

Middletown, Md.
July 15th, 1863

20

My dearest Lis,

I wrote you yesterday that the "rebs" had eluded our grasp--and true enough they have!

We went from Hagerstown to Williamsport yesterday--for no other reason that I could learn than to gaze in blank amazement at the place where the "rebs" had slipped off!! They crossed the river at Williamsport wading a deep turbid stream--with a rapid current nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ mile wide and deep enough to come up to the armpits. I was sure men fleeing for their lives would find some way to cross a river like the Potomac.

They commenced crossing on Monday morning July 6th and the last of them got over yesterday morning about 7 o'clock--among the very last that crossed were Generals, Lee, Longstreet and Hill!!

Pavilion Center Antique Shop

There has never been such a blunder in the army as allowing them to escape. They were completely within our grasp and with energy, boldness and promptness that army and the rebellion could have been crushed at a blow! We were at Boonsboro on the morning of the 8th and could easily have reached Williamsport on the morning of the 9th. We should have then met a defeated and divided (a portion over the river) enemy--and what is more all that day they were without ammunition! We came here as I said on the 8th and unaccountably let day after day go by without striking a blow! Put a General's shoulder straps upon a man and he loses all common sense at once. He seems giddy with his elevation. Every private in the Army knew that every moments delay was disastrous to us as it gave time for the rebs to escape--to entrench themselves likewise.

Pavilion N.Y.

But that idea never got through the Generals heads until this whole army had gone, and when citizens from Williamsport who were just released from bondage told them so, told them that Lee and his whole army were gone--they could not believe it, but straightway started for Williamsport with the whole army--infantry, artillery and baggage trains just to assure themselves that such was the fact! At least I concluded that was so, for they marched us down there yesterday through rain and mud a distance of eight miles and this morning at daylight we came back over the same road on a forced march to the Lord only knows where! When we were chasing the rebs, the boys, although barefooted and ragged and half fed, were cheerful on their forced marches, but today they feel chagrined and humbugged. They are silent and morose and what little they do say is damning the foolishness and shortsightedness of the officers. They are right for they have endured everything, braved everything for the sake of success, and success bountiful and lasting was within their grasp--but lost by the imbecillity of commandry. Our army is an anomaly--it is an army of Lions commanded by jackasses!!

This is the third time we have been at this place in the last 20 days--hope we may never come here again although it is a pleasant place. I haven't the least idea where we are going but I am of the opinion that we are to cross the river at Harpers Ferry and go to Winchester to intercept the rebs--too late! too late!

7/15/63

I am heartsick and discouraged and thoroughly disgusted with such folly and humbugging and shall try to resign as soon as this campaign ends, which must be before long for they can't march us much more for we have been marching or fighting all the time for the last month.

We were pleased and surprised today by the appearance of Jack Mitchell and Lt. Crosby in our midst again. They escaped from the rebs at Martinsburg on the 10th inst. nearly lost them by drowning in swimming the river. They are well. Capt. Cheney gave the rebs the slip that night before they did, but he has not yet reached us.

Proof of Pav. Co. Antique Shop

I think you will have hard work reading this as I have been under the necessity of writing this by firelight--lying on my belly on the ground. We have marched 3 miles today--the weather is hot and muggy and we are ordered to be ready to move tomorrow at 4 o'clock. Should we go to Harpers Ferry I think we should reach it tomorrow night.

I am quite well. My love and kisses to the children and yourself. Do write often.

Affectionately

Henry

P.S. We have had no mail for several days but hope to soon. I am very anxious to hear from you for I could be content if I knew it was well with you at home. I have heard nothing from Henry Fuller since I left Gettysburg.