copied

Miss Mary Louisa Hall

[MARY LOUISA]

Cumberland Gap Ky Feb 25. 1863

Dear Sir —

I have thought of writing to you often enough since I left home, but like some of us do a good many things, and without any reasonable excuse I suppose, delayed doing so from day to day until it has become as a reproach to me and of course disagreeable to think of it so.

Cumberland Gap though is a place of small interest or importance to a world looking always for something pleasant and agreeable — and it has not enough of the romantic about it to ~~excite~~ inspire common mortals with poetic ideas, sometimes however some one upon whom fortune has bestowed more than fills ~~share~~ to the common lot lets off some pretty flights of eloquence to the newspapers.

I am well enough impressed with the desolation of this place — Capt Wise & myself this evening rode out in the country five or six miles and on our return visited a cave which the noted robber and murderer Murrell used to inhabit I suppose you know Murrells history and you may imagine our unpleasant feelings when we entered the gloomy and sombre cave he made his harbor of safety and protection apart from the ~~natural~~ gloom the dark and cold walls impressed us with we had to think of Murrell and his band — and of another mournful event connected with the cave

which some of the citizens here told us.
A few years ago a party of young men & ladies visited the Cave. ~~for~~ They went in and after enjoying themselves and rambling on for a quarter of a mile or more as they thought their light went out. One of the party a young man volunteered to remain till the others ~~went~~ could go out and return with a light. They got the light and again entered the cave but could never discover the young man. He had his violin along with him and for three or four days and nights they heard him ~~fiddle~~ playing but the echoes from so many caverns prevented them from discovering him - it seemed they said as if they heard him every where and in every direction but could never get closer to him. The citizens all searched the cave but I suppose the unfortunate young mans fate impressed them with dread and fear and they were loath to lose themselves.
The poor fellows fate was melancholy enough; he never was found and I suppose his bones are now bleaching ~~somewhere~~ perhaps half a mile among those rocks. Capt Wise and myself did not penetrate far; we had no lights, and besides were not force enough to enter Murrells den, but the Captain thinks he will explore it fully if he can get a guide. It has already been explored 3/4 of a mile. The mouth of it is not larger than a common door - you enter this opening and find yourself in a large opening more spacious than the largest rooms. then again there is a small opening to a second apartment but beyond

this Capt Wise and I did not penetrate, all was darkness within it to us.
Really we are in a desolate place and I think there never was but one time that many men wished to be near it and that was when retreating from Kentucky we looked to this spot as the goal of our sufferings and marches. I dont think I shall ever forget how cheerful these old sombre black cliffs looked in the distance as we approached them and how eagerly we all rushed forward to reach them
I do hope that no longing eyes or thoughts may be directed here from that direction anymore,
I am longing to leave here, never to see this place again and to push into Kentucky and into active warfare against the Yankees - it will come to that at last and I'm ready for the fray
We have to fight I know & fight hard before peace will be made. Many bloody battles have to be fought and in all of them I hope we may be fortunate enough to act our parts well to the end.
Many long for peace and many who thus far have acted pretty well their parts cry out for "peace" Well I think it is well enough that friends whose conditions do not call them to the field and relatives should long for and desire it but the principle is that the brave men should never betray themselves into such injurious ideas and surrender such discontent & despondency if they yield to such thought we would have to surrender soon. as for myself I cannot wish for peace just now; that we will finally achieve our independence I am sure but after many days and may be years of fighting.

I hope his that you enjoyed yourself with Aunt Sallie, and that your health improved by your visit. – Summer is not far off though and you will get well then anyway.

It is raining here now; the weather is so variable that hard rains come on us without warning us at all. Genl Gracie is going to have a review of the troops here in a few days. – This Battalion will compare I hope favorably with any Regiment here in drill and discipline.

Boling has had hard work with his men and I don't believe there ~~are~~ is an officer of his age who has done better and very few of any age who could have done as well in the circumstances. I shall have a good deal of work the next few days as is always the case at the end of the month. Returns reviews, musters, inspections &c have to be attended to.

Genl Gracie has intimated that an examination of the officers is necessary and told ~~me~~ Boling to send the names of his officers to the examining Board at Knoxville.

Of course I flatter myself that I shall pass a pretty satisfactory examination (this in jest) but really if mine should not prove satisfactory woe betide many others of my acquaintance and some who rank as high as Capts Majors &c –

Jno received a letter from him a day or two since; he was well but told a pretty mournful tale of trials, ~~[illegible]~~

Yr Crenshaw Hall

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