

Barracks N0 3
Elmira Feb. 5 1864

Dear Mother,

Yours of the 31st was received last night, glad to hear you were well etc. It is to be regretted that your pleasant dream of my arrival in De Kalb on a certain Saturday were never destined to be realized especially when we consider the trouble you were at to receive me, if I should come. I feel it myself to, for I entertain feelings of great respect for baked spare ribs and am always exceedingly glad to fall in with such old acquaintances, I assure you I love it none the less for having been deprived of it for a long period of time, nevertheless in this instance your loss was your gain, for if I had appeared in your midst both spareribs and fried cakes would have disappeared from your table with marvelous rapidity, never again to return.

I am sorry to hear that you expect to be obliged to leave your present residence so soon, and consulting my own interests am selfish enough to wish that the contemplated sale will not take place, if it does however we must grin and bear it and console ourselves with the reflection that "a setting hen never gets fat." The advice of a son to his mother to induce her to go west in her old age. If obliged to leave do the best you can, and remember that it might be much worse. If ever bearing in mind

if in coffins

"Every tear drives a nail, beyond doubt

Every merry grin will surely draw one out"

What will Mr. Danton do if he has to leave, and where will he go, he seems to be much afflicted at present. I hope he will soon recover his usual health and strength for of a truth it is no agreeable to be on the sick list.

I was surprised to learn of the death of Frank Anderson, you wrote me she was failing but I hardly expected to hear so soon that she had changed worlds, nothing very surprising however when we consider how very slight a cause is sufficient to derange the delicate mechanism of this mortal lady and cause the weary wheels of life to cease their work. Only the common lot of all mankind and the time will some time come when we must also die; sooner or later we too, must tread that unseen path and a few years should not make much difference with us. "It matters not how long we live, but how."

Affairs in Elmira change not, to amount to anything, the great pressure of business is gradually subsiding as no volunteers are allowed to be sent here until there is more room for them. I am at present employed in the office of the Quartermaster and have rather more leisure than when in charge of a Company. The mud has dried up and frozen down and sidewalks having been laid down through camp we are once more enabled to rejoice in good sound footing.

We have the usual number of Churches here, among which is the Congregationalist, having for its Pastor no less a man than the Rv. Beecher, a half brother to Henry Ward Beecher. I generally manage to attend forenoon services in his church and I hope with profit to myself. It would do you good to hear him. He is

a talented man and like all the Beecher family liberal and generous in his views and full of love and sympathy for mankind. It seems to me sometimes that he understands the meaning of the Bible better than any man I ever heard. He is always bringing up something new and worthy of our attention. One can live on his sermons a whole week after they are preached. And his views of Christ, his character, his works on earth and the meaning of his words and teachings are the most interesting that I have ever listened to. Prayer meetings are also held at the different churches during the week but in no case is service held in the afternoon of Sunday for fear, I suppose of exhausting the literary abilities of the several parsons who are expected to edify the good people of Elmira for "two years unless sooner discharged."

The people of this goodly town, like to amuse themselves by skating and little boys and smaller girls can be seen scattered over the little puddles very earnestly engaged in this exciting pursuit while the older ones both male and female, "most do congregate" on sundry skating parks where one can skate himself to death if he likes, in a single evening for the small sum of 50 cents or if pleased to be more calm and leisurely about it can purchase a season ticket for five dollars and slide whenever nature gives them wherewithal to slide upon.

And now wasting a whole sheet of paper of the value of one cent or upward, in the attempt to answer your letter, I will close by wishing you all

Good night

John