



Thomas Montgomery and family papers.

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Head Quarters Co. I. 15th Inf. Col. Inf.
Baton Rouge La. Feb 9th 1866.

Dear Bro. Jas. Charles.

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Once more I seat myself to write you a few lines hoping they will find you well.

I received a letter from home on the 7th inst. dated Jan'y 25th written by Father, Mother & yourself.

I was very glad to get it. It was the first for over three weeks. I was pleased to hear that all were well and doing well, and that you & Bro Alex. were going to school, to a good teacher. I hope you will improve yourselves. I wish many a time that I was 14 again, and had as good a chance as I now have.

Persons don't learn as aptly, after 25, as they do before, but I intend to do the very best I can. I had a very good start while young, but my six years on a farm, did not forward me much intellectually. I will never regret acquiring good and useful knowledge, whenever obtained. And if I get out safe, neither will I regret having entered the service of my Country.

I wish I had an opportunity to enter the Regular Army with my present position. I would gladly accept it. The Regular Army will probably be increased with a few Colored Regiments, who will be officered by the present Officers of Colored Troops, who have been such over two years.

I read considerable, but have no systematic method of studying, in fact that is out of the question. Just as I finished the foregoing, one of the Guards of the Military Prison, came running in, and said that some of the Prisoners were trying to escape. So being Officer of the day, I hurried over to the Prison (it being near midnight) and discovered that two ^{white} men had got out of their cells, and were out on top of the Prison wall about 50 feet high. All the guards were out & had range of them. I found out that they cut through the top of their cell, walked around to the top of the tier of cells, cut a hole through the slate roof and got out on the roof & were passing over the wall to another building, when discovered. They had made a Rope of chain Blanket over, 60 feet long, with which to get down. I made them get back & come down the way they went out, had them handcuffed & locked up in separate cells, under strong guard. They are charged with manslaughter & desertion. Our Reg. being the only one here, guards the camp, Penitentiary, Post Hospital, Fort, Arsenal & Levee, besides doing Patrol duty, in all about 120 Guards daily, also about as many for fatigue daily. All the Guards are in charge of the Officer of the day, who has a horse to ride to the different Posts. I come on as Officer of the day about once a week, & that is all the duty I do now, except my Regular Company duties. Col. Edgerton has returned from his sick leave, in good health, and is in command of the Regt & Post.

Act as apt,
Lieut Hutchins and me. seceded from the 160. Dr Mess,
and I set up for myself. He and me now mess together.
He is a genial friend of mine & also a brother Mason.
I attend the Masonic Lodge here regular, and have
found some good hearty friends, even among what
we would call 'secesh'. They have a fine Lodge here.
I will never be sorry for becoming a Mason. but
I have only yet commenced. In Masonry I am like Isaac
Newton on the shores of Knowledge. Masonry & Christianity
go hand in hand together. The lessons it teaches are very impressive.
The public have in the line of Amusements in this City
Circuses about once a month, concerts, theatre &c.
I seldom attend, having but little taste for such things.
Since I last wrote on the 30th ult, we had three days
of chilly, disagreeable weather, but it has cleared
up again. We have had two Regt. Inspections.
The Inspector, a Reg. Army Officer, said our guns were
the nicest he ever saw. The Reg. now numbers
about 750. Enlisted men, I have only got 63, having
lost 31 since I came down, by deaths, discharged & deserted.
I discharged over 20. one year men. There is no more
said about us getting out of the service soon.
I think the Reg. will be paid in a few days.
I attended the Mth Church South last Sabbath.
I heard a very good sermon. There is besides
a Presbyterian, Roman Catholic & several Colored
Churches in the city. They are generally
well filled, some other churches are not yet occupied.

Feb 9

You say that your Good Templars Lodge is increasing. That you and Sandy got such an office I am gratified at your success. and hope you will all be real temperance men. I have said "No" many a time when asked to drink when the custom would say "yes" but although I often felt odd & alone in resisting yet I am not sorry for it. My health continues very good thanks God. and I am enabled to do all my work alone. I have not heard nor seen any thing of St Roberts since I came back. He is in the Freedmen ^{Bureau}. I suppose you have heard of the disasters to Steamboats & life lately on the Rivers. They are frightful. The M.R. Carter, was blown up a little above Natchez & is a total wreck. Lost near 200. The Missouri was blown up on the Ohio, & the Miami on the Arkansas. All first class boats. Several others have burned or sunk. Planters find it very difficult to procure hands this season. They offer higher wages than I am afraid they can sustain through the year, unless cotton maintains its present high price. Baton Rouge is being improved considerably of late, trees set out, streets graded, & houses repaired. I am thankful to Hester & Mocha for writing, but I did not receive any papers yet. Give my best respects to all enquiring friends. Tell Elizabeth that Ann is well & improving fast. He sends howdy, Give my love to D & D & all my Parents. except the same yourself and wife & sons. Please pardon this bad writing as I am in haste to put this in the mail. Write soon & often. I believe me your Affectionate Brother

Mr J. B. Montgomery
Cleveland Mass.

Thomas Montgomery