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## A Florida Soldier in the Army of Northern Virginia: The Hosford Letters

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## A FLORIDA SOLDIER IN THE ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA: THE HOSFORD LETTERS

edited by KNOX MELLON, JR.

A LONG NEGLECTED AREA of American Civil War history has been the thousands of unpublished letters and diaries still found gathering dust in hundreds of attics across the nation. The recent Civil War centennial brought out some material of this type, and the general public has grown more aware of the advantages to be gained from the publication of soldiers' memoirs. Despite this fact, it is rare indeed to find as moving and articulate a series of letters as the ten written by a young Florida Confederate officer, Lieutenant John W. Hosford, to his sweetheart, Miss Laura Rich, between November 1862 and April 1864. Hosford was a member of Company H, Fifth Florida Infantry, which was a part of General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, and he participated in some of the hardest fighting of the entire war.<sup>1</sup>

The battles of Fredericksburg in 1862 and Chancellerville and Gettysburg in 1863, and the long hard months of fighting in 1864 which saw Grant and 100,000 Union troops attack the forces of Lee in the Wilderness campaign, followed by Spotsylvania Court House and Cold Harbor, are all part of the background reflected in the Hosford letters. The value of this correspondence, however, is far more social than military, for Hosford was a junior officer and not involved in higher strategy.

Twenty-eight year old John Hosford enlisted at Apalachicola, Florida, on March 10, 1862, for the period "three years or the war," and he was mustered in at Ricco's Bluff on April 19, 1862. His company, the Liberty Guards under command of Captain William T. Gregory, became Company H in the Fifth Florida Infantry. He served first as a clerk, and on November 17, 1862, he was elected second lieutenant. He held this rank until he was mustered out on April 9, 1865, at Appomatox Courthouse, Virginia.<sup>2</sup> When the Fifth Florida was first organized, Colonel

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1. Board of State Institutions, *Soldiers of Florida in the Seminole Indian, Civil and Spanish-American Wars* (Tallahassee, 1903), 135-36.

2. Information on the military activities of John W. Hosford are contained in "Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who

J. C. Hately was commanding officer, but because of a disability suffered in the fighting at the Battle of Sharpsburg, September 20, 1862, he was forced to resign on July 6, 1863, and the command passed to Colonel Thompson B. Lamar.<sup>3</sup>

The Hosford letters are written by an articulate and sensitive man with all the vivid impressions of warfare present. In early correspondence there is evidence of an optimism which was characteristic of Confederate troops everywhere during the initial stages of the war: "At the moment I read your letter we were just ready to go out in the direction of Jefferson City to hunt the yanks to see if we could get a fight." Because these Florida companies were staffed by men from the same area, most of the personnel knew each other and there is the feeling of close association in sentiments running through the letters. Even as early as 1862, the supply shortage in the South is noted by the young lieutenant: "We are all nearly bare of clothes, some of the boys are bare-footed." In his letters, Hosford also gives several moving descriptions of the horrors of war. He displays a magnificent love of nature and the outdoors; in one letter he describes a Sunday evening stroll with a Virginia girl, viewing the mountain peaks: "The rustling of the trees was perfect harmony and melody. I thought of the garden of Eden and my dreams were as of Paradise." Climbing to the summit of a nearby peak, he "gazed [down] at all the world as though it had been a football at our feet. . . . I felt as if I were an angel and quoted all the poetry I could think suitable to the occasion from Burns, Biron and Shakespear." In the letter written on April 1, 1864, he describes a great Virginia snow storm.

Once, in a moment of romantic enthusiasm, Hosford climbed another mountain, and while gazing on the villages below, writes to Laura of his love for her: "In these cottages are the fair women in her beauty, most blest of all creation, who can conquer Kings and Tyrants and whose soft smile greet man in his gloom and

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Served in Organizations from the State of Florida, Fifth Infantry," H-I, Microcopy No. M251, roll 63, microfilm copy in P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville, Florida. The records show some discrepancy on the date of his election as second lieutenant; on one roster, dated March 1865, it indicates that he was elected in October 1862, another lists it as December 1862.

3. *Soldiers of Florida*, 136.

make him glad. Thus he is blest by the angel women, without her he is miserable and with her he is happy." In his concluding letter, April 2, 1864, Hosford reaffirms his love for Laura and asks, "let me hear from you by the first chance and I shall ever be truly." Although he makes no mention of it in his correspondence, Hosford's company rolls show that he was absent sick from March through June 1864, and absent on sick furlough in July and August.<sup>4</sup> This may have been the reason for the cessation of his letters, or it may have been that shortly afterwards Hosford received a letter from Laura telling him of her engagement to John Sealey.

The original letters are in the possession of Mrs. Sue Hemming Sealey of Tallahassee. They were brought to this writer's attention by her son-in-law, Thomas Morrill, a free lance writer. The letters are all written in ink; the script is far more legible than one usually finds in such correspondence, although there are some spelling and grammatical errors. A few changes have been made in periods and capitals, but the original spelling has been maintained. Brackets indicate a word so obvious that it has been inserted in order to make the narrative read more smoothly.

\* \* \* \* \*

Near Culpepper C. H. [Court House] Va.  
November 16., 1862

Miss Laura:

I rec'd your kind letter 2 days ago and since read and duly noted the contents. If you could imagine the noise and confusion [in which] I am now endeavoring to answer your kind epistle you would readily excuse the exercise. I cannot give you a description of any of the beauties around me in consequence of fatigue.

At the moment I read your letter we were just ready to go out in the direction of Jefferson City to hunt the yanks to see if we could get a fight and found them but it was running; our company lay in sight of the artillery shelling on yesterday and the most of the men slept, I for one, thus you can guess whether we are becoming hardened to battle or not. Though the knaves did not use but two or three batterries on us doing no damage only

4. "John W. Hosford's military service record," *op. cit.*

wounding two men and killing two horses and then they ran and we did not get a shot, and returned. We have been at this place now two weeks not doing anything only what just described. I cannot give you much news, for we do not hear much in the army. If I knew anything about the movement of our army I could not tell you, but our army is still at this time and may not have any mo[r]e active movements this winter, especially in this part.

The weather is quite cold having frost every morning and snow two days in a week. I am seated with my face to the north and a cold wind blowing from that quarter seems to pierce like cold pins. I am sitting on my blankets with a barrel head on my knees which serves as my desk. We are camped on one of these high hills or small mountains, and the Blue Ridge is in our view with its snow crested top which to the lover of nature's grand works and scenery is certainly magnificent notwithstanding the desolation has been laid on the land in this vicinity by the invading enemy. Cornfields are laid waste, houses are tenentless, fences are burnt and even little towns are vacated. But yet you can see that nature was certainly partial to this part of the globe for while its soil is productive to all the grains necessary to life its beauties are sublime. Our boys are now discussing what they are going to do if they ever reach home. Oh! if you knew how sweet that word is to us.

