

In the trenches near Petersburg
Jan 5th 1865

My dear Pat -

This morning finds me in full possession of health and strength and sitting by myself, (which is a great wonder under my little tent fly, and by a cozy little fire with a little boiler of peas stewing away for my dinner, thinking of home and the dear ones far away. It is almost a miracle that I am alive, besides on picket and sewin' on work, and it is a great wonder that I have such a quiet time to write to you. I had better not brash however, for in a minute some trench officer may call out "Follow that is this and that for you to attend to." I wish I could describe to you accurately the soldier's life in the trenches - I don't think I ever did - and the trenches have been my habitation since May. It would be useless but how do we make out to live this cold weather? Well we have holes dug in the ground and poles laid over and dirt thrown over that, with a hole in the corner for a fire place and chimney. Some of us cut a hole and stretch a piece of canvas over it, cut a fire place and chimney and that forms our dwelling place, with plenty of lice and dirt to contend with. Then when wet weather comes the trenches are ankle deep in mud and we have to wade through it all, to get wood and our eating. We can't leave the dishes in

going out or in or a Sharpshooter aims his piece
for our lives. This is a few words in our life in the trenches
and, dear Pat, we shall have to undergo it all this
winter, I forgot to say now and, then a mortar shell
comes a-bang and smashes down our temporary houses
and kills or wounds the inmates, there have been some
remarkable escapes in this particular - some have escaped
underneath though the shell bursts in the very hole with them.
It is through the mercy of God that I have lived through
these things and have been allowed to see a new year.
May He be praised in a right spirit and that my heart
may be given more to this service. I often think of a nice
fire at home with all of you around with none of the
terrors of this war to disturb us. Oh! that the past year had
ended this way and brought us back again to peace &
happiness! But there is no peace for those at home as well
as those under the enemy's guns. There is an uneasiness that
breaks it all up, and there are troubles that "nean knowit
not off".

I suppose you are busying away at your work and the
children are playing about over the floor, innocent and
unconscious of what is pending in the outside world.
We have much to grieve over and much to bring despon-
dency to our hearts - almost a death-blow has been struck