Chapter Six

"My very much beloved dear Anna"

Whether maiden or mistress, Anna Calhoun Clemson, like other Southern ladies of her era, responded to the demands of men. Pleasing first a father, and then a husband, was behavior befitting to those of a supposedly subordinate gender in a patriarchal society. Anna's purity, as a virtuous young lady loved dearly by her father, was particularly appealing to the man she would marry. Thomas Clemson's passionate pursuit of Miss Anna Calhoun, albeit primarily in letters as prompted by their separation from one another, preceded their marriage on November 13, 1838. Obviously an emotional union based on love, rather than a family arrangement that had typified nuptials in the 1700s, their marriage committed Anna as a wife to the traditional duties of domesticity, which was held in esteem in the nineteenth century. Like all wedded women of her day, Anna would follow her husband's lead and hold their family together despite the sometimes perilous path of their journey.[1] A last view of the life of Anna Calhoun Clemson will observe her relationship with her husband from the time of their marriage in 1838 to her death in 1875, and it will reveal her legacy of land and love.

"My very much beloved dear Anna – …I live through you – you are more dear than life – your happiness is my only desire – you are the first and the last – the blessed idol of my life."

In Philadelphia in the summer of 1838, Thomas Green Clemson made the above overture to the young woman who would soon become his wife. Six weeks after their parting and having had no word from Miss Anna Calhoun in response to his letters, he passionately reaffirmed his feelings for her. Although they had apparently reached "an understanding" before she left Washington, D.C., for her family's Fort Hill plantation in South Carolina, the fact that he had heard nothing from her since then not only added to his ardor but bewildered him, as well. After almost a dozen epistles and no answer to any of them, Clemson likened his worry, in a letter of August 19, to "a load of excruciating suspense and accumulating anxiety." Fortunately, he heard from her the following day and experienced what he described as a most remarkable "revolution of feeling." Happy that her mother, father, and sister-in-law Margaret spoke kindly of him, he expressed confidently his belief that "if love and devoted affection to Anna will veil my numerous and various faults, then I shall be perfect."[2]

Although excited about what she referred to as the wedding "*event*" scheduled for fall, the bride-to-be conceded her nervousness to her dearest childhood friend, Maria Simkins, in whom she confided about everything. Maria, who knew that Anna idolized her father, would surely be sympathetic to her pain in giving up the man she considered to be "the cherished object" of her life, even though she thought her choice *"the best"* in the matter of a husband.

While true that Anna was probably closer to her father than anyone else, and that her place in his life was never assumed by anybody after she married Clemson, it can be said that in their case the father gained a son rather than lost a daughter. The smart and multi-skilled Clemson, the son of a rich Philadelphia merchant, had many attributes characteristic of his illustrious father-in-law. Being one of six children, Clemson received a substantial share of his father's estate, estimated at $100,000, at his death in 1813. Educated as a mining engineer with training in geology and chemistry and gifted, too, in the fine arts of music and painting, Clemson became interested in agriculture and diplomacy. With his tall, lean stature and dark hair, he even resembled Calhoun,[3] according to some observers.

As a seemingly confirmed bachelor who is said to have declared that there was no woman whom he would ever marry, Clemson was apparently quite smitten by Anna's purity and loveliness. Captivated by her large, dark eyes—their extraordinary animation softened by the most attractive sweetness—he wooed and won the woman who had herself expressed a determination never to wed. Their marriage on November 13, 1838, was solemnized in the parlor of the Calhouns' home at Fort Hill plantation.[4] Following her husband, as all wedded women were wont to do, she traveled widely in the North, journeyed as far south as Havana, ventured to live in a "*Miner's Hut*" in Georgia, and, finally, traveled abroad to Belgium.

The separation from her family in America, especially her father, during the six years of Clemson's diplomatic service at the court of King Léopold l in Brussels, was particularly painful for Anna, who dreamed every night of the pleasure of seeing them all again. She

felt deeply the distance from her dear parents and found herself unimpressed with whatever she thought Europeans valued as treasures. Indeed, she did not enjoy her experience abroad but rather endured it as a duty to her husband. After a little more than six years spent in Belgium, she gladly returned home permanently in May of 1851, and, following a summer at Fort Hill, she moved about with her family for another two years to various locations in the North before finally settling on a farm near Washington in August 1853. Unable to obtain a foreign post in the administration of Millard Fillmore's successor, President Franklin Pierce, Clemson had decided to become a planter again, although he still maintained an interest in government service. Clemson had authorized Francis Pickens, his Edgefield neighbor, to negotiate the sale of his Canebrake property in South Carolina with Alfred Dearing, Pickens's brother-in-law.[5]

Grateful to have her own homeplace in America, Anna designated the farm her husband had purchased in Bladensburg, Maryland, to be called, simply, "The Home," and she proceeded to cope with the demands of managing the household there. During the following years, Clemson's increasing irascibility made life difficult for those around him and particularly Anna, who thought so much of family love and harmony that she promoted these virtues in every way. She had admitted earlier (to her brother Patrick) that her husband was sometimes *"cross"* in spells of gloom, though she still felt that she could humor his fits and that he had much improved since the time of their marriage when he was liable, she said, to the *"blues"* and "dyspeptic & *ailing*." Believing that his ill-health was related to habitual despondency, she had tried never to worry him and to amuse him when his spirits were low. Consequently, she felt that his mental state had much improved towards the end of their stay in Belgium. However, Anna's letters to her daughter Floride, then away from The Home at her Aunt Barton's boarding school in Philadelphia, seemed to indicate more of an evolution in Clemson's later chronic moodiness, rather than a swing in the opposite direction.[6]

