

David Trimble letter to Micajah Harrison

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Capt Harrison

Sir,

I have sent you perhaps two letters, besides some to my other acquaintances in town__ which you have seen__ I wish to promise that I have not heretofore, nor do I intend at any time to write one word which is to go the press__ Those who scribble for the press may do so, I write for my friends, and have no higher ambition,__ Besides I don't set myself up as the standard of military criticism and therefore don't wish any of my remarks upon the time past present _____ or to come, to see daylight thro' the medium of a newspaper__ Having thus passed a non-intercourse between myself and the press, I proceed to Inform you that the inclosed is a correct plat or map of so much of the country as it pretends to show, and the river, Islands, Ford, and Batteries are laid down, (paying due regard to distance) so very near their true positions, that It requires the eye of a critick to point out any error__ Col Dudleys battle was fought on a part of [word crossed out] Genl Waynes battle ground. You know where his ["Genl Waynes" inserted] tent was pitched__ Do you remember a large white oak -tree, which seperated into three large trunks near the gro= ound and grew to a majestick height. That tree stands within this post, about 50 paces from the upper End and there, near its root, or base, genl Wayne pitched his tent on this side the river. I am now writing in my tent exactly 70 paces north of that tree__ and if you will take the trouble to draw a line from my Tent, or from the tree, across the river at right angles with the stream, you will touch the house where Dr. McKeehan lay last winter [word crossed out] and was fired on as he was going with the flag to Malden after the battle of the 22nd Jany__ a line north. 5 East would pass near Genl Waynes quarters on the other side. So much for things of "olden times" which I mention, because it will be more satisfactory if you recollect the objects I mention__ Fort Meigs is situate on a bank about 10 feet higher than the opposite side of the river. But the highest part of the ridge which leads Eastward from the Indian rifle Battery as repre= sented on the map, is quite as elevated as the ground on which the fort stands__ and is only from 100 to 300 hundred yards from the East angle of the Fort. And this fact leads me to say, that Genl Proctor is a fool, as he could have taken this place. He might have reduced the Fort in two days__ Suppose he had opened the seige, with the Batteries 1. & 2... and then broke ground at 3.... Which is about 1200 yards from the centre of the Fort.... This latter ought to have been barely to keep up appearances, and amuse the Fort: and In the Interval he ought to have crossed over and selected a spot on "Indian ridge" (in the ridge on which the Indians fixed their rifle battery.) about 300 or 400 yards from the East angle of the Fort. There they would have been completely masked by the woods.__ They might

have erected a Battery in 3 days__ mounting 4-12 pounders or of any calibre__ This Battery might have been Elevated 6 or 8 feet above the surface of the Earth__ When finished they could in two hours have cut away the under groth__ and bushes__ and at day-light opened a fire which would have driven the garrison out before sunset. Instead of doing this Proctor caused the little batteries 9 & 10 to be Erected, and even these annoyed the Fort as much as the large battery on the opposite shore. Again_ He ought to have erected a battery on the river about 2 miles above the Fort, on either side__ say the north side__ with two six pounders he could have sunk every boat we had in Genl Clays Brigade. Several lesser Errors were Committed but these were unpardonable in a Genl__ So much for Genl Proctor and his combined army of 3,000 british and Indians: Let us attend to ourselves.____ The day will never come, when this Fort will be easily taken__ You would be astonished to see what work has been done by Genl Harrison__ to secure the place & his troops. You may judge of the work by this fact, the Picketing is mostly of split logs, planted perpendi=cularly; and there is scarcely an instance of a cannon=ball knocking them down____ By the "by" If about 1,200 effective men defended this place against 3,000 How Long might Hull have defended a stronger place "Detroit" against 2,000_____

Whatever the British may say about the battle of the 5th and the seige of this place, you may rely upon it that they are greatly injured and embarressed, by the affair__ Proctor told Genl Tecumsee that he would drive Harrison out of the Fort in two days__ When the battle of the 5th was over,__ Tecumsee,__ (angry at the loss of his young men,) went to Genl Proctor, & said "Sir, you asked us to come up here and see you drive Genl Harrison out of Fort Meigs,--- --- --- Insead of which, we have seen him drive you away from your Big-guns; and if it had not been for my Warriors, you would have been driven home__" If this ["fellow" crossed out, "Chief" inserted] could muster men enough, he would be our Hannibal ["if he" crossed] As to our own loss it is less than was at first supposed; and it is my opinion that we should have lost as many as we did in any event. The Fort includes about 772 acres of Land, from which if you will deduct, the ground occupied by about 1000 effectives, and seven or Eight hundred men, sick & Complaining__ also allow for block-houses, meat houses__ magazines &c. &c. and also make a full allowance for a number of Traverses__ running in various directions, with ditches on each side, and you will have but little room left for Genl Clays Brigade ["left" crossed out]__ But suppose them safely marched into the fort,__ and at the same time suppose the Enemy to continue a brisk Cannonade for 24 hours, It must be obvious that many would have been killed; and at Last we should have been

compelled to make a Sortee; in which [word crossed out, "even" inserted] the Enemy would [word crossed out] not have been taken by surprise; but would have expected that manouever and would have been prepared for it___, in which case, a desperate battle would have been fought, by the party making the sortee, [word crossed out, "again" inserted] at least equal,perhaps, double their number___ Under this view of the subject they might not have spiked the Enemies cannon, without loosing more men than were lost_____ Especially as we must have crossed the river in the face of the Enemy___ The truth is that no Genl ever adopted a wiser plan under like circumstances__ and it is my solemn opinion that if Majr Lewis or any

officer of reflection or calculation, [word crossed out] and prudence, had been in command the whole Engagement would have been honorable to our arms___

