

Marietta May 25th 66

My Dear Father

You have found out before this that I have made application for an early marriage, or at least to be informed what is the earliest time at which I may expect to fulfill my engagement now of eighteen months standing. When I wrote to mother<sup>1</sup> about it, I expected you would return home via Marietta and that I would get to talk it all over with you; and let you see Lucy,<sup>2</sup> in whom you would find a strong argument why it should not be delayed any longer than necessary. But you did not come here, and the time I was with you at Parkersburg was so short, and so taken up by visitors that I did not have an opportunity to mention it at all. So that I must discuss the matter by letter, though it would probably be more satisfactory to do it viva voce.<sup>3</sup> But the term is rapidly drawing to a close, and I want the matter settled one way or another before Commencement<sup>4</sup>, so that I may know what to look forward to and not have the feeling that it is at an indefinite distance, with

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<sup>1</sup> Amacetta Laidley Summers

<sup>2</sup> Lucy Woodbridge would become Lewis' wife on April 30, 1867.

<sup>3</sup> Literal translation from Latin for "with the living voice," an oral examination of academic argument

<sup>4</sup> Lewis graduated from Marietta College in June 1866.

only enough certainty in it to be talked and thought of with no intention of having it acted upon. Let me know pretty soon what you think about it, so that I may know what to calculate upon.

In discussing this application, viz. of marrying this Fall, I suppose we may take it for granted that I am to marry Lucy at some time; for that question I consider

*[page 2]*

settled and beyond discussion. So that the question narrows itself to a question of time, shall it be immediate or shall it be longer postponed?

To answer it, we will first take into consideration the fact that the minds of both of us are made up upon this point, and that if we had no one else to consult, it would take place immediately. So that the happiness of two persons would be increased by it\_\_ and happiness is an important part of the end of life. By delaying it we should be separated for a year, two years or three years, as the case might be, and all the pains and discomforts of so long a separation would have to be endured. This I consider a valid argument why it should not be postponed any longer than necessary.

In the next place I suppose you would ask me how I would support her, and tell me to wait until I get into business and become self-supporting before I encumber myself with a

wife. True, I have no means, no way of supporting a wife, nor myself either. But could I not ask my father, who has so well cared for me, to take care of one who is as dear to me, as I to him, and who would ~~also~~ in a short time become as dear to him also? If not altogether on my account, on your own also, for the sake of having a daughter by you who is worthy of your love and respect, and who will love you and be to you as a daughter. I know the times are hard, and it is hard to get along. But when was it not so? Not within my recollection; and yet we've always managed to get along, haven't we? I am satisfied that this would not be a very expensive luxury. One person does not materially increase the expenses of a

[p. 3]

family. And her wants are not many. She is not extravagant, dressy, or wasteful. And I think we could both live on what I spend at College and at home with her, my own wants would be fewer. Suppose it does cost something, is not the expense more than made up by the pleasure of her company? Especially to mother she would be a welcome companion. She is just such a person that mother would like, and when all of the men folks of the house are away, there would still be someone to be company for her. What is money for, if not to purchase those things that will give us more comfort and happiness? And so long as a man don't demand any thing vicious to satisfy his

wants, he is perfectly justifiable in satisfying them; nay, he is <sup>vicious</sup> not to satisfy them, when the reason for not satisfying them is that he may not diminish his wealth.

Still, you are the one to judge on this point; and if you can't afford it, why I suppose I will have to wait till I can afford it.

Next you may say you might say that I have as yet no profession and that I cannot go through the study necessary to acquire a profession so well with a wife as without one. That at first sight appears a strong argument against early marriages. But it proves too much for if marriage prevents us from that study necessary to obtain a profession, it will also prevent from that study necessary to carry on a profession after it is obtained. And I don't suppose that anyone will maintain that the single men are the most successful in business or in the professions. Do we not meet with men every day who have married before studying their profession? I know of several. Mr. Boyd<sup>5</sup> told me that out of his class at the Seminary in which class were ten

[p. 4]

members, there were nine married men, and one widower. He had his wife<sup>6</sup> with him at Kenyon<sup>7</sup>, and he

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<sup>5</sup> Reverend John Boyd was the rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Marietta from 1850-1902.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. Boyd married Eliza Sharpe in 1845.

<sup>7</sup> Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, was founded by the Rt. Rev. Philander Chase, the first Bishop of Ohio. The school was chartered in 1824 at Worthington, Ohio, & moved to Gambier in 1828 as Kenyon College and Bexley Hall Theological Seminary. Rev. Boyd graduated from the Theological Seminary in 1850.

says he don't see that it was any disadvantage to him. So that even if I should go into the ministry, and I have not made up my mind to do so yet, I would go to the Seminary under like circumstances with others, and I hope with as good results. But if I study law at home, I could do it as well with Lucy with me as with her away. In fact a great deal better. For if we were separated I should always be thinking of her, and missing her, and longing for the time to come quickly when she could be with me, so that there would be more interruption to any studies than if I had her along with me. So that, as to my future profession interfering with it, it ~~might~~ <sup>ought to</sup> be an argument in favor of marrying; that it will give would give me greater inducements and a better opportunity for studying than if I remained single.

