

Greenville, Ga.
Mch 14- 1893.

Dear Father:

Thinking you would like to hear directly from the storm which swept away nearly or quite half of our town. I shall write you a letter. The storm came up hurriedly from the south-west about 9 o'clock on the night of the 3rd inst. Really the storm was on us before we were aware of our danger. I went out doors and looked at the clouds not more than one minute or a minute and a half before the cyclone strook my house. The cloud looked like the glare of a fire behind a hill. I was sure when I looked at the clouds that a cyclone was coming, but hoped it would miss my house. I had just shut my front door behind me when Mr. Davidson and his sister ran in. Mr. Davidson was very much excited, saying that we must get in my cellar at once. Before we could pick up the children the storm struck the house. We simply stood looking at each other expecting the worst to happen. I realized in a few seconds that the cyclone had passed and went out on my front porch to see what damages had been done. My front yard was literally full of tree tops, joists, rafters, sheeting, shingles and bricks. I could see these things by the lightning Henry Hall's house which is not more than 25 feet from mine on the west side of mine, is a two story building, built in the good old times when houses were more strongly built than now. It was the top of his house that was in my yard. His house saved mine as it sat just in front of mine in the track of the storm. The street on which I live runs east and west. The house next to me on the east was occupied by Mr. N. F. Wright. It was a large two story house, built about one year ago at a cost of \$2000.00. It was crushed flat to the ground. I do not suppose that the highest perpendicular height of the wreck was more that six or seven feet. I saw both these houses in a second or two after I went out on my front porch- and their condition. In my Wright's house were himself and wife and three small children and Mrs. Wright's mother, who is Mrs. Pierson of Newman. Not a one was hurt. They were caught under the wreck; and it took us two hours to out and saw them all out. That they could have escaped at all seems miraculous. I learned this: That the safest place inside a house in a storm is on the floor by the side of large trunks or objects that can hold up large timbers. A street runs entirely through our town east and west. The town north of that street is in ruins. The Negro Baptist church, the Negro Methodist church, the college building, the Presbyterian church and four residences (white) were completely demolished. Our large two story brick store was also leveled with the ground. Quite a number of negro houses and weaker structures- 40 or 50 in number- were likewise destroyed. Nearly every house on the north side of the street mentioned was unroofed and otherwise damaged, except mine. My roof is on but badly damaged. Two hundred dollars will cover my losses, both in town and on my farm 3 miles east of town. The tin roof on my store was partially torn off. Brother Straton's house was slightly damaged. It is in the extreem south side of the town. The Baptist church

was not blown down, but is a complete wreck. It might as well be down.

When that storm struck Greenville, nearly every body went to praying. Wicked men made no bones of the matter. They simply fell on their knees and prayed aloud. Our marshall who is a rather wicked man was in the sitting room of the hotel in company with 12 or 15 gentlemen and in their presence fell on his knees and prayed earnestly. It was no laughing matter with the other gentlemen, for nearly all of them joined him in prayer. This shows whether men believe in God or not.

Often when I lie down at night I wonder if you have remembered me in your prayers that night. The night of the cyclone I felt confident you had. You recollect I once asked you always to remember me.

The roaring of the storm as it was doing its awful work was fearful. It cannot be told. Large timber out of Hull's house were driven against my house and into my house and yet I didn't hear anything of it, so great was the noise.

Mr. Robert L. Winslow's house was as completely destroyed as Mr. Wright's. At the time his wife was in confinement. She was soon rescued and the child was born in about an hour after the storm. Mother and baby both doing well.

From exposure the night of the storm I have been quite sick. The whole town is very busy repairing and rebuilding.

Excuse the haste and manner of this letter.

Yours as ever
W. S. Howell

(This letter was probably from William S. Howell to Rev. J. H. Kilpatrick.)

*Why to J.H.K. ?
Better, to Samuel Howell.*