

Welsh, Peter. Irish Green and Union Blue: The Civil War Letters of Peter Welsh. Edited by Lawrence Frederick Kohl. New York: Fordham University Press, 1986.

28th Massachusetts Infantry

A. 1862 “We Advanced Proudly Despite It All”

1. Sept. 14
  - a. Hard marching to join regiment
  - b. Proud that he could keep up with anyone and better than most
  - c. Wishes he could be with her and promises he is not drinking now because there is no liquor around
  - d. Relief money, furniture
  - e. They are after Stonewall Jackson now
2. September 21—worries about her receiving his previous letter
3. October 11, 1862
  - a. Glad to receive her letter because he was afraid she was sick
  - b. Says her situation is much better than others and will send his pay as soon as he gets it
  - c. Regrets being separated from her and having gone to Boston at all
  - d. Is eat well, she should not worry about him
4. October 19
  - a. Tries to get his wife to cheer up
  - b. Reassures her that he is hearty and healthy and strong
  - c. Food, water, bowels
  - d. New colonel so now expect better order and discipline in the regiment
  - e. Cannot muster over 300 men, men in hospitals wounded
5. October 23, 1862
  - a. Happy to get each letter from her
  - b. Has a colonel from the regular army and expects a great deal of drilling
  - c. Have a mixed body of men and regiment has not had competent officers
  - d. Irishmen are good soldiers but they must have strict officers
  - e. Many hang back when there is fighting to be done
  - f. If all officers and men did their duty, the war would be long over
  - g. One man who came out with him killed at Antietam and another camp mate loss his right arm
  - h. Has been lucky to have a tent mate now who is clean and neat
6. November 4, 1862
  - a. Received New York and Boston Pilot
  - b. Quartermaster duties--hands out food and is exempt from guard duty
  - c. Hopes she is well and in good spirits--she is hardly ever in good spirits
7. November 23, 1862
  - a. Did not have time to write--tells her how to address letter--will write a long letter when he hears from her
  - b. Hard marches
  - c. Grows healthier every day and expects to have money to send
8. November 30, 1862
  - a. Has not heard from her

- b. Mentions Meagher and a lieutenant's pay
- 9. December 4, 1862
  - a. Still concerned about not receiving letters and received only one Boston Pilot
  - b. Worries about her bad health and troubled mind
  - c. Doubtful there will be any fighting here this winter
  - d. Three priests in the brigade so many opportunities to attend mass
- 10. December 8
  - a. No letters received since October 18
  - b. Urges her to make her mind easier
  - c. Not likely to have a battle and are building winter quarters
  - d. Cold but keep good fires and stay warm
  - e. Complains of high tobacco prices
  - f. He will be handy cooking when he gets home
- 11. December 18, 1862
  - a. Fredericksburg—brigade so small it is not fit to go into action
  - b. Would have written soon but had no paper or envelopes
- 12. December 25, 1862
  - a. Working on winter quarters—delay in writing
  - b. Mass in tent—has not gotten to confession yet
  - c. She might send a box but it might get to him, p. 41
  - d. Notes advantages of officers and how officers get their food, p. 41
  - e. Rumors of Meagher going home to recruit or brigade going to Washington
  - f. Does not need liquor like he used—stronger now than when he worked indoors
  - g. Can eat most anything now—will not be so picky when he gets home
  - h. Slept on boards the night before the battle and blankets covered with frost by morning
  - i. Confederates shelled them in streets as they waited to go into battle
  - j. Tells of Fredericksburg and hottest fire of the war, casualties, p. 43
- 13. December 30, 1862
  - a. Denies account of a soldier about men freezing to death
  - b. Denies there are men without pants
  - c. Food and his duties as commissary sergeant, p. 45
  - d. Laying on arms at Fredericksburg, 45-46
  - e. Tells of difficulty of withdrawing from the front and getting the wounded
  - f. Tells of being among the wounded, pp. 46-47
  - g. Don't send a box but could send a small article by mail
- B. 1863 "Is This Not Worth Fighting For?"—not as much as fighting as in 1862 and Welsh becomes a color bearer
  - 1. January 4, 1863
    - a. Sunday duties, doctor's call
    - b. Picket duty, fatigue duty [various camp duties], battalion drill
    - c. Sleeps in cookhouse with plenty of candlelight
    - d. Better to have a smokey chimney or a scolding wife
    - e. Notes that he misses his wife very much
    - f. Some lazy no good soldiers, describes how to be a good soldier, p. 52
    - g. Praises colonel even though he is a man of discipline

