TWELVE LETTERS FROM ALTOONA,
JUNE–JULY, 1863

In June 1863, during Lee’s second invasion of the North, southern Pennsylvania became briefly a battle area, in the campaign that culminated at Gettysburg during the first three days of July. Because of the emergency, Enoch and Charlotte Lewis, residents of Altoona, sent their children to Philadelphia, for safekeeping with his mother. The following twelve letters—all by Charlotte, except for one by Enoch—were occasioned above all by the Lewises’ own domestic concerns. Obviously written largely in haste, in a somewhat breathless and often witty manner, they reported on the events in the Lewises’ household and their own personal drama. None adds new information on the larger events or on the personalities which they also briefly mention. Yet they do give vivid impressions of the confusion and turmoil which the invasion was causing in the immediate hinterland of some of the principal actions. Altoona, the site of the Pennsylvania Railroad’s main machine shops, was an important rail center on that vital east-west line stretching across Pennsylvania. Further, as Charlotte’s letters indicate, she had at least secondhand access to information coming from the railroad’s telegraph office, an invaluable source for fact and rumor on the course of military events. The letters also refer to occasional instances of an intriguing contrast between crisis and life-as-normal, such as Enoch’s passing mention of a July 4th excursion made by one of the Lewises’ servants, perhaps undertaken even while the battle was still being fought at Gettysburg, only some forty miles distant; or Charlotte’s reference to a railroad employee who walked twenty-six miles home from the war, then left the next day for his father’s wedding near New York City.
The Lewises were Quakers, yet clearly partisan in the North-South conflict. Enoch, born in Delaware in 1821, came of an abolitionist—albeit non-violent—tradition. His formal education had been cut short at age thirteen by the death of his father, and he spent nearly all of his active life thereafter in railroading: first, in locomotive and other machine shop construction; then in Russia from 1844 to 1846, building carriages for the Moscow-St. Petersburg line, under painter James Whistler’s father; and then almost the entire period from 1850 till his retirement at age 72, with the Pennsylvania Railroad. Throughout the Civil War he was in Altoona, as the railroad’s General Superintendent, an operational position. His wife, Charlotte S. Thorn, born in New Jersey in 1823, died in Philadelphia in 1916, outliving her husband by fourteen years.

A look at the overall military scene in mid-1863 helps to put Charlotte’s story in context. The South’s victory in early May at Chancellorsville, midway between Washington and Richmond, left the way open for the Confederate forces to attempt another invasion of the North. Just a month later they began withdrawing to the west from the Union front on the Rappahannock River, and then moved rapidly northeastward through the Shenandoah Valley and up into Pennsylvania in a sweep around the Union’s Army of the Potomac. By mid-June they had brushed aside the Union forces at Winchester, Virginia, under Major General Robert H. Milroy, and during the night of 15 June a Confederate brigade crossed the Potomac and entered Chambersburg. It was thus rapidly becoming apparent to the Union that Lee intended to take his Army of Northern Virginia across the Potomac and to invade the North in force. Union measures to meet the new situation included a massive redeployment of the Army of the Potomac and

1. Enoch’s father, Evan Lewis, was a school teacher and active almost all of his adult life in the abolitionist cause; delegate to the 1833 convention in Philadelphia which created the American Anti-Slavery Society and adopted the Declaration of Sentiments, drafted by William Lloyd Garrison; for a few months immediately preceding his death in 1834, acting editor of The Genius of Universal Emancipation, during travels abroad by its founder-editor, Benjamin Lundy.

2. George W. Whistler, an army-educated, civil engineer.

3. Mentioned in several of Charlotte’s letters, Milroy was subsequently placed in charge of some emergency troops under the Harrisburg headquarters, until survivors of his command could be reassembled.

