

4-16-1862

Arthur McKinstry to Brother

Arthur McKinstry

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Camp Marshall Scott, near Yorktown, Virginia
Dear Brother,

Your and Mother's letter reached me last night and very glad I was to hear from home again. As you are probably already aware we have emigrated from Camp Marshall and are now upon the "sacred soil" of Virginia, and within four or five miles of one of the principal strongholds. Our force is much improved in equipment and our siege guns are now mostly in position. We have also several gun boats up the York River ready to cooperate with us. Mr. Smith (the rebel General) in answer to Mr. C. Lincoln's order to surrender declared that he would first make every house in Yorktown a hospital. As things look just now he must have his bacon a bit in doing that for we have the men and the implements to whip him in short order. There has been heavy firing to day and I presume that our gunners have been getting the range of the artillery. Preparations for a general assault. Our Brigade is south east of Yorktown and is encamped upon Charlesmans Creek, which flows into the Popoquin River. We are not yet in sight of the enemy but we expect to move up to the advance in a day or two. We expect a big fight very soon but our artillery will probably do most of the work. There are a very great number of field and siege guns, but the most numerous are the steel guns or brass howitzers, whose large shells will sever the grape and canister beautifully. We had a very slow passage down on the Elin City and were just a week in performing the journey of a day. That is a fair sample of the way Government transportation is carried on with rebels hired at from \$500.00 to \$1000.00 per day. The tide flows here to the height of three or four feet and all those who like clams and oysters can have them if not too lazy to pick

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April 16
Archer 1862

them up and cook them. I don't buy them myself
and have never eaten any except on days when we were
short of provisions when I baked a few on the coals.
While you are probably singeing the fire around the
sap-kettles I have sneaked off to the woods to
escape this hot Virginia sun. Don't this air in your
blow you here and there in the wind and mild.
Mr. Colman is in the other side of the river. I have
the command.

And so you are trying your luck at my old place.
I don't think you could well have got a better.
After living so long with Father it is high time that
you should begin over again and learn the farmers trade
at a place where work is not only done well but done in
season. A man can do his best days work between
sunrise and sunset and I am glad that you are at
a place where you will see it, and learn to be
wiser than you are now. You are and must be
enough after sunrise to make it good. You must
remember me to Mr and Mrs Edwards and to Dick and
Jerry and last but by no means least to the girls. I can
think of nothing more of importance so hoping to hear
from you early - letters will come safely enough and
you and Mr Edwards folks must write directing to
Washington - I remain

Yours affectionate brother

Wm. M. Henry
3^d Regt. Exels. Brig.
Washington D.C.

P.S. It is reported that the firing today
was at one of the rebel batteries which
our men carried, with the loss of Gen
Porter. I do not know if it is true or not.
There is smart cannonading this evening.