We have lost seventeen boys of our company that we know and several more supposed. Our company numbered 224 when we left Fla. and now we have 30 in camps, ballance in hospitals excepting the dead.<sup>5</sup> This makes me feel sad and seams to add sweetness to the word home. Oh! how sorry I am for our poor fellows who are dead. My heart bleeds when I think that they may have lived. Four only were killed by Yankee bullets, the others by exposure and hardship. My brothers stand it well.<sup>6</sup> Your relatives also. Your Brother "Wash" is well. Benj' Rich<sup>7</sup>

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5. The muster role for Co. H, in *Soldiers of Florida*, 148-50, lists the names of 140 enlisted men and six officers. The company suffered heavy casualties throughout the war, particularly in the fighting at Sharpsburg (Maryland), Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Petersburg.
  6. Sergeant Robert R. Hosford was wounded on May 6, 1864, in the fighting at the Wilderness. Another of John Hosford's brothers, Private Thomas J. Hosford was also a soldier in Co. H, 5th Florida.
  7. Second Lieutenant Benjamin T. Rich was mustered in on March 10, 1862, and was mustered out at Appomattox on April 9, 1865.

and John Bryant <sup>8</sup> are here, health good. Jack Rich is in the hospital. <sup>9</sup> I do not know any more of your relatives in the Brigade.

Our Reg't. the 2nd. <sup>10</sup> and 8th. <sup>11</sup> Fla. constitute a Brig'd and Gen. Perry commands. He is a Floridian and we are now in a Fla. Brig'd. <sup>12</sup> We are in hopes we will be sent to Fla. this winter, this is the hope of the Brig'd. It is Sunday evening and everything goes on just like it does any other evening. I often loose the day of the week. We have no preaching for our preachers are not willing to follow the army. They cannot stand camp life. You must read and excuse, my hands are cold and I am tired. . . .

In my last letter I gave you an acc't of my fare while in Orange Co. One of the Girls died while before I left. She was kind and lovely. I will recolect her to my death. I will tell you all about her if I live to see you.-

We are all nearly bare of clothes, some of the boys are bare-footed. Shoes cannot be had at any price; it would astonish you to hear the prices of articles with the army. . . . <sup>13</sup> Archie Smith

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8. John R. Bryant was mustered in April 19, 1862; he was wounded at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863; and was mustered out of service April 9, 1865.
  9. Jack Rich was mustered in March 10, 1862, and mustered out April 9, 1865.
  10. The 2nd Florida was mustered into Confederate service at Jacksonville on July 13, 1861, and two days later it entrained for Virginia. Colonel George T. Ward of Leon County was commanding officer of the regiment, until its reorganization May 10, 1862, when Colonel Edward A. Perry was elected to the command. *Soldiers of Florida*, 77-79; J. J. Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, in *Confederate Military History*, edited by Clement A. Evans (Atlanta, 1899), XI, 142-48.
  11. The 8th Florida was mustered into Confederate service in May 1862, and was ordered immediately to Virginia where it fought alongside the 2nd and 5th Florida regiments in the Second Battle of Manassas, August 30, 1862. In his dispatches after the battle, Brigadier General Roger A. Pryor noted: "The 5th and 8th Florida Regiments, though never under fire before, exhibited the cool and collected courage of veterans." *Soldiers of Florida*, 186-87; Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, 148.
  12. After the fighting in Maryland, September 1862, the army returned to Virginia, and there the Florida regiments were assigned to a distinct brigade under the command of Edward A. Perry, who had been promoted to brigadier general. The Florida Brigade, as it was known, remained in R. H. Anderson's division, Longstreet's corps, until after Chancellorsville, when it became part of Ambrose P. Hill's corps. Dickison, *Military History of Florida* 149; Sigsbee C. Prince, Jr., "Edward Alysworth Perry, Florida's Thirteenth Governor" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Florida, 1949), 38.
  13. According to the account by Catherine Cooper Hopley, *Life in South; From the Commencement of the War* (London, 1863), II, 276-77, the cost in 1862, for "children's shoes, and very inferior ones, from

is here, came to bring donations to the Young Loves and Smiths. They are in the 2nd. Reg't, I believe I have told you. [About three words illegible] I am a critic by the very way you appologised and begging me to write by hoping it would improve you. Now don't copy mine for if I knew you did not expect better than this from me, you would not see it. *This is the way we thrive, flattering each other.* It is now dress parade. I wrote a letter to sister. I hope she rec'd it. Give my best regards to your kind mother. Write soon, Address as before. We receive all our letters from Richmond. I know your good nature would excuse this if you knew the ill convenence of writing. Believe me your sincere

John W. Hosford

Camp near Fredricksburg, Va.,  
May 31st., 1863

Miss L. G. Rich

Dear Madam:-

I am again among the jovial soldiers and a Sabath day and pening you a few lines that may reach you in surprise, for you may think by this time that I have been numbered among the dead. But by the blessings of an alwise Providence I have weath-ered through a disease that has proved fatal to many of the 5th. Fla. Reg't., and to cap the climax I have had the Small Pox or more properly the Variola. I escaped without many marks in the latter case.<sup>14</sup>

I have been furloughed home for a short time<sup>15</sup> and intended visiting your fathers while at home till time escaped and time to return had come, and I hastened to the army and arrived just in time to see the carnage of the battlefield which no doubt you have seen the acc't ere this. I will not and cannot describe to you de amount suffering I saw on and near the battlefield of Chancellors-

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three dollars upwards; full-sized shoes from five to ten dollars a pair." All kinds of clothing for the troops was scarce, and, in 1863, the Florida legislature appropriated \$75,000 to purchase the necessary materials for shoes and uniforms and to pay for having them manufactured for use by Florida forces. *Laws of Florida* (1863), 47; John E. Johns, *Florida During the Civil War* (Gainesville, 1963), 171.

14. Hosford's medical records show that he was admitted to General Hospital No. 25 on December 3, 1862, and again on January 1, 1863. The record lists his illness as "variola distinct."
15. Hosford was granted a thirty-day furlough beginning March 31, 1863.

ville and Fredricksburg. You have doubtless seen the acc't given by A.J.T. (who is our Adjutant) in the "Floridian."<sup>16</sup> I had returned from home and arrived to Fred'g the day the battle ended and regreted not being here to be a participant in the fight. I saw a column of yankee prisoners near the length of a mile and a half long. I asked them where they were going and they said "down towards Richmond. Hooker had promised to carry them and they had concluded to go without him."<sup>17</sup> They appeared to be in good spirits and full of jesting, no doubt glad to get out of the murderous scene they had been witnessing.

