The General To His Lady:
The Civil War Letters of William Dorsey Pender to Fanny Pender

Knowing of my interest in Major General William Dorsey Pender, for whom Pender County was named, my good friend Bill Bass gave me an out-of-print book, The General To His Lady, from his personal library. It was edited by William W. Hassler and published in 1962 by the University of North Carolina Press.

A representative selection of this compilation of General Pender’s letters to his wife Fanny comprises this article. The personal details of General Pender’s correspondence paint a vivid picture and reveal the humanity of a man who was one of the finest Confederate commanders. His integrity shines through and the hardships that he and his men endured are part of our Southern heritage.

At 29, William Dorsey Pender was the youngest Major General in the Confederate Army. He led his men with valor and was wounded in almost every battle before receiving a fatal injury from a shell fragment at Gettysburg. He was laid to rest in the churchyard of Calvary Parish in his native Tarboro, N.C. In a documented testimonial at his headquarters south of the Potomac, General Robert E. Lee stated, “I ought not to have fought the battle at Gettysburg. It was a mistake, but the stakes were so great I was compelled to play. For had we succeeded, Harrisburg, Baltimore or Washington was in our hands. And we would have succeeded had General Pender lived.” - Colonel George N. Earnhart.

Garsburg, N.C., May 18th, 1861

My dear Wife

Your letter of the 16th was received yesterday. It gave me great pleasure to see you in such good spirits, and I am also happy to feel in a better mood myself....

I am tired of working for other people. I want to go and get my own Company and commence with it. I was telegraphed yesterday by Judge Howard if I would take the Coloneley of one of the Regular State Regiments. You see I am having office seek me and through a judge at that, besides that I am approached for letters of recommendation to the Governor. I have heard that I stand very high with his excellency, and very direct too. Honey, you will not think me conceited writing you about myself in this way. I do not speak to others of myself. You know that I did not in former times put on airs, and I believe I do not now, but it makes one proud to think that my wife's husband is of enough consequence to be asked to take a Coloneley when so many older ones are seeking it. The idea that Mrs. W. D. Pender's husband, altho' poor is considered a man of some merit. I always thought that you deserved something better than a poor insignificant Lieutenant. I am no more than I used to be but others think I am and that is more than half. I would like to be a great man for your sake but I have not the confidence to try. Even if I would be afraid to try a Regiment....

Matters it would appear are coming to a crisis. Troops are being concentrated very rapidly by both sides at Harpers Ferry and at Old Point and Norfolk. It is hard to say which would be better for us, delay or immediate action, for there is no doubt that they are making tremendous efforts and are organizing much more rapidly than we. They imagine we are much better prepared than we are. The fact is, our people imagine the only thing to do to whip the Yankees is to form a few volunteer companies and go to Richmond and the thing is done. Do not imagine I fear for the cause. We fight for protection, they for revenge and stubbornness. I have thought for some time that a little whipping would be of immense benefit to us, not that I wish anything of the sort.

Sunday, 19th [Same letter]

My own wife, today is Sunday and how it carries me back to those pleasant times at Vancouver when we used to walk to church together I feeling so proud of my wife, and to hear [you] sing even with that old melodion. Honey, those were pleasant days—especially those spring days of ’60. The pleasure of going out and then pleasant anticipation of seeing the baby when we got back. You will say I am getting sentimental; I own up; I do feel so this morning. Not sadly so but thinking of the happiness I have had the world, and which we may enjoy for many a day. Darling, I am not that cold and matter-of-fact individual always that you seem to think. As soon as I begin to think of Good Spring I go back under that shade tree as the most perfectly happy time I ever spent—Oh! how I should like to be with you even this short day, but as it is otherwise, we will not complain.

I shall go to church today if it does not rain too hard. My love to all.

Your devoted Husband
My dear Wife

I hope you have not been as unfortunate as I have, for not a word have I heard from you since leaving. I do not blame any one, for if your letters got to Garysburg I expect they detained them. But I fear some derangement has taken place in the mail. You must recollect that now five cents in money must be paid, the U.S. postage stamp being of no value now.

We are getting on very well. No sickness of any importance, and no complaining among the men of importance. Some say I am too damned strict and others that I am just right. The people are as kind as they can be. We have a delightful camp; fine shade, fine spring water, and good drill ground. I do not wish anything better than to be allowed to remain here long enough to get the Regt. a little in condition. They begin to make quite a presentable appearance, much better than you would suppose. I am now in command of the troops at this place—one cavalry camp, besides our own, and if I chose several post[s] besides this. Four thousand troops are to be ordered to this place, but my own Regt. is as much as I want, and as I can take care of. Altho' so near the enemy we are about as ignorant of their move-ments as you are in N.C. It is said we have a very large force at Norfolk, how many but few know.

