

South Mountain Gap July 11, 1863
Some 3 or 4 miles from Middletown Md.

My Dear Ann,

We had orders to be ready to move last night at one o'clock, but we have not gone yet. Maybe we shall not go until tomorrow. I have heard no news from the front to day but I know that the Rebs are retreating to Williamsport &c, &c. If you will get the weekly Tribune to day you get more news about the doings of this army than I could tell you in two or three letters. You will no doubt see in the paper an account of the capture of Rebel spies at Fredrick City I saw one of them hanging to a little locust tree about a mile south of the city in a lot not far from the road. The rest were hung the day after we came through. It seemed rather bad to see a fellow mortal hanging like a dog, between heaven and earth but, he deserved his fate. I knew him at once a man that had often been in our camp= sell yankey notions such as Blank Books pencils paper Envelopes &c. There is not the least doubt but that he was the cause of much harm to our Army. And he confessed that if he had only five hours more to work in he would have Stewarts cavalry on our Supply train & destroy or capture the whole of it.

As it was I think we had pretty narrow escape while at Uniontown.=

I have been up on the top of South Mountain to day. It quite steep and rocky most of the up on the side next to the road but on the other side are beautiful wheat fields ready to be gathered. there I found some men cutting and binding wheat, & as good luck would have it the Farmers daughter brought some water & pie for the men. They gave two pieces of pie, and of course I had to try to craddle. I did so and went round the piece once without trouble. The men said that I knew how to craddle and never ought to be a soldier &c= I got all the Black Raseberries that I could eat & some Huckleberries that were very good.

I have never seen such crops in all the days of my life of wheat as there is between here Westminster. I am very sorry to hear such sad new from Dec Lewis please give him my best wishes and to Mrs Lewis too if she is alive.

It is July but I see no prospects of any of no getting a furlough to come home except to our long homes. But I shall come as soon as I can. I am very glad that there is a fair prospect of a good hay crop. The weather is very warm= I think that both armies are preparing for and other Great Battle But _____ I am not certain. I do not think that Lee can get all of his army over the River without fighting. Give my warmest love to Dack_ & Ma_g_ and to Father & Mother and &c.

Much love and many kisses to yourself & little ones

Your very lonesome husband

Wm. Charles

South Mountain Gap Maryland July 12 1863

Dear Ann

It is a great blessing to me to have the privilege now and then to write a few words to you= I do not feel much like writing to day but maybe tomorrow or next day or next to that I can not have the privilege= I have not much news, only I saw a man to day from our Regiment that was taken prisoner the same day as Billy Jones he made out to get away from them after being a prisoner for 2 days There was 157 privates and some 12 Officers taken from our Regiment on the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg=

Our Corps march right through the town and before they knew it they were surrounded by the Rebs @ gobbled up in less than no time and of course the report went forth that our Regiment was all cut up, only 17 men left &c. &c. yesterday I certainly thought that the Battle would begin before now but as yet it has not and I begin to fear that Lee will succeed in getting a cross the River in spite of our Army but still I trust not the next day or two will tell

July 16, near Jefferson Md

Dear Ann

Since yesterday morning we have come from 8 miles beyond Hagerstown Last Tuesday I went up to the Regt. for we expected that there would be a great Battle &c but the Rebs left I heard from Billy Jones & S Williams yesterday they are all right

Well I not wait any more for the bugle is sounding forward We are on the way to Harpers ferry We came over 20 miles yesterday and about 14 allready to day

Good by

Wm Charles

5 miles from Harpers ferry
Near Birlin July 17, 1863
Maryland

Dear Ann

I Received a letter from you yesterday dated July 2. I am very sorry that you are not well but I hope that you are better by this time yesterday as we rested a few minutes by the roadside I went into a house and begged an envelope and sent a letter to you that is I left it at that house and the man said he would take it to the Office to day= One of Our Boys by the name of John Michell that was taken by the Rebs at Gettysburg got a way from them and got back to us yesterday. He says that William Jones and S. Williams were quite well Capt. Harrison Cheney had also got away from the Rebs but what has become of him no one here knows Some think that he was caught again

Does Jane feel very bad after Alfred That is I have been told that he was killed at the Battle of Gettysburg But I am not certain that it is true but I am afraid that it is for His Regiment suffered terribly and you know that the 64th never gives up or retreat.

Since that Battle I have felt very lonesome & if it was not for you & those two little ones I would rather die then not

you see all the Welsh boys are gone every one of them and I am left a lone Last Tuesday morning We were told the great Battle would certainly begin, so I started from South Mountain Gap to go to the Regement not with with the intention of fighting but I could carry water to the wounded &c. &c.

