

Head Qrs. 108 N.Y.V. in Camp near the Rapidan
Sept.29/63

Mrs.S.D.Porter

Dear Madam: I owe you an apology, g for neglecting so long to answer your kind letter commending, with a mother's Christian love, your son to my watch & prayers. It must be my excuse that I was sick at the time I received your letter & afterwards going home on leave, the pleasant days passed so swiftly in the society of - her I had left a new made beautiful bride, that I too selfishly forgot others' happiness in the sweetness of my own. Better resolves came back with me & I hasten to respond to your yearning solicitude for your dear Son. I will watch over him & pray for him& seek to do him good.

Oh! May God give me grace for I am all too weak and sinful & unwise to know or to perform aright this watch for souls. I have been quickened to pray for him, by your kind letter: though before that his young nobleness, his manly open, ingenuous youth had held my eye & drawn me to an unusual interest in him. I will not fail to pray for him nor use what influence I can to lead him to the Crucified, who can crown him with glory forever. But Madam, yourself, his mother and trusting God have more power to influence to his conversion than any other power save God's own Spirit. Your mother's heart with long-enduring faith can reach up strong hands of ~~faith~~ prayer that shall lay hold on God's hands & move them to save your son. What can I say better than that good Bishop said when Monica kneeling at his feet with many tears besought him to persuade the dissolute young Augustine of the truth of Christ's Gospel. Wearied with her importunity - God is never wearied- he said "Woman, go thy way; the child of such prayers cannot be lost." Or that answer of hers which she made long years after, when her faith had grown stronger by long exercise. To one asking why she still agonized in prayer & did not give him up, she said: "For twenty years I have besought God for him & it may be that this year God will hear my prayers, shall I then for one more year lose all my twenty years of prayers?" And so it was that year God converted Augustine & she became the mother of, no doubt, the noblest of the Fathers. "And will not God hear his own elect which cry day & night to Him? Yea He will - though He bear long with them."¹

I can but feel there are great hopes for your dear son. His demeanor is most exemplary, modest, ingenuous and like a true soldier. I am persuaded he avoids intoxicating drink & profanity & is ready to attend as well as attentive to worship when it can be held.

It shall be my pleasure to watch over him & supply to him in some slight degree the care his parents would have for him. Believe that I shall be his friend & helper if accident or should befall him.

May I not also ask your prayers with those of all God's people for myself? The Christians at home little know how much the army Chaplain needs their prayers nor how hard & isolated his position. God's ministers here need the prayers of God's people that we mat be faithful & not faint.

Grateful for your kind letter & confidence I am happy in sending to Mr. Porter & yourself my sentiments of sincere regard. Mr. P's kind letter I received. Samuel is well.²

I am Madam

Very truly yours

Thos. G. Grassie

Transcribed by Terry Crooks.

The original letter is in the Porter Family Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Libraries.

Notes:

¹ The underlying allusion in the Chaplain's letter is taken from *The Confessions of St. Augustine* Book 3, Ch. 22, pp.48-49. Monica, mother of Augustine pleaded with an unidentified Bishop to help Augustine realize the errors of his ways. The Bishop did not advise direct action but suggested prayer and added that "it is not possible that the son of these tears should perish."

²Just how much solace Susan Porter received from the letter is unknown. However in battle Grassie made quite certain of his own safety. At Chancellorsville, for example, he and Dr. Ely arrived back in the Falmouth camp *24 hours before the regiment re-crossed the river!!* Perhaps they reasoned that their particular aid was not required at the front after a battle.

Also later in life Grassie was totally useless in the aid of Mary Porter's pension application after the death of Sam, claiming that he never saw Sam sick and he did not recall Porter's presence at Gettysburg. Given the Reverend's penchant for self-preservation this final statement could be truthful if the good reverend was not there either!!. Why the opening comment about his consorting with his young "bride" is included defies logic, good taste and borders on the emetic.