“Ah well,” you say, all that may be true, but you are too young yet, only twenty three next July.” That’s so, I am only twenty two now; and I have a lot of inexperience and youthful follies. But it isn't mere age that fits a man to marry. I've known men of forty who are as unfit as I am now. It wants experience, a formed character, sound judgment and all that. Well, I don't have as much of them either as I ought to; but I think I have as much as I am likely to have soon if I live at the at this poor dying rate. It's marriage that brings a man out, rubs off all the rough

corners and angles of his character, puts a polish on him,

[p. 5]

and makes a man of him. That development of character will be better gained by one year of married life than by years of single blessedness, knocking around the world in daily contact with men of low lives. In fact it can only be gained then. A wife has a conservative influence over a young man that is incalculable. If he cares for her any, and I profess to have a great regard for Lucy, he would become more and more assimilated to her and better, with more love for home and less for the world; with a mind above the daily toils of life, and money getting, and with a great motive for keeping out of the way of temptation and resisting evil. All this I propose to bring to bear upon my condition, and see if I am not the better for it. It will not only make me happier to have her, but it will make me better. Is twenty three any too young to begin to better myself or to elevate myself?

To sum it all up\_\_ but there is as much more that might be said\_\_ I want to marry Lucy next fall because

I love her and she loves me, and marriage is the  
natural fruition of love

I want the happiness marriage will bring with it, and  
to avoid the pain of a long and tedious separation\_\_

Nothing will be gained by delay, except that I will become more set in my ways and less pliable\_

She will be of benefit to me in a thousand ways.

She will be a blessing to you and mother, and you will love her & be glad she has come.

[p. 6]

She will be like a ray of sunshine at Glenwood, making it more cheerful and lively.

And she will be company for all of us.

And a dozen more reasons why it should soon come off.

Think of this, Father, and remember it is a serious thing for me, and greatly concerning my happiness. Consider whether the reasons you have why it should not be - if you have any - are sufficient to overbalance the reasons why it should be, and the disappointment I should feel were it decided against me. I have been thinking so much about it, and have got my mind so set up on it, that were it longer delayed and another separation endured, I should hardly have heart to undertake any serious duty as the study of a profession. Why can it not take place this fall? If it may, we will soon arrange the details. She does not know I am writing about it, but will consent if I am free to ask her parents and they are willing. Please let me

Judge George Summers from Lewis Summers, May 25, 1866

know what to expect, as soon as you can, for I want all the preliminaries settled this term if possible.

We had speaking in chapel Wednesday and I am happy to say that I had the best speech and the best delivered of any of them. I was complimented by several upon it. I took the Newland Evans murder case<sup>8</sup>, making strong grounds for the prosecution\_ I only wish it had been in Kanawha against some of these murderers there.

[p. 7]

I hope you will be able to get Mother and Syd<sup>9</sup> up here to Commencement. I should like to see them very much, and I know they would enjoy themselves, but I fear that the river will be too low, as it is falling now. If no boats are running then, I don't know how I am to get my plunder home\_ I shall have too much to ~~earr~~ bring with me by stage\_ Will have to leave it here till the boats start, then either have it sent to me, or make a special trip up for it myself. Lucy says mother must

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. Benjamin Newland shot & killed Prof. Madison Evans for seducing & impregnating his teenage daughter. This murder took place in Bedford, IN, in the spring of 1866. He was acquitted. See attachments for additional information.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis' uncle & close friend, William Sydney Laidley



come to her mothers<sup>10</sup> & stay, if she comes up at Commencement.

What kind of a trip did you have down?

I guess you found it hot. I got off just before dinner on the "Carrie Brooks."<sup>11</sup>

This dry weather is bad on farming. I don't see what farmers are to make their living off this summer. The wheat is all done for, and now this drought will settle the corn & pastures and meadows.

If I am to have a new suit for graduating, it is time I was seeing about it. Let me know what you think it ought to cost and I will try to regulate accordingly. As it's now only four weeks & a little over till the end of the term I must be closing up my bills & paying my debts. Please send me enough to last till I get home\_ Could you spare \$100?

[p. 8]

I haven't begun on my Commencement Speech yet, but will light into it next week.

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<sup>10</sup> Lucy's mother was Abigail Darling Woodbridge of Marietta.

<sup>11</sup> The "Carrie Brooks" was a steamship operated on the Ohio River.

Judge George Summers from Lewis Summers, May 25, 1866

I hope to hear from you soon, and I  
hope you may enter into my feelings  
in this matter, and give me an early  
assent.

Love to All -- Good Bye

As Ever Lew

*[Locks of red hair included with letter.]*