While I am writing we are having preaching as I said on the other page, being the Sabath day which we always have on Sunday, sometimes of nights through the week when we anticipate no trouble with the yanks. Sunday is always general inspection day in the forenoon afterwhich we repair to some place dissignated for preaching at eleven o'clock in the forenoon. We have no Chaplain for our Reg't. but some of the men preach and it is sublime to visit one of our humble Churches.<sup>18</sup> We have no music save that of vocal and that consists of our men's voices who has been exposed to all the dews of heaven and cold till it is somewhat hoarse and harsh. Still the music is good and grand when collected in some grove with leaves for our seats and no one present but the masculine sex. The preacher reads his text and gives out the hymns something like they do in churches built of finer material than ours, as well as I can recollect. The choir takes up the time which consists of all nearly present and makes the woods ring with its melody, and I think if you were here you would be obliged to say it is good music. All is quiet in time of preaching, apparently interested in the discourse and I have no doubt they are, and

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16. The Tallahassee *Floridian*, a weekly, began publication in 1828, and by the Civil War it had become one of the most widely distributed and influential papers in the state. Winifred Gregory, ed., *American Newspapers 1821-1836, A Union List of Files Available in the United States and Canada* (New York, 1937), 95; J. Pendleton Gaines, Jr., "A Century in Florida Journalism" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Florida, 1949), 8.
  17. Union General Joseph Hooker was commander of the Army of the Potomac from January 1863 until after the Battle of Chancellorsville, May 1863.
  18. According to available records, the chaplain's post in the 5th Florida was never filled. *Soldiers of Florida*, 136. For information on Confederate army religious activities, see Bell I. Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb* (Indianapolis, 1943), 174-91.

I think these sermons do more for the salvation of our men than all the sermons they ever heard before.

Today is one of the finest I ever witnessed in this State before, being a soft mild sunshine with a cool soft wind blowing from the west; something like the first of April in our climate. Spring is just appearing here with few flowers and very few as they are held as sacred almost as those of the Garden of Eden were they here now as in the day of Adam and our mother Eve. This don't agree with the boys from the "Land of Flowers." I do not know of any of your acquaintances to tell you of except those in our Co., John F. & B. T. Rich, John Bryant are well also G. W. Bryant<sup>19</sup> who is detailed now on Provost gaurd. G. W. Watkins is in good health and always in good spirits.<sup>20</sup>

We have been under marching orders for several days, but were relieved last evening by orders from the Gen. to make ourselves easy and comfortable as possible. When we are under marching orders we keep our rations cooked and in our haversacks and ready to move at a moments warning and it always keeps us in awful suspense. We never know where we are going or anything of the kind.

You must excuse me in this hasty letter for I know not what to say or how to write an interesting letter. I think I have written you two or three since I received one from you and I know that your letters would be interesting to me and I do not now recollect of having rec'd but one from you since I have been in the State. I would be happy to see you and see the family and Oh! this makes me think how happy I once was when all was peace and plenty and I could spend the Sunday evenings with Florida's Belles and time past unlingering by and all was so pleasant that it now seams to me like an old sweet dream. But if we ever get out of the war I intend to make myself happy as I never was and I think I will appreciate what I never did before.-

I must tell you something of the fashions in this state and N.C. The Girls of the fashionable class and certainly they all do so, shingle their heads, that is cut the hair in the same fashion of the soldiers, parting it on the left side and combing it precisely as a

19. George W. Bryant was mustered into Co. H., 5th Florida, on April 19, 1862; he was wounded at Petersburg, Virginia, July 30, 1864; and was mustered out of service on April 9, 1865.

20. G. W. Watkins is shown on the rolls of Co. A, 8th Florida. He was mustered in on May 8, 1862.

man's. This does not agree with my taste, for I think when a Lady cuts her hair off then her beauty is gone and besides it is sinful before the Almighty, according to Scriptures "But every one to their taste."

Give my compliments to all especially to your Good Mother. Also to your Father. And all inquiring friends, and please write to me. Communicate all the news and if all are well & c. and if no news write anyhow and if you cannot write send me blank paper; anything from home is interesting here. This leaves me in good health hoping to find yourself and the family enjoying the same priceless boon.

Address J. W. Hosford Lt.  
Co. H, 5th Reg't  
Fla. Vols,  
Richmond  
Va.

Ask for any information you may want respecting our situation or any one here, and I will give it to the best of my humble abilities. Excuse bad writing and all errors which I know you would do if you could see a soldier's humble facilities-

I am as Ever  
J. W. Hosford

Camp near Orange C.H. Va.  
Aug. 19th. 1863

Miss Laura

My Dear Friend

Your much esteemed letter came to hand a few days ago under date 7th. Inst. I have read it many times and noted contents. . . . You seem to be fearful it would not be interesting but when I tell you that the most happiness I enjoy is in the reading your letters, when you note your mind as it appears you did this, I hope all such fears will vanish. And perhaps you will be dained to accuse me of flattery if I were to tell you or describe the pleasure it gives me to receive one of your letters when I am so far from you, but if, I occupy a place in your esteem as you define the word *Friend* then I am certainly happy and you can have more confidence in me than to accuse me of

deceit or flattery. It would be an injustice both to my conscience and yourself were I to withhold from you my feelings and sentiments between us. If you are acquainted with me (and I hope you are) you know I am one of those persons whose heart is warm and will give vent to my feelings to those I repose confidence in and a real friend is as myself. Alas, how many friends have I? Take my mother, father, brothers and sisters out and where are the others? Perhaps I have one or two but if you were to ask me to name them doubtful if I could do so.

I have often thought of this subject and accused myself of being to suspicious to repose confidence in those who indeed deserved the confidence of those more meritorious than myself. You will be ready enough to allow me to accuse myself [of being suspicious] or says you, you would not have lived so long as you have in "single cursedness" but would have made love to some "Fair One" and called her your own ere this. And I must confess that this has been a detriment. Yet I hope you will not accuse me or think I consolidate all within my acquaintance in this, but, would those whom I have confidence in allow me to love them? This is a question I would like to have answered. There is not in my opinion much difference between love and friendship. You must be friendly before you can love, and real love is from the soul and heart and gives a pleasure indiscrivable where it exists with a blot or detriment whatever. I do not mean love or friendship is impulse for the moment, or passion for the time; lasting, trusting, present or absent, and one you can think of as yourself. It is a pleasure to me to think of this subject and especially if I could imagine there is one I can love as a friend or lover and one that would repose confidence in me. Then music and melody would issue from all nature and the wind would waft the perfume from the Garden of Eden, I could seek some lonely spot to meditate in stillness, all calm, I could hear as it were the Angels singing in Paradise,

I have no news to write you only that we were in another battle last Saturday two weeks ago and the first day of this month. I presume you will see the casualties in the news papers ere this. I sent it in for publication as I did the Gettysburg battle.

