

On the March from the Peninsula

Williamsburg Aug 18th 1862

My dear wife

I did not write you yesterday. it was impossible for me to do so as we did not halt till long after mid. night. Early yesterday morning "George" or "little Mac" as we call him passed by my Camp - that was the signal to pull out and my long train began winding out of the field and took the road. I did not start until the last wagon had gone. It takes an hour for all my train to pass one point. as soon as all had gone I mounted and followed with my ordnance. I must not forget to mention that the house I spoke of as being near my Camp was fired and burned to the ground. Just as I was finishing writing to you a Regt of Infantry came up and halted for the night close beside us. Officers and men began crowding into my Camp and insisted upon roasting green Corn by the nice fires my men had burning. One officer came up to my fire and without saying a word seated himself between me and the fire. I was just closing my letter at the time and he was in my light. I asked him if he "wanted to see any body" and he said "No" I asked him if he -

"wanted anything. No" said he and ~~still sat~~
still. The Sentinel who was near and had
only permitted the fellow to pass because he
was an officer now took the hint that he
was not wanted there and stepping up to
the fellow said. "Dont you see you are in
the Captains light Sir" What Captain said the
man - "Come Come get away now and no
foolin said the sentinel at the same time
bringing down his gun. "Cant a fellow ^{roast}
a little Corn at your fire" No said the sentinel
dont you see the Captan dont want ye here
Come go away now and dont be botherin
the Captan any more" I had laid down on the
bed and been listening to the talk between
the Sentinel and the Whunter Captain no
little Amused I Can assure you. Several of
the Officers men had now Come down to the
fire and were putting Corn on to roast and
I plainly saw that unless I cleared them out
at once I would be kept awake nearly all
night so I got up and politely told the
officer that "he was at the Head Quarters
where no one except ^{those} on business was allowed
and he would oblige me greatly by building a
fire of his own and taking his men away
at once. He got up and said "your mighty stickin
about your old fire it wouldnt hurt it for the
"boys to roast some Corn on it" to which the "boys"
as he called them all said "thats so" I made no
answer but quietly said to the Sentinel "go and

tell Capt Jackson to send me 15 men with sabres
and Sharp Rifles. The Volunteers at once began taking
their Corn out of the fire and leaving and the officers
not liking the turn things were taking went
off cursing the Regulars and out of spite refusing
to take any fire to kindle his own by. I sent
my men when they came back ~~back~~ to sleep
and after laughing heartily at the fool of an
officer I turned in for the night. About 2 o'clock
I was awakened by the crackling of flames
and on ~~getting up~~ ^{getting up} found the fire house just
above me one mass of fire. The damned
Volunteers had set it on fire. I was very angry
and went over and found out the men belonged
to the 2^d Brigade of Genl Peck's Division - from
what I saw of these men they are little better
than barbarians. The next morning when Genl
McClellan came along he stopped and looked
at the smouldering ruins a long time. He
sent an officer to me to find out who burned
it and I told the officer all I knew and he wrote
it down and gave the paper to Genl Mc
who seemed much displeased and rode
on. I would not be in officers boots (who has
Command of the men who burned that house)
for a pretty thing. He will hear from "little
Mac" I assure you and I hope the Genl
will dismiss such ruffians from the
Army. We marched just yesterday forenoon
and by one o'clock reach the now famous
Chickahomine River. We crossed the River on
a Pontoon Bridge. A pontoon bridge you

must know is made of little boats. They tie a whole
lot of ~~flat~~ Boats together and then tie the ends to
the shores - then they lay boards on the Boats, so as
to make a bridge and on these they Cross. It only
took 3 hours yesterday to build the bridge - and the Army
at once Commenced Crossing. I soon got over for having
the Genl's Baggage I got the preference. Our Army ~~is~~^{is}
still Crossing the bridge - it will take it two days
to all get over the bridge. If ever you saw a big
Drive of Cattle Crossing a bridge you may form
some idea of how long it would take a large
Army to Cross. As soon as I got over the bridge
I formed my wagons and men up in a field
and ordered them to rest and feed for two
hours. I lay down under a tree to eat my
hard bread and salt pork. The meat is so
salt ^{it} has taken the skin off the roof of my
mouth and it hurts me to eat. At 3 o'clock
I ordered the train "forward" I went to the front
about 4 o'clock word was brought me that there
was an effort being made to break my train
in ~~two~~ two and let another train in between
the front and rear of my train. I sent a Scout
and 12 men with orders not to allow the train
to be broken. I soon got word from the Scout
that the train would be broken unless he
got more men. I then sent Lieut Tucker with
20 men from Co L and he soon sent word
for more men or the train would be broken.
I ordered back all of Co "L" and a Co of the
2^d Dragoons that were guarding the rear of
Genl McClellan's baggage. Hearing something

