
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. Chancellororsville 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 ands 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 ¾ 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