The war has a prospect of continuation and the alwise only knows when it will close. Some times I am almost willing to give

it up and then I am willing to die, and it seems we will never have the pleasure of going home, till at last I almost murmur and think of *Job*, and then conclude all things are for the best, and think there is certainly happiness for me in the future. Some writer has said, This World is a Stage and its inhabitants are actors and every one must act their part.

You ask me to write something for your *Album*. I have intended to do so ever since I made the promise and will the first chance. I think your subject a good one were I able to control language to define it in space small enough to place in an *Album*. I sent you two copys of the *Illustrated News*.<sup>21</sup> Please send one to Mrs. Sealey. There was a man in our Company whose name was L. E. Washburn I think some relation to Mrs. Sealey. He was killed in the last fight at Culpeper C.H. It is painful to me to have to write to wives of their husband's deaths which I am often compeled to do. James Nixon rec'd a wound that killed him in the same fight.<sup>22</sup> Your father knew him.

My time is short and cannot write you an interesting letter amid so much noise as I have here in these camps sitting on the ground resting against a tree. I know that you must have been vexed with so much noise in time of the whooping cough but you can hardly guess the embarassment we have to contend with here in attempting to write. . . . I hope you will consider me a friend and excuse all mistakes and will not hesitate a moment when convenient in answering my humble letters. And we must submit to the Alwise for our protection and hope for the time when we can meet and communicate without a slow method of writing.

Give my kind respects to all and believe I often think of you with a sence of love and good feeling.

Your Very Friend  
J. W. Hosford

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21. *The Southern Illustrated News* was a weekly paper published in Richmond, beginning in 1862 and continuing through 1863. Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1930-1938), II, 112.
22. James N. Nixon was mustered in on April 19, 1862, as a private in Co. H, 5th Florida.

Rhapahannock River near Rhap' Station, Virginia  
October 20th. 1863

My Friend Laura: -

Yours of the 6th. came to hand yesterday evening and relieved me from much anxiety for I had been looking with impatience for it. It has been delayed probably in consequence of our being on a campaign after the enemy, having run them from Rapidan River to Manassas and our returning yesterday morning to this place when we met the mail and with it the things we most enjoy, our letters *from our friends far away*.

It seemed that the enemy did not intend to attack Gen. Lee and he determined to attack them. He sent our Corps on a flanking expedition something like Stonewall Jackson's movements but it seems our Corps Commander, who is A. P. Hill, did not have the energy or the military skill enough to accomplish the desired object in no way but what the enemy found out our movements [in] time enough to defeat us by falling back towards the Potomac and never offering us battle by a continual retreat.

We took a circuitous rout westward until we came to the base of the Blue Ridge mountains and thence by those mountains north 'till we came near flanking the yanks from the soil of Virginia. We overtook them at Bristow where they tarried to rest and engaged them for a short time on the evening of the 14th. Our Brig'd and a North Carolina Brig'd was engaged with them, many were killed, the North carolinians lost many. Our Reg't lost five killed, several wounded. Our Company lost none, none wounded, except myself and I only got a slight wound on the hand which is nearly well.<sup>23</sup>

We advanced near the enemy and they poured into us a hail of lead and iron for they had a Corps massed in a Rail Road cut and several pieces of artillery all playing on us at the same time, but we held our ground 'till night when the enemy silently retreated under cover of the darkness of a cloudy night, leaving many of their dead for us to bury which we did after burieing our own dead. But of a few we could only find some pieces of the body such as a hand or two or three fingers. Sometimes a foot, or part of a foot, sometimes a whole arm, or half of the head, and bodies mangled in every conceivable condition. But it would only make

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23. There is nothing in Hosford's medical records to indicate this wound.

your heart ache for me to describe the battlefield were I able to control language to give you a description.

Many poor mothers weep, and sisters grieve, wives morn, children lament, brothers sad and their solemn reflections of where their relatives are laid, in some distant old field or on the side of some mountain or hill, silently in the land of strangers waiting the sound of the Trumpet that shall call all the nations together at the last day when everyone shall give an account of the deeds done in the body. My heart has ached when I have seen them carelessly buried or cramed in a grave to small to receive the body, with no coffin or shroud and the clod thrown over them as roughly as the Irishman throws his clay in digging a ditch. No one to mark the spot, shed a tear or plant a rose, or express a sentiment of compassion as though he had no friend on earth. How often I have thought of the song "I'll kiss him for his Mother,"<sup>24</sup> for it seems to speak a word of sympathy to the grieved. Perhaps you know the song or have heard it sung, and a sweet song it is to those who have experienced the life of a soldier.

After leaving near Manassas we marched to this place, where we have been resting since yesterday morn, and sweet it has been to us who so much needed it after our wearisome march, now south of the Rhapannock River. I do not think we will stay here long. I think our Corps will be sent to Tennessee. I am not willing to go, but of course our willingness will not be consulted about that. Our camps are a sad looking spectacle to one that never saw the like; our men lounging about on the ground, not on a beautiful mountain as we have had in some cases but on a plain and it rained the night before last till the earth is covered with mire, making it disagreeable.

You said your Father had gone to the Election and was endeavoring to have me elected. I do not know how the election has gone but if I am elected it will be with the greatest reluctance that I would accept a Cival office and retire from the army. My father knows this and I am almost sorry I suffered my name run, he being the cause of it. But if they elect me they cannot make me serve.<sup>25</sup> I would willingly go home and be happy to meet my

24. This may have been a line from the popular Confederate song "Somebody's Darling."

25. County and congressional elections were held in Florida in October 1863, but it is not known what office Hosford was seeking.

friends, but can I be happy knowing so many are absent engaged in this war? Notwithstanding I feel under many obligations to my friends. . . .

You said a report came from the Dark Corner that you were to be married, and wishes for you "connubial bliss." Your curiosity must have been excited not to know who was to be your share for "better or worse." I am very anxious to know who it could be that is to be the happy participant of your joys and cares, for I sincerely believe he would be a happy being. Now if you are about to make this sudden change do let me know so I may know how to address you. I would like much to see you before the change but if it is not so ordered then I submit to the Power and take my fate and will be ever your Faithful

John W. H.

