

CIVIL WAR LETTER

Camp Houghtaling

My Dear Sister:

I received your very interesting letter of the 3rd inst. yesterday - also, one from Hattie, both of which I was glad to get and will now try and answer to the best of my ability. Pomeroy will also write in answer to yours. We are both of us well as also the rest of our company; although we are now having very hot weather and I fear there will be a great deal of sickness unless we get rain before long, the weather being at the present very dry. As yet however there has been but little sickness in camp and no deaths among the many thousands of soldiers encamped here (of disease). Three have been killed, one murdered and two accidentally shot, also one drowned. This, I think, speaks well for Cairo that abroad has the reputation of being a very unhealthy location. You say you wish for me to give you one of my "real good long letters." I think I will try and write you somewhat at length but as for its being good or interesting I will leave that to yourself. I could if I only had time to spare, fill up a dozen sheets of paper with many incidents relating to camp life that would doubtless be of interest to you but I find my time is constantly employed in one way and another so that it is necessary for me to write briefly and to the point; or be three or four days in completing a letter which in these fast times would be considered old and stale. It is now five o'clock and the order is given to fall in for drill so I must stop as every man is required to be in the ranks so here I go. Drill over and having been to supper I will continue until roll call. Messrs Wise and E. Baldwin have just arrived and I must go and see them and enquire about the folks in Ottawa. At roll call Mr. Wise made us a speech in relation to matters at home and also of the present condition of our country and the future prospects of bringing back our government to its former firmness. I was surprised at his manner of speaking as I had always supposed him to be a very poor speaker but on the contrary I must say that he speaks well and is strongly attached to the interests of the Union. They came for the purpose of settling with us. They say our uniforms cost from four to five dollars which is to be deducted from the eight dollars donated us by the citizens and as soon as they return home they will forward the balance to us. Mess. F. C. Prescott and his brother Alphonso were here last week. John F. Nash was also here. It is now so dark that I can not see to write more tonight and as I go on guard in the morning I will go to my bunk and try to get a good night's rest.

June 11th - This is a beautiful morning although the heat of the sun at this early hour indicates that we are going to have a day of incessant heat. I must tell you about our location, how we live; what we have to do, etc., etc. We are located 2½ miles from Cairo on the banks of the Mississippi River on a most beautiful piece of level ground, our two field pieces planted on the water's edge pointing with deadly aim upon Missouri soil ready to spread terror and destruction upon the heads of traitors

should they at any time make their appearance on the opposite shore which their cowardly acts we fear, will not permit them to do. Our sleeping apartments (or barracks) are built about fifteen rods from the River, behind the levee which makes a good **breastwork** that I believe will never be of any importance to us as there is no probability of our being attacked by any secession force should we remain here a lifetime and as for the mosquitoes, the levee is of no importance to us in keeping them at bay as they in my opinion are far more brave than the secessionists and have engaged in a better cause; they for the purpose of sustaining life while the Secessionists are toiling in every mean way to destroy the most important means of their subsistence. The order of the day is the Reveille at five o'clock in the morning, immediately after which the roll is called and all that do not make their appearance are "marked" and have to stand double guard. After the roll is called, we march to the River to wash and prepare for breakfast which having done we return and scour our guns and put them in order. We breakfast at half-past six and at seven o'clock we fall in for drill which continues until nine. We then break ranks and again clean up our guns and prepare for guard; mounting which comes off at nine o'clock and thirty minutes when the guards that have been detailed form in line and go through the performance of inspection of arms and any man that has a gun that is not polished is either sent to the guard house or put on extra duty. The guard is divided into three reliefs. The first Relief goes on post at 9 o'clock and remain until eleven when they are relieved by the Second who stay on until one o'clock and then the third Relief takes their respective places until the first Relief again comes on. In this way we have to stand two hours and rest four. After guard mount we retire to our respective quarters and are at liberty to enjoy ourselves in a manner that best pleases us. Then can be seen men writing, reading, sleeping, singing, talking, speech-making and various other performances too numerous to mention. The old guard always have the privilege of going to town in preference to others. At twelve the drum beats for dinner and we all march for the table in good order and in quietness we partake of our meals; which generally consists of beef soup, fried or boiled potatoes, bread and crackers, ice water, beans, rice, dried apples, etc., etc. We have tea and coffee for breakfast and supper -also plenty of fried or boiled ham. After dinner we are at liberty until five when we again have to fall in for drill and drill til supper and at sundown the roll is called and the guard detailed. At eight o'clock we are required to be in the barracks and at nine we go to bed and at ten we have to extinguish all lights and cease talking. We have to go to the City every Saturday to the grand review of troops; which is the most magnificent sight I ever beheld. To see five or six thousand men uniformed and equipped in military style and drilled to almost perfection, marching and parading with bands of music and the numberless (almost) flags floating in the breezes, every man stepping at the same time, which with the

