

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 cosy 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 alone, Bernard on picket and Lewis on work, and it is a greater wonder that I have such a quiet time to write to you. I had better not boast, however, for in a minute some trench officer may call out Pollard there 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 in 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 canvass 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 trudge through it all to get wood and our eating. We can't leave the ditches in going out or in or a sharpshooter aims his piece for our lives. This in a few words is 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 along and knocks down our temporary houses and kills or wounds the inmates. There have been some remarkable escapes in this particular. Some have escaped unhurt 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 His 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 war, and brought us back again to peace and 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 "man knoweth not of".

I suppose you are trudging 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 desperation to our hearts. Almost a death blow has been struck to our cause in the West. That was a vital point and through mismanagement or something we have lost everything in Ga. and Tenn. We have much to deplore and little to cheer us this commencement of the new year. But let us pray that God be with us and then "who can be against us"?

I wrote to Cousin Jack yesterday about having me a pair of shoes made if he can start the leather, for I shall soon be barefooted. The gov. doesn't hear much the demand for shoes and what are furnished are of very indifferent material, and worse put together.

You must write to me soon and write all the news and everything in relation to the farm. Has Lewis' hand gotten well so that he can do anything? How did your hogs turn out? How much corn is made? Tell the negroes to go straight to work on the fences in getting rails etc. The ploughs must go to work as soon as fit. The children (Willie and Betsy) are still, I suppose, going to school.

And now I must conclude, may God bless you and the little ones, and may I be able to see you all the latter part of this month. My love to you and them.

Your affect. husband

Jos. L. Pollard.

For your wife to be good and write all the laws and regulations
in relation to the farm. This letter is written with so that you can do
anything. How did you hope to have some more letters. All the
agrees to go through to work on the farm in getting things etc. the
people want to go to work as soon as possible. The children (Lillian and Betty)
are still in school, going to school.

And now I must conclude, may God bless you and the little ones and
may I be able to see you and the latter part of this month. My love to
you and them.

Your sincere husband

Joe L. Toland