- h. Don't think McClellan would have done what Burnside attempted to do
  - i. Criticizes Burnside—only part of the plan that was well executed was the river crossing and retreat.
2. January 7, 1863
    - a. Tells his wife once again to be of good cheer
    - b. Don't know where they are going and won't know until commanders give the word
    - c. Newspapers expensive, p. 55
    - d. Describes scene where he is writing, p. 55
    - e. Soup and cooking, 56
    - f. Describes some of the food, 56
  3. January 14, 1863
    - a. Hard to keep clear of lice
    - b. Clothing would be lost quickly on a march, p. 57
  4. January 23, 1863
    - a. Was paid
    - b. Had a "jollification" and he spent some of his money, p. 59
    - c. Waited in camp and did participate in mud march
  5. January 27, 1863
    - a. Sent money home with chaplain and regiment also donated for chaplain's vestments
    - b. Had some fun (unspecified) right after they were paid
    - c. Army stuck for the present because the roads are so bad
  6. Fragment ca. February 1863
    - a. Governor of Mass. Authorizing raising of black regiments--strong feeling against blacks here
    - b. Thinks that some other excuse other than slavery might have begun the war, p. 62
    - c. Washington warned against foreign intrigue and harlot England
    - d. England wants to divide this country rather than end slavery
  7. February 3, 1863
    - a. Chaplain sending home money
    - b. Explains why he has to be away from home, 64
    - c. Defines the stakes of the war, pp. 64-65
    - d. Explains his spree and the pain and remorse, pp. 64-65
    - e. Illicit rebellion by St. Paul's standard--refers to Archbishop Hughes
    - f. Slavery and emancipation, p. 66
    - g. Notes how this has been a great land of opportunity for the poor of Ireland
    - h. No monarchs and aristocrats here
    - i. Religion and political duty toward our fellow man, p. 67
  8. February 8, 1863
    - a. Hopes her health is better and suggests she go to a doctor
    - b. Gained 15 pounds in a year
    - c. Older men who should never have been in the service being discharged
    - d. Is disgusted with management of war, fraud and trickery, party influence
    - e. Jealousy between generals

- f. Change inevitable in this kind of government--leaders today will not be the leaders tomorrow
  - g. Has faith in people despite government and worship of blacks
  - h. Judgment of God in war, political fraud and swindling
  - i. Notes lack of religious training in public school--a reference to school controversies
9. February 15, 1863
    - a. Does not fear because God can protect us from all dangers
    - b. Our days numbered and all determined by God
  10. February 22, 1863
- A. 1863
1. May 7, 1863
    - a. Chancellorsville another grand skedaddle after Hooker's left was broken
    - b. Had some hot fighting bring a battery off the field
    - c. Our part of the line was strong and could held out indefinitely
    - d. But broke part of the line where the Sixth Corps was that forced retreat
    - e. Had to retreat through mud to the ford—little food
    - f. Complains of cowardice of Howard's eleventh corps
    - g. Color sgt is most honorable position an enlisted man can have—describes his pay, p. 91
  2. May 10, 1863
    - a. Glad her health is better and he is in excellent health
    - b. Hooker wise in providing that our quarters were not destroyed when we moved and he issued extra rations to the troops after the battle
    - c. Hooker takes care of welfare of the army
  3. May 13, 1863
    - a. Furloughs hard to come by
    - b. Colonel has not promoted enlisted men out of this regiment to be officers but instead has brought in men for promotion for other regiments—a mean act
    - c. Colonel has done so to keep size up so he could keep his position as colonel of a regiment
    - d. Some officers protested this and were court martialed
    - e. We cheered officers when they returned and that made the colonel mad; several officers have now resigned
  4. May 27, 1863
    - a. Has not had much time to write
    - b. Has fixed a fine shanty
    - c. Guarding railroads and speculates whether capture of Vicksburg would change their situation
  5. June 1, 1863
    - a. Letter addressed to his wife's father living in Ireland
    - b. Feels he has to explain why he is in the army
    - c. Knows how people in Ireland have great contempt for anyone who would enlisted in the British army
    - d. But here things are different and we have a free government
    - e. Thousands of Irish have come here seeking refuge from tyranny and persecution

- f. Irish helped free America from English tyranny
  - g. Thousands of Irishmen have died in this war so far and we should say they have not died in vain
  - h. America an asylum for oppressed of every nation
  - i. Notes that agitation that caused this war was done by native born citizens, p. 101
  - j. Foreign born cannot afford to stand aloof and let rebels destroy this country
  - k. Freedom for Ireland must come from America
  - l. Notes the many from Ireland rescued from misery by the United States
  - m. Notes especially how daughters of Ireland have found opportunity here
  - n. We striking a blow at England because England hates this country
  - o. Notes slavery agitation originated in England
  - p. This war is a school of instruction for those who want to strike a low for liberty against England
  - q. Proud to carry green flag on last St. Patrick's day
  - r. Notes distressed of his poor wife and she worries too much
6. June 18, 1863
    - a. No time to write
    - b. Has been on picket reserve
  7. July 6, 1863
    - a. Came out of terrible battle of Gettysburg unhurt
  8. July 17, 1863
    - a. Picket Rappahannock on June 13 in a severe thunderstorm
    - b. Describes various marches
    - c. March 32 miles in one day, p. 108-9
    - d. Many men fell out along the way
    - e. Fought around base of Little Round Top
    - f. Little left of the Irish brigade, p. 109
    - g. Third day rebel charge and Lee's army got badly whipped
    - h. Hates to hear news of New York rioters—rioters are agents of Jeff Davis who should be hung like dogs
  9. July 22, 1863
    - a. Describes various marches and rains
    - b. False reports that they had lost at Gettysburg, 112-13
    - c. Witnessed army driving Lee's right three miles on the final day of the battle
    - d. Confederates left their dead and wounded on the field
    - e. Lee's worst defeat
    - f. Even disaffected will now have to admit Union accomplishments—Vicksburg
    - g. Ironic to have riots as rebellion is being defeated—again refers to Jefferson Davis's agents
    - h. Mob acting under false assumptions—defends fairness of conscription
    - i. Thinks a good conscription will show Union determination
    - j. Concerned that her letters show great worry and she should be more at peace with God
    - k. Is healthy and a different man now
  10. August 2, 1863

