. Polk on a pious pilgrimage to Mecklenburg and Hopewell, North Carolina.

Draper Manuscripts 15 VV 75

December 4, 1872

Since my last to you I have procured from my son-in-law, W. Davidson Alexander, Esquire, a deacon of Hopewell Church in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, an accurate and full copy of the inscription on the tombstone of Captain James Knox. I find it corresponds exactly with the copy I had hastily made one of the coldest days of December 1865. I enclose the copy to you. The hymn from which the poetry is taken is within your reach: therefore, only two lines are copied. On the tombstone the whole of the hymn is engraved beautifully. I have not copied the devices and emblems upon it but will add that the first two lines of the inscription form a half circle embracing the face and bust of a man draped in military costume, sword, etc. The line in Latin is in a straight line beneath the carving. This is artistically, even elegantly, done for 1794 and in upper

North Carolina. The widow had evidently left nothing undone which could at all manifest either affection or grief at her loss. I have endeavoured to ascertain her maiden name but have not yet learned it. I have a vague recollection that it was either Brevard, Davidson, Alexander or Springs Nelson. I know that President Polk claimed kinship with these several families. I will prosecute inquiry further on this point. I always heard that Captain Knox was noted for his courage and skill as an officer, his patriotism as a citizen, his zeal and piety, and his devotion to Presbyterianism. His widow has well described his characteristic virtues; *justice, generosity, probity, and sincerity*—traits which also eminently belonged to his grandson J. K. Polk, conspicuously so. If I have omitted anything please indicate the omission. I have sent Mrs. Polk a copy of the inscription and the traditions as far as I know them and as I said before I will inquire further.

Are you making progress in your *magnum opus*? Do let the world see it before 1876—a part of it sooner.

Poor Greeley died under a mistaken apprehension that a majority of the intelligence and virtue of the country had not voted for him. Deduct the Negro vote and the vote of the rabble North and South and he has a pretty majority. I was for him only in *spots*, as Ritchie said of Jackson's Union Proclamation (against nullification). While he endeavoured to benefit the Negro he has really done the race a great injury. Send me occasionally something to read. I get nothing further about Sumter or Coffey. . . .

Inscription copied from the Tomb Stone of Captain James Knox in Hopewell Graveyard December 1865 by *J. G. M. Ramsey*.

“Fond Man! The vision of a moment made Dream of a dream and shadow of a shade!”

Vivit post funera Virtus *

“In memory of Captain James Knox Who, in hope of a glorious resurrection to eternal life deceased Oct. 10, 1794 aged 42 years.

“To continue his memory in the minds of his surviving friends and to perpetuate a character in which were united the tender husband, the affectionate parent and good citizen and by whom were cultivated justice

* Anglice. Virtue survives the Grave.

generosity probity and sincerity this monument is erected by the faithful and grateful *partner of his life and affections.*"

Then follows the well known poetic *effusion of Pope*—beginning "Vital spark of Heavenly flame, Quit, O Quit, this mortal frame" and so on through the hymn closing with "Oh Death where is thy sting." It is the 640th hymn as now found in the Hymn Book of the Presbyterian Church. I need not copy more of it. The inscription continues

"Cease then frail nature to lament in vain
"Reason forbids to wish him back again."

On foot stone of the same grave. J. K.

The stone is fine—the sculpture and engraving excellent. They are found in Hopewell graveyard, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. Captain Knox was a very pious member of this church—perhaps an elder. It was founded about 1756 when the Virginia colonists were driven there by outbreak of the Indians after Braddock's war.

I copy this for L. C. Draper at request of Mrs. Polk.

J. G. M. R.
Nov. 11, 1872

Draper Correspondence

February 3, 1873.

I received your last favors by due course of mail and with them the two valuable volumes and yesterday the annual *Report* of the Wisconsin Historical Society. I have read every word in them with great interest and a high appreciation of the zeal and energy and success with which *you* have inaugurated and carried into effect such a Herculean undertaking as you have done for your own state, the west, the country at large, and the world. I don't flatter you when I speak thus—but am sincere in the declaration that *you* have accomplished more for learning, science, and especially history and biography than any living man—perhaps I may truthfully say than any one that has preceded you from Herodotus down. When I compare your achievements for Wisconsin with the little that has been effected for Tennessee I blush and feel mortified, exceedingly so. When you retrospect your own *past* you may exclaim with Ovid "*Jarnque opus exigi quod me finum*" etc.—but enough of this now.

I was glad to hear the name of Mrs. James Knox Gillespie. She was of a good family—not altogether unknown to fame. If I mistake not her father was a soldier—perhaps an officer—captain, I believe, under Greene at Guilford Court House, North Carolina—of the Scotch Irish Presbyterian stock in 1775 who did so much for liberty and the right of self government from the dawn of the Revolution at the battle of the Regulation at Alamance, 1771 I believe. “Oh,” said an old man who was in that battle, “if John and Daniel Gillespie had only known as much about military discipline then as they knew a few years after that, the bloody Tyron would never have slept in his palace again.” *vide Sketches of North Carolina* By William Henry Foote. D.D. page 61. I suppose you have that volume (large octavo pp. 557, N. Y., Robert Carter, 1846) in your library. If not let me know and I will express it to you at once. It contains much of Revolutionary history in the Carolinas and may help you in your “Sumter and his Men.” I am promised something further of Captain Knox. When received it shall be sent promptly. You received, I hope, the beautiful and pious *Inscription* by his wife on his tombstone at Hopewell and also the several treasury bills inclosed you by mail. I have on hand some of the post office stamps, passports, orders for transportation, telegrams, etc., etc., of that renowned Confederacy—*quorum magna pars fini*. If they will interest you so much as to desire them let me hear from you early. When I am dead and gone they may be lost or destroyed. They are a part of history, to us in the South especially interesting if not valuable.