4. It was possibly at this stage that the Lewises sent their children to Philadelphia. Lottie Maud, their youngest, was born in September 1863. Others mentioned were May, born in 1854, and Anna, born in 1859. Theodore, born in 1855, was not mentioned.
ENOC H AND CHARLOTTE LEWIS, CIRCA 1854. (Michael R. Gannett.)
the appointment of a new commander, Major General George G. Meade; changes in other command arrangements, with new headquarters established at Harrisburg and Pittsburgh; and calls issued for an additional hundred thousand volunteers, to serve for several months or for the "emergency," one half to be raised in Pennsylvania. After a period of maneuvering and lesser engagements in which some Confederate units reached as far north as Carlisle, and close to the Susquehanna River on the outskirts of Harrisburg, the opposing armies joined battle at Gettysburg from 1 to 3 July.

The letters tell their own story. Some extraneous portions have been omitted to enhance continuity. Other editing principally concerns paragraphing, punctuation, and occasionally spelling, primarily of proper names.

* * *

Charlotte's first letter, written on 16 June to her mother-in-law, Sidney Ann Gilpin Lewis, was sent at a time when she was expecting that Altoona might soon be overrun by Confederate forces:

I sent some flannels, etc., to Lottie this morning in great haste for, as E[noch] did not get to bed till 5 this morning, we did not get up till 8½, & then he was at the office & Logan House before breakfast. We are coolly and deliberately packing & mean to pack all clothing is away & linen & toweling. Dont tell where we send things [place name crossed out]. Mr. Scott calculates the enemy will arrive opposite Harrisburg tomorrow, in which case our men are at hand to cut the bridge and telegraph, when communication between us & your city will cease for a time; but our plans are such we shall secure our escape before the enemy comes within sight or hearing, so do not feel the least anxiety. While we can use the [rail]road we shall go to Bellefonte by way of Tyrone which is only a short distance 14 miles from here, then across 20 miles by stage to Lock Haven, & so on to Phila.. Even if we should have to drive by way of Wopsononock it wouldn't be a

5. Undoubtedly Enoch's position vastly facilitated travel, and dispatch of letters and baggage, by members of his household.
6. A hotel near the station, built by the Pennsylvania R.R..
7. Probably a railroad employee. Other probable employees mentioned were Stephen P. Darlington; Messrs. Kitchel, Rose, Savery, Wilson, and Young; and Robert _____.
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bad summer excursion to the nearest railroad that leads to Phila...8

The long box with handles sent last night has nothing of the children's in so need not be opened. My silver is scattered about the black trunk, beside a box of spoons in the first trunk that came with the children.

Gaps are manned & considerable delay at the mtns. will be caused the enemy, but whether they can be kept away altogether or whether they only mean to forage all through the southern part of our state we know not.9 All hands think they mean to go to Harrisburg & perhaps come up by way of Bedford, too.10 We are on the lookout—have scouts in all directions—so as to escape. Both girls will wait with us till we leave—say they are at headquarters where they get the true reports & have faith we will care for them.

We are blessed with good health & good spirits & still trust we may not be routed from our home, & if we are shall conclude Providence asks it for our Country's good. Kiss all the little folks—love to sist[er].11

* * *

Charlotte seemed somewhat less alarmed in her letter of the next day, 17 June, also sent to her mother-in-law:

I write to assure thee we are here & have taken things very coolly today—lain on our oars awaiting further news. This morning word came for more troops at Mt. Union, ordered up 100 and found the scare was caused by some of Milroy's men who cut through [a gap] somewhere. The next [report] was the enemy was falling back towards Greencastle—that induced me to

8. Charlotte added the postscript, "I mean we shall go while the [rail]road is safe farther than that." Tyrone, Bellefonte, and Lock Haven are to the northeast of Altoona, and Wopsononock through a gap to the west.

9. In addition to tactical reasons for the invasion, Lee's forces had a pressing need for food and forage, owing to distribution problems within the Confederacy.

10. Altoona is midway between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh. To place some of the other localities mentioned in connection with troop movements, Bedford, Pa., and Cumberland, Md., are directly south of Altoona. Hollidaysburg, Huntingdon, and Mount Union are on a route running east from Altoona. McConnellsburg and Chambersburg are on a route running east from Bedford, to Gettysburg. Shippensburg is north of Chambersburg, and Greencastle and Mercersburg are to its south and southwest, respectively. Hancock, Md., is just over the Pennsylvania line, east of Cumberland.

