

George Oscar French (1844-1865)
Civil War Letters – 1864, part 2
Transcribed by Dawn Hance; typed by Joann Nichols; edited by Paul Zeller

[Large letterhead depicting U.S. General Hospital Div. No. 1. Complex at Annapolis, Maryland]

Annapolis, Md. Aug. 15, 1864

Friends at Home

Perhaps you would like to be informed of the health of Oc. Well I am happy to be able to say that I am on the gain though you will not think so by the appearance of this writing. Above is a very good picture of our Hosp. I room in the 3d house from the corner on the left. You see I marked it. All the houses on this row are 3 story brick, in front, with 2 story back part about 30x40. They are all uniform inside & out, and were built for the Young Naval School Students. I have not heard from home in a long time, & should really like to hear from some of you. I suppose there is some mail at the Regt for me & I have written on to have Tucker forward it to me. I am afraid that the draft will take Wilbur [his brother Will] But I hope he will keep out of the Army as long as he can. I never want him to suffer what I have suffered, and what has made an old man of me in my 21st year. There is a shower coming up, thrice welcome, in these burning days & sultry nights. One word more about poor Nate Bliss. He was as good a soldier as ever shouldered a gun, always doing his duty cheerfully & often doing more than was asked of him. On the march to Reams Station he was so weak as scarcely to be able to walk & I carried his gun for him a good share of the way. But he was used up, at last. I suppose Em's school is most out by this time. You must tell Smid for me to be a good boy, and remember his big uncle. I can never fill out this big sheet, so will stop.

Don't fail to write

Oc

Officers Hosp. Annapolis Md August 18./64

Friends at Home

The rain is coming down in a fine shower this morning, and I have nothing to do, but write home. I arrived here from Sandy Hook on the 10th & wrote you immediately, asking for \$25.00 in money. I don't get a word in reply, in 8 days, & I am in want of the soap very much. I need \$100. partly to get me an outfit &c. & partly to meet my expenses. Had I been ever mustered as an Officer I could draw my pay at this place. But I have never been mustered for the very good reason that I have never had an opportunity to go to Washington for that purpose, or at all since I was commissioned. But I shall draw 2nd Lt's pay from the time I was assigned to duty. (24th July) \$105. per month, the first of Sept they will owe us 6 months pay. My commission final statements &c. are in Washington, in my valise. I have written to have my valise sent here by express. I expect it will be at the Ex Office to day. I shall go out into the city this P.M. & see about it, if it don't rain too hard. Capt. Goodrich is here rooms in the next house west of this. He & I are going to take a sail on the Bay this P.M. if it don't rain.

My health improves, though quite slowly. I don't think I shall be able for duty in 30 days. Had I been well enough, I could have gone to instruct the 100 days men in Heavy Arty service. This would have been a good job, and one for which I flatter myself, I am well fitted. I hope I shall be gratified by soon getting a letter from home, with the needful in it. I have borrowed some of Lieut. Dunham Co. D. who got 5 mos. pay since he came here, snug little sum of \$525. Don't think I will write any more till I go to the office & see "is there anything for me. I dunno."

Have been down to the Office & got yours of 14th inst with \$15. instead of \$25 as I requested. I expect you will have to smash into my little pile like blazes. But I shall make it all up when I get started. You ask me about Wills enlisting I think I gave you my opinion about that in a previous letter, which you have probably got ere this. Will knows nothing of the hardships he would have to endure and it wants an iron constitution to stand up under it. Even for a short time. As to the Navy. They will shut you up on one of those iron clads. A perfect roasting prison house. I have seen & talked with sailors on the James & Potomac & on the Chesapeake Bay and they are all tired of their ovens. Will had better stay at home—give me the chance & see if I don't

Yours, Oscar

[Written on the side of the letter: Aug 18 64 Leave off the co & Regt when you write here]

[Large detailed letterhead of Annapolis, Maryland]

Officers Hospital August 20th 1864

As it is two days since I wrote guess I will try and write a little more this morning, though I have not much to say. I am on the gain slowly but surely, the old strength comes back to my limbs, and the old energy takes possession of me. Already I am beginning to weary of the quiet life in the Hospital. I think I shall be able to join the 6th Corps by the 1st Sept certain & perhaps sooner. Yesterday Capt Goodrich, Lieuts Maxham, Dunham & French (all from the 11th) had a nice sail on the Bay. [First Lt. Jabez R. Maxham from Stockbridge, Co. H, 11th Vermont wounded June 1, 1864. First Lt. William G. Dunham from Morrystown, Co. D, 11th Vermont.] Our boat carried two sails, one fore & aft, beside a “jib” and she would fairly fly over the water. A good sharp breeze was blowing and the white caps rolling on the big round billows of the Bay. We rode into a cove and fished, catching many kinds of queer animals. This ride done me good the salt water breeze serving to lift a fellow. I thought of Smid, and how he would enjoy if he were with us, our wild exciting ride. I have been in Annapolis the queerest old City you ever saw. Some of the buildings were built the next year after the flood. This picture is quite natural, giving you a good view of the City, as it looks from the Bay. You speak of my getting “transferred” to Vermont, that cannot be. It is different with Officers from what it is with enlisted men—They are sent around to one place & another without any expense to them selves – while a poor Officer must pay his way & the highest cash price at that. Yes I expect a grist of letters from the Regt. some time but I presume they have had no mail since they crossed the Potomac on the 5th inst. Confound those town authorities. I would just like to be a citizen, Knowing what I do now & have some of the town of Castleton “Authorites” ask me to enlist. Whew! How the fur would fly. Twould be a caution to the red dogs forever more.

I left the ring to that watch hanging on a nail in my room at Fort Stevens, on the 12th of May. I had so much business to see to that I could think of nothing. I was up all night the night before we left, helping the Capt. straighten out his clothing, ordnance Camp & garrison equipage &c &c. A large am’t of which we had on hand & some of it got lost. The 100 days men that relieved us broke into the boxes and helped themselves to clothing, free of cost. The rascals have made our nice quarters look like the “Desert places” They have broken in the windows, burnt a good share of the bunks—and dirtied up everything around. How our boys did give it to them, during the 20 hours that we stopped at Ft Stevens. “Touch that table you hundred day “pimp” and I will kick you in the mouth.” &c They gave Co. “C.” a wide berth, looking upon our boys, all dirt & rags, and blackened by exposure to the burning Southern Sun, with awe & reverence—Consequently gave them a wide Berth.—I was truly glad to learn that Mother was better. I should like it if I could come home this Fall. But I expect the boys up in the Shenandoah Valley will want my assistance as soon as I can get around. Capt D.J. Safford lives in Morrystown Vt.

There is no Lieut. Fleming in the Regt. Lieuts Sowles & Fleury Bat. K were taken that time. [Second Lt. George H. Sowles from Alburgh, Co. K, 11 th Vermont, was taken prisoner June 23. He was paroled December 13, 1864. Second Lt. Alvan G. Fleury from

Isle La Mott, Co. K, 11th Vermont, taken prisoner June 23, 1864, and escaped captivity at some unspecified date] But that Co. was not stationed near us. They were at Ft Totten 3 miles distant, beside. I am unable to find out the address at present. Capt. S. would be more likely to know about Bill [Barber, taken prisoner] as he was for a long time 1st Lieut Co. D. stationed at Ft Stevens with us. We have had some rain & the air is much cooler, and more agreeable—I will write no more till after the mail comes in.

