

Camp Oliver Dec. 13th, 62

Dear Friend

Excuse me for addressing you in this familiar manner but I cannot deny myself the privilege of thinking you to be one of my kindest friends and I believe the best and thinking so I cannot well restrain from expressing some of my thoughts on paper. I have sometimes thought you must consider me as rather forward in addressing you at all.

When I consider that personally we are almost entire strangers and that I am in the army 1500 miles from home and surrounded by all the vulgarity and profanity common in all camps I could not blame you for thinking. But Elizabeth when I enlisted in the U. S. service I gave myself credit for having at least some manhood and independence of character and think that I bore this reputation and further, knowing something of war of what I had read I enlisted with the determination of preserving my manhood at all hazards and after being in the service more than 14 months I have seen no reason why a soldier cannot be a man and has no reason to stoop so low as to be partaker in all the vices incident to camp life. My wish is that if I cannot return to my friends and be as much respected as I was previous to my enlisting I never may want to return.

I am very glad that we are becoming well enough acquainted through the medium of the pen that we can correspond with each other to some degree without _____ and if we do write some foolish things why whose^{is} business/it except our own.

Of course you will excuse me if my letters are rather sentimental as you know our business at present is inclined in that channel. nevertheless I like jollity in its place as well as any person can.

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I believe you are right in observing that girls do not always mind their mothers and even if they did do you suppose they would always do right. Neither do think that boys should be old men in their actions if they were where would we find the young men.

I rec'd yours of the 24th Nov. on yesterday but the one I answered in my last was of later date. I think you must have had quite an interesting time writing at Mr. Smiths. Did E-s-t-h-e-r want to know who you was writing to. If she was not inquisitive she is different from what she was in the days when we went to school. I am sorry I cannot have the privilege of reading that lost letter but probably Miss. Mc. has made sure of it. I suppose if she wishes a letter very bad that I might write her one but then I dont think it would be very interesting to her. You apologized for your _____ but you had no need of that those are just the letters I like to read one such letter is worth a dozen _ by _ letters fixed up after the latest and most approved style.

You may think that my taste in this respect is not very refined, but if refinement consists in having a desire to read about ten or twelve short lines you will please reckon me out.

I think I have written more and made more mistakes than you will be able to decipher. I suppose your time is pretty much occupied in teaching the young ideas how to shoot, but please remember.

Leonard