

Cumbeband Landing,
on Pamunkey River,
12 miles from West Point,
May 11/1862.

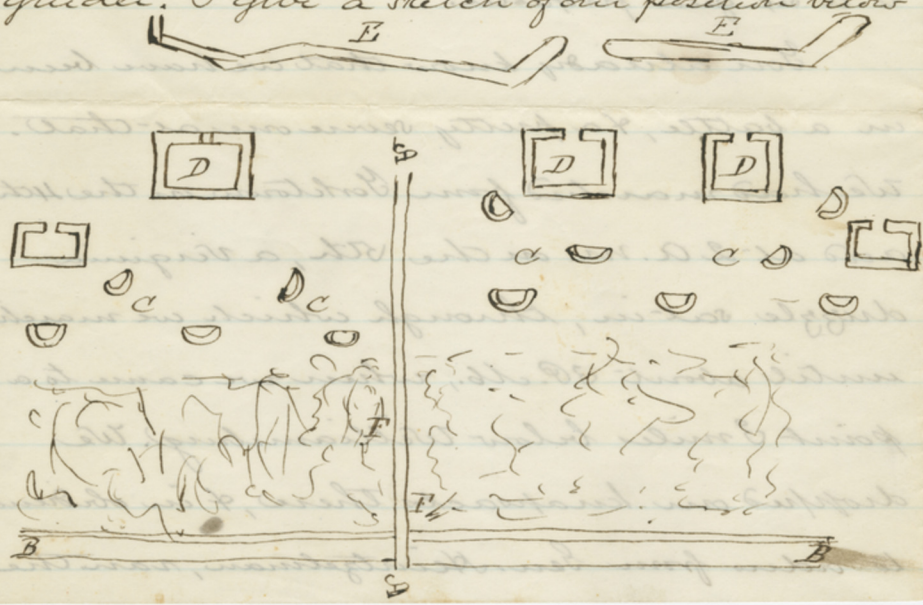
Dear Mary,

My hurried note to you some
four or five days ago was so short that
I cannot call it a letter, & will now
try to write one more worthy of the name.

We are now on the Pamunkey R., a tributary
of the York, and are about 25 to 30 miles
from Richmond. There is a house or two at
the landing, & the river is crowded with
steamers, sailing vessels, & transports, of all
sizes and descriptions, from a canal-boat
to a six-gun propeller.

You already know that we have been
in a battle, & a pretty severe one at that.
We had marched from Yorktown on the 4th,
and at 2 A.M. on the 5th, a Virginia
drizzle set in, through which we marched
until about 3 P.M., when we came to a
point 3 miles below Williamsburg. We
dropped our knapsacks there, & in obedience
to orders from Gen. Heintzelman, ran the

3 miles at double-quick, thro' mud & water
 knee-deep. Just as we came within
 range, Col. Riley halted us to catch
 breath, & made a brief speech, saying that
 "they" were probably the last words he
 should say to us, but that any man
 who did not want to go in, might go
 back." Not a man, I believe, refused to go
 in, and we dashed up the road through
 an opening in the breast-work, and took
 a position where rebels, concealed by rifle
 pits, logs, & brush-wood, had a fine cross-
 fire at us from both sides of the road,
 agreeably varied by the shell, shot, &
 grape from the redoubts & Fort Aba-
 quider. I give a sketch of our position below



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A - A. is the road up which we came
B - B, breastwork, a mile & a half long,
C, C, rifle-pits, fifty or sixty in number,
altogether, D, D, strong, ditched redoubts
E, E, Fort Abagruder. F, F, positions a-
mong the thickly matted brush and logs,
occupied by companies, D, J, A, H, & B,
and by the 38th N. Y. The rebels were as
thick as bees in this brushwood, on both
sides of the road, and the position of
their dead the next day showed that
they had driven Hooker's Division at
least 300 yards away from the long breast
work, at the time when Kearney came
up.

During the most of the fight, I was in
the neighborhood of the left-hand F, & was
sandwiched between two dead men of the 38th,
part of the time, & another lay behind me,
and within a circuit of ten yards, perhaps
fifty dead bodies could have been gathered,
besides scores of dead artillery horses, while
guns, knapsacks, haversacks, canteens, & every

article of clothing and equipment strewed
the ground in profusion.

Not one gun in four of ours would ex-
plode, so that all that we could do was to
stay and be slaughtered with as much forti-
tude as possible, until night closed the scene.
The 38th was badly cut up, being very badly
managed, but we lost but 4 killed, 23 wounded,
and 4 missing, owing to our leaders having
the judgment to place their men where such
as had serviceable pieces could do execution,
and have some protection from the overwhelming
fire of 60,000 rebels, entrenched as they were.

We finally made out, under Providence, to
silence the rifle-pits which were visible, but
of course could do nothing with the redoubts
or Fort Sbaguader. Our artillery, having no
ammunition, were lying useless on the road,
and small arms were opposed unaided to gi-
gantic earth-works and heavy artillery.

