

Letter From Christie, Alexander S. written Sunday, February 19th, 1865

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Soldier: Christie, Alexander S.

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My Dear Sarah:

Now that the bustle of dinner is over and Roll called, I have sat down to answer your letter received several days ago, and laid aside until I could have a suitable opportunity and something interesting to write about. And now after I have sat down and got this far, I am embarrassed to think of what to write about for here there is nothing to be seen or heard, any more than if I was shut up in an old barn and indeed these quarters do resemble old barns to a surprising degree.

However, I will try to give you an idea of how we pass a Sunday here, and especially how I passed this forenoon and intend to pass every succeeding one whenever it is practicable. In the first place, we discover that it is Sunday sometime after Reveille, by inspecting our Diaries, or by inquiring among ourselves "What day is it?" as is customary with us for there is nothing to distinguish it from any other day, as no part of the daily routine is omitted; that which we go through are weekdays being indiscernible on any day, consisting as it does of Roll-call and Grub three times and Dress-parade once, only there being no drill at all.

This morning, as soon as I knew what day it was, which was sometime after Breakfast, I gave myself a second and thorough wash, changed my shirt & drawers, and going to my valise, took therefrom a clean pair of stockings which as yet I had not had on since I left home; but had preserved as a memento, as it were. This morning however, hearing that divines service was to be held in the neighboring quarters, and having been dreaming all night of Home, I took the notion into my head that I would put on these stockings, which to me seemed so like pulling them off the line behind the stove where Mother had hung them all so clean and dry for me, and with the little Testament which she had given me long ago in my pocket, I would go and hear Divine Service which would be so consonant with her wishes and that of Father, and not by any means against my own inclinations.

Accordingly, I went in company with a little drummer boy of my Regt., or rather, like myself enlisted for my Regt. When we arrived, the Preacher was in the middle of the Morning prayer and the room was already filling up to the "maximum." However, they continued to come in at intervals during the whole services, which did not disturb the meeting in the least, they were very orderly. He took his art from the saying of Solomon, and I, not having an Old-Testament was precluded from marking it as otherwise would, but it was, as near as I remember as follows: "And in the last days they shall mourn, crying, how have I neglected they teachings?" The Preacher was a Northern Irishman by the name of Thomson, large, powerful & portly, with a large, bald head, a red beard & a good countenance.

He was a presbyterian, and an enthusiast at that, to which I do not object since I have heard him myself. I cannot follow him through all his discourse, but enough that all his arguments were good; that his views were broad; that his sympathies were on the side of Union & Universal Freedom of Mind & Body and that the effect on his audience was far greater than I expected it could be. The fact is, it took all I could do to Keep the tears from running down my cheeks, and there were many that who found it impossible to do so.

It was truly excellent. His sort o'Irish tongue; his sparkling wit, as it shone in his apt illustrations; and above all, his powerful appeal to the feeling, was irresistible. I returned to my Quarters well repaid for my time and attention, with all my good-resolves still [?]. I only wish that such a man had his home in Clyman.

As yet I have had no Pictures taken, but will before I leave my "Native North." The last time I was at St. Paul I had so many other things to attend to that, although I did not forget about it, yet I did not get the thing done.

As you wish, I will send you an Ambrotype & some photographs but it may not be that I will get it done for some days.

You are doubtless disappointed that I do not write more interesting letters but I can assure you that the material here is very scarce, and that I am not a second Tom, either. I really believe that he could make a more interesting letter about a hickory nut than I could about a Battle. The fact is, you need not expect two such in our family.

I expected to see something great when I saw this place, but I "couldn't see it" after getting this far. The fact of the matter is, I was not so much astonished at these sights, because I had expected to see something new and striking.

Like Dan, who on being asked by one if he wasn't astonished on seeing the 20ft Boa Constrictor in the side-show, answered, "Not much; I paid my money to see a big snake and expected to see one." Had he met the Boa in the Sandlot, I dare say he would have been astonished, to no small degree.

Besides, this is not soldiering by any means. It is only being shut up in a place far from home and friends, and fed 3 times per day. Once I am in the Field then you may expect something worth pausing, and not till then.

I intend to save and send home the best of the letters sent to me, while I am in the service, for it is too bad to lose them all.

I want you to write me a long one in answer to this, and it will be answered more promptly than the last. You must send me all the news of the neighborhood, and such like things, for I want to have nothing new and strange to me when I com back, but just as if I had been gone for an arm-full of wood or a pail of water. You cannot think how much good Dave did me by alluding to "Devin's marsh." I brought me right home. Doth his and Willie's letters did me a great deal of good.