

Fort Morgan

August 6, 1864

My darling wife:

I avail myself of an opportunity to write you a short note to let you know that I am entirely well, escaping yesterday without getting a scratch, although my duty as commander of the Post necessarily caused me to be at every gun inside the fort to encourage the men to keep cool and do their whole duty like men, which I am proud to say they did in almost every instance. There were a few individual exceptions, poor devils, who were frightened nearly to death. It is indeed wonderful to see how few were wounded. I suppose there was never a heavier fire from the same number of guns for a short time. It is impossible for us to say what amount of damage done the vessels of the enemy as they had had two of their vessels lashed side by side so that if the nearest the fort should be crippled, that the other could tow them off, which I am certain was the case with Farragut's flagship. We sunk the most superior Monitor that they had not over 500 yards from the fort. Three others escaped.

Admiral Buchanan fought the Tennessee as gallantly as any man on earth could have done, but with as little judgment as I ever saw displayed. For instance, instead of engaging the enemy just under the guns of our fort so as to receive all the support from them, he deferred it until they had nearly passed us before engaging them. He then came into the fight and pursued them several miles up the bay and engaged the three Monitors, and all the wooden fleet besides. The Tennessee evinced her superiority to all of their ironclads as her armor was not pierced in a single place. The casualties on board her were caused by a shell entering one of her portholes and some splinters. She was disabled, finally, by breaking the tiller chain and getting her smokestack shot away. I am more convinced than ever of what I told you before you left that had the fight been conducted as it should have been we would have had one of the most brilliant victories to record that the world ever saw.

Our old friend would not permit me to open fire on the enemy for twenty minutes or more when they were in easy range. I will not say more. Suffice it, in my judgment, it was badly managed. Fort Gaines will fall soon. Two of my companies were sent there to reinforce the place and will be sacrificed with the others. I believe it will be the fate of those at this place, also, when the whole command could be saved and put in the defenses at Mobile with perfect ease.

I have urged this evacuation immediately and if they will not take all of the troops I have asked that they would take all but three companies and leave me to hold the fort with these. If there is any sense left in the department they will avail themselves of one of the other suggestions immediately. But I do not expect them to do either, hence you may expect a long and tedious siege and we will hold this place as long as there is anything for us to eat.

Now my darling, be hopeful. I will endeavor to be prudent and yet discharge my whole duty. I got a friend who left here yesterday to promise to write the paymaster [Henry

St. Paul, Brigade QM] who last paid me and forward his certificate to you by which means you may be enabled to collect the money due me from the government.

The yanks are now shelling Fort Gaines. Farewell my darling. May God bless and protect you, is the prayer of your devoted husband. Love to all. Accept a thousand kisses from your devoted husband.

James T. Gee

The original of this letter is in the Duke University William Perkins Library collection.