Letter from H. M. Misemer to His Wife

March 20, 1864

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For English 618: Research Methods in English

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Introduction to the Series

This transcription and its attendant annotations, explanatory material, and bibliography was prepared by students in ENGL 618: Research Methods in English, the required gateway class for the MA in English degree program at Western Carolina University (WCU). The learning outcomes for this class include the following:

1. Conduct appropriate, effective, and ethical scholarship.
   a. Effectively find and use advanced research tools (handbooks, databases, guides, bibliographies, etc.) appropriate to a subject.
      • Students will be able to use a wide variety of such tools and evaluate those tools.
   b. Find appropriate advanced research (print and electronic scholarship) and apply that research to specific disciplinary questions or issues.
      • Students will be able to find a variety of scholarship, evaluate both the appropriateness and rigor of that scholarship, and incorporate that scholarship correctly and effectively.
   c. Develop accurate bibliographies and reference citations.
      • Students will be able to annotate, abstract, and cite materials following standard MLA format.

2. Understand the process by which texts we use are made available.
   a. Students will be able to conduct basic editorial work and evaluate the editorial work of others.

All work is presented as submitted by the graduate students. While they take great care with their transcriptions and annotations, errors are possible. As they learn throughout this class, good scholarship requires meticulous research and corroboration by authoritative sources. Our objective is to provide transcriptions and annotations of WCU’s Special Collections materials that will be useful to the institution, students, scholars, patrons, and all users of our library’s resources.

If you wish to submit an emendation or correction for this document, please email Dr. Brian Gastle (bgastle@wcu.edu).
Introduction to Document

This letter is a letter written from H. M. Misemer to his wife, Martha Misemer.

Many times, the author writes their ‘s’ as a vertically long and stretch out form of the letter. This could often be mistaken for a ‘f.’

Unless otherwise noted, words written in superscript indicate the two lines, formally called carrots, which mark the above insertion of a word, phrase, or number in the manuscript. When seen with words or phrases, this sign usually marks an afterthought of something skipped over or not written in logical, syntactic order due to haste. Also, superscript could indicate words written above the line or inserted above/between words that are not paired with a carrot in the manuscript.

Words will be spelled as written by the author in the original manuscript. Words that are hard to understand in the original spelling will include a footnote of the modern and/or correct spelling of the word.

Brackets ([ ]) will show logical inserts made by the transcriptor when the author leaves out small things, such as punctuation at the end of a sentence. Other breaks of modern, ‘proper’ grammar, such as subject-verb agreement, capitalization, and comma rules, will be overlooked and included in the transcription, so as to best maintain the voice of the writer.
Nashville, Tennessee

March the 20th/64

My Dear wife I again embrace the

opportunity of addressing a few lines to

you to let you know that I am yet in

the land of the living and out of the

reach of Rebels. I am well and as

fleshy as you ever saw me and all of

my old acquaintances in the company are well 1

Tell all enquires about there friend’s2

here that they are well and doing well 1 3

Well as you have learned that I was

absent from this place 1 I suppose

you would like to know where we

have been and what we done 1 I will

try to tell you in as short a manner

as possible 4 for to give you a full account

1 This superscripted phrase is written directly above “the company.” This is probably due to running out of space on that line but not wanting to split the sentence. In the manuscript, the placement of the phrase is indicated by two vertical minims ( ‘ ‘ )

2 ‘Their friends’ is grammatically inferred here.

3 A period is inferred here by the capital letter in the next word. Throughout the paper, the writer seems to use longer spacing to infer the end of a sentence.

4 A mark that resembles a comma appears after the misspelled version of ‘possibly,’ but it is most likely only a blot or mark on the paper, because the author abstains from the use of commas throughout all other parts of the letter.
of all that tran\'pired ⁵ on the way would
consume a week [.] We left here on the
27\textsuperscript{th} day of Dec and landed back her on
The 18\textsuperscript{th} day of March which was day
Before yesterday an We penetrated to west
point⁶ West Point Mississippi [.] we burnt between two and three million
[MS page 2]
bushels of corn fifteen hundred
bales of Cotton captured 1500 negroes
3000 horses and Mules Killed and
captured 800 or 1000 Rebels and only
lost about 150 or 200 men [.] we⁷ also
tore up and destroyed 40 miles of rail
the Mobiel and Ohio Rail Road⁸ and
cut up generaly [.] We had 7 or 8000 men
all Cavalry and mounted Infantry and
when we all got together it looked like
there was enough of us to whip the wour-

