

READING

A Day of Triumph

Because of the enormity of the death, destruction, and upheaval caused by the Civil War, reactions to its end were filled with emotion. Here, Caroline Bartlett White (1828-1915) from Brookline, Massachusetts reacts joyfully to the news that the war has ended.

Monday, April 10, 1865

Hurrah! Hurrah!...Early this morning our ears were greeted with the sound of bells ringing a joyous peal—& a paper sent home by Frank announced the glad tidings that Gen. Lee had surrendered with his whole Army to Gen. Grant! Surely "This is the Lord's doings, & it is marvelous in our eyes"—The city has been given up to rejoicings all day & this evening there was to have been a great illumination—with music fireworks & such other demonstrations as are usual in a time like this... April 9th! Will long be remembered as a day of triumph—just as one week ago came the thrilling intelligence of the Fall of Petersburg & Richmond—& today the greater triumph still of the surrender of Gen. Lee of the Army of Northern Virginia—This crowns a week unparalleled in the annals of this war—& I doubt if a parallel could be found in all history...I wish I could be near to join in the general jubilation—it is stupid enough to be sitting alone in a quiet room—where only the faint echoes of a city's burst of joy reach me—Ah! Well! I can be grateful to the Lord who has made bare His Arm to save this people—& who has brought them through great tribulation—through sufferings not to be described—through battle fields, red with the blood of the best of their sons—to see this belled day—step by step has He led this people up even higher & higher—on to the great plans of righteousness—justice & freedom... I think we ought to know what patriotism means—and shall realize more fully than ever what it is to have a Country—and our children will have an inheritance greatly to be desired. Let our starry banner wave—from sea to sea and no slave shall look upon its glorious folds—no chains shall clank beneath it—but every where, & to all people, of every color shall it be the loved emblem of liberty.¹

¹ Excerpted from *The Caroline Barrett White Papers, 1844–1915*, at the American Antiquarian Society (Worcester, MA).