

Near Falmouth V.A. March 12, 1863

My Dear Sister,

Your letter of last Sunday week was most welcome indeed. It seemed a long time since I had heard from you though but two weeks had elapsed since and in time I had two letters from home. I miss your kind cheery words sadly when circumstances cause you to skip one of your weekly letters. I am always glad to hear from any of you but everyone misses just what you would write and so I am not wholly satisfied unless I hear from you too.

Time passes as rapidly here as with you – weeks disappear before I make note of them, almost. The past year seems surprisingly short. A year ago day before yesterday the great army of the Potomac took up its march towards Manassas. I shall never forget the circumstances. We had been out a week along the Railroad and fell in to the leading column when it came up short of rations, worn out with marching and continuous picket duty. Nearly all day it rained, at times heavily. And we marched 20 miles in the mud and went from early morning till late at night without food and then laid down cold and wet. That night I caught the cold that led to my sickness. It is the first breaking in that uses up so many men. The 1st two or three weeks of the Manassas Campaign sent over 50 of our men to the hospital. We should laugh at the same experience now. I doubt if one of the 50 now doing duty here now would give out under it. Unless it should be some of the men who have had Typhoid Fever and have not yet fully recovered the use of their limbs. The next day I gave out on the march and had to be brought up in an ambulance. The next day we marched only to Union Mills, three miles and I kept along afoot. At Union Mills, we

stayed until the Sunday following, much of the time very stormy. Sunday morning I was so low I was put in an ambulance and started towards Fairfax, and was left by the driver at a house by the way, where I was found by Chauncey several days afterwards. I had been delirious but roused a little when he came. I shall never forget how grateful it seemed to know he was near me. For long weeks he thought I would die. I came near it and would have died had it not been for his unwavering watchfulness and care. How much I owed him and how little of the debt was I permitted to repay during his long wearisome illness. A brother could not have been more constant and unwearied than he was. I cannot make myself fully realize that he is now dead. It seems a dream too painful to contemplate.

March 15th I intended to finish and send off this letter immediately, when it was commenced. I was interrupted however and somehow have not taken up since.

We have had disagreeable weather for a no. of days. Cold and very windy. Water freezes rapidly. It looks now as though it might rain by tomorrow and I think the edge of the air is turned a little. Four or five days ago 'twas very springlike indeed. Blue birds, Robins etc. flying and chirping about us, frogs peeping etc. etc. Now the birds are all huddled up in the bushes and the frogs "have too bad a cold to sing."

Yesterday I had a very unexpected visitor-Jim Wood, "little Jim" as we used to call him, Milt's Brother. It's a long time since we had met as he left Versailles in 1851. I knew he was in the army here but could not trace him out. Yesterday morning one of the Carter boys of the 154th found him and they came over together. We had a nice time talking over old times and comparing notes. I had much to inquire about his folks and he much to learn of the Versailles people. Johnathan Wood and Wife are both quite sick.

Philander is not expected to live-ill with consumption I believe. Milt is married and lives a short distance from the old folks- is now teaching. Jim married in Princefs Anne, Maryland. Has two brothers – in – law in the rebel army. The regiment (2nd Wisconsin) to which he belonged at the time and the one to which they belong met in battle during Pope's retreat. They did not see each other however. He is now Asst. Adj't Gen'l of Meredith Brigade with the rank of Captain.

Your letter last Sunday came in this morning. I always receive your letters on Sunday. The chronicle amused me not a little and the whole letter interested me. Everything is very quiet here- the hush before the storm. The army was never in so fine condition for active service. T will be very sickly here unless we move very soon, there is so much filth and offal of every description on all sides. Dead horses and mules unburied count by the thousands within the limits of the Army and very soon there will be an awful task to bury them. Over a hundred horse carcasses were counted by a friend of mine the other day by passing around the camp of a single brigade of cavalry. They are to be found everywhere. Hooker is carelefs in enforcing sanitary measures.

I send with this letter a photograph of Captain Fuller 64th N.Y.V. I shall claim it sometimes perhaps-meanwhile please take care of it. My health is all I can expect-not good and I see very little chance of its ever getting better-Justice to myself imperatively demanded my resignation three months since. The pressure from some who don't seem to care whether I live or not so I acquire some sort of name, which will be forgotten within three years afterwards, is to remain, and remain I probably shall. That is just the way I look at it. I took nearly the same view of matters several years since when studying law

and paid in consequence what constitution and endurance I had and so my stock in trade is pretty small.

It is an easy matter to urge me to remain here when I only am to pay the penalty. Some of your letters must have gotten lost. It vexes me to think so for I hate to lose letters from home.

Yours affectionately,

J.M. Pettit

10P.M. A regular thunder storm this P.M. about 4 o'clock and an occasional rumbling still to be heard. Rained and hailed very hard the whole evening-Good Bye Jim