

4. It is inconceivable that Gordon did not know that Barlow subsequently fought against him in Grant's Overland Campaign of 1864.
5. Gordon was a very powerful voice in the movement to heal and move on after the war. The Barlow story was only an attempt on his part to effect a reconciliation of the regions based on mutual admiration for the heroism of the foe.

Let us consider each of these objections in the light of the sources, our knowledge of human nature, and reason.

First, the inconsistencies in Gordon's two accounts are all minor variations of a kind that one would expect in the telling and retelling of an event. In their essentials, the accounts tell the same story and are therefore more likely to be true than false. Indeed, minor variations are the mark of truth rather than falsity; identical or substantially identical stories reflect copying.

Second, except for Barlow's failure to mention Gordon or Arabella and the business of the letters, the inconsistencies between Gordon's and Barlow's accounts are of minutia and are easily and reasonably attributable to differences of perception and interpretation, taking into consideration all of the surrounding circumstances and the condition of the principals.

As for the letters, how did Barlow destroy them when he was lying on his back nearly dead and possibly completely paralyzed? By his own testimony, he was too faint to walk, did not expect to get out alive, was in considerable pain, and his clothing was saturated with blood. I submit that in these circumstances there is really only one explanation for the apparent conflict in the primary sources, and it is this: Barlow did not himself destroy the letters on his person; he was in no condition to do that. But he knew about the incriminating letters and it was thus a matter of great importance to him that they not fall into the hands of the enemy. So he got rid of them (i.e. he "destroyed" them) the only way he possibly could -- by getting someone else to do it for him. That someone else was none other than John B. Gordon! That is the only explanation that squares with all three accounts, with reason, and with probabilities rather than possibilities. That Gordon mentions letters in both *Reminiscences* and *Last Days* makes it very probable the letters were a part of the happening that occurred between him and Barlow on the knoll. That Barlow also mentions letters in his account makes the case even more compelling. That both men expressly speak of the *destruction* of letters makes it somewhere between very probable and nearly certain that they are talking about the same transaction. The stew is simply too thick to suppose that they are talking about separate letter incidents. Postulating that they are talking about the same incident is the key that opens all doors.

With respect to the July 7 letter, the first thing that needs to be said is that it is incomplete: pages are missing. There is simply no way of knowing whether or not he mentioned Gordon or Arabella or both in the missing pages. That the letter does not mention Arabella has not been taken as evidence that she never came. That Gordon is not mentioned in the incomplete letter should likewise not preclude his having helped Barlow in the way he says he did. A lot of possibilities can be offered as to why Barlow did not mention Gordon in his letter