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### The Civil War Letters of August Henry Mathers

Franklin A. Doty

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**THE CIVIL WAR LETTERS OF AUGUSTUS HENRY  
MATHERS, ASSISTANT SURGEON, FOURTH  
FLORIDA REGIMENT, C.S.A.**

*Edited by* FRANKLIN A. DOTY

**T**HE WRITER of the letters which follow was born in Monticello, Florida, on April 25, 1825, the son of William Henry Mathers, Jr., and Elizabeth Clarke Mathers. The details of his early education are not known. He was married on October 28, 1848, to Mary Ann Cooper, daughter of Dr. James A. Cooper, originally of Farmington, Georgia, and Elizabeth White Cooper. The young couple lived a while in Madison, Florida, before removing to Micanopy where Mathers, together with his father-in-law, opened a drug store in 1853, known in later years as the "Old Reliable Micanopy Drug Store."

During the winter term of 1857-58, Mathers studied at the Augusta Medical College in Augusta, Georgia, and obtained the degree of Doctor of Pharmacy in March, 1858. He thereafter practiced medicine in Micanopy in addition to his interest in the drug store. During the war Mrs. Mathers remained in Micanopy and all of these letters were addressed to her there.

Enlisting in Company F, Fourth Florida Regiment, in June, 1861, Mathers served until honorably discharged on April 17, 1865. At the end of the war he resumed practice in Micanopy, but around 1900 removed to Tampa, Florida, and opened the Nebraska Pharmacy there. His health failing, he arranged to return to Micanopy only ten days before his death on April 14, 1914.<sup>1</sup>

Although Surgeon Mathers spent the entire span of the war years in the service, only the letters here reproduced, dating from September 12, 1861, to February 27, 1862, are extant.

1. The biographical information was obtained from Mrs. Catherine Mathers Simpson, of High Springs, Florida, who is the granddaughter of Surgeon Mathers. The editor is deeply grateful for Mrs. Simpson's kindness in making these letters available for publication and for her assistance in establishing the surgeon's background. Mrs. Simpson's scrapbooks contain a printed flier advertising the opening of the drug store in 1853, a certification of the surgeon's enlistment and honorable discharge, together with his pension claim number as well as dozens of other family letters and memorabilia of the ante-bellum period.

One of them contains a postscript written by Louisa (Mrs. William L.) Fletcher, Mrs. Mathers' sister. She, with her children and her colored cook, accompanied her husband to the same encampment near Cedar Key where Mathers first served. Only one letter from Mrs. Mathers to her husband written during this period is extant, and it is inserted at the appropriate place. So far as is known she did not follow her husband's suggestion, in the letter of January 27, 1862, to visit him in the camp at Fernandina.

In view of the presentation of these letters as source materials, their transcription to the printed page has been made with a minimum of alteration or modernization. Surgeon Mathers' consistent use of the upper case in initial C, K, S, V, and Y is preserved, and his spelling has not been altered. Since his initial M's and W's lie somewhere between upper and lower case, these have been transcribed as modern usage would indicate. In a few instances letters have been added in brackets where an unusual but habitual misspelling or elision occurs for the first time. Periods and commas are virtually indistinguishable, coming from his mid-nineteenth century pen-point, and here again modern usage and the context have been the guides. No punctuation has been added.

The annotation of the letters has been held to a reasonable minimum, on the assumption that the general reader is attracted by the letters themselves and not by their historiography, and on the further assumption that the scholar can discover for himself as much more collateral information as his research objectives demand. Wherever possible, individuals have been identified.

It would be superfluous to evaluate these letters or even to recapitulate their contents. Their intrinsic worth to the reader, whether historian or hobbyist, will become apparent upon perusal, and they will have varying significance according to the point of view and the purpose of anyone using them. Since they were obviously written without a view toward publication, they are characterized by the intimacy and frankness one would expect in a husband's letters to his wife. The ideas and attitudes in them range from the petty to the sublime. They certainly have the virtue of immediacy and directness, and there

seem to be no inhibitions in the expression of opinions on officers, enlisted men, the Confederacy, the top management, conditions of life in camp, and scores of other items. Given unity by the recurrent theme of familial affection, they contain, in spite of their brief compass, a remarkably detailed and varied over-view of the first war-time year on the Florida front.

\* \* \* \*

Sea Horse Key <sup>2</sup>  
Surgeons Department  
Sept 12th 1861

Dear Wife

Thinking that You would like to hear how I Stood the trip, this will inform You that I am at my post feeling Verry well Stood the trip fine, and think that I will improve The boys met me at the depot and brought me over with out Stopping the[y] all Seem glad to See me, their is none Sick except chill and a Verry few have that. I have not yet Seen the battery as it is two warm for me to go down. They have one gun mounted and will mount annother this-evening their is one 12 lb Stand-ing out in front of the light house movable Colo Hopkins left here a few days Since by Command of the General. <sup>3</sup> I hope

2. The 4th Florida Infantry Regiment was mustered in on July 1, 1861, with Edward Hopkins of Jacksonville as Colonel, M. Whit Smith of Lake City as Lieutenant-Colonel, and W. L. L. Bowen as Major. Board of State Institutions, *Soldiers of Florida in the Seminole Indian, Civil, and Spanish American Wars* (Live Oak, Florida, n.d.), 118. (Hereafter cited as *Soldiers of Florida*.) In October, 1861, Governor John Milton wrote that "there were but eight im-perfect companies when he [Hopkins] was elected," although the muster rolls of ten companies appear in *Soldiers of Florida* and their various locations are mentioned below.

Surgeon Mathers went first with Company F to the encampment on Sea Horse Key named after Colonel Hopkins, off Cedar Key, but later removed to Fernandina to which place the bulk of the regiment was transferred. He remained at this post during the period covered by these letters.

3. Brigadier General John B. Grayson had been ordered to assume command of the Department of Middle and East Florida on August 21, 1861. United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1894 ff.) Series I, Vol. VI, 267. (Hereafter cited as *Official Records*.) He made his first report from Fernandina on September 13, but shortly thereafter became so ill as to necessitate his being relieved of command. General E.



AUGUSTUS HENRY MATHERS

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he will bring things right Well he was ordered to pensacola as the enemy is Sounding in the harbor for an entrance. It will not be long before we will be safe from an attack John Riggs has bin appointed chief Carpenter. as Soon as the batteries and the magazine is don[e] then the Hospital And my room will be attached. I will have it fixed good and Comfortable If You Can Secure me a few Blanketts do So as I will have to Rough it until my Room is don. You may rely on Some fish as Soon as possible Bill <sup>4</sup> Seems to be Verry well though he Says he has had fever - he looks well Their is a pleasant breeze here now though the Sun is quite hot. All enquired after You and Lou <sup>5</sup> Your old friends they were glad You were better. I will write You again Soon a longer letter as I have not the time now Kiss Coop <sup>6</sup> and my Love to all  
Your husband

A H M

Assistant Surgeons Depart  
Fort Hopkins  
Novr 4th 1861

Dear Wife

I am Sorry that I have not bin able to write You before this but things have transpired that prevented me. In the first place I have had the Chills again. on my way home Wednesday it took me in the Cares [cars] but was Verry Slight not enough to be noticed but Friday it Shooked me well while the Storme was raging not Such an one as the first but pretty hard. Sunday I tooked medicin to break it up but failed and the piperine Verry near run me crazy. this morning (Monday) I feel Verry well but no appetite. I forgot to State that while [I was with?]

