

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## CLARENDON IN WAR



"Clarendon In War" is the title of Chapt. XVI from History of Clarendon by David Sturges Copeland published in 1889. The rather lengthy chapter goes into detail about certain battles fought by Clarendon soldiers during the Civil War and lists those involved. The author however, includes information from his own perspective on the people who were at home. Their attitudes, feelings and fears are chronicled with some editorial license by Copeland. For our purposes here, let me share these parts with you. I do this so that you may see that people 130 years ago weren't much different than some people are today.

"When the bloody Rebellion blew its awful trumpet, Clarendon, like every other town in the whole country, was startled as if some earthquake had rolled through its borders. The town was so closely divided upon party line, Democratic and Republican, that a deep feeling of hatred seemed to take the place of reason and good sense, and instead of joining heart and hand to aid the government, a large class were ready to look back over their shoulders, cursing the ones who started the slavery agitation, and using all their strength in windy discussions over the causes of the war. When we now look at these days, through the events of the past, and with our own experience to aid in summing up the acts and actors of that period, we can but admit that the course pursued by those opposed to the war was as dangerous to the safety of the nation as would be the mutiny of a ship's crew in a hurricane, when the vessel was on her beam-ends. There were certain individuals who were called by the Republicans 'Copperheads,' who loved to hear of a victory achieved by Lee's forces, but who always looked stormy and very chap-fallen when McClellan or any other Union general had secured a triumph. So much did the love of self, and hatred of Republicans, rule the mind, that old men left their farms to spend long days in the heated discussions which these times naturally engendered. It was well for Clarendon that these old grumblers were too far along in years to be of any particular service to the town in which they lived...."

"When the news reached Clarendon that our boys had been terribly beaten at Bull Run, what a scene occurred! The parents who had sons in that battle were nearly wild with excitement; fathers rushing up and down the streets with their eyes

standing out of the sockets, and mothers and sisters lamenting the day that Johnny, or some other lad, marched away to join the army. Teams could be seen on every road, and each person wishing to know the news; some taking the cars to Rochester, hoping to telegraph to Washington to find out where such and such soldiers were, and all kinds of business seemed for the moment to be at a stand-still. The newspapers made the situation as black as they could picture it, and every one expected that the next mail would bring the news that Beauregard had entered Washington. But the history of all campaigns clearly demonstrate that but very few officers know how to take advantage of a victory, and the battle of Bull Run only added one more case to prove the truth of the statement.

"Then, to walk into the stores or shops in Clarendon and hear old gray-beards wag their heads and say 'I told you so!' and 'Good, Good!' was enough to paralyze the feelings of those who were interested by having their own blood and bone in the awful coil of war. But time has a wonderful power of familiarizing the heart and mind to the terrible realities of this life, and in a few days the good people of Clarendon began, like the rest of the nation, to shake off the chains of fear and arouse themselves to a just sense of the true condition of affairs at Washington. To us it seems very strange that with all the past teaching of history in relation to civil strife, that the whole country should have been so blind to the truth, so unwilling to believe that either side really meant to fight, or that the strife would be of any duration. A veil of absolute darkness had been drawn over the minds of the wise men, both north and south, and as the Jews, in the days of Titus, who would not believe that the Holy City could be taken, or the temple destroyed, so our people could not see before them four years of the bloodiest struggles the world has ever known. And it was well for Clarendon and all the towns of the north that Bull Run was a signal defeat, for it roused the people and taught them that they could not boast in going into the fight as one in coming out. It also placed before them the dying and the dead; the mangled, bleeding, gasping, groaning, shrieking and moaning of war, horrible war; not in reality, but in awful picturing, which the words 'died on the battle-field,' or 'in the hospital' produced upon their hearts when far away."