

Camp of the 108<sup>th</sup> NY Vols  
Near Morton's Ford  
March 1<sup>st</sup> 1864

Dear Father

Before I fairly get into the body of this letter, I wish to apologize in part and in part offer excuses for my long silence. When I wrote last I was at Brigade Head Quarters A.A.D.C to Col. Powers.<sup>1</sup> Since then Col Smyth of the 1<sup>st</sup> Del Vet Vols has returned and relieved Col Powers from command of the Brigade. I might have remained with him had I chosen to do so, but I preferred returning to the Regiment. My leg was about well, but I did not feel exactly like duty and was excused for two or three days. I had just reported myself as ready for picket when an order from Division Head Quarters reached the Regiment convening a General Court in Camp 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, and appointing me Judge Advocate. The Court was convened on the 16<sup>th</sup> Ult and since that time I have been very busy, with its business. We have tried about fifteen cases, and as Judge Advocate I have had all the writing to do. The proceedings in every case have to be written out separately and sent to General Commanding for approval. This you can imagine has kept me pretty well occupied, and although I might have found time and doubtless ought to have done so, for writing home. I think that I am not much to blame for neglecting it. The weather for two weeks has been delightful, but day before yesterday Kilpatrick moved across the Rapidan with 10,000 cavalry and as usual soon after the move commenced, rain began to fall and everything now looks like a protracted storm. The army is full of speeches that Kilpatrick is said to have made such as ( I will go the Richmond or Hell) etc. etc and we are all deeply anxious to learn of the results of his raid.<sup>2</sup> Enclosed you will find the Programme of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps Ball given on Washington's Birthday which I attended. The affair was a perfect success. About one hundred and fifty couples were present & well accommodated. The dancing room was immense and the handsomest looking room I ever saw. Even Corinthian Hall when fitted for the Bazaar could not compare with it. All or nearly all the great Generals of the Army were present, and numbers of the elite from Washington. Three full bands supplied the music and from the length of the programme you can imagine at what hour the exercise closed. The Christian Commission has recently presented our Regt with an immense church fly, and we have now a building for sacred exercises which will contain three or four hundred people.<sup>3</sup>

The Pay master is expected soon to pay Regt four months payments.

Love affect son  
Sam

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Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> A.A.D.C. is probably Acting Aide De Camp since Powers' command of the brigade was temporary.

Transcribed by Terry Crooks.

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

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<sup>2</sup> Hugh Judson Kilpatrick, originally a captain in the 5<sup>th</sup> NY infantry (Duryee's Zouaves) transferred to the cavalry where he became a Brig. Gen. of volunteers and eventually commanded the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division of Pleasanton's Cavalry Corps at Gettysburg. He was a rather controversial figure, labeled as a liar, a blowhard and a womanizer by contemporaries. Today's historians generally agree with this evaluation, even his modern biographer, Samuel J. Martin does not like him, but there are some who will take a less biased look at the rather odd looking little man who was nicknamed 'Kill-Cavalry' for the way he went through horses and cavalymen.

The raid by Kilpatrick, accompanied by Col. Ulric Dahlgren, was designed to free prisoners in Richmond. On Feb. 28, 1864, the Third Division of Cavalry – 4000 men not 10,000! – crossed the Rapidan at Ely's Ford and moved towards Richmond. The raid proved a failure and turned into a scandal when incriminating 'documents' were found on the body of Col Dahlgren.

<sup>3</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps Ball took place on Feb.22, 1864, at the Thom House on Cole's Hill, Stevensburg, Va. Porter who attended, paid the donation of \$20/ officer although not all 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps officers were expected to attend only those who were solicited. Porter, a 'solicited' officer, was now moving in the rarefied upper echelons of the army with the presence of Vice President Hamlin, Gen. G.G. Meade and various senators. Corinthian Hall was the premier lecture hall of Rochester. It was originally known as The Athenaeum when built in 1849 and later Corinthian Hall and finally the Academy of Music and was torn down in 1928. The Christian Commission was a major humanitarian relief organization dedicated to helping soldiers spiritually and physically.

The Christmas Bazaar was held annually and sponsored by the Ladies Hospital Relief Association.