

Sperryville Headquarters 1st Army Corp
Army of Virginia July 24 1862

Dear Father,

I have been laid up sick ever since I wrote to you last, and as I feel hardly able to perform any duty I thought I would devote the morning in letting you know how matters are going here.

This and General Banks Corps are about moving to Culpepper. The road is filled with Cavalry, Artillery, & Infantry all on the move while the fields up and down the valley as far as the eye can reach are filled to overflowing with wagons containing supplies for the different divisions.

We have had very rainy weather for a week which has swelled the streams so much that a good many of them have been impassable. All of the supplies mails to come from Warrenton on the RR about thirty miles distant and for more than a week the Rappahannock River between this and there has been out of its banks and till a pontoon bridge could be built the supply trains could not reach us and the consequence was that our rations got down to next to nothing. Hard tack and beef without salt is not calculated to raise a man's fighting bump very high as we all know by experience. I believe that our volunteer soldiers will bare more fatigue and hardship than any other troops. I have heard the foreign officers express the opinion that European soldiers would not endure half as much without mutiny. I think that a great deal of our suffering could be by prevented by proper attention on the part of the commissaries and Quarter Masters. If some of our Generals practice Napoleon's plan of giving some of them a little hemp it would help matters amazingly. We have had no mail here for more than a week and consequently know but very little about what is going on in the world.

I walked over to Genl Schencks Quarters last evening and had a long talk with Capt Crane. Everything seems to go along quietly there. They have a beautiful encampment in the yard of a citizen. I had quite a conversation with the Genl himself. He told me that Charles Anderson is raising a Regt at Dayton and proposed to write to Gov Tod and get one a position in his regiment. I don't know how that would please Cousin Charley.

We have had a regular row here in the regiment for some time. growing out of some appointments that the Col has made I in the first-place he appointed an outsider the sutler (a brother-in-law of his) to fill a vacancy over Lieut Edmonston who immediately resigned. He then appointed another relative who had no earthly right to the place in Edmonston's place. Then the Capt of Lieut Hesse's company resigned and of course Hesse expected to be advanced but no: The Col had still another friend to help, so he took a Lieut out of another Company and appointed him over Hesse who resigned and went home. Well when Lieut Dietrich was detached and went to serve on Genl Cluseret's Staff. The Capt applied to the Col to put me in his place but his reply was that I was not entitled to it as promotion went by seniority. Heaven help the mark. All the captains' commissions are made out and dated on the same day and that is the day of the consolidation of the Regiments.

The secret of it all is that he has and is making it a family concern and also he don't want the fiftieth men to have any show at all as he wishes to drive Col McGroarty out of the Regt. He has succeeded in doing that. as he is going home as soon as his resignation is accepted. Lieut Dietrich I am told is coming back to the company again so he cannot appoint anyone over us.

I would not whimper a word about this but that is has become notorious throughout the division. Neither would I if the appointees were competent men, but as the boys say, "They are all a set of wooden heads" and not fit to fill the places assigned to them. It is very very unpleasant to be commanded by a lot of men who know nothing and will learn nothing but whose sole merit is that they are Col Schleich's brother-in-law or cousin.

If I could get a commission in one of the new Regts now forming in Ohio I should feel exceedingly grateful and would try my best to deserve it but if I cannot I shall have to and will carry my musket with as willing a heart as ever.

I saw Uncle James yesterday. He has got look and act entirely different to what he did when I first saw him He is in good spirits now and would not give a cent to go home.

It is reported here this morning that Jackson is advancing upon us via Gordonsville. I hope it is so for I think that if it anybody can fight him it is the little Dutchman (Seigel) and there won't be much left of Jackson if he gets a half a chance at him. I wish we could get the papers and mail, as we hear so many reports and cannot tell what to believe and what not to. I suppose we will get one this afternoon however.

Col S.J. McGroarty has just handed me a letter of recommendation to Gov Tod. Capt Crane told him that the Genl had written to the Gov about it and he thought he would do so too. It was entirely unsolicited on my part.

He also gave me one to Col Anderson I wish you would present it to him It may not do any good but it can do no harm. I must close this hastily written letter as the mail goes out in a short time.

Probably before I have another chance to write I shall be at Culpeper or beyond

Remember me to all yours

Affectionately

Robt Patterson

Col Jefferson Dayton