

3-9-1862

Arthur McKinstry to Mother

Arthur McKinstry

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Camp Wood March 9th 1862

Dear Mother,

There has been hard fighting to-day within sight of our pickets but across the river, we have seen the destruction of all the rebel camps which are near us and the demolition total of the so-called blockade of the Potomac. I have no authentic intelligence but I can ascribe these events and the continuous firing which we have heard and whose smoke we have witnessed to no other cause than an advance and a victory by Heintzelman, We can now cross unmolested and I think that we shall do so at very short notice so I dash off these lines to relieve you of any troublesome anxiety concerning your scapegrace son. The batteries opposite us are deserted and in flames and the Potomac is now as safe to navigate as the Connecticut which never saw the smoke of a rebel camp. I am all ready for business having sent home my spare clothing and procured those little trifles—a watch with compass, a revolver, and pocket spy glass which for a small one is very good. Thus my equipment is complete as a soldier and a correspondent. You spoke in your last of the danger of attaching too much importance to my letters. While I attach no importance whatever to them to my comrades I may be excused for reposing a confidence in my mother which I do not extend to any great degree even to M^r. and Bro. That they afford pleasure to many I know by friendly messages from the friends of my companions and by the privileges extended to me here by those who do not want to be "damned by faint praise." I have never in any instance allowed private animosity to leak out in public correspondence and I do not mean to but I have known officers to apprehend something of that sort. In the meanwhile I exert every care to be quite innocent of any appearance of consciousness and as I never was in a set so generally friendly to me I suppose that I must be successful.

I hear that we are not likely to be paid off before the first
of April and I am more sorry on your account than my
own ~~as I cannot~~ ~~see you~~ ~~the~~ ~~first~~ ~~shell~~ ~~war~~ ~~is~~ ~~over~~;
No matter how shells shall ~~kill~~ ~~them~~ ~~and~~ ~~what~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~case~~ ~~is~~ ~~it~~;
I fancy these recent victories
must give Uncle Sam "I promise to pay" a good deal higher
circulation. One thing I will bet high upon and that is
that they won't be waged four months longer. It is getting to
be spring here and the birds sing right merrily though today
they have been sadly eclipsed by the musical whistle of
shells. How the fates begin to tighten upon poor "Sech";
Shells rain down upon them in front flank and rear and
the bloody drama is well nigh over. One or two more death hugs
and the grapple will be past and we who love the union so
well will return to bright firesides and loving hearts while our
rash and beaten assailants will find their homes in ashes and
their property ~~washed~~ ~~away~~ ~~with~~ ~~the~~ ~~long~~ ~~and~~ ~~fruitless~~ ~~struggle~~;
Those who raise a devil should beware lest the servant should
become the master. In very spite and desperation the rebels opposite
have burned the habitations of friend and foe alike and only blackened ruins will
mark the sites of some of the fairest homes in the magnificent valley of the
Potomac. And all this time our homes are untouched and tenanted by
the old familiar faces and they are not so far off as they seemed a month
ago. In the victories of science as well as the victories of arms space is
annihilated and time is the only true reckoner of distance. Thus New York
city more than ~~is~~ ~~not~~ ~~450~~ ~~miles~~ ~~away~~ but linked by rail is nearer to you
than Cologne which is but one ninth of the space. Well it is late
and I must pace the shore for some long hours to night so good
bye. I shall give through the censor later and better information.
Expect to write next from the "Old Dominion" Love to all
Your aff son.

Arthur.



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Ms Austin Chapin
Forestville
N.Y.

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