

Camp near White Oak Church Va.
January 5th 1863

Dear Mary

Your letter of the 30th ult. came to hand yesterday; and one of the 22nd ult. came to hand today. The latter, was a little behind time, but very welcome, nevertheless, on the principle of "better late than never." I confess to forgetfulness in not mentioning Hollands safety, in my first letter after the late battle; but under such circumstances a person has so many things to think about, and generally so little time to do it all, that he cannot just bring to mind every thing he would wish. Now that there seems to be a sure way of conveying information to Mrs. J. I will bear in mind, in my letters to ~~you~~ here after to mention his name. However, he generally stands a good chance of escaping the accidents of the field; as he is Regimental Post Master, and is not required to go into battle.

I have no doubt, but there are a great many officers about Petersburg on leave now. Some officers seem particularly fortunate or favored, as far as getting home to see their friends is concerned.

but you don't see many from the 9th Regiment; unless they are wounded or crippled in some way. There is no use to apply through the regular channel here for leave of absence unless you can get a board of Surgeons to certify that a change of climate is necessary to save life, or prevent permanent disability. Most "leaves of absence" are obtained directly from Washington through the influence of Members of Congress and at the War Department.

If you should happen to get acquainted with Mrs. Holland you will find her very much of a lady; at least with the short acquaintance I had, I thought her such; and know that she enjoys that reputation amongst her friends and acquaintances. But then I have always thought the girls had a peculiar ~~habit~~ habit in finding out each others' faults and failings and after discovery, of magnifying and publishing instead of extenuating and hiding them. Perhaps it is only a notion of mine.

We are getting along about as well as could be expected in this out of the way place. It seems to me we are about forty miles from our place. There are some vague rumors about us going back to Washington, within the fortification; but as every Division in the Army has the same story afloat in relation to themselves - even the new Regiments, which have not been six months in service - I do not place much confidence in the reports.

Mr Miller, husband of late Jennie A. called to see me the other day. I learned from him that Sam was well. I also learned that they had, a day or two previous, received something like fourteen dry-goods boxes filled with good things for Christmas, and that they received marching orders the same day; and being afraid that they would not have time to leisurely enjoy their presents, they eat away, until nearly every man in the Regiment was sick.

The weather here continues quite mild and pleasant, during the day time; but rather cool and frosty at nights. Most of the men are very comfortably fixed in their little log huts; in fact, on an average, much more comfortably than they were at any time last winter. The idea that the men would willingly leave their huts to meet the enemy may exist in the minds of newspaper correspondents, but does not pervade the camps in this section of the Country.

Yesterday we got word of the late battle in the South west, and of the loss of the Monitor. I received John's note containing some post stamps for which I am much obliged. Give my love to John and family, and to all the folks at home. Expects to enquire friends.

Your Affectionate Brother
Bob

P.S. Holland is well, and wishes to be remembered,