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FRANCIS P. FLEMING IN THE WAR FOR
SOUTHERN INDEPENDENCE

LETTERS FROM THE FRONT
edited by EDWARD C. WILLIAMSON

Part II

Bivouac, near Berryville, N. Va.
June 21st 1863

I do not recollect which of us wrote the last letter.¹ The last that I received from you was dated May 5th, but why so much ceremony what difference does it make whether you owe me a letter or I owe you one. I flatter myself that a letter from me, independently of coming from the army of Northern Virginia, would meet with a welcome reception at your hands, and give you the same pleasure that the reception of yours always give me. Please bear in mind that the principal, and I might almost say the only enjoyment that a soldier up here has is the reception of letters from "The loved ones at home", deprived as we are of all society, it is about the only link that connects us with its enjoyments and keeps alive within us an appreciation of home associations. Therefore don't always wait for a letter from me before you write me; sometimes it is a long time before I have an opportunity of writing, particularly while we are on the campaign.

But I presume you would rather hear something about the movements of our Army. We - Gen. Anderson's Division - left Fredericksburg a week ago today and by hard marches arrived at this point today about 12 o'clock M. Berryville is a little town about ten miles south east of Winchester, in the valley of the Shenandoah. Since the death of Jackson two more Lieutenant Generals have been made in this army.² Ewel and A. P. Hill each commanding a Corps of three Divisions. Our Division is in the Corps of the latter General. Gen. Ewel

1. The first series of letters by Confederate soldier Frank Fleming appeared in the last issue of the QUARTERLY. The envelope of this letter is addressed to Frank's aunt, Miss Matilda Seton.
2. General T. J. (Stonewall) Jackson was mortally wounded at Chancellorsville, May 2, 1863.

left Fredericksburg about three weeks ago, arriving at Winchester he stormed and carried the enemy's works last Sunday (this day week) and the next day compelled the surrender of that place with five thousand prisoners - Gen. Milroy's army. Milroy however, with a small body of cavalry made his escape. Gen. Ewel then sent a Division of his Corps towards Charlestown that captured two thousand more prisoners that were coming on to reenforce Milroy. It was altogether quite a Jacksonian achievement.³ The reports are so numerous and various that it is difficult to arrive at the truth. There scarcely any doubt that Ewel is in Maryland, and we hear today that Gen. Roads, [Rodes] of his Corps, has taken and is occupying Harrisburg Pennsylvania this is only rumor though and the truth of it is very questionable. I have just heard *positively* that Ewel's headquarters are at Shepardstown Md. I understand that we move in that direction tomorrow morning, and I hope in a few days to be in Maryland.⁴

I suppose you have seen the account of the bombardment that our Regiment withstood when the Yankees crossed over to Fredericksburg the last time. We lost four Companies taken prisoner Seton's and Capt. Moseleys among the number.⁵ They have since been ex-

3. Engagement at Winchester, June 13-15, 1863: the result was a complete rout of the Union forces under General Milroy. *Official Records of the Rebellion*, Series 1, XXVII, pt. II, pp. 33-34, 41-49, 454, 1115.
4. Following Chancellorsville, Lee decided to invade the North, and in June his army reached Pennsylvania.
5. At Fredericksburg the 8th. Florida Regt. commanded by Capt. David Lang was detached from the Florida Brigade and assigned to Barksdale's Brigade. Companies A, D, and F of the Florida regiment under the command of Capt. William Baya were ordered to prevent the enemy from making a crossing below the town. Capt. Baya regarded the position assigned his unit as an exposed one which afforded no means of withdrawal; therefore, he objected to its occupation. However, upon the order being repeated he acquiesced. After the battle the three companies under Baya composed of forty-four men were reported missing, presumably prisoners. Capt. Baya and some of his men were later exchanged and rejoined the Florida Brigade. The remaining part of the 8th. Fla. was effective in repelling the Federal attack in its sector of the town until Capt. Lang was wounded, at which time it became demoralized, lacking leadership. *Official Records of the Rebellion*, Series 1, XXI, pp. 579, 603-604, 610, 618-619.

changed except the officers Seton and Capt. Moseley were not taken.⁶

I have an immediate opportunity of sending this off and must close. Please send this to mother when you read it.

