



In the summer of 1865, Acklen packed up her children for a year-long tour of Europe. While in Paris for several months, she posed for a portrait with her daughter Pauline. (Belmont Mansion Association)

South is so famous has never been more aptly illustrated," the *Republican Banner* wrote of the event, and the "pleasant memories"¹⁴⁴ more than five hundred invited guests carried away from it.

Adelicia Hayes Franklin Acklen married for the third and final time a year after her return from Europe, and her decision to do so is both interesting and curious. She survived the war without significant damage to any of her personal property, and with proceeds from the cotton sale safely tucked away did not "need" to re-marry. Perhaps, as her younger children were still quite young, she saw a need for a father-figure in the household. Perhaps, at age fifty, she missed the companionship of a husband. As was so often the case, Acklen did not leave behind reasons for her actions; she did, however, on June 18, 1867 at Belmont, marry Dr. William A. Cheatham, a well-known and respected medical doctor, and she did so "most gorgeously,"¹⁴⁵ according to the *Springfield Republican*.¹⁴⁶ Prior to the ceremony, a marriage contract was drawn that conveyed all of Adelicia Acklen's assets to George Shields, as trustee, but to be used and controlled by Acklen for her benefit and enjoyment, and that of her children. This document reached farther than had her marriage contract with Joseph Acklen, and with his execution of it, Cheatham renounced any interest in her assets, as well as community property interests generated by the Louisiana properties during their marriage.¹⁴⁷

While Adelicia Acklen's third husband is often misidentified as "General" Cheatham of Confederate Civil War fame, William Archer Cheatham did not serve in the war, but it directly and dramatically affected him, his future, and Acklen's as well. Three years his wife's junior, Cheatham was the son of Robertson County, Tennessee's General Richard Cheatham and his wife, Kentucky-born Susan Saunders Cheatham, and earned a medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1843. Cheatham married Mary Emma Ready of Murfreesboro in 1847, and the couple had two children—Martha, born in 1853 and Richard, in 1855. In 1852, Cheatham was named superintendent of the Tennessee Lunatic Asylum, recently constructed in Nashville in response to the national reform movement spearheaded by Dorothea A. Dix, who visited often and praised both Cheatham and the institution.¹⁴⁸ The asylum's trustees extended his term an additional eight years in 1859, but in July of 1862, Cheatham was abruptly dismissed from his position as Union occupation made itself felt in Nashville. In May of 1863, William and Mary Cheatham were arrested; the charge, corresponding with the enemy. Mary Cheatham was the sister-in-law of notorious Confederate guerrilla, John Hunt Morgan, and the Union had intercepted letters written by her to Hunt's wife and Mary's sister, Mattie. The Cheathams were ordered to the federal prison at Alton, Illinois, for the duration of the war, but on the journey north, Mary suffered what was termed

a nervous breakdown, and sympathetic Union authorities allowed their return to Nashville. Her health never recovered, and in April of 1864, Mary Ready Cheatham died, leaving her husband a widower and her children, aged nine and eleven, motherless.¹⁴⁹

It appears, from a surviving collection of Mattie Cheatham letters, Acklen formed strong and loving relationships with her step-children, and perhaps they represent one of the reasons for this marriage. After losing six of her children in early childhood, the Cheatham children likely tugged at Adelicia's maternal heartstrings. Their ages also closely aligned with those of the Acklens, and by all appearances all of the children accepted each other as siblings almost immediately. Acklen's letters to Mattie and Richard Cheatham contained family news from Belmont, many endearments, and were always signed by Acklen as "Mother." At the bottom of one of these, written in the fall of 1868 while she was away at boarding school, Mattie wrote, "From my beloved mother If I could only receive sweet letters every day How very very happy sweet cheering letters make me."¹⁵⁰

The early years of this marriage, and the coming together of this large family, were happy times for Adelicia Acklen Cheatham. William Cheatham continued his medical practice and assisted with the management of Adelicia's vast properties, and she supervised the children, their educations, the daily management of Belmont, and engaged civically and socially in Nashville.