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Kirby Smith was assigned to the Department on October 10, but did not actually assume command, and in his place General James H. Trapier was appointed on October 22. Until Trapier's arrival, Colonel W. S. Dilworth, commanding the 3rd Florida Regiment at Fernandina, assumed Departmental Command. Upon Trapier's removal on March 19, 1862, Dilworth again succeeded to temporary command, until relieved by Colonel Joseph Finegan on April 8. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. VI, 276, 293, 413, 430; J. J. Dickison, *Military History of Florida*, in Clement A. Evans, ed., *Confederate Military History* (Atlanta, 1899), Vol. XI [Part II], 26.

4. Mathers' brother-in-law, Captain William L. Fletcher, commanding Co. G, 4th Regiment.
5. Louisa Fletcher, Mrs. Mathers' sister, and wife of Captain Fletcher.
6. Surgeon Mathers' son, James Cooper Mathers, born in 1852.

You Verry near all the men in Camps had had Some Kind of aiding Consequently Bill Mc was glad to See me Some of the me[n] were Sick Dysentary is the disease <sup>7</sup> John Riggs is quite Sick now and two others the ballance are better half cured Beef I think is the Cause that being the oneley meet they have had until Yesterday (Sunday) Nothing worth Your attention transpired on my trip to Fernandina I was invited by Dr. Hill <sup>8</sup> to go around with him which I accepted and Spent a Verry pleasant time meating old friends and School mates Dr. McCants Conducted me all around the fortifications which I do not think Verry formidable for the time they have had to build them. <sup>9</sup> I Suppose You Know by this time that they have Sent back for the hands <sup>10</sup> to go back and mount some guns. Now just think of twelve hundred men at one place and being fed at a heavy expense as lazy as they Can be and doing nothing not even Standing Guard and then You have a fair Specimen of the Sol-derey at the above named place. <sup>11</sup> except the Marion Dragoons <sup>12</sup> 28 on Guard day and night Those are the Kind of men that they Send out in the Country for hands to work for. Their is no

7. For a generally non-technical discussion of the casualties from sickness and disease among Confederate troops, see George Worthington Adams, "Confederate Medicine," in *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. VI, No. 2 (May, 1940), 151-166. Surgeon Mathers' comments on this subject generally corroborate the conclusions in this article except, perhaps, for his greater concern for measles.
8. Surgeon with the 3rd Florida Regiment. *Soldiers of Florida.*, 100.
9. General Grayson had written earlier to L. P. Walker, the Secretary of War: "I have pulled down much of the battery and magazine. . . . The batteries are incorrectly put up and not finished. The enemy can land where they please." Grayson to L. P. Walker, Fernandina, September 13, 1861, *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. VI, 276.
10. A reference to the use of slaves for manual labor in the camps. Although Surgeon Mathers deprecated the practice, the use of slave labor in non-combatant capacities was common enough. In a notice in the *St. Johns Mirror* (Jacksonville) of May 7, 1861, a Captain Holmes Steele invited "the contribution of slave laborers, for a week or ten days, for most important work on the Fort at the mouth of our river," and the editor of the paper added: "Now that so many of our citizens have able-bodied hands thrown out of employment, it would be no less a relief than, under present circumstances, it is a patriotic duty" to comply. (Microfilm, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville.)
11. That is, at Fernandina.
12. A reference to one of the earliest cavalry units in Florida, organized by William A. Owens, and "composed of the chivalry of Marion, Alachua and other counties." See Mary Elizabeth Dickison, *Dickison and His Men: Reminiscences of the War in Florida*, (Louisville, Kentucky, 1890), 10, 91.



reason nor Sence in it. The men are not healthy at that point. I think on account of not having Substantial food enough beef five times pr week and that a good many times bad. Dr. Hill wants to Chang[e] places with newson and hinted Strong at me. The Marion Dragoons is located about the middle of the place their parade Ground is the public Squair. About as much use for them their as a waggon has for five wheels. The people of the town Say So. a great many of the boys would Stay at home now if they were their. I Could not go every where and Consequently did not go to the hospital. You Know Cobb. Him and Wife is Steward and Stewardess they returned their from Lake City and they are their now in that Capacity I did not See them but was told So just before I left. About the time I was Stepping in the Cars Some on[e] tap[p]ed me on the Shoulder I turned around and behold Capt Hardee <sup>13</sup> with his red Shirt was at my back. I did not have time to talk with him. Now I must Stop by Stating that on my arrival here I found myself turned out of the room we were in and all my medicin locked up. So now I onely have access to it in the day-time and have to Sleep in the tent and fa[r]ther I find that a mattrass is indespensable and no moss Can be procured here. So if I Stay here with the pressent bad arrangements I must have Some moss. Other things I have plenty. We have had two Very Cold nights. I have not Sleeped well bin Cold but maybe I will get used to it. I think if Lou was not here they would have, or try to take, the whole house. Lou has improved the most You ever Saw the children are as fat as they Can be. Lou will write Kiss Coop for me and give my Love to all Oh! Cook was So Drunk in the Cars when we met, he did not Know me Say nothing. he has returned I Learn

Assistant Surg Depart  
Fort Hopkins  
Novr 10th 1861

Dear Wife

This leaves me Verry well The Chills have quit me for a while at least and I feel as well as ever. Their has bin more

13. Probably Charles Hardee, a surgeon with the 3rd Florida Regiment. *Soldiers of Florida*, 102.

Sickness in Camps for the last ten days than all the ballance of the time that I have bin here principally Diarehea and Dysentary. I believe it will run through the Camps before It Stopes. I have not lost a Case Yet My Success has bin beyon[d] My expectation. Mary [,] Lous Cook [,] is now in bed Sick and will be for Several days I think. The weather is So Cheangeable and So Suden that nothing els Can be expected. I hope it will Cease Soon. I received fathers letter wishing the fish Sent by the last of the week I found more difficulty in getting Salt than I anticipated and hence Could not get them as Soon as I thought Though now I have procured the Salt from Mr Fields and the barrrell out of the Comisary So the fish will be at Gainesville by the last or middle of next week. but however I will write You by the Same train So that You will Know. It is impossible to get Salt here at anny-thing like a fair price. Their has bin as high as ten dollars bid for the Salt here, and when it is Sold, their is no telling what it will bring.

We learn that their has bin a fight at Brunswick Georgia if that be the Case Lou will be at Micanopy Soon on her way home as She Says that She is going home when She leaves here Dick Stephens is here Came over on a fishing expedition She Speaks of going back with him. I do not Know what is their intention Mrs. Crowson is here Yet Wiley Curry and Several others Colo Smith <sup>14</sup> will not allow anny-more furloughs neither will he let the men go to Ceader Keys unless on Special Business (Good) We have thirty days provisions once more and I think they will not fail again, as it was in part the neglect of the officers of the different Companies which Occasioned the delay. I would be glad to See You but it is not to be So. Write Soon My Love to all Kiss Coop and Accept the Love of Your Husband

A.H.M.

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14. Lieutenant-Colonel M. Whit Smith, second in command of the 4th Regiment. His name appears as a colonel among the staff officers in the Indian War in 1855, and also as the editor and publisher of the *St. Johns Mirror* in 1861. *Soldiers of Florida*, 12, 118, 119. In the latter reference, however, his home is given as Lake City, Florida, in 1861.

