

Shelbyville Tenn.: March 19th 1863

Dear Et,

Yours of the 10th has just been received. It is the first line I have had from you since the 2nd. Before this you will have received two or three more of mine written since the one of Feb. 21st by Lt. Davidson. I don't know why the mails take such freaks. At one time I received a letter from in five days after it was written: And began to hope that I would hear more frequently than before, especially while I was stationing at Shelbyville. I perceive that you have limited yourself to one letter a week now – I suppose on account of the scarcity of paper, or perhaps because you are so busily employed about your domestic concerns. I shall feel anxious and uneasy until I hear again how Pat is. I don't know why the children have been so subject to those fevers of late, unless it may be attributed to your occupying a ground floor. (By the way, you wrote me last fall that you had moved downstairs and I have enquired once or twice since and you forget in your letters to answer whether you are still there or not?) I don't know what is detaining Col. Beard & Harry. If they started as you supposed they would on last Thursday (13th) they should have been here two days ago. I expect they did not start. If you have made up your mind to come here, I am sorry you didn't come with them, instead of waiting for Capt. Strain. His health is not good & withal, is, I expect, not so well up to all the tricks of travel as Col. Beard. You seem undecided though, and say that you would rather have my approval or disapproval of the move. I am so anxious to see you, that it cannot meet my disapproval. I do fear the fatiguing efforts of the trip upon you and the children, as also the exposure of the children to Small Pox, etc. (that's another question you have not answered – has the vaccination taken properly on all three of them?) By all means do not let them stir from home till they have been vaccinated and it has properly taken – not even to go to town. You do not believe the stories about Small Pox being in Monticello. It may not be there, but it is best to act as though it were there. If you come, you must telegraph me from Savannah to Shelbyville, so that I can have a place for you to go to. Every nook & corner is full to overflowing; and I think it probable you will have to stop at Winchester. If you shall get there and not hear from me, enquire for Mr. Frank Estill. He will provide you lodgings either at his own house or somewhere else – or for Mrs. Hutchins, an old friend of mother's or for Mrs. Frizell whose son married Miss Scruggs in the neighborhood of Casa Bianca. Capt. Foster, Quarter Master is also there now, as Post Quarter Master. He will take it as a favor if you will call upon him for anything you want. I have mentioned all these names, so that there may be no mistake about it. I feel sure that some of them would be able and all of them would be willing to furnish your temporary accommodations. And I mention Winchester as a stopping place for you , in case you should come up that far and find the military condition of things at Tullahoma and Shelbyville is such as to make it unadvisable for you to venture farther. Winchester is two miles from Decherd a station on the road – whence and omnibus would take you to Winchester. On arriving at Decherd (in case you conclude not to come on to Shelbyville) you had better stop there where there is a pretty good tavern and write Capt. Foster a note to procure a place for you in Winchester.----But I have written as though you were coming sure enough! The very thoughts of you seeing you soon makes me wild with delight. I have been so fortunate during this war, and have so much to be thankful for, that I can hardly hope for this crowning act of good fortune, but I will hope.

Davidson did not get his leave extended, so I look for him on the 22nd and I do not much expect to see Col. Beard before that time.

Since I commenced writing this letter, Genl. Withers has returned from Mobile so I suppose I will go back to my Brigade tomorrow. I have not seen the General yet but will go and see him soon in the morning. His Division is in most excellent condition now – better than it ever was before, and by far the best in Genl. Bragg’s army. If it does not make its mark in the next great battles, it will not be the fault of the subordinate officers and men. I received today a letter from Judge McGehee which I will answer soon. I suppose your visit has brought me this favor.

You rather ridicule my letter of the 19th ulto. speaking of it in a former letter as a “lecture,” and now in this you call it my “letter on propriety.” I certainly did not intend it to be either of the one or the other; but as you had, in former times, when we were more together than we have been permitted to be of late, frequently asked me to counsel with you freely about such things, I ventured to advise, not to lecture. I still think it was not a prudent thing for you to do, although you took the precaution to have the children & Miss Sylvester with you. I think it was not less imprudent in Miss Sylvester herself – I think the manner in which she is living at Mr. Hamilton’s is very imprudent, and I would rather you had gone alone than to have taken her with you. Mark this prediction, she will be extremely fortunate if her name does not become common on the tongue of scandal before another year rolls around. Not that there will be the slightest foundation for it – for that I do not believe – but merely because, in her daily walk, she affords opportunity for it. That is all that scandal ever wants – opportunity.

I had intended to answer your inquiries as to what are my ideas of “prudishness” but have already “lectured” long enough. I know these are not agreeable topics to you – I will tell you, when I see you, if you will remind me of it.

-- March 20th --

Genl. Withers returned last evening and assumed command of his Division today. I take command of Chalmers’ old Miss. Brigade (Chalmers having been transferred, himself, to the army in Mississippi). It contains many of my old Miss. acquaintances and friends – and at their solicitation Chalmers made a parting request of Genl. Withers that I should command them. It is a good Brigade, but I don’t think it is quite as good as the one I commanded at Murfreesboro (Walthall’s).

I have just heard that Col. Beard came on without stopping at Monticello, or rather that he did not come through that place, but took the nearest route from Tallahassee up through Albany & he stopped at Ringold, GA to see Dr. Gamble, and had not reached Tullahoma on yesterday. I suppose Harry will come on with Capt. Strain or by himself.

I have just seen a Louisville Journal of the 12th March. It contains nothing specially interesting. The Fed. Congress has created a new Territory somewhere East of the Cascades called Idahoe (at first they called it Montana) of which Lincoln has appointed Col. Wallace the Governor. Wallace’s term as delegate from Washington having expired on 4th Mch. B.F. Kendall (you remember him?) was killed in his office by a young man whose father Kendall had maltreated in some way.

Today I received a letter from Mary at Camden Arkansas, dated 24th Feb., in which she laments her own fate rather more than she does that of her husband. She is

evidently deranged, in my opinion. She is there in the swamps of Arkansas, water and mud-bound with a carriage and two horses and three servants boarding at \$150 per month! Mother had written to her to come to Memphis, and she (Mary) writes to me to advise her what to do. I shall certainly not advise her to go to Memphis, for besides it being in the hands of the Yankees – where I don't want to see any of my friends – she would have mother in two days, as crazy as he is. I wouldn't live on the same plantation with such a woman for all the Plantations on old Caney!!! So you must know that I am not sorry that you are my wife, instead other women I have seen!!-

Kiss the boys all around, Willie, The and Pat for me. I shall feel very anxious till I hear from you again how Pat is. Much love to Aunt. Where does she expect to spend the summer? Love to Mollie too and her gals (how many has she?!!!) And here a long, long kiss for Et from

Your
Patton

Transcribed by Christopher A. Baker, University of Florida, 2008.