Oct. 21st. 1863

You must excuse me for extending my already to long epistle and thus trespass on your patience with something that may be wholly uninteresting. Within enclosed you will find a letter I wrote yesterday evening and failing to send of[f] by the mail, being to late. We have a mail every day and as often look for letters when we are in camps. We never have a mail when we are on a march.

Everything goes on this morning as it did yesterday. We think we now will be sent to Fredr'b'g., that is about seventy five miles from here and we are ninety miles from Richmond.

John Bryant is here, though has not been put on duty, his hand not being well.

The Health of our company is good and we are in good spirits. I have not and cannot see any end to this war. How we pray for peace that we may go home and see all our friends and enjoy the comforts of home.

Give my compliments to all your relatives. I would be happy to see you and could tell you many things of Virginia. I hope the day may not be far in the future when we can meet. But we must not be impatient.

Your Humble Friend  
John W. H.

Camp Near Rapidan, A.N.V.

Nov. 23rd. 1863

Yours under date 12th. last. came to hand yesterday evening and give great satisfaction to hear from you. . . I had been like you waiting with impatience and had even concluded I had uttered some sentence that had given offence and that you had concluded not to waste time in communicating with a correspondent so void of interest, and boldness of expression. I often think I am to bold but always to late, in pondering over what I have written I am fearful there is something not intelligible or something audacious and feel ashamed of what I have said. But I hope your good judgement with our long acquaintance will be sufficient to excuse any error I may commit in my extreme ignorance in expressing my humble thoughts to you.

You must not expect this to be interesting as I am as blank of anything to say as ever I looked, and you know I am as bare as an unwritten book. The last letter I wrote you was written on this side of the Rhappahannock River and a day after one of the most arduous marches we have ever taken in this army. We left those camps and came to these just two weeks since and we are now in the same camps we were in before we made the march and the same where we were in Sept. and first till 8th. Oct. If you recollect I mentioned in some communication about our erecting rifle pits and breast works at this place, well, we have been improving these since our return. I think Genl. Lee intends resting his army here for the winter, if the enemy does not make some move to draw him out of his fortifications. We think we will have another fight here this fall or winter. We never know when we are going to have a fight till we are into it.

I did not state in my last an incident that occurred to me the day we were in the last fight. We were marching at a quick time, you will understand we were within the yankee lines, - and as is usually the case the Ladies and children gathered to the road side to see, as they called us "Rebels," and, I might say, hundreds of ladies often scattered along the road to see us on the march. You will imagine when I tell you that it is a rare sight to see thousands of soldiers marching four men aside [one another] and you carry on some mountain peak to observe the column, and you can see neither end of it, and you can see for miles, but it seems to be

dragging its way out of some hole or cave at the rear, and its front seams to be making its way as it proceeds.

But my story, as stated we were marching quick time, and passing a group of beautiful girls as they were cheering us by waving their handkerchiefs and giving "Huzas" for the "Rebels" and telling us to go and kill all the yanks and throw them into the Potomac, and asking us if we had plenty to eat, and saying they had heard we were perishing to death, when we assured them we had plenty to eat. As I passed, one, in their excitement, she struck me on the shoulder with her 'kerchief saying "go it my brave fellow, you are the boys for me," just then I had a feeling, and felt as though I could fight "old Meade"<sup>26</sup> and all his yankee crew.

That evening we overtook the yanks and had the fight in which I rec'd the slight wound on my hand by the yankee minnie ball, and I thought of the fair Damsel and her encouraging words. Her beauty was perfect, her cheeks seemed to reflect the rose's tint and compare with the lillies freshness, making all within her presents smile. I think I must have loved her, but alas: she is in yankeedom and I cannot see her again I fear.

Not long since I went to witness a cavalry review, a scene that is rare to one, especially not in the army. Gen'l Stewart [*sic*]<sup>27</sup> with seven thousand of his cavalry were reviewed by Gen'l Lee. There was many Ladies to witness, among whom were many very beautiful. But when you see seven thousand men well mounted on line steeds with drawn sabres and ordered to pass in review, in charge, the scene is magnificent. Three or four horses fell and the others ran over them killing or disabling de horses and their riders. This is common at these cavalry reviews. I had a position on an embankment high up on the Rail Road that ran nearby and consequently could see all. The Gen's took a stand near where I sat and of course all the audience got as near them as possible. And the cavalry had to pass in many long columns by at a charge and the riders yelling like demons all the while. I envied old Gen'l Lee as I noticed him conversing with a very beautiful young Lady dressed in black silk. Jack Rich was with me and tried to "evedrop them" and learn what they were saying, but he could

26. George G. Meade was the Union commander at Gettysburg.

27. James Ewell Brown Stuart, Confederate cavalry general, was killed at Yellow Tavern, Virginia, in 1864.

learn nothing, only something about the army and we cared nothing for that. After the review was over I noticed old man Bob riding with her, both mounted on horse back, toward home, I guess, I don't know where she lives.

Now I will tell you of a scene appalling to me and shocking my nerves worse than battles, though I have seen men shot by my side, and mortally wounded, men have run over me in their deathly impulsive fits, making the scene horrible, and life's gore covering the ground; but of all to see men shot tied to the stake for deserting. Six men marched with their hands tied behind them and halted and ordered to kneel fronting twenty four men with bright shiny gund loaded, all drawn up in lines, and see the Cle'rgyman advance to the convicts and kneel and offer a word of prayer, blindfold and ask them if they are ready, they answer in the affirmative, and you hear the officer command of the guard give the orders "ready," "aim," "fire," and you see their lifeless forms sprawling on the ground, mangled, perhaps one or two may be breathing the last in the agonies of life, and others are wounded, and another file of men are ordered to advance to shoot those who have a spark of life left, and nothing remains but a heap of lifeless forms. . . .

You speak of seeing my Brother on the cars. You ought to have made his acquaintance. He is Hospital Steward at Tallahassee and I presume he had been off on a tour procuring supplies when you saw him. I guess you are mistaken about our resemblance for the girls all say he is pretty and I claim none of that. I wish to know very much what it was that you desired to tell me and would not attempt to tell me with your pen, with the excuse that you could not express your sentiment on paper. I desired to see you before you "make the change" because I know I would not enjoy your company as well after as before, as I never enjoy the company of married folks as those unmarried. I hope you will not take this as if I "about half way believed you were going to marry." I do not think you ought to say you cannot tell your desires on paper, as, so far as I am competent to judge, I think you are, and can express yourself if you would. But I am anxious for you to tell me, even if it appears simple to you, what you desired to tell me.

I must close this as I have already written more than I expected.

