

Camp Griffin, Va.

January 1, 1862

Dear friends,

A "Happy New Year" to one and all clustered around the "ingle side" at home, or rather to all who around the social board today gave a passing thought to those of us far away from home and friends. I went on picket yesterday morning and was relieved this morning. So the entire programme of the departure of the old, and advent of the New Year was open to me. I passed the night in "watching" but somewhat differently from the watch meetings at home. I spent from 8 to 12 at night on the outposts and we were in expectation of an attack all the time. This kept me constantly on the line among the men preparing for an attack. At 12 I was relieved and moved with my men back to the main reserve where we built a huge fire and six to eight officers of us gathered around the fire and spent the time in telling yarns, cracking jokes. Officers from the 7th Maine, 49th & 33rd New York were present. Occasionally a shot or two would bring us all to our feet but as all would be quiet again down we would go and into the fun again. About four o'clock this morning I spread my blanket on the ground and with a stone for a pillow slept peaceably my first sleep for 1862. I got to Camp about 9 A.M. and found your letters awaiting me.

Ed, I wrote to John Messner about coming down. I suppose he received the letter. I have made room for him in my Company. I would like to have been at home on Christmas and had set my heart upon going but somehow or other Col. Good and Gen. Brannan both do not want me to leave at present. The fact is we are daily expecting an engagement and they seem to think my Company will not do as well as they expect it to unless I am there. I have the Crack Company in the Regiment. Yesterday was muster day and Sam Miller received the premium for having the cleanest arms in the Regiment. However, I think I will get off before long if nothing occurs unusual. I will send you some (unreadable) the first chance I get.

I am sorry to hear of Mr. Rizer's illness but hope he will be well ere long. I should like to have him in our Regiment as our Chaplain is worse than none at all. I have seen him so tight that he had to hold himself up by a tent. We have plenty of fun with him though such as smoking him out, putting big trees before his tent, etc.

Ed, give my best respects to Miss Warner and if she does not go home before the first of February I think I will get to see her as I will make a desperate effort to spend my birthday at home. Mother, if I get there I want you to cook a dish of shitz and knep. I have been wishing for them all day. Yesterday I went into a house on the line and bought a mince pie and cup of coffee from a girl there. They were first rate but mother could beat them.

Mother, suppose you pay a visit to Washington. I will meet you there, pay all expenses, bring you over here, and give you a good time generally. Now do, it will be good for you. When you write again just mention the day you will come. I stay at the Clarendon Hotel but will meet you at the cars.

Abbie, I am pleased to learn of your progress in Music. I think you are improving in your letters, also. I hope you will continue to do so and ere long you shall have an instrument of your own. Is Miss Rauthauff your teacher yet where do you practice.

I had not intended mentioning the following but for fear some of the boys may and an incorrect story get out. I will tell you. The other night while on picket Mark Shipman fired upon some man crawling up to him or he supposed he was. Sergeant Piers and myself went out to the line to see the cause of the report and some one attempted to shoot at us but his cap snapped. The fellow made tracks in a hurry before we could catch him but I think he got badly frightened anyhow. You do not say anything about this and do not be alarmed as he could not hit us. It was too dark and if he had fired or his gun gone off we could have shot him by the flash. We have not lost a man on picket in one entire Division.

Pop, were you at Engels with that party you mention. I have heard a good deal about Jake Becks present and would like to know something about it. Where did he get it and what is it, etc., eh!

Ed are you reading any? I would like to know something about your progress.

I am all in my house. Bill has gone "up town" and Reese is out visiting. The wind is blowing a perfect hurricane around the house. I have my house papered all over now and I tell you it is the best this wide of Gen. Smith's head quarters. Jake Keiffer just came in. He was in picket with me last night and tried for about two hours to catch some guinea hens for a New Years dinner. They were too wild for him and so he filled his haversack with potatoes out of a hole he found. He won't starve in this country. Remember me to all friends and all write soon.

Yours,

Shindel