

Belle Plain [Falmouth]¹
Dec 18, 1862.

Dear Farley

Your kind letter would have rec'd speedier attention but there has been such excitement in this part of the country that for the last week we could think of nothing but our own danger. Now however those of us that escaped safe from the bloody fields of Fredericksburg have had time to recover in part from our fright and fatigue and once more resume our accustomed duties. Among these I consider that none stands higher than the duty of writing home and assuring you of my safety and health. You will hear before this reaches you of the terrible scenes of the last week and there will be no advantage for me to enter into particulars. Let me merely say I think that no description can give you a conception of the horrors of the four days we spent in Fredericksburg.

The 140th was in F[redericksburg] and I understand was the last Regt to leave the city² but of them and their movements you are doubtless better posted than I am and I will confine myself to our own affairs. For fear that Port will give you a false idea as to the state of my health I want to say a word or two about my meeting him in the village. I had not felt very well that morning and told him so. He seemed to think it a serious matter and after he had left I was afraid he would write home that I was sick. There is nothing the matter with me and I shall be as well as ever in a few days.

Our Regt suffered quite severely in the fight but not nearly so badly as others. The loss amounted in killed and wounded to about 52 about twenty per cent of the number engaged. None of our Co lost their lives but there are 5 or 6 very badly wounded (three of the no. with amputated limbs) who are in a very critical condition and may die at any moment.³

(Porter cuts out part of his letter at this point, whether he was compelled to censor it is not made clear. He goes on top explain the ellipsis.)

This part cut out related to the appointment of the new captain, but as we did not care to have it general talk until we know more, it was cut out + now I cannot lay my hand on it.⁴

Notes:

¹ The regiment returned to camp at Falmouth on the morning of Dec. 16. Why Porter writes "Belle Plain" is simply error or inexplicable.

² The 140th NY may not have been the last regiment to leave but it was certainly close to it (see *O.R. 1,21, 1, p.429*).

³ Port is Porter Farley, his cousin.

For the 108th NY at Fredericksburg: Missing 37 ; Killed 6; Died of wounds 9; Wounded (recovered) 40 = 92 total.

⁴ The missing part of the letter is the start of the brouhaha that ensued over the captaincy of Co. F after the promotion of Pierce to Major (see letter to Father on Dec.20).