You speak of your preparing to make sugar, I very much desired to be a guest at such a place. I do not know when I was at a sugar boiling. We never see sugar or syrup here.

Today is raining and cold. We had snow not long since. President Davis is here in the army. He looks well. . . . Lt. Ben Rich has come since I commenced this, for the first time he has been with us since he was at home. He seems to be in good health. George W. Wadkins is here in very fine health. Health of the Company is good. We think we will have another fight here this winter. Give my kind regards to all the family and believe me your

Very Humble Friend,  
John W. H.

P.S. Write soon, tell all the news

Camp Near Rapidan A. N. V.  
Dec. 19th. 1863

My Dear Friend Laura: -

Again I am delighted to reply to one of your esteemed letters which came to hand yesterday under date 6th inst. Not that I know where to begin to make this interesting, but to engage my mind in that which is ever pleasant to my feelings.

I must in the beginning of this reply to some points in your letter. You seem to have withheld or have been indifferent or careless and somewhat distant, in this to that of others. If I have misconstrued and thus frankly tell you, I hope you will forgive me. I think you must have had your "Bonnet well over your face," when you wrote this letter, like you did in school. If it has not been for the Emblem contained in the envelop I would have believed my last was cold and distant and that you had concluded to reply in the same style.

You know I am not very exciteable but as I was finishing my last letter Lt. B. Rich came and it raised such an excitement among us as such always does and in extreme absence of mind I folded my letter, enveloped and addressed it without thinking to put your address in the face of the letter. I never thought of it untill I had mailed it, and that gave me no little uneasiness. I know you think I ought to address my letters first, beginning, but

I do not and this has no address now at the top. I withhold the address in consequence of being among so many men, and some are apt to be looking for the name at the top to see whom I correspond with, and I always leave the address till I close my writing.

You imagine that Ben is quite a personage among us that he raises excitement among us, but it is the case with any member of the Company who has been absent sick or any other cause, and *especially from home*. I know you would laugh at our folly could you but see us, so much like children.

It is useless for me to expect you to tell me what you withheld in your last. Also you say I am a perfect riddle and I need not ask you why; for you will not tell me "under present circumstances." I wish to know what those circumstances were. You asked the question would I tell you that, that I would not have the world to know I must conscientiously reply that I would, and if I did not have the confidence I claim in you, I assure you that my correspondence with you would be conducted in a careless manner. You have all my confidence (and sometimes I fear more than you desire) and would know the inmost secrets of my heart if I were aware that you would condescend to hear them, but my extreme timidity deters me from speaking to those I dearly love and I often wait to be driven by passion. You say you are always ready to drop correspondents and that you had no confidence, hardly in any one, and that you are almost ready to say you intend to live and die an old maid, only you disdain the name. Excuse me if I quote. I hope you will not drop me. I have already told you how much confidence I had in you and I believe you have some confidence in me. I would certainly be a very unhappy being if you were to drop correspondence with me. As to being an old maid, that is unnatural and I believe sinful, for it is natural for persons to marry, and if you act illegal to nature's law you must expect retribution.

I am like you in regard to love, I believe it is of slow growth. I know I don't love at first sight, and you know it, for you know my temperament is not of a hasty nature. Consequently I could not have loved the Girl in yankeedom, and I would not love any Girl for merely fadeing beauty, and besides, she may have been some old yank's *Sweetheart*. I have loved, and I know that it does not spring at first sight with me, and should have little confidence

in first sight love. You confess to know but little about love and I own that I do, but I am not prepared to describe it, now. Webster says love is sometimes stronger than death. I confess to know nothing about that kind of love. My love story is not a sad one to me. I must tell you this that you may not think my sad appearance, at times, are accountable for in some sad love affair. I may tell you at some future day. I promise you that I shall always answer your communications and that you need not prepare to drop correspondence with me. I have come nearly to a closing point in this and have not written what I intended at the beginning. I have written through an honest purpose, and if anything is wrong about it, I hope you will excuse my folly as having been committed through ignorance.

I came very near losing myself and company on the last day of Nov. in skirmish with the yanks. We lost Neil McPhaul<sup>28</sup> and George Hagan.<sup>29</sup> I have not time to give details. I made the closest escape I ever did with my life. But I was blessed with having escaped from fifteen yanks shooting at me not more than fifty paces.

Give my kind regards to all. Write to me.

And be assured that I am as ever

Your very Affectionate  
Friend

John W. H.

Camp near Orange C. H.

Army of Northern Va. March 7th. 1864

My dear Friend Laura:

It is my happy privilege to write you again . . . in the same friendly language that I ever did. I had concluded that you had forgotten me or that my last was so void of interest that it had even excited your indignation. But Serg't Rich's case made me the happy recipient of your language in *blue violets* with your letter explaining clearly to my understanding what had

28. Neil L. McPhaul was mustered into Co. H, 5th Florida, on April 1, 1862, and was mustered out April 9, 1865. Apparently, McPhaul was only wounded in the skirmish and not killed as reported by Hosford.

29. George W. B. Hagan was mustered into Co. H, 5th Florida, on March 13, 1862.

been a mystery to me. I received it yesterday evening and you cannot imagine my joy after being extricated from my gloom, for I had imagined a thousand things that might have give[n] you offence and you had dropped my correspondence in utter contempt. It appears that Ed Bryant<sup>30</sup> with the ballance of his villiany has retained the letter you sent or intended to send me, and finally, he has skulked in the woods doing not only an injustice to me as his best friend, but keeps our Co. out of getting a furlough every thirty days which is of inestimable value to the members of our Co.

I saw a man belonging to the 8th Fla. Reg't shot for desertion and it would be Bryant's fate now if he could be caught, but as mean as he has done me, God forbid that I should witness his execution; for I assure you nothing shocks my nerves more than seeing a miserable man tied to a stake and shot. I am sorry that Bryant has done so badly for he acquired himself a gallant name as a soldier.

The yanks came near capturing Richmond not many days ago. We had a tramp after them which the boys will tell you better than I can on paper, for I intend to send this by them. . . . My long silence does not enable me to write you an interesting letter, now, and I hope you will excuse me for I am writing by candle light in my tent and the boys making every kind of noise that is usual to uncooth boys and soldiers.