Your affe nephew
F. P. Fleming

In Camp, Army of Northern Va. ⁷
5 miles east of Chambersburg
Penn. June 30th 1863

My dear Brother,

I will *commence* a letter to you now that I have an opportunity of writing, but it may be some time before I am able to send it off; as you will see by the date of this, we have penetrated some thirty miles into the State of Pennsylvania. We have been "resting on our oars" here for three days, living on the fat of the land, that is on chickens, eggs, butter, milk etc. of which the country abounds, this being a very rich valley and never before having had an army through it. I presume from the appearance of everything that they scarcely knew that the war was going on; things are cheaper here than they were in many portions of our Country before the war. I bought butter for 12 1/2 cents per pound, chickens at 15 cents a piece, and milk at 5 and 10 cents per quart. But in spite of the cheap prices and strict orders against pillaging, some of our men will steal chickens etc. but when we reflect upon the number of poor fellows in the army whose houses and property have been entirely destroyed by the brutes whose country we are now invading, and who have driven their families from their homes in a destitute condition; we can only wonder that they are not guilty of greater outrages. But I don't mean by this to advocate stealing and pillaging. I rejoice to say that Gen. Lee's orders against it are most positive and forcible, and the Sub-Generals use every exer-

6. The 2nd. Florida Regt. was held in reserve.

7. This letter is an eyewitness account of the Gettysburg campaign.

tion to enforce them, and prevent plundering. The enemy's conduct in our Country is no reason why we should so degrade ourselves as to become guilty of their brutalities by making war upon women and children and defenceless citizens.

Gen. Longstreet's Corps passed us today. We will probably move forward tomorrow. We are totally in the dark as regards Gen. Lee's intended movements. It is generally believed that he ultimately intends capturing Baltimore, but some suppose that he will first take Harrisburg, the Capital of this State. I think myself that such will be the case, as the only troops there are raw militia, who have never yet "smelt gunpowder". Our invasion has caused a great panic in the State. The portion of Pennsylvania through which we have passed is settled by a class of low Dutch.⁸ I have scarcely seen a refined and highly intelligent person since I have been in the State. Our marches have been easy and short and the men have got along very well, their health and spirits are fine. Seton is very well. The portion of Maryland through which we passed was strongly "Union" in sentiment. We met a great many friends and sympathizers at Hagarstown. It was very gratifying to observe that in nearly every case the intelligent and higher class were our friends, while the lower class and the ignorant were unionists.

We crossed over into Maryland at Shepardstown Va. passing through Sharpsburg Md. and over the old battle grounds. We met with a most enthusiastic reception in passing through Charlestown Va. - the place where Old John Brown [was] executed. The town was crowded with ladies waving handkerchiefs and flags to us as we marched through, keeping steps to our fine brass band playing the Marseilles Hymn.

Seton wishes to know whether Mary ever received a letter that he wrote her shortly after his return from Florida.

8. Pennsylvania German (Deutch) rather than Dutch.

Battle of Gettysburg

Camp near Hagarstown Md. July 7th 1863

Tomorrow we will probably have an opportunity of sending off the mail. We have had, since my first date, probably the fiercest and most bloody battle of the war, just beyond and around Gettysburg Penn. Our advance arrived there on the morning of July 1st and found the enemy very strongly posted in the heights of Gettysburg. Gen. Ewell's Corps had a hard fight with them and succeeded in driving them through the town. The next day the battle became general. Our Corps (A. P. Hill's) occupied the center, Longstreet the right and Ewell the left. We attempted to carry the enemy's position by storm and succeeded so far, in the center, as to force two lines of battle but they then sent heavy reinforcements which owing our weakened condition after having charged across an open space of a mile and a half through a terrific fire from thirty pieces of artillery (I am speaking now of the part acted by our Division) and musketry were too strong for us, and after having as I said before forced two lines of battle and driving them from their guns, we were compelled to fall back to an original position. Had two or three Brigades been sent to support us we could have held position that it cost us so dearly to take. Longstreet drove them on the right, but for the reason above stated, he lost part of the ground that he gained. Our left was scarcely engaged. Major Mims and Capt Ballantine were wounded and left on the field and fell into the hands of the enemy, and in falling back Capt Moseley fainted from exhaustion and was also taken prisoner, which left Seton in command of the Regiment.⁹ The next day the battle was resumed. The cannonade on that day was the most rapid that I ever heard; it probably exceeded any thing of the war. Our Brigade was again sent in, and charged the enemy under a murderous fire, but

