

Headquarters Army of the Potomac

May 11, 1862

Dear Friends, [Mrs Mary Whipple Hurlbut]

Yours of the 27th April and also the Republican [St Lawrence Republican, newspaper published at Ogdensburg, NY] with the letter enclosed has just come to hand and of course was not very sorry to hear from old De Kalb and the inhabitants thereof. It is Sunday down here and for a wonder we are not on duty. But McClellan will not march his men on the Sabbath unless in case of urgent necessity. And so today we rest and have been enabled to get our mail. The mail goes out at 4 PM today and we may not have another chance to send a letter out in a week, and your letters reach me very irregularly indeed. There are several of your letters that I have not received and you undoubtedly have not received all I have written.

“On To Richmond” is the cry and the whole gigantic army is pressing on to deal the deathblow to this accursed rebellion. McClellan is with us to lead us on. McDowell is sweeping down on the other side and terrible is the vengeance that will soon overtake the doomed wretches.

You at the North cannot have the feelings that we do here, as we toil along beneath our heavy loads exposed to the rays of burning sun, half suffocated by the dust, the water hot & muddy. Curses loud and deep are vented against those that are the cause of all this suffering and many a threat is made that the Sesesh shall pay dearly for it if they come within our reach, and in fact they suffer more than we, for their country is desolate. We are now marching through a beautiful country, rolling land and timbered like our northern country, with fields, grasses, and orchards. Looking more like home than any we have yet passed and such splendid wheat fields as I never before saw. Standing up as high as my arms and green and luxuriant beyond all description. And yet we camp in these same fields. All army horses eat what they like of it and droves of beef cattle for the army tramp it under foot after eating what they want. Cattle, sheep, hens, corn and in fact anything we want we take. Most of the males have left and in some cases all but the “niggers”.

I remember hearing mother tell of the march of General Izzard's army in 1812, of 5,000 men and how they strung along all day and have often thought it must have been a great sight. But compare that with the Army of the Potomac: 60,000 have gone on ahead of us and 125,000 more of us are following on with all our baggage & provisions, mile after mile of solid columns, all marching on to Richmond. Well may the Sesech tremble as we advance for they know that their doom is sealed.

They left here on “double quick”, in many cases leaving their wagons & buggies sticking in the mud & riding off on their horses as our advance guard approached.

My health is very good, indeed and I stand the marching as well as the best of them. I wish I could write more but we must clean our guns and then dress parade and then though it will be late for the mail. No pay yet, but we have all we want to eat and more such as it is.

Write Often,

Yours John