11 A.M. Lieut. Allen just came from the P.O. and brought me yours of 17th with \$10. which is very welcome. I don't care about the finances. You must keep track of them. All I want is when I ask for money to have it forthcoming, as long as I have any, at home. I assure you I shall not ask for it unless I need it. I did not know as you owed me \$40. You need be in no hurry about paying it. I had rather draw every dime on the notes, than to put you to any inconvenience. I am sorry to hear such an acc't from Em. I should ask that cussed Griswold [Cullen J. Griswold who Emeline French later married] his intentions. When I was at home last winter I saw at a glance that there would be a row in camp if I should stay there for any length of time. Sergt. Frank Smith has asked for my old coat, says he will pay \$20 for it, should we ever go back into the Defences, & think we will this winter. That coat is for an Enlisted man, cord around neck & sleeves, pointed cuffs, &c. These are omitted on any Officers coat, beside I expect I will make new one out of friar cloth this time. And one good dress coat will last me as long as I am in the service, \$8. is not much boot to pay. The 10th NY Arty has gone back to the Defences, and one Battalion of the 9th NY Arty. Don't expect Tim was very sick. Well I have written quite a letter. Don't expect you can read it. Guess Capt Goodrich will go to Washington as Drill Master. Write often.

Oscar

Annapolis Gen Hosp.

August 22nd [1864]

I suppose according to existing regulations that I must write every other day. I am on the gain yet. I walk what I can. You know we are in the old Navy Yard & cannot get out into the City, without a pass. However we can get a pass every day, by applying to the Surgeon in charge (every morning.) Can get a pass from noon till 9 P.M. My valise at Washington that I wrote for on the 13th has not yet made its appearance. I am going out to the Express Office, this P.M. and see if I can get any tidings of it. I should hate to lose it as my Blouse cost \$14 & my commission are in it. I have recd no letters from any source but home since I came here, guess that mail communication with the 6th Corps. is somewhat broken. It has been quite rainy for three or four days, but we are going to have a nice day to day. Sun is coming out in fine style. Expect Father is over in Clarendon slating. But you must write as often as you can. You see I have been very punctual, since I came to this place. I see by the papers that Sheridan has fallen back to Berryville. I expect the boys will have a big fight before they get out of the valley this time. I have applied for a leave of absence, & you need not be surprised any time between now, & the 1st of Sept. to receive a call from a tall young Officer from the 6th Corps. The Dept at Washington may return my application with "Respectfully Disapproved" Endorsed upon it, just my luck, if they do—In that case I shall be obliged to postpone the idea of going home to some "previous time" Since I have been able I have written letters to a good many different people. I had got sadly behind on my correspondence. And have not got caught up yet. Nor don't expect to. Capt. Goodrich and all the Officers from our Regt. stay here yet. I guess they are in no hurry to get back to the front. Though the Capt is unable for duty. As for myself, I don't care to get back before Sept 1st. At that time, in case I have no pull backs, I am willing to go back. 11 A.M. Have been down to the Post Office the P.M. read off the F's, the last one, he read French Here, that's mine, said I. He passed it over to me. When I read Lieut J.A. Francis, I passed it back to him, highly disgusted at the mans carelessness. I just got a receipt for my valise. It is probably at the Office. I can write no more to day. Am all out of anything to say.

Give my regards to all Enquiring Friends

Yours Oc

Annapolis

August 25, 1864

Father Your last was recd last eve with the one you wrote at W. Aug. 1st and one written at home – the 11th with 4 stamps. I also recd the paper. I continue to improve, and am now almost as good as new. I am not quite as stout in the legs yet, as I would wish to be. I did not expect it were possible for me to gain so fast. I shall rejoin the Regt. as soon as the 1st of Sept. if my leave of absence don't come. Had I thought it possible for me to gain like this I should have not applied for a leave. I see by the papers that the Army in the valley has had a fight. And they also say that the 2nd Div 6th Corps suffered the most loss. Lieut. Col. Chamberlain is mortally wounded [Lt. Col. George E. Chamberlin ofrom St. Johnsbury. Wounded August 21, 1864, and died the next day]. All the casualties I have heard of in our Regt. That there must be more, I am sure, & I await news from them anxiously. I got a letter from Maje W [Sgt. Myron Wood of West Haven] written before the fight. says they have had hard times since I left. Living 5 days on three days rations, and marching all the time. They advanced as far as Strasburg, and after skirmishing, & fooling around two or three days, fell back on the night 16th through Winchester. They marched in three columns, sending Pack horses to the front, as Maje says gave them a good butt end to run against.

Capt. G. & Lieut Dunham have gone to Washington to drill 100 days men, in the Forts. Lieut. N.N. Glazier, who lost his left arm at Spottsylvania on the 18th of May has reported here. Been to Vt. on leave. I am very sorry to hear that Will is so obstinate. He will only see his fault when he is far away from home – sick – most to death, or perhaps like an old worn out horse, he is kicked out to die, with no one to care for him. He may laugh, and say “I wont be sick” But if Tim & I are sick, with our constitutions, Why should not he be? And if marching 500 miles in 22 days will wear me out, why should it not tire him? On the march from Harpers Ferry to Frederick City – 74 men dropped dead with heat & fatigue, from our Corps, some poor fellows, lay by the roadside stiff in death, still holding up the Surgeons pass, for an ambulance. I could not march, & it was by the merest chance that I got onto a coal train & rode up 30 mis [miles] But I heard Officers vouch for the truth of the above. The Stragglers got to be more than the marching Corps, and banding together loaded their guns & swore they would not or could not budge another inch without rest. Along came the rear guard & fired on this band, killing one man. The stragglers, all reckless, fired on the guard (whom they greatly outnumbered.) Killed the Capt. in com^d [command] & one private, besides wounding many. The guard was forced to move on & let them alone. Tell Will to take the advice of one who has seen the elephant & not go to the show. Sept 1st They will owe me 6 months pay. Write soon

Oscar

Hospital, Annapolis, Sunday morn.

August 28th 1864

Dear Father,

Yours of 24th was recd last night 9. P.M. & I must say it was a very dismal letter for me to read. I was thinking of it long into the night. Thinking how foolish Wilbur was and how bad you must feel at such treatment. Will will never know what he has done till it is too late to retrace his steps. He will be subjected to a discipline that beats the volunteer service all to death. But I prophesy that if he ever returns, he will come penitent, and thinking more of a good home and kind Parents, than ever before. I cannot come home this time. It is very hard to obtain a leave from this place, as this is a convalescent sort of a hospital. My application went in two weeks ago tomorrow, and I have heard nothing from it yet. I am getting strong, and have felt for three or four days as though I ought to be back with my Regt. My papers are mixed up, and I want to get back, and be mustered the 1st Sept. I will get my transportation papers at 10 this A.M. & at 6 P.M. tomorrow shall take the cars for Harpers Ferry. I expect to find the Regt. cut up. You are mistaken about our Corps being driven. the old "6th" drove the enemy a mile, then fell back, by orders to their original position. You were right about the coat & I shall not want them at present. I think Jo had better make the coat & wait for the pay till I am paid, which will (I think) be about the middle of Sept. If you get time to see to this, I wish you would. Jo can keep the coat till he is paid for it. They owe me 6 months pay, & I cant afford to smash into the papers. When there is a prospect of our being paid so soon. July 25th the whole Corps was paid, except the heavy Arty Regt. I got a letter from Maje. Same old story, marching 5 days on 3 days rations, skirmishing, advancing & retreating. No doubt but Early [Confederate Lt. Gen. Jubal Early] has been reinforced to a great extent, but we have also been reinforced, and to no doubt we have a force of not less than 50,000. Maje thinks that our chance for going back to the Defences is good. And he is a pretty good judge. Or at least would not say so, unless – in his good judgment – he thought so. Wednesday, the Str [Steamer] New York, arrived here with about 450 exchanged prisoners. Such a sight I never saw, most of them had to be removed on mattresses, put on platform cars & run down on the wharf, beside the Steamer. Many of them have died since landing and several times a day, a squad with reversed arms, goes out of the yard, the band playing "The March in Saul." Yes I got the Herald, one piece you marked. "The West men hewers of wood & drawers of water for New England." I find an exact counterpart of this piece taken from the Richmond Sentinel which I wish you would read attentively, and then tell me how much difference there is between the "Peace Party," And a stay at home Rebel. In as much as neither is in arms against their Country. I also recommend to your observation, the picture in Harpers Weekly, "Compromise with the South." This picture is perfectly lifelike, and one can study it for ten minutes to good advantages. 11 A.M. Have been down to the Treasurers Office & settled up. I owe the institution \$20.00 for which I have certificates of indebtedness. I find I cannot get away till 3.45 P.M. tomorrow, as I cannot get my order for transportation on Sunday, as they told me yesterday. I may then lay over till Tuesday morning. Next time you write, direct to the Regt. Lt. Col. Chamberlain died of wounds, recd a week ago to day in the Battle near Charlestown, Va. The next letter you write after you get this, I wish you would send