Well we walked 4 miles mostly up hill the road was very muddy and the weather warm and of course it made me sweat like rain Then we got a ride most to Funkstown 5 miles more than we expected to find the Regement But they had gone

We heard there that Lees army had cross the River and that our army was following them so we pushed on to Hagerstown 2 miles more there we were told that our Regement was gone to Williamsport 7 miles farther, so we pushed on and just before night we found the 11th Corps and our Regt. very near the potomac where most of Lees army waded across

It is an everlasting shame to have let the Rebs off so easy. I cannot account for it no way at preasent----Get Rid of those poorest cows as fas as you can How is Jimy lameness is he any better I bought a hat at Hagerstown for \$2. my old one was all rags

How does the folks feel there about the Rebs getting a way The boys here feel very bad about it.

(July 17, 1863, continued)

We shall have to go back into Virginia again May that we are not going to follow Lee any longer and that we can have a rest for a while I do hope that [line obscured by fold and wear] that I can come home for a few days but I am relieved that you will be gone for the present

It is a great shame that Mother & susan do not come to see you often please give my love to Dacke and Mange=
[line obscured by fold] good wishes to you and the children

May Our Heavenly Father ___ his ___ guard and protect you all is the wish of your Husband

It rains very hard to day it is cold too

Camp 154 Regt N.Y. Vol.
New Baltimore Va July 24 1863

Dear Ann

We came to this place last night some where about 10 o'clock We must have come 25 or 30 miles we did not stop at all from the time we started early in the morning untill we got here We came by the way of Middleburg, Little Georgetown & White plains. At Middleburg a Secesh Lady gave me a very nice biscuit I asked if she would be so good as to give me something to eat. She asked me if I was sick I told her that I had been &c. so she gave me the bread= She said that she was very sorry that the war could not be stoped &c

The people in this part of the state are all Rebels. Night before last up at Mountville some 30 Teams was sent off some 4 miles from camp to get corn of the farmers= one of our Teams went with them. I came very near going my self. But some thing kept me from going. Well nine of those Wagons were taken and burned up, & the men & the mules & horses taken off. If I had gone most likely that to day I would be on the way to Richmond I heard some canons last night about 6 o'clock But where it was I have not been able to learn The weather is very hot to day

We went to pick Blackberries this morning and got a fine lot. I do hope that the mail will go out today

Very Truly Yours

Wm Charles

Camp 154th Regt. N.Y.V.
Warenton Junction, Va. July 26, 1863

Dear Ann,

I have written to you from Mountville but could not send them away but this afternoon it is said that there will be a chance to send letters away.

We have not had mail in a great while.

We came from New Baltimore to this place yesterday. The weather is and has been very hot. Hot last night and I felt pretty well used up. This is a very poor place for water. We have to go a great ways for it, and then it is not fit to use, but most likely we will go from here tommorrow. The railroad comes here from Washington and they have sent us a great quantity of Hard bread and pork and coffee and I guess that we are going to cross the Rappahannock.

We made out to capture from Lee's Army the other night a lot of cattle and a wagon train of one hundred and two wagons loaded with flour &c from Pennsylvania. Saw the cattle today, many too were taken from the farmers in that state. The drove is made up of everything from a calf to the old _____ king ox. More than half are good cows and heifers giving milk.

It seems to me that we are ahead of the rebel army, that is we are nearer to Richmond than it is and I cannot see how Lee is going to get into Richmond without fighting another battle and I look for a battle most any day. I do not hear a word from those boys that were taken prisoners. I saw a New York newspaper yesterday with the list of killed and wounded of the 64th., and Alfreds name was there as killed, he having been shot through the lungs. It is hard to believe but I suppose that I must believe it. Indeed it is too bad but such is War and Oh, My God when will it stop.

Poor Jane and little Kitty, I feel for them but I know that our Heavenly Father will take care of them, for he has promised to do so. My health is pretty good. Please give my warmest love to _____ and tell him that I wish he was here so I could buy a chew from him once in a while. tell _____ not to worry and not to work too hard. I trust that we shall be paid before a great while and I can send some money to you. I have no news who are drafted in that town. My very best respects to all. Kiss the little ones for me. I send lots to you and them.

Very truly your obedient husband

Wm. Charles

(Note: This letter courtesy of Charles and Mildred Edmunds,
Farmersville Station, N.Y.)

(On colored Magnus stationery, "I Have No Mother Now!")

Head Quarters 154th Regt N.Y. Vols.
Camp Near Warenton Junction Va.