11. Sarah Lewis, also called Sade, was Enoch's sister, residing with their mother in Philadelphia.
sleep & rest. This afternoon word comes there are stragglers coming into Bedford from Kelley's force,\textsuperscript{12} saying there was a fight between them & the enemy near Cumberland but cant tell who was victorious. Now reliable word comes from our operator who went within two miles of Chambersburg & attached the wire. He says they are retreating towards Greencastle—what for, where to go next, we cant tell. Men from shops & offices have gone from here [to] the works Coppée\textsuperscript{13} has taught them to make about 6 miles from Hollidaysburg at a pass in the mtns. 1000 arms have gone from here, some 1400 from Hollidaysburg, and the men still pour in from the country.\textsuperscript{14} Savery & Kitchel have gone; Darlington is helping Enoch.

Our carpet bags are packed, money in the purse all ready for a start, but dont expect to go, at least hope not. Mrs. Wilson has tacks out of her carpets. I shall not do that, our movements are so watched, when we take alarm all the town will. There is not a woman or child at the Logan House save the helps. Bridget Carton (nurse)\textsuperscript{15} got excited & made toothache the excuse to go & I am glad she is going tonight, for there is nothing to do here & if there was I can get Mrs. McDevitt. Bridget is firm & will stay. Tell Ellen her trunk is to go with our things if we think there is danger of losing them here. Please put my children's washing out & Ellen will keep clothes in order if thee will furnish her with cotton and needle I neglected to send. In fact, my needles & cottons were packed up. Our piano & pictures have gone—most of them, at least—and May's doll is safe, I hope. The Wilsons are well. I went to see Mrs. Wilson this morning, for I thought she seemed anxious yesterday. She seemed very bright today. I am going now to see Mrs. Shoemaker, who had a bad fall last night.

\textsuperscript{12} Brig. General Benjamin F. Kelley was commander of the garrison at Harpers Ferry.

\textsuperscript{13} Henry Coppée, ex-army officer, was an English and history professor at the University of Pennsylvania, who offered his services to Pennsylvania and was sent to Altoona to arrange with the Pennsylvania R.R. for the defense of that locality and of railroad bridges and mountain gaps in the vicinity. He was later first president of Lehigh University.

\textsuperscript{14} Maj. General D. N. Couch stated in his report on the Department of the Susquehanna's participation in the Gettysburg campaign, that "Five thousand men of the counties bordering on the Juniata [River, which the railroad followed for much of the distance between Harrisburg and Altoona] filled the passes leading to their homes, and threw up military works. They were an army of bushwhackers, commanded by ex-officers."

\textsuperscript{15} A servant in the Lewis household. Others mentioned included Bridget ______ and Ellen Ruff, who accompanied the children to Philadelphia.
LETTERS FROM ALTOONA

We may have to bake for our soldiers tomorrow. I have a hope yet our people will be so roused the Rebs will not dare come here. I should think a look at our yard would disarm them of evil intents. Kiss the darlings for me. Enoch keeps well. The danger at Harrisburg seems to diminish.

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In her third letter, dated 18 June, again to Mrs. Lewis, Charlotte remained somewhat anxious:

We thank Sarah for her notes both recd today. In the confusion of yesterday no mail from Phila. came here. We are feeling secure today but shall not yet recall troops or goods till we are certain the enemy is out of the state and will not soon reappear. We are very grateful for the care extended our little ones and your thoughtfulness in keeping us apprised of their well doing. James' folks as well as we hear are going well—he has 300 arms among his men. I shall go down as soon as I can without detriment to people here, would have gone today but am so watched that one quarter of the town would take alarm if I was seen leaving yet. Troops are continually arriving—a lot of Rebel prisoners went through last night—they held the officers in Pittsburg until today.