I am treated with the greatest kindness by the people. Several invitations to dine today, as well as Sunday invitations to tea. Dined today with the most beautiful girl in Suffolk—and it has [a] great many very pretty ones...

My horse came last night—the one given me by messers Davey and Norfleet. He is really a very fine horse—goes well under the saddle and splendidly in harness They paid $200. Mr. Davey in addition sent me a nice Dragoon saddle and bridle. It is a fine present and one I very much appreciate. Very few will be able to get a better mount than your Colonel. He is a large "bay"—magnificent you might say on his carriage—named "Jim." My rich relatives—and those only who are supposed to know my inability to buy a fine horse—allow those who are not expected to have any particular interest in me, to present me with a horse. They are willing enough for me to work for the reputation of the family but that is all. Put not your trust in relatives. Honey I flatter myself that thus far no one need be ashamed of me. I occupy a high position for one so young and have been able to sustain myself so far. I do not feel elated or conceited for the future is before me and I feel the terrible responsibility, and all the chances for me to ruin myself in a military sense. Darling I have said nothing of you and dear Turner and Little Dorsey, but not because I have not thought of you. I am very anxious to hear from you all and look forward to each mail with hopes which have thus far been sadly disappointed. One consolation and a great one it is I feel that when I do hear you will have gone through the worst and almost ready to be up. I will not allow myself to think but that you are doing well. It is the best way. Honey why should I not be satisfied in this world. Let me enumerate the reason[s] why I should. A fine Regt., nice gentlemen who treat me with the greatest deference—you have no idea how much an affectionate brother, a fine horse, a good mount, the good opinion of the world, and Oh! the best wife in the world. Honey every woman I see has to undergo a comparison with you and none will stand the test, none, none; Oh my dear wife your husband loves you and appreciates you more than tongue or pen can tell; and to proceed, the finest boy in the world, for I think none can compare with Turner. And last, but I assure you I do not consider it the least, the affectionate love of one such as Pamela. Assure the dear create that next to your love I appreciate hers next. She is not expected or required to give it and for that reason it is valued the more.

I should be much obliged to anyone who can get your brother's [Samuel's] sword from Willie without hurting his feel-ings and send it to me by express at once. Tell Jake if I ap-parently neglect him he must not think hard of me for I have more than I can do. I have not as yet been able to organize my staff and consequently have more than my share of work. I will keep you posted as to my movements.

Your devoted Husband

Suffolk, Va., June 9th, 1861

My dear Wife

I was very happy when I received your letter, and instead of scolding, I blessed you. You have been blessed honey in your confinement most assuredly, at least up to last dates. It came on earlier, before the hot part of June and July and then you could not have been better than you have. I wish you were perfectly recovered. I should be tempted to have you come down to see me. This is the most pleasant little town I ever saw. The kindest and most hospitable people I ever saw anywhere. The ladies keep my table covered with flowers and smile on me in the most bewitching manner and some of them are certainly like pinks. The colonel is quite a lion. Do not be jealous for none of them have the attractiveness of Mrs. W. D. Pender. I have not failed to
let them know that I am married for poor creatures I do not wish
to destroy their rest. We have had various rumors in the last few
days, but as long as we remain here we shall not be hurt unless
accidentally. They have enough to do on the North side of the
James River. It is supposed here that Gen. Magruder made an
attack on their camp at a place called Newport News about 25
miles from here across the James River yesterday for both musket
and cannon firing was heard and seen from this side of the river,
and four steamers soon thereafter took more troops to them.
Newport News is an encampment they have back of Old Point
and on the James River.

General Magruder is stationed at Yorktown 7 or 8 miles
from them. The impression is gaining ground that they have not
as many men in and around Old Point as was supposed. We have
at least 25,000 to 30,000 men within 7 or 8 miles of Norfolk,
and no doubt could attack their camp if necessary. The troops
here are intended I suppose as a reserve for Norfolk, and also to
prevent their getting possession of the Petersburg and Sea-board
roads wlich cross near here; and which if in their possession
would completely cut Norfolk off from speedy succor, and
therefore important even if fighting should not take place here.
To get here they would either have to march twenty miles or
come up a small and difficult river, in [the] latter case their
approach would be known.

