

**Lewis Summers from Amacetta L. Summers, March 18, 1866**

Glenwood March 18th 1866

My Dear Louy

Do you know anything  
about the 18th of March? it is my birth-day  
I am 48 today, an old woman<sup>1</sup>\_\_\_ I feel old  
and the world has not half the hold on my  
affections it had\_\_\_ you my dear child  
and your father<sup>2</sup> are all I have to live  
for\_ but I am not going to run off on a  
long train of thought suggested by the day-

Indeed my dear boy I should feel grieved  
if I thought you would never feel happy  
at home again. I think when you feel  
that your school days are over and you  
come home, your love for home will

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<sup>1</sup> Amacetta was born in 1818.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis' father was Judge George Summers.

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renew itself, your love is absolutely neces-

sary to my happiness\_\_ I know your

heart is too affectionate, and you have

too long loved father & Mother to be in

danger of losing it now\_\_ and I think

you will become interested in the

*[p. 2]*

affairs of home, after you have

outgrown your attachment to your

school-life, which all have to do, your

father thinks the great defect of your

character is want of energy and decision,

which he thinks you inherit from me.

you say to know one's defects is the first

step towards curing them\_\_ these defects

are curable, for I know by myself, I have

changed very much in many respects

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by really wishing to change\_ and you  
will too, you must not regret that you  
are not living some where else, and that  
your lot in life has not been cast in  
more favorable circumstances, you  
must try & overcome that restless feeling  
you have\_\_\_ it is common to all boys  
at your age, or do you object to be called boy?  
I have seen it in my brothers & indeed  
observed it in all I have been thrown with  
but after they have got into business they  
lose it, and I think you will too\_\_\_ how  
many there are who think you ought

*[p. 3]*

to be the happiest person in the  
world, the only child of father & mother  
who love you so dearly & who wish to do

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every thing they can for your good,\_

I am more & more convinced that a calm  
confidence & reliance on God is the great  
secret of happiness in this world after all  
to look to Him for every good, and to make  
it the aim of one's life to serve Him, brings  
more true comfort than money honor  
or anything the world can give, the  
love one feels to God grows & strengthens  
by constant trust in Him and prayer to  
Him, and I shall rejoice to see you  
take so important a step as that of  
confirmation, as it is a starting point  
in the right direction; if you have  
God for your friend & counselor, you  
need fear no evil of this world\_ I wish  
I could make you sensible of the real true  
comfort there is in trying to serve Him

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& in loving Him\_\_ as to trying to be ready

it seems to me, that all the ready ness [*sic*]

[*p. 4*]

He requires is to feel your need

of Him, here Lord I give myself away

‘tis all that I can do\_\_ you cannot be

good yourself, it is his Grace alone which will

enable you to overcome the world the flesh

and the devil, lead us not into temptation

and may God give you that Grace my dear

son, and He will if you really desire it.

The Magazine<sup>3</sup> is on the table, I have

read most of the articles, you ought to have

written one for it\_ I thought ‘My Forte’

sounded something like you\_\_ I think

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<sup>3</sup> “The Magazine” may refer to the *Marietta Collegiate Quarterly*, published by the senior class of 1866.

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Society in Marietta is very much given to  
clubs sure enough, I think they had a  
reading club in Charleston, I heard Will  
saying and he & M<sup>rs</sup> Hedrick read a scene  
from Romeo & Juliet at the reading club\_  
but it will be a great thing to revive.

Speaking of the murder some years ago  
reminds me to tell you of one that was  
committed last Thursday night not far

*[p. 5]*

from M<sup>r</sup> Jarvis, ' a man by the name of White<sup>4</sup> had  
been sent to Charleston from Clay County<sup>5</sup> by Capt. Knotts<sup>6</sup> with money to  
buy goods and to buy a waggon *[sic]*, he was followed by two  
men from there, who killed him not far from Magazine

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander White was murdered by Newton Simms.

<sup>5</sup> Clay County could be an error; Capt. Knotts & Newton Simms were both from Calhoun County.

<sup>6</sup> Capt. Knotts was Absalom Knotts of Calhoun County who was a captain in the Confederate army.