me \$10. With the \$40 I bought pants \$13, Blouse \$14, Cap \$2.25, suspenders handkerchief, collars &c Lt. S. still owes me \$6. of the \$20 you sent me at Petersburg. An Officers expenses are very heavy. I have had [lines[Union?]] coat, shirt, socks &c since coming here. Lieut. Dunham's expenses aside from board in 12 days were \$150. Mine aside from board, for same period were \$12. So you can judge something how I squander my money. I shall keep my old sword & belt till one comes in off the front, sash, I have none. One pr of shoulder straps, cost me \$3.00 they wanted \$4.50 for them at first, Haversack, \$1.50. I think I will close as I have nothing more to write. Please write often & a little longer letters if you can find anything to put in them. My love to all the Family.

Yours, Oscar

Monday Morn.

I shall leave on 3.45 train this P.M. For Harpers Ferry. Have written to Jo about the coat. Told him I want he should wait for pay, and told him that any bargain he could strike with you would satisfy me. I priced some dress coats in the city. I can get nothing less than \$35. from that to \$50. In Haste

Oscar

Camp Near Charlestown [West Virginia] August 31st 1864

Friends at Home—

Pursuant to Special Order &c &c I started from A. [Annapolis] at 3:45 P.M. staid at Relay House over night, as no train left for the Ferry that night. At 8.15 AM took train for H. Ferry with Capt D.J. Safford [Capt. Darius J. Safford from Morrystown, Co. L, 11th Vermont, taken prisoner June 23, 1864, and escaped from Andersonville at some unspecified time]. Escaped, who came on from Washington. He knew nothing of Bill as Com^d Off^r & Enlisted men were not allowed to speak to, & were kept separate from each other. I arrived here last night, 9 mis [miles] west from H.F. [Harper's Ferry, West Virginia] found Co. C. had lost 13 wounded, 11 Badly. I was some tired, marching from the Ferry. But feel firstrate to day. And have an appetite like a horse. I was glad to get back & find the boys so well. Julius Lewis was killed a few rods from here on the 21st inst [First Sgt. Julis Lewis from Poultney, Co. I, 11th Vermont, killed August 21, 1864]. One fellow from 5th Vt that our boys did not have time to bury. The Rebs buried him & left his feet & head sticking out, & drove a stake 3 inches square, down through his neck. You may doubt this, but I have seen the stake & the grave where our boys reburied him. One Sergt Field carried colors of 2nd Battalion was shot down & the color bearer of our Battalion lost his right arm at the shoulder. But our boys gave it to them in good shape. John D. [probably Donnelly] & H. Ross arrived at the Regt yesterday, short time before I did—All well [Pvt. Hiram A. Ross from Castleton]. We are having splendid weather Nothing is going on today. Johnnies are 7 miles out in full force, waiting for something to turn up. I Earnestly hope that something may turn up & that Will has not gone to sea for his benefit. Major Fleming has forwarded a list of all the prisoners from the Regt. & Bills name is among them, all safe & sound. They were at Macon, Ga. This is all I can learn about him. But this is bona fide, & I hope will cheer up Uncle C's folks some. I shall forward any information that I may get in regard to him, just as soon as I get it.

You must excuse all dirt &c as I write under the usual difficulties of the camp

I think of no more to say I send love to all tell Ella to write, Smid & Al [Alice] too. I would have liked to come home, But their circumlocution Office in W. was too slow for me. Beside twould have cost me quite a little Pile

Good Night
From Oscar

Alfred shot off two of his fingers, about as soon as he got here. But the Surgeon sent him to duty.

Camp Near Berryville Va. Sept 6th 1864

Dear Friends at Home—

The Supply train is just in from Harpers Ferry, and of course, we expect the mail is in and that we shall have an opportunity to send out letters in the morning. We left camp Near Charlestown 4 A.M. on the third, came out here, found our advance skirmishing with the enemy. They kept it up till after dark. Our forces repulsing the enemy three times As they charged across an open field. Our Div was not engaged. But we were closed “en masse” in the woods in rear with stacked arms. Next morning we heard nothing from the Johnnies. Night before last we built entrenchments all night in the rain & cold. I tell you it made the recruits stick out their eyes. But our old boys worked all night without a word. Having seen too much such work & when the projectiles from Dixie were crashing through the woods—over our heads at Cold Harbor.

For two days it has rained almost incessantly for 24 hours. Cold, chilly & penetrating. I am very anxious to hear from Will & you at home. Election is going on to day here—Republican votes being furnished & No Opposition. Many would vote the other ticket could they get it. But I guess that not many Democratic votes will be got from the 11 Vt. Send me a newspaper once in a while. No news boys penetrate to the Shenandoah Valley.—Moseby was between here and the Ferry yesterday. But our Cavalry went down and cleaned them out. Of course we were mustered on the last day of August. Making 2 years in U.S. Service Today is 25 months for me. What do you think about Atlanta and Mobile? Our Boys are feeling pretty well elated over the news. The mail has not been distributed. But I expect a letter from home. This is terrible weather for campaigning. 75 Rebel Deserters came in just now, under Grants order or proclamation. Oh I tell you their old Confederacy is going up as fast as possible

Let the North come out and volunteer just as we did. Not send good for nothing substitutes and bounty jumpers. We want support, and the support of stern Determined Men. It may take 500,000 more—Perhaps yet more. But shall all the lives that have been sacrificed be sacrificed in vain?—While I was sick, I could not help noticing how careless the citizens were about supporting the Administration, and the Army. And yet how very careful they were that their individual selves should avoid the Draft, or in any way by hook or crook, keep out of the service. But I will not grow eloquent over a subject that is disagreeable to Northern citizens. Had our Citizens shown as good a will as the Citizens of the South, This War would be closed ere now. No mistake about it.—Mail has come but not a thing for me. No answer from one of the many letters that I scattered among my friends!! while at Annapolis. Confounded pen don't work well.

Good Night. All Well from No 6

Yours,

Oscar

Near Berryville Sunday Sept 11, 1864

Father

Yours of the third inst is before me. Found me well, and enjoying myself as well as Soldiers do. Half submerged in water. I received the \$10. and it came very opportune. I should have told you that State pay ceased, but I supposed you knew only that enlisted men are paid \$7. But instead of June 24th My State pay should only cease on the 24th of July. The day I got my com [2nd Lieutenant's Commission] & was assigned to duty at Georgetown Heights.