9. For further details concerning the Florida Brigade at Gettysburg see Fleming, *Memoir of Capt. C. Seton Fleming*, pp. 79-88; *Official Records of the Rebellion*, Series 1; pt. II, pp. 288, 614, 617, 631-633.

were again compelled to retire. Our loss in the fighting of the 2nd and 3rd days was very heavy. Our Brigade that numbered nearly seven hundred before, now numbers about one hundred and sixty. Seton was so fortunate as to go through both fights and escape unhurt. Dave Dunham, on the second day, was missing; it is supposed that he was captured, as were a good many more, when we had to fall back.¹⁰ Capt McCaslan of the Marion Company was killed.¹¹ No troops could have fought better than our Floridians. Our great loss bears testimony to this. The 2nd lost about one hundred and fifty.¹² Wm. Livingston was wounded in the leg and fell into the hands of the enemy.¹³ Gen Lee finding it impossible to force the enemy from his position at Gettysburg commenced a retreat on the 4th inst and today we arrived here. We have had several little cavalry fights at the passes of the mountains, since we commenced our retreat, but nothing of much importance. In one of these fights Gen. Hampton received a wound on the shoulder, but it is not very severe. We lost at the battles of Gettysburg Brig Gen. Kemper and Maj. Gen. Hood wounded Brig. Gen. Garneth killed. Kemper is said to be mortally wounded. The losses on each side, I think, is greater than in any previous battle of the war. The enemy lost Maj Gen. Reynolds killed. We took about ten thousand prisoners. We were obliged to leave our wounded at Gettysburg. They have, of course fallen into the hands of the enemy. We have no idea what our next move will be. Some suppose that we will cross over into Va. others, that we move in some other direction through this state. Time will tell. We fought the Yankees at a great disadvantage at Gettysburg. They occupied heights similar to those that we occupied at the first battle of Fredericksburg.

10. 1st. Lt. Dave Dunham, Co. H, 2nd. Fla., captured at Gettysburg and sent to Johnson's Island. *Soldiers of Florida*, p. 91.

11. Capt. William E. McCaslan commanded Co. E, 2nd. Fla. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

12. Of which 81 were killed or wounded, the rest must be presumed missing or prisoners. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

13. William Livingston, pvt. later sgt. in Co. G. 2nd. Fla. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

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Capt. L'Engle is well. He says that he would write, but having been up traveling all last night, he is too sleepy and tired. Give my love to Mary, Aunt L-, Cousin Susan and all. Please send this to Mother when you have read it. It may be some time before I can write her.

Your affe brother
F. P. Fleming

Camp 1st Cav. near
Dalton Ga May 4th 1864 ¹⁴

Dear Aunt Tilly

I will wait no longer to hear from you before writing, feeling sure that there is some good reason for your long silence, as I know that you are a most excellent and punctual correspondent. I have not heard from you since the letter that I received very soon after my arrival here, that I immediately answered.

Lieut Taylor told me that you were unable to get my coat finished in time to send by him. ¹⁶ I received a pair of very nice gloves from Monticello about a week ago, presuming that you sent them I tender many thanks.

If you have been unable to make my coat just let me know what it cost, and I will enclose the amount.

Day before yesterday, we thought that the big fight was about to open. About ten o'clock the artillery on our right opened quite a heavy fire: soon after we could distinguish the report of small arms. We were ordered to the front, where we remained until about 4 o'clock P.M. when we were brought back to Camp the firing only resulting in the advance of the enemy engaging our pickets, and being repulsed. It is generally supposed that we will have a grand battle here very soon. Every one feels sanguine that if the enemy attacks us here that he will get one of most complete thrashings that

14. Shortly after the return of the army to Virginia following Gettysburg Frank Fleming was appointed 1st. Lt. Co. D, 1st. Fla. Cavalry, which was attached to the Army of Tennessee. Fleming, *Memoir of Capt. C. Seton Fleming*, p. 88.

