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Letter from Thomas S. Armstrong to Francis P. Porter

Thomas S. Armstrong

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Head Quarters Fort Donelson  
Stewart Co. Tenn. Feb 23rd 1862

Frank

After nearly two weeks of travel on Rail road Steamboat & after Then the excitement of preparing for battle Then the march Then the formy column on the field Then the surrender Then the look upon the bloody field Then the bivouac Then the sleeping on rails in the mud our feet to a fire then commencing to rain at 12 P.M. Our blankets wet our faces in the water then the movement of our encampment to Dover Then my waiting upon a sick Brother Then the sleeping in mud walking in mud running in mud sitting in mud standing guard in rain and mud you may see that we have been busy. I hardly got time for as much writing as I would like to do. NeAR day the Cumberland commenced raining the lightning clouds poured down rain with sharp peals and thunder we had to move our head out
of the way of the rising water. Last night I slept with Robert Henson in a decent photographer's shop. This morning I awoke the birds singing, the sun shining clearly, an enjoyable, pleasant day. I washed & ate my breakfast of coffee, hard crackers & fat pork & just in that a young man left paper when we two young men signed W. H. Gillespie & H. F. Anderson. Then I took a stroll to look at the fort and took some kind of it and one sketch. W. F. My brother had the gang come here & went to Cincinnati night before last. He will stay in the hospita a while. He was just sick. Day before yesterday, or rather 10 the John Gillespie fell into the water between two steam boats & sunk so often that he came up the last time & said that he had just caught 1. I tell you he was saved narrowly indeed. George is well & in good spirits. I think we shall leave this place in a day or two. Joseph P. Kelly was here yesterday. He & two other men from Mount Airy came here after 6 dead & about grounds here 4 times. So day I...
saw Wash. Grow of the 76 Reg. O. V. one of my old school-mates. We are enjoying ourselves hugely here. The Gutta Sticks the prices onto the bags charging 2 prices for articles. I feel that we will be home before many months the Lord sparing our lives. Thank you should make yourself as happy as possible. Give your best to pray for us and away down in Tennessee write to me very often letters are bonds that bind faithful hearts to each other. Letters among be mind giving to kindred spirits lasting & true delight then if you would strengthen our friendship don't forget to write to me often. From your friend

Thomas P. Armstrong
Fort Donelson Tennessee

To My Friend Frank P. Porter
West Jamesville O
February 23, 1862

Head Quarters Fort Donelson

Stewart Co. Tenn Feb 23rd 1862

Frank

After nearly two weeks of travel on railroad, steamboat, & afoot, then the excitement of preparing for battle, then the march, then the forming in line in the field, then the surrender, then the look upon the bloody field, then the bivouac, then the sleeping on rails in the mud our feet to a fire, then commencing to rain at 12 P.M. Our blankets wet, our bodies in the water. Then movement of our encampment to Dover. Then my waiting on a sick brother (W.F.). The sleeping in the mud, walking in mud, running in mud. Standing guard in rain and mud, you may see that we have been busy. I hardly get time for as much writing as I would like to do.

Yesterday the Cumberland commenced rising, the clouds poured down rain with sharp lightning and thunder. We had to move our tent out of the way of the rising water. Last night I slept with Robert Hanson in a Secesh shoemakers shop. This morning I awoke the birds singing the sun shining clearly, an awful pleasant day. I washed and ate my breakfast of coffee, hard crackers & fat pork fried. I read a Zanesville paper where were two pieces signed J.W.A. Gillespie & W.F. Armstrong. The I took a stroll to look at the fort and took some views of it and one sketch.

W.F., my brother, had the Lung fever here & went to Cincinnati night before last. He will stay in the hospital there awhile. He was pretty sick. Day before yesterday or night rather, John Gillespie fell into the water between two steamboats and sunk so often that he came up the last time and was just caught & no more. I tell you he was saved narrowly indeed.

I think we shall leave this place in a day or two. Joseph J. Kelly was here yesterday. He & two other men from DeWitt Co. Ill came here after 6 dead & 20 wounded men, 4 of the dead belonging to Captain Conklin who was called here this morning. He said he was in the hearing of shells & balls but he said he was unwell and did not want to stay in the fight. Joe Kelly looks well & hearty, very portly. He thinks we will be in Alabama soon. Just like him. Capn Chandler has not been well since he came here.

I should like to have you see our boys in their tents. They take to Camp life as if they were used to it. I would like to give you a description of the battle but you have got just as good in the papers as we could give you. I have seen lots of Secesh prisoners. They wear pants of brown homemade jeans, snuff colored coats like hunting shirts with a belt in which they carried their Bowie knives. Our boys have thousands of Bowie knives, dogs are plenty, & Brock Keyes has a rooster which crows in our tent regularly. I have been over the grounds here 4 times.

Today I saw Wash Irwin of the 76 Reg O.V. one of my old school mates. Well we are enjoying ourselves hugely here. The ______ sticks the prices onto the boys charging 2 prices for articles.

I feel that we will be home before many months, the Lord sparing our lives. Frank you should make yourself as happy as possible. Serve your God & pray for us far away down in Tennessee.
Write to me very often. Letters are links that bind truthful hearts to each other. Fettering mind to mind. Giving to kindred spirits lashing & true delight. The if you would strengthen our friendship. Don't forget to write to me often. From your friend.

Thomas S. Armstrong

Fort Donelson Tennessee

Care of Col. M.D. Leggett

78th Reg. Co. B. O.V.U.S.A.