The condition of dysthymia, from which Clemson apparently suffered, caused a chronically depressed mood (though not a major depression) that adversely affected his behavior, especially with regard to such medical symptoms as "subjective feelings of irritability or excessive anger," "poor appetite," and "feelings of hopelessness." It is not surprising that without pharmacological therapy, now recognized as effective in the establishment of an anti-depressive personality, Anna's attempts to cheer her husband out of what she called the *"blues"* succeeded only in the short term. Today, with appropriate therapeutic treatments, including drugs, counseling, and psychotherapy, an estimated 80 percent of all clinically depressed people can improve quickly. Life-long relief from this widespread psychological illness is, by all accounts, realistic. Unfortunately, in Clemson's case, without the care that is now available, the seriousness of his misunderstood condition worsened and caused personal distress, even disability, within his family, despite all that Anna could do to keep the peace she prized dearly.[7]

Anna wrote to Floride, who was away at school in September 1856, that her father ate little but complained much, knowing that her daughter would be glad to hear that he was still very kind and amiable. She advised Floride not to mention this in her response, which Clemson would probably read, because she did not wish him to think mother and daughter spoke of such matters. Aunt Barton could be trusted to keep confidential the subject of Clemson's depression. As he seemed to miss both Floride and her brother,

Calhoun, who was being treated for a spinal affliction in Northampton, Massachusetts, Clemson was more devoted than ever to his little one-year-old daughter, Nina, born in the fall of 1855. Anna, who knew Floride would know how lost she was without her and Calhoun, confided to her daughter that, "If it were not for baby, I could not stand it." Despite being far from well, Clemson remained pleasant and amiable, though, as usual, convinced, according to Anna, that he would "die in a poor house."[8]

Another expense would be the calisthenics training that Anna thought necessary for Floride's educational curriculum. As Anna did not like to oppose Clemson's wishes, she regretted that his sister, rather than speaking to him about Floride's taking the course, had not simply billed him for the cost, to which he typically objected beforehand. Distressed also at his refusal to give money for a cloak that his sister had said Floride needed, Anna promised to send $20 herself in March to pay for the item. She also sent $5 bank notes to her daughter that she had received from her own mother, Floride Calhoun, in South Carolina.[9]

With her son's return home from the North in November 1856, Anna and Clemson concluded that the fifteen-year-old's health must receive priority in their lives for the next few years. Unable to do any reading or writing because of headaches, Calhoun, like his parents, worried about his backwardness. Not only did Clemson try by conversation to interest his son in science, but, according to Anna, he continued to keep up with the water cure treatment that Calhoun had undergone in Massachusetts. Rousing the household at 5 o'clock in the morning with his preparations, Clemson proceeded to pack the unwilling boy for one hour in a wet sheet, covered by five blankets. He then rubbed his son with a wet and then a dry sheet and, later in the day, supervised a sitz bath with Calhoun wrapped in a blanket in a tub of water for thirty minutes. A wet bandage worn around his waist and a diet of the simplest food completed the hated regimen that Calhoun called the "water tortures." "I really feel for him," Anna wrote to Floride, and "it is enough to run one crazy, to see the state of the two rooms, which I must right up."[10]

Calhoun's condition did improve by Christmas and New Year's, and, by spring 1857, Anna also had good news to report to Floride about her father, who had been approached by the Belgian minister, M. Bosch, in regard to the matter of his being sent back to Europe. Upon instructions from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the King, M. Bosch had requested that the new president, James Buchanan, and his Secretary of State, Lewis Cass, give the Belgian mission to Clemson, who felt highly complimented. As the matter appeared certain, Clemson made plans to sell The Home, if possible, and have Anna live with Floride in a house in Philadelphia, near his youngest sister, Catharine North. Calling the mission a godsend for her husband, Anna thought it the best thing that could happen, as she told Floride that her father's worrying and dissatisfaction made him and everyone around him miserable. In particular, she said, "it is a good thing Calhoun should be separated from him for a while"; and, although she disliked greatly both the idea of leaving The Home and the trouble of moving, the pleasure of being with her daughter again reconciled her to the situation.[11]

However, after six weeks with no commitment by the government to Clemson's appointment to the Belgian post, the possibility of his resuming diplomatic service became much less certain. President Buchanan had said that great political pressure prevented him from acceding to Belgium's request on behalf of Clemson; and, since, according to Anna,

he had been "so buoyed up" by the hope of getting "so essential" an office, she dreaded the effect of a disappointment that would make him very miserable. Thus, instead of preparing to move in June 1857, she, along with the whole household, anxiously awaited Floride's homecoming from school.[12]

Apparently the fourteen-year-old's summer stay at The Home turned out to be a stressful one, ending in a family quarrel the day she departed for Philadelphia in September. Described by Anna as "that thunder storm," the unexplained dispute followed three months of friction and seemingly "left no material for further explosives." Since her daughter's departure, "Quiet, if not peace, has reigned," she wrote to Floride. Clemson's failure to receive the diplomatic appointment to Belgium could well have resulted in a depressive spiral characterized by a dysphoric state of anxiety with an irritability that contributed to hostility between father and daughter.[13]

