

In Front of Yorktown April 8th 1862

Dear Mother

I received your letter dated the 30th also one from Libbie the same date last night. It did me a great deal of good to get them for I had given up all hopes of getting any letters for sometime to come. We are lying about a mile and a half from Yorktown but do not go into town verry often. We started from camp at Hampton last Friday and marched about four miles this side of Big Bethel where we found the first battery. The Sharp Shooters were deployed as skirmishers and marched for the fort to draw the fire of their guns. They fired two shots at us and then our batteries opened on them and they left about as quick as possible, they were very strongly fortified then but did not have guns enough to support them against a heavy force the only booty there was a few blankets and two prison boys about 17 years old Genl Porter has one of them for a guide. We camped six miles from Yorktown that night at Cockeltown where we found Sutters Stores six casks of Syrup and fifteen bushels of Peanuts. That was all dealt out to the soldiers that night we had quite a jolly time over it. The Sharp Shooters were started in the morning in the advance of the whole army as scouts and skirmishers, which is not much fun as you do not know what you are going to run into. The first introduction we had was a canon ball whistling over our heads from a fort about a mile from us that we had not heard of. The next was a shell bursting within ten rods of me but did not hurt any one, our Artillery then came up and engaged with them and we went on under cover of our guns we crawled up within 80 rods of their guns and got behind a rail fence and began to fire on them picking off the gunners very fast we succeeded in stoping their fire after about an hours firing. I would not go through the same thing again for the world unless I was obliged to. We were placed right between our cannon and the fort so that they both fired exactly over our heads, and those shells make the most horrible noise that I ever heard. I would have given a good deal if I had been at home about that time The Rebels had their Sharp Shooters just the same as ours only they were firing at us and did not trouble our gunners any I got quite used to the whistle of a rifle ball and did not care much about them after I had heard them a while, but I never can get used to the whistle of a shell and hope that I shall not have to take the same position that I had Saturday while I am in the service. The position that we held all day has made lions of the Sharp Shooters but I had rather not be a lion than go through with it again I had quite a compliment paid me yesterday by the Colonel General Porter sent to him for ten of his best shots to go with him on a scouting expedition and the Colonel chose me as one of the ten to go. Professor Lowe is here with his balloon and has been up several times so we have shows here without paying a quarter for it The Rebels are verry strong here and there will be a terrible battle before we ever get possesion of Yorktown but I think the most of it will be done with artillery for it would be impossible to get them out with the bayonett. They have got 80 or 100 guns within a circle of about three miles and could shell us out of camp now if they wished to but I guess they have not any more ammunition then they want for they will have a hot time in a few days and they are aware of it. They knew of our coming as soon as we started from Washington one of our boys found a letter here telling the names of the Regiments that had started and ours among the rest. We have been camped by the side of the 14th Regiment ever since we came to Fort Monroe and I see all of the New Berlin boys every day. Charley Beardslee sends his love to you and hopes to get back so that he can see you again. The boys in his company say that there is not a better soldier in the Regiment then he is. Remember me to all and write as often as you can but you must not expect to hear from me very often. Your aff son
C J H