15. Lt. Taylor is unidentified.

we have yet inflicted upon him. We have a splendid army. Everyone says that the greatest change has taken place since Gen Johnston has taken command.¹⁶ The troops have every confidence in him, which is at once an earnest of success. Our cause has never appeared more hopeful or our prospects brighter than now. On every side, beginning with the battle of Ocean Pond, have the enemy [been] repulsed.¹⁷ In no case have they gained a success. I trust that they will soon see the madness of their undertaking to subjugate us.

I received a very interesting letter from Julia Calt brought out by Miss Anna Dummett. They were all well. Matilda D- was there with her husband, Mr. Taylor.

We have just received [orders] to get ready to move, it is reported that our pickets have been driven in.

I have to come to a close let me hear from you soon. My respects for Mr. Gadsden and any other friends.

Your affe nephew
F. P. Fleming

Camp Hospital
Newnan Ga May 30th 64

My dear Aunt Tilly

I have had the pleasure of receiving both of your last letters since writing you. The last I received about four days ago.

As you will see by the date of this, I am at a Hospital, much to my mortification at this time. The great fatigue and exposure that we have undergone, since the campaign opened up here, brought on quite a severe attack of ercipelas in the face, which at one time, was so much swollen that I was perfectly blind, but I am now much better and hope that in a few days I will be able to return to the front, and join my command in

16. General Joseph E. Johnston was placed in command of the forces opposing General William T. Sherman's march into Georgia.

17. Ocean Pond is more commonly called the battle of Olustee. Here in the piney woods of North Florida, Union forces advancing along the railroad from Jacksonville towards Lake City were turned back. "Olustee was a bloody check to the Union cause in Florida." Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*, p. 293.

time for the big fight that must take place soon. There has already been some pretty hard fighting, but as yet no general engagement. Up to the time I left five days since our Brigade had not been engaged though exposed several times to the enemy's fire, killing several and wounding quite a number, among the latter Edwin Roux (who is a Lieut in the 7th Fla) severely in the leg. Gen Finley was also wounded - his collarbone broken.¹⁸

We have been gradually falling back ever since giving up our position in front of Dalton, but the troops are in fine spirits and have every confidence in Gen Johnston, and that when he sees fit to make a stand will inflict a terrible blow upon the enemy. How great have been our successes in Va. under the guidance of our noble Chieftain in command of the Army of Northern Va. I don't believe we have another leader that can inspire the same love and veneration with which his troops regard him. He is certainly the Washington of this revolution. I have heard nothing from Seton since the fighting commenced in Va. but trust he is safe.¹⁹ If you hear from, or of him please let me know.

Your revelation in regard to my coat did not surprise me. If you have not already done so, please don't send it on until we are stationary again. I do not need it *now*, and it might be lost if brought on while we are on the march. I thank you very much for your many acts of kindness and kind offers. Should I stand in need of anything will be glad to avail myself of your kindness. In case I should be so unfortunate as to receive a wound, I scarcely think it would be advisable for you to come

18. Brig.-General Jesse Johnson Finley commanding the Florida infantry in the Army of Tennessee.

19. Capt. C. Seton Fleming was killed in the Wilderness on June 3, 1864. *Soldiers of Florida*, p. 91. On a scrap of paper in the Fleming papers is written: "During the battle of the Wilderness in which Capt. [Seton] Fleming took a prominent part in leading on the men, he was twice wounded. The men were in dread of it, as from his brave conduct they knew he would be conspicuous object for one of the sharp shooters. He was so slightly wounded first that he soon rose again, but the second time he could only raise himself on one arm, but with the other he waved his cap over his head, and urged his command on to victory, telling them not to mind his being wounded."

on. The wounded are well taken care of, and receive every attention. Mrs. Harris and Mrs. Harrison from Jefferson are at this Hospital both very kind ladies. The former says that she knows you and inquired particularly for you. . . . I saw Uncle George in Atlanta two or three days ago. He was well.

Write soon. Direct to Army of Tenn, as I will probably leave for the front in a few days.²⁰

Affy yours
F. P. Fleming

Barnesville Ga
Aug 21st 1864

Dear Aunt Tilly

I presume that ere this reaches you, you will have learned by Mother's letter that I stopped at the Hospital at this place instead of going on to Newnan ; having heard on my arrival here that the Hosp. had been moved from the latter place.