Even though Clemson would not improve much, Anna nevertheless wanted Floride back at school to let her mind be at ease. Calhoun, she said, was unusually affectionate and attentive to her at home, and they got on very well. In fact, the arrival of her brother Pat, "a favourite" with her husband, meant "no change or storm," as Clemson, she reminded Floride, was in her uncle's presence always more pleasant.[14]

Despite Anna's disapproval, Clemson's decision to send Calhoun to study with his paternal Uncle Baker in Claymont, Delaware, led to a hard trial of loneliness for her. With Floride already away at her Aunt Barton's academy in Philadelphia, she wrote to her daughter, "If it were not for Nina, I do not think I could bear it." The little girl, at a year-and-a-half and "one of the smartest children" in her mother's eyes, would sit at length on her father's lap and call herself "papa's Nina."

Some months following both Calhoun's and Floride's return to The Home, it was their little sister's unexpected death from scarlet fever on December 20, 1858, that provoked such a despondency in Clemson that Anna's mother Floride Calhoun urged her daughter to do all in her power to prevent her husband from committing suicide. In a letter that she had received from him almost eight months after Nina's passing, Mrs. Calhoun found her son-in-law to be "still dwelling on going to his child" because "life is a burden to him." Fearing that he would put an end to himself, she admonished Anna that he would lose his mind or something worse if he did not lay aside those awful feelings. Apparently the severe emotional stress caused by his daughter's death had brought about a clinical condition of double depression with a major depressive episode superimposed on the distraught Clemson's dysthmic disorder.[15]

Shortly after Mrs. Calhoun's warning, Anna learned from Laura Leupp that her own father, Charles Leupp, Clemson's close friend and financial adviser and a wealthy New York City leather merchant, had shot himself, partly the result of his involvement with the financial schemer, Jay Gould. This news deepened the despondency that Clemson had suffered since Nina's death. He sounded "so depressed in spirits" in a letter to his uncle Elias Baker who expressed his astonishment at such language of despair from one whom he thought should be a happy and contented man. "You must not *always* look at the 'Black Side' of things," his uncle had responded to Clemson's grumbly complaints, as he advised him to look, instead, on the bright side. Although sympathetic to the pain of Clemson's loss of both his little daughter and friend Charles Leupp, Elias reminded his nephew that he had a wonderful wife and two fine children, a competence in money matters and the

enjoyment of a lovely home. "Why should you," he wrote, "grumble, complain, and make yourself miserable?" If all was well with Anna, then Clemson, his Uncle Elias maintained, should not complain about anything.[16]

Anna may well not have shared fully with Clemson her personal feelings of sadness in the aftermath of Nina's death. In her personal album, however, she had written poignantly of her sorrow. Questioning where her "angel" Nina was, and why she had been taken, wondering when she would see her again, and musing solemnly on what the nature of their relationship would be "in another world," Anna grieved at the thought that mother and child would never meet again. A child's devotion and sweet dependence, so special to a mother, would, she wrote, be lost forever and any meeting of the spirit hereafter a disappointment to her heart. Recalling other loved ones, as well, in a reverie of the past, when young and happy, she felt her heart close and life become once more sad and gloomy with the approach of a footstep.[17]

Evident here in her album's private expression of sentiments is the effect in part of Clemson's desolation and despair on his wife, his "very much beloved dear Anna." Understanding what psychiatric scholar, Kay Redfield Jamison, describes as the "compelling, contagious, and profoundly interpersonal" nature of moods, one can see how Clemson's depressive disorder altered not only his own perceptions and behaviors but also those of his wife.[18]

While Floride went South, in the fall of 1859, to spend some time with her grandmother, Anna remained with Clemson and Calhoun at The Home. Apparently, she must have indicated some apprehension about her daughter's not being there when she wrote to her sister-in-law, Sue Clemson, the wife of Clemson's younger brother, William. Her sister-in-law, who hoped that she would have a pleasanter winter than anticipated, wondered why Anna had not kept Floride with her and had sent Calhoun away as she had planned. "Sister Sue" also urged that Anna open her heart and confide openly about her son's condition. William Clemson, in a letter to his niece, Floride, made his own caustic comments about her "*poor sick brother*," but expressed real concern that her "poor mother" would be "cooped up" during the winter with her husband and eighteen-year-old son. "I am afraid it will be more than she can bear," he wrote, trusting that God would "protect her." Irritated about Calhoun's not going to school and, instead, being allowed to hunt and ride and generally do as he pleased in order "to restore his *weak* and *shattered* frame and *strengthen* his delicate *constitution*," his uncle exclaimed, "Poor boy! what will he turn out to be"?[19]

Calhoun, in fact, soon left The Home for a hunting and fishing expedition to Florida in the company of his English friend, G. H. Dunscomb. Anna, "cooped up with only her husband," wrote to Floride that Clemson was "uncommonly amiable, as he always is when we are alone, both because he is dependent on me & when you children are not here, many reasons why I must interfere with him do not exist, & I can let him do as he chooses." Nevertheless, she admonished her daughter to guard her comments in correspondence, as he always asked to read Floride's letters and seemed to be much interested in them.[20]

When, in January 1860, Clemson accepted the offer of Secretary of the Interior Jacob Thompson to head the Patent Office's agricultural department, Anna felt that the occupation would be a great thing for her husband, and he, in turn, was much pleased

at the compliment. Finding Clemson to be in excellent health and spirits at the time he assumed the duties of his position in February, Anna thought the government work would be rejuvenating for him, even though the $2,000 salary was much less than he had anticipated.[21]

Anna informed Floride that her father got on famously in his new office. In preparation for spring planting on the farm, "you know I am overseer," she said, with Clemson giving the orders and she executing them. Anna was also pleased to note her husband's inclination to improve the place and hoped that he would continue in that spirit.