My Dear Wife

After waiting for many days for a letter from you, I got one last night & 3 to day! from you and one from Richard Lewis. I am very sorry that you do not use the machine to cut the hay= I think that Dack_ could use it first rate with out any trouble at all. I am a fraid that it will be pretty rusty before I can use it I did think that I could get a furlough in this month or the next but now I see no hopes for it at all. I sent a letter to you yesterday yes two of them but it was before I got that letters of yours= I am very thank in deed to Our heavenly that you are all so well It is to bad that you have to loose Gilbert I do not know what you will do now= but you must try to get along as well as you can=

Maybe that Dack_ will be able to find somebody to help him= I have no news to send to you at all it is Reported this morning that the Rebels are have come through Chesters Gap, and are near Culpeper C.H. if that is the case they will get to Richmond without fighting if they wish to

I feel very sorry for sister Jane it was to bad to take her husband off so sudden Tell me all about Alfreds funeral I presume Mr Harris will preach. I should like very much to hear the surmons I hope they will be kept so I can read them if my life is spaired to come home

Tell Tommy Bach that data loves him very much= and would like very much to come & help him and Dack_ to get in the crops

Tell him to be very careful not to get hurt with the sythes & forks, or get to near to the horses &c.

Frances Ann does not talk yet. It is about time I should think. she will talk all the faster when she does begin I send her and Tommy some cards maybe it will please them for a little while

Well I can only pray for you all, and hope that we shall meet you all once again on earth

My love to all. Poor Deacon Lewis must feel very lonely as for his I think she is where sorrow never comes. Well good by= May be we shall stay here for a day or two

Truly

Wm. Charles

Camp near Warrenton Junction
154th regt. N.Y.S. Vols.
July 31, 1863

My Dear Wife

It is very warm and I cannot write but a few words=but I must let you know how I am &c. Well my health is pretty good. We have a pretty good place place for a camp, only the water is very scarce but things are growing better the different Corps are moved farther from each other so that it will be easier for us to get water. It looks now as if we were to stay here for a week or two but still we may be off tomorrow morning or sooner.= I have no news whatever to send to you I heard this morning that Capt. Cheney has got home==

My Dear Wife you say that the War is soon to stop Well I hope it will= if the army of the Potomac had been able to ketch old Lee before he got back into Virginia, I think it would help to to bring the war to a speedy close== Still I do not blame the army of the Potomac it has done nobly= but some of our officers have been very much to blame If they drank a little less Whiskey things would go on much better than they do now

Some big loads of hay you say in the Barn and some cut. Well if Gilbert is with you you must be nearly done by this time= I am very sorry that you do not use the machine=

How does John get along with his haying who has he got to help him=

Please give my best respects to all enquiring friends & my warmest love & kind wishes to Dack__ & Ma_g_ & Love & kisses to yourself & Tommy & Frances Ann

Yours most Truly

Wm Charles

Bristow Station Va August 2 1863

We came to this place yesterday just before we started I saw J. Jones & J Hooper I tell you I was glad to see them. they are well They have been in ten different Battles in Maryland and pennsylvania They say that they never knew any thing about fighting before

I send you a letter writen to JohnLewis if you can read it to him, you may do so I know he can not read it. you can do as you like with it. We have a good place now and plenty of water Good Water and oh what a blessing it is. My health is very good. Dr Van Aernam has given me a new shirt a very good one to so I am all right again on the clothes question My love to all I expect a letter from you to night

Most Truly &c

W Charles

Head Quarters 154th Regt. N.Y.V.
Camp Near Cattlets Station Va.
August 16th 1863

My Dear Ann,=

It is Sunday morning We have just been down to the brook to wash ourselves. We go most every day. It is very warm but I must try to write a few lines to you for maybe it will be several days before I have a chance again for we expect to be marching again every day night before last we had orders to be ready to march at a very short notice, so of course we do not expect to remain here much longer. It is reported that were to go out to Stafford Court House where we was last Winter again but I do not hardly believe it yet although it may be so. I have no news Whatever to send to you= My health is pretty good day before yesterday I had a spell of the sick Headache I did not vomit much. I have had the Dirrhea since but not bad It will be all right in a day or two It is the sabbath day= but there is no signs of it to be seen here not the least. for my part I try to respect the day as much as I can, and I do no work unless I am oblige to do it. Last Winter I had more work on the sunday than any other day of the week, but it is not so now. I have the day to my self. So I spend in reading and writing & going to meeting when we have any= We shall a sermon to day I hope We had a very good one last sunday= The Drum is just beating yes it is for meeting and I will go.= I have just come from the meeting it was a very short one & but few there. Our Chaplain is not very well liked by the boys--in fact, he is not the man for the place he occupie= The words he preached from to day you will find in the 12th Ch. 26 Ver. of 1 Cor. Since I have come from meeting I have refused to let the Majors Waiter to use my tools to clean a sword sheath also two Lieutenants came and wanted some work done I told them that there was plenty of time during the week to such work and that I did not wish to do it on the sabbath maybe I have given some offense but it is better to offend man than my God=who has commanded all men to rest upon the sabbath day= Many a man does that here that he would be utterly ashamed to do at home and excuses himself by saying that others do it or that it is customary in the Army to do it. But that is no excuse for them= It is worse than no excuse at all.