They had a little affair at Yorktown two days ago, in which
their steamer Yankee was badly handled. Our first Regt. is there.
Our 2nd at Norfolk in a swamp. So far as location is concerned
we have the best of any troops in this section of the state. We are
at the head of several springs, where we have plenty of good
spring water and shade, and in the way of eating everything that
we could wish. We could not be more comfortably situated.

As to the war I know but little—having to get nearly all our
information from the papers. Eighteen miles below us at the
mouth of this river—the Nansemond—at what is called Pig Point
Battery they had a little firing three or four days ago dismount-
in two of our uns, but hurting no one. The steamer was supposed
to have received several shots. We are drilling four times a day
having Regimental drill once each day. In two or three months
we shall make quite a presentable appearance.

Mary gave me a good scolding for giving David a
position, but has since relented and sent her love. David says he
shall make Mary go with you and Pamela this summer. Do not
fail to go. By the way let me give you the fashion here in summer
dresses. Cape something like you have seen on the old fashioned
overcoats or rather more like the one on your cloak. I have seen
several and they wear no shawl, etc. and it looks very pretty,
particularly for good and small figures. Material on the same
style as yours. Honey I hope they have not let your figure be
spoilty by not keeping your bandage sufficiently tight. Anything,
but do not lose your figure.

I am troubled to know when I shall be able to get any
uniform, for [I do not know] where the money is to come from,...
I have money due but do not know how to get it. North Carolina
owes me $40 which I get tomorrow.

Someone told your father that he had offended me by the
way he spoke to me the day you were sick, for he spoke to me
about it and I said he was excited, but did not intend to hurt my
feelings. I accepted his apology and allowed him to keep his hat
on. I hope he has not worried you much during your sickness.

We had service in camp twice today. Our Chaplin is a
Methodist but a very sensible man. Brother of Major Andrews
of Vancouver. Great many of the ladies came out this afternoon
to hear our service and remained over to dress parade. They are
getting to come out in numbers every evening and bring us
bouquets, etc., etc. dish like apple dumpling. We have dress parade
without the music. I would [pay] $25 per month out of my own
pocket for a band....

We had a grand time Thursday—the day appointed by
Mr. Davis for fasting and prayer. Honey write me as often as you
feel like it. I will write you again tomorrow. We had a false alarm
last night and the men altho excited showed fight. It was nothing
but some one deviling the sentinel and he hollered for the Guard.

Tell Pamela I again take back anything I had said about her
not writing. She is a dear creature and it makes me feel proud to
have her say she loves me so well. I should like so much if you
both could be here.

Your devoted Husband

Suffolk, Va., June 26th, 1861

My dear Wife

Let me state my grievances in the beginning and I shall be
in a better mood to finish up. Have you not neglected me in your
pleasure at Spring House. You say you were well when Dr.
Wharton got to see you Thursday, and altho' you had not written
for several days, still you put off writing until the next Mon-
day.... Was such delay justified by my treatment of you....

You say you are going to have the baby christened, but do
not tell me who is to be the God father or to represent me. I
would not deprive you of the pleasure of having it done by the
Bishop, but do you not suppose these little questions of any
interest to me, or have you taken me literally when I say I love
Turner and you will have to love this baby. As to the reason, I
have nothing more to say than I have already said.

I was at a little gathering two nights ago, and had a very
time dancing and flirting with a very nice girl. I am trying
to get her to knit you a sac for the hair, but she said that she is not
going to work for my wife, but will do anything for me...
Read to end

Good Spring, June 30th 1861

My dear Husband

I will try to answer your letter fully and definitely, and hope it will give satisfaction. It is true I was well when the Doctor arrived, but I was not out of bed. I had been keeping very quiet for fear of a return of the chill—I sat up for a little while on Friday, but the fever had left me as weak as a baby—I gained strength very rapidly, however, and would have written to you on Saturday, but there was no mail until Monday, so I deferred writing until Sunday—I wrote as well as I knew how, little thinking that the letter which gave me so much pleasure in writing should be the cause of so much complaint.

As to christening the baby, I had just heard that the Bishop was to be here and thought it would be the only opportunity I should have for some time. I should, of course, much prefer your being with me on such an interesting and solemn occasion, but would I be justified in postponing it? I intend to have no Godparents—Father will of course represent you. I did not know, before, that you attached so much importance to the rite of infant baptism, or I should have written more at length about it. The name I only proposed as a joke—no, Mr. Pender, I have ever had too much respect for your opinions—or fancies even—than to wish to act in opposition to them.

