

Elmira March 4, 1864

Dear Mother,

I was somewhat surprised on receiving your letter to learn that you were not at the Falls, and I presume it is just as well that you did not go there. You would have had more liberty there and more room to move around but after all you would have missed your old neighbors and our family is not very large now and perhaps you will have room enough even in a small house. You speak of selling the stove and pipe. I think it advisable as you do not need it where you are, but be sure and get your pay for it in advance if you think there is any danger of his not paying.

Do you hire the house of Townsley or Weymouth, and do you have any garden spot with it. How much money is there in my bank now? We shall get our pay in a few days and, I am not yet sure whether I shall send it home or not. If we continue here at Elmira during the remainder of our time, I shall not visit you till I get home for good, but should we be obliged to leave I may be home again.

Affairs are progressing about usual at Elmira. We had a row among the soldiers a few days since which resulted in the death of two of them and the injury of several more, one in particular having his arm shot through, requiring amputation. Whiskey was at the bottom of it. The men killed belonged to the 5<sup>th</sup> Mich. Cavalry, detained here for want of transportation while returning from the field. They got on a spree, both officers and men, and cleaned out one hotel entirely. The 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Regts Invalid Corps were called out to stop them and in the fray the men were killed and wounded as above stated. During the absence of the Invalid Corps from our barracks, the volunteers rallied on the Sutler, thinking as there were no guards present they could easily clean him out. On discovering this several of us went to his assistance, and with clubs and revolvers kept the crowd at bay till we got more help from the cook house, and got some guards, after which we proceeded to clear the room in military style, double quick, some of them going out much quicker than they came in and in quite a different manner. These raids on the Sutler are of quite common occurrence in the army and excite no surprise among soldiers. Some time ago they tried it here and failed but met with better success when about an hour after they made a rush on the cook house, and cleaned it out entirely. Carrying off everything that was eatable, but I am wandering from my starting point and will say in regard to the officers of Michigan Regt. that several of them are under arrest, and will undoubtedly be severely dealt with, as it is regarded as a heinous offence for an officer to engage in any disturbance whatever.

Last night as two young boys were playing with a revolver it was accidentally discharged and the youngest one shot through the head. I was close at hand, and stepped in to see what had happened, We procured a light and found the ball had entered the brain just above the ear. The family were wild Irishmen and their grief was excessive. The boy that had shot him (they were brothers) was crying as loud as he could because he had killed his brother, the father was raving and swearing, threatening to kill him for doing it, while the mother was going through with an

Irish wail that could have been heard a mile. The only sensible one in the family was the boy, not dead, but stupefied breathing regularly, pulse strong and varying not a single beat from its usual throb, whether he lived or died I am not able to say as a surgeon had not arrived when I left to ascertain how far the ball had penetrated the brain. I assure you that notwithstanding the solemnity of the occasion I had to laugh in spite of myself at the expression of the father and we had to send the boy away to the neighbors to prevent the old fellow from wreaking his vengeance upon him for accidentally shooting his brother. He could not be made to realize that the agony of the live brother far exceeded that of the other, and that the fact of harming his own brother was a mental torture far more terrible than any he could inflict, but I have detained you too long already with my chatter of accidents and wishing no longer to trespass on your time and patience will close by bidding you.

Good day,

John