You are mistaken about my "ideas of economy" as you term it. I have no standard by which to regulate my expenses, but my wants, and of course, I don't expend more than my income. Again you seem to accuse me of a wanton waste – or words to that effect. And seem to intimate that ½ sent me is only so much to my damages etc ad infinitum. Among other things you draw a sad picture of corrupted morals &c with the opinion that some had better be shot dead at the first fire &c. Now I could give you the items of all bought or expended since going to Annapolis. As to the statement that I am getting tough, I shall deny it. And leave Tim to prove my assertions. Nor do I think that a "dead shot at first fire" would have a salutary effect upon me. But it might have the effect to lessen my expenses. As there by I would not be obliged to pay the "shot" of a funeral. Any more than the blackened martyrs I saw Summer, from the bloody field of Spottsylvania to Petersburg, And in the Valley. When I got your letter I thought you had really written me a good long letter. But was sadly disappointed to find it a political lecture. I have seen McClellan's letters of acceptance and I think if he only lives up to that, and his speeches, on some former occasions that the Peace planks in his platform will be broken & the dirty Peace men will find themselves without a reed to lean on, i.e. If he is elected, which you seem to think certain. But I think Old Abe stands a good show for another four years. But for My part (and I speak as 9/10 of the Soldiers in the field.) I care not who is Pres. if they only go in for a Vigorous prosecution of the War. Making Slavery a secondary question & using the full Abolition principle, if necessary to weaken our enemy, & restore & maintain the Union. You say that I dodged the main question & Now you must know that I dodge No question. I stand square and take whatever comes. I did not dispute the truth of the price [peace?] first sent me. Or at least a portion of it. But I cannot think the N.E. men so very much more selfish than all the World, & the rest of mankind. However, Let us grant that the Western States are mere Hewers of Wood &c. Would it not look much better in every Northern man to pass it over in this hour of our mutual peril, & instead of finding fault with Govt. & Administration and stirring up sectional Discord between the East & West, try all in his power to unite the forces of the North & first subdue the common enemy, after this settle the little differences at home? Without trying to aggravate a trifling Difference, and engage the West & East in civil war, is not one Civil War enough? I suppose there are men at the North, who rather than aggravate our "Southern Brethren" by a negro slave, would prefer to see their dirty flag on the State House at Albany, and the attendant comforts of a Despots rule. You condemn Abolition agitation. Very well, so do I. But at the same time you support a paper that is doing all in its power to separate two powerful Sections of the Country. By

publishing, and continually expatiating upon Tariff, Revenue & such other articles. These articles are sectional unreasonable and a bound with low epithets. It is easy enough to see that these articles are got up merely for political capital. And that their sole object is to sever the friendly relations now existing between the East & West. I recognize them only as the despairing wail of a set of unprincipled semi secessionists, who have been fasting four years. And now want to get a lick at the Public favor. And perhaps, yes very probably betray their country, as did their illustrious Predecessors, Toombs &c. Again in the slip last sent, Editor says, Ab. Agitation 30 years or more ago – commenced the dismemberment of our glorious Union.—Presto!! Look in the next column. He says Lincoln is the first great cause of all our woes. Poor fellow, he forgets what he said a moment before. But enough I am through. All I go for is Union, Constitution & enforcement of the laws. For this I have risked my life. And to this end my life is pledged—We made a raid after Moseby the other day. But succeeded nothing. Weather is awful wet and cold and muddy. We have not sufficient clothes, blankets, tents or shoes, for comfort. But the next train from Harpers Ferry will probably bring these necessaries. Our mails are very irregular. But the boys stand these discomforts with cheerfulness, and are confident of our Ability to whip Early. Should he make such a mistake as he did the 3d and attack us in our present position. I have written to Post Master at Annapolis to forward my mail so expect to get your letter soon – I bid you good night & send love to all the Family. Should Em or Al might write to a feller
Oscar

Camp Near Berryville Sept 15 [1864]

Folks at Home

Fathers two of the 1st & 6th, and Mothers of 28 inst came in the mail of the 12. We expect the train up to night and so I will write again. I am well at present. I wrote to Uncle John [Farwell] for a pair of boots. Cant get a pair of boots in H.F. [Harpers Ferry] or Wash. Or even in Annapolis for less than 10. - \$15.00 You wrote about the coat &c. I shall not want them at present. Will let you know when to send them, as also the boots. Geo. Shaw was only slightly wounded in the Battle of 21st inst [Charlestown, West Virginia] Capt G. [probably Goodrich] is in W. [Washington] sick. Nate Bliss Died in Armory Square Gen'l Hosp'l while we were away up in the Loudon Valley. Of course none of us could write to his friends for the first thing we knew Lt. Tucker got official notice of his death &c. I was the means of getting him into hospital. I set up the Surgeon in good style, full as much as I dared to, and got an order for an ambulance. Mail is at Brig. Hdqrs. I wanted to answer Mothers good letter, in full, But it is most dark, and I shall not have the time. Our Div & one Div of 19 A.C. [Army Corps] made a made a reconnaissance as far as the Opequan Creek, on 13th run into a whole Corps of Johnnies. But our Arty done most of the fighting. Shelled them for two hours, when all at once a terrific shelling commenced from the Reb. batteries, the first shells striking right in our Battalion. Some were badly wounded, only two killed in the whole Division as I have heard of. It is a wonder from the way they struck, that we were not completely cut to pieces. But Providentially, only a few of them burst. Custars cavalry took the 8th S.C. Prisoners, and we gobbled many stragglers beside. It was certainly the most decidedly our "best" of any skirmish I ever saw. And the first time I was under fire since coming back. I hear nothing from Cousin A. Smith. I wrote Jo. that anything you said about the coat, I would be satisfied with. I am thinking about Bro. Will. I bet he will find that what I told him he will find to be true. I am in such a hurry I cant write at all. I hope Al will go to school. I will pay tuition if she will go, & when paid will send her enough to buy her a new Dress What I wrote about politics, you must not take any stock in. It is striking up a brisk rain to night. Very rainy all the time. 1st Vt Cav. is here, two miles Distant but Sam [Dowling] is not here. Don't know where he is. I shall write as soon as I hear from you again.

Lieut. G.O.F.

Sept 22nd 1864

Four miles above Strasburg, Va.

Knowing you will be very anxious about my welfare, I take the first opportunity to let you know that so far I am all right. For which I thank a kind Providence. Report is that the train is coming up & so I write hoping to get a chance to send it out to night. Near Woodstock Va Sept 23rd was broken off, to make a charge & we did charge & carried the enemys works in fine style, capturing many guns, prisoners &c. We had a great battle near Winchester on the 19 [Battle at Opequan, VA] and gained a great victory. But My Dear Friend M. Wood [Sgt Myron Wood of West Haven] lost his right leg below the knee. I cannot tell you how bad I felt at this Brave boy. He sent me word to write to his Father which I shall do at the first opportunity. Lieut. Tucker was wounded in the first charge, & I am in com'd of the Co. since 19th. No 6 Boys came out all right. H. Ross was not in the fight, as he was not armed. I took a very heavy silver watch, English lever, full capped, Hunter case, worth \$50 from a dead Johns pocket. Keeps first rate time. I was not hit, but a minie ball cut my hair just above my right ear, did not hurt. We took 17 pieces of Arty. & more prisoners than we care for. The Reb Army is completely demoralized. Burnt their wagons on the pike. I cannot write much this morning as the mail is going out right away. I shall write to Mr. Wood by the next mail if I can. Tom Williams was also wounded [Pvt. Thomas Williams from Castleton, Co. C, 11th Vermont]. But not dangerous. Maj'r [Wood] was at Winchester and doing well, and in good spirits. We are 12 miles from Strasburg, & 32 miles above Winchester. I am well. But very tired from the severe labor of the past week. Have seen Sam on the 17, was well. I got yours & Ellas letter, shall answer as soon as possible. I can write no more this morning. Good By

