

Camp of the 108th N.Y.V
Near Falmouth, Va
Feb 11th /63

Dear Father

It is now several days since I have written to any of the family and I find myself so far behindhand that I shall have to declare myself insolvent and merely pay the most pressing part of my debt. You have written to me twice since the 1st and as one of the letters was on business, I feel bound to answer you first and let the others take their chances. First to business. With regard to our standing account, even if the sum you mention was all I owed you the balance in your hand would be ten dollars less than you call it, 233.00 instead of 233.00. Besides that difference in account I am by agreement with the Maj. to be held responsible for the \$25 advanced to him while recruiting. This unless you have other charges against me, such as doctors fees, bills at Sabey's, Bernes's etc leaves a balance due me of \$198.00. The letter enclosed for Pierce I handed him and he admitted that you were right with regard to the amount of the note but as he has undoubtedly written to you before this I will say nothing about his affairs.¹

I see by all recent letters and papers from R that you have had an extremely cold period. That will correspond with the cold snap we had out here about the first of the month. For a few days the weather was very severe but of late it has moderated and we are now having delightful spring days. You complain of my not entering into details in my letters. It seems almost impossible for me to do more than merely mention a [*'mere' – crossed out*] fact without going into the minutiae. For instance I am officer of the guard to day, and at guard-mounting we had a very ridiculous performance owing to the ignorance of some of the men. Now as you don't know what guard mounting is, and are ignorant of all military movements any thing of this kind must be passed over in a letter, and as these little things are about the only items of interest in our camp we have to make our letters very dry and brief. However there may be some things in which I might expatiate such for instance as picket duty and hereafter I will try to write with more interest. Our old picket line has been some distance from the river where there was little or no danger but we are to change our line very soon and then I may have on that subject to write about. Our mail comes now quite regularly and I receive my Papers very nearly every evening. Last night I rec'd a letter from you and one from Far[ley] his letter I will answer in a day or two. My box sent by Amiet came last night and I am much obliged for all the good things. My clothes left with H.H. Sperry Esq I am sorry to say have never reached me yet. I live in hope however and expect them soon. I mentioned in my last that our cook expects a furlough of ten days, and I still think that he will succeed. If so he will visit you and bring anything you wish to send.²

Your affect son
Sam Porter
Lt. Co F 108.

Notes

¹ Obviously the financial affairs of Sam Porter will be lost to time, however the reference to 'Sabey's' may be to James Sabey who went into business as a hatter at 105 East Main St., Sam who is sartorially conscious may have had an account there. Unfortunately 'Bernes's' for now is untraceable but it could be assumed to be some sort of business enterprise.

²H.H.Sperry- see letters of Dec. 1862. He has been awaiting his clothes since Sept.1862.

Amiet – Carl V. Amiet, 2nd Lt, Co.I, five months later would be killed on July 3, 1863 during the cannonade before Pickett's advance while moving to the aid of fellow officer Lt. Dayton Card, also killed (*Died at Gettysburg* ,p.123,125).

Guard Mounting is the prescribed routine for assigning and positioning camp or garrison guards, involving the regimental adjutant or designate. A similar routine takes place for picket duty. Pickets (infantry) or videttes (cavalry) were an advance guard for the larger force. Videttes were stationed much farther out than pickets and therefore much closer to the enemy (*Army Regs.* pp.59,87 ; *CW Desk Reference*,p.476). Sam's impatience with his father is understandable since guard mounting and picket duty were tedious daily routine. Real camp life may have horrified Porter senior so Sam, unless in battle or turmoil over promotion, had to be selective about his topic of conversation in his letters home.