

Transcribed by Terry Crooks.

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

Head Quarters 3rd Brigade
2nd Div. 2nd A.C.
October 20th 1864¹

Dear Father

Your letter of the 15th has reached me and, I wish to express, to you, in particular and through you to the other members of the family, my thanks, for the good things coming [to] me by express. The receipt has been received, & in time I shall look for the valise to come by me of Rogers boats.²

A few days ago the 63rd N.Y. Vols, a Regiment belonging to the Irish Brigade presented Genl Smyth with a horse. The whole Regiment was marched up to our Hd.Qrs. and Dr. Reynolds presented the horse. The Genl responded to a written address of the Doctor's briefly but well. The officers and men of the Regiment were then, after repeated urgings, prevailed upon to partake of a little cold punch etc,etc.. The whole affair passed off very pleasantly indeed. The equipments sent for by the officers of the Brigade have not reached us yet, we are expecting them however every day.³

This noon we made the first inroads into a barrel of fresh shell oysters which were really superb, reminding one of Thanksgiving, New Year etc,etc. We have one of the pleasantest staffs in the army and when we all go off mounted, to some review or any other man cut a swell [*there may be some words missing since the previous is not a coherent statement*] I assure you. Then too when at home we live pleasantly, no cliques or jealousies as are apt to be the case. Capt. Nichols our Brigade Commissary is a member of the mess and is without exception the most entertaining man in his way that I ever met. Such jokes and stories, and so well told does he amuse us with, that frequently for a whole evening we all just sit and listen to him.

Yesterday we, that is Parsons and I had a nice brick chimney built in the end of our tent and feel as rich as Lords in the possession of the nicest tent to be found anywhere in the Corps. When I get my breadth of carpet it will be nicer than ever.⁴

The war news has of late been of a character very encouraging, and I really think that the Rebel army of Virginia will be unable to stand before us in the coming campaign.

I have concluded that our Brigade is in the best position of the Division line. Every day or two the Rebels salute the troops to our right and left with these large ten inch mortar shells which rush tearing through the air in a manner very trying to weak nerves. Just where we are however they throw almost none at all, and although the bursting shell can be heard on every side we feel and are as safe as desirable for a soldier to be. It is really wonderful to witness the effect of one of the large bomb shells. They are not thrown at all like the shell or shot from smoothbore or rifled cannon, but are discharged from the mortar at an elevation of almost 50 or 60 degrees so that when they strike they are dropping almost perpendicular. Some of these will in this way go through (bomb proofs) made of logs a foot or more in diameter and covered with three or four feet of solid earth.⁵

I am very much pleased to learn that the wedding passed off so finely, also that they are enjoying their consequential. I have been very sorry [a great many times -*crossed out*] when thinking that Mary was to be married and I be absent. but suppose that it is all for the best.

I have recently totally renounced liquor of all sorts but as yet still stick to my pipe which I much prefer to cigars. Perhaps however I may at some time reform in that respect also.⁶

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I have just lighted a candle and find that the last half of this letter is written in a remarkably Shedaquoric [?????] *No idea what this word is or means* manner as Nichols would say but I have so much business in hand that you must excuse me from copying it.

Court Martial still continues. Tried a man to day who could neither read, speak or understand English.

I believe that some time ago you requested any information I could furnish you with in the case of F. Frey. He was taken prisoner at Reams Station since which time nothing has been heard of him by the Regiment.⁷

Affectionately Your Son
Sam Porter.

Notes:

¹ They were still on the Petersburg front near the Jerusalem Plank Road.

² Rogers Boats could be a semi-humorous reference to Hosea Rogers of Rochester and his American Line boats that were put to use for the army as transports.

³ Surgeon Lawrence Reynolds of the 63rd NY presented the horse on behalf of the regiment to Thomas Alfred Smyth on the evening of Oct.17,1864 (Boyle,p.376).

⁴ Nichols is Captain William A. Nichols, Commissary of Subsistence and Parsons is Theron Edward Parsons, 1st Lt. and Adjutant, Feb.12,1864.

⁵ A 10" Mortar fired a solid 90 lb. ball with a range from 300 -1200 yds. with a max. elevation of 45°(CSA Manual, p. 120).

⁶ The Temperance pledge usually ran through the army at various times, often before a major engagement. Drinking was a definite problem in the army (Has it changed?) but other vices such as smoking and gambling were much harder to renounce. In the early part of the war, the march to battle was usually littered with discarded playing cards which were often retrieved by survivors when the fight was over.

⁷ Frederick Frey was a German native who served in Co.F of the 108th NY. He was captured at the battle of Reams Station, the nadir of the 2nd Corps combat record, in August of 1864. He was sent to Libby Prison. At Gettysburg he had the unique experience of having the tip of his nose shot off but he survived the war.