

Letter #2 (White Confederate Soldier):

Fredericksburg Sunday morning Nov. 30 /62

My dear & devoted Mat [his wife] I was made unexpressibly glad yesterday by grasping once more then hand of Mrs. Crockett & was delighted when she said to me that she had a letter from you for me. She came to our camp just as we were about to leave to go on picket consequently I had chance to ask her but a few questions and contented myself by reading your welcome letter which afforded me great pleasure though somewhat mingled with grief [two words faded] & glad to hear that you & [a line faded –then he reveals what gave him “grief”:] but more than all that you were in dread of a [slave] insurrection [inspired by the Emancipation Proclamation] and that out of all of the letters that I have written you of not one of them have reached you. It is indeed mortifying to write and learn afterward your letters never reached their destination. I have started you four letters since the battle of Sharpsburg all of which would of afforded you much great satisfaction had they of reach you. The first one I wrote was in response to your first letter which I received on my march to Maryland. It is useless for me to attempt to describe the satisfaction that letter afforded me Dear Bro. A received one at the same time making the second one for him We both answered them but saw no chance of getting them down until after that memo[r]able battle of Sharpsburg. Oh Mat it almost makes shudder to think of it how will the 17th of Sept. 17 '62 live in the memory of the 32 Va reg & its friends Oh: It was an awful day imagine my feelings if you can when I saw my comrades & friends falling all around me from the death dealing shot & shell of the enemy and knew not how soon it would be my fate. Thanks be to a kind Providence I came out unhurt but narrowly escaped. A ball passed through my blanket between my body and right arm. I shot my gun until I could hardly get a carriage down her. Finally they gave way & ran hotly pursued by our Brigade the 32nd leading the charge until pursuit was dangerous. They were said to be three to our one. But I am wandering from what I started to write about. After the battle I wrote you another letter & put them both in one envelope & enclosed that in another with a note I directed it to E. Montgomery requesting him to send it down the first chance. I also wrote Cousin Marshall a letter enclosed with the one Bro A. had written & sent that by E. M with the same request but [a long account of how the letters got lost . . .]

Dear Mat you ask me to try and get a substitute & if I cant do that try and get a pass to come to Mothers in the Christmas I am sorry to tell you to do either is utterly imposible Dearest I know you do not want to see me any worse than I do you for your are the joy and pride of my live It is you and little O that makes life Dear to me now. Dear Mat I must tell you I am in a hard place and know not what to do. When I think of my sufferings both in mind and body which are indescribable and how much my services are needed home I am tempted to try and get there I see no probability of getting there if I remain in the service. The war is likely to last for years yet and I cannot reasonably expect to survive it. Besides this you are threated with an insurrection [slave uprising inspired by the Emancipation Proclamation] and how better can I die than defending my family & fireside to do this I came in the War and now that you are threated I consider it is my Christian duty to come to your rescue & protection Dear Mat you know that I love my country but I love my family better. My darling wife I have a great deal to write but have not time nor space. T. Charles is waiting for me to write him a few lines I am now on picket duty in this city the enemy is in full sight and speaking distance and we expect them to shell the city every day and a general engagement to take place I read your letter to Old Abe and think it very well done but don't think

it would do any good provided I had any means of sending it to him. Give my love to all and many the good Lord soon bring us to meet again in the flesh is my humble prayer & heart's desire. Your affectionate husband. J.F. W.

John French White Papers, Confederate Military Manuscripts, Series A, Reel 42, owned by the Virginia Historical Society

John F. White was a Sergeant in the 32 Virginia Infantry

Source: <http://teachinghistory.org/best-practices/examples-of-historical-thinking/25048>

Fredericksburg Sunday morning Nov. 30/62

My dear & devoted Mat.