roar of artillery flying in every direction, is a sight that one can little imagine if they have never witnessed the same. Wm. Gregg, Geo. Wakefield and Em Campbell have just arrived from "Villa Ridge". They report themselves and companys generally well and are calculating to re-enlist for the War. I also learn from them (and from others) that Quinn will probably go in again for the War. As for myself, I am not fully determined as to what course I shall take in the matter; But am certain of one thing, that I shall never go in our present company as there will not be over from 10 to 15 that will go and the company will probably be broken up. The "Life of a Soldier" suits me so well that you need not be surprised to hear that I have joined some other company and am off for the Wars. I think, however, that I shall go to Ottawa before entering upon the duties of a Soldier in the regular service. Pomeroy is keen for going but will doubtless do as I may determine. If I go he will go also, If not, neither will he. Two companies under command of Col. Oglesby went yesterday to Columbus; a Secession town 20 miles down the River in Kentucky; on board the Steamer City of Alton, supposing that the "Cheney" in employ of the government had been stopped by Secession troops as she was behind time. But upon arriving they were surprised to find that the many thousand S.C. Troops that were reported to be stationed at that point were not to be found. A large Secession Flag was taken and being satisfied with even this much gain upon the Rebels they hoisted the flag upon the bow of the Steamer wrong side up to show their contempt for the three stripes and seven stars that these Rebellious traitors are foolhardy enough to suppose will ere long wave triumphantly over this broad land of ours. I was in town when the Steamer came in and saw the flag and the presentation of the same to General Prentiss; and his speech in return. He said among other things that he would soon lead us to Memphis where we could capture many more such traitorous emblems; and on the morrow (today) he would inform us when we were to advance upon the enemy. I suppose General McClelland will be here today and that we shall find out what we are going to do in the future. Some think we will go immediately to Memphis while some think we will remain in Camp here. It is my impression, however, that we will in a few days have an election for the purpose of ascertaining what portion of the three months troops will re-enlist and taking them, will form them into regiments and proceed immediately down the River; discharging from service those that refuse to re-enlist. In this, however, I may be mistaken. For my part I would much like to go South. "Our Boys" went for the first time last Saturday to the dress parade (artillery) and were complimented by Col. Wagner, Commander of the Artillery Battalion, as being the finest and best drilled Company on the ground, doing the fastest firing much to the chagrin of the Chicago Company, who pride themselves of being a little superior to other companies, coming from "inferior towns". In answer to your question as to what the trouble is in regard to the Chicago troops not being

honored enough, I will give you my opinion on the subject. It is simply this - they appear, by their actions, to think that outside of Chicago there is no band of men quite as good as themselves. They have drawn from Government their uniforms, arms, etc., etc., are far better equipped than many other companies that as much deserve to be "honored" as they do. They get as much to eat and wear as any of the Soldiers (are better uniformed) and have no guard duty to perform except around their own camps while the rest of us have to guard the lines surrounding the City; a distance of 6 to 7 miles, besides guarding the different lines at and around Camp. Defiance. There are men in all of the Companies that find a great deal of fault and think they are not as well treated as they should be but I think there is but slight difference in the treatment or honors of the different companies except that I may mention that the Quincy Co. appear to hold all the important offices. In regard to Dr. Sims, I can only say that he is a very successful physician and appears to be a gentleman in every sense of the word; and as for honors I have never heard a word mentioned in relation thereto but conclude there is nothing very serious or it would have been generally known here. We have as yet received no pay nor do I know when we will, but presume it will be in a short time. We shall get a new uniform in a few days; expressly for dress parade, keeping the one we have for fatigue dress. Pomeroy has gone on guard and will not be back for 24 hours. He wished me to give his best respects to all his friends and to say that he cannot write you today but will do so the first opportunity. I wrote home to Father over a week ago but have as yet received no answer. Shall expect one today sure. I want you to all write often and give all the news and especially what all our friends and relatives are doing and how they get along. How is John's folks, little Arthur in particular. Tell them both (John and Ann) to write to me and in return I will answer. How is Mother, Grandma Hull, Mr. and Mrs. Morse - in fact "everybody". I hope to see you all soon. I want the advice of one and all in regard to my going for three years. I must close this "good long letter" by requesting you to write immediately on receipt of this. There are seven of us writing at this one table, Palmer and Eli among the number. They send their best respects to all their friends. I have "played out" in the way of news. So you must be content with this ill-composed letter and when you write again don't dun me for a "long" letter - and good ones you very well know I am not capable of getting up. I will now write to Hattie so goodbye for this time. Kiss little Ella nine-hundred times for me and serve little Arthur the same way. Write, do write now, won't you write soon.

Respectfully yours,

C. P. WHITMAN