\footnotesize
⁵ The ‘s’ is in superscript, because the author of the letter appears to have written it above the word as an afterthought, due to the realization of his misspelling.
⁶ ‘west point’ has been struck through but is still legible. Here, the author made amendments to capitalization mistakes in his writing.
⁷ After ‘we,’ the word ‘all’ seems to have been erased. It is inferred that he began to spell the next word, ‘also,’ wrong, and he corrected his mistake by erasing the start of the word and writing it again.
⁸ “The road was chartered in Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee and Kentucky in 1848 as a way to bypass the slow, uncertain river travel to New Orleans with fast, reliable travel to Mobile. Construction began in 1852 and was completed at Corinth, Mississippi in April 1861, creating the longest railroad under a single charter in the US.” Robert F. Schramm, “The Mobile and Ohio Railroad.” Admiral Raphael Semmes Camp #11.
ld and the balance of creration [. But our
trip was not to fight But to make a raid
into Miss--- which we done and accomplish-
ed all we were sent to accomplish and
returned loosing only five men in our
regiment [. none of company F was hurt
but have all got back to Nashville [.]
We had a fright at Oakalony Miss
And through disobedience of orders on the
part of our Briggade commander from
General Smith it resulted in a stam –
- peed for about two milles there was three
Briggades of us our’s was behind and the Rebs
Aimed to surrounded us and in the absence

[MS Page 3]

Of the other Briggades and that is why
we had to stampeed [. But when we got
up with the other Briggades we turend

---

9 Mississippi.
10 Page is slightly torn in the middle of this word. The ‘v’ in five is missing, but the complete word is used in this transcription, because it fits contextually, as this word is meant to inform his wife on how many men are lost in this event.
11 Town in Yalobusha County, Mississippi, United States
12 This is most likely referring to Andrew Jackson Smith, who was the major general of the XVI and XVII Corps of the Tennessee Army. See “Andrew J. Smith” for more detail.
13 Miles
14 Refers to the Rebel or Confederate Army.
15 Turned
loose on them and made them pay
dearly for following us [. ] we lost Lieut -
Colonell Cook of the 2nd E Tenn [. ]16
he was wounded and left in the hands
of the Rebs But we killed Colonell
Forest nephew of General Forest17
which is a sort of balanceing of accounts [. ]
Well we had a long and tiresome March [. ]
we traveld about 8 or 900 miles a part
of the time in the coldest weather
I ever saw without tents only such
as we could fix up with our grim
blankets [. ] But I18 did not suffer
but verry little with cold [. ] I was nearly
dead with cold when I left here But
I was determined to go if possible [. ] there
was about ten days that I couled19 not
speak above my breath more than
half the time [. ] I could have got perm-
-ission to come back any day But I

---

16 Colonel Cook was part of the 2nd East Tennessee Regiment, which was made of Union cavalry. This regiment was formed July 1862. See “Search of Battle Units” for more detail.
17 Nathan Bedford Forrest: Confederate general in the Civil War. Nephew’s name is unknown. See “Nathan Bedford Forrest” for further information.
18 Word is scratched out directly after ‘I’ but is not able to be deciphered.
19 Could
still hung on like grim death

to a dead nigger \textsuperscript{20}[] The raid is over

[MS 4]

and I am back at Nashville

as stout and harty as ever I was

and notwithstanding I like gre\textsuperscript{e}n

back\textsuperscript{21} I would not take one hundred

dollars for what I have seen in the

last three Months and have it\textsuperscript{22}

blooted\textsuperscript{23} from my memory .]

martha if I ever get home again

in peace and I believe that I

will surely get home I will be

a goodeal\textsuperscript{24} better Satisfied with our

little poor home .[.] in fact I would

not give it \textit{for} no home that I saw in west

Tennessee til I got back to Paris .[.] there is some

pretty land about paris But the balance of

West Tennessee is the poorest Country I

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Hung on like grim death}: to do something with extreme determination, to hold onto something very firmly (Grammarist.com)

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Green back}: a monetary note issued by the United States during and immediately after the Civil War, and not backed by gold or silver (now \textit{historical}); (in later use more generally) a dollar, a dollar bill; (in \textit{plural}) money. (Oxford English Dictionary)

\textsuperscript{22} Here, the beginning of what seems to be the word 'blotted' is scribbled out.

