

Object ID: *MG0828_SeriesB_F10*

Document: *Letter to a friend from a place near Vera Cruz, Mexico*

Transcript:

Guard Tent – Camp Washington—near Vera Cruz
Midnight – Sunday March 26th 1848

Esteemed Friend,

I am writing this whilst you and yours are resting, if not slumbering – such being the difference between Civil and Military life - that whilst the Citizens of good old Columbia, are enjoying the sweets of repose, in perfect security – I, – “who claim a right to Citizenship in time of peace” – am Officer of the Guard, “for a portion of the American Army, encamped in Foreign Territory;” which duty requiring twenty four hours constant attention, in preventing surprise &c. I am barely able to snatch sufficient time to communicate my thought thus to you.

My imagination – this evening – has carried me to Old Columbia, and placed me in the Methodist Church, gazing at the beautiful and smiling damsels, there assembled and I almost [sic] fancied myself, standing on the steps, my arm extended, for the grasp of one of the beautiful creatures, but those pleasant thoughts were disturbed, by the cry of –(turn out the Guard) – which caused some confusion – but on proceeding to the spot I discovered it to be nothing more, that the stupidity of a Dutch Sentinel, who seeing a black stump in front of him, supposed it to be the [missing] whole Mexican Army – after cursing the Dutch for [missing] hour - one hour more was required for [missing] wrath, and now I am in just a [missing] I was teasing Sam Wike.

I suppose you would like to know how I am pleased with my situation – Well, you know I was delighted with soldiering, at seven dollars per month – cooking my own bean soup and Slap Jacks, and sleeping on the ground with the sky for a covering – but now, how could I help being satisfied – having in lieu of the ground - a soft pine board to sleep on (four nights out of five) a servant to do my cooking – a soldier to black my boots and saddle my horse – sixty five dollars per month and plenty of spare time – Oh, the beauties and comforts of soldiering, how I wish you could stop here and see me button'd up to the chin in my uniform sword buckled on and myself squared up to a Pork barrel (writing) with my paper on its greasy head, this midnight Epistle to

I had to stop writing again, on account of that same confounded stupid good for nothing dutchman – out of my whole guard (thirty in number) I have had no trouble except with him and if he annoys me again tonight I'll swing him up by the thumbs until morning.

P.S. My passion prevented me from filling this up

Colonel Loomis' command two thousand men – our Detachment included – had orders to march on Saturday morning, but did not get off; the time now set, the first of April – I hope we will have no more delays, for I am anxious to reach the City of Mexico, previous to the treaty taking effect – as the general opinion here, is to the effect that our



forces evacuate the City of Mexico on the seventh of May 1848 – yet my opinion is that peace is farther off, than our wise heads – at Washington hope or think for – .

Oranges, pineapples, etc are in abundance but the mosquitoes, fleas, sand flies and other insects far more numerous than the good things of life. The sun shines so hot – as to have scorched the skin off my nose – blame the luck my sword handle caught in the hoop of the barrel upsetting it and spilling my ink - I am almost tempted to tear this letter to atoms but no – I will send it to you as evidence of the perplexities of midnight letter writing – and if kneeling to, and writing on the head of a Pork barrel, is not sufficient apology for all blunders, I say simply, I have none others to offer at present – but my next letter shall be written by daylight.

Give [missing: my [?]] Love to all the girls, and tell them, I am [missing: waiting for the [?]] letters they promised me. [missing] at present

Thomas Welsh

Analysis: Wiggin

This playful latter, to an unidentified recipient, captures many of the emotions of a soldier in the field—wistful thoughts of home, youthful fantasy, news and hopes from the front, and the loneliness of waiting for things to happen, without much news from home. He is clearly enjoying the life of a soldier. His 4-5 months of recuperation back in Columbia have reconnected him with old friends. He gives no hint of continuing problems with his leg, which within about 5 weeks will get him sent home again on medical leave.

Scope and Content:

Handwritten letter from Thomas Welsh to an esteemed friend describes the challenges of army life as well as "the beauties and comforts of soldiering;" topics include food, weather, waiting for the peace treaty to take effect, and thoughts of home.