We have no romantic scenes these times that I can try to describe to you but I must tell you of a novel thing of myself and a Va. Girl. I and she had been out on a soft, sunny Sunday evening viewing the mountain peaks and walking on a plank road, every thing was lovely, I am sure I was happy, the rustling of the trees was perfect harmony and melody, I thought of the garden of Eden and my dreams were as of Paradise. We noticed a very

30. Like Hosford, Edward J. Bryant was mustered into Captain Gregory's company first and then mustered into Confederate service, Co. H, 5th Florida, on April 19, 1862. He was promoted to second corporal on November 17, 1862. The company muster rolls for November and December 1863 show him on furlough. According to the records, he was "absent without leave" in January and February 1864, and on March 1, 1864 he was reduced to ranks. Later company rolls, September and October 1864, also show him "absent without leave." "Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Florida, Fifth Infantry," B1-C1, Microcopy No. M251, roll 60, microfilm copy in P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History.

tall peak of the mountain just by which she had been telling me on the top of which we could see all Va., and we turned our course and after much climbing and helping each other we ascended to its topmost peak. We gazed at all the world as though it had been a football at our feet, seeing many villages spread out in vast expanse all added to the panorama.

I felt as it were I was with an angel and quoted all the poetry I could think suitable to the occasion from Burns, Biron and Shakespear and we turned to make our decent no[t] so precipitous as the one we ascended and I do not know what I had been saying, for it seems like a dream, when she said you officers from the South are so tricky I do not know how to answer you, and said she had heard of some of them that had married girls here and actually had wives and loving ones at home.

I assured her that old Nick would not be presumed to tempt me with such a sin and that I had never been married and that I had not and would not dupe her. We descended to our road again and when we reached her cottage it was quite dark, the time seeming to me as if it had been but a moment. I have not told you all that passed between us but I will tell you sometime. The time passed off pleasantly with me and she seemed well pleased and enjoyed my oddities as she called it, very much indeed.

We are camped now on a tall mountain and I know the scenery would be romantic to you and I wish you could be here for a brief period that your imagination might be completely enveloped in real mountain scenery and picturesque view, - I sometimes see my folly and only wish I could remedy it but it is beyond my power, and now I am alone the boys have all retired stillness prevails, my thoughts sound like words in my ears as I write. I stop to consider the frailties of human nature. Oh! Laura, would that God would put a period in this cruel war that we could all go home in peace and see our loved ones. My heart bleeds on this sad question. I see not end to it but the horizon seems to darken. Oh! that I could send the olive branch on the troubled waters. But I am a weak creature. . . .

I will come home some time between now and May next, I will see you if you will allow it and I believe you will, and I will tell you many things I feign would put on paper. You must excuse and allow for my folly, for I mean to be good and am actu-

ated by pure motives. I know you see many things curious and mysterious in me, and probably suspicious but I cannot see them - You must be sure to write me on the reception of this. Please do not be delicate for you are acquainted with me and know I am only an ordinary character, - I have not received but no letters from you since last Dec., Bryant kept the letter you intended to send by him.

Do not take this scribble as an example; I am in a perfect state of nothingness tonight. Give my love to all and be assured you have what the initials of the Valentine Spelled From

John

Quarles Mountain Near Orange  
March 18th, 1864

Miss Laura:

My Dear Friend:

I have just ascended to the peak of this mountain to take a view of the scenery natural with paper, pen and ink in hand to write you a letter. I am so tired I do not know that [I] will do or write what I thought I would or not, for I am almost breathless and the wind blows so cold I can hardly grip my pen now.

Siting where I do now on a rock resting against a large chestnut oak located on the highest peak of this mountain I see the world at my feet as it were with hills and vallies, with mountains away far off and the whole is romantic, beautiful, and grand. . . . I am alone with nothing to greet my ears but the whistling of the wind. This is as sweet to me in mind as the scenery is gratifying to my vision, but this does not explain to you my feelings for you do not know anything of my passion for scenery, but when I tell you I am passionately fond of romance, then although I do not describe it, you can imagine nearly my feelings now. But I must try to describe some of the most prominent points of things in my view. I am sitting with my face to the west and the sun is passed the zenith on the decent to the western horizon, and the sky is so clear that it seems to have been swept by some artificial hand with a new broom and made bright.

I see in front of me our camps away below, for they look as if they were in a well, being one fourth of a mile down on the side

of this mountain below me, more precipitous than any hill I ever saw in Fla. I see beyond many other camps in the valleys with smoke rising from their rude huts like a distant town; here and there I see droves of horses grazing on the plains, I presume would compare with those of the wild horses in the western prairies. These are the army horses.-

Now I look northward, I see Slaughter mountain, and Cedar mountain, these are biographical with the history of this war, especially Stonewall Jackson's for he flogged the yanks on Slaughter mountain, the 9th. of June, 1862, when they gave this mountain its present name. I see their camps looking similar to ours but if I was there I would see that they are laid off more systematical and scientific than ours, and I guess of more costly material, and if I did not see men better clad I am sure I would pity them.

Now I turn from this sad scene, for such I consider soldiers camps, and nearly about face to the south. I see as I glanced all the eastern Virginia in one vast plain specked here and there with towns and villages, and some of the most beautiful cottages ever beheld. Europe might envy, France and Italy may cope but certainly none can compare with these. In these cottages are the fair woman in her beauty, most blest of all Creation, who can conquer kings and tyrants and whose soft smile greet man in his gloom and make him glad. Thus he is blest by the angel woman, without her he is miserable and with her he is happy. May heaven bless them-but I am lost from my subject-

Now I look south and can see no mountains, all seems to be even, one level, now I see the train or iron horse gulping his black smoke running from Richmond to Orange C.H. and I see another bound for Staunton; it appears to be mad and running at the mountain for revenge. Is it any wonder that the world has been called one great stage and its inhabitants actors, every one acting his part at his turn. . . Here you could witness to the extent of your wishes this saying. How I wish you were standing here. Your dreams of romantic scenery might be realized. I would be so happy to have you give expression to your thoughts. I would feel blessed to have the privilege of showing and telling you the names of different mountains and villages[.] For of course you would not know any of them not having been here, and I having had them shown me.

But you would rather have a more decent soldier than I to show you these things and I could not blame you, for, I will assure you I am not a dandy looking and you would even wonder that I had a taste for scenery were you to cast a glance at me now in my humble position trying to pen my thoughts to you as they occur to me. But I do not believe this, you are more compassionate and would rather sympathize than scorn.

But now the sun begins to approach the Blue Ridge, the wind has lulled its blast, and I soon must descend the mountain for it is nearly time for Dress Parade. - I feel as though I had been in a pleasant dream. I feel that only one thing is required to make me a happy mortal. I shall not tell you now what that is. Pardon me will you, I have already written you a long letter without the receipt of one, or permission from you. I sent you a hasty written letter by Lt. Rich for I hoped by this means you would receive it sooner. I was much chagrined at the way our correspondence has been delayed by Mr. Ed Bryant. I do not approve the sending letters by hand, especially between unmarried people. Uncouth suspicion gives vent to actions. You must not think my feelings are wounded with you for anything. You must pardon all errors in composition for I have no book for reference. "A word to the wise is sufficient."

