

Beginning of the Civil War

Sabbath, April 21, 1861

Dear Father:

Yesterday and today have been very exciting and solemn days to Potsdam. Indeed for several days our village has been full of excitement, watching the mails and twice a day receiving telegrams about the awful, unprovoked war which is upon us. Yesterday we had a gathering of citizens to see what we could do to assist our beloved country in her trouble and prevent the overthrow of those blessed privileges which were bought by the blood of our forefathers—which blessings were civil and religious liberty, free speech, free press and, what no other nation ever fully enjoyed, the right to choose our rulers or law-givers by our own voice through the ballot-box.

The love of our country was shown by some more substantial evidence than mere words. It was shown by actual sacrifice. Forty-nine young men, some of them the pride of our village, came forward and enlisted for actual and immediate service. Thirty-five hundred dollars were pledged to the support of the families of those who would thus fight for their country. Many an old man as well as the young bowed themselves in tears of sorrowful mourning for their country. There was no fictitious delusion. All was solemn, stern reality. All realized what they were doing.

During the day the streets were thronged with people, all eager to hear and tell the awful news. There is but one mind. Democrats are anxious for the success and maintenance of the government as well as republicans. Party is swallowed up by country. This is as it should be. Today has been a solemn day in its stillness. As the minister prays in choked voice for this once happy land and for those who are going from our midst, stout hearts are melted in tears and those who never prayed before were moved to prayer. A union prayer for our country was held in the Methodist Church. The house was crowded. It was a solemn meeting, I assure you. Many of the volunteers are pious professors of religion....

Wednesday, April 24, 1861

I was at the cars yesterday, hoping to see you there. Mrs. Herrick came and said we might look for you today. Hence, I was again at the cars today. We expect to be keeping house in June. If the roads are very bad so that you cannot come next week, perhaps it will be more pleasant to visit us in our new home and see how we will be situated. Do as you may think for your pleasure. We will be exceedingly glad to see you at any time.

The military excitement is still very high here. Nearly two companies have enlisted. One of the companies is to leave here the first of next week. Parents, wives, brothers and sisters will weep at their departure but all will bid them God-speed and follow them with their prayers and blessings. Five thousand dollars has been raised in this town alone for the support of their families.

Seventy persons constitute a company. This county will try to raise a whole regiment. Dr. Sherman will be their surgeon.

I am sorry that Frank cannot forget party and stand up for his country. He is so mad that I fear he would be willing to destroy the Union to injure the Republican Party.

His last week's paper was filled with weak, disgraceful, epithets and malicious, revengeful slang which will bring upon him the odium of all respectable citizens. An office issuing such a sheet should not stand here one day! Why does he not stand up for the Union first and Party next? He could do that and be respected!

United States flags (nice ones) float from a dozen and a half hotels, stores and housetops. A pole is to be raised with a flag costing eighty dollars.

Each company raised here will be presented with a beautiful silk banner.

We are well. Hope to see you next week.

Carroll

Potsdam, Oct. 14, 1861

Dear Father:

There is no prospect of my going to the war.

The Captain and the men wish me to go but Col. Sandford says he promised Dr. Hewitt (the old doctor) that if he would assist him in getting up the regiment, he would nominate him for surgeon. The Doctor has done so and the governor usually appoints the one recommended by the colonel. Probably Doctor Hewitt will be the man. It does not trouble me for it would cost me some sorrow to leave Lottie and my pleasant little home, also to leave my practice here. Yet if they wished me to go, I should be glad to try a military life.

This is beginning to look like a military center. Drilling of men is continually going on. New recruits are coming in. Everything is assuming a military air.

Our band will leave for the 16th regiment next Thursday. Money is becoming more plenty.

In haste,

Carroll

Camp Union, Potsdam, Oct. 27th, 1861

Dear Father,

You see by the above that I am in the military service. The commission of surgeon cannot be given until the regiment is full, hence I now have the assistant-surgeon commission with the understanding with the Surgeon at Albany that I am to receive the Surgeon's commission when the regiment is full. I have been to Albany twice within ten days, once to be examined and once to receive my commission.

The pay of Assistant-Surgeon amounts to about \$118 per month; that of Surgeon is \$187 per month including everything, even horse rations.

I got the appointment by a petition signed by the officers of the regiment to the Surgeon-General at Albany (S. Oakley Vanderpool).

The Colonel did not oppose me but he gave Dr. Hewitt his influence. We have had quite a tussle. The appointment was telegraphed to the officers by a friend of mine. The officers went in order to the depot at twelve o'clock at night to meet and congratulate me. But I came by way of Malone and did not get home until Saturday noon. Saturday evening they came to my house. One of the captains made a congratulating and welcoming speech, which I responded to, after which I provided coffee etc. with apples.