She made no direct mention of the fact that she was pregnant with her fifth child, though she indicated needing household help for the summer. In early March 1860, at age forty-three, she suffered a miscarriage. "I cannot imagine what *caused the accident*," she told Floride and her own mother. Since for three months she had felt badly, she supposed "it was to be." Even though still somewhat weak and confined to bed by the doctor, she was, she said, wonderfully well. "Your father," she told Floride, "is as kind as he knows how. He was terribly frightened & stranger still very much *disappointed*." Perhaps Anna's observation that Clemson's disappointment was strange might signify a sense of relief rather more than grief for her part in the matter.[22]

While she was recuperating after her miscarriage, a vision of her father, who had been dead for ten years, appeared to her in a dream that she subsequently recorded in her album. "I lay in bed," she wrote,

> but not it seemed to me asleep, though my eyes were shut, when suddenly, but with an evident intention to avoid alarming or surprising me, my father stood beside me.—I come, my daughter, said he, to speak with you, & I do so now, that your mind is more independent of your body, than when you are awake, that I may spare you the shock, always felt, when matter comes in contact with disembodied spirit. You are right, my daughter, not to give way to the delusions of spiritualism—I do not say there are devils*, for evil is not created*, but from want of knowledge, comes error.—I cannot explain to you many things—human language has no words, for what the human mind cannot conceive, of the great mysteries *on this side*. Continue to strive to know & do the right, & to elevate by every measure your soul, & when you come on this side all will be clear.

Anna seemed to hear from her father the words she wished but did not dare say to her husband:

> —Tell M*r* Clemson he must do this also, or those he loves will be as invisible to him on this side, as they are now—for the universe is vast, & *like dwells with like*—Tell him he has not fulfilled the trust I had in him when I gave him my daughter. And now I go my daughter, but before I leave you, it is permitted you should to see all those you love on this side.—Then I saw them all, each with the most familiar & loved expression—Their eyes were more *living* than in life, & as I encountered the glances of each, they seemed to emit as it were, an unspoken language. Soul spoke to soul. Tho' perfectly *life like*, they seemed less *flesh like.* The soul seemed to pierce its outward covering— It seemed to me there was less

of form than countenance—March 1860[23]

We will have to surmise the meaning of this encounter for Anna, but various levels of possible interpretation have been suggested by Reverend Bob Haden, an authority in dream analysis for therapists, clergy and individuals. From the spiritual perspective, the dream primarily reflects communication with a world beyond this one and therefore is reassuring of the existence of that world. In a secular sense, the dream shows the strong bond that Anna shared with John C. Calhoun. Representing the "wise old man" with a message for herself and Mr. Clemson, her father is a positive "primary animus" (animating or actuating spirit), a figure advising each of them "to strive to know & do the right, & elevate by every measure your soul." Anna might well have thought that she heard here an echo of Calhoun's often expressed motto, "*The duties of life are greater than life itself*." Clemson, the "other primary animus figure," represents a certain negative aspect of Anna's "critical nature within," an aspect that somehow restricts the development of her character to its possible potential. The dream, in part, is about her need as a wife to work with Clemson in order to fulfill her own individual identity; and it seems to be calling for her to"receive the wisdom" from Calhoun and convey its message to Clemson. Her alienation from the man she had once thought to be "*the best*" is evident as her vision of Calhoun directs Anna to tell Clemson, first, that he must heed his advice "or those he loves will be as invisible to him on this side as they are now," and, second, that "he has not fulfilled the trust" with which Calhoun gave his daughter to Clemson in marriage. Although Anna recorded the dream soon after its occurrence, she did not show it to anyone until she gave a copy to close family friend James H. Rion, fifteen years later, in 1875, fully aware that he would later show it to Clemson.[24]

During her recuperation after the miscarriage, Anna received delightful understanding and affectionate letters from Floride. She basked in Floride's love since she got "so little of that kind of thing." Despite the fact that Clemson's disposition had improved dramatically since his suicidal sentiments had so concerned Mrs. Calhoun and his uncle Elias Baker, Clemson apparently could not communicate with his wife. The "feelings of hopelessness" symptomatic of Clemson's condition of dysthmia caused "clinically significant distress or impairment" in his relations with others and could well have prevented the expression of emotions Anna longed to hear.[25] Soon after the return of both Floride and Calhoun to The Home in the spring of 1860, Clemson was off to Europe on official government business that summer. Back home from abroad at the end of October, he was, according to Anna, in a "*wonderfully good humour*," although "how much longer it may last," she observed to Floride, "there is no knowing."