I am very well—seventy-six the twenty-fifth of March 1873 and you will be surprised to hear still vivacious and with some energy—fortune all gone—practicing medicine for a living—better contented than when sick, and with a more confiding and filial trust in God. A little bereaved again to hear of the death of a grandson, James Ramsey in North Carolina. [illegible] . . . and Eve Ramsey Alexander a grand daughter in Mecklenburg, North Carolina. I will go to them—They will not come to me. . . .

May 5, 1873

I read in the good Book “Avoid the appearance of evil.” I am unwilling to seem even, to have forfeited your good opinion as a punctual correspondent—especially where I am requested to assist your research and

investigation of Tennessee History or the biography of her people. And yet I will not say "*Peccavi! Peccavi!*" The day after your last favor came to hand I wrote to my friend J. T. Lenoir of Sweetwater in Monroe County, Tennessee to procure for your use the *old* maps and traditions of the localities you desired. Colonel Frank A. Ramsey, my nephew, handed him my letter; to whom he answered that he knew the man, *Colonel Johnson*, who was able to fill the bill precisely and should do it soon. All these gentlemen are competent and perfectly reliable. But after waiting thus long for their reply I have to add no reply has been received, and I begin to fear they may have sent the results of their labor directly to yourself. If so, I hope it will be satisfactory. If not, whenever it comes to my hands the whole will be duly forwarded.

In the meantime though I take the opportunity to add something myself—I once had an atlas (1800 I think was its date) when I began to study geography, 1808 or 1810, which contained a map of Tennessee as then known (and much of it except the rivers and Indian war and trading paths undelineated because unoccupied—a seeming wilderness and *terra incognita*) some French settlements on our southern boundary. The great *Creek's* Crossing below what is now Chattanooga, and some Shawnee villages below what is now Nashville were pretty well delineated, but all of West Tennessee and much of Middle Tennessee a blank, one-third of East Tennessee still marked as unsettled. That atlas was burned with my library and house in September 1863 but copies of it are now extant. Will send you a copy if I can find the atlas, at least the page containing Tennessee. It will interest you some, if it does not answer your full purpose.

Again, when searching for the first approaches of civilization to Tennessee I procured the *Memoirs of Judge Drayton*—two volumes if I remember right. He and the Reverend Tennant were appointed in South Carolina to visit and address the back districts of that state so as to induce the settlers to espouse the cause of the colonies. In these volumes I noticed an old map and an account of the campaign of General Williamson against the Cherokees, 1774 or 1775, with his army. In that map are plainly given all their marches, their battles, the villages destroyed as well as visited or seen. The map is very full and minute. I know it can yet be had in South Carolina, perhaps elsewhere. My own copy was burned or stolen. Get a copy if you can. This is all I can do for you now. I will forward to you as soon as it comes to hand the answer of Lenoir and Johnson.

I am well. Our season and crops very unpromising but as more refreshing to us both a revival of religion in all our churches. Praise to God. May He continue to bless you and yours prays your friend. . . .

P. S. I do hope before I die that you may publish some of your *Border Warfare*. Especially Sevier, Robertson, Boone, Sumter, and others. Put one of them out now as a feeler. We are all satisfied about the work, but we old men in Tennessee want to see even a part of your *magnum opus*. P. S. second. I thank you for all you have sent me and will be thankful for more. I send you Nolichucky Jack (Anglice, John Sevier) being an address just out of press delivered by W. A. Henderson, Esquire, before the Knoxville Board of Trade. It is pretty good. I asked him not to mention my name in it.

August 5, 1873

I have been hoping to hear from you that Mr. Johnson or Mr. Lenoir, both of Monroe County, Tennessee, or others to whom I had applied for the old maps and other sources of historical, at least topographical, information had before this time furnished you something that would meet your wishes on the subject. Have they done so? They promised me to either send it to you or to myself. They have not sent me anything. Sincerely do I hope they have found something that will interest you and that they have forwarded to you.

I met yesterday on the street Colonel J. M. Flemming, our superintendent of state schools. He is neither a personal or political friend of mine but yet I desire to make his administration of the educational interest of Tennessee subserve the best interests of our people, and therefore suggested to him as most promotive of that great object to put himself at once in communication with you, informed him what you had done in this behalf for Wisconsin, gave him your address, etc., and authorized him to refer to me. If he knows his duty as I do he will write you.

We are all quite well. Cholera has visited many places in Tennessee with fearful fatality but thus far the epidemic has touched Knoxville lightly. I have not lost a single case. The apprehension still exists though that we will not altogether escape. Our whole people in Knoxville, with a spontaneity that was little expected and never surpassed, several weeks ago appointed a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer to God that He would avert His judgments from us. Thus far His hand has been stayed. Thanks

to His goodness for the past. Let us hope in His Mercy for the time to come.

Send me anything of your own as soon as it sees the light. I have already written the Pulpit of Tennessee and have done something for its bench, its bar and its clinique. It is almost presumption in one aged nearly seventy-seven to expect to finish either of them—isn't it?

Your old friend.

J. G. M. Ramsey