The "chivalry" of the rebels in fleeing from
a place of such strength, when attacked by
less than half their number, the assailants
laboring under every disadvantage, is rather
questionable. The backing out may have
been "military strategy" of the first water,
but we don't see it. I suppose they will
tell their people that the place was of
no importance, &c., ^{as usual} but if they spend 6 or 8
months in fortifying such unimportant points,
they must intend to have "somebody hunt"
at the first place that is of importance,
"in a strategic point of view."

I threw my Austrian rifle away in
disgust, not being able to fire it. I suc-
ceeded in finding a U. S. Harper's Ferry
rifled musket, which is a splendid
weapon. Numbers of our boys secured those
pieces, & Austrians are at a heavy dis-
count. They have been weighed in the balances, &

5th page. I enclose a little trophy from
Fort M'aguer. I picked it
up in an officer's quarters.

found wanting:

Next day we took possession of the works in
regular style, Col. Riley having ascertained on
the previous night that the rebels had made
another "skedaddle", nearly as heroic as that
from Fort M'aguer, which, however, still stands in
history as the embodiment of "chivalry",
being rather ahead of Williamsburgh. ~~After~~

After camping near the fortifications
for several days, to enable the men to rest
and recruit their strength, to bury their
dead comrades, and to allow the roads to
dry up, we again started off on our chase
after the Southern Confederacy, which was
still hovering in the dim distance. Every
mile of our route gave evidences of that
"good order" which the rebels generally
claim as characteristic of their retreats.
Cannon, caissons, forges, wagons of all de-
scriptions and sizes, ambulances, ammuni-
tion for all sizes and kinds of ordnance,


provisions (wet and spoiled), ragged cloth-
ing, (all of the meanest description, generally
butternut jeans and "nigger-cloth") were
just about paving some parts of the road,
and horses, dead, dying, lame, serviceable,
and unserviceable, were in no way scarce.
The wagons were in great part planta-
tion wagons, of as many varieties as the
"baskets" that old Noah accommodated,
but some appeared to be regulation wagons,
built on the plan of the old bonestoga,
"only more so," by a "feet" or two.



There, that's a faint imitation of
their grotesque appearance. They looked
like a cross between the Sunstable
bonnet and the Spanish five-decker
of Columbus's time. The second view is an
equally faint attempt at one of the crit-
ters. It is a detached view, but the
hind-quarters (and fore ones too) of the
original were a little more "detached".

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Our marches since the battle have been very monotonous, only varied by changes from heat and dust to rain and mud, and vice versa. We found James "city" (or Jim's city, as the people called it,) to consist of four dwellings, one Post Office, a store or factory, two smoke-houses, a half dozen negro quarters, and one shed over a dug well. There may have been another smoke-house, but I wouldn't like to swear to it now. Remingtonville had one house. Kent about Horse about half a dozen, all very fine and neat, and an old looking hotel.



You speak in your last letter, and I think in others, of being low-spirited. I am sorry to find that you are melancholy, and wish that I could relieve you. What do you judge to be the cause or causes of your sadness? I am afraid I have written in too gloomy a tone, and should have had more sense, but a melancholy vein was over me also, and like the Hebrews at Babylon, I could not sing while my heart was pining. If religion is the cause of your sadness, do not

on any account, strive to dispel the feeling,
but go on "seeking" until you find, bearing
in mind that the Lord is "faithful and
true", and that "whosoever cometh unto
God thro' Christ, He will in no wise cast
out."

Would you like to have me return now?
I can, I think, procure my discharge, and
having been thro' a severe battle and done
my duty there, I do not see where the dis-
honor can be in leaving a service where
my deafness renders promotion hopeless.
No man (or officer) in this regiment has
been more unsparring of himself in the
discharge of his duty than I have, yet
no man has been treated more shamefully,
and only a sense of the dishonor of leaving
before a general engagement has kept me
where I have been exposed to such indignity.
Our present Adjutant (Lieut. Warner) is a born
by disposition and education - a narrow-
minded, easily humbugged, and brutal black-
guard & I threw up the situation of clerk in con-
tempt, threatening him and the Colonel with a
general court-martial.

Our division is now commanded by Brig-
Gen. Kearney, a hero of the Mexican war. His
name is historical already. Hamilton, and our
Lieut. Col. (Egan) are under arrest for treason
at the Rip. Mass. They had communication with the
rebels at Yorktown & told them of the positions of our
camps, so that they could shell us, & also betrayed
McClellan's intention to attack a detached
fortification of great importance.

I must close. Give my love to all, &
believe me,

Ever yours,

J. H. Jenkins.

Miss Mary A. Benjamin
care of John Lewis Jenkins Esq.,
Smyrna, Del.



Miss Mary A. Benjamin,
care of John Lewis Jenkins, Esq.,
Smyna,
Delaware.



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John H. ...
St. ...

S-17-62