With Calhoun off to South Carolina (to spend time in the company of his grandmother and great-uncle James) and with Floride in New York City (visiting Laura Leupp, the daughter of her father's late friend Charles Leupp), Anna was getting anxious to have her daughter at home again. Floride's cooperation, she felt, would be necessary if the household was to live tranquilly, as Clemson seemed desirous that it should. "Let it not be our fault," she continued, "if he again breaks out" in anger. Begging her daughter, for both of their sakes, to act patiently with her father upon return home, Anna asked of Floride no more than she earnestly demanded of herself. "I make no reference to past events, & strive to avoid all subjects of discussion," Anna wrote.[26]

Glad that Calhoun, in fine spirits, was going to do all in his power to please his uncle and hopeful that all might turn out well for him in the year ahead, Anna nevertheless worried what action would result from the recent election of antislavery Republican President Abraham Lincoln. Sympathetic to the southern view that Lincoln's election pushed to extremity the reasons to secede, she acknowledged that South Carolina and all the South "could not perhaps draw back from their solemnly expressed determination without dishonour." Anarchy and confusion seemed inevitable since Anna had no faith in disunion as a "*remedy*." Nevertheless, she reveled in the thought that her state preferred "death to dishonour" and trusted that all might turn out better than she could imagine possible. She did not want to be blamed if the office of Superintendent of Agricultural Affairs, which was "*all importan*t" to her husband, was terminated. She said little about what Clemson should do, leaving him, she said to Floride, "free to act as he pleases."[27]

Clemson resigned his government position on March 9, 1861, following the formation of the Confederate States of America in February. South Carolina led the way by seceding in December under the political leadership of Anna's cousin, Governor Francis Pickens. The promise for the future, which Anna felt when her husband had received his government appointment in January 1860, was now overshadowed with peril as war erupted in April 1861, dividing the country for four years and separating families such as the Clemsons. Clemson and his son, Calhoun, left Maryland in June and ultimately joined the Confederate forces although Anna and Floride did not go South until near the end of the fighting.[28]

Mother and daughter moved temporarily, in June 1864, to a comfortable five-room place outside of Beltsville, near Baltimore, on the railroad. Having rented The Home and its land, they found that the packing up of personal possessions that they could not carry with them was a troublesome task. Of particular concern to Anna must surely have been her husband's handsome collection of pictures acquired during his diplomatic tenure in Brussels. Along with his own amateur works in oil, some of them copied from King Léopold's collection of paintings in the Royal Art Galleries, were pieces by such notables as Rubens, Hals, Robbe and Bossuet. Anna packed and sent them to relatives in Altoona, Pennsylvania, where they safely survived the war.[29]

Six months after their harrowing journey South, Anna and Floride, in the summer of 1865, were reunited first with Calhoun and then with Clemson at Mrs. Calhoun's "Mi Casa" home in Pendleton. Having taken on June 9 the oath of allegiance to the United States of America, "a bitter pill" for both, the two men arrived within a week of one another in South Carolina. Calhoun, who had been held captive for twenty-one months at a Yankee prison on Johnson's Island in Lake Erie, and Clemson, who was discharged from the Army of the Trans-Mississippi Department following its surrender by Confederate General E. Kirby Smith, seemed to be surprisingly well to the women. To Floride, her brother, who arrived on foot on June 25, looked "very handsome & well, considering his privations." Clemson arrived on July 1, riding unceremoniously in an open wagon on the morning of his fifty-eighth birthday, looking, she thought, "pretty well for a man well on to 60." He had officially ended his Confederate service in Shreveport, Louisiana, when, in very shaky script, he signed his Parole, issued by the United States Government as "Supervisor of Mines & Metal Works." A little over two weeks after their reunion at Mi Casa, Floride found her father to be nicer and more pleasant than she had ever seen him. Really

affectionate and amiable, she described him as "a dear old fellow."[30]

During the war, the Clemsons had experienced hardship and adversity; and, although the crisis of conflict was now over, perhaps the most difficult days were yet to come. The war had staggered South Carolina's economy and widespread suffering reigned with a merciless rule throughout the state. The once prosperous Pendleton was beset with misery and need, and those who had lived the good life there were reduced to a state of abject poverty. White South Carolinians continued to fight for their right to control their community's own affairs and to restore its order and harmony. Both Anna and Thomas Clemson felt strongly sympathetic to the distress of those around them. She especially participated in every good endeavor and distinguished herself among her neighbors as few women ever had. In the role of community leader, which she undertook alongside her husband, her service was truly a credit to the memory of her father, whose maxim, "The duties of life are greater than life itself," she had imparted to her son as a young boy. Amidst the prevailing poverty, the Clemsons contacted some of their wealthy northern friends and asked for money to provide relief for the pitiful plight of their neighbors. The class identification of the elite that had transcended sectionalism during the war continued in its aftermath, as well.