It has been very sultry for some days. Last night for a first experience to many, our men had a thunder storm on them without shelter, but there was not enough rain to do the ground any good. Proff. Coppée is here attending to fortifications and Enoch never gets this side the office door without a summons, "Proff. wants to speak to you." One might suppose he was Enoch's aide (or hindrance) instead of Gov. Curtin's. The drum is continually heard yet. Enoch is just in, & says Mr. Scott is anxious about 200 cavalry & infantry known to have been at Hancock, Md. yesterday. The Rebels have entered Chambersburg again. Wont our folks hurry down and trap them? Genl Milroy and staff are at Harrisburg. I hope 'tis to stir our folks up. We are promised a battery here soon. Enoch says dont be anxious about him—he will stay here as long as he can serve the company, but he dont think he can be of any use to them while the Rebs are here, and he expects to leave before they come. I'm here to see to that, otherwise I should not have imposed my children on

16. This refers probably to a Pennsylvania volunteer unit raised for the 1863 emergency. "James" may have been Enoch's older brother of that name.

17. Andrew G. Curtin, Governor of Pennsylvania, later Minister to Russia and member of the U.S. House of Representatives.
my friends. The cavalry did not take our horse. I believe all were a little afraid he wouldn't stand fire so he is waiting for us.

I will send Ellen's trunk to keep her things in & bring them home in. Bridget thought there was not much here she would want in Phila.. There were 4 tickets to the Soldiers Fair in my trunk, if Ellen or others choose to use them you can doubtless find them in the small apartment of the tray of covered trunk. I sent Lottie Maud a sunbonnet yesterday & one of the hats called Nannies they use in common—it was bought for Lottie Maud. If they are in need of stockings or aught else I shall have to trouble aunties to get them. I hope they will be able to come home the last of the week. Nurse Bridget went home last night & I dont know that I care for her to return. I must have a girl that can sew some, she does not mend her own clothes, I believe, neither has she any patience with children. Love to all. . . . Kiss the little pussies & tell them that's from Papa and Mama.

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By the time of Charlotte's fourth letter in four days to her mother-in-law, dated 19 June, life in Altoona had somewhat calmed down:

We are spending a very quiet day—no noise of troops, as for some days past. It seems like a sabbath. Enoch had an undisturbed night and is starting all trains again today: he and Mr. Rose are the only men in the two offices. The enemy was at McConnellsburg this morning, which is west of Chambersburg, east of Bedford, and directly south of Mt. Union. They were driving horses and cattle before them. They came in one door of the telegraph office there as the operator went out the other and they took his instrument, but he had a magnet concealed elsewhere and after they left he went back to his post & reported. We feel if they come here at all 'twill be only a dash; but our recruits at Mt. Union and elsewhere are so undisciplined they would be easily frightened, and until the defenses are more perfect Enoch feels best satisfied to have the children remain away. We hope 'twill not be long before our people arrive at some more efficient mode of keeping the state secure from invasion. There is a demand for cars to carry 8000 troops to Shippensburg—that is above Chambersburg—and Genl Milroy has gone today to Bedford to take charge of his fugitives there. Enoch says he has more
reliance on Milroy's 1700 disciplined men than on all the rest of the force that has gone to the different points to defend this [rail] line. Proff. Coppée & Mr. Wilson were at Johnstown this morning to plan a defense of that place. The people are greatly excited there, being frightened yesterday by some of Milroy's cavalry coming into their town. The uniform in this war is no guarantee of the party. The Pittsburg folks feel very secure with their fortifications. The city has natural defenses in its hills and rivers; it is easily made impregnable. Our town is under martial law; the men indulged so freely in drink they became riotous—not our own men, but those collecting here to be sent by Coppée to other points. The air is cooler and distant thunder indicates a coming storm very much needed. We have had showers for two nights past but the ground was not wet under bushes & trees.