I had an intimation secretly of their visit and, of course, though perhaps they did not know it, we were ready for them with speech and bread.

The men seemed rejoiced at my appointment.

I have not colored the above. You can imagine better than I can tell you what my feelings were upon receiving the above demonstration.

I thank God that he has given me so many friends. All Potsdam seems rejoiced at my success. The regiment will not leave here until Fall, probably not before January.

I am now examining nearly five hundred men. I wish I could get a few volunteers from Franklin County. It would give me influence.

Dr. Hewitt will yet make a desperate effort to get the appointment.

I attend to my best out-patients yet.

Carroll

Camp Union, Potsdam, Nov. 30th, 1861

Dear Father,

It is now six weeks since I entered this regiment. The second night after I commenced my services here about 200 were attacked with profuse diarrhea. "Of course the new doctor put physic into the hash and all were swearing mad! They were all willing to take medicine but they did not want it put into their victuals." But as I had not been into the cook-room, all thought that Dr. Hewitt put the medicine into the food out of revenge. The real cause was that they eat about 200 loaves of new bread just from the oven in one meal. They have had no new bread since.

For about ten days I had about ten to fifteen to prescribe for because of change of diet. Four Dover powders, one every six hours usually cured. A dose of castor oil and then the Dover powder was sure to cure. During the next two weeks about as many were troubled with the hard colds and constipation. A dose of Epsom salts followed by one or two Dover powders cured. Now the complaint is hard cold with symptoms of fever and sore throat. An emetic and a few Dover powders cures cases in two days. Have had two cases of pneumonia, one congestion of the brain, one fractured rib. Amputated one finger which was shot to pieces by the discharge of a gun. One dislocation of the scapular end of the clavicle. One case of Orchitis. And the worst of all, one case of gonorrhoea ophthalmia. The young man, a captain of a company from Gouverneur, came into the hospital two weeks ago with a very sore eye with something in it. I found a small cinder burnt into the cornea which I picked out assuring him that he would be better on the morrow. The next day he was led to the hospital nearly blind. I mistrusted the cause the eye discharged so freely and looked so much swollen. He owned up. I bled, gave calomel and antimony very freely, scarified the conjunctive very freely, used washes of nitrate of silver, sugar of lead and alum. Dr. McChesney was in twice to see them. The man came into the hospital two weeks ago last Friday. He is now totally blind in both eyes. He is a smart active young man rendered unhappy and useless for life.

WE have from two to six sick in the hospital all the time. But none very sick, besides from 15 to 20 out patients every day who come to the hospital at 9 o'clock A.M. and 2 P.M. to be prescribed for. Morning, noon and evening, I attend to my village patients. From 9 to 12 and 2 to 5, I am at the hospital, attending the sick and examining men. We now number about 750 men. Probably the regiment will be organized in two weeks when the surgeon will be appointed. Dr. Hewitt is bringing to his aid all the

political influence possible. He is an intimate friend of Dr. Sherman's, Dart is a partner of Hewitt's son-in-law. The Colonel is pledged to him. On the other hand, a petition, signed by every captain and lieutenant save one, for my appointment was sent to the Governor some time since. A very thorough, determined protest against Hewitt's appointment, signed by the same officers will next Monday, Dec. 3d, be sent to the Governor, and the Colonel and a copy will also be sent to the doctor himself. Major Patrick, the inspector-general of the state, is my friend and will do all he can for me. Three of the most influential captains have been appointed by the captains as a committee to visit the Governor and the Surgeon-General this week and lay the case before them. The regiment are determined that Hewitt shall not go as surgeon. How will it be?

Last Wednesday night, Dr. McChesney sent for me to help set a dislocated shoulder. They had already sent for me before they sent for him but I had been up two nights and sent them for someone else. They got Dr. MCD. They fastened the man to the door-latch and had several men pull upon him but without success. I found just such a case as that of Henry Fuller's. The head of the humerus rested forward under the pectoral muscles. I showed the doctor my apparatus—the same as yours. I took it with me and told Charlotte when I left the house that I would set the arm before I came back. The patient went to bed while I was putting it on. When all was ready, I called the doctor. He rolled the elbow, I managed the shoulder with my hands with a towel around the shoulder and my neck from which I drew back the head of the bone powerfully. In fifteen minutes the bone was in its place. The case has done me a great deal of good. It goes that Dr. McChesney could not set it and Dr. Bates set it in fifteen minutes. We are well. Write soon.

Carroll

I have written this letter in great haste. Hence the poor writing. I am always busy. Besides all my other duties, I have to make a report of medicines, etc. and also of all persons examined every week to the Surgeon-General. Also report every name to the Major-General. Also vaccinate every man in the regiment, and report how many had been previously vaccinated and how many had not; how many it worked on who had been vaccinated, how many on whom who had not been vaccinated.

