



Thomas Montgomery and family papers.

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Headquarters Co. F. 65th U.S. Infy

My Dear Mother Baton Rouge La. Jan^y 16th /66.

(20)

I am happy to acknowledge the receipt to day of your kind and interesting letter of the 1st inst. - and also on the 3^d of yours of the 16th ult. in which you sent as a Christmas or New Years gift, your photograph. I was much pleased to receive it and think it is far superior to the other one I had, & thank you for sending it. Now if I had father's, I would have my album complete. I am glad to hear that you are still enjoying good health, as well as father & brothers. Lizzie and all the friends. My own health is excellent thank God. My temporal enjoyments are equal to my desires, for one situated as I am.

My spiritual enjoyments are behind what they ought to be; having limited religious privileges, but I cannot complain. I am thankful that it is as well with me as it is. I am prone to wander, but by God's help have tried to resist evil temptations & thank Him that it is no worse.

Since entering the army, I have seen the guiding hand of Providence, in all my affairs. Sometimes, while alone in my tent I feel happy, again, I am dejected & chide myself for having so often grieved the good Spirit of God, and for having served Him with such little sincerity.

I had abundant opportunity to do much worse than I did, but at the same time, I could have done better. My surroundings are worse now than they ever were, & tend to lead astray into sin & folly, dissipation. Swearing, gambling, with the whole train of vices. There is very little opposing influence. Do not think, that I engage in any of these vices. My heart is evil enough, but there is none of my passions that master me yet. My religious training, & impression of right, before entering the army, were of incalculable benefit to me, were it not for that I would have yielded to temptation long ago, but I thank God it is no worse with me.

The beautiful and impressive moral lessons, of Masonry, are of great service to me, and have a powerful influence to guide the mind aright. Masonry has also found for me many a friend already. There is a lodge in this city. I agree with you, that happiness of the real kind is oftener found in poverty, than in wealth, and that a farmers life is the freest from temptation, but you know everyone is not a farmer nor poor. I have seen many happy & pleasant times on the farm, but I have also seen more unpleasant occurrences there, than I have met with since. The truth is, we must grapple with life as we find it, whether rich or poor, in public life or secluded in the country, surrounded by temptation or otherwise. Since entering the Army, I have seen much more of vice than of virtue. My position has enabled me to observe nearly every form which vice can assume, in all the grades from loathsome poverty, to the grandeur of the wealthy. A volume would not contain all I have seen & heard of these things. These observations have not been lost on me, for they have warned me to shun these things myself. I have tried by God's help to shun all the paths of vice, & for all my success I thank Him, & not my own evil heart. God has been good, very good to me. Success & prosperity has attended me, so far since leaving home, and nothing has interrupted my happiness, but what is common to all. Without any desire to be egotistical, I would say that my conduct & abilities, have merited for me, the approbation of all my superiors. I have never been under arrest, or punished a single time, or even reprimanded for neglect of duty, which very few can say truly, and I still retain my place with credit & honor to myself, & have the respect of all. I have no desire whatever to turn my back on heaven, but mean to press forward keeping that prize in view. May God help me to be faithful unto death, that in the next world I may receive a crown of life. Pray for me, that I may be more earnest & faithful.

Dear Mother, since I wrote last, I have been in the city of New Orleans. The General Court Martial, of which I was a member, adjourned sine die, by order of Genl. Sherman & not having received my pay, I made immediate efforts to get a leave, in order to draw my pay, as I could only draw it on pay accounts while on detached service. I went down on the 11th inst. on the W. R. Carter, & remained in the city two days, I succeeded in getting pay up to the 1st inst. 6 months pay \$955, on which I paid a tax of \$32.75. I did not get my extra pay of \$10. per month for Condy Comp'y but will on the Co. muster rolls. I bought a citizen's dress suit of clothes \$75, a pair of uniform pants \$15. Boots &c, &c, I have now \$500. in bonds. Clear, having paid up every debt & expense up to the present time. My expenses now are far more than they were in Morganza, having to dress finer & we also live better. I did not lose a cent by being absent from my Regt. over 90 days in all. Besides my pay I have cleared in other ways about all the expense of my trip. I had but little spare time, while in New Orleans, but I laid it all out to good advantage. I was only one night in the city, I visited all I could of course, saw Lt. Col. Baldey of my Reg. on duty in the city, who told me, he believed we would be mustered out by March. Troops are being mustered out here all the time. I saw other friends in the city, but the greatest satisfaction to me was that of seeing all my old Company K. Lt. Krebs & my old Lt. Col. Losey, all out of the service & going home. They were all glad to see me, & came up with me on the same boat to Baton Rouge. I bid them a final farewell, & was glad to see them on their way home free men. One of them made me a present of a Masonic Pen, or badge. I visited among other Jackson Square in N.O. It is the most beautiful place I ever saw. Orange trees were there in plenty, loaded down with oranges. The prettiest flowers were in full bloom, the grass green, as also the shrubbery & trees. What do you think of that in January.

A vast business is done in that great city. The levees are lined with forests of shipping & steamboats. About 20 boats left for up the River the evening I left. I did not see St. Roberts down there as I expected.

He is still in the Freedmen's Bureau. Superintendent of Schools. I had a pleasant trip & got back safe. The river is very high again, but there is no danger of an overflow this spring at this point as it is high land. I wish I could send you some of the oranges I saw. I got 6 of the largest for 25¢. On the 7th one of my Sergeants, was detailed to go to New York, with a squad of men, with a prisoner. A very nice trip. On the 10th our Regt. was inspected by Major & Brevet Lt. Col. Nelson a Regular Army officer, formerly mustering officer at St. Paul. He was highly pleased with their appearance, and thought we equaled the 1st Regulars. We are to be inspected again to morrow by Maj. Loring. Lt. Violet of my Co., now acting Reg 2, Me., is not so fine a man as I thought he was. He is a good business man but has mean ways. I convicted him ~~that~~ before the Candy Officer, of taking a ~~Box~~ out of my desk, & then denying having it. I recovered it. He had it over ^{month}.

Your letter contained much news. Miss Talbot & Jaeger got married at last. I wish them all manner of happiness.

I suppose you have had very cold weather there. The weather here has been delightful, warm in fact. Many of the officers are looking after land to buy or rent. Hundreds of plantations can be purchased or rented cheap. I have no particular desire to stay down here among "Rebels & contraband chattel," although I believe I could make five times more money than I could at the north. I would rather spend a few years at a good school, or enter into business. I must now draw my long letter to a close, hoping you will receive it in good health. Give my best regards to the friends. Jones, Smiths, Flowers, Talbots, Keiths, &c. I hope Elizabeth is well, and that you agree together. Wm. is about the same. Nothing very bad is the matter with him I think. I send love to you all, & to you a double share & remain as ever your affectionate son. Thomas Montgomery