

Camp of the 108<sup>th</sup>  
April 11<sup>th</sup> '63

Dear Mary

About three days ago I was on picket near Fredericksburg & crossed the river with a flag of truce. We were none of us allowed to leave the bank but quite a number of the Rebs came down to see us and I had a fine opportunity of examining them. Some of the men are fine looking, but all show the effect of poor living and are dressed very poorly. There has never been a time since the war broke out when they have seemed so friendly as now. Almost every day they manage to send across boats loaded with tobacco & our boys return them full of coffee sugar etc.. All this intercourse of pickets has been forbidden but it is impossible to prevent it entirely, and the men will converse across the river spite of all the officers can do.<sup>1</sup> The same day that I crossed the river I met the Lady that was at Antietam ministering to the sick. She is now at the Lacy house and does considerable good. She furnished me with a very fine dinner, supper & breakfast.<sup>2</sup> The day we were relieved from picket instead of allowing us to return to our camp, we were marched off about six miles to be reviewed by Lincoln. The review was a very fine one, the largest I ever saw. Over 50,000 troops must have been in the field. Abe certainly is the homeliest man I ever saw.<sup>3</sup> Before this reaches you, you will of course have received my coat and a letter for father by Lieut. Kavanaugh. I hope father will have concluded to let *F* come down here. He would be so much interested in witnessing a little of soldier life. According to all accounts the Stereopticon must be a wonderful invention and very interesting<sup>4</sup>. Yesterday was the first warm day we have had, the weather hitherto having been very cold and stormy. I have never seen the Regiment in so good a condition as it is now. The boys are all learning to play ball and every leisure minute is spent in that recreation. Of course you will say nothing about the inclosed to any body not even C. Tell father that I have received the \$10.00 [?] sent by him & I am now waiting for \$20 or \$30 more. Give my love to all the folks and believe me your affectionate brother<sup>5</sup>

Sam Porter.

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Notes:

<sup>1</sup> For the official reaction to the commercial trade among pickets see *O.R. 1, 25, 2*, pp.198, 219.

<sup>2</sup> Quite clearly this is Clara Barton (1821-1912) who at the start of the war was a clerk in the Patent's Office. She organized medical relief and care for civil war soldiers. Eventually after the war she was responsible for establishing the American Red Cross (Boatner,p.48)

<sup>3</sup> Abe's review of the troops took place on April 8, 1863 at Hooker's HQrs. Sam's reaction to Lincoln's appearance was not unique. Most of the men noted Abe's homeliness but unlike McClellan who called Lincoln "the original Gorilla", the foot soldiers developed a genuine affection for their homely president.

<sup>4</sup> *F*: is Farley, the younger brother.

Lt. Patrick C. Kavanaugh was the 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. of Co. K (March,3, 1863), 108<sup>th</sup> NY.

Stereopticon : A type of projector arranged to combine two images of the same object or scene on a screen giving an effect of solidity (OED).

<sup>5</sup> Sam as a baseball himself would obviously encourage the game among the men. See Priscilla Astifan's five part study of baseball in Rochester in *Rochester History*: Volumes 52,#3, 62,#2, 63,# 1 &2, 64,#4.

The secret of the "enclosed" is intriguing and the "C" referred to may be Charles Pond, Mary's intended.