\textsuperscript{23} Blotted

\textsuperscript{24} Good deal
ever saw [.] in fact the country is literally

destroyed [.] the fencing and a great many

houses are burnt up and the Country is

no account for any thing [.] Mississippi is

a poor Country as a general thing but

I saw some of the best land in Miss

that I ever saw Any where [.] I thought I

had seen big piles of corn But I was mistaken for the corn was all in Mississippi [.]

O Martha you dont know how

anxious I was to hear from you

while I was gone [.] I imagined that

you was dead and I would have given

any thing for a letter from

you [.] I was so uneasy I could not

sleep nor be still any where [.]

O Martha you are all in all to

me [.] there is nothing on this Green

earth for which I would wish to

25 Literally
26 Mississippi
27 A ’y’ on the end of general seems to be scribbled out.
28 All the other words on MS 4 after ‘mistaken’ are written up the right margin of the paper.
29 Dead
30 Two unknown words scribbled out here.
live if you and the children were
taken from me [.] the world[^31] hath
no attractions for me except in
you and them and I want you
to take as good care of yourself as you
can and don’t strive to make more
than a support [.] we are both tolerable
young yet and I think that we can
make a living without you killing
your self at work and hope and
trust and pray that this cruel wick-
ed and uncalled for war may soon
end [.] I also pray to our farther[^32]
in heaven to spare me through these
trying times and return me to you

[MS 6]

there to nestle on thy bosom
and to behold and enjoy thy
sweet smiles [.] Martha you said
you wanted me to send you my
likeness [.] I haven’t[^33] got had it

[^31] World
[^32] Father
[^33] Haven’t
taken yet [.] I will try to get it
taken tomorrow and send it
by Old John Dixon\(^{34}\) [.] he is here
now and is to take this letter
to you and I will try to get him
to take my likeness provide\(^{d}\) I
can get it taken [.] you said you
wanted me to burn your letters [.]
I will comply with your request
all though I hate to give them
up for reading your is at
great satisfaction to me yet I
am willing do any thing you reque
st [.] I told you I got a letter from my
brother Philip\(^{35}\) [.] he says I can only
imaggin\(^{36}\) the satisfaction he has in
knowing that he has a Brother and
a son that are patriottts in deed [.] he
has no confidence in men who hollow
fro the Union and are not willing [.]

\[\text{MS 7}\]

\(^{34}\) Unknown person, possibly a courier or a fellow solider
\(^{35}\) H. M. Misemer’s brother
\(^{36}\) Imagine
Martha I have written Enough foolishness [.]

I would like to tell you more about the trip but I fear you are tired of reading such axsn epistle all ready [.]

in my next letter I will send you the names of all the Towns and countyes and distances from here to each of them [.]

Well Martha when I got back here I found five letters here from you and one from my Brother Philip in Mo\textsuperscript{37} and yesterday I got one from his son in the Union Army at Helena Arkansas which makes seven in all that I have read in a day and a half and you may guess that I have not done much else [.]

you dont know how happy and how thankfull I was to an all wise God to heare that you and the children Except Dollie was well and that \textsuperscript{you} had plenty to eat and wear [.]

now perhaps you think that I dont think of or care any thing about Dollie [.]

If you do you are mistaken [.]

\textsuperscript{37} The abbreviation for Missouri
And want to see her as bad as I do the rest [.

[MS 8]

to show there faith by

their works he says he dont think

any thing But the point of

the bayonette the mouth of

the cannon and the destruction

of Slavery will bring perma-

-nent peace [.] he says all the rest

of the connexion But him his

family and one of 38 Brother

Jacobs boys are Secesh 39 [.] I forgot

to tell you that Sol and Lee 40

are here [.] I was glad to hear that

Father had moved in the house

With you But sorry that he 41

was obliged to do so [.] Martha do the

best you can a bout farming [.]

I know not what to tell you un

-less I was there to see If you can

38 Possibly Jacob P. Brient, a captain in the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry. (“Union Officer Prisoners”)
39 Secesh: A secessionist. Also secessionists collectively. (Oxford English Dictionary)
40 Martha Misemer’s brother-in-law, Solomon Bogart. Lee appears to also be related to the Misemers, but further information in unknown.
41 Unidentifiable word scribbled out after ‘he.’
only make enough to live on [.]

I42 dont care if you let father make

What he can and keep it [. ] I close

By Subscribing my self H. M. Misemer

Your loving husband [.]

42 A letter seems to be scribbled out after this word.
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This site provided information on the 2nd and 3rd East Tennessee Regiments.

This source was used to find information on Jacob P. Brient.