

READING

Conquered

Because of the enormity of the death, destruction, and upheaval caused by the Civil War, reactions to its end were filled with emotion. Here, Kate Stone, who fled from her family's plantation in Louisiana to Texas during the war, expresses her sorrow at the Confederacy's defeat and her fears for the future under a Union government.

May 15, 1865

Conquered, Submission, Subjugation are words that burn into my heart, and yet I feel that we are doomed to know them in all their bitterness. The war is rushing rapidly to a disastrous close. Another month and our Confederacy will be a Nation no longer, but we will be slaves, yes slaves, of the Yankee Government.

The degradation seems more than we can bear. How can we bend our necks to the tyrants' yoke? Our glorious struggle of the last four years, our hardships, our sacrifices, and worst of all, the torrents of noble blood that have been shed for our loved Country—all, all in vain. The best and bravest of the South sacrificed—and for nothing. Yes, worse than nothing. Only to rivet more firmly the chains that bind us. The bitterness of death is in the thought. We could bear the loss of my brave little brothers when we thought that they had fallen at the post of duty defending their Country, but now to know that those glad, bright spirits suffered and toiled in vain, that the end is overwhelming defeat, the thought is unendurable. And we may never be allowed to raise a monument where their graves sadden the hillside. There is a gloom over all like the shadow of Death. We have given up hope for our beloved Country and all are humiliated, crushed to the earth. A past of grief and hardship, a present of darkness and despair, and a future without hope. Truly our punishment is greater than we can bear.

Since Johnston's surrender the people in this department are hopeless. If we make a stand, it would only delay the inevitable with the loss of many valuable lives. The leaders say the country is too much disheartened to withstand the power of a victorious Yankee army flushed with victory. Still,

many hope there will be a rally and one more desperate struggle for freedom. If we cannot gain independence, we might compel better terms.

By the twenty-fourth we will know our fate—Submission to the Union (how we hate the word!), Confiscation, and Negro equality—or a bloody unequal struggle to last we know not how long. God help us, for vain is the help of man.¹

¹ Excerpted from John Q. Anderson, ed., *Brokenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone (1861–1868)* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955), [The Journal of Kate Stone](#).