If Ellen needs anything we have not sent, we can send to her. Her sister was a good deal frightened lest the Rebels would come, but all have got over their fear since so many men from different parts of the state have gone to watch their movements. Mrs. Sargent has got into a worse place than Altoona by going to Bellefonte for quiet. The house is crowded and there was a fair prospect of a riot there last night owing to the imprisonment of a man who had resisted the draft. I wrote to her to come back & stay with me till she could go into her own house. If the Rebels come at all they'll not dare to stay long enough to burn the whole town. Their objective seems now to damage the state by raids as much as possible; they carried off some of the prominent farmers in the lower part of the state. . . .

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Apparently the relative calm at Altoona persisted, as Charlotte's next letter, sent to Sarah Lewis, her sister-in-law, was not dated until 23 June:

Thanks for thy letters; 'tis a comfort to know the little ones keep well, tho I always hope they are so.

Mrs. Sargent left us yesterday for her new home & we miss them very much. I thought today I would send for the children and Mary and Lizzie19 & all that could come, but Enoch and Mr. Wilson think we had better wait a few days until we know more what the Rebels design and whether our people are going

19. Probably Charlotte's and Enoch's sisters, respectively.
to establish any reliable force to protect the state. Proff. Coppée & Genl Smith & all the rest who have been sent to superintend the matter seem very theoretical and fond of ease—they dont go out to see what is being done in the way of fortifying, but depend on Captn Lamborn's reports, which are a poor dependence, I think.

Sometimes we feel quite secure & then a message comes that makes us feel very exposed. The siding & car and men that guarded it were all needed, so our things have been brought home. I unpacked pictures & hung; but E[noch] wont let me go any farther, so the piano is in the box in the outer kitchen, one chest is in the lower front hall & another in the upper hall.

Anyone who wants to visit us can run with us if they will come, but I do feel it is too bad to have other people take care of my children when we have so much room and I so little that is necessary to be done.

Mr. Kitchel goes to New York or to Elizabeth tonight to see his father married. He was here to tea & filled a box with beautiful rose buds for the bride or one of her daughters, I dont know which. He returned last night from war, walked 26 miles yesterday & his feet are sore.

The only report today is not entirely reliable—that was that the enemy was just below McConnellsburg stealing what they want. It is very strange we cannot send a force to drive them out.

Charlotte wrote next to her mother-in-law, on 25 June:

I have not much to say except that we are all well and were glad to hear our Lottie acknowledges her Grandma. I want to see the little pets dreadfully, but do not allow myself to think much of it.

We had another threat of attack on Harrisburg or somewhere else—yesterday all was excitement again, [the railroad] refused to receive freight, and men ready to let down bridges, etc.. Mr. McFey's company from West Chester is at Mt. Union throwing up entrenchments or making rifle pits, with a regiment beside, for no one knows what the Rebs are meditating. The facts are, their cavalry encamped 8 miles below Carlisle last night &

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20. Brigadier General William F. "Baldy" Smith was assigned to the Harrisburg headquarters and was inspecting Maj. General Milroy's forces. Captain Lamborn was a volunteer aide to Brig. General Smith.
started at 10½ northward this morning. From reports it was thought they were only waiting for main force to come up, but now it seems as if they might still be on a foraging expedition & the long train of wagons may be to carry the plunder back—we have to wait patiently & see. A company of 70 men returned today & I hope tears will flow less copiously now. I don’t want to see an Irish woman again as long as I live—their minds are perfectly impervious to patriotism, the town has been invested by a set of bleating calves, our house has been, I might say. I pitied first, then became disgusted.

Enoch sent Ann Preston’s valise and boxes to her at Lancaster today; everything looked so uncertain this morning he professed she should have the responsibility of them & she might need her valise. Besides, I doubt whether we can get up a class before the 5th of July when she proposes to go away on a trip. This excitement must abate before people will listen to anything so tame as anatomy.

