

Camp Douglas Chicago
Jan 3 1862

My dear friend Annie

I have a terrible cold and bad headache today which makes me about sick; and besides this there is a furious snow-storm raging outside which is not calculated to improve my ill feelings. It requires no little effort for me to attempt to write a letter under existing circumstances, but I know you will be indulgent after contemplating my case.

Since I wrote you last I have returned to Chicago and made another trip out and back besides which has given me between six and seven hundred miles of travel. If this had all been in the direction of W. G. it would have materially lessened the distance that separates us. But such contemplations are perhaps rather aggravating than otherwise.

I received your letter on the last day of the old year and would have written on the first day of the new had I felt able. I remember that you received my expressions of attention on last New Year's day at the expense of my friends in this locality. I made no calls this year but staid in camp most of the forenoon and in the afternoon went out to dinner for a short time and then came home and sat by the fire all alone. I suppose there is no reason why our New Year's greeting should not be as hearty this year as ever but somehow it seems of necessity to contain a mixture of sadness; our future seems so dark & clouded. The incoming year will probably furnish more history than the past half-century and are we as a nation and individuals prepared to accept and discharge this vast responsibility which is thrust upon us. I almost fear sometimes that we do not realize the full importance

of the great trust committed to us. It requires a strong faith, a steady purpose and unflinching resolution to discharge our duty at such a time. The only consolation we can have is that we can not be held responsible for results. It matters not to us what the issue, if we only discharge our duty properly & faithfully but even this is so difficult that we constantly fall short of realizing our own standard.

Since writing the above I have attended a prayer meeting in our company quarters. It is the first meeting in which I have participated since I have been in camp, but in fact I have never spent much time in camp as yet though I like it much better than going round after recruits.

Perhaps you would like to hear something of the manner of conducting a prayer meeting in camp. I have told you before I believe, that we are occupying permanent barracks constructed of boards and made very comfortable. The benches are arranged on either side for sleeping purposes leaving an open space in the center some ten or twelve feet wide extending through the whole length of the company quarters. In front of the benches and on either side of this corridor is a row of benches which will accommodate from 60 to 80 quite comfortably. These seats were very well filled and there was very good attention. The Chaplain of the Regt conducted the meeting which was mainly carried on however by the Soldiers. It was purely a social prayer meeting interspersed largely with singing. Of course only a small proportion of those present really entered into the spirit of the occasion and it may be a question whether there is as much enjoyment for a Christian as in meeting of Christian brethren. That I presume would depend somewhat upon how much missionary spirit a man possesses. I must say that as at present constituted I should most enjoy to meet with those who could sympathize with me. Perhaps I may as well take this occasion to answer a question you have several times asked.

whether I find it easy to pray in public. It is not generally natural or easy for me to take part in such meetings and I don't suppose I can do any much in the way of edifying others, but still I don't often allow myself to refrain from performing my duty in this direction. The fact is I never could furnish any reasonable excuse to my own conscience for refusing to perform as plain a duty. It is somewhat a matter of practice and I believe as a general rule the more we engage in such service the less reluctant we shall become in doing so.

Saturday morning. I felt obliged to stop at this point last evening on account of severe headache. I feel much better this morning but still have a very bad cold. Think I shall go to the city to night and remain over the Sabbath and see if I can't sweat it off. The snow has again commenced falling this morning and we are likely to have another stormy day. It interferes very much with camp duties preventing our ordinary drill and leaving the men with more leisure time than is profitable. I believe the worst and most demoralizing service for soldiers is the inactivity of camp life. It is worse than severe marches or hard fought battles.

Your apprehensions for my personal safety while on recruiting ^{service} among seceders I consider altogether groundless. In the first place I am not very rash myself and not likely to commit any indiscretions which would lead to serious results. In the second place these people are generally consummate cowards any way and one resolute union man would scare a dozen of them. No doubt they have a sort of consciousness of the injustice of their cause which you know makes cowards of men any way.

I don't know whether I shall go out any more or not our company still lacks sixteen men of the number necessary to organize but I have got about tired of the recruiting business myself. I should be glad to have somebody else take a turn at it only they don't seem to want

very well. Oh, if we ever get organized in good shape
won't I have a day of thanksgiving

I know nothing more in regard to the probability of
my being able to go East this winter. It is only a bare
possibility any way - hardly enough to have any hopes upon

Your Christmas festival must have been a delightful
occasion. I should like to have been a spectator of the
scene. I came home quite unexpectedly the night
before Christmas and took my Christmas dinner (which
was a very good one) with the soldiers in camp.

We had Roast Turkey & Pie in abundance for the whole
Regiment.

It seems after all that you are to be deprived
of the privilege of officiating as bridesmaid for your
favorite cousin. It seems very unfortunate and quite
mysterious but with no knowledge of the parties or their
previous history I don't think I should be able to throw
any light on the subject. It is one of those cases which
time alone can explain. I have no doubt the same
will appear some time and perhaps the remedy also.

Annex - how do you like messages on such delicate
little note paper as this? You see it is such as Gov.
furnishes and the only kind available when I commenced
this letter. I can't say I like it very well. There is altogether
too much area to cover. But I must close for the
storm has ceased and we must get ready for drill.

Always your friend & brother

Otis W.



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Miss Annie F Noble
Brooklyn
N.Y.