I was made inexpesibly glad yesterday by grasping once more the hand of Mrs. ~~W. H. H.~~ I was most delighted when she told me that she had a letter from you for me. It came to our Camp just as we were about to leave to go on another. Consequently I had chance to ask her but a few questions and contented myself by reading your own than welcome letter, which afforded me a great pleasure. Though somewhat mingled with grief on account of the fact that you & I were separated, it was in every respect a good letter. I had intended to give it to Mrs. Dick and she had it, but - more than all that - you were in the midst of an insurrection, and that out of the letter, that I have written you of - that at least one of them have reached you. It is my intention to write, and soon afterwards your letters never reached their destination. I have written you four letters since the battle of Chapsburg, all of which would have afforded both you and me a great satisfaction had they reached you. The first one I wrote was in answer to your first letter which I received on my march to Maryland. It is useless for me

on are my thoughts by day and dreams at night

to attempt to describe the satisfaction that letter
afforded me Dear Bro. it received one at the
same time making the second one for him
We both answered them but saw no chance of
getting them down until after that memorable
battle of Sharpsburg. Oh! that it almost makes
shudder to think of it. long will the 17th of Sept/62
live in the memory of the 52^d Va Reg & its friends
Oh! it was an awful day imagine my feelings
if you can when I saw my comrades & friends
falling all around me from the death dealing
shot & shell of the enemy and knew not how
soon it would be my fate. Thanks be to a kind
Providence I came out unhurt but narrowly
escaped a ball passed through my blanket be-
tween my body and right arm. I shot my
gun until I could hardly get a cartage down here
Finally they gave way I took ran hotly pursued
by our Brigade the 52^d leading the charge until
pursuit was dangerous. They were said to be
three to our one. But I am wandering from what
I started to write about after the battle I wrote
you another letter & put them both in one envelope
& enclosed that in another with a note & directed it to
E. Brown, my requesting him to send it down the
first chance I also wrote Cousin M. a short
letter enclosed him the one Bro. A. had written &
sent that to E. M. with the same request but

before I sent ^{Henry} W^m Hunt - talk of going down
home & I gave them to him with a pocket Bible
Bao of bequeath to Endora & beg him to try and get
them down he said he would I told him if he saw
no chance of ^{getting} home to send them E. M. in K. She has
since sent me word that she sent them down
I also loaned W^m Hunt 20 dollars which he said he
give you soon as he saw you. I cant tell what he
done with the Bible Mrs C. says Cousin M. has never
gotten it. Soon after I sent them I learned I could
get a letter home through Edward Phillips I set
down and wrote you another, and in a few days I
received your letter of the 31st of August. I sat down
again and wrote you a long letter of six pages
giving you all the news and answered all you ask
me in the letter. I am very sorry that none of them
never reach you. I have received 5 letters from you
including the one by Mrs C. if you have written
any others they have not come to hand. Dear Mat
tell Cousin M. & Sister I greatly sympathize with them
that they seem dearer to me than ever tell them to
try and bear their afflictions & live humble Christians
and meet their loved ones where separations will
be no more. Tell Cousin M. I buried Bao of The
but I could under the circumstances and that I
save all he had of importance about him
I have his money a \$192.00 a lock of his hair
and a button off his coat which will bring

home to her should it ever be my good fortune
to get there. Dear Mat- you ask me to try and get
a substitute & if I cant- do that- try and get a
pass to come to Mathews in the Christmas I am sorry
to tell you to do either is utterly impossible Dearest-
I know you do not want to see me any more! Thank
I do you for you are the joy and pride of my life
It is you and little C, that makes life bear to me
now. Dear Mat- I must tell you I am in a hard place
and know not what to do. When I think of my sufferings
both in mind and body which are indescrivable and how much
my services are needed home I am tempted to try and
get there I see no probability of getting there if I
remain in the service. The war is likely to last for
years yet and I cannot reasonably expect to survive
it. besides this you are threated with an insurrection
and how better can I die than defending my family
& friends to do this I came in the war and now
that you are threated I consider it is my christian
duty to come to your rescue & protection Dearest Mat
you know that I love my country but I love my
family better. My darling wife I have a great
deal to write but ~~must~~ have not time nor space
I, Charles is waiting for me to write him a few lines
I am now on piece duty in this city. The enemy is
in full sight and speaking distance and we expect
them to shell the city every day & a general engagement
to take place I read your letter to old Abe and think
it very well done but dont think it ^{would} do any good provided
I had any means of sending it to him give my love to all and
may the good Lord soon bring us to meet again in the flesh is my
humble prayer & heart desire Your affectionate Husband J. J. W.

at the hospital
a few days ago
which a few days ago
I have
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