In April 1866, acknowledging the receipt of $500 from Washington banker William Wilson Corcoran, Anna not only thanked Corcoran for his noble gift but for the pleasure it gave her to bring comfort to so many hearts. Clemson also appealed to Corcoran for financial aid in rebuilding the worthless and shattered economic life of South Carolina and was hopeful that the state would survive with help from such supporters as he. A patron of the arts as well as a businessman, Corcoran was described in the 1850s by Virginia Tunstall Clay, wife of Alabama Senator Clement Clay, as "the prince of entertainers." Noted for the weekly dinners and frequent evening dances hosted at his mansion, Corcoran, who was sympathetic to the South during the Civil War, went abroad in 1862 and did not come home until the end of the conflict.[31]

Despite the constant care required by Mrs. Calhoun, dreadfully ill with cancer until her death at Mi Casa in late July, Anna supported her husband's interest in the promotion of scientific education in the South. She made their home a focus of life in Pendleton, providing hospitality to those who shared his vision of an animated system of agriculture as the main remedy to the distress which the region was suffering. Well-qualified for leadership in the Pendleton Farmers' Society, because of his expertise in agricultural affairs, Clemson was elected in 1866 and again in 1868 as its president, a position formerly held by John C. Calhoun. At a meeting of the Society in November 1866, Clemson was appointed to a committee, along with the Hon. R. F. Simpson and Col. W. A. Hayne, to appeal by "Circular" for the founding of "an institution for educating our people in the sciences to the end that our agriculture be improved, our worn impoverished lands be recuperated, and the great natural resources of the South developed." Concluding that the location of such an institution would appear best adapted to upper South Carolina, "not excelled, if equalled" for health and climate by any other part of the continent, the "Circular" claimed that the picturesque mountain region was comparable to Switzerland.[32]

About the matter, Clemson's personal contact with Anna's Uncle James, at his Millwood plantation in the Abbeville District, was encouraging. Commending the circular's formidable argument for such a scientific institution, James Calhoun offered up to 1,000

acres of his lands in the Pickens District for a proper site sufficiently spacious for an agricultural college. James considered himself financially disadvantaged in the aftermath of the war, having lost about $130,000 that he had invested in slaves. The 1867 tax records show that he owned 10,194 acres of real estate, but this wealth was substantially less than his holdings before 1860. He may then have used his cash reserves to purchase previously owned property when prices dropped sharply after the Confederacy's defeat. James did not imagine that the circular's appeal for an academic agricultural institution could be resisted, but it did not generate the widespread support needed to launch such an enterprise.

By 1870, Clemson, utterly discouraged by the seeming lack of interest in scientific education in the South, withdrew from the Pendleton Farmers' Society. He would later renew his efforts for a school with his wife's support.[33]

Anna was sympathetic to her husband's goal and understood the discouragement he felt at his inability to promote an interest in the scientific study of agriculture. At the same time, she was pleased that Floride, who had married Gideon Lee, Jr., of New York, in 1869, was happy in her new life at their "Leeside" home in Carmel. The birth of a baby girl, Floride Isabella, on May 15, 1870, not only brought much joy to the family but also strengthened the bond between Anna and her daughter. Writing from Leeside early in 1871, Floride assured her mother that the baby, who had been ill and weak, was trying to play, calling her father, sitting up feebly and even giving faint smiles. As to her thumb-sucking, a habit of which they had tried to break the child, the doctor advised that they must not worry her since it was her only comfort now. In a telling reference to Clemson's apparent antagonism towards his daughter, Floride wrote, "As to father's anger with me, it is probably not real…I am sorry for it, but know nothing I could do would help it. I know if the chance comes you'll make the best of it." Very likely, Clemson's frustration at the failure to spark an interest in the scientific study of agriculture not only aroused his ire towards the South but affected his attitude towards Floride, as well. The effect of this important issue on Clemson also had an impact on Anna.[34]

Unfortunately, on July 23,1871, the untimely death of twenty-eight-year-old Floride Clemson Lee from, it seems, tuberculous peritonitis, left a grief-stricken family to mourn her loss. It also left a child who would never know her mother. Stunned and shocked at the demise of their daughter, the Clemsons were further devastated by the sudden death of their thirty-year-old son, Calhoun, killed instantly in a train wreck only seventeen days later on August 10. Referring to the tragic accident in a note of sympathy, Clemson family friend and Charleston financial agent Henry Gourdin said simply, "Humanity cannot comprehend the justice of such terrible calamities."[35]

Anna, now alone beside her husband, faced a man grown old and bitter. Disheartened by the inability of his earlier efforts to establish an agricultural school for South Carolina and now despondent at the death of his children, Clemson depended upon his wife to sustain his sagging spirits. His discouragement about the school he had envisioned was overshadowed by the unmitigated tragedy they had endured. His dream of an agricultural and mechanical college for South Carolina now grew increasingly important to Anna as a merited monument to her father and her son Calhoun. Despite the legal controversy that prevailed with her brother Andrew's family over her inheritance of the property from her mother's estate, Anna knew that the land needed for such an institution would be

hers when the matter was settled and she took possession of Fort Hill. At the time of Mrs. Calhoun's death in 1866, Anna's mother still held her deceased son's bond and mortgage title on the disputed property to which Anna was the principal heir. Making her own last will and testament within two months after her son's death, Anna left ownership of all present and future property in her own estate, as well as the right to give away said inheritance, to her "beloved husband." Should she survive him or should he as the survivor die intestate, her "granddaughter, Isabella Lee," would become her heir.[36]