I cannot get used to the novelty of things staying in place when put there. I never knew before what it was to have so small a family. Mr. Darlington dined with us. Joe does not gain her strength. She wants to come up & make me a visit but her husband, or rather Enoch, thinks it would not be prudent just now unless she could leave her baby at home. I just suspect her husband is the greater attraction. I enclosed a pass for Ann Preston in her letter but as she still asks for one she must have dropped it without seeing it. Much love to all & kisses to pets.

Charlotte wrote to Sarah Lewis on 26 June:

Thanks for thy full letter. If my children only keep well we shall have nothing we dare complain of, for gratitude for that blessing ought to overpower aught else annoying.

I have several times made up my mind to go see Ann [Preston], but I cannot get away from the telegraph with any comfort. Mr. Kitchel goes to New York via Allentown & usually comes the same way or I should have suggested a call, for I know ’twould give him pleasure.

Mr. Darlington dined with us yesterday & read from a letter from his wife, a description of a visit to his sister-in-law, Frank’s wife—’twas rich! She was visiting her mother in Maryland when

the militia was called for & he enlisted for six months. The mother came home with the daughter and stormed & raved about Frank's deserting his family and leaving the property in the care of the Pennsylvania niggers—a tenant colored man & wife were left in charge. Joe does not get strong; & if Kitchel returns and Mr. Young gets well enough to let Robert come home (he is now taking Young's place at Harrisburg), Mr. Darlington will probably take her to Atlantic City next week.

I think our children have no cause to regret Rebel raids. I long for Anna's threatened squeeze and Lottie's love grunt, but I try to be patient. Much love & kisses to them, love to Ellen and thanks for her good care of the precious ones. Tell her her folks are all doing well. The men have all got home, and I expect the wives are happier than they ever were before. Her little niece is often here, and Bridget often sees Mrs. Ruff. If I had some nightgown muslin I put somewhere I'd give her [Mrs. Ruff] to make for May. I suppose it is with other material in that long box. Some of these days, if the Rebs are going to occupy Penna., I'll have it home. I have got used to the excitement & we may yet be like the Nashville people—have the Union and Confederate army alternate in possession of the place.

James' discouragement about affairs in our state is because he hears many rumors and does not hear what is going on at headquarters in Harrisburg. We must view this invasion only as it will affect the rebellion, and I feel sure it is the worst thing for Lee's cause & best for ours that he could have done.

We have 300 Chester men encamped in the car sheds waiting further orders. Tell mother, if we should ever lose Harrisburg & that caused a healthy action in our people, 'twould be a cheap way of ending the thing. This invasion will assuredly put Copperheadism below par and the Negroes above—they are winning respect wherever used. A soldier just in to ask Bridget what time she had tea & if he might get some, told her he came to fight the Copperheads. I cannot yet think Harrisburg will be molested by more than a small cavalry force, if that; they have not advanced nearer it yesterday, or today, and the scare now seems to be at Bedford because the enemy is in force at Hancock. If one credited all rumors one might suppose them in force everywhere. Every day or two the Pittsburg people get up a panic because the Rebels are at Uniontown. Milroy has ordered farmers to drive their horses and cattle to the mtns.. I hope they'll rob the Bedford
County people well, for they are secessionists and wouldn’t turn out a man for the emergency and some objected to furnishing any eatables to our men.

Mother would not apologize for her note if she knew how glad we were to see her handwriting.

Enoch is very well & in good spirits, considering all things.

Bridget has been out to get the latest news from Ellen’s friends. Her brother Mike and Bridget’s husband came home night before last, and Mr. Erringer came yesterday. They are all well & in good spirits. Her sister Mary she saw, too, & she is feeling all right now that the men have returned. As Mary thinks Ellen might write & Ellen does not know how & probably has nothing especial to say, thee might ask her if she has any word she wants sent to Mary or any of the rest. Bridget says it is grand fun to go out and hear the women talk. One, who talked here the other day faster than a windmill against the government for deceiving the men pretending they only wanted them a day or two and she knew they were going to them for the war, now says she always bossed her husband before but she’ll never do it again. I guess many go to the army to get rid of war at home....