You could not expect Jake to write as definitely as I could have done. I have tried ever since you left to have you informed as to mine and Turner's health, and if the letters were not written exactly as you wished, I could not help it—remember, Mr. Pender, that I am not quite as strong as I might be, and I have a good many duties to attend to that distract my attention from the sheet before me. I never sit down to write a letter that I do not have to get up half a dozen times to perform some little service either for the baby or someone else. And often, I attempt to write with both children screaming in my ears and indeed, indeed I never intended to neglect you. It was but natural that I should be glad to see my favorite brother from whom I had been separated three years.

I have never in the whole course of my married [life] done anything deliberately that I knew would pain you—your will has always been my law—and I have ever tried to obey to the very letter the commands of my Lord and master. You have indeed fulfilled your duty in writing to me, and I have blest you a thousand times for it...

You say that the ladies seem to think I am a very superior woman—it would be a great pity to [undeceive] them, and might detract somewhat from your distinction—so I had better remain, for a great many reasons, where I am....

"I was at a little gathering two nights ago, and had a very nice time dancing and flirting with a very nice girl. I am trying to get her to knit you a sack, but she says she is not going to work for my wife, but will do anything for me." Now, I ask you candidly, in your sober senses, why you wrote me such a thing as that? Was it to gratify your vanity by making me jealous, or to make me appreciate your love still more? You are very much mistaken. I feel indifferent that any woman should have dared to make such loose speeches to my husband and that he should have encouraged it by his attentions, for you must have gone pretty far for a woman to attempt such a liberty.

My dear, ever dear Husband, do not think this is only a little jealous feeling—I know it will amuse you now, but the time will come when you will remember it. I never thought to hear that he, whom I loved above all the world, whom I respected and esteemed till now, would stoop to listen to such improper language—do you think the lady would have made such a remark in my presence? Then it was not proper for you to hear. I never expected to hear you admit that you had been flirting. What would you think to hear me use such an expression? And would it be more immoral in me than in you? I did not think you would trifle with my feelings in that way in the future. I had rather not hear these things. You cannot, of course, intend to give me pleasure by mentioning them. I know you love me, my dear Husband. I have had too many sweet and precious proofs of it to doubt it now. You have ever been the kindest and best of husbands, and I have loved the very ground you trod upon—the very air you breathed. I have tried to please you. God knows I have—I have tried to consult your wishes in everything—and do you think even if I did not write exactly when you expected it, that I deserved such a letter? I cannot think what reason you could have had for it, you ask me to look over and forget it—I have forgotten all the anger I felt at first—but I can never forget that letter—nothing you have ever said—nothing you have ever done, nothing you have ever written in this whole of our married life—ever pained me so acutely or grieved me so deeply. I know you are sorry for it now, for you must feel it to be unjust, but it is enough to know that you could, in any mood say so much to pain me....

Turner is the dearest little fellow. I know you would love him more than ever if you saw him. He is getting right fat again.

Little Dorsey is a beautiful child for his age—I am really getting to love him a good deal....

All send love to you. God bless you!

Your faithful Wife

Camp Ruffin, July 9, 1861

My dear Wife

To my great surprise I received a letter from you today which I assure you afforded me the most sincere pleasure. You will excuse me for alluding to the subject, but really I should not have been surprised if I had not received any more letters from you. I had about made up my mind that we were henceforth to be as strangers. You will be surprised at this confession, but Honey I could not see how you would ever write me such an affectionate letter again, and darling, if you knew what I have suffered since receiving this letter you would believe that I was not putting on.

Oh! Fanny, Fanny, how could you suppose a dishonorable act, for if as you say "the young lady acted dishonorably and I must have encouraged her," I was acting in bad faith and again darling you accuse me of prevaricating when I said I wanted to see you but that you had better not come down, which would have been prevaricating if my intentions had been as you intimated.

That letter was in my mind awake and sleeping, and again
and again would my grief have to be relieved by tears. If you
had simply said I do not love you I could have stood it, for I
should have known that you did not mean it, but to accuse me
of dis-honorable acts. But honey let it pass with the last remark
that if you knew how much I suffered you would believe me

... It is certainly lonely enough [here] to satisfy a monk. I
feel as if we had been laid on the shelf for the war. No chance
for us having a fight I fear. God bless you.

