

## A BLUE GRASS BELLE REPORTS ON THE CIVIL WAR

Miss Mattie Wheeler was a mature young lady of sixteen years when she decided to keep a casual journal in which to record her activities and those of her large and pleasantly connected family and circle of friends. There were, for instance, the Clark County fair; the races at Woodlawn near Louisville; the parties and marathon wedding celebrations; the hunts and fishing, riding, and walking; and the almost constant visiting and being visited. Her reporting is always fresh and artless, completely unselfconscious and unsentimental.

But the year was 1860. The following May she wrote: "I never thought that I would live to see war in the United States". Young as she was, she proved herself to be an excellent reporter. She listened well and reported accurately. And she revealed in those casually written pages a poise and charm which would be difficult to match in other young girls, then or now.

Mattie and her widowed mother, Mrs. Samuel Wheeler, lived in a comfortable brick house on a farm which now is partly within the city limits of Winchester. There had been four daughters and a son; Eliza, the wife of Boone Railey, had died and Mrs. Wheeler was rearing the two grandchildren, little Sammy and Annie Railey. Boone Railey was a Union sympathizer. So was the husband of Mollie Wheeler, James F. Robinson, Jr., son of the governor. So, also, was the husband of Carrie Wheeler, Col. Charles S. Hanson of the Union Army. On the other hand, Mrs. Wheeler and Carrie were ardently loyal to the Southern cause and young Lee Wheeler was a junior officer in Major-General John Hunt Morgan's command. Family loyalties were strained but unbroken under the aggravated emotional tensions of the "brothers' war". When Charles Hanson was captured at Lebanon, Lee Wheeler (on the opposing side) managed to make his way to Hanson at the battle's end in order to learn of his condition. When Lee was captured and sent to the Allegheny City prison, Boone Railey escorted Mrs. Wheeler and