Night 8 Oclo[ck]

P S Have just Seen Some four or five Vessles lying off We do not Know as Yet what they are they made their appearance about Sun down. our Glass (as you Know) is not good So many in one bunch is a little Suspicious Lieut House <sup>15</sup> has gon[e] over to inform the Colo of the fact, So I anticipate quite a time tonight. The Guards have bin posted double and I presume every precaution will be taken to prevent a Supprise Colo Whit will be over I presume and an opportunity will be offered for him to Show Some of his militarie. Although I must Say that it is Suspicious. Yet it may be that bowen <sup>16</sup> is bringing his prises here for Safe Keeping, though they are in a good direction for Key West They Cannot Come in tonight for their is no wind and the tide is running out. I will write You more in the morning if I have the Chance

Assistant Sur Depart  
Fort Hopkins  
Novr 12th 1861

Dear Wife

Having missed one mail with my letter, I have Concluded to write You and Send all together. On Sunday evening about 4 oclo their made appearance off about fifteen miles five Sloops and Schooners. We did not have time to See them well but made Sure of a fight. Consequently a messenger was dispatched to the Keys to inform the Colo The result was an Order to imediately move all the women and children off the Island and of all the fixen and bustle You ever Saw it was here with Lou and the Children all asleep and had to be waked up and dress[ed] (Mary Sick You Can well immagin how it was Now about 11 oclo at night. Well it was assigned to me to go with the woman over to Way Key We left about the time above mentioned and landed at one oclock. I Soon had them a room and Comenced my journey back Via Ceader Keys for Som Caps and powder. I had no difficulty passing double Centrys on the Keys

15. Samuel O. Howse, later a captain of Company G, 4th Florida Regiment, presumably succeeding Captain Fletcher.

16. Major Wiles L. L. Bowen, in command of Company K, 4th Florida Regiment, stationed at Tampa. *Soldiers of Florida*, 119.

found all the familieys up and all the boats and liters that Could be Started at the warf, I Suppose to Convey the Citizens off in the event of a fight Now I had the Same amount of Centrys to pass at Sea Horse at which place I expected trouble, but I found a man on post that I Knew well And I Soon landed in Camps once more at four oclock in the morning After taking a Short Knap I got up looked out and Sure enough their was two Schooners three Sloops making up to Sea Horse on the gulf Side, in full Sail with a fair wind. Now Come the exciting time The men all formed the Drum and fife going a Special detale loading the Cannon the Six pounders wheels greased and place[d] in the most favourable position in fact every thing made ready as well as Could be with the means. By this time the Small fleet had Come within about one and one half miles. However they had thrownd to the breeze one flag which was a Confederate We were not Satisfied with that. So all at once one of the Guns at the battery belched fourth and Send her missel of death right across their path which brought them to a halt. It was not until now that we Suspected friends the more So for the flags were hoisted in all directions, and they Soon launched their Small boats to Send ashore. A Special messenger was dispatched to Capt W L Fletcher from Maj Bowen asking leave of his eighteen pounders to pass into port The facts were these. Bowen had left Tampa with two Schooners, prises that he had taken with the prisoners on his way to Tallahassee and on his way had Captured three Sloops. Hence his little fleet made quite a formidable appearance These Vessels are principally fishing Smacks and hail from Key West except one Schooner She is maned by Yankees and hailes from the north <sup>17</sup> They have any quantity of fish mostly Groupers. I will send You Some if they can be got the finest fish I ever Saw. My fish arrangement has failed and I have Concluded to Send the fish packed down in Boxes and You must pickle them at home their is no other Chance I have a man out now So I Can Send You a box by the Same train that Conveys this letter. And I will Continue to Send them until you have enough. Their is no other Chance unless I pay \$18 pr Barrell and they not half put up at that. Lou and Mrs. Crowson are at Way Key Yet I do not Know how long they

17. For Major Bowen's report of the capture of the two schooners a month before, see *Official Records*, Ser. I. Vol. VI, 294-5.

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will Stay Bill will not let Lou go home Yet. they are uncertain  
I will write a little from Way Key and let You Know what I  
Send

[The following is added on the same sheet:]

Way Key Nov 13th [1861]

Dear Sis

As Gus has left me a small Space I will Say a few words  
to you with my pen. I would rather See you and talk with  
you, for I could tell you 'lots,' you will learn from Gus that we  
are at Way Key, where I expect we will be likely to Stay Some  
time unless we have Some worse trouble. Gus has told you all  
about our running from the Supposed Yankees. it was a time.  
we got here at two instead of one oclock. we had Wiley and  
Mrs Crowson with us and they were considerable help in taking  
care of the children, but they all went to Sleep and were not  
much trouble. it would make you laugh to know all. We are  
all well. Mary has been quite Sick, but is up again. I am  
better Satisfied than I expected to be. I have a large room.  
Sand flies and muskitoes very few, and I will see Gus or William  
one, nearly every train. Gus sends you, a box of oranges, nice,  
also a box of fish. He has some Mullett, and is going to try to  
get Some groupers and Snappers from off one of the Captured  
fishing Smacks. I want to write to you Soon and tell you  
all the news. My love to Pa Jimmie Cooper and yourself.

good-bye,

Lou

Assist Surgeon Depart  
Fort Hopkins  
Decr 2th [sic] 1861

Dear Wife

Not hearing from home (except by Some passing) has  
made me feel Somewhat uneasy Mr Fergerson leaves here  
today and I write by him Onely to let You Know that I am  
well And Send by him one hundred fish in a box together  
with the Roes I will perhaps Send another box before leaving,  
though it will be uncertain, for if we recive Orders tonigh[t]

we will leave on Thursdays Train. I do not Know how things will work I have friends trying to get me a Situation in the regiment Their is no Surgeon <sup>18</sup> Davison has resigned and I do not Know who will get the appointment.

[fragment]

Assistant Surg Depart

Decr 10th 1861

My Dear Wife

They are all out drilling and I have Concluded to write You. I recived Your letter of Sundy and was delighted to here from home. it made me Sleep Sound. And indeed would I have bin glad to have bin at home last Sunday, for truly it was a loneley time on Sea Horse, but more than all am I glad that You are all well. We are all well here, and my health is better than it has bin for a long lime. The fish was not burned as luck would have it, all that prevented, was, that I Could not get over to Send them off, and Consequently they were left, and I was glad that it turned out as it did. You Should have recived them last Satturday Night. I sent them to the Care of Mr Walker, and requested that he would take them on the Stage and you Should have had a letter at the Same time. You said nothing about either and hence my Conclusions are that You did not get them. Such are the ways of the world I hope to be at home on Satturday at which time You shall have two Gallons Oysters and sixty five good mullett. I think perhaps I Can Carry them Safe I hope the others have reached You ere this. Their is nothing of importance transpiring at this point except the fitting out of those Vessels for Sea. They leave this point for the purpose of trying to run the blockading Vessels. They expect to trade at Havanna I think it rather hazardous, becaus there is now a great

18. Mathers' appointment as regimental assistant surgeon was made on December 22, 1861. See letter of that date below. When the 4th Regiment was ordered to Virginia in the late Spring of 1862, Mathers was transferred to the camp at Sanderson, Florida, and served there, under the command of Captain J. J. Dickison, until the end of the war. He was paroled at Waldo, Florida, on April 17, 1865, according to an affidavit he made in 1909 when applying for a pension. The same affidavit also states, however, that he was at home in Micanopy on sick leave on this date. Photostats of affidavit and pension applications in possession of editor.

