

[top margin] Oh that the mercy of Jehovah may continue to abide with my dear little family & his strong arm protect them from every danger, seen & unseen, is the prayer of him whose whole happiness is wrapped up in the welfare of dear wife & littles ones.

Hd. Qs. 10th Ala. Regt.
Near Fredericksburg, Va.
December 24th 1862

My dear wife,

Christmas Eve! And I not at home with my loved ones! Nevertheless I am not sad, for, I have just received, read, re-read or rather devoured you last precious, long-looked-for letter. This of itself, with the delightful assurance that the Good One still spares & protects my darling and little ones, is enough to make my heart cheerful & happy. And, tho' I am separated from you and can't be with you in person tonight, it is a pleasure to invoke the aid of memory and pass in review before my mind the many happy "Christmas Eves" we have spent together with our little ones around us. One would think that such pleasant reminiscences, coupled with the late triumphant successes of Confederate Arms, and the news of today, which tells of confusion in the councils of the enemy, and added to all this, a cheerful letter from a wife who loves you, would be sufficient to make my happiness complete for the hour. But in spite of myself there is one thing which flits as a shadow over all the bright pictures that I can conjure up this evening! It is this: The last Christmas Eve that I spend at home, if my memory serves me right,

you and I sat together before the fire amused at the various wishes and conjectures of the children as to what Santa Claus would do for them during the night. We saw their glowing cheeks, as they were assured that St. Nickolas always remembered the good, and the eyes sparkle in expectancy of nice little presents. We saw their stockings one by one hung up by the mantle, and the children one by one steal off to bed full of hope and confidence that they would not be slighted by the friend of children. We saw them too, the next morning, before the curtains were raised or day had dawned, with their stockings filled, promising blessings upon old Santa's head.

In my imagination I see you tonight. Mother is sitting by the candle stand knitting at a rapid rate – Lucy is pulling at mother's sleeve, saying as rapidly as her little tongue can rattle, Ma, Ma, will Santa Claus come to night? Will he put anything in my stocking if I hand it up? Ed, is equally anxious on the subject – between hope & fear he says but little, but thinks enough to take all the chances, so he has pulled off his socks and hung them both up, and is now slipping that “first pair of suspenders” off his shoulders, so that he may doff his pants and “bid the world goodnight.” Johnny is sitting in the corner – has squeezed himself in the smallest chair in the house, has his elbows resting on his knees and his head or face resting in his hands, every now and then he rebukes the younger children with a “pshaw!

brother, Ed, aint you and Sis got no more sense that to think there is any such fellow as Santa Claus – you ought to know Ma & Pa are Santa Claus – and Pa is in Virginia and Ma hasn't got anything to give you except a switch – so go to bed. [Walt], all this time has been silent – playing wise – sitting on the opposite side of the candle stand from his mother – reading the “thrilling adventures” or “hair breadth ‘scapes” of some pirate or highway robber – but he can stand it no longer – “I wish you would hush, brother, nobody can read with an satisfaction with all this gab – you all know Santa Claus can't come tonight even if there be such a fellow – The blockade has shut him out and we needn't look for him any more till the war closes.”

Poor children! I feel sorry for you. Your little hearts are not as light and cheerful from expected gifts as they have been heretofore; but you must cheer up, remember there are thousands of little ones, just as dear to their parents, as you are to yours, that have been turned out of house & home, by the cruel war, to wander about and feed upon the charity of those who have not been so unfortunate. [Walt], was right. The blockade has interfered very naturally with the operations of Santa Claus. If it had not been for the war, I dare say “St. Nick” would have presented each one of my boys with a nice pr of new boots and my little daughter Lucy, with a nice little doll with a red dress. But it may be that I am too fast – perhaps old Santa runs

the blockade and brought you something after all. If he did, I shall rejoice to hear it; but I am satisfied he didn't do as well by you as he would if it had not been for old Lincoln and his "blockading fleet."

What I have written above is chiefly intended for the children – now, let me pay my attentions to you & things more "matter of fact." You say you haven't bought your meat yet – I could have engaged all you would want (say 1000 lbs.) of Charlie Martin when he was out here, at 20c – Get someone to see him for you and know whether he has sold yet or not. If salt is so scarce, I think there certainly will be a decline in the price of pork. Farmers can't get the salt to bacon it – they can't afford to fatten hogs and then turn them out again into the range; But whatever may be the market price, buy at least 1000 lbs., less than that will not do you and if [Mr. Stule] should bring you some from Tenn., it will only be so much the better. I am glad he paid you a visit I hope he will move down about Selma. He can do well there.

If old Denman's cow is a really good one, with a young calf, buy her – you must not go through the winter without milk for the children.

I hope [Picket] is with you by this time. If she is not write to her to come up in February, I'll be at home then, if my life is spared. Write to your Mother if the Yankees get possession of Tenn. again and she has to leave home, she knows where she will be welcome.

[top margin] Kiss the children for me – Remember me to friends, and when I get home, with what pleasure I will respond to that “warm kiss” and “long embrace.”

You say if there is no probability of my going home you want to come out to see me while you are in funds. Well, I assure you that nothing would give me greater pleasure than to have you pay me a visit. But, I declare I don't know what I could do with you if you were to come. I have one old tent, the worse for twelve month's wear – my bed is an armful of straw placed between to logs of wood to keep out the cold. I lie on two blankets, cover with one blanket, a shawl, & a woolen overspread & my overcoat & have a pair of saddle bags for my pillow – at my feet is placed another log to keep me from rolling or slipping down into my log heap fire in front of my quarters. I do manage to pull off boots and spurs of a night; but such has been our constant expectation of an alarm at night that I haven't slept with my pants off in more than a month!

Do you like the picture? But I am going to do better than this; I have bought me a stove today, and as soon as things settle down I intend to fix up a little better. But if I were ever so comfortably fixed. I would not be willing for you to expose yourself in Camp. It is no place for a lady – it is too bad for a decent man to say nothing of a woman.

Nothing but death itself can prevent me from

[top margin] Tell Mrs. G. & T. that their boys are well – Lon complains sometimes that he don't get enough to eat – George is as fat as a buck. John Francis is well; but tell Mat I am sorry for him there is no chance for a "nog" in the morning.

visiting home this winter. I intend to write in a day or two to Gov. Shorter and get him to ask the Sec. of War to order me home to attend my courts. If I cannot get a furlough in this way, what say you to my resigning? You know I am exempt from military service by virtue of my office as Solicitor but I have never claimed it, and I had nearly as soon die as do it; and the fact is, if the authorities will only allow me to go home one a year to my [courts] I never will resign if the war lasts ten years. I have no idea, however, that anyone would censure me even if I should resign. I have served eighteen months, and in that time have contributed as much energy, zeal, and nearly as much health as any man in the Army, and all this, too, when I might have remained at home under cover of my office. But what say you to the proposition as a dernier resort?

Don't give yourself any uneasiness about Aunt Anna's teacher. You and Carrie can always get a good school. The Preacher will soon frazzle out.

I am glad to hear that Henry is improving. Tell Renfro, now that he is elected a Lieut. He had better come in as soon as he can & be prepared to stand an examination on [Tactics]. They examine all newly elected officers now. The regiment is in fine health.