Litigation involving Anna and Clemson, acting as her trustee, in contention with her brother Andrew's family over the estate of Floride Calhoun, was settled by an auction of the Fort Hill property in nearby Walhalla, on January 21, 1872. Mrs. Calhoun's executor, lawyer Edward Noble, secured Fort Hill for Anna by his bid on the property with the mortgage willed to her as its principal recipient. Her deceased daughter Floride's fourth part of the Fort Hill property title had passed to Anna's granddaughter. Except for insignificant court costs, no money was involved because Anna inherited a three-fourths share of the estate, and Floride Isabella Lee had inherited her mother's one-fourth share. The following year, Anna and Gideon Lee, as his daughter's guardian, officially apportioned the property, with Anna receiving 814 acres, including the Fort Hill home, where she and her husband were already living, and with little Floride receiving 288 acres. With Clemson as the heir to Anna's real property and estate, the opportunity for him to establish the agricultural college that he had long desired was thus made possible by the bequest of his wife, signed and sealed on September 29, 1871.[37]

The long spell of cold and disagreeable weather that followed the settlement of Mrs. Calhoun's estate, in January 1872, was, as Anna reported to her Uncle James at Millwood, "very hard on Mr Clemson's health & spirits—confining him to the house, & preventing persons coming in to distract his mind." Despite Clemson's continuing very indifferent disposition and her own discomfort with neuralgia, she was looking forward to a visit from her son-in-law, who planned to personally escort her and her husband back to his home in New York. In the midst of preparations to move from Mi Casa to Fort Hill, the stay at Leeside was a happy interlude after a wearisome four-day journey by land from Pendleton to Carmel. At first, Clemson's health was better and his spirits somewhat improved. However, he seemed to Anna "gradually falling back into the old hopeless state," and she greatly feared he would never be better. Their "dear little grandchild," she found "very bright & interesting," "very affectionate" and "wonderfully little spoilt, *considering*."[38]

The Clemsons returned to Mi Casa after more than two weeks in the North and were able to move to Fort Hill at the end of June. They found the farm in much disorder after several years of tenant occupancy, with the exception of the main house, and, in Anna's view, because of the "utter neglect, & wanton mutilation of the place" by her brother Andrew's family. Once again a planter, Clemson, like others in the South during the postbellum period, was forced to enter into a contractual relationship with free black laborers in the attempt to find a manpower replacement for his former slaves. However, his central concern, as well as Anna's, was promoting interest in the school they both desired to see established.[39]

On August 9, 1874, Anna personally selected a committee to issue a "Circular" calling for statewide support of a plan to build on land at Fort Hill a scientific agricultural

institution whose existence would commemorate the career of her father. Prepared by William Henry Trescot, one of the leading scholars of the state, the "Circular," as cited by Alester G. Holmes and George R. Sherrill in their Clemson biography, was entitled "Scientific Education" and noted the Calhoun legacy at Fort Hill and the statesman's role in South Carolina history. "No nobler monument could be raised to the great Carolinian," the Circular asserted, "than such an institution on the spot where the tradition of his great and beautiful life would be most strongly felt." Four years later, in a letter to his old Washington friend, W. W. Corcoran, Clemson himself would ask for aid with the school project that he and Anna had been unsuccessfully promoting for lack of funds.[40]

Anna complained little about her health problems. She was much overweight and suffered from neuralgia and heart trouble that could take her life suddenly as it had that of her brother Andrew. On September 22, 1875, while Clemson was away from home, he received word from a messenger that his wife was quite sick. Hurrying home in his buggy, he met a servant just outside the inner gate of the yard who told him that she was dead. Horrified at the news, he rose up and gave his horse a tremendous cut. As the animal dashed through the gate, the wheels of the buggy hit the gate post so that Clemson was pitched some distance from the vehicle, causing some to think for a time that he, too, was dead.[41]

At age fifty-eight, Anna had succumbed to a heart attack, as she had predicted she would. Family and acquaintances of the Clemsons were formally invited to attend afternoon funeral services for her at St. Paul's Church in Pendleton on September 24, the same day that the *The News and Courier* in Charleston carried the announcement of her death:

> Mrs. Clemson, the last surviving child of the Hon. John C. Calhoun, died at Fort Hill, Pendleton on Wednesday evening at 5 o'clock. The tidings of her death, which will be universally regretted, carry the people of South Carolina back, in thought, to the time when her illustrious father guided the destinies of the State, and remind them how often, in the trying days since the war, we have vainly longed for a single hour of that "dead Dundee."

There was little comfort for Clemson who buried his wife beside their son in the churchyard at St. Paul's. The grieving husband's despair was movingly expressed in a letter to his friend, Henry Gourdin, as noted in Ernest McPherson Lander, Jr.'s work on the Calhoun family and Clemson: "How disconsolate and wretched I feel," Thomas Clemson wrote, "it is impossible for anyone to imagine."[42]

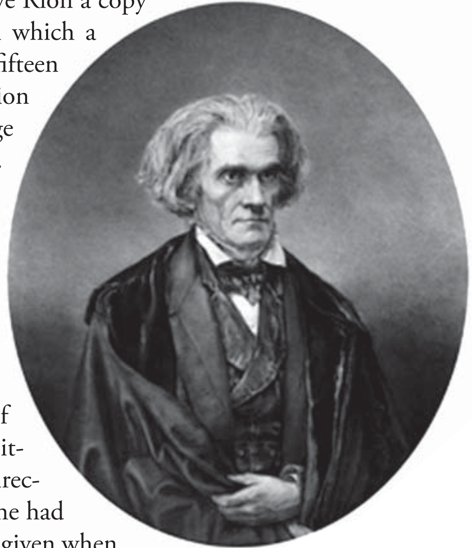
Among the many messages of sympathy that Clemson received, the one that must have meant the most to him came from James Rion, "the former Calhoun protégé" who would later become Clemson's own financial adviser and lawyer.