manny war Vessels of the enemy floating round. We here of them often but do not See them The Companys that are here now fitting out is the Same one that Came into Jacksonvill a Short time Since. They are all an out-landish Set that I have no Confidence in principally Jews that had as Soon betray us as not if they make money at it They are loading with Spirits Turpentine now at Way Key warf. We have with us Lieut Bobo as drill officer You Know the one that John was flying-round in Madison She married Walker. her Son. he has bin to Virginia and his health failed, had to return. he went from Texas as Capt of a Company. he Says that Richmond is worse than Sodom and Gommorow More profligacy and immorality than he ever Saw. Such is the Commencement of the Confederate States of America and I predict its downfall. Sam Rogers Driving round in a Coach and four and Cant pay his debts at home. he fa[r]ther States that their is not less than twenty five thousand office Seekers in the City. Now what does all this Say. Can anny-thing good Come of all this. then I am decived. Colo Smith is not here neither has be bin here in two weeks and the post would not be worsted if he never Came back it would have gotten rid of annother drunken-no-Count-man, for such he is <sup>19</sup> I do now Know at what time I

19. Governor John Milton described both the ranking officers of this regiment most unfavorably in his letters to Jefferson Davis. Lieutenant-colonel M. Whit Smith, he informed the president, "is said to drink to great excess." Of the commanding officer he wrote: "Hopkins, whom I now believe most honestly to be too irritable, involved himself in difficulties at Appalachicola, and was ordered by General Grayson to remain on Saint Vincent's Island, with his three companies, but left without permission and came to Tallahassee. . . . I have reason to believe if he [General Grayson] had lived he would have had him dismissed from the service." Milton to Davis, Tallahassee, October 29, 1861, in *Official Records* Ser. I, Vol. VI, 301. Two months later he reported to Secretary Benjamin that "much has been accomplished by the forces in service by State authority since Colonel Hopkins was ordered from and left there, who is in Confederate service; and immense expense has been saved. . . ." Milton to J. P. Benjamin, Marianna, December 29, 1861, in *Ibid.*, 354.

The tone of these letters can be explained in part by Milton's misgivings regarding the military appointments and arrangements made by his predecessor, Governor Madison S. Perry. His military thinking was also somewhat strained by the dichotomy he tried to maintain between state forces answerable only to himself and those in the service of the Confederacy. In the same letter to Benjamin he wrote: "It is extremely difficult to associate forces in the ser-

Shall be at home it would be a greate pleasure for me to See You all Christmas but it Cannot be under the Circumstances allthough, I had the right and have it now but do not like to exercise it perhaps I will See You Soon, but You must be patient. if I had the Chance to Send You Some money I would Send three hundred dollars but I will bring it when I Come.<sup>20</sup> I wish You to Send by S O House my Pockett Case, I mean that with the Vials it will be Verry useful at present as my walking is So extensive until it is inconvienient my feet is So worn out at night that I Can hardly Stand - also Send the best old pair of Boots that is their. You Cannot get them at anny reasonable price neither is their anny to get their is no goods in this place one dollar pr pound for Black Pepper 75c for Soda Such is the low prices Old Hopkins has not treated me right and now I am independant of him. The onely hard part of this Service is Staying from my family the ballance is easey and the money Comes in a large pile - perhaps my business is Suffering Some but I hope not as Mr. Falkner Said it looked like Sunday every day in Micanopy<sup>21</sup> Write by Oliver and write often. do You think it does me no good to hear from home. Surely it does do write. My pants is about out and You must if You Can get me Some Goods Blue Sattinett if possible So when I do Come we Can make them Tell Coop father wants to See him bad and that he must Kiss Ma for father My Love to all and ac[cep]t all the Love of Your husband

Guss

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vice of the Confederate Government and those serving the State authority harmoniously." This attempted distinction was to plague the military effort of the Confederacy during most of its existence. Colonel Hopkins, as will be seen, was in charge of the evacuation of Fernandina in March, 1862, although he was then, apparently, in "Confederate" service.

20. The pay for assistant surgeons with less than five years' service was \$110 a month. *Official Records*, Ser. IV, Vol I, 129.
21. This implies that there was not much business any day.



## Micanopy Sunday night

Dear Gus

I have just lurnd that you have gone back to your post. I was fixing a box of sompthing to eat for you. Mr Edwards told me he would carry it to you tomorrow as he was going back to the Keys tis no use for me to send it by the stage unless some one was in the stage that would look after it for nothing seams to go safe all is confusion. tis very straing that you did not get my letter written by Mr. Feester. I thought you would be more afit [?] to get it that way than by mail but in your last letter you say nothing about it. I have been very much troubbled ever since I got your last letter saying that William was sick do try and make him take care of himseft for you know how imprudent he is poor Lou is almost crazy about him She thinks he will never come home again. I never did read such sad letters as I get from her tis a grait trouble to me for some times I think my own troubles is as much as I can beare tho I try to bare it the best I can, thinking thare is a better day coming, but I shall stop this for I will not write a sad letter and make you feel sad. Well now about the cloaths. my darling I have told you and told you we had nothing of the kind in Micanopy that you want in the way of most I do not know what you will do for cloaths if you could come home probably we might contrive some way to fix up some. Jim an[d] Cook say they are going off after goods soon if so prehaps I can get them to bring you sompthing. I will send you a box of sompthing to eat the first chance. you know if I send it and it is delayed on the road it will spoil. Sue Colding sent a box to Ia. and the Yankees got it. dont I wish it had poison in it I do because they put hand cuffs on them poor fellows they took. I feel like I could shoot them old yankees myself. all is lonely I hear nothing but the chirping crickit for all is sleeping sound but myself when shall I stop you see I cant write a short letter for I have so much to say to you I hardly know what to say first Jim has gone to see Lou he will be back tomorrow. I want to go to see her as soon as I can but I thought I would wait until you made your visit home for fear I should be gone when you came. Oh how glad I will be when Dr Camran [?] comes hom so Pa can go and stay with her. when you write

be shure to say how William is it will releave my mind to hear you say he is not bad sick but if he is say so. do take care of your self if you get sick come right home. Coop says tell Pa howdy for me and tell him to come home I want to see him. I have a plenty of green peas in the garden how I do wish you and William had some of them. remember me kindly to Mr Mc . . . my love to William do tell him to take care of himself and try and get well. may the good Lord take care of you both. write be kind to your sick do all you can for them to make them comfortable bare with them if you find them cross how I do wish I could send some things to your sick.

good by dear Gus may we meet soon

Mary

Fernandina East Florida

Decr 16th 1861

Dear Wife

Perhaps You do not Know where I am, and hence I write You. I left the Keys in Company with Dr. Randolph with the intention of going home, but learning of the anticipated troubles at this point,<sup>22</sup> he thought best to take me with him as he was fearfull that Surgeons would be Scarce So, I am here and do not Know when I Shall be able to be at home. The two Companys at Ceader Keys and Sea Horse will be here tomorrow and I Should have gon[e] down on the train had I Known it. Their is no indication of an imediate attack more than the Blockades are quite impudent they run a Schooner Yesterday and fired at her run her ashore and burned her up. She was loaded