Yours
Lieut G.O. French

Va Oct 9th [1864]

Dear Friends at Home

I wrote you last from Harrisonburg, since then we have had some hard marching &c. We arrived here yesterday at 3. P.M. o.c. & went into camp on the plain east of Strasburg. Our Brigade is camped in line only ten rods from the Shenandoah, & parallel with it. The past 48 hours have been quite cold, our boys have no overcoats many have no woollen blankets, and a few are without shoes. We have had a very hard campaign. Have seen some of the hardest fighting of the season. But I suppose you have seen accounts of it in the papers. I wrote Em a small sketch of Winchester. None of the papers that I have seen give an accurate acc't of it. One paper says we are or call us 5th Corps, another calls us 2nd Corps. While Both these organizations are before Petersburg. The charge at Fishers Hill [21-22 September] was a desperate affair. Our Corps bore the brunt of it being in the centre of the Corps. After trying over two months I finally got my discharge papers [these had to be completed before he could assume his Second Lt. promotion] through at Harrisonburg and was mustered as an Officer to date July 24th 1864. My Discharge & final statements are all correct, and I can settle up to 24 July as soon as I can find a Paymaster. The old Regiments have been paid off. But no pay for the 11th & say however that we shall be paid before the 1st of Nov. I hope so as it is so much work to make out the Muster Rolls, and I have the most of it to do. I wrote to Uncle John [Farwell] about some boots. I am to send him the pay from here. Expect to pay \$10.00 or more for them could you get them some leisure day & hold them in readiness to send me with the two coats & pants by and by. I would like it. I do not know whether we shall stop here this Winter. Go to Petersburg, or Washington. If we ever get into winter Quarters I shall want them. Perhaps before, my shoes are good yet, but should it become very wet & muddy I should want boots. I am pleased to hear Em say "Take care of yourself." Of course I shall. But I think what "Mankillers" such as Fishers Hill & Winchester are, fight all day & march all night with nothing to eat, no water to drink, half of the time, such exertion tells on a mans constitution. Don't know but I am as good as new. Except a little stiff & lame—Castleton boys are all right. Will Alfred writes me that he is in Philad'a out of reach of the plunging shells. Just where he wants to be I suppose. I hear that Lieut. J. H. Macomber is at home paroled [First Lt. John H. Macomber from Fairhaven, Co. C., 11th Vermont, who had been captured June 23, 1864. He was paroled September 12, 1864]. You must excuse my writing, I have no table to write on. I recd Ellas verses. They were pretty. I read them many times. About the magazines, I have sent all that I have recd. Have not seen a magazine in a long time & but seldom ever see a paper, and then 5 days old. So Ella Little Gal you must not be so hard on your poor old Uncle. I wish I could read the Harpers [Weekly] this fall. But we are away from all marks of civilization. From 25 miles above Staunton our forces have burnt every mill, Haystack, & every particle of grain for forage that we could not take away. Large quantities of wheat & flour was found & burnt. At night the country was lit up & at day darkened by the fire, & smoke of burning barns &c &c. A great many families are going north as it will be impossible to live in the Valley. Our Corps foraged, plundered indiscriminately. In one day Co. C took 500 lbs honey 1 barrel sugar cane molasses, 5 barrels flour, 5 or 6 shoats, 4 large sheep, 20 gallons apple butter, 15 or 20

turkeys & geese, with apples, peaches &c. Sam Dowling brought over a bushel of plug tobacco & gave the boys. Every day the boys get something.

I am glad to learn Sister Al is going to school. I hope she will improve her time. It is quite cold to day, perhaps tomorrow will be uncomfortably warm. Ems letter of 25th came to hand last night. But most of the news is anticipated. To day is Sunday, but we only know it because we keep track of the flight of time. We have no Sunday in the Army. This morning we could hear Artillery up the valley. Supposed to be 19th Corps skirmishing with Longstreets Division of Johnnies. My watch continues to keep good time I think a great deal of it. Well I have made out a very long letter. I guess you will think its length is its only good quality. I am sorry to know that Father has been unwell. I hope that your healths may be good & can think of not much & will close wishing you good night.

Affectionately Yours,
Oscar

To Family of E.W.F.
Castleton
Vermont

[An undated letter written sometime after October 9 and before October 20, 1864.]

Shall send you the hair chain of the watch I captured at W [Winchester]. I wish you would preserve it. I send it because I am afraid it will wear out in the field. I have a ribbon to put on my watch. Wouldn't take \$50 for it. It keeps first rate time. I hear the Armstrong boys are making money like dirt. Shall send home my commission as soon as possible. The Johnnies occupy Fishers Hill. Report is that Longstreets whole Corps is here also a part of A.P. Hills. If this is the case, They must be 40,000 strong in our front , most equal to our force. But the 6th Corps is the butt end of this Army, some picket firing is going on, out at the front.

We are under arms this morning at daylight. But hear nothing from it since any moment is liable to bring on an engagement. Though I hardly think the Johnnies would pitch in to us first. Weather is quite cool have sent after an over coat, that will cost me about \$15. Although our regiment has been cut up so bad this summer we have recd recruits enough to nearly make the number good. Co. C. has had 20 men who are bought most of them, once in a while a good one is found among the No. [number]. Well my "yarn" is most played out, and I will close for the present.

From G.O. French

E.W. French Esq.
Castleton
Vermont

P.S. Direct as I said & then put on one corner of the box,
For. Lieut G.O. French
11 Vt Volunteers

Camp on Cedar Creek, Va.

Oct. 20, 1864

My Dear Mother,

Your kind letter of the 13th Sept. (I think you meant Oct) came to hand this morning. The first mail we have had in a long time. We had a very hard time of it yesterday. We were roused by the sullen of cannon, out at the front. Orders came for us to be ready to move at a moments notice, and we started on a double quick, loading our pieces on the run. The Johnnies had pitched into the 8th Corps surprising them in their tents. They broke & ran, leaving tents, guns, clothes, knapsacks, even their hats, & ran for the rear. This brought their charging column in rear & on the left flank of the 19th Corps, who after a brief resistance also broke & ran, at this time they had captured over 40 ambulances, 21 cannon. Not less than 15000 muskets, and a good many prisoners. (I was in Com'd of Co D. during the fight till I got wounded.) We went right on the skirmish line, and drove the enemys skirmishers for half a mile, through a belt of woods. On they came, in solid column. And our skirmish line fell back on 3d Brig. (Gen. Bidwell) & passing to the rear, formed on the left of our Brig. which was on left of 1st Brig, 3d Brig on our left. We held the crest of a hill & such fighting I never saw in my life. Our Division was in one line. No second line. No reinforcements. No ammunition. I thought the day was lost, but still done all in my power to prevent such a calamity. Their Arty raked our position with shot, shell & cannister. Lieut Oscar Lee Co. M. fell a short distance from me, a ball cutting half his body out [Capt. Oscar R. Lee from Waterford, Co. M, 11th Vermont. He was promoted to Captain October 16, 1864]. We were being cut up awfully, soon after I was hit in the left side of the back of my head, with a piece of shell, that struck the ground & glanced up. I fell, & Capt. Templeton came & helped me [Capt. Robinson Templeton from Worcester, Co. H, 11th Vermont]. It cut to the bone but not dangerous, a gash two inches long, bleeding freely. Capt T. ordered two men to take me to the rear, but I sent them back, & put off alone. I worked my way to Newtown where I staid last night, & rode up here this A.M. horseback. I am all right, but my head is sore & neck sore & stiff. In the PM our boys drove them, recapturing all arty & 22 pieces more, all ambulances & wagons from them. Don't know how many but they have been whipped, so they will not forget it very soon. You say you have not heard from me in a long time, but I write very often. I know nothing of S.K. Gates [Sgt. Salmon K Gates from Castleton, Co. I, 17th Vermont Infantry. He was wounded and taken prisoner September 30, 1864, and died at Petersburg, Va., October, 1864]. He is at Petersburg & we are a long distance from him. Did Will tell you what Regt he was in? or where he was? Tell me so I can write him. Our Co. did not suffer as bad as usual yesterday. One killed & 6 wounded, 1 missing. No Castleton boys are hit but me. Geo Ross is hit in hand, not very bad [Pvt. George W. Ross from Castleton, Co. B, 2nd Vermont Infantry].