Your Husband

My dear Wife

Anxiously do I look forward for tomorrow as I expect
your Sunday letter. It takes one day longer for us to get our mail
than at Suffolk which is quite a deprivation. Our mail today
failed [ed] to arrive from some cause or other.

You will see that I call this place Camp Ruffin. It is in
honor of Judge Ruffin. I did not know anyone whose name would
confer more honor than his. The location and appearance of the
camp is anything but agreeable in looks or in comfort. We had
to clear out an immense thicket, dead vegetable matter of which
now smells terribly in my tent. Speaking of my tent, it is a very
nice and large one, and I have it all to myself. It is nearly large
enough for a family.

We have three camps stretching over about 312 miles. Four
cos. at two of the camps and two at the third. We can see all the
movements of the enemy by water, at Newport News. It would
amuse you to see the curiosity evinced by our men at every
movement of theirs. I suppose you will have seen Lincoln’s
message. He calls for 400,000 men and $400,000,000 to make
quick work for our subjection.

I hope the work will be done quickly for we are more
able to cope with them now than we shall be after they have
drilled more. Undrilled we have all the advantage. I look forward
to a large engagement near Martinsburg with great interest.
It will test our relative strength. With anything like even numbers
the thing would be certain, but looks as if they were to precipitate
two armies upon Gen. Johnston either of which is larger than
his. Let it come and may God defend and strengthen the just.
If we are worsted then we can try it again and again and the result
will be the same. They cannot conquer us.

I wrote Ham the other day I believe and ought to have an
answer soon. What is Jake going to do. I see that the Regt. that
Ham and William are with has been accepted into the service of
the Confederacy. Who are their field officers? I hope they may
get good ones. But I wish still more that we all could go home
and have peace and quiet.

Honey this is a poor letter, from necessity not for the want
of inclination. My love to all. I would write to some others of
the family, but I am on the go all day between the camps and
when night comes I feel but little like writing. My own dear
wife, may you have good health and strength, and may the
children keep well. How I should like to see you all. Darling
how are you off for money. Let me know, for I have plenty to
send you. I have near $100 in cash and $200 due me.

Good night and may God bless you.

Your devoted Husband

My dear Wife

We have been fighting for several days. I am safe and sound
with the exception of a small cut by shell on the top of the head.
It will be well in a few days. Willie was shot near the knee and
above—only a flesh wound. Ham had been placed at a
comfortable private house. You need not be uneasy about him.
I saw Ham a few moments ago. He is well. Our first skirmish
was at Manassas day before yesterday. Jackson’s Army had quite
a fight maintaining our position. Yesterday we had a general
action and whipped them badly making almost another Bull Run
affair. They had about ninety thousand, we had not that number
in action. Their loss was tremendous and ours very heavy. We
are now pressing them and our Division will move soon. My
loss has not been very heavy. I have not time to write but little.
May God have mercy upon me and protect me as he has thus far
and may he keep you in health and spirits. I am very anxious to
hear how Dorsey is. Please write to my home and tell them that
I am well. My love to all.

Your devoted Husband

My dear Wife

As Maj. Scales will leave tomorrow or next day for N.C. I
will commence with the intention of writing you a long and
affectionate letter, feeling some assurance that you will get it.
I envy the Major very much, but if we cannot enjoy a pleasure
ourselves the next best thing is to have our friends do so. He
goes off clothing, etc. for my Brigade. I send by him six pairs
shoes, none of which I fear will do, two pounds of tea, three
pairs drawers and three shirts. The drawers I send Ham and the
shirts to father. One pair of the shoes I thought might do for
Pamela. I sent Jake off 18 miles hoping to get [a] good many
things, but the shoes and tea were all he could get. I will get the
Major to try in Richmond for the linen and corsets.

We are getting on very nicely but no orders for a move yet.
I should like to be a little nearer the post office if we can serve
the country as well. I cannot but allow my desire to have you
this winter make me feel as if I should like to winter nearer
Richmond.