22. The Union fleet, advancing down the Atlantic coast, had taken Port Royal, South Carolina, on November 8, 1861, and Savannah, Brunswick, and Fernandina seemed the next logical targets. The coasts of South Carolina, Georgia and East Florida were constituted a military department by the Confederate government, and General Robert E. Lee was placed in command on November 5. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. VI, 309. Lee promptly inspected the batteries and posts along the coast and reported to the Adjutant General, "The entrance to the Cumberland Sound [the north end of Amelia Island on which Fernandina is situated] and Brunswick are the only points which it is proposed to defend." Lee to Samuel Cooper, Savannah, November 21, 1861, in *Ibid.*, 327. On the same date, Lee directed the 24th Mississippi Regiment to be sent to Fernandina to reinforce General Trapier there. *Ibid.*, 346.

with Coffee and other articles the [that] we Verry much Kneed. Their is all the time two Vessels in Sight Gen. Treipier is here making arrangements for the fight and as a matter of Course we are also buissey preparing I hope it will not take place not that I fear defeat, but because of the Sight Sick wounded dying all in one pile. it is not a pleasant thought. The evening that I left Sea Horse the wind was b[1]owing fresh and Continued to increase until it blew Verry hard Consequently I Came Verry near being Shipwreck. had to leave my fish and Oysters in the boat and waide out Some three hundred Yards which was not Verry pleasant had them to leave in the boat Bill will Send them down to You as he will be at Gainesville on tomorrow. I am Quartered with Colo Hopkins in a fine large house ample room and a white Lady Superintending and Conducting the Cooking. the Companys here are fine ones and I am truly glad that Bill is ordered here. their is Som[e] men in that Company that wants to be made to Know their place Townsend is not Chaplain their has annother bin appointed I do not Know who he is, So, he is out. I thought that my Chance was a bad one but Dr Randolph has recommended me to the General So the Appointment is Sure. I will try and See You by Christmas and perhaps Sooner but You must not look for me until You See me I hope that You will get all the fish and Oysters Safe the fisheries had Stoped before I left Mullett Could not be Caught they had Stoped running I Saw John Beggs<sup>23</sup> this morning he has dysentary and lookes badly he is first Lieut in Dyals<sup>24</sup> Company he did not Know me, neither did I make myself Knowned. You need give yourself no uneasiness about me for if they have a fight I will not be exposed My post will be in the hospital Amputating and dressing wounds - do write Soon and let me Know how You are I hope You Coop and all are well My love to all tell Coop to Kiss his Ma for me

As Ever Your Husband

A. H. Mathers

23. Lieutenant John M. Beggs, Co. C, 4th Florida Regiment. *Soldiers of Florida*, 123.

24. Captain William H. Dial, commanding Co. C, 4th Florida Regiment. *Soldiers of Florida*, 123.

Fernandina East Florida  
Decr 18th 1861

Dear Wife

When I wrote You last, their was at that time no prospect of a fight. I do not as Yet See anny that is brighter, Though the Blockade is more impudent, and on Yesterday Came in close enough to exchange Shots with the fort perhaps nothing more than to get the range of our Guns. Every arrangements are being made for the anticipated Attack their is quite a number of Sick here, more than aught to be at this Season of the Year. I fear that this is a Sickley place, and if So, what will it be in the Spring and Summer. The men are all lively and look hearty those that are up - the Measles - and Mumps are in Camps. I forgot that) The people have all left, and You Cannot See annything els but Uniforms, nor here anny-thing but file Right and file Left until it has becom[e] a good Emetic. All the Officers have Come in and I must Stop. I wish You would get me Some good Stuff to mak[e] pants Blue Sattinett wool if You Can if it is not in Micanopy Send to Ocala by first Chance if You Cannot get that, anny-thing that will do for I will be out when I Come home I wish to make them.<sup>25</sup> Hoping that You are all well I

Remain Yours as Ever  
A H Mathers

Fernandina East Fla  
Decr 22th 1861

Dear Wife

I have not herd from You Since I have arrived at this place and hence as the opportunity offers of Sending by hand I embrace it The prospect for a fight is no brighter than when I last wrote, though their is a greate many guards out every night to Keep off a Supprise. You Can See the blockade Vessle anny-time She Comes in Verry Close Some-times She is quite large. This is Sunday and it has appeared to me that every boddy had more to do than at anny-other day-the whole military was out on general parade. I did not have the time to

25. Surgeon Mathers had been a tailor prior to starting the drug store.

go I never have bin so buissey in my life my appointment was made to day as assistant Surgeon Provisional Army.

[The following, on a separate sheet, is probably a continuation of the above.]

At night 9 Oclo

Their has nothing of interest occured to day, no fight Yet neither are their anny increased Signes of an early Conflict. One of Capt Hunters <sup>26</sup> men had his throat Cut and a Stab in the Side his life is dispared of. The perpetrator of the deed was one of the Same Company he is now in Jail King Alcohol was at the bottom of it all. I have just returned from the Camps Visiting a Sick man the Measles are as thick in Camps as they can be and on the increase. Charly White has them he is the onely one except Bill in that Company as Yet. The Cars are Coming. Have You Wrote Me! do write. A few little dainties (Straingers in Camp life) would be acceptable to Your Husband for instance a Small box of Sugar Cakes and anny other things of that Class You may be disposed to fix up-. My tent will be up tomorrow then I Shall move. Colo Hopkins has furnished me with lumber to floor it So it will be Verry Comfortable. The Hospital is quite full of Sick but I hope it will not prove as fatal as it did last week. O! that Your health may Continue to be good and the good Lord may preserve You and the little one is the Prayer of Your Husband My Love to all. Tell father that I approve of his arrangement in refference to the books, and hope he will do the best he can

Your Husband

A H Mathers

Fernandina East Florida

Decr 31st 1861

Dear Wife

Your Verry welcom letter together with the bundle Came Safe to hand. Not hearing from You for So long a time made

26. Captain Adam W. Hunter, commanding Co. B, 4th Florida Regiment. *Soldiers of Florida*, 121.

me Somewhat uneasy for I had bin here better than two weeks without a Syllable from home. It makes me feel easey to read Such a letter from You, and I assure You that I have all Confidence in my wife, and feel Satisfied that She will do for the best. And I Can perform the duties that are imposed on me with greater grace and Confidence when I Know that all is well at home Oh: that the Good one may Continue Your Good health and Supply Your every want in this trying time for it is Surely one

We have no more appearances of a fight at this point now, than when I first Came and in fact their is no one Knows where will be the next point. We Cannot [illegible] of them annywhere nor of their doings. The Blockade Vessel is Constantly in Sight and does her best to Keep out all Communication whatever. In that She failes for a Small Sloop out run her the other day and Came in loaded with Salt. the demand for the article is So greate that it has advanced in price even in the British provinces the Cargo is not Yet opened it will be bought for the use of the troops. My opinion is that we will have to do on less than we ever thought we Could the Condition of the Country is deplorable and I fear that the poor will be the Sufferers, but enough of this. My buissness is Confined to the Camps I have to walk about three miles a day and treat about 30 or 40 Patients afflicted with all Kinds of diseases if I had a horse it would be much better I am entitled to feed for one but I have not got one neither Could one be got. I will make out if Clothes Can be procured I do not Know what I Shall do the goods You Sents will not do the Color is not good and it is two light for the bleak winds we have at this place Sometimes Verry Cold My Coat is nearly give out, but I will try and Streach them make then do as long as possible. Blue, being the Color of uniform pants in the medical department I though[t] if the blue Sattinett Could be got, I would like it. I Shall not buy a uniform unless all do it then I Suppose it will be my duty to be like the rest at present that are not to be had the Consumption is extensive for every man You See has one on it is So Common until it is disgusting. The general Hospital is the Cay house the largest in the place their is about forty or fifty Sick in it it is the general deposit

for the Mississippi Regiment the 3rd & 4th together with the battalion in fact a general rendezvous for all those that Cannot be treated in Camps. Dr Montgomery a brother of D A Montgomery of Flemington is Surgeon of the Mississippi Regiment a Verry nice man The two Baily boys is here together with McCarn (John Beggs Seth Bunker and James Kirkpatrick <sup>27</sup> all of Madison I have Seen Capt Langford <sup>28</sup> and a great many other acquaintances

I have received one letter from Cameron brought from Cedar Keys he Says that Jim must wait until he Comes home.

