

Camp Brannen

Key West, Fl,

Feb 16, 1862

Dear friends,

You cannot imagine my joy on Friday when a steamer arrived and had in the mail on board a letter from you for me. It was the one of the 3rd or 4th inst. and as it was the first tidings from home I had since I left the North it was doubly welcome. This day being Sunday we have had no drilling. I went to church this morning. I attended [the] Episcopal church and will do so as long as we remain here, for several reasons. First, it is the largest, second, the preacher is the best and most loyal, 3rd the most and best looking ladies attend there. The day is very warm and I came out in white pantaloons, with stockings and low shoes - together with a white shirt & collar. The boys thought I was going to get married. All or nearly all the ladies were draped in white while the Gents were nearly all clothed in white coats and Cuban leaf hats. I just thought as I sat there that about the same time you were sitting in church at home wrapped up in shawls and overcoats. Now, about 4 o'clock, I am sitting under an awning in front of my Markoe, without coat or vest, and sweating at that. I tried to write in my Markoe but it was too warm so a book on my knees serves for a desk and if the mosquitoes leave me alone for a half hour I will finish yet before supper.

We are getting things fixed up nicely here. Our Camp is a most beautiful one. My dining room is an arbor fixed under a large cactus tree. The birds sing and carol merrily around my head while I eat, while flowers give the air a most delightful odor. Oh! this is the most delightful country in the world and if I can once [get] used to the mosquitoes, I would not exchange it for the whole of Virginia. If I outlive this War I want to settle here, for no better place exists.

However, I do not think we will remain here long. Possibly not over a week or two. There is already a large fleet of Gun and Mortar Boats in the harbor and as quick as Gen. Brannen arrives we expect warm work. Either Pensacola or Mobile I think will be attacked by us. Some seem to think New Orleans will be the point but I do not. However, it may be

that this point will be our headquarters and all letters should be addressed here until we get some other post with our hands of which we will give due notice. But I hear Bill, the cook, calling me to supper and I will finish tonight after church.

10 P.M. Well, I have just came from church. Saw plenty of girls - good looking ones, too, for this country, but nothing to compare with our hearty buxom ladies at home. They appear like hot house plants here - too fragile to be exposed to the air.

Next Saturday is the 22nd and we are going to have a fine time of it here if we do not move. In the day time I am to make a speech - then we will have a greased pig [unreadable] climb a greased pole, a wrestling match - a [unreadable] Mates are for the men, and in the evening the officers intend having a Ball for themselves - so you can look out for fun. Ed says the Ladies are going to have Refreshment table for the benefit of the church. I wish you had some of the oranges, cocoa nuts and bananas that our boys waste here. How I would just like to step in in the evening and see you all. But I will think what a good time you are having.

Abbie, I have a hat full of the most beautiful shells for you that I will send to you the first opportunity that occurs. You never saw so many or such handsome ones. You must keep them until I get home. I will send you some other curiosities I have as soon as I get a chance which I think will be before long. If I could I would send you a box of oranges.

Mother, I should have liked to have met you in Washington but you left too soon. I suppose father did not even get to see you there. I am glad you enjoyed yourself so well. Bill Hendricks is now messing with the non-commissioned staff or, rather, rooming with them. He still eats with the company but not with me. I told him he would have to hunt other quarters and take care of himself. His "lady Mamina" had better come down and take care of him.

I see Bouldy's body got home safe. I am glad of it as it is a load off of my mind. I hope they did not open the coffin though, as it would have been very dangerous.

Ed, I want you to write to Farney and have him send me the "War Press" regularly every week. Pay in advance. The money will reach him more surely from there than here.

I wish Jake Rohrbact was here. I would make him Orderly, with a fine chance for promotion shortly. Remember me to Gen. Clement, Grandmother and old friends.

Yours,

Shindel