

Beaufort, S. C. July 6. 1862

Dearest Sister

Your letter of the 9th ult reached me a few days ago while we were at Hilton Head, where it had been forwarded to me from Key West. I was very glad to hear from you, and now as I am settled down once more in my tent, I can answer it. This is a most magnificent place - far superior to any place I ever saw. The houses are palaces while the yards, filled with shade trees and flowers are beyond description. Upon the arrival of our troops here the inhabitants with but one exception, left, and the negroes, and soldiers committed fearful havoc among the furniture. Over a million dollars worth is supposed to have been destroyed. I went into a house the other day and found nine broken pianos there. If we had arrived here sooner I might have sent you one, as a great many were sent north, but our General has ordered everything to be gathered and delivered to the Quartermaster for the use of the Government.

Send me your own (Mrs. Lee's) photographs

I had intended, if we had remained at Key West, to surprise you all, by visiting you this summer, but the idea is given up now. The enemy in considerable force is within 12 miles of us. And Gen Brannen says he brought one Regiment of here to drive them off. So there is a prospect for a brush, and at that time I must be on hand. I may however see the General, and I know if he will grant a furlough to any one, he will to me. However, if there is any show for a brush I will not ask it, nor would I accept it. You will I am afraid, have to wait some time yet on me. Pap writes that I should come home as you and Sis Shaw was coming up, and it would be a good time to flirt. I can't imagine why I should think I am fond of that business.

My joy, that I had intended for Lizzie, I was compelled to leave at Key West, as I could get no chance to send him north. I was sorry, but it could not be helped. However, Lizzie shall have one, if her Uncle is fortunate enough to get home again.

Our picket lines are only divided by a small stream some nine miles up. On the 4th the Rebels tried to drive in ours, and a boat came across to burn our ferry house. A Cannon ball was sent right through the boat, drowning and killing the whole party. One half of our Regiment is out there now, and the rest of us will go out next week.

If you go home, I want you to treat Maria Wendnick as she deserves. Do not yield one iota to her. Treat her rather as an inferior ~~than~~ as a superior. If she makes the first advances well and good - if not, have nothing whatever to do with her. Yesterday Bill got on a bust again, and behaved very badly. I will not allow him to enter my tent, nor so in my Company tents. He is a poor, cowardly skunk, of no character, no stamina. He even tried to injure me in my Company and among the officers. But he might as well have saved his pains. I am too well known. I have reported him to the Colonel, and will do my best to have him sent home, as I want nothing to do with him.

My dear one all in good fighting trim

I dont understand a paragraph in your letter
in which you say that is heart whole again. Why
should she be otherwise? She is not of that
character as to break her heart for any one. Must
be a reckless, farum-scarum, individual
like my humble self. If I am to believe all
I hear I must be an awful fellow. On every
side. The word "flirt" meets me, and yet I can
for the life of me not see the cause. Why even
in Key West, they tried to saddle it on me. But
so it goes. There are some splendid ladies
there (we have none here.) You ought to have seen
the party. Tears fell like rain, and wasn't I
affected(?). Well, these soldiers do get spoiled
and no mistake. Never let your husband go to
war, if you wish to keep him.

But what nonsense
There are some friends I left at Key West whom
I shall never forget and if I live will meet them
again. Write soon. Sweet to Port Royal
S. C. Remember me to all friends
Did you get a box of shells
Your Bro
Smail