I would have Sent my money home but I had not drawn it when house left. I wish You had it, then It would be out of my way I have three hundred and forty dollars in Cash I will try and take Care that You get it. I told You that it all Should be Yours and So it Shall be except enough to pay my expenses which will not be much

The medical department is not Settled Yet I do not Know how it will be Yet I Shall try and hold my Sittuation Dr Randolph is in my favor and from him I hold my place now. do write often Cant You afford to write once a week Commence Monday and Surely You Can make one out in four days. I will Come home as Soon as possible, but Cannot Say when Tell Coop to Kiss ma for me and to be a good boy and learn to read My Love to all Did You get the fish Your husband

A H M

General Hospital  
Assistant Surg Depart  
Fernandina Jan 7th 1862

Dear Wife

Although I am Quite worne out when night Comes and feel quite pleasant when I have the privilege of retireing for the night, Yet I do not feel right without writing to You once a week anny-how. I never have bin So buissey in my life and

27. Seth Bunker and James Kirkpatrick appear as sergeants on the original muster roll of Co. C, 4th Florida Regiment. *Soldiers of Florida*, 123.

28. Captain Thomas Langford, commanding Co. G, 3rd Florida Regiment. *Soldiers of Florida*, 111.

never have neither did I ever expect to have to treat as great a Veriety of diseases in my life. I Can tell You that their is a great many men that are clothed in white Skin that aught to have had a black one and Some of them are in Bills Company. You Know Guss Johnsons Brother that was Micanopy Some time ago he is in Capt Gees <sup>29</sup> Company the poorest Chance for a man that I ever Saw. I begin at Bills Camp and it takes me until one or two oclock to get back I am fearefull that the amount of exercise will be two much for me the work is laborious and we are much in want of drugs and medicin which are in my opinion Scarce. You may Say to father that opium is worth twenty five dollars that will make Laudanum and Paregoric worth 38 and \$.40 an ounce and all other drugs in proportion Sell them high every thing els is up and every boddy is trying to live off of this poor broken backed Government. <sup>30</sup> Their is plenty of money here and nothing to buy with it the fact is their is no goods in this place and I do not know what I Shall do about Some Cloths. I have on all the Cloths I have in the world, and the Company that I am Compeled to Keep, and am frequently brough in Contact with Comeples me to dress well Their is now in the Hospital about fifty out of the two Regiments that are Stationed here, and in Camps about Seventy in each one. that will make about one hundred in each to be Seen every day and oneley four to do the Practice and the Scattered Condition of the Companys makes the work Verry laborious Now the Cars have Com I wonder if You have wrote to me. Well if not I Shall think You augh to have don it. Well we expect on the train the General and Stalf [?] the medical perveyor if So I Shall try and get a Chance to go home a while if it is oneley for a few days. If I Could See You onely two days it would Sattisfy me. It is thought here that this Regiment will be ordered off, that is to South Carolina.

29. Captain Charles A. Gee, commanding Co. A. 4th Florida Regiment. *Soldiers of Florida*, 120. There were six Johnsons on the original muster roll of this Company.

30. This echoes the complaint of the governor in deploring what he considered the uselessness of the eager organizing of cavalry units: "Almost every man that has a pony wishes to mount him at the expense of the Confederate Government." Milton to Jefferson Davis, Tallahassee, October 18, 1861, in *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. VI, 290.



I think it would try me if that Should be the Case for I Can tell You that dragging Volunteers about Kills them up like anny-thing. the Missippie Regiment has lost Since its arrival here four men and has Some fifty or Sixty Sick in hospital I Come in Contact with Dr Montgomery every day find him to be much of a Gentleman I enjoy myself with him Verry much he is quite liveley Several of the Physicians in that Regiment I am acquainted with Some one of them are in the hospital every day. Bill [?] is here and they Keep Such a talking that I will Stop and finish tomorrow then perhaps I Shall have Some News to write you

January 8th 1862

Dear Wife

Their has no news of anny importance, except the fighting in South Carolina that has terminated with no loss of anny Consequence on either Side The impression is that the above mentioned Place will be the battle ground it would do the Yankies more good to take Charleston than the whole State of Fla On Saturday next is the time Set for the fight at this place but madam Rumor is buissey

This morning opens beautifully and the day bids fair to be a pretty one the display of General inspection will take place and I wish You were here to See it The whole Regiment fully fited out with every-thing proper for a Soldier to have Cartridge Box full of powder and balls Caps & Led for action I Should like to be pressent myself but Shall have to go to the Camps and take my usual rounds amongst the Sick which is not Verry pleasant. Though their is not So many as their has bin I understood last night that their was a New man Sent here as medical Director of the affaires of the Island but I have not Yet Seen him his name is Clintock he is not of Florida and Consequently if this be So their will be a general Smash up for those now employed Say they will not Serve unless the Director be a Floridian I think myself they have little to do to Send men from other States to Supervise over a department of another unless their is no one Competent in Service to perform the duties. But I doubt the whole This is a hard Service, because the men do not get enough to eat of that, that is whole-

some beef at this Season You Know is poor and they give them one Ration pr day - and one of pork pr week and they have nothing but flower and the pork is the dependance for Grease to put in the flower which You Know will not do. Hence I here every day the bitterest Curses heaped on the Comisarry and men say they have not enough to eat

At night

Dear may I wind up my Letter after Visiting one Verry Sick man in Bills Company It would not Supprise me if he was dead by morning Clark Paggett <sup>31</sup> Pneumonia is the disease with which they are affected. Their has a greate many bin burried within the last few days and their will a great many more if they Stay in this Variable Climate Bill is quite well and So am I.

Tell Coop that father wishes to See him Verry much

Your Husband

A H Mathers

Camp Fernandina

Asst Surgeons Depart

January 27th 1862

My Dear Wife

Having expected to eat Supper with You tonight is the reason I offer, for not writing last week. It was a Sad disappointment on my part for I fully expected to go and therefore was not prepared for a refusal, which was nothing more than, I Cannot do without You. But Such is the fate of those that are to be Controled by annother. I am Sitting here in my tent every boddy asleep and all things quiet except the Guards arround the fire talking of the hard times they have passed through and what is Yet for them to forego and the Cough of those that are Suffering from measles together with other from bad Colds, and a thousand other aildments which Soldiers Can hatch up to Keep from doing Camp duty and Drill

Well now for a history of my Situation in Camp life. I have a fine large tent with a large table my Cot and one bench a

31. This name appears on the muster roll of Captain Fletcher's company, and after it the remark, "Died in Service." *Soldiers of Florida*, 130.