Camp Near Strasburg, Va

October 24th 1864.

Friends at Home

Having a few leisure moments to day, thought would improve them in writing home. I wrote you the 20th next day after the Battle, from Cedar Creek & suppose you will hear that I am wounded, & will worry about me, but you must not. My head is getting along finely, is somewhat sore, but is all right. We are now lying a mile west from where I wrote you on the 9th inst & just out of town. Our Div is on picket. I heard that Sam [Dowling] called to see me the next morning after the battle, but I had not then come up from Newtown & so missed seeing him. I am out of humor with everyone this morning & cross as a bear. Sergt Freelove called on me yesterday, just escaped from the Johnnies [Sgt. John Freelove from Castleton, Co. B, 2nd Vermont Infantry. He was taken prisoner May 10, 1864, and escaped September 14, 1864]. He just made out to whip the Rebs. on the 19th capturing all their Artillery, about 5000 prisoners, ambulances, wagons, ammunition etc. They had Kershaws celebrated Division & another Brigade that was not with us at Fishers Hill or Winchester, & consequently did not know Sheridans style. The 8th and 19th Corps. were completely surprised & broke & our Corps went in and held the whole thing. But the dead lay all over the ground. The Johnnies charged to within 10 rods of our lines, but the old 2nd Division stood up pouring into them, such a volley as fairly made everything rattle. Eight months pay are most due. Capt Goodrich is stopping at Pennsylvania Hotel in W. [Washington] has been gone five months Poor fellow, how he has suffered. Our Returns, & clothing rolls, are 5 mos behind & now we must go to work and make them out here in the field, no accommodations, no nothing. I am out of any kind of change. But for fear you will think me an awful spendthrift, will not ask for any now. I can borrow for a few months longer. I hope the U.S. will pay the Heavy 11th sometime. The other Regts in the Brigade have been paid twice since our Regt. It is coming on rainy & cold, we have no overcoats, only a few blankets etc. Our Q.M. [Quartermaster] is not worth a red cent, is back at Harpers Ferry drunk, all the time, don't bring us a continental thing. This is captured ink, "Johnnies" It will be useless for me to tell you I am cross, this morning. I guess you will see it plain enough. If I was getting the rank & pay for all this, twould be a very different thing. All No 6 boys are well. Except H. Ross. Leechs enough tobacco to kill a horse and goes around shivering like a little fool [Pvt. Horace G. Ross from Castleton, Co. C, 11th Vermont]. Old Ross should be shot for ever allowing him to enlist. I expect a mail in to night, and a chance to send this. I will bid you

Good by Write often

G.O. French

Strasburg Va Nov. 6th 1864.

My Dear Father,

Yours of 24th Oct. came to hand on the 2nd inst. found me all right, and right side up. I think you must have missed some of my letters, as I have written so often that I am almost tired of the operation, & it seems as though there was so many of you there to write against me alone, that I should at least receive two to my one. I am glad that Will is on the sea, he is better off than I. He will not be compelled to charge breastworks, and look those guns in the faces. My head is healed up, and I took the rag off. Feel quite natural. I heard of St. Albans raid would like to have been there with Co. C. We would have cleared them out in 5 minutes. I am looking for the express receipt for my box, it is getting cold weather, and I need those nice boots. Your garden is indeed very good. I am glad to learn that it is so. You should see my Johnny Watch. It is tiptop. Can take \$50 for it any day, a very good one. I have no time to write to night as the mail is to go out soon. I shall not call this a letter, & shall write one soon to make up for all deficiencies in this. G.O. French

P.S. Yours of Oct 30th is at hand I am very thankful that you write so often. You must continue to do so, for I think so much of even a word from home.

Am glad to learn that Sam [Sgt. Samuel Dowling from Fairhaven, Co. H, 1st Vermont Cavalry. He was captured July 3, 1863, and paroled November 17, 1863. He apparently was sent back to one of the general hospitals in Vermont. He was mustered out of service November 18, 1864] is at home all safe and sound. He is very fortunate. Lt. Tucker and myself occupy a parlor in town, as an office. We pay no rent. The people (Mr. Borum) are terrible secesh, have three sons in the Rebel Army though one is a prisoner at Ft. Lookout taken at Vicksburg. As to resigning I do not think I shall. I want to stay my time out & go home with the Company. Carl B. [Carlos Barber] writes me that his patriotism is played out. Smart speech that, when his Brother, is in Rebel hands, suffering no one knows what While he is at home enjoying all the comforts, and luxuries of life [Pvt. William Barber, Co. C, 11 th Vermont, was taken prisoner June 23, 1864, and died in the Confederate POW camp at Andersonville, Ga., November 16, 1864]. Yes that was a terrible battle at Cedar Creek. Had it not been for the Old 6th Corps, the whole thing would have been in Winchester that night—minus a wagon, ambulance or a piece of Artillery. Our corps. was formed to check the entire Rebel Army, and was disposed in one line of Battle, no breastworks. 3 times did Kershaws Div. charge, ours, and in three lines of Battle, & three times were they repulsed, leaving their dead in heaps, in our front. In some piles there was 10 or 12 confeds piled up. All our dead & wounded that they could get at were stripped of clothes leaving their stark corpses on the ground for two or three days. We captured 50 ambulances, loaded with their wounded, a great many wagons, & caissons. Over 60 cannon, including 24 that they took from us in the morning. As many as 12000 muskets. And over 7000 prisoners (including wounded) Earlys Army fell back to New Market that night (over 30 miles) a complete rabble—I must close.

Good night
G. O. French

Camp of 6th Army Corps
Near Kearnsstown Va.

