

Culture- The culture I have chosen is American Civil War, the daily life of a family. My story is set on a farm in the North, in February, 1845.

## **A Thousand Letters**

I carefully swept away the tear that had fallen onto my 77<sup>th</sup> letter to William, hoping against hope this would be the letter that he would finally reply to. Ever since he left, eight months ago, I have written letter after letter, wishing to hear how he was managing the horror of the war of rebellion, yet he hasn't replied to any of them. I'm beginning to wonder whether he's received any at all. Yet still I will write. When he left home, he promised he would write to me anytime he could, but so far, not a single letter has come to our door. It's frightening to think the first letter I get from the war, could be declaring I no longer have a brother. It's awful enough losing a father when you're only 12! Even so, I know things must be worse for Mother. She has taken over all of Father's duties on the farm, and, although she conceals it well, our family has become awfully poor since the war began. Father had to leave a year ago and William had to leave 4 months afterwards, which doubled the workload for Mother and I. William had been the optimist in the household, always seeing the sunshine in every situation. He even managed to keep our spirits high when Father left. Now, our house is quite lonely and I've nobody to play with but poor little Anna, who is only seven. She now behaves as a sixteen-year-old would, taking up responsibilities and managing almost everything on her own. I undoubtedly act more responsibly now as well. I do all of William's old chores (as well as my own) around the farm, without complaint and as cheerfully as possible, in this dark time. Mother is always endeavouring to keep Anna and I healthy and positive. I am the only one who can read in the household, so I attempt to teach everything I know to Anna. School closed some time ago, and Father's greatest pride was his intelligence. I know he would have wanted Anna to at least be able to read.

I sealed my letter, leaving it on my bed and set off to work, in what was left of our farm. Mother was forced to sell half of it so we could have food for another year, and our horses have been taken for use in the war. I recognised Mother across the field, struggling to drag the plough on her shoulders. I rushed over to help, but she disregarded my offer saying she could manage it herself. I realised she needed time to herself, so I pursued with my other chores. I hauled the water, fed the chickens and cleansed the chook coop, and was about to water the crops, when Anna hurried towards me and whispered in my ear that she had prepared a luxurious lunch, because today was Mother and Father's wedding anniversary. I had forgotten all about it! I glanced over at Mother and saw she was clutching a picture of Father, sobbing. I nodded at Anna and told her to go inside and I'll bring in Mother.

Mother's reaction to this delightful surprise was perfect. She hugged Anna and I one hundred times each, and almost cried with joy. It was the happiest I had seen her in a great long time. We had just sat down when a filthy envelope marked with the military's crest, popped in through the gap under our door. For a few seconds, we all sat there staring at it nervously. It was Anna who finally got up, and recognised William's name in the letter inside. Mother gasped and turned as pale as a ghost. One thought echoed throughout my brain; "William is gone..." I took the letter out of Anna's hands, and slowly read it aloud. But after reading the first sentence, I was relieved to find it wasn't the

letter I had always feared would come, but that which I had been wishing for! Soon Anna was skipping around the room with joy, and Mother was dancing. I read the letter in a sing-song voice. The letter told that William had received every letter I had sent, but hadn't managed to find the materials to send one back. He said war had been a frightful, yet exciting time, and he had heard rumours around camp of a surrender from the south to end the war, happening in June this year. He wanted me to keep sending letters, even if he doesn't reply and, most of all, he wanted us to stay hopeful.

"HE'S ALIVE!" I cried, dancing on the table-top, waving the letter above my head. We celebrated for hours (Mother let us off chores for the rest of the day) and rejoiced more than we had done in years. As I lay in bed now, I understand my sorrow may not be over, as the war is still persisting, and William is still in grave danger, but my hopes have been raised tremendously, and I shall not let them be lowered.

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