I expect to go up to the front tomorrow.²¹ Don't know that I am getting much better, but no worse, and I trust that the change may prove beneficial, and that I will not have to leave the army again on account of sickness.

I have heard that it was a current report in Monticello that I was engaged to a certain young lady who was the subject of conversation between us on the morning of the day that I left you. Now in case anything should happen to me, not wishing that a false impression upon such a matter should rest with any relatives and those for whom I care, I will state that the above mentioned report is untrue, and without the slightest foundation. I state this solely for the above reason, and while that does not exist I scarcely think that there is any need to mention it.

I cannot refrain from thanking you, my dear Aunt, for your many kindness unto me in every respect and

20. The front at this time was approximately fifty miles northwest of Atlanta.

21. The front now was at Atlanta which Sherman would enter Sept. 2.

trust that I may be able to prove to you that they are not unworthily bestowed.

I would be glad if some such arrangement as you suggested could be made in regard to Matilda, with Mother's approval. There are several reasons why I think it would be better for her than remaining in Monticello. Matilda is just at that age and of that temperament that she needs pleasant and congenial companionship which in her present situation she cannot enjoy, to the extent that she ought. Write me any suggestions or plans that you may have in the matter. It would be best though to find out first what kind of a teacher she would have. Elwell Maxwell is here, expects to start for Florida in about a week.²² If you make your visit to Tallahassee and Bel Air you will probably meet him. No doubt you will enjoy yourself much. Wish I could be with you. Write soon and give me all the Florida gossip.

Yours affe
Frank

Jonesboro, Ga.²³
Sept 1st 64

My dear Mother,

I wrote you a few days ago, but knowing how uneasy you will be upon hearing of the battle at this place in which we were engaged yesterday, I write again that your anxiety on my account may be relieved. Through God's mercy I have been spared, escaping unhurt. The supposed retreat of the Yankees that I mentioned in my last, proved to be an extension of their lines in the direction of this place, which is on the Macon and Atlanta R.R. about eighteen miles from the latter place.²⁴ Every night until the last we have been either marching or throwing up breastworks. Night before last we marched the whole night arriving here after sunrise. We then

22. Capt. D. Elwell Maxwell had transferred from the Florida Brigade in Virginia as an enlisted man to become an officer in Co. D, 1st. Fla. Cavalry Dismounted. *Soldiers of Florida*, p. 92.

23. Jonesboro is about eighteen miles south of Atlanta.

24. The Union forces expended their lines around Atlanta following the battle of Peach Tree Creek on July 20.

went to work to complete a line of unfinished works. The enemy soon placed a battery in such a position as to completely enfilade our lines and shelled us furiously for about three hours, when we moved out and formed in line of battle - Hardee's Corps - preparatory to a charge. The line moved forward about half past 2 P.M. the right first becoming engaged (Our position was near the center of the Corps). We advanced about a mile through fields and woods before becoming opposed to a concentrated fire, when we came upon the enemy strongly entrenched. We charged his works under a terrific fire of artillery and small arms but their works were too strong to be taken by a single line of battle, and we failed, and were compelled to fall back. Our loss was considerable but I cannot give it yet. I had one man killed. The enemy was driven for some distance on our right but we could not hold the works and today occupy pretty much the same position that we did yesterday. In the weak condition that I was in I became completely exhausted in the charge and don't think that I could have held out were it not for the excitement, in the retreat had to be supported out by one of my men.²⁵

3rd Last evening there was again a very hard fight. The most stubborn since the commencement of the campaign. The enemy numbering five Corps charged Gen. Hardee's Corps and after a very hard fight succeeded in breaking a portion of our line causing the giving way of the whole. They paid dearly for it though losing about five or six thousands.²⁶

The balance of the army evacuated Atlanta last night, and is expected here today. Our present line is about four miles south of Jonesboro. I forbear comments. God grant that all will yet be well.

The portion of the line that our Brigade occupied did not become engaged though we were subjected to a terrible shelling the whole day.

You did not mention Maggie. I hope she is better.

25. Battle of Atlanta.

26. Last phase of battle of Atlanta.

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Much love to all. I presume you will find it difficult to make this out written in pencil, but it is the best I can do. The shells are coming over pretty thick.

Remember me to all my friends.

Your affe son
Frank

(This series of letters will be concluded in the next issue.)