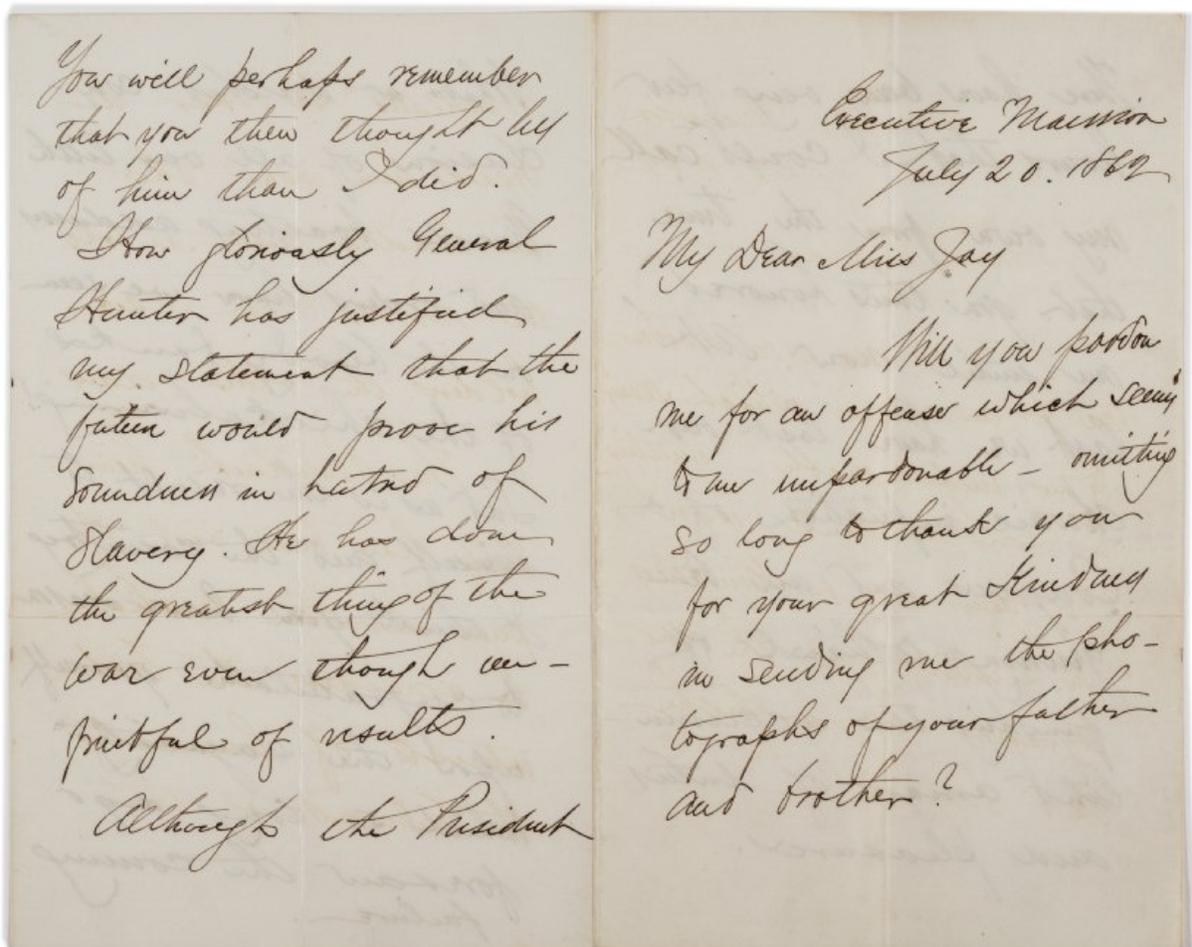


Introduction

Written while serving as Assistant Secretary to President Abraham Lincoln to a family friend. Writes of General George McClellan and his failed Peninsula campaign, "...What a wretched conclusion of all our little General's boasting addresses and orders have we seen on the bloody banks of the Chickahominy! Sad as is the result to himself and the country..." Mentions General David Hunter's attempt to emancipate slaves, "How gloriously General Hunter has justified my statement that the future would prove his soundness in hatred of Slavery..." Hints of the coming of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, "But he will not conserve slavery much longer. When next he speaks in relation to this defiant and ungrateful villainy it will be with no uncertain sound. Even now he speaks more boldly and sternly to slaveholders than to the world."

Image



Transcript

John Hay to Mary Jay, July 20, 1862 (The Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC01569)

Executive Mansion

July 20, 1862

My Dear Miss Jay,

Will you pardon me for an offense which seems to me unpardonable - omitting so long to thank you for your great kindness in sending me the photographs of your father and brother?

There have been very few hours that I could call my own from the time that you thus honored me until now. At last we have lost our chronic infliction of a Congress and are beginning to think of finishing the accumulated arrears of duties and pleasures.

What a wretched conclusion of all our little Generals boasting addresses and orders have we seen on the bloody banks of the Chickahominy! Sad as is the result to himself and the country I think you have reason to congratulate yourself upon the sagacity which so long ago foresaw the coming failure. You will perhaps remember that you then thought less of him than I did.

How gloriously General Hunter has justified my statement that the future would prove his soundness in hatred of Slavery. He has done the greatest thing of the war even though unfruitful of results.

Although the President repudiated his order he regards him none the less kindly, and so told the Border State Slaveholders the other day.

The President himself has been, out of pure devotion to what he considers the best interests of humanity, the bulwark of the institution he abhors, for a year. But he will not conserve slavery much longer. When next he speaks in relation to this defiant and ungrateful villainy it will be with no uncertain sound. Even now he speaks more boldly and sternly to slaveholders than to the world.

If I have sometimes been impatient of his delay I am so no longer.

Please present my regards to those of your family whom I have the honor to know.

Yours very truly

John Hay