> You have lost a wife, who was in every sense of the word a companion for you, not only worthy of affection but of the highest esteem. Her good nature, high spirit, elegance of manners, extensive information and reading, fine intellect, and all the more valuable female accomplishments, fitted her to be a wife worthy of any man that ever lived. Rion, who had paid a visit to Fort Hill shortly before

Anna's death, said further: "It is a great, though sad, consolation to me that I saw her so soon" before she died.

Rion, who had come to live with the Calhouns at Fort Hill in 1844, when his mother was hired as a housekeeper there, was treated as "one of the family" and educated at the expense of Anna's Uncle James. An interesting aside to Rion's role in the lives of the Calhouns and Clemsons is the rumor that he was the son of the Dauphin of France who should have ruled as the Bourbon King Louis XVll but was prevented from doing so by the execution of his father, King Louis XVl, during the French Revolution. Not until the time of Rion's death in 1886 were the details of his alleged royal heritage revealed. (According to the recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander, a business associate of Rion's after the Civil War, Rion told his family on his deathbed that his father was the French Dauphin, who, as a lieutenant in the British army, had been stationed in Canada, where he met Rion's mother. Rion further stated, in Alexander's account, that John C. Calhoun, as Secretary of War, was privy to information about the marriage of his parents and about his own legitimate birth. Calhoun's interest in his welfare, he explained, was due to the "knowledge of his identity."[43])

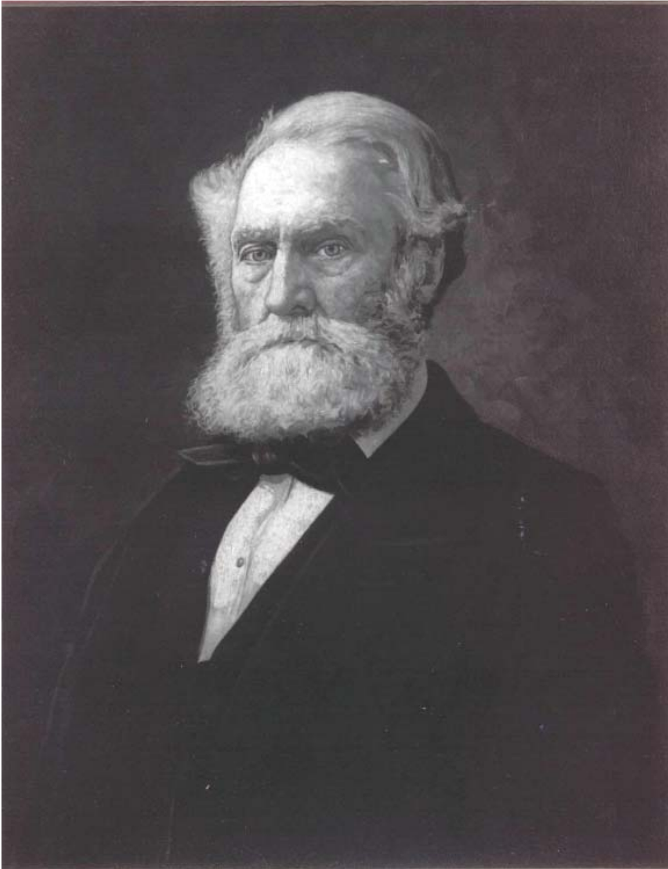
Apparently, in August 1875 Anna gave Rion a copy of the dream, recorded in her album, in which a vision of her father had appeared to her fifteen years earlier. Presumably, she expected Rion to share with Clemson her father's message to her and her husband, which he later did. Thinking that the end could possibly be near for her, as it proved to be, and aware of what difficult days would lie ahead for Clemson, she obviously wanted him, in the words of her father to "continue to strive to know & do the right." With concern for Clemson's welfare, in light of all that they had lost, and perhaps fearful of what he might do when left alone, she omitted from Rion's copy of the dream the direction from her father to tell Clemson that he had "not fulfilled the trust" with which he had given when he offered Anna in marriage. Thomas Clemson would never know how much he had failed his "very much beloved dear Anna." Cursed with chronic depression throughout their marriage, he could neither control his belligerent behavior nor convey convincingly the "love and devoted affection" he had professed for her on the eve of their marriage.[44]



John C. Calhoun

Three months after Anna's death, Clemson sent a copy of his wife's vision of her father to a spiritualist, Dr. John J. F. Gray, for an explanation of its meaning. The two men had met a few years earlier when Clemson, while visiting at his son-in-law's in Carmel, had attended séances in New York City. Evidently interested in spiritualism, Clemson had, according to Anna, enjoyed "wonderful experiences" communicating with the spirit

world. Glad to hear from Clemson personally and to possess a copy of the vision, Dr. Gray replied with absolute certainty that "Mr. Calhoun appeared to & spoke with his daughter, as related by her." The powerful phenomenon of Calhoun's presence was apparently more meaningful to Dr. Gray (and presumably to Clemson, as well) than was the message to "continue to strive to know & do the right."[45]



Thomas Green Clemson