Well I presume you have been to meeting if you were well= I hope that the time will come when We can go to gether as we used to Those that have never been deprived of good meetings on Sundays do not know what a blessing and a comfort it is

It is getting very warm & I must stop for my hands are getting so sweaty that the paper will get all messed. I will finish it in the morning if I am alive and well Dear Ann,= as it is a little cooler I have made up my mind to finish this letter I have been trying to sleep but the flies would not let me This I think has been the hot-test day that we have had=

Capt Cheney has not come yet it is reported that Bill Jame & Ben Holms have left Gettysburg for some place unknown have they come to Freedom I hope they have not Deserted that would be a Disgrace not only to the Army but to the Regt. and to the town. Bill always declared that he would never He would never do it if he was in the army 40 years I have not heard any thing lately from the boys that have to Richmond

Box 308

Head Quarter 154 Reg N.Y. Vols.

Camp near Alexandria Va.

August 4, 1863 (Actually September 4, 1863)

Dear Ann=

In my last letter I told you that I was going that day to Washington &c I did go on a little Steamboat.= O I tell you I did enjoy the ride= I went all through the Capitol building= and such a place O Ann I never thought that man could make any thing so beautiful if you & I will live long enough you must see it I can not tell you any thing about. There is one picture there that cost three thousand dollars It is the most splendid thing that I ever saw= How I did wish that you was with me----- -----But the time will come I hope when you and little Tommy & Sissy can see it.-----

Well I am to tired to night to write any more. I have been very bussy to day= So good night & God bless you all= I take a look at my little picture very offten and it does me good every time I look at my Dear boy I wish he was here to play with me=

September 5, 1863

Well here I have been taking a short walk the sun is just up and it is a lovely morning

There is no news to send to you I had a long talk with Cheney last night He some what doubts if Bill James & Ben. Holms will ever come back to their Regiment. It is a great shame for them= They will be reported as deserters in few days if do not come back

It looks to me as if We were to remain here for a month or six weeks maybe more It is a good time now if any body wants to send any thing to us= The Parole Camp where Dick Lewis Ben Morgan and Lewis Jones are is only about a mile and half from our camp.= So if any body wishes to send us any thing they can do so= But I do not wish you to send me any thing because if you did send me some butter it would only be harder for me to do without it after wards But if some one else is going to send a box and condecends to let you know, you may send me a piece of cheese= Direct= if any body concludes to send any thing--By Express to Alexandria Va.

Care T.A. Allen Q. Master 154th Regt. N.Y.Vols.

It will be sure to come through

You said a while ago that you wanted some pictures to put in your Book. I have three that I am very proud of. Doctor Vanernum has been very kind to me When I was sick he sent a man to take care of me= and came Himself twice a day to see me== He lives in Franklinville Major L. D. Warner is also a very cleavor man= and Quarter Master Allen is a good friend to me= Do you not think that they are good pictures== I will have more by and by maybe= If these ever come to you please be very carefull of them I expect to get a letter from you to night I will only send one of the pictures in this letter= I wish you would Direct all your letters to me just as this one Envelope is have Milo Holmes or Jameson or Sam James Direct a lot for you then you will have them ready== I will if I live send you a line again on monday= My love to all===

(continued)

(September 5, 1863 continued)

I would like to write more but the jobs begin to come in.= Remember me most kindly to Father, Mother and Susan and John and all I send lots of kisses to you and the children How does Tommy like his cressent=

Good by Your Very Truly

Wm. Charles

I think that we shall be paid before long. there is six months pay due me now= besides of a hundred dollars of Extra pay, but I am almost certain that I shall never get that=

Will you please let me know in what Hospital Bill Davis is if I knew I would go and see him the other day=

P.S. I have a cressent for you but I want to keep it a little while

Wm. Charles