Tell Mary that I fear that I am to some extent responsible
for some very unwarrantable indulgences. He [Ham] was over
to see us this evening and took his drink of apple and honey with
the rest of us. The other evening I went to see him and he was
out with the band making music for the ladies, one of whom I
was sorry to hear had fallen in love with him, being under the
impression that he was single. I do not know how she is, but my
wife would hold me responsible for such weakness on the part
of any lady. The fact is, my wife is so particular that I hardly
grease where young ladies congregate. I was very much gratified
today to find in conversation with my very esteemed friend Tom
Ruffin that he is about to give himself to our church. He used to
rather sneer at our church but now he has become interested in
such things he turns to it with great interest. He will make
a most enthusiastic member of the church if his life—which I pray
God may grant—is spared. I know no one that I have a higher
opinion of than him and feel that I have the regards and good
opinion of such a man as he is. Oh! my dear wife, if I could live
a Christian life. I try but it is so hard that I almost despair. I want
charity and humility above all things. It is hard, almost impossible,
to love our neighbor as ourselves and to forgive and look kindly
upon the weaknesses of others. "If thou shalt say thou fool thou shalt be in danger of hell fire"—what a terrible thing and I say it of some every day, nay almost every hour and feel the next moment that I have violated the order of our blessed Father. Honey, do you know that I sometimes believe fully that my life has been spared thus far to reward the prayers of a Christian wife. I cannot realize how I could otherwise have escaped than by the kindest interposition of God, and I cannot see why he should take me under his especial charge but to reward your prayers. If I could be what I believe you to be I think I could look forward to the prospect of death without fear—almost with pleasure. May he hear you so far as to save my immortal life. Honey, my nightly prayer is that we may be spared to a good old age and live to His Glory.

We are getting on very pleasantly and I am getting very worthless. I have lost all energy. We were strung up so long that any little quiet completely lets us down. I was getting very feeble under the continued hardship and excitement, and had fallen off [a] good deal, but this rest has improved me very much and I am fattening every day. I was upon the point of giving out several times but by taking to brandy kept up. I think the hard work is over, but if it should commence again I am strong enough to stand it. I do not believe I have thanked you for the nice shirts if not you have received in my heart often enough. Darling I fear I should not be able to get you either the woolen or silk dress except in Richmond where they would cost a fabulous price, but if you absolutely need them you shall have them cost what they may. The articles I sent you which cost about $5 or $45 would have cost at least $200 in Richmond. By the way Honey, you must send me word what distribution you and Mary made as Ham and myself cannot settle until we hear from you and Mary on the subject. As my paper is about filled I will close for the night. Pleasant dreams to you, my own dear wife.

Oct. 12

Sunday has passed and I feel that I have passed it very unprofitably for I have not even read the service as I usually do on this day. I commenced but was interfered with. I shall do so before I go to sleep. I always miss you so much on such occasions. Tell father he will be indebted to Mary for the drawers and shirts as she wrote Ham to buy them for him. My love to all. God bless you and the boys.

Your devoted Husband

Richmond, Feb. 25th, 1863

My dear Wife

A duller place I never saw and I am heartily tired of it, and if I can be pardoned for this offense I think I will never come to Richmond again without business. I shall leave day after tomorrow. Everyone has treated me very kindly. I went to call on Mrs. Walker—the bride—last night and she is a beautiful little woman. I do not wonder at Walker’s being caught by her. I took particular note of her dress—she had just been to dine out and of course was doing her best—so I could write you what her style was. She had on a very pretty dress and accompaniments. I went out today to get you some belts but could not find any. I shall try again tomorrow. My promotion hangs as it did and really I do not expect it for months if at all. Gen. Jackson is in my way having recommended another man. I never will vote for his being President. Everyone here seems to think that our prospects are still bright[en]ing, that the Yankee conscription Bill if it passes the House will only serve to make matters with them worse. I hope so. There is really no news here at all. It is reported that they have commenced firing at Vicksburg with one of their Batteries. Honey, I will try to search down the river when I get back to get you some things, if I find they can be had at reduced prices. I think however before summer is gone things will be cheaper. How did you find the boys. Honey, you wrote that you had deferred writing while here so you could let me know if you had escaped again, but did not say. Darling, in looking around I do not find any ladies who to my eye that [are] any prettier than my wife. Mrs. Walker is considered a great beauty, but I was com-paring you last night while there and I came to the conclusion that you were the prettiest, and by far more intelligent than any lady I met. God bless you—how I do want to see you and the children. I wish I could buy something for you altho’ my money is about out.

Honey, I will write you a long letter when I get back to camp. You know how difficult it is to write in all the confusion one is in for the first day or two in a city. I am going to dine with my old Captain now Gen. [Arnold] Elzey, today. My love to everybody.