serious might occur I now rode back myself and on arriving on the ground found Mr Tucker engaged in a ~~red~~ violent dispute with some Infantry. The Infantry were trying to get their baggage train into cross street cutting our train in two. Just as I came up an Infantry soldier chained the wheel of one of our wagons so it could not go on. A Col L man hit the fellow over the head with his saber and sent him reeling to the ground. The Infantry were New Jersey Volunteers. The officers were blowing and cursing and so were my officers. I soon put an end to the whole fracas by putting an Infantry Captain (who was anxious for a fight) under arrest. I then ordered the Infantry and Cavalry both to clear out and the wagons to go on. I then went to the front and just before dark word came that our train had been broken. I sent Mr Tucker back with Col L and ordered the front end of my train to go on. I lay down by the road side to rest. It got dark and no word of the train. We were in a thick woods and it was dark as pitch. I ordered one of my aides to build a big fire and tying my horse to a tree I lay down to ~~not~~ sleep awhile. I was soon awakened by a big Infantry soldier stepping on my head. He came blundering through the brush and did not see me. He had large nails in the soles of his shoes and as he planted his foot fair on my head he hurt my ear a good deal. The poor fellow did not want to do it. He was thoroughly frightened and as I was in a fearful rage and began hunting for my saber to cut his head off he

ran off and disappeared down the road in the
darkness. I could not sleep any more and so sat up
Hundreds of wagons went by but still mine did not
Come. At last they came about mid-night I Co
and Mr Lucker at their head in all his glory
I mounted my horse and fell "in". We now had
 $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to go to Williamsburg when I intended
to halt for the night. We pushed on expecting soon
to reach that place but we had not gone far
until one wagon broke down in the middle of
the road another upset in a mud puddle and
one stalled on a hill. Seeing plainly that from
the way things were going we would not get into
Camp before morning and being so tired and
sick I could hardly cling to my saddle. I ordered
a small guard from each Co to be left behind
and with the main body I left the train and
pushed on for Camp. It was no small job I can
assure you to reach it. On we went over ditches
and stumps and gullies. Now winding between
wagons that were going at the gallop - now leaping
up high banks to keep from being crushed to death
then plunging down deep banks into the road
and through swamps and water. I had the lead
and being weary and out of humor I spurred
on at the risk of my neck - once or twice my horse
fell but got up and on we went again. The
soldiers could barely keep within halloaing
distance of each other. It was so dark you
could not see your hand before you. Mr Lucker
and one or two of the best riders kept up with
me and at last we got ahead of all the teams

And a smart gallop on a hard ~~road~~ road brought us
in five minutes to Williamsburg. It was just
3½ o'clock when we galloped through the town. I have
encamped just outside of the town in a clover
field. Slept soundly last night (a morning) under a tree
and did not wake this morning till nearly 9 o'clock
when the sun was shining brightly in my face.
It is now nearly 2 o'clock and I am still here. I
think I will rest all day and start early tomorrow
morning. My horses and men are so tired I do not
feel like having them go further until rested.
Perhaps I will make a short march to night.
We lost a great many horses yesterday. Most of
them gave out and had to be left behind. Some
were jammed between the wagons and killed and
some died from fatigue. The whole road is strewn
with dead horses and mules. We go from here to
York town which is distant 12 miles. This is
a fine country through which we are travelling.
This is where the hard battle was fought in
which poor Lt. McClellan was hurt. I have not
been over the battle field yet but as it is close
by I am going to ride over it this afternoon
with Lt. Spangler who was at the battle and
who will point out to me the interesting spots
where McClellan was wounded and where our
Regt. charged etc. Williamsburg is a pretty
town. It seems to be about as large as
Carlisle and looks very much like it. I have
not been in the town yet but I am told
it is nearly deserted. All the stores are closed
and the people nearly all of whom were

Secessionists fled from their homes when the
Union Army approached ~~but~~ as it went up
to Richmond - I sent my man into ~~to~~ town this
morning to see what he could buy and all he
he could get was six sad biscuits for which he
paid a Quarter. They are little better than dough
but anything will do for a change from hard crackers
There is not much danger of my starving in this -
Country especially as long as Geo L is about of whose
thinning propensities I have spoken - Peaches apples
and ripe pears have began to come into camp
pretty plentifully - I have an abundance - I had
fine Chicken for dinner to day - One of my men
brought it - He said he tried to buy it from ^{any} the
old secessionist but he would not sell it so he
"borrowed" the Chicken from him until next
time we came along - I had to furnish ^{one of} my men
very severely this morning - My Cook Palmer - on account
of his stiff fingers he has been ordered to do nothing but
Cook for me - Yesterday evening when I left him I ordered
him to go on into camp and ~~bring~~ ^{bring} me something to eat when
I came in - I got in at ~~dark~~ ^{this morning} and sent for him to make me
only a cup of coffee - He sent word back he was sick and the man
said he said he would be damned if he would get up
this morning, he had no breakfast for me and I could
not find him about at all - When he came into camp
I had him hung up to the limb of a tree by the thumbs
I punished him terribly - I have been good to the
lazy rascal and he had nothing to do but Cook for
me - I made an example of him - the poor fellow
I screamed bloody murder but he was to be cut down
but I let him up until he was quite weak - My men
looked on in silence and I think it did them good -
I am kind to my men but God help them if they
abuse my kindness - My men know me and we get along
pleasantly - Palmer got me an excellent dinner to day
and I guess he will not just come again to Cook when I
tell him - Palmer seems to think I served him right
"furny aint it" just the way you used to say after I had
scolded you and you came to thank me the matter -
They say we are going to Washington - I hope so - if we do
I will send for you or come home and bring you down
with me when I come back - They can't complain of that
letter not being long enough - I have now in my pocket 3
letters for you - I will send them all from ^{the} first train to
morrow - we have no mail from here - Good bye
God bless you from your own
"Jim"