In Camp near James
Riven — May 24th 1862.

My dear, dear wife,

Tho' very much engaged all the time & with poor opportunities for writing I feel that I must lay aside every thing else in order to write to that sweet, darling wife of mine. I got a letter from you on yesterday dated the [illegible] & I was so glad to hear from home & that all were well. I got a letter from Rit also which I will certainly answer by tomorrow if nothing serious prevents — Alfred wrote me from Montgomery that he had, on reaching there, concluded to join a Co from Butler County — I felt sorry he had done so. I wanted him to be with me & had so advised him — Here I could have nursed him if sick & seen him well attended to — besides I shd have enjoyed his Society

I felt quite sad about this — & lay awake one night for hours thinking about the dear boy — I have however finally come to the conclusion that it is perhaps all for the best — and that he acted wisely in joining the Company he did instead of coming on & join our home — There he will be appreciated & in time promoted — If he had joined any Company here that wd have been much more difficult unless I could have given him some position — this I had determined to do but it wd have been attended with some embarrassments even to him. There is an advantage in a boy setting out & paddling his own canoe — He will learn self-reliance. The schooling he will get in the Army will be valuable to him.

He will learn human nature — the ways of men & of the world — & learn to rough it. Altogether I think Al has acted as he usually does with great judgment & discretion. Vacancies frequently occur in Companies & if one should he will be apt to get an [illegible] he may be elected [illegible] should not be [illegible] can get him an office I will do so — It will be no disadvantage to him now or hereafter that he has joined as a private. — I will try & get him with me if the war lasts & we both live. I will try & write to him to day — Don't be uneasy about the darling boy. He is a manly noble boy & we ought to be proud of him. I feel confidence too in his being steady in his habits. I wish Rit could get a situation. He is too delicate to

bear the hardships of the private soldier — I will exert myself & get him a Cadetship or some other position & only regret that I have no good one & give him. If I cant get him a Cadetship or Lieutenancy I will try & give him some little place in my Reg't — There are no vacancies now, but I will turn some one [illegible] him in if he has to go — [illegible] will do better to spend — There at school are appreciated & in time incomplete & to stop now we would never make up — If the University is open he had better go there & be learning all he can & then besides he will be learning to make an officer & soldier. It will be time enough to choose what Co & Reg't he will join when he arrives at the age of 18 & is called upon to do so. The time Al spent at Tuska has been of great advantage to him & I wish Rit had gone there too — His constitution is delicate & being subject to rheumatism he could not be com-

pelled to go unless he desires to do so. Tell him I will write either to-day or tomorrow to him —

I am now out on picket duty — with my Reg't — We have to be on the look-out all the time — The enemy's gun-boats came up in sight of my pickets yesterday & fired some guns but without damage — They are said to be advancing upon us & I look out for a fight either to-day or tomorrow but I have been so often fooled that I cease to think much about it & am never certain — Heavy firing was going on yesterday in our hearing — both on land & water — But the particulars I have not heard. Tomorrow is my birth-day & I have been telling my mess that I expected to celebrate it with a big-fight — or by being in one — We are in a fine neighbourhood here — The lands on the river are beautiful & residences fine — The people kind & hospitable. We get fine fish

vegetables & butter — milk — Butter is only $1 per pound & every thing else in proportion — A tooth — brush cost me 1.50 — common at that — The prices of every thing in Richmond are exorbitant. Tho' within a few miles of the place I have not been there since I reached the vicinity —

The wind is blowing so hard I cant write, & I must close —

I was glad to hear that Mr Jones & Sister Anna had been confirmed — My kind regards to both of them. Tell the judge he was slighted me of late — He ought to write to me oftener & make allowances for my delays in writing as I have so little chance to write — (I am now writing on my knee with my paper on a book — Dombey & son). By the way tell Mary to get that novel & read it — She will find it quite interesting —

Maj Gracie has gone to mobile & Col Hale has been assigned to the [illegible]

Regt — This leaves us with no field officers & causes me to be more closely confined. It is certain (I suppose) that a great battle must come off here very soon — It will be the greatest perhaps of the war. I hope to acquit myself well and also to survive it — for your & my children's — But I feel that our lives are at the disposal of an over ruling Providence — and that if it is his will that I shd fall that I could not fall in a better cause — I feel that I am doing my duty in battling for my wife & children & repelling a foe that wd reduce them to ruin if not disgrace — depriving them of all they have — I would not shrink from it tho I knew my life's blood would be poured out — for my heart & mind & soul are enlisted in the cause.

I cannot help at such times as these indulging in many reflections — the tenderest & sympathies & thoughts of you & my children. My whole soul gushes out in love for the wife of my bosom — the thought of giving her pain or uneasiness distresses me — I know your good sense & love for me will make you appreciate my motives — whatever faults I may have you know that my love for you has increased more & more every day since we were made man & wife. The most cherished wish of my soul has been to prove myself worthy of you & to make you happy — It will take many long years more than of daily devotion to repay you all the obligation I am under to you for your goodness, kindness & affection to me. Adieu my sweet, sweet wife. Kiss the darling children for me & love to them all — & to all at your house — Your ever fond & devoted

Husband — S. M.