Your loving Husband

Camp Gregg, Va., April 5th, 1863

My dear Wife

Your letter of the 30th ultimo came yesterday much to my great pleasure. My dear girl I had no idea that you had not been down stairs for so long. How I have wished to see you since you have been sick. I have never before since the war commenced been so anxious to go home and if I could only have seen ahead for a few weeks I should have made the attempt. I fear I shall not be able to get you any calf skin, but send me in your memorandum the sizes you will want for the children and for yourself and Laura. I expect to have a chance before the summer is over at Yankee assortments. Capt. Kirkland says his father got some very nice white domestic (unbleached) at Fayetteville for 35 cts. a yard a month or so ago. Would you like to have some. They have mills there and altho it has probably gone up, still it may be cheap. I can write to my cousin Henry Marover who could send it to you by stage.

I went to Communion today. Mr. Williams officiated. He desired to be remembered to you. I think of getting him for Brigade Chaplain.

The snow fell last night to the depth of at least four inches. It was preceded by a most terrible storm in the midst of which I heard several wish most earnestly that it would sink the blockading squadrons.

Honey, your charge that I love you better when absent has something in it—there is no doubting, to be based upon; I always make more professions of love wllen you are away, but let me ever be able to trouble you with my presence again and I will show you a different state of affairs. O dear girl how I should like to have you with me in that big arm chair we spent so many happy moments in this last winter.

Don’t you think honey that you had better starve Dorseys a little, and not let him get so fat and Penderish. I had rather he
would not get fat and coarse for you will think that he is not of good blood. Turner is of the gentleman pattern, is he not? However, Dorsey may be trimmed down a little after we find he will not be on the small style like ourselves. Six feet add wonderfully in this world to a man’s career.

Lent is over and I have not but felt that I passed the latter part of it a little better than I ever did before and I hope I have become a better man. I have broken myself honey of using anything like profanity even in telling what some else might have said, and I very seldom say anything that I would not say in any company. I am trying very hard to break myself of anything like filthy speaking, so common amongst men. Honey, I believe fully in Christ and that he will save those who do His will and I try very hard to do so.... I have some hope and I try very hard to be charitable, particularly in not judging anyone lightly. It seems to me that I would be willing cheerfully to undergo anything for a certainty of future salvation. Honey, pray continually that my life may be spared this war. We have nothing at all new. Bread, alias plundering, riots are becoming common. Some of the rioters in Richmond will probably get sick of it before they get through with it. My love to all. God bless you my dear wife.

Your loving Husband

Camp Gregg, Va., May 23rd, '63

My dearest Wife

Your sweet letter of the 20th came today much to my great gratification. I wish my letters could go to you as quickly as yours come to me. The longer we stay here the more I wish I had sent for you, but as Turner and Dorsey were both so sick it would have given you great uneasiness, if you had come with me. I am so glad that they are both better and hope soon to hear that they are both well.

Honey, I like your summer. I shall send tomorrow to David $150 to help defray your expenses at the springs [near Raleigh]. Do try to get Pamela to go with you. She would enjoy it and you both would be better pleased. But if she does go, make her understand that the thousand and one human beings in Confederate uniforms she will meet there are skulkers from duty. Most of them will be getting sympathy upon the pretext of wounds will be well enough to be with their commands. I judge by what it was last year. Go to Edgecombe and from there to the springs, but under whose care are you going?

[Brigadier General Junius] Daniel and his Brigade came up a few days ago and [A. H.] Colquitt’s Brigade went from here to N.C. We got a large Brigade for a small force. Everything looks quiet this way. Stuart has 12,000 cavalry now and it is said is up to some big raid. It is to be wagered that he will do better than Stoneman.

Honey, I thought I told you about my arm. I certainly intended doing so. It is getting on very well, but last Sunday it was very painful. It has turned out to be a little deeper than it appeared at first but still it is but trifling.

I should like very much to help you eat some of your strawberries, but I do not expect any such delicacies this season. You have no idea how anxious I am to go home and shall take any reasonable pretext to take a little furlough. I find but few so conscientious about leaving as myself.

It is rumored that Stuart has tendered his resignation because they will not give him this Corps, but I cannot think him so foolish. I heard this evening that Gen. Hill had got it. The same state of affairs as you relate about deserters exists in [a] great many places in western N.C. We have lost [a] great many men by desertion since the fight, most from N.C. Regts. Vance has published a Proclamation which will have a good effect. Gen. Hays’ sword was presented me and I sent it to Vance to be kept at Raleigh with a very patriotic letter. That is the way to make glory tell. Did you see a little notice in the Journal of your husband, but I am getting to care very little for newspaper compliments; I feel that they are worth but little compared to the good opinion of my superiors.

