

Head Quarters District of Savannah  
on board Steamship Savannah  
off Augusta Ga May 17<sup>th</sup> 1865

My dear Friend

We left Savannah last Sunday morning and arrived at Augusta yesterday afternoon, a rather tedious trip when you take into consideration that it is only 225 miles between the two points. Of all the windy and monotonous rivers that I have ever been on, this Savannah River is far ahead in those respects. The country both on the Ga. And Carolina sides is very low for upwards of one hundred miles and is principally rice lands. The balance of the way is passably good land and is under cultivation. Cotton and corn seemed to be the only crops they were looking after. The Negroes were working them with apparent industry, whether on their own, or their former masters account, I cannot say, but should judge that the former had remained with their masters until our forces under Sherman came. They the left and as soon as they found that the commanding officer at Augusta had no provisions to feed them with, they quietly returned to work—though not undoubtedly without first making some agreement as to their being remunerated for their labor. There are a great many torpedoes still in the river which cannot be found and will probably always lay hid. It is hoped that they are, or will be damaged by the water to such a degree that they will never do any serious injury [ ]. I do not like the idea of going over this route knowing that at any moment we may “go up,” but as we have become somewhat used to these little annoyances, I hope that we will come out all right.

Augusta is quite a place — of some 18,000 to 20,000 inhabitants. It is not as pretty as Savannah, but it has been more of a business place during the existence of the farce of the Confederacy. The principal streets are “Broad” and “Green.” The former is the business, the latter the private street. The city is not in good condition, not having been long enough under the rule of the energetic Mudsills. The streets need cleaning and the cellars draining before things can be considered fit to look at. Though the freshet occurred some weeks since, the [ ] have not been pumped out. The military authorities have ordered the citizens to have it done at once. I called on Mr Jackson’s Brother-in-Law, Mr Shear, the gentleman to whom the package of religious papers was sent by Mr J and of which I spoke of to you before leaving. As you may suppose, I had considerable trouble to get them to him, but the kind attentions shown me by Mr Shear and his wife fully recompensed me for any trouble this gave me. I was his guest while at the city and was well cared for by them. Please mention to Mr Jackson that Mrs Shear will probably arrive the latter part of the first week in June, and that I will make every arrangement for their transit from Augusta to Hilton Head etc etc.

We have a valuable cargo on board consisting of about \$250,000 in gold and silver, mostly I believe the assets of the Central Rail Road of this state. I am at present watching it with a jealous eye, it being my turn on from dark until one o’clock in the morning, at which time I am to be relieved from that duty by another staff officer. We have to exercise great care as the country is filled with robbers — deserters from both armies — who would not hesitate to attack us if they thought we were off our guard. We are anchored in the stream and have 180 picked soldiers on duty as guard to this vessel, besides two 12-pdr howitzers, and as the vessel is ironclad I think that it would be an excellent joke and would relieve the monotony if some of the rascals would

attack us. By the way, I have almost forgotten to speak of a cargo of paper we have on board which has been facetiously called bonds — from which I think the South were glad to be released from. We also have confederate money, which together with the bonds will probably amount to several millions — not worth transportation. We also have General Beauregard's Official Papers. Not to mention "several trunks belonging to that redoubtable warrior."

Gold and silver is quite plenty here and is selling at 120 for gold and 115 for silver. If you buy anything at market for 30 cts and hand them a one dollar green back, they will give you 70 cts in silver. This will not last long. It is owing to the fact that there is a great scarcity of small national currency.

The ladies here — and the ministers — are very bitter. I speak of [ ] but as soon as the "Yanks" get time to look after them they will act more becomingly, at least it is to be hoped so.

I rode out to the arsenal which is uninsured, as also visited the "Confederate State Powder Mills," which are quite extensive and contain a large quantity of unfinished powder. The Cotton Mills here are large and in operation. The country evidently contains immense quantities of that product, though the people are loath to bring it forward until the policy of the Govm't is more fully developed. This is probably owing to the unfortunate actions of the Govm't agts at Savannah who seize cotton whether belonging to individuals or the C.S. Govm't without any discrimination. If the Govm't was the recipient of the proceeds of the sales ie all of the sales, well and good, but the opinion prevails among us all in this country that certain parties, among whom is [ ] have not lost anything by the transactions, in other words that the Govm't has. If so I hope their sins will find them out.

I am looking about very carefully as to my future movements, as I am liable at any moment to muster out, though I see no prospects yet that will answer me, for the reason that I have no capital whatever. Men who have money and are willing to [ ] have an excellent field. Could not you or your Brother make time enough to come down here. The weather is still pleasant and the round trip could be accomplished in two weeks. I can promise you every comfort that can be had in this state, and I am sure that the trip would well be worth your while. I have been offered indirectly the position of adjutant general of the state, do not think much of it as yet. I want to know who is to be the Mil<sup>y</sup> Gov as I have no intention of serving anyone with whom I do not agree as I have served too long and risked my life too often to care to sacrifice political principles to mere demagogues. I of course still retain my old idea of living south as I think that by some means I may yet start and work my way up to a respectable competency.

Did you receive my last letters written some days since. Enclosed in one was a letter from Grover, which I hope will assist in getting my promotion. I need not tell you how anxious I am to get it before leaving the service. It would be very pleasant and gratifying to have such acknowledgment of my having endeavored to do my duty, but I am afraid the chances are against me. I send this to your house for fear that you would not find time to read it when at the office. I send you Savannah and Augusta papers.

Please present my best wishes to Mrs Roosevelt and the Young Ladies as also your Bro Theo and of course to the Boys.

Very Sincerely  
Oliver Matthews