

December 26, 1862

Norman A. Barnes
Southington, Conn.

(Envelope is postmarked Portray Dec. 30 with a 3-cent stamp and stamped "Due 3cts." Letter is on one sheet of large stationery folded in half and is written on four sides in ink.)

Beaufort, S.C.
Friday Eve
Dec. 26th, 1862

Cousin Norman –

I received your letter of Dec. 7th last Sabbath Eve and will now proceed to answer it. You need not count on receiving anything very great from me, as you seem to expect to judge from your letter. But before I proceed farther, I must lay an injunction upon your proceedings in regard to the disposal of this letter. In doing this I may disappoint you somewhat. It is that this is to be considered by you as an answer to your letter, written to you alone.

It is not to be looked upon as one written to the inhabitants of Marion, nor to be read before the Marian Lyceum, as you may desire to do. I am not so ambitious as to have anything I may have to say passed in review before any circle, subject to their approval or disapproval. I presume there are plenty of others who consider themselves well qualified to write letters or "reports" to be read before audiences, and I must beg of you to try in some other quarter; I have no desire that way. Remember, this is my wish, and I trust you will comply with it. Thus much by way of introduction and if you can make cense of what follows or desire any pleasure from it then I'm content. The first thing I perceive in your letter is a request that I will give you all the incidents through which I have lately passed. Well, I really (**Pg. 2**) don't know how to take you there. It shows that you consider soldier life a pretty exciting kind of an existence, and so it in certain places and at certain times, but not in this particular portion of the globe, although once in a while we have a little excitement, especially when such affairs as the attempt on "Seceshionville" and Pocatigo, come off. But we don't have these little affairs everyday!

Since the first of August I have led a very quiet existence. I have been on my back some of the time and during the whole of it in a not very enviable condition.

I have "put up" for a time in that "lovely retreat" the General Hospital at Hilton Head, where so many are carried in unaccompanied by ceremony of any kind, but where so many are carried out and borne away preceded by the muffled drum and fife. I tell you my friend it is a hard thing to lie there day after day with the poor fellows on either side of you and to see and hear at any hour of the day and night the life going from the worn out shell. It is a place in which men can grow callous to others sufferings; a place in which the dead are handled with little care or gentleness. I never wish for any more experience in one. I left then, for the Regt. on the 13th of Nov. not well by any means, but considerably better than when I went in, I arrived here the same night, got to camp a

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little after dark, glad enough to get here I assure you. Since then I have been pursuing the “even tenor of my way,” doing my best to keep the apothecary’s business alive by swallowing all the pills, powders and potions the MDs (*Pg. 3*) feel disposed to give, but, as far as I am able to see with but little benefit to myself. I think that if I keep on a while longer I shall be able to speak the Satin tongue. However like the elder Weller I’m living in hopes something will “turn up”.

Our Regt. is out on picket duty at a place called the “Ferry” about 10 miles from here. They went out last Saturday to be gone 10 days, will return probably on Monday. All the Regts here have to take their time in relieving one another; it is the first time our Regt. has had to go. The Rebel pickets are on the opposite side of the river, so I presume the Boys have to keep a pretty bright look out especially during the night. The Rebs are very accommodating sometimes in the matter of supplying us with news. It was through them that we first heard of the election of Seymour in New York, although we did not know whether it were best to believe it or not. Through them we also heard of the repulse of Burnside at Fredericksburg. I do not suppose they would be quite so eager in giving us information if they should chance to get whipped pretty badly in Virginia.

Christmas has come and gone and is buried in the past. Not much like a Christmas in New England did it prove. There was nothing going on here except in the 4th New Hampshire Regt. which is encamped a few rods on our right. They had pretty much the same programme, which the 48th N.Y. had in Fort Pulaski on Thanksgiving, which I (*Pg. 4*) presume you saw in the paper I sent to your father. In the morning they had a match game of baseball, which is quite popular just now with the men here. Following this was the wheelbarrow match, which consisted in wheeling a barrow at a barrel a few rods off the men being blindfolded. Some of them came pretty near it, while others wheeling in a circle brought up nearly in the rear of the starting place. After this a foot race came off between several members of the Regt. In the afternoon the “high and mighty” Officers had a game of baseball the right wing playing against the left, the Col. keeping “tally”, and acting as judge. I presume they all took a stiff drink of whiskey after they got through; perhaps it was the stakes they played for, who knows. Such stuff you know is good for men who wear the shoulder straps, but it won’t do for the insignificant fellow who carries only a shooting iron on his shoulder and a pack on his back. Funny regulations they have sometimes in this world and in certain places.

A little before noon, in company with another, I took a stole into town, which lies to the left of our camp less than a quarter of a mile distant, to see what was going on there, but everything was quiet. Admiral Dupont arrived from the Head in a few minutes after I got down town, on a visit to Gen. Brannan I suppose. There was a little crowd of the curious gathered in the street to see the Naval dignitary when he landed.

A squad of cavalry and a company of infantry were stationed on the wharf to honor him with a salute as he passed through to his carriage. In a few minute he appeared,

(End of letter no further copy)