



Thomas Montgomery and family papers.

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My father, who is a devoted friend of the cause, is now in the hospital, and is not to go, which I should have mentioned.

(35)

St. Louis, Decr. 16<sup>th</sup> 1863.

My Dear Parents,

Yours of the 3<sup>rd</sup> inst.

I received yesterday morning, and was well pleased to hear from you. It is strange to me however, that with the present mail facilities, it takes letters so long to go from one place to another.

Sometimes we get letters from Cleveland in six days and other times it takes twice as long. For instance Ed Valbot received a letter yesterday also, which was mailed on the 8<sup>th</sup> and yours was mailed on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. I hope before this you have got most of my letters, and will credit me with them when you next write. I am sitting up to night with Mr. Hoyt, who is quite sick with inflamed bowels. I give him his powders &c. He is only sick a day or two, but I hope will soon get better.

Mr. C. P. Little is also sick with neuralgia in the head. Mr. Fitch is still in the hospital.

The other boys who are complaining are not confined to their bunks. I have good reason to be thankful to God for his many blessings to me, and one great blessing in the army is good health.

If a person is sick, unless he goes to the hospital he often lies in his bunk unattended, and always surrounded with noise & confusion, which do him no good.

I must now date my letter the 17<sup>th</sup> for it is past-midnight. I often sit up till after midnight especially when on guard. I am not on guard to night for a wonder. I have been on guard more than half the time, for a long period.

I have of late, got greatly into the habit of studying and this habit is getting prevalent among our boys. A great number are learning to read and write who could not do so before. W. Hanigan, Tolson &c. a few weeks ago, did not know their letters, and now can read tolerably well. Others are buying Arithmetics and Grammars &c. and study during all their spare time. We help each other on. Teach them Arithmetic perhaps and write copies, and they assist me in something else. For some time at first after arriving here, nothing would satisfy us, but roaming over this great city. But now we are more settled, and choose pleasure in books.

I have been reviewing Arithmetic, Geography, History Grammar, & Tactics and Army Regulations. I have also read several works as Shakespeare &c. and practise much in writing. There may be an object in all this, but I believe it is a laudable object, and does no harm anyway. I said once before that I thought of going before the Board, to be examined, and I still entertain that notion, and I guess I will not be alone in that matter, even from Company "K". There are several striving hard. When I will go I cannot say, but probably in a few weeks. I purpose sending for a permit this week.

Sergeant Worden has received the appointment of Sergt.  
Major, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Mo. Col. Regt. This increases his pay to \$21.  
and places him where he will be promoted by vacancies,  
which will undoubtedly occur. I accompanied him  
yesterday to Benton Barracks, and was introduced to  
Colonel Branson of the 1<sup>st</sup> and Col. Bailey of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mo. Col. Regt.  
I was offered a position on the non-com. Staff of the latter  
but preferred risking an examination, to going among  
strangers for so little an inducement. I believe I would  
rather be a Corporal in Co. "C", than any thing short of a  
Commission in a Negro Regt. If Worden leaves then I will be  
second on the list of Corporals, as probably Clapp will be sergeant.  
But perhaps I am only speculating on the prospects of  
the future, for I know not what a day may bring  
forth, but there is nothing like perseverance, and we  
must always be content, take things as they are presented  
to us, and hope for the best. Capt. Carter has not yet  
returned from Nashville. Tomorrow if well I will perhaps  
take a ride into the interior of this State; to Rolla.  
I go on duty. I know not yet what kind of duty, but perhaps  
as guards. We go on the Cars. It is about 130 miles from here.  
This will be my first trip from here. If I go, I will say so  
before I mail this letter. Colored Regiments are rapidly  
forming in this State, one whole regt. was formed last week.  
The 1<sup>st</sup> Iowa, Colored, Vol. Inf. Passed through here on  
Monday for the South. They looked fine, had color, music, &c.  
One Company was from Minnesota. They look well under arms,  
and I guess will fight as well as an equal number of whites.

Early Sunday morning about a dozen prisoners escaped from the Grattot St. Prison. These rebels effected their escape by means of a tunnel, which they dug from the prison to an adjoining cellar, came out through an outside trap door jumped the fence and away. Past the guard, who caught one of them. It was a very secret plan. I was on guard the same night but my relief was not then on, but after I had posted them I heard picking on the cellar wall just under one of the guards. Noise in the house caused them to desist, but we had a guard at the trap door. I heard Rev. Dr. Harris, (Asst. Secty of M. E. Miss. Society) preach last Sunday twice in Union M. E. Church. Bishop Ames was in the city, but was unable to preach, on account of ill health. They were going to establish societies in the large cities down South, but the Rivers. The weather here is changeable. Last night it snowed a little & to day it is sloppy. One day is very cold and the next warm. Some of our boys returned & some went away. C. Hess returned to day from Natchez. Miss. & G. Simpson from Indiana. I was glad to hear of you getting along so well with your work. I was sorry to hear of Mr. Jones' illness, but I hope he will be well before this. I wrote a few lines to J. M. Flowers, last week. I sent you a couple of papers yesterday. Now I trust you will receive this in good health. As it leaves me, and hope you will answer it forthwith. I am truly grateful for your last letter with its words of encouragement. How greatly they help & encourage me in the path of duty. May the bright wings of love guard us wherever we roam. The time has come when brothers must fight. And Sisters (& Mothers) must pray at home. Please remember me kindly to Mr. Jones. Flowers, Talbot, Smiths, Cheadle & all. I hope to hear a string of news from brothers next letter. Love to them & you, and with the best of wishes remain  
Your affectionate Son,  
Thomas Montgomery