Latest news is enemy is retreating—very small force at Hancock, says scout just from there come into Bedford.

Charlotte sought to reassure her mother-in-law, in a brief letter dated 29 June:

We are glad to be able to say we are well and in very good spirits, considering the existing state of things.

Our men are turning out well since the town has guaranteed to see to their families. The P.R.R. pays $5.00 a week to the family of each of its employees that goes with the three month men or for the war, but only promises it for the three months. Individuals have subscribed a reserve fund beside to aid the families [of] any who go from our town. The 300 Chester & Delaware Co[unty] men left here yesterday for one of the gaps; Col. Yarnell made a very good speech before he left which did not seem at the time to make much of an impression and, as they filed past the Logan House to take the cars to Hollidaysburg, one of the men waived his hand to ours townsmen and cried, “Goodbye, cowards.”

22. These men were probably from the 29th Penn. Inf. Regt, an 1863 emergency unit, to which Lt. Colonel Norris L. Yarnall was assigned.
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Tell Ellen her sister Mary & Bell were here this afternoon & sent their love, and said tell Ellen all her folks are well. Bell & I are getting well acquainted while Aunt Ellen is away.

As 'tis 11½ P.M. I must close and take this over to the office. Dont get alarmed for you will be safe in Phila.— tho' the Rebels should come there, you cannot of course help getting indignant; but it does no great good to one's self or the cause. . . .

We have no later news than the morning papers, save that all is yet quiet at Harrisburg.

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Perhaps out of anxiety Charlotte limited her letter of 1 July to Sarah Lewis, to news of a fire in Altoona, and sought to reassure the Philadelphia relatives that they should remain where they were:

Lest you should see some exaggerated acct. in your papers of a fire in Altoona, I will give you my version as an "eye-witness" and let you know we are blessed yet with our home and health. Jas. Lewis took tea with us, said they were all well but he must go home last night as the times were too exciting to stay from one's family unnecessarily. There was no line [train] save at 1 in the morning. It was a little late—a rap on the office door we thought summoned him that his train was near—just then awful screeches, ringing of bells, etc. We sprang to our feet supposing the Rebels had surprised us and an attempt to repulse them had created the alarm & confusion; but when we got to the balcony we heard the cry of "fire" and saw men running with guns and a confusion of men, women & children. The [telegraph] operator then said Plack's house was on fire and they could not rouse the inmates—this just below us on the same side of the street. In a few moments the flames burst forth on top of Hickie's house, and by five the row was totally demolished. Our slate roof and the wind setting in an opposite direction saved us. We were packed for a move & watching events. No lives lost and nearly all furniture saved. Dr. Tietze's house is no more—fortunately many of the inmates were away, Mrs. Tietze & children among them.

Enoch is well & been sleeping for some hours past.

Everything in the war horizon looks brighter than for a long time past. Butler will check McClellan & manage for him. 23

I thought we had given you to understand Enoch thought

23. The reference is to political rivalry between Major General Benjamin F. Butler and Major General George B. McClellan, over the Democratic nomination for the 1864 Presidential election.
the children & you perfectly safe—even should the Rebels possess
the city, would not advise moving unless those they are with
felt more comfortable to leave, when he would not object to
their going. Your property would doubtless be as secure there
as anywhere you could send. . . . I fancy I can come soon for the
children. . . .

Telegram came just now. Rebels are skiddling fast as pos-
sible. . . .

* * *

Charlotte's letter of 2 July to Mrs. Lewis, was brief and mostly
small talk, awaiting news of the outcome at Gettysburg:

We are all settled down into an almost lonely quietness. Our
men left for Huntingdon this morning, there to equip and await
further orders. There were 250 of them. I feel very much like
getting the children home, but Enoch says wait till this battle is
over that has begun. As Phila. & Altoona are safe at present and
will be equally unsafe in case of defeat of our forces, I might as
well have the care of them as anyone. It is now for the North
to say whether it will make short work of this rebellion. There was
a great alarm at Hollidaysburg this morning. At 5 o'clock bells
were all rung to announce the proximity of the Rebels & the
colored people fled in numbers—all because a stage driver said
they were at Newberg yesterday marching towards Hollidaysburg.
Enoch says he went to bed right and slept right from 11 till 6.
It is excessively warm today. Ellen's niece Bell was bitten by a
dog—a little pup she was playing with ran a tooth into her arm,
but she has had very little pain from it and it is healing nicely.
She comes every day to show it to me that I may watch if there
is any inflamation. . . .

