

DEFENSES OF WASHINGTON FT. SCOTT

(Letter written by a soldier of Connecticut Artillery at Ft. Scott, Arlington, Virginia, November 30th, 1862. Donated to the Arlington Historical Society by Mr. William F. McGuinn.)

SABBATH AT FT. SCOTT

Ft. Scott, Nov. 30th/62

Sister Mary,

I received your last welcome missive in due season. And will now try to answer it although I must confess I do not feel much like writing to night for it is Sunday evening.

Would you like to know how we pass our Sabbaths here in the army? I will tell you.

We have usually an inspection and review on Sunday if the weather permits. To day we have been to Fort Ward, a distance of four miles. Our Col's. head quarters are at that place. We left here at eight o'clock this morning fully equipped with arms and accouterments including knapsacks. After we arrived there we had to march in review and then be inspected. We got back to fort Scott about one o'clock. And then have a dress parade here at four o'clock. Therefore you see we have but little time to ourselves on Sunday. In fact it is the busiest day in the week. It is similar to regimental training in old Connecticut. Thus we pass our Sabbaths in the army.

You say that you think that the Sabbath School scholars make the best soldiers and are ~~the most to be trusted~~ to be trusted rather than some others, and ask me if I think so. I must confess I cannot agree with you on that subject, although I admit you may be right and I wrong. But as far as any observation extends in this regiment, I must confess I think that the young men who were reputed hard cases at home exhibit more honor now here than those who were professing Christians and thought to be the best of men at home. At least I would sooner trust the former class. Now I will tell you my reasons for thinking so. My observations on this subject are these. A man's moral character is never at a stand still. He daily grows better or worse. At least I think so. And I find that the young men who came out with me who were professing Christians and were members of the church held out strong and firm for a short-time and guarded themselves, but after a while they gradually ceased their watchfulness over themselves and began to fall from

Grace if you like the term, until they have lost all of their religion and are now gradually losing their character for good morals and in eighteen months longer bid fair to be the hardest characters we have in the regiment. And to illustrate I will take them three young men in our company who shall be nameless. They were all Christians by profession and I believe at the time we left home were were (sic) so in reality. Now one of them will not hesitate at any lie where he thinks it will gain him the best favor in the eyes of his officers. Another one will curse and swear occasionally and the other gets intoxicated occasionally. These three are by no means the worst-cases of that kind that have come under my observation. And on the other hand those men who were hard drinking characters have been at times where they could not get intoxicating drinks and in that way have got their appetite for it weakened and by that means accompanied by a strong effort on their part to quit have been enabled to do so. And their character for good morals has been continually improving. As I have but little time I will take but one illustration of this kind. There is a young man who I knew at home and he used to get intoxicated very often, in fact he was a common drunkard. I have seen him intoxicated but—twice since he left home and now he is of good repute as regards morals in the company. He is liked by every one in the company. And stands far higher in my estimation than any professed Christian who came out with us. There is also a middle class who have not altered much either way but their moral character stands about the same as when we came out. What do you think of my argument? I could write several sheets on the subject and count the illustration by dozens to sustain my argument.

But-I must say I know one or two drunkards in our company when we came and who are drunkards still. But-I think there is not a solitary case of a man who was a Christian that is a *Christian* still in our company.

There is nothing new with us. It is the same thing over and over day after day — nothing but drills and dress parade and guard duty — to perform excepting on Sunday, but I believe I have given a history of our Sunday. Consequently I have no news to write.

There is some hard feeling among the old soldiers regarding the removal of McClelland.

We think him the ablest General in the World at the present time. He *had* and still *has* our *entire confidence*. We do not doubt either his loyalty or ability. In fact he is the *idol* of the army of the peninsula. This been written in a great hurry and perhaps you cannot read it but it is almost time for roll call. And I must close with the kindest wishes for you and yours.

Except and excuse and answer if you think it worthy.

From your true friend and brother

G. W. Verill
(illegible)