Nov. 13th 1864

Friends at Home

Yours of 30th Oct. is recd as also Ems. paper. The Army of the valley moved from its position on Cedar Creek on the morning of the 9th inst. Our Brigade left Strasburg at daylight & formed the rear guard of the Army. We now occupy a good position. On the night of our arrival at this point, I was detailed to go on picket & was out until yesterday noon. For 30 hours before I was relieved, we were skirmishing with the Rebel Cavalry, & mounted Infantry, who drove in our cavalry picket, & were trying to feel our position. Our folks have taken 620 prisoners & two cannon. I expect our fighting is most done up for the year, i.e. if they don't send us to some other places. There is some talk of our going to Wilmington N.C. to take that place. I hope not, for that place is strongly fortified. I want you to tell me what Co. Regt Brig Div Corps Brother Will is in. Mother said he was in the Army, and then you wrote that he wrote to Aunt Ell just as he was going to sail & I am at a loss to know whether he is in the Army or Navy. Hope he is in the latter for I think he stands the best chance-- Weather here is very cool. I am writing, sitting in a shelter tent, without a stove. I did write to have my boots, etc sent & shall want pants. Evans is to bring them up from W. if we do not go there. I would not be surprised if we went there to winter But do not expect to much. Pat Donnelly has come up also. Ock B. [Babbitt]. I send you a picture of Dog Jack of the 1st Brigade (Col. Warner) of our Div. 1&2. P.O.O. Isn't it curious Aunt Ell don't write to me? I wrote her when in Annapolis. However she can do as she pleases about it. Think Tim would be around sometime. Lt. Tucker is to have a pair of boots made at Uncle Johns. If you could get them & box them up. It would be doing him a favor. We will let you know where to send them by & by. He don't expect them less than a month from now. I cant write worth a cent today. So cold. We are waiting to hear from Grant now. He does nothing but fire shotted salutes in honor of our victories in the valley [Lt. Gen. U. S. Grant saluted every victory in the Shenandoah Valley, by having the Federal artillery around Petersburg fire a prescribed number of rounds into the Confederate trenches]. Should like to go to Washington to stay the winter, & would like to come home this winter on furlough. Do you advise me to come? Expect twould cost rather high. Tell Sam [Dowling] that I heard that he called to see me before he went home & was sorry I could not see him—Guess that Uncle Chan is getting rich to go into real Estate. So I have got me a coat (Cavalry over 10.55) Regulation slouch hat 7.00 gloves. 2.50 pants (Common foot) 3.55 & would like it now if my boots were here. My old shoes begin to fail up a little. You must tell me if you got my Commission, Discharge etc. I wish all the papers to be carefully preserved. Expect we will be paid this month. But don't know for certain. I have sent Uncle John the \$8 for my boots. (Out of the \$60 you have on my allotment. I shall want you to pay Jo. H [\$] 20 & do as you like with the rest.) I want to send Grandma some money, but my expenses are so great I cannot do it. I am glad to learn that Sister Alice is doing so well at the Sem. Little Sis Ella writes so much to me that I

feel myself greatly indebted to her in the writing line. But she must take a good share of all my letters to herself.

I sincerely hope that fighting will be over this Fall. If Grant should do as much in proportion to the force at Petersburg, as Sheridan has done in the valley, I think they would "cave" this. I want to tell you one thing. At the battle of Cedar Creek, the 6th Corps was not driven an inch. Nor did we fight behind breastworks. Our corps after repulsing the charges of the enemy fell back about a mile. This manœuvre was done "by the right of regiments to the rear into column." It was only done to straighten the line. While falling back, there was little musketry & not much Arty. firing. The Papers say "The Army was driven beyond Middletown & the 8th and 19th Corps ran in confusion, some of the 8th Corps got as far as Winchester, 15 miles & only came back to Camp on the ground that the rest had won for them. But the Grecian cross [symbol for the Sixth Corps] has not been driven. My head is some tender yet, but it is doing firstrate. I wore a wore a bandage on it only a little over two weeks. The Illustrious Will Alford is in Vermont. I must close this hard looking letter Give my regards to all enquiring friends-- Write soon & often if not more so.

I remain

Affectionately Yours

G.O. French

E.W. French Esq

Camp Near Kearnsstown Va Sunday Nov 20, 64

Dear Friends at Home

Ems letter of the 10th inst came to hand this P.M. Also one from Father at Keene & Wills letter, both of which I should answer, if Father were to stay at Keene. Wills [brother] letter brought tears to my eyes. I guess the poor boy will find out that I was about right. But if he feels lonely now what would he do, should be called upon to go through such a campaign as I have this summer? The very memory which seems like a horrid dream. I am very very much alarmed at hearing that Mother is so sick. Em you must stay at home & take care of Mother. Cost what it will. I will pay you \$5. per week, & more if necessary. My pay is \$152 per month, and I can and will go it all for Mothers comfort. Except of course enough for me to live on. Em, I charge you to see to this. Don't go to your school, till Mother is better. I would much rather you would stay at home than to hire a girl. A girl would not take half the interest in it that you would. As to the other thing you spoke of, let it pass. If you must have a girl, I wish you would try to hire Hattie Hawkins, will pay all the shot Don't let money stand in the way of Mothers comfort.

I sent the \$60. By allotment, 5 mos at \$12 per month. Em I should not think you would want to travel around at all while Ma is so unwell, tell Smid that his big Uncle conjures him to stand by his mother & be a good boy to do all the chores &c.

The Weather is quite cold & rainy. I send Maje Woods letter. Take good care of it for me. All No 6 Boys are well. Write often. You are doing very well now Days. But don't be weary in well doing.

I will close
Take good care of
Mother
Good night
Truly Yours
Lt. G.O. French

Camp Sixth Corps, Nov. 29th/64

Friends at home,

As we have had no mail for seven days, I am naturally very anxious to hear from home, and Mother. It is reported that Moseby captured our mail last night. But I hardly believe it, as there are so many rumors always circulating through a camp. The Johnnies Cavalry has been down on a reconnaissance. They found us here. I am greatly in need of those boots &c. Have you sent them? If you had sent them when I wrote, you see I could probably have had them now. My feet are out on the ground. I fear I shall be compelled to get a pair of Sutlers boots & pants 35-40- I send some comic paper to Frank [Smid] – or shall when the next papers go out, don't know when that will be. We are now lying in same old camp, known as "Camp Russell". If Father is at home & can send me \$10 I wish he would do so, but don't discommode your selves in the least to send it. I did not get much money, and have had to live & get some clothing since paid. I never expect to save anything to amount to much in this service, it costs so for all that an Officer wants. I hate to ask for money, for Father once spoke as though I was a spendthrift—which is not the case—If I don't have enough to square all up when I get out of the service, I will go to work, and pay up, all you send me. We are having Battalion and Brigade drills every day. Also Brigade parades, each night.

There is nothing for me to write that would interest you. The boys from C- are all well, so far as I know – N.H. Stratton has given up Business at cor Ave – expect my box will be at 401- Ex. Office till called for. Some rumor of our Brigade going to Washington for winter quarters But I don't put much stock in it. All ambulances, teams &c belonging to 6th Corps. at Petersburg have been ordered to report at Mid Vill [?] Dept. pretty good evidence that we are not going back to that dismal place.

If you have not sent the box, Send it at once—Directed as follows.

Lt. G.O. French
Bat "C" 1st Vt Arty
Winchester Va
6th Corps

The cars now run to Winchester and from thence it will be brought up here by the Brigade teams I would give \$10 if I had the things now, tis most 3 [written over 4] months since I wrote to Uncle John about the boots. Sherman is doing a big thing in Georgia. I wish he could have 50000 veteran reinforcements he would take every city on the Atlantic Sea Coast, and Gulf of Mexico. Well now I will close. Don't fail to take a Duplicate receipt for that box & send me one.

Don't think to forget to fail to give my best regards to Old Sam Dowling. Shall send Sister Alice a Waverly Magazine.

I bid you all
Good Night

From Oscar
Expect Major Johnson is at home.