Carroll

Camp Union, Potsdam, Dec. 14th, 1861

Dear Father,

I am much obliged for the Gazette which you sent me. Louisa writes well but I am sorry that the paper has not been for the Union.

It is very healthy here now. I have had hardly a call for a week – out of camp. The health in camp is exceedingly good. There are but four or five on the sick list and those are not much sick. Cold and sore throat are the chief troubles now.

I have been in Camp seven weeks. Probably one week more will finish my career in the army.....

Potsdam, March 29, 1862

My dear Father:

After five months incessant labor, I am just beginning to breathe once more. Two months and a half I was in camp examining men, writing records, prescribing for the sick in camp and out of camp; for I tried to keep all the outside practice that I possibly could. Since that time I have been continually on the go from early morning until late at night insomuch that I have read neither medicine nor political enough to keep the run of the War.

I like to be very busy but this winter I have been crowded beyond my strength. I have just learned that I am neither very stout nor very lazy. Sheridan once wrote words to you from Maine that "he hoped I was good enough to learn for I was too lazy to work."

This has been a profitable winter for me. The prevailing disease has been measles. I never knew any disease to make such a thorough sweep over the country. Old and young have alike suffered. Hardly a person has escaped who had not previously had the disease. Many have been very sick but not one has died that I know of who employed a physician.

I am and have been very well all winter, have never passed a winter with out a very hard cold before. I have only been tired.

As to politics" I am more than ever united to the Republican Party. I approve of its principles from beginning to end. The Administration deserves the most ardent support of every Northerner or Southerner who is not a traitor to his country.

I do not say that all are at heart traitors who do not support the Administration but all who are not traitors should lend their aid in crushing this uncalled for and unprovoked Rebellion! Prejudice may and does warp men's judgments. Frank Flanders and Louisa would spurn Mason, Slidell and all other accursed traitors who would sever this Union and thus destroy it! This Union which you and they call the most perfect government on the face of the earth, were they not prejudiced against the Republican Party and maddened by continually and for a long time revolving the defeat of the Democratic Party in their minds.

Every man has a right to be a Democrat or a Republican in his mind, but no man has a right to endeavor to destroy his country or to befriend those who would destroy it because his party does not prevail or his choice for ruler is not elected.

Revolutions in this country have been common. That can and should be brought about by that means which a republican government always provides and which makes it so much better than all other governments. Kings cannot be dethroned without bloodshed. Presidents can be removed by ballots. If your choice for pastor is not placed in your pulpit, you have no right in the sight of God to destroy or to encourage the destruction of our church. If your choice for president is not elected you have no right to encourage the destruction of your government! You have a right to procure in a legal way the election of another to fill his place but not by destroying either church or state.

The Gazette has done as much to destroy the Country, yes far more, than the most rabid Secession Southern sheet of as little influence. No traitor could write more traitorous articles or copy more traitorous clauses than have been found in its columns. It has exulted over Southern victories and rejoiced over Northern disaster. Yet, I do not believe that in more sober moments, Frank Flanders is at heart a traitor.

I should like to go to Malone but both Frank and Louisa have allowed their feelings to go so far that they cannot treat me as a brother.

As soon as possible after Frank was arrested, I went to see Louisa and gave the girls each a gold dollar merely as a token. She was displeased with them for accepting it from her only brother! When the War is ended and the Union is preserved, as it can and will be, they will be ashamed of the course pursued by them!

April 12th

Dear Father,

You will see that the above was written two weeks ago. Fearing that I had said too much, I concluded not to send it. I suppose that when you read it, you will say, "Pooh, pooh!" and lay it at one side.

The weather is beautiful today, very much as April should be. Four days ago I rode in a cutter, since that I ride on horseback. The snow is two feet deep in my front yard.

Have made out to pay almost all of my debts and have on hand \$128.00 to make a payment on my house the first day of May. Have over twenty cords of wood in my yard. The United States owes me \$300.00.

I came to Potsdam eight years ago this month.

Carroll

Check dates

Malone, May 24th, 1862

My dear father,

Frank received your letter yesterday. We had wondered and wondered what had become of you! What about Governor Morehead's photograph? I told you I had two. He sent one of purpose for you and I thought I would let you take your choice. I hardly dare send them by mail. I have just written a line to Mr. Cassidy and told him you remembered him very gratefully for his great kindness to us all. Did I do right? His last letter to me and one since to Frank says, "Present my compliments to Dr. Bates, Mr. Raymond and Mr. and Mrs. Judge Flanders." Your name comes first.

Louisa

Frank sends all his papers by any means east. He ought to send one to the Montreal Transcript for it comes to him every week but he doesn't seem to care about sending away more than a half dozen or so, though he has offers of subscribers from all over the state almost every week.

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