Now our band plays and adds its melody to the surrounding scene, and I must repair to my duties. I will not dare glance over this scroll for I fear it is not right. - "Do not view it with a critics eye"- "But pass its imperfections by"- Give my love to all your friends. And my grateful compliments to your Father and Mother. Excuse my visionary dreams and write by the first opportunity to your Friend

John

Camps, 5th Fla. Regt.,  
Perrys Brig'd,  
April 1st. 1864

Miss Laura

My Friend: -

Yesterday's mail made me the happy recipient of your favor under date of 19th. ult. . . in answer to mine, by Lieut. Rich, and although you must have been embarrassed for

time, by the visit of your Brothers, it was quite entertaining to me. I am well aware of your feelings in gratitude to the Alwise for guarding them through so many dangerous scenes and their having the privilege of visiting once more their happy home and fortunate ones there.

I wrote you a letter about the 22nd March and enclosed a note telling you not to write after receiving the letter, until you heard from me again. I had hoped that I would have the pleasure of going home and my hopes are not blighted yet, but I fear that they will be, I do not know. You seem to anticipate this for you say, I spake as assuredly as if I knew I was going, and truly I did when it was certain I did not know. When we cannot go any where without leif and Genl. Lee does not choose to give papers everytime one takes it into his head to go. In this instance you are something of a Prophetess.

You will see by the date of this that "today is all Fool's day" and it certainly verified in my case for I feel that although I have undertaken to write you a letter and although you are the most valued among my Friends, I have nothing to write you that can interest you.

But for a Commencement, On the 23rd. Ultimo, we had as great a snow storm as I ever witnessed in Va. or any where else for you know that my experience is limited in this matter. But snow with her white mantle enveloped every thing, and to the depth of about two feet. The scene was so magnificent and charming. The elements were bright with more than common gale blowing, a steady wind from the north with flakes of snow in driven whiteness and downy lightness filling the air, looking perfect, gentle, innoent and pure. (We are camped the most of us in huts of our own building, and commonly from three to five of us in one of these dens, looking something like what your Father puts potatoes in, those he intends for the table in autumn. These have chimnies to them are called here, soldiers winter Qrs.) The canopy apparently was arraid in vengeance from ten or noon day until dark, and nearly all night, and sending its vengeance on the earth in the shape of hoary and harmless snow.

The morning of the 24th. found us all cooped in our dens with our doors litterally bared to the roof with pale snow. We soon devised means to extricate ourselves from what had become jails

to us by procuring some boards; turning these into shovels and lifting the snow immediately from our door. I have told you our camps are on the side of a mountain. You can imagine the scene when we stepped forth from our dens of a calm, still morning and the sun already peeping from above its purple horizon and down the side of the mountain at us, for we are on the western side. All greeting each other from den to den for it was useless for us to try to get together more than belonged to the same den. I stood amazed dreamily comparing this vigorous climate to that of the "sweet, sunny south." That day passed off and next day the snow had melted so that we could begin to snow ball. We had long lines of battle sometimes two or three thousand soldiers on a side, of all grades and ranks, from Brig'd Genls. down. The fighting similar to fighting yanks, displaying as much energy and determination. . . .

Today is rainy, the snow having all melted, but you must remember that we have not seen any warm weather. We can distinctly see the snow on the Blue Ridge, but cannot see it today on account of the mist. But the last three or four days were fair, the sun reflecting on the snow making the Blue Ridge look as if it was crowned with silver. But the most beautiful scene was yesterday evening as the sun retired behind the Blue Ridge, some clouds obscured its brightness and I could see apparently its purple rays descending as to the mountains and then they appeared as if crowned with bright, shining gold. I wish you could have seen it.-but I had reference to the scenery until you must be disgusted. I'll say no more on the subject.

I can hear the sound of artillery, and it almost makes me shudder. Gov. Vance of N. C. is making speeches to his N. Carolina troops and they are saluting.<sup>31</sup> This brings to my mind the state of our country and casts a shady gloom over my dreams of pleasure through whose mists I see no happiness for our country. Can we not prevail on the Almighty to extricate us from this trouble? I do not believe we have done our duty to Him, from no other source need we expect peace-but enough-

I have sent you the southern "Litterary Messenger," a Monthly Magazine, commencing with last Jan.<sup>32</sup> I hope you will receive

31. Zebulon B. Vance was governor of North Carolina, 1862-1865.

32. The *Southern Literary Messenger* was published in Richmond, Virginia, 1834-1864. Mott, *History of American Magazines*, I, 629-57.

it. I think it is the best in the South. I will write to you again and hope to be not so nonsensical in the next, but gloomy days always cast on my mind gloom that I am sure to give utterance to, but please excuse and don't forget to write to John.

2nd. Note-Morning  
April 2nd.

Last night rain ceased falling and snow commenced and this morning it is falling something like that herewith described. I do not think this snow will be as deep as the last as rain is mingled with it and it will melt. It is now six inches deep and still falling. The mail leaves at ten o'clock, thus giving me time to add to my already uninteresting letter. As I told you what we had for dinner yesterday, I will tell you what we had for breakfast this morning. It consisted of bread and coffee sweetened with sugar, none of your rye or corn or confederate coffee, but *sure enough coffee*, and we actually drew it in rations.

I think the Confederacy is improving, I hope so at any rate. My spirits are considerably revived this morning. I am not one that would make the worst of everything, but I must confess that I have been greatly desponding. I could not think of anything that would give pleasure to my mind. Nothing half so sweet to my mind as love and this gives little pleasure here. . . . This brings to my mind what you said in your letter about the "*initials*" of the *valentine*. You say you were surprised if that was true, and then you evade saying any more about it by saying you will say more at some other time. I hope you will and I shall be in suspense until I hear. I may have hazarded our friendship, if so I do not think I was responsible. If I love you, it is not my fault, this is plain-Unless I find some time this morning, I cannot go into detail but will do like you, "say more at some other time."-

But Laura what is the use to love under present circumstances of affairs, this makes my heart shrink within my bosom. Far away from the object of my affections puts me in a deplorable condition, yet it comes like the winds, I cannot tell whither it cometh or whence it goeth. And plain it is that trouble comes and swift on the foot stops of pleasure. Pain follows pleasure as quick and sure as death follows life. Yet I love you though I am

THE HOSFORD LETTERS

271

far away from you and that love may be the consequent cause of pain, but we must see:-

Let me hear from you by the first chance and I shall ever be truly

John