- a. Irregular mail
  - b. Does expect fighting a while
  - c. Changes in the army and drafted men will be brought out
  - d. Irish too easily led into things like the New York draft riots
11. August 10, 1863
- a. Given her poor health, it would be good for her to board out of the city for awhile
  - b. No battle anytime soon; will remain here until conscripts come in
  - c. Send a box by express, tobacco
  - d. Does not want anything he might write to encourage her brother to enlist
12. August 21, 1863
- a. Got paid, will send her \$20
  - b. Thinks if Charleston is captured war might come to an end soon
  - c. Expects conscripts here soon
13. August 28, 1863
- a. Box came safely
  - b. Provost marshal searches boxes for liquor
  - c. Lists items in box that arrived safely, p. 121
  - d. Many conscripts here who came out as substitutes
14. September 9, 1863
- a. Feels very homesick and lonesome on account of her bad health
15. September 19, 1863
- a. Our corps support cavalry who do all the fighting
  - b. Explains why he did not send more money home, p. 124
  - c. He does not draw sergeant's pay yet
  - d. Problems with officers and he will not be reduced to the ranks, p. 125
16. September 25, 1863
- a. Tells of pay again and what money he will send her
  - b. Does not think generals intended to attack the enemy in our front
  - c. Movements here depend on Rosecrans and Bragg, p. 126
17. October 7, 1863
- a. Will try to get a furlough when they get into winter quarters
  - b. Sutlers do not get to sell liquor here, p. 128
  - c. Woman sutler recently sold watered down liquor
  - d. Have a priest continually with him
18. October 19, 1863
- a. Impossible for him to get a furlough
19. November 2, 1863
- a. They will not keep three-year men longer than their term of enlistment
  - b. Thinks a trip to Ireland might be good for her and cheer her up
  - c. Had diarrhea and a bad cold but is will again
20. November 13, 1863
- a. Skirmishing at Kelley's ford but our corps was not engaged
  - b. False rumor of Meagher taking command of the brigade again
21. November 25, 1863
- a. She wants him to get promoted to be an officer so he could resign, p. 135
  - b. Has no friends from home in regiment so harder to get promoted

22. December 18, 1863
  - a. Cannot get a furlough yet
  - b. Describes terms of reenlistment
23. December 31, 1863
  - a. Order that no furloughs will be granted
  - b. Order of no furloughs unless  $\frac{3}{4}$  reenlist
  - c. Too many substitutes and not enough men to reenlist
  - d. In debt for clothing so will not much pay right now
  - e. Lost a pair of gloves and wants her to send him gloves
- A. 1864 "We Licked Saucepans Out of Them"
  1. Reenlisted and finally got his furlough--at home 35 days
  2. January 12, 1864
    - a. Hard to write with an inflamed thumb
    - b. Discourages her from coming out to see him
    - c. Would have to travel miles from the railroad through mud and slush
    - d. Barren country, no civilization
  3. January 23, 1864
    - a. Is getting better
    - b. Cannot send money home through father Corby
  4. January 29, 1864
    - a. Got box from her but all the liquor was gone
  5. February 1, 1864
    - a. Cannot get a furlough just on his sore hand
    - b. Like to be part of a cavalry outfit--no marching and little fighting
  6. February 13, 1864
    - a. On reconnaissance to the Rapidan
    - b. Will be home in a week or ten days
  7. April 14, 1864
    - a. Good health--can grind hard tack and anything that comes his way, 150
    - b. Sending \$60 by Father Corby
    - c. No truth to reports of army moving
    - d. Colonel sending strange officers to the regiment
  8. April 25, 1864
    - a. Was home 35 days on furlough
    - b. Anyone who is sober and pays attention to business can do well in the U.S.
  9. April 29, 1864
    - a. She has suffered with her teeth
    - b. Tells brother in law coming to America to shun alcohol and company keeping, 155
  10. May 15, 1864 wounded slightly at Spotsylvania
    - a. 8 days of constant fight before he got hit
    - b. Writes from a Washington hospital
    - c. Died from the wounded, pp. 157