looking Glass one towell plenty of Soap but no basin or pitcher I have a floor in the tent and it well pined down which makes quite a Snug house provided it was a little better furnished Cant You add to its Comfort a little by presenting me with an Oil Cloth to Spread over my bed and Carpet to Cover the floor and a basin and a few towells. The table Contains my medicins that is a few of them. the others are in the Camp Chest as it is called it is a large box made to hold medicins. on one Side is my Cott together with a Small Candle Stand made after the fashion of Gody You Know [?] <sup>32</sup> at the head where I Can reach it from my bed my Cloths what I have hang on the tent pole while my trunk Sits under my bed Thus You have a full discription of my Tent and its Contents. I mess with Capt Barnes Lieut Deakle Seargt Harris and Seargt Smith all Verry much of Gentleman and treats me with greate Kindness in fact all the officers in the Camps treats me Kindly. I have tried to demean myself So as to gain the respect of all and So far I believe that I am quite popular and that is the reason why Col Hopkins will not let me leave. Their is Capt Lesly, Lane Barnes Hunter Gee Hunt Fletcher and Capt Dial all in a row making in all in this Camp Eight Companis <sup>33</sup> about five or Six Hundred men, each every day a Sick list of an average of fifteen and Sometimes more their is generally about one hundred and fifty to be Seen twice pr day and half or more with the measles Such is what I have to do every day which Keeps me buissey and no

32. Possibly a reference to *Godey's Lady's Book*.

33. John T. Leslie, Co. K; William F. Lane, Co. H; Joseph B. Barnes, Co. I; Adam W. Hunter, Co. B; Charles A. Gee, Co. A; James P. Hunt, Co. F; William L. Fletcher, Co. G; and William H. Dial, Co. C. *Soldiers of Florida*, 120-134. Governor Milton, earlier in the fall, had written to President Davis concerning this regiment in disparaging tones: "With regard to what is called the Fourth Regiment, commanded by Colonel Edward Hopkins, there were but eight imperfect companies when he was elected . . . some of them in a deplorable condition and scattered" between Saint Vincent's Island, Saint Marks, Tampa, and Cedar Key. Milton to Davis, Tallahassee, October 29, 1861. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. VI, 301. Even though Colonel Hopkins was still in command - evidently the regiment had been mustered into Confederate service - the regiment would seem, from the surgeon's comments, to have at least the appearance of a respectable unit. His list of captains omits William A. Sheffield, Co. D, and Thomas J. McGehee, Co. E, whose units presumably stayed in Tampa when the remainder of the regiment was concentrated at Fernandina in January, 1862. *Soldiers of Florida*, 119, 124, 126.

time to Spair. I am now writing to You twelve olco at night. but I am quite well and feel as well as a general thing as I ever did in my life I [have] two Verry Sick men in Bills Quarters or rather Colo Taylors house Doc & Jimmy Howren They Came here in John Hendrys<sup>34</sup> Company but it was not full and Could not be mustered in So it has returned and left them here with the measles I attended his Company all the time it was here. Timmy [?] Brantly and his father both have bin here together with others from Madison I was Glad to See then. holding the position I do I must say that I have a great many friends here in the Companies and get along well Capt Barnes Says he would like to See You. he wishes to See Your likeness Send it if You Send a box Not for him to See, but for me my darlin I Cannot Say when I Shall See You This Regiment I think is permanently Stationed here the Third has bin ordered to Ceader Keys<sup>35</sup> and a part to Syrna<sup>36</sup> [Smyrna] which I think leaves this here for the ballance of their terms Mrs. Heagan from Way Key has moved here Suppose You pay me a Visit I Should be glad to See You. Now I must Close as it is late and no time to write tomorrow Kiss Coop for me tell [him] to be a Smart boy So he Can read for father when he Comes home My Love to all

As Ever Your Husband

Guss

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34. Captain J. M. Hendry, commanding the "Taylor [County] Eagles." *Soldiers of Florida*, 42. The surgeon's remark will serve to answer the question posed in this reference: "... the record does not show who mustered, to what command it was attached or where it served."
35. On January 16, 1862, a Union gunboat attacked Cedar Key and set fire to several vessels, the railroad wharf, and several flat cars. Only a small detachment of a lieutenant and 22 men were at hand, after the removal of the 4th Regiment's companies to Fernandina. The movement of the 3rd Regiment to Cedar Key at this time may have been intended to remedy this situation, although in May the regiment rendezvoused at Midway, in Gadsden County, preparatory to departing for northern Mississippi. *Soldiers of Florida*, 100. For accounts of the Cedar Key attack, see General Trapier's reports, January 20 and 31, 1862, in *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. VI, 75-77.
36. Companies E and H, under Captain Daniel B. Bird, went to New Smyrna to protect the landing of supplies being brought in from Nassau. *Soldiers of Florida*, p. 100. For General Lee's order sending cannon and support troops to New Smyrna, see Lee to Trapier, Coosawhatchie, South Carolina, January 17 1862, in *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. VI, 370.

Camp Davis <sup>37</sup>  
 Assist Surg Quarters  
 Feb. 2th 1862

My Dear Wife

Your Verry Kind Box together with Your letter is Safe to hand this evening and I assure You that they are acceptable as Camp life is hard living. Manny a feast will I have over the Contents of that Box and think of You Oh! how I would like to See You and Coop all of You. I Could but think while taking the things out of the Box (what a darlin wife May the good one take Care of You and Coop and may we meet Soon. Now You are impatient because You have had no letter from me. Why because the mail did not go Straight and I Stated the reason I fully expected to be at home the last of the week, but let that drop. I know you have one by this time Now if You do not get one until next week think nothing of it as we Commence moving on tomorrow <sup>38</sup> which for a while will increase my work, and perhaps will not have the time. Their is no news of interest here A Small Craft run the Blockade Yesterday and arrived Safe in port loaded with Salt Potatoes and pork Some thought She was a Yanke Craft I did not See her Salt is worth twenty dollars pr Sack her Cargo was for Jacksonville to which Place She has gon. The general impression is that their will be Some hot times before long but No one Knows where Some think at Savannah no one can tell R H Howren <sup>39</sup> is here with Charity to nurce Jimmy he is quite Sick I do not think he will live Dr Clay and myself are his attendants Measles I think will take him off Their is quite a number Sick in Camp Some hundred and fifty with measles mumps Pneumonia and Catarrhal fever. I have not lost a Case Yet

37. Possibly named for Colonel William George M. Davis, who was elected commanding officer of the 1st Florida Cavalry. Part of this outfit saw service on Amelia Island prior to its removal to Chattanooga in the spring of 1862.
38. This must refer to some local move within the camp or the island since Secretary Benjamin did not issue the evacuation order until February 18, 1862. The next sentence leaves the impression that this "moving" was not important.
39. Howren was a prominent minister in the Florida Methodist Conference. See Charles T. Thrift, Jr., *The Trail of the Florida Circuit Rider* (Lakeland, Florida, 1944), *passim*.