We have Communion tomorrow. Mr. Williams is a nice man and good chaplain. I wrote a few days ago to brother Robert to get you some N.C. money and about Anna’s going back to Salem and think he cannot withstand my appeals in her favor.

Take Pamela to Edgecombe and Kittrells by all means. God bless you my dearest wife and kiss the dear boys. I was joking about loving Dorsey best. Love to all. If you find you will want more money than I have sent, please call on David for it.

Your loving Husband

Fayetteville, Penn., June 28th, 1863

My dearest Wife

Our mail came in today and the only thing I heard from you was that four letters had reached Shocco the day after you left. We are resting today after marching 157 miles since leaving Fredericksburg twelve days ago yesterday. If I had any certainty that you would get this in a reasonable time, I should have [a] good deal to tell you.

Until we crossed the Md. line our men behaved as well as troops could, but here it will be hard to restrain them, for they have an idea that they are to indulge in unlicensed plunder. They have done nothing like the Yankees do in our country. They take poultry and hogs but in most cases pay our money for it. We take everything we want for government use. The people are frightened to death and will do anything we intimate to them. The rascals have been expecting us and have run off most of their stock and goods. I bought a few articles for you yesterday and will get you a nice lot before we leave. We pay about 200 per-cent.

I am tired of invasions for altho’ they have made us suffer all that people can suffer, I cannot get my resentment to that point to make me feel indifferent to what you see here. But for the demoralizing effect plundering would have on our troops, they would feel war in all its horrors. I never saw people so badly scared. We have only to wish for a thing and it is done. I have made up my mind to enjoy no hospitality or kindness from any of them.

Everything seems to be going on finely. We might get to Phila. without a fight. I believe, if we should choose to go. Gen. Lee intimates to no one what he is up to and we can only surmise. I hope we may be in Harrisburg in three days. What a fine commentary upon their go days crushing out [i.e., Lincoln’s original call for go-day volunteers to crush the Confederacy], if we should march to the Capital of one of their largest states
without a blow. It seems to be the impression that Hooker will not leave Washington, but [will] leave the states to take care of them-selves.

We are in Adams Co., having marched through Franklin. If we do not succeed in accomplishing a great deal all of us will be surprised. Our men seem to be in the spirit and feel confident. They laugh at the idea of meeting the militia. This is a most magnificent country to look at, but the most miserable people. I have yet to see a nice looking lady. They are coarse and dirty, and the number of dirty looking children is perfectly astonishing. A great many of the women go barefooted and but a small fraction wear stockings. I hope we may never have such people. . . .

Nearly all of them seem to be tenants and at first I thought all the better people must have left. And such barns I never dreamt of. Their dwelling houses are large and comfortable, looking from the outside—have not been inside—but such coarse louts that live in them. I really did not believe that there was so much difference between our ladies and their females. I have seen no ladies. We passed through Hagerstown . . . but saw little Southern feeling displayed. The fact is the people in N.W. Md. are as much of the Dutch Yankee as these, and I do not want them.

I hope you reached home safely and feel satisfied with me, and see that this time at least, you did not leave camp much too soon.

I never saw troops march as ours do; they will go 15 or 20 miles a day without leaving a straggler and hoop and yell on all occasions. Confidence and good spirits seem to possess everyone. I wish we could meet Hooker and have the matter settled at once. We got the Richmond papers of the 24th today and they bring us good news from Vicksburg. This campaign will do one of two things: viz—to cause a speedy peace or a more tremendous war than we have had, the former may God grant.

Joe enters into the invasion with much gusto and is quite active in looking up hidden property. In fact the negroes seem to have more feeling in the matter than the white men and have come to the conclusion that they will [im]press horses, etc., etc. to any amount. Columbus is laying in a stock for his sweetheart and sisters. Gen. Hill thus far has managed the march of his Corps and I think will give us as much satisfaction as Lt. Gen'l as he did [as] Maj. Gen'l.

My love to all and keep my folks in Edgecombe posted as to my well being. Write to me occasionally through S. Cooper, A. and I. Gen'l., Richmond.

Now darling, may our Good Father protect us and preserve us to each other to a good old age. Tell Turner I have a pretty pair of low patent leather shoes with heels for him.

Your loving Husband

Colonel Earnhart is a native of Tarboro, N. C. and a distant relative of General Pender. He grew up as a member of Calvary Episcopal Church where the General is buried. Col. Earnhart graduated from West Point in 1950 - one hundred years after General Pender entered the same military institution.

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