

Assist Adj't Gen'l's Office
1st Brig. 1st Div., 19th A.C.
Near New Iberia La
January 1st 1864.

My dear Friend

Your kind letter of 13th ultimo together with two papers of the 13 and 15th respectively came to hand in good season, the papers particularly. Papers of the 15th were selling for 25 cents apiece and difficult to purchase at that. We read the President's Proclamation and it gave general satisfaction to our Army in this Dep't from all that I can learn; I am more anxious than ever to have him for our next President, and feel that he will do justice to his Country in her hour of need under all circumstances. The army is generally in favor, and it is often talked of.

I was much pleased with the "novel method" of redeeming our City and no more effective manner could have been devised. I hope it will be thoroughly carried out and that your idea of having them march from one end of the city to the other will be executed.

There is general stagnation of news items. All quiet on the Lines is the continual [] typed report of each Field Officer of Day as he comes in our Office to report. But I am forgetting that an exchange of prisoners took place on Christmas day. 500 of our men who had been captured were made happy by being exchanged for the same number of rebels. They were a sorry looking set as they had disposed of all their buttons, hats in fact [everything] saleable was gone. The Confederates gave \$2 apiece for common brass buttons, \$25 for old black hats, \$5 for jack knives, and for every other article in proportion. They were kindly treated by them as all of our prisoners are in this section of the country. Two of our signal officers who were prisoners say that two or three of the Confederate officers, desiring to reciprocate for kindness shone them when they were captives, invited them to a supper given for their especial benefit. It was quite an ordinary one, having no luxuries, and yet it cost them \$300. Their money is actually good for nothing, I bought some for less than 8 per cent. The money is of some use here just now as we buy chickens and ducks etc with it. I enclose you a trifling sum as a mere specimen though I presume you must have had, or at least seen some before this. The Rebs are suffering considerably for want of provisions. They and their new prisoners had nothing for several meals, no more than parched corn. On arriving at Shreveport they had flour then, which I presume must come via Matamoras. This movement together with the Texan Expedition has been the means of depriving the rebel army of one of its principal means of support. Our friends at the North cannot realize the amount of damage they suffer from the effects of this movement.

Our army had a "jolly time" on Christmas, Gen'l Franklin having issued an order that "divine services should be held and that an extra issue of whiskey should be issued to the command." Of course the latter particularly gave general satisfaction and was thoroughly appreciated. Major Hoffman A.A.G. for the Gen'l gave me a special invitation to accompany him—the day before Christmas—to Madam Porter's plantation some 28 miles from this place and about 2 ½ from Franklin in St Mary's Parish; and at one P.M. he called for me. We had an escort of cavalry and were well armed, in fact we were rather desirous of meeting the guerrillas for the sake of excitement and change but we met none. We had a glorious time, there being every precaution

taken to guard against the Rebs, not to mention the cordial welcome of the Madam (who by the way is a staunch Union lady) and the pleasant countenance of a young lady from a neighboring plantation. We returned in safety the day after Christmas. It was a pretty good ride all taken into consideration, the total distance ridden being nearly 63 miles. I had the pleasure of dining with Genl Franklin the day after my return; he is a very sociable gentleman. They have a very good joke on me about drinking, which I am sure will soon “play out.” Gen’l Emory was [] at Carrollton so that I of course became acquainted with him and when he assumed command of this Div, he invited me to call and see him when I had occasion to go there on business. One day, I heard some one calling me very quietly and after some difficulty I found it was the Gen’l, in his tent, who wanted me to take a friendly drink. I begged him to excuse me telling him that I never drank liquor, not even under such circumstances like the present. Says he, “Well Captain it is a very good thing for a young man if he only sticks to it, but the trouble is that these chaps who don’t drink get most d-ly drunk occasionally,” which of course turned the laugh on me and every now and then I hear some one say [] Matthews when does your next drink come off etc etc.

I think that the Corps will move to Franklin about 30 miles nearer Brashears. There are no larger bodies of Confederates in our front as they cannot live on the country which we have so thoroughly cleaned out of all provisions and forage.

The Government was very wise in the reenlisting of our soldiers as veterans, as nearly all who are entitled to do so will gladly avail themselves of this privilege. One of the Regts in this Brigade will commence reenlisting immediately. It’s one of Butler’s old Regts 30 months volunteers (late Let Col Bullock). There will be no difficulty in getting all of the 3 years Regiments to [].

I was very much pleased at Congress treading on the Copperhead Wood’s head (I suppose it gave way on acc’t of softness) by tabling the Peace Resolutions. How galling it is to every true Patriot to know that our Congress is disgraced by such black[] and villains—excuse the expression which is more applicable than elegant—but then there is satisfaction in knowing that they can do but little harm, while we have so many good [] men to counterbalance his influence.

I see by the papers that there is a bill up to increase the pay of officers 2 per cent. I hope that for the present it will be tabled, not but what I should like it increased, but I feel that our Gov’t cannot afford it, at least at this state of affairs. At some future time I should like to see all of our old officers and men of ’61 who entered the army before the [] of draft and high bounties was an incentive to enlist have given them by vote of Congress a medal which would be greatly prized. This is the general feeling of the 3 years men that are here now—they enlisted from patriotic feelings—and yet those who enlisted for pecuniary considerations receive high bounties etc etc. When Congress see we are clear of breakers they may give us all the honors and pay they wish, and we will receive them gracefully and thankfully.

About my future, I coincide with you and your brother’s idea of it and shall do as you advise. I shall have no difficulty in procuring the letters as they have been offered me before I left for the North. The trouble is I have a great dislike to asking for them. I hardly think I shall remain here much longer. If an opportunity occurs so that I get to New Orleans, I have an idea that I will be ordered on Gen’l Banks staff. If I can manage that, I’m all right.

Be pleased to present my kind regards to your family and accept my sincere and best wishes for their and your welfare.

Sincerely yours
Oliver Matthews
A.A. Genl