

Letter from Daniel S. Johnston, Sr. to "Dear Friend Michael (Meissner)"

Company L, 2nd Heavy Artillery, NY

Washington, DC

January 7 (?), 1862

Dear Friend Michael,

Not having received any answer from you to my letter and not knowing whether you received it or not and as I was writing to Brother David and thought as stamps are very scarce here to make the most of this and as David's letter did not contain near all I wished to say I thought as you were both like brothers to me as well as to each other that both could read the letters and so have both more news than if I wrote to each one alone and separate. I hope you and your wife and family are all well as this leaves me and mine that are here at present and so are all the boys that came from Cow Bay and join this company. We have had a change in the weather and a little snow night before last. The river is covered with ice but we have been treating ourselves in our tents to a small stove and you don't know how much more comfortable we feel. Before when I wrote I had to throw my overcoat over my shoulders and every few times would have to wait and put my hands in my bosom to get them a little warm and try again, but now I have had to take my jacket off and am writing in my shirt sleeves quite comfortable though the day is very cold it cost us three dollars but we do not begrudge it I can tell

you. About 1 1/2 or 2 miles from here on the rail road track a few nights ago two of the Patrol Guard were shot on their posts and killed. The other is expected to recover. Sometime before one man in an adjoining company got poisoned by eating a pie bought in camp from a basket peddler.... close by us are some beautiful springs of water, from which I suppose 30,000 soldiers and 5,000 horses get their supply, were found poisoned after which guards are always kept to water them. But one night the guard was shot from a house close by. Some of the balls taking effect in a large tree under which the Guard stood so that you may see we are amongst some of them, and has to watch pretty careful, we have been to work at our stables for we have got some of our horses and expect the rest in a day or two. We will have 710 besides the officers 5 and 6 canons and when we get them I am in hopes you will soon hear something that will make your hearts glad from us Cow Bay boys and the rest of our company for a few months in camp soon makes a fighting man of a patriot and I was going to say of a coward but I am in hopes there are none such amongst us. Some of our boys occasionally take a long ramble and see what they can see. Edward has seen more than any of us, and James and Daniel have seen much more than me for to tell the truth I do not like to walk far and since I was taken prisoner and confined I travel less than I did before. I hope Dear Brother I ought to call you for you and David have appeared more like brothers to me than most any other and you will write to me as opportunity offers and above all I desire you and Sally Ann to pray for us, oh dear friends. I often think and speak of you. Remember me to Father and Mother. I hope they are both well. Tell Father William that if God spares him and me 'till I come back I have got enough in my head to talk and keep him amused for several evenings and that I will be sure to come there and try to amuse him and your kind mother. And my little pet Delia tell her I am not hanged. (?)

You remember me to Elizabeth and tell her she must write a few lines to me and Evelyn and all others inquiring friends. And may God Bless You both and keep you straight in this world and in the world to come. Life Everlasting.

No more at present, from your Sincere well-wisher,

D.S. Johnston (Sr.)