



Letters from Prison: Jefferson Davis to his Wife, 1865-1866

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The center of this book is Fortress Monroe, Virginia, inserted in the dateline of every one of the twenty letters printed here. Only a little note at the end, folded to make its own envelope, is different. Its place name is Prison. Both are accurate. Months before the first letter, the US Army converted one of the fort's gun emplacements into a jail cell, complete with iron bars and an ever-pacing squad of armed soldiers—all to secure one man: Jefferson Davis.

After three months of anxiety about his family, this solitary confinement finally forces Davis to ask if he may write to his wife, Varina. He may, but he does not even know where she is. The Army locates her and delivers his letter—the first one in this book.

The rest reflect the news that Varina's letters bring: of the sorrows of the conquered South, of an unexpected refuge in Canada, and of friends scattered through Europe, waiting to go home. Through the Davises' eyes we see their own past happiness, their present misery, and a shadowy future (his life is at stake) brightened always by the husband's trust in God.

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