

[Letter from his mother in Charlottesville, Virginia, to Dr. John Watts in Texas]

August 3rd 1862

My dearest Son

Your most welcome letter was received on the 1st [unclear] I cant [can't] tell you how glad I was to hear from you all, oh how my heart yearns to my children. May God bless you every one. The time seems so long from one letter to another. Vic is here. She thinks I am too impatient but I cant [can't] help it. She came two weeks ago. The Yankees were within three miles of Capt. Burton's, so they started off at a moments warning and got safe here. Capt. B. returned but did not intend going entirely home, but near enough to hear from there. They were at the C. H. and through the county in considerable numbers, and also in Culpepper in large force and in Rappahannock and the counties around. It is said Pope has a hundred thousand men to sweep the whole country, but he will find a force ready to meet him. They have been in Rockingham, and in Harrisonburg twice. The first time they didn't do anything, but the last time committed many depredations. They went into your Cousin Catharine Gamble's kitchen and wanted to take the bread that had just been baked for the family. She told they should not have it. One fellow said he had walked a long way and was hungry and he must have it. She asked him what he came for, nobody sent for him, however she sold their bread and made about \$80 while they staid [stayed] selling to them. She asked \$1.00 a loaf for bread. They paid about half in gold and silver.

Since the battles below Richmond, of which I suppose you have heard, they have been tolerably quiet. Stonewall Jackson is a few miles from Gordonsville largely reinforced so I suppose there will be stirring times among them shortly.

I long for the dove of peace once more to visit our stricken country. We have a good many wounded and sick here and it is dreadful to see the poor fellows go about the streets some on crutches and some with their arms in a sling, some wounded in the head, neck and different parts of the body. Hundreds have died here since the war commenced. The University grave yard has received the body of many a poor fellow whose home is hundreds of miles off.

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I am mightily glad the children think of us and talk about us. We often think of, and talk about them, and long to see them. Tell them they shall have some pretty things as soon as the war is over and we can send them. I would like to see Johnny with his breeches on. I know he and Mary are both just as sweet as they can be. Be very patient with them my dear Son and teach them to be truthful and kind to each other.

I think Elisa and Effie have reason to be proud of their cloth. I am glad my dear Effie has become so industrious. She never was lasy [lazy], but she never had much to do, to call forth her energies. She was always ready and willing with anything I wished her to do and I feel sincerely thankful she has a good home with you both while this disastrous [disastrous] war is raging. She is as safe there as she would be here. I heard the Yankees had been in Louisa but I dont [don't] think they were near Annie. Since I commenced writing a large Cavalry force, some hundred, passed through on their way to Jackson. The town is always in commotion with coming and going of soldiers and army stores.

There is a great deal of typhoid fever here both among the soldiers and others. I think it would be better for you to remain at home than go in the army, if your health is bad you couldn't well stand it.

You are far ahead of us in vegetation, we have no roasting ears yet, but will in a few days. I believe the crops are pretty good about here, but every thing is very high. We make out

very well. If we have to pay high, we get good prices for what we have to sell. The wet weather has injured potatoes, causing them to rot, they are selling at \$4.00 per bushel, all other vegetables in proportion. There is such a demand for them. We raise plenty for ourselves, but none to spare.

Where is Capt. Ferrell's company now? I should like to here from them. I saw John [Rai--] he passed through N. Orleans the day the Yankees entered it. He was looking very well and told that he and his wife had both joined the Methodist Church. I wish that I could hear of you and your wife doing the same. It would cause rejoicing in my heart more than tongues can express. It is not advisable to defer so important a matter. You know your responsibility, but you know

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not when you will called to account for it. Oh do be persuaded my dear Son to seek your soul's salvation- your eternal interest is at stake. Oh I could throw my arms around you and beg you on my knees to be reconciled to God, to forsake every thing that he hates no matter how dear it is to you to seek his pardon for all past sins, and an interest in a Savior's love. You will never be happy without it no matter whether you are with your friends or not. If you have religion you will be happy, if you have not you will feel unsettled and unhappy though you should have all that earth can afford. It is the burden of my prayers day and not. I will never cease praying for it until it is answered while I live, I could not if I wished, it is a part of my life. I believe I could as soon cease to pray for the conversion of my children and their eternal happiness will be my last prayer in death. And when you think of me, whether day or night, think of me as agonizing before God for your happiness. Many a time have I been cross and hasty with you when I should have been kind and patient. I hope you will forgive me for ever having caused you a sigh or a tear. You must not think of leaving home to come to Virginia while the war lasts – but when it is over which I hope will be soon I hope to see, I long for it. I love you and yours with an undying love such a mother only can feel. I thank you and your dear wife for your kindness to my child. May the Lord return it to you both in rich blessings to you and your children.

If I have said any thing you do not like, forgive it. I write from a full heart. I have just received my Effie's letter dated May, but post marked 8th of June. It started before yours but was longer getting here. I will write to her in a week or so. I want to hear something from the army below Gordonsville before I write again. We heard they were fighting there to day, but dont [*don't*] know whether it is so or not – a battle cannot long be deferred any how. If the enemy conquers we will be overrun [*unclear*] if we succeed in driving them off it will be a great victory

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5# Louisa Halbach is to be married to day at 10 o'clock in the Presbyterian Church to Capt. Heishell. There are not many weddings there, but after the war I suppose there will be plenty.

Have you received the letter I sent you informing you of the death of Dr Leitch. Col. Ashby who was killed in the valley in a fight with the Yankees, was buried the same day. Sallie Jeffries and Mrs. Sullivan have died since then and a great many others about here.

Vica sends here best love to you all. She intended writing now but thinks she will wait a few days. Annie and hers were well at the last account. Your Pa is weak and complaining as he generally is this hot weather. It is exceedingly hot now.

The farmers are generally done harvesting. The crops I believe are plentiful, but the vile invaders have destroyed everything they dont [*don't*] want in the counties they have been through

Yesterday it was rumored that France and England had recognized the Southern Confederacy – that Seward had resigned and that Ohio Pennsylvania and Rhode Island had refused to send any more troops to the war. It is all too good to be true and I dont [*don't*] believe any thing now, until I hear it confirmed

Give my love to my dear Effie and Elisa, and kiss the children many times for me. You must all write often.

Your Pa sends much love.
Heavens blessings be around you all is my daily prayer

Your affectionate
Mother