A postscript added the next morning said, "Very warm weather," and,
"Another good night's sleep for E[noch]. All anxiously waiting
results of battle."

* * *

In his only letter in this series, Enoch wrote briefly to his mother
on the evening of 5 July that the favorable outcome at Gettysburg
(which, however, was never named in any of these letters) meant that
the children would be returning shortly to Altoona:

The great tension of anxiety under which we have been for some
three weeks past has been somewhat relieved yesterday & today
by the favorable news from the Army of the Potomac; though
LETTERS FROM ALTOONA

we have nothing official since Friday night [3 July], yet all the reports of today indicate that Lee has been defeated and that he is now retreating towards the Potomac. His retrograde movement probably commenced Friday night. Our scouts along the southern turnpike have reached this evening a point only 3 miles west of Chambersburg & they report that long trains of wagons are moving toward the Potomac. Milroy’s men who are near Loudon today have captured some wagon trains & prisoners today near Mercersburg. I ardently hope that this victory may be so full and complete as to go far towards settling this rebellion, though I have no doubt there is much yet to do. At any rate, I hope it will relieve Pennsylvania from fear of present invasion.

We are both well and were rejoiced to hear this morning that our children were well and happy. I hope their Aunt Sarah’s anxiety is somewhat relieved by intelligence that you certainly ought to have in Phila. today.

As the weather is becoming warm we are getting anxious to get our pets out of the city and, if the Rebel invasion is postponed, we believe Altoona air will suit them as well as that of Brown’s Mills. We also feel a little as if we would like to see them; so Charlotte proposes as soon as Bridget gets home (she went to Harrisburg to spend the 4th of July) and she can get the house to rights & things in their places, to go to Phila. and bring the little ones and as many of you as will accompany her home—it will be some day this week...

Charlotte says please let Ellen have $5.00 if she wishes to make any purchases before she returns. . . .

* * *

Although greatly relieved by the outcome at Gettysburg, the Lewises were left limp. Charlotte’s letter of 6 July, the last in the series, reported to her mother-in-law that “the danger seems over and I thought to set things in place yesterday and come down today for my children, but the warm weather, loss of sleep and tension we have been under left us weak.” Although the piano had been set up and she hoped within a’ day to have the house look like home again, much remained to be done. Also, Enoch could not yet leave Altoona. Therefore, if Ellen could pack without “burthening” Mrs. Lewis, Charlotte proposed to send for the baggage and let Ellen bring the children home with their Aunt Mary when the latter was ready to come, “unless they or you have a choice in my coming for them.” She also asked, “What does thee
say to coming up now?”; and added, “I have not once heard of Lottie going to see Grandma Thorn\textsuperscript{24}—it is very remiss in them not to dilate on her merits.”

Charlotte concluded her letter:

Is it not glorious that Vicksburg is ours\textsuperscript{25} & Lee routed, his army demoralized? I hope most of it will yet be captured. . . .

Love to Sade & kisses to pets. How shall we ever thank you or repay you for the excellent care of our blessings? I expect Lottie will be lonely without Grandma if she don't come home with her.

Thine Charlotte

25. Vicksburg surrendered to Grant's forces, 4 July.

**IF YOU CAN'T SAY SOMETHING NICE . . .**

. . . he came into court and menaced the justices on the Bench and called them all Fellons and used many other approbrious words and ill reflecting language against the officers and others attending this court as also against the inhabitants and good people of this county.


**CONTRIBUTED BY RUTH K. HAGY, WEST CHESTER, PA.**