(Good Luck I hope I will not May the Good one Crown my Efforts in my attempt to benefit the Soldiers Emerson was here to See me today. I paid him Seventy five dollars and thought I would Keep the ballance for You, in the event of an emergency I Could have paid him more but People do not pay me and You may Knead it in Case the hard times Continue. Colo Hopkin has let me off from uniforming provided I will do So when he wishes. The Orders embraced the 4th Regiment but I have no Commission and hence he does not Compell me but when he Says So I will have it to do or quit the Service Lieut Howse leaves in the morning to purchase them if he Can I do not think the Cloth Can be procured in the South. The night is Verry bad raining and Verry dark the Sentinells are laughing and talking taking the rain while the officers are Sousing in their tents. It is a hard life I would not be a private under no Considerations. Have you Concluded not to be my Mary because You failed to get a letter when you thought it aught to have Come. dont let that fret You because I failed one week for reasons Set fourth, and it may be a week before You get annother because I have not the tine but You will here from me. if the box had Come to hand a little Sooner I Should have wrote You by James McReady but I wished to make a report of it. I have bin quite well up to this time my throat is Verry Soar. to night but I hope will be better in the morning otherwise I am quite hearty and will likely get fat now that I have plenty to eat. The beef is Splendid I hope You had Good luck in Saving Your meet. every-thing in the Box is good. I will Say nothing more about Cloths as I Know it troubles You they Cannot be got here I have had my Coat Lined and it is as good as ever So I will Say no more than what I have Stated in my last. Bill is quite well his health is good he has improved

Camp Fernandin  
Assist Surg Quarters  
Feb 14th 1862

Dear Wife

Your last Shirts made their arrival last evening and I assure You they are the Verry thing Capt Barnes wanted to take

them away The Clothes You Sent are all the Verry ones I wanted You Could not have pleased me better. I am now Staying in Camps like I was before oneley the Regiment is laid off according to the Regulations which throwes my tent on the extreme left of the Regiment in a line with Capt Hunter with whome I have bin messing Since here The Beauregards Lieut Harrison & Lieut Richards <sup>40</sup> are Gentlemen and greate friends of mine My proper mess is Capt Barns all of his Officers are Gentleman in fact all the officers and men treat me with greate Respect Bills Camp is Next he is quite well and doing well. I have bin Camps Since the first of January I was ordered in 28th Decr but never had my tent until about the time mentioned. The place that we are now at is a beautifull one the tents are all in rowes and on the Slant of a hill Stand on the hill of a night it looks fine My tent is on the hill in the prettest bunch of oak trees You ever Saw My office tent is in front facing towards my Sleeping tent So you see, I have two tents The Colonel has provided for me Comfortable Quarters he Seems to think a great-deal of me and treats me Verry Kind <sup>41</sup> I thought that I wrote You all about my Camp lif how I lived and who I messed with Surely You did not get the letter I wrote You all about it Soon after I moved The reason why Bill did not See me was because he boarded out and his Camp was two or three Companys above where my tent was and he has got Such a mean Sett of men that it takes him all of his time to Keep them Strait his first Seargeant was reduced to the Ranks the other day for neglect of duty his Place has not been filled Yet. from Seven in the morning until Nine at night I am on my feet going I was caled to the Colo this morning at day-light he was Suffering with his throat he is now on the field drilling The health of the men is improving but plenty Yet enough to make one man Stir round I have no time of my own, have not bin to fernandina in two weeks Seth Bunker

40. Lieutenants Reuben L. Harrison and John Richards of Co. B, 4th Florida Regiment, known as the "Beauregard Rifles," *Soldiers of Florida*, 121.

41. Assuming that the reference is to Colonel Hopkins, the tone is quite different from what the surgeon wrote on December 10: "Old Hopkins has not treated me right. . . ." One wonders if the colonel had mended his ways.

is here and a greate many of the Madison boys that have grown out of my Knowledge. I do not now think of all them they have all had the measles and Some of them Verry Sick now and perhaps will die The measles are breading all the nasty little diseases that generally follow them and the Camps is the worst place to have them in the world it is astonishing to me that I did not take them Verry near all those that have had them, had them again and now the mumps are here and taking the rounds. I wish You Could Visit the Camp and See how You would like the arrangements it would be quite a treat I Know Eight Companies all in rowes in one encampment in tents Some good ones, Some bad ones The Drums beats at half Past Six in the morning role Call the Surgeons Call at half past Seven all the men are marched up in front of my office for examination those that try to play off are Sent back to duty those that are and those that are not Sick much in tents and others to the Hospital Such is my dayly duty all of which employs my time during the day. Capt Barnes is going to town and it is late So I must Stop and get him to Carry this letter My love to all Kiss Coop

Yours as Ever  
Guss

Camps 4th Regiment  
Asst Surgeons Quarters  
February 27th 1862

Dear Wife

I Should have wrote You the fore-part of the week, but for having So much to do being the oneley Surgeon now in the Regiment, I have bin acting in the Capacity of Surgeon for two weeks, and it is all that I Can do to Keep up. I am not So hard pressed now as I have bin though plenty to do Yet. The Hospital is about to be moved, and all the Sick will leave the Island and as fast as the men get Sick they will be Sent to Lake City. Their was four deaths in the Hospital Last Night and one in a private house and one of those was James Kirkpatrick of Madison he was taken in Camps about two hours before day and was dead by Sun down Conjestive Chill Death is making a broad road through the 4th Regiment I



think they have lost thirty or forty men Since they landed here. The Island is about to be abandoned <sup>42</sup> they are dismounting and Sending the Guns away now all the horses have bin Sent away and the work of tearing every-thing up is now going on. the Colo has orders to leave the Island, but no place Stated where he is to go to Their is Various rumors in Camps but non true our destination will be either Tallahassee or Fort Steel on the St Johns River The latter I think most likely When we move I will try and Come home, but that is my onely Chance The impression on my mind is that florida will be invaded from the fact that all the Sea-port towns will be left open for the enemy to Come in without a Struggle. and why. on account of men being at the head of affaires that is not acquainted with the Country. the Vast amount of work that has bin don and money expended to accomplish the batteries on this Coast is now but a wreck and all the work that is now going on is to destroy and pull down. this Showes the want of a determined Spirit to Controll in military matters Perhaps before this reaches You we will be on the move, where [when?] I do not Know and if You do not here from me next week You may

42. The reverses suffered by southern arms in the west Tennessee theatre early in 1862 necessitated the swiftest possible shift of support to that area. As a consequence of this over-all strategy, Secretary Benjamin sent the following dispatch to General Lee on February 18, 1862: "Order the cavalry regiment of Colonel Davis from Florida to Chattanooga immediately, to report to General A. S. Johnston. Withdraw all forces from the islands in your department to the main-land, taking proper measures to save the artillery and munitions of war." *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. VI, 390. After news of this order and its implementation by General Lee and General Trapier spread to Tallahassee, Governor Milton wrote in shocked incredulity: "The effect of the order is to abandon Middle, East, and South Florida to the mercy or abuse of the Lincoln Government. It cannot be possible that the order was intended to have such an effect. . . . I cannot and will not believe that an order to that effect would have been issued without previous notice to the executive of the State. . . ." Milton to J. P. Benjamin, Tallahassee, March 5, 1862. For Hopkins' report on the evacuation of Amelia Island, see Hopkins to R. H. Anderson, Lake City, March 30, 1862, in *Ibid.*, 94-5.

With the governor in this state of mind, it is little wonder that the surgeon expressed strong disapproval and sharp criticism respecting this top command decision. His letters thus coincide with the first major episode of the war in Florida - from near the beginning to the painful shortening and tightening of the lines around the north-central parts of the state where they would hold, generally, for the duration.

Know what has happened My general health is good I feel as well as usual hard work agrees with me I have received all the things You have Sent me and they are admirably adapted to the uses they will be put to. I am proud of my Shirts and pants. When I wrote You last I asked You Some questions You must answer them because if You Consent I want to Secure a Commission in the Army. Charly has made his arrival looke Verry well I was glad to See him back for I wanted help Verry much

Write Soon and tell me all the news tell Coop he must not forget father Kiss him for me I hope to See You Soon My Love to all

While I Remain Your Husband

A. H. M.