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up Elk,<sup>7</sup> one of the men is Newton Simms<sup>8</sup> the husband of  
that M<sup>rs</sup> Simms<sup>9</sup> that staid [*sic*] at old Jarvis' when he lived here  
he had made his escape, but the other man is caught, the  
man received three shots one of the bullets entering at  
the ear coming out at the eye\_\_ your father says he  
does not remember much about the circumstances of the  
Patton case, I remember it was very strange how he was  
found out, and was tried & convicted, and I suppose  
is in the penitentiary now if he is living\_\_ murders & robberies  
are alarmingly common now, the jail is full, until  
some are hung there will not be a stop to it, and it  
seems to be impossible to have them hung whilst we have such  
officers & such a state of morals and laws\_\_

Your father says he will send you the money to pay

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<sup>7</sup> "Magazine up Elk" refers to the area of current Garrison Avenue overlooking the Elk River on Charleston's west side.

<sup>8</sup> Newton Simms was tried & convicted of the murder of Alexander White in April 1866 in Kanawha County.

<sup>9</sup> Newton Simms was married three times. In 1866, his wife was Margaret Jane Hall, whom he had married in January 1864. By the time this murder was committed, the Simms had separated due to allegations of her infidelity.

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for the books you bought\_\_ but he disapproves very much  
 of your borrowing money or making debts\_\_ he never did  
 either, and he wants you to be particular about it, some  
 time you might be caught up, & give you a great deal of  
 trouble\_\_ have a principle never to do either\_\_ your father

*[p. 6]*

continues out of health, he does not recover as I  
 could wish to see him, I have not done much in the garden  
 have no one to work in it, I have some lettuce sewed, no peas  
 no potatoes yet, but there is not much lost by it, last night  
 the ground froze very hard and seed do no good in the ground.  
 I am afraid we will soon have some cold weather yet\_\_ I have no  
 woman yet, but hope to get one before long\_\_ they are not easy  
 found the right kind are not\_\_ Syd<sup>10</sup> left yesterday on the 'Laurie'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Syd is William Sydney Laidley, Amacetta's younger brother & Lewis' uncle & close friend. He practiced law with his brother-in-law, Amacetta's husband, George Summers.

<sup>11</sup> The "Laurie" was probably the "Annie Laurie," a sternwheeler that operated on the Kanawha, Coal & Ohio Rivers & was captained at this time by Frederick A. Laidley, a son of James Madison & Anna B. Laidley.



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for Athalia<sup>12</sup> & Cabell,<sup>13</sup> he became desperate & thought that  
 be the best time he would have for some time, the courts coming  
 on now and the busy season count commencing\_ I believe  
 Ce & Fanny Laidley<sup>14</sup> were on the boat\_\_ Virginia & Hallie will  
 soon be at home now, Cousin Lou is papering & painting  
 and fixing up for Virginia\_\_ Cousin<sup>Madison</sup><sup>15</sup> has bought the place  
 owned by J. G. Wright<sup>16</sup> in the back part of town he has built  
 a couple of rooms and will move down soon\_\_  
 M<sup>rs</sup> Light<sup>17</sup> has just come in and says a whole gang of men have  
 gone down the road in pursuit of two negroes from Monroe  
 who had killed a couple of women up there, two thousand  
 dollars reward is offered for their capture, the negroes only  
 passed down last night and I suppose will be captured

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<sup>12</sup> Athalia is a small town on the banks of the Ohio River in Lawrence County, Ohio. It is about 10 miles northeast of Huntington, WV.

<sup>13</sup> Amacetta & Sydney were from Cabell County, WV. Their family home was called "Lamartine."

<sup>14</sup> Ce & Fanny Laidley may be Frances "Fannie" Laidley & Harriet C. Laidley, daughters of James Madison & Anna B. Laidley.

<sup>15</sup> Cousin Madison is James Madison Laidley, the builder & original owner of Glenwood.

<sup>16</sup> John G. Wright is listed on the 1860 census as a 66-year-old hotel-keeper in Kanawha County. A business directory published by the Kanawha Republican in 1857 indicates he was the hotel-keeper at the Kanawha House, which was located on "front street, opposite steamboat landing". He died April 4, 1864 & his death is mentioned in several letters between family members.

<sup>17</sup> Mrs. Light is apparently the Summers' housekeeper. She is mentioned in several letters between Summers' family members.

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it really frightens me the continual reports of murders

God preserve us \_\_\_ Your affectionate

Mother