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Middletown Md. Th. 12 11th Corps.
July 8 1863

Dear Mo,

I have just received your letter of the 3rd, and for the first time since Sunday week have any an hour or two of probable leisure – for with the cannon sounding in my ears it is only probable, – I determine to write you rather more at length than I did just after the battle of Gettysburg. I may start by saying that although I am much exhausted by the hard work of the past week, yet I remain in good health, & have no desire to give up yet. I sent you my last letter from South Mountain Pass. We stayed there only half a day, & over coming in the afternoon to march immediately. We took the road back to Middletown & on to Frederic that night, our course lying through a beautiful country, a picture of peaceful agricultural thrift and felicity. By the time we reached Frederic & went to bed it was midnight, & at half past three in the morning we were ordered to march. We were not the most cheerful company you may imagine. The men had had no supper the night before & no breakfast in the morning; it was a "forced march" and no time could be spared. Add to this a drenching rain came on which rendered the clay road wet & slippery. We worked on steadily up the valley with such success that by 4 o'clock we reached our destination which was the pretty little town of Emmitsburg, having made 35 miles in 24 hours, the longest march ever made by a division of this army. So well did the men bear up under it that some regiments had at the close of this march every man they started with. Emmitsburg is a very pretty place. The Sisters of Charity have here their chief house, an imposing & extensive edifice, surrounded by 600 acres of good land. Another very prominent structure on the hill side likewise belongs to a Catholic sect, & is an educational institution. Nearly half the town had been accidentally burnt a week or two before our arrival, the extensive ruins & blackened walls being all that remained to tell of many handsome mansions. It was most cheering to us to receive such a welcome as we did here, & to see the ladies con-

gregated on the steps with bouquets & more substantial refreshment. Nothing tended more to implant a more determined spirit of fight in the men than this sympathy & good feeling which they had been strangers to so long. We remained here a day, marching only a moderate distance in the vicinity. The next day was the eventful first of July.

South mountain Pass. July 9.

I had written thus far when marching orders came, & after a very tedious march of several hours up the mountain, we made our head quarters at the very spot whence I wrote you last. Such are the curious mutations of war. It presents a quite different scene now from last Sunday week. Long ammunition trains, battery after battery, ambulances filled with wounded are filing by, & have been ever since our arrival last night. A cavalry fight was going on all yesterday within four miles of us, and as I write musketry firing is reported. Doubtless before you receive this we shall have another great battle to chronicle. May it likewise be a great victory. But to return to Gettysburg. On the first of July we took an early start for Gettysburg, 10 miles distant. As we approached, aids & orderlies kept coming to hurry us up. No rest was given the men & about 10 A.M. we reached the Gettysburg cemetery. This is just outside the town on a high hill, a very commanding & in a military point of view a most important position. The enemy afterwards made desperate efforts to take it but were repulsed with heavy loss. The view at the time I speak of was most interesting. In the plain below us, the troops were moving like chess men. Four or five batteries were playing, squadrons of cavalry were forming & charging, masses of infantry moving to assault. Presently a narrow dark line became visible on our left moving slowly & regularly forward over fields & through woods. It was Longstreets line of skirmishers, two miles in length driving in our left wing. Fortunately they did not push us then as they did the next day or the Army of the Potomac would have had a different & sadder tale to tell. Meanwhile we doctors were preparing for our share of the work. We were driven out of two places in which we had established our hospital by the firing & finally took refuge in a large barn about

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three quarters of a mile from the principal scene of action. Here I remained throughout the battle leaving it only for an hour or two on the fourth. Our distance preserved us from danger from the musketry, but on the afternoon of the third we were shelled without intermission for two hours. None of the Surgeons were injured but two men and several horses were killed & wounded close to the house. Our principal anxiety was lest our barn which contained at that time over 500 wounded should catch fire. It escaped, however. That day was the most terrific fighting ever known in this war. Gen. Armistead of the rebel army was brought to our hospital. He has since died. I had considerable conversation with him & was much pleased with his manners & language. Capt. Stowe of our staff was brought to me during the afternoon, wounded just behind the ear by a piece of shell. I extracted it, but though I left him doing well, I am not without anxiety as to the result. The wounded came in rapidly, so that by the next day we had over a thousand to attend to. Many of them were hurt in the most shocking manner by shells. My experience at Chancellorsville was nothing compared to this & I never wish to see such another sight. To add to the Scene a heavy rain came up on the fourth & many of the wounded were drenched to the skin & lay writhing with pain in the mud & barn yard water. The Surgeons worked night & day but were insufficient in numbers to accomplish ~~very much~~ everything. For myself I think I never was more exhausted.

On the fifth I was ordered to report to the Division for marching orders. I had an hour or two to spare which tired as I was I passed in looking at Gettysburg and the battle field of the right wing which under general Slocum resisted a most determined attack of the rebels. The dead had just been buried but the signs of desperate

fighting were plainly visible in trees scarred by hundreds of bullets others split into slivers by round shot, the earth torn by shell and the numerous mounds of fresh earth that covered the remains of the fallen Relics in abundance lay scattered over the ground, & already curiosity seekers were on the spot collecting the fragments of broken guns, cartridge boxes, canteens &c.

The town itself which had been occupied by the sharpshooters of each army bore likewise numerous marks of bullets, & splintered window shutters & battered bricks told of many a whistling ball. For several days no one could venture into the street without imminent danger to life, & when our men took possession, many corpses lay here & there in the streets & on the door steps.

Early in the battle I met Dr. Stiles & had a few moments conversation with him. He was then going to seek a location for a hospital.

Hardened as Surgeons must get to the sight of suffering, I confess it was with a feeling of intense relief that I got my orders to leave this place where groans & cries had been resounding in my ears for days, & or did I complain though we were started off in the night, & rain and darkness on a seven miles march southward. We halted at Horner's Mills & the next day came to Emmitsburg. There we started the next morning & working again through rain & mud stopped at the foot of the Kitoctan Mountains near Frederic. Yesterday morning we were again on the road by daylight, & without waiting for breakfast tried to cross the mountain. The regular road was blocked with artillery & trains, so I & one or two more started off to find another. We soon succeeded in completely losing ourselves & having wandered over the mountain some five miles in a pouring rain brought up at a Dutch farm house where we were put in good humor at once by a breakfast of ham & eggs & having learned that we were going in precisely the opposite direction that we ought to started on the right road & reached Middletown about noon when I commenced you this letter.

All the farmers here are in despair about the weather and predict a total failure of the wheat crop. I hope it is better with you. My horse has suffered much from the hard marches. Since leaving Goose Creek we have been marching or fighting every day, & almost every day it has rained. Yet I never observed the men have fewer diseases. They suffer much in other ways. One quarter of them are barefoot & the roads are stony & rough. They have missed their rations for a day & a half at a time & have had little sleep & long marches. Yet they complain little & fight with indomitable vigor.