

Hempstead Inquirer

"From Major B.A. Willis, headquarters 119th Regiment, NY, Berea Church, February 4th, 1863)

My Dear Friend,

I received your letter a long time since but at the time was on a march, whereby I was necessitated to neglect the matter for a long time; but I have not forgotten you. With grateful pleasure I recall your kind efforts in my behalf to raise a Company for the benefit of our common country; I cherish a high regard for the warmth of interest you manifested towards my comrades in arms, not only Company H, but likewise for those who have united their destiny with other commanders. I am proud of my company; it is larger and composed of better material than any other company in the Corps.

I try to treat the men with kindness. There is no Captain towards whom so much love and respect is shown, or who commands so ready an obedience as myself. My treatment has never been complained of - strange to say - I have never had occasion to arrest a single one of them, and never had a single deserted, in which respect I challenge comparison with any other.

But there is something of which can still more proudly speak. On the march from Centreville to Fredericksburg, then again to the Rappahannock, through deep mud, amidst storms of sleet and rain, not one of my company has straggled; each night, although weighed down with weariness by the day's fatigue, the roll call has been promptly answered. No other company in the 11th army corps can point to such a record. General Sigel has publicly complimented them. And when I speak of them I know whereof I affirm, as I have been by their side through every march, every difficulty, every hardship and every peril. Ever since September 13th, when I returned from recruiting service, I have been ever present with my company, being on duty every day and have affixed my signature to every

report. I disdain to reply to contrary rumors, whose base origin bespeaks their character.

I have lost three men to disease. My company have bathed their memories with many sincere tear-drops. They were respected and honored; I will recall their names: Charles A. Marshall, Michael Connor, and Henry DeMott. If Hempstead reverences the memory of her martyred sons, and would avenge their wrongs, let her lend her united energies toward the completion of that stupendous task, the overthrow of an unhallowed rebellion of which there were victims. Let their families be remembered and cared for. Let no want of theirs go ungratified.

Three of my men have been discharged owing to physical disability - probably three more will leave for the same cause. Hence you will observe I would like to have nine men to fill vacancies occasioned by discharge and death.

Is there not patriotism enough yet remaining in your home to commission that number more to go forth and assist us in our holy purpose to preserve the nation's life? Yes! Let Hempstead then respond to that call, and her love for Company H be made manifest by filling its thinned ranks and henceforth keeping them full. Write me as to the prospects of that number.

Oh! How I do shudder for my country, as I peruse northern newspapers - the speeches of politicians - the proceedings of legislatures, and discover the luke-warmness, cowardly fear, and craven indifference, that pervades the heart of the loyal States. It borders on treason, and must be crushed.

but what makes us most indignant, are the gross libels and misrepresentations as to our feelings, ideas, and sentiments. Those wicked defamers - those malicious, villainous slanderers who would crush the republic, and then mockingly smile at the ruin they had wrought - I mean those monstrous wretches who tell you the Potomac\ac army is no more, the\at we are ready to rise in mutiny and lay down our arms, while the moat atrocious and vilest of enemies flaunts the banner of treason defiantly in our front - that we, because the hour of midnight has struck, because gloom and darkness enthralls us - are about to abandon that cause, upon

the result of which hangs suspended mightier destinies than any involved in the grandest struggle of the past. (sic.) Who would have the world believe that we are ready to descend to the most ignominious baseness - martyr the aspirations of a civilized age - ignore our sensibilities - tear down the pillars that uphold the proudest fabric ever erected to constitutional liberty - spit upon the memories of our comrades already sleeping their last sleep - in that soil rendered sacred because it contains the remains of the immortal Washington - simply because a paymaster neglects his duty - because Congress is recreant, or the Administration remiss - I repeat it, these monstrous wretches though clad in robes that token lamb-like innocence, will be brought to judgment - vengeance cannot slumber long - retributive justice will soon unchain its fury and woe! unto them when that hour of dread that gives to each his desert of punishment or bliss arrives when a voice is heard crying, "As ye have sowed, so shall ye reap" - how tremblingly will they stand confronted by the tens of thousands of our fallen brethren, murdered by an infuriated, satanic treason, bearing witness to their apostasy. But I will leave them with the invocation. For the sake of that future we are now molding - for the sake of that God, whose essence is perfect love - for the sake of that religion whose precept is equal justice - for the sake of the past outspread before you, so replete with patriotic achievements and heroic struggles, for the sake of our mighty present, displaying so many triumphs of arms - so many evidences of Spartan valor - of Puritan devotion to truth - for the sake of the liberty which belongs to the meanest of God's creatures - which the noblest of earth have been proud to vindicate - for the sake of yourselves, moral, accountable beings as you are, abandon at once your treasonable schemes - desist from your unholy purposes - discard the base partisanship that loves faction more than country - gather yourself in devotion to its cause. Do this, and protect yourself from the stings of an insulted and defied conscience - do this and save yourself from the curse of angels and men - do this, that an epitaph on your black-hearted infamy and treachery may not be written over your grave, and the stigma of your wickedness cloud the hopes of your posterity. With you or without you the nation will succeed. It is quite time the character of our soldiery was understood, because we have suffered disasters traceable to the mis-generalships of our chieftains - let it not be

said we lack in bravery - in determination - in any attribute that constitutes the true soldier. Every battlefield almost attests our superiority.

Remember that pure courage, like a lamp, shines brighter in the hours of darkness, than in periods illumined by the splendor of the noon day sun.

Our army possessed of a divine courage that defies a world at arms - defeats do not dishearten its proud spirit of misfortune weigh it down with grief. Trusting in the righteousness of our cause - looking through the telescope of justice, we discern a future that will bring on its wings our certain victory - and see written on the pages of god's works, "be patient, the day of your rejoicing is nigh."

We have great faith in Hooker; and we are ready to move against the enemy as soon as the roads will admit and when we meet him we will whip him. Hooker is a general. All the army wants is a leader that will conquer and take advantage of victory. He is the man - the soldiers love him. I will write more respecting him in the future.