OC

P.S. I am going to be married. I enclose my wifes picture. She is 35, old enough. But very rich, that is what I go in for-- [He was facetiously referring to Miss Jewett, his correspondent in Foxboro, Mass.] Oc

Camp Russell, Va

Dec 5th 1864

Dear Friends

I have just finished a letter to Will. I shall send him yours of 28th. Our Division is still here, two days after the 1st Div left. The 3d Div followed. We got up in the morning, and looking over to the right the Old 3d Div was filing slowly out in the direction of Winchester. Report is that the 1st Div took transports at Washington on the 3d under sealed orders. I think that our Corps will go either to Savannah or to Charleston S.C. To meet Gen. Sherman. Although our Division is here at present I expect we will go in a day or two. But may not go at all. In Washington I shall be able to get my things. I am very much worried on Mothers account. I hope that she will refrain from doing anything at all, until she fully recovers her strength. In the meantime Alice, Frank, & Ella will do all the work around the house. If our Div. stays in this Dept. or in the event of our Regiment going to the Defenses of W. to winter, I shall try for a leave of absence to come home for 20 or 25 days. I mistrust that Lee & Grant will transfer their Armies to Ga. or S.C. this Winter, and fight it out in the cotton States. I am some anxious for Sherman, am not of those who think he can march 250 miles through a hostile country, without opposition, perhaps serious disaster. But I am more than ever confident that the great Bogus, rotten-hearted Confederacy is bound to be overthrown. Col. Warner is now Bvt. Brig. Gen. of Vols. We are trying to work it so as to get Maj. Walker for Col. I expect this is the last letter I shall write you from the Shenandoah Valley. The scene of so much suffering, toil, dangers and glory, The Sixth Corps is bound for new fields of strife. No Winter Quarters for us. Your last letter was a very good one—long and “gassy” Take good care of Mother, and tell Smid to not forget to read about “cats” in the paper I sent him, & to remember his Uncle. Also tell Ella, I thank her for her letter, & that Dog Jack has seen that and a good deal more. That he can whip any dog in the Army. We have got a pet gray squirrel in the tent, eats hard tack from our hands with a gusto.

Write Soon
From Oscar

On board Steamer Vanderbilt, Chesapeake Bay Dec 11th 1864 1 P.M.

My Dear Friends,

We broke camp and moved out at daylight the 9th. Took the cars at Stevensons Depot, and here we are bound for Petersburg. The Steamer shakes some and rolls. I jumped off & run down the Avenue & found the box all right at Cor 6st in Taylor's Saloon. I guess Strat has failed or something & runs it in Taylors name. The coat is a good snug fit, none too close for a military coat, but a little too long for all on the back. I sold the other this morn to Bill Cheny of the band & took off the chevrons, sold it for \$20. The apples tasted real good. The cheese is quite mouldy but tastes firstrate to me. I got Als letter, she seemed to think it was a Big thing to have my name in the papers, as wounded. But I will take my choice to be excused, if agreeable to all concerned. My boots fit good & came in play I tell you. I shall put the things in my valise & pitch the box into the James. We expect to arrive at City Point some time to night. Every one is astonished—or rather thinks it rather hard that the 6th Corps should be sent to Petersburg after doing such fighting in the rally this summer. All No. Six boys are here and well. Only 9 cos of our Regt are here, & Officers & baggage & horses—I think of Childe Harold as he went from Houer[?] the Sixth Corps is similar minded. We care not what land they ban us to. So not again to Petersburg. But there we are going, & we are trying hard to make ourselves believe that it isn't so bad a place after all. I am anxious to hear from Mother. I have written two or three times since I heard from home. Expect our mail for the past 8 days is at City Point waiting for us. My health is firstrate. Never better. I am truly a big Yankee

Gouy is sounding for officers [illegible] [illegible] \$11.00 shant go. Eat the [illegible] hardtack first. I have suspicion that you will not of cannot read half this. So I will stop.

Don't fail to write soon

From Oscar

P. S. [illegible] O. G.

[Ona aseperate scrape of paper] Tell Ella we have got our pet squirrel in the state room. The Philistines got our Kitty.

Camp Before Petersburg Va. Dec 14th [1864]

Dear Friends,

Yours of Dec 4th & 9th with 10 [dollars] are recd. We arrived here last night & relieved the 2d Div 2d Corps. We found pretty good quarters here put up by 15th Corps and vacated when they went on their great raid. Our Div is 3 miles west of Weldon R.R. 4 miles west of Fort Hell & 3 miles east of Southside R.R. On the night of the 12th we got off the cars, and went into camp, not 20 rods from poor Peter's grave [Sgt. Peter Donnelly who was killed in action June 23, 1864]

The grave was all right except we found a railing around it & a better headboard than we had been able to furnish for him. When we left, this spot was two miles in front & beyond our left, now Grants left is some six miles to the front. I tell you Grant has done well here. Let some old fogies that find fault come out there & see the situation, & if the lines are not far enough advanced to suit them, take hold & advance a mile or two, just for fun -- If Sam thinks he can save \$100 a month he is mistaken. It costs me \$6 a week for board & get nothing but [hard] tack, pork & coffee. I don't know for certain that pay is raised but I understood it was from Oct 1st. It must be raised or the Army will want for Officers before spring. I have none of the extras that you mention. I use no whiskey or tobacco, as do the rest of mankind, & Officers in particular. You bet I know as well what the soap costs as anyone & shall do my best, though I don't expect to get rich out of this war. As to the pictures from Foxboro, I never got one, we have written two or three times this summer, but don't "get on soft" a bit. She is an old maid, writes a good letter but is very sentimental, about this Civil War &c. Should have answered sooner, but in the hurry I forgot it. I have got hold of Dickens "Boz" & like it firstrate. I like the boots, they are a good fit. So cold I cant write for sour apples. I am very glad to learn that Mother better, should think that Zerua [Babbitt] was old enough to not be homesick. Well I must close have nothing to write. Have got the straps on my new coat, looks gay. Take good care of yourselves all.

From
Oscar

Shall receive & send a mail now every day

OC

In Camp, Dec 31st 1864

My Dear Father,

Yours of the 17th inst came to hand a few days ago. It must have laid over on the road and waited for the other to pass as some of mine have done. Truly it was a fine letter, beats all I ever saw you get off. You never told me of Alice's misfortune, it is a very bad thing to be so, but still if she can see things quite near her, her work &c It is better than some I have seen. Weather here is cold & wet, very disagreeable. Ed Burns [Peter Donnelly's step-father who had apparently come to bring Peter's body home] has come and gone with good success. If he only gets home all right, will have a good job done. I want you to send me my "Muster in Roll" that I sent home. Send it in a large envelope, if convenient, so as not to fold it too many times. You must not feel down hearted about the prospects for the future. As you say, "We will try to worry them through, in some way." Were mustered to day. Shall get the rolls in by two days more. You are mistaken about the Colonel having us paid off at any time he chooses, for the Col has been as near "dead broke" as any of us, but could not influence the Pay Dept a bit or hurry up the "green back presses." I got a line from Em a few days since, and replied. Directing to Hubbardton. The Johnnies continue to come in at different parts of the line [surrender], there is some picket firing to-night. Last night, they gobbled a few pickets from the 3d Div. & killed 2. Last Friday they only hung one man, contrary to the usual custom—generally hang 3 every Friday. Deserters, that we took in the Valley, fighting us. I saw but little of Freeloze when here, or rather at Strasburg. I fully realize that I am spending 3 the best yrs of my Life. But I did smile when I thought of spending 1. a day for board & burning the other 4 each night, "so funny" I expect however that bill has not passed, as I signed a paper the other day petitioning Congress to raise Officers pay. Did you know Geo Shaws wife has got a baby? Such is the lamentable fact. I learn that Warren Mather [Pvt. Warren D. Mather from Plymouth, Co. K, 6th Vermont Infantry, died December 17, 1864 from wounds received October 19, 1864] is dead. Was wounded at Cedar Creek, had a leg amputated & has since died. That is the way a poor Soldier has to take it. Don't fail to send my roll. I should not have sent it home. Not that it is necessary to have it, but, a fellow should for his own interest have it around. This is the last night of the hardest year I ever saw. But I am fat, & stout, at present, notwithstanding the pull back at Annapolis. Well I wish you a Happy New Year.

From
Oscar

P.S. When you write to me don't underline the Lieut. on the envelope, & oblige Yours,
Jones, Ball & Poor.