Before this time you will have seen Genl Harrisons official report of the Battles &c. &c. I suppose it is as correct as such reports usually are, but in confidence I may remark that some part of it is founded on an entire mistake___

So much for matters of General & publick concern, among which I had almost forgotten to say that your brother Clerk Mr T Allen Q.M. to Col Bozwell's regiment, killed an Indian as sure as the Holy Gospels___ Col Boswell discloses that he saw the Indian fall, and he stood by when Allen shot.___ By the way__ T Allen is as fine, and as brave a man as ever went on a Campaign___ And you may rely upon it that Col Boswell is a Brave man, and highly meritorious as an officer.___ He was ["with the killed" crossed out] among the first to aid in

forming that part of his command which went out to battle, and during the whole engagement he was as much, if not more exposed than any other man under his command. Adjutant Taylor frequently called out to Col. Boswell during the engagement, informing him that he was exposing himself improperly and more than was necessary. The truth is that Col Boswell displayed as much skill and cool deliberate bravery ["as" crossed out] on the ["the" crossed out] as any man in the army, and at this time he is the most popular officer of his grade at this Fort.

[The following twelve lines were crossed out.]

Genl Harrison did not name Adjutant Taylor in his Genl Order__ But you may rely upon my [illegible] that he is as brave a man as [words illegible] into battle, and the fact is that he never took a tree during the whole battle, altho he frequently told Col Boswell of his Danger,

and advised him to tree__ Col Boswells con=
=stant reply was that he had no time to spend
behind trees__ It is said that [illegible] when one
of Genl Thomsons aids gave an order for the retreat,
on of the Companies of the militia began the retreat,
Col Boswell did come up at that Instant

and not knowing the Aid DeCamp halted the
Company, faced it about, ordered a Charge,
and [word crossed out] then asked why that Company was on
the retreat__ By this time the Aid found out
that Boswell was the Commandant of the Regi-
ment, and told him that Genl Harrison had
sent him to deliver the order__ Then said
the Col, I will obey it and immediately
gave orders for a retreat__ All this was done
with so much Cool, firm deliberation, that the ["Cols" crossed out]
Col's ability and Courage are placed above
Doubt among candid and sensible men.
[The next eleven lines are crossed out and illegible.]
A major from Ohio) who acted bravely

as well that day (May 5th) as during the
whole Siege, was entirely Omitted__ However,
I suppose these things ["offen" crossed out; "often" inserted] occur and I
dare

say that it is no easy matter for a Genl to
do Justice to all__
[The next eight lines are crossed out and illegible.]
When

I get home I will amuse you with some good
things which are too long to be put on paper.
June 16th 1813__ The first thing which
struck me here after I had leasure to look round
me is, the very shortness of the nights__ At this time
day light-or in other words day-Break, appears at
half past three O.C. A.M. from which time
untill sun up, seems almost one & one half hours.
____I must stop__as I am just told that
the mail has come in from upper Sandusky__

-----Well Sir, I have got your letter of June
3r'd--which I am sure was written In a
Hurry, because you thank me twice for the map
Inclosed-whereas In fact, the map is
now inclosed__ and if I sent one before
I have fairly forgotten
["Sugar and Coffee, &c, &c have been
sent to me fromChillicothe.
As I shall not be home untill the End of the
Campaign and mayhap I may before that see my
[illegible] I bequeath this map to you, S. L. Williams
Dr Mills &c____, the rest illegible" crossed out]
Should be glad to hear from A. R. L...My respects
to him__ You have no doubt heard of Genl Clays
indisposition__ He has had a very severe attack of
the Gravel, &c, and only yesterday resumed his com=
=mand__ Three days ago a fleet of Boats came

down from Fort Winchester-with about 1200 barrels
of Flour-70 of whiskey 90 of Pork &c, &c, and
another Fleet is expected this evening___
My Best wishes for the health and happiness
of all my friends male and female__not
forgetting Mrs Harrison Mrs Mason &c &c

and Drs Haden and Mills and then

["wives" crossed out] wives_____

In haste

But with Esteem

D. Trimble

P.S. This letter is for yourself and Capt. S. L.

Williams Dr Mills and James Crawford_____

except one part which you and Williams will

read, and then scratch out, untill I come

home__&c. &c All I want to say further is, that

you will have to pay postage as money is scarce

here___ and this letter is__ hardly worth its

first cost_____

D Trimble