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Title: Letters from Theodore Christ to Eli Slifer

Date: 1862-1863

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Hilton Head. S. C. June 20th 1862.

Hon. Eli H. Liles.

Harrisburg, Pa.

Dear Sir -

I see by the late papers, that there is a call from the President, for 40 Surgeons, + 120 Assistant Surgeons, and that the Assistants will be promoted according to merit &c.

I think I am justly entitled to promotion. I have heard of other Assistants being promoted, who have been less service than myself. by the time this reaches you I will have been one years service in the Army, (including the three months.) and more than half of this time I have been doing the duties and having the responsibilities of a Surgeon, and have been at more expense than Assistants generally are, I have treated all manner of disease, and had considerable experience in Surgery, Sanitary regulations &c, and have been as successful, if not more so, than many of our present Surgeons.

I much prefer remaining under our own noble Commander-in-Chief. Gov. Berlin, because I am proud of our State, also of her heroic sons. if I cannot be promoted in our own State,

I will make application at Washington City, if I am allowed to do so, I wish you would make an effort in my behalf, to our worthy Surgeon General, H. H. Smith, and ascertain if possible what my chances are for being promoted soon, if recommendations from our 45th will be of any service, I can furnish a full supply.

I will leave this for your Consideration, and will feel grateful to you for your advice &c.

The papers you sent me, came safely, for which I am much obliged.

Col. Welsh is now at Stone Inlet, with six Companies of our Regt. the other four we have here, & are still picketing along these Islands, on the 12th inst. Col. Welsh writes me, that two of our Companies, A. & B, had a brisk skirmish with the Rebels near James Island, they fired 40 rounds without ceasing, & the Muzzle-barrels became so hot that it scorched their hands, Co. A, had one man killed & Co. B, one wounded, the 16th inst. our forces at Stone, advanced by land on James Island to take a battery there of some 5 Guns, that was able to shell the Camp of our Men, Genl. Stevens advanced towards the battery & succeeded in getting some Men into it twice, & was driven out each time, by superior numbers, he was

to have been re-inforced by Genl. Wright - from another direction, but for some reason unknown to me, he did not reach the place, they were all ordered to withdraw, the loss in killed, wounded, & missing on our side, is reported at 672, that of the enemy is unknown, the 100th P.V. lost about 100, no other Pa. troops were engaged. Genl. Stevens wept like a child when he was ordered back, he fought with skill & bravery, one of our privates, I can't say what Regt. swore he would have his man certain, & he actually rushed into the Fort, seized a Rebel by the hair of his head & dragged him over the ramparts, & into our Camp a prisoner of war. Our troops fought heroically. The above account of the 16th inst. I give you as I heard it from a reliable source, who brought the news here from Stone. Col. Welsh is with Genl. Wright, and is temporarily in Command of a Brigade.

The health of this detachment is very good, the men stand this climate remarkably well. it is very warm & sultry. Last week we crossed over to the main land with two of our Co's. A. & D. for the purpose of driving away some Rebels from a place called the White House, once a Ferry Hotel, the Rebels annoyed our picket very much from this point, so we destroyed the buildings & returned in safety, it was my first attempt at house burning, as I had no musket, I was determined to make myself useful in some manner, kind regards to friends &c. Yours Truly - Geo. S. Christ.

Hilton Head, S.C. June 20th 1862.

Hon. Eli Slifer.
Harrisburg, Pa.
Dear Sir-

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The papers you Sent me, came Safely, for which I am much obliged.

Col. Welsh is now at Stono Inlet, with Six Companies of our Regt. the other four we have here, & are Still picketing along these Islands. on the 12th inst. Col. Welsh writes me, that two of our Companies, H. & I. had a brisk Skirmish with the Rebels near James Island. they fired 40 rounds without ceasing & the Musket barrels became So hot that it Scorched their hands. Co. H. had one man Killed & Co. I. one wounded. the 16th inst. our forces at Stono, advanced by land on James Island to take a battery there of Some 5 guns that was able to Shell the Camp of our Men. Genl. Stevens advanced towards the battery & Succeeded in getting Some men into it twice, & was driven out each time, by superior numbers. he was

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Yours Truly,
Theo. S. Christ.

J. S. Christ
July 25/62.

Newport News Virginia July 25th 1862

Hon. E. Sifer

Sir

Your kind favor of June 30th, reached me a few days before our Regt. was re-united at Hilton Head. S. C. we went into a new camp there on Elliott's Plantation, and supposed we would remain there until September, but we had no more than comfortably fixed our selves until we received orders to pack up & march to the wharf, to take passage on the Steamer Anago, for, as we supposed James River, but we landed at this place on Monday last, we left S. Carolina, this day one week ago, and arrived on Sunday night at Fortress Monroe, disembarked on Monday morning & marched here same day, about three miles from the wharf.

When we landed, I was saluted by many old friends, from the 51st P. V. who are now here, I was pleased to see them all, and especially those from Lewisburg, Lieutenants Kelly, Beaver, Shortleaf & many others, also Col. Hartman, Capt. Linn, had left for home in the morning.

This is the cause of my not answering ^{sooner} I have really been working very hard, ever since we have been re-united, I will arrange matters so, that I will be able to give you a succinct statement of what transpires since of the sick & wounded of our Regt. there is but few from our own immediate neighborhood, what does belong, these are all well, Walls, Blair, Isaac Raven & Mitchell, son of the Rev. Mitchell of Williamsport. Should anything occur of note, you shall hear from me, we brought all but a few of our sick with us here, a few we sent to New York. The rest are doing very well.

Joseph Mansell of Co. E. died yesterday in the General Hospital here, he was taken very ill just before leaving Hilton Head, he had Typhoid Fever, he is from Centre County, near or at Rock Springs, I believe.

The health of our Regiment is very good, Diarrhoea, Dysentery, and a few mild cases of Fever, is the principal trouble.

As regards my promotion, I think I am justly entitled to it. In conversing with Colonel Walsh to day, he asked me if he could do anything for me, (he had just been reading a paper, which had a notice in for the examination of Candidates for Assistant-Surgeons,) he said if he could be of any service to me, I should let him know. This was unasked for, at the same time, should I be promoted, he would be sorry to see me leave his Regt. he says I have done my duty faithfully & well, & have given entire satisfaction, & am deserving of being promoted.

My examination may have been deficient in some respects, but my abilities for the position will speak for itself. I feel confident that my experience will see me through safely. It is no more trouble to take care of a whole Regt. than it is of a half, this I have done for over 7 months. I leave it with you, to arrange with the Surgeon General. Should I receive a Commission as Surgeon, & that in a new Regiment, I would like very much to know it before being assigned to one if possible. I think there will be other changes in our Regt. before long, I might be mistaken, but it has been intimated to me that Lieut. Col. Beaver will likely be promoted to be a Colonel of one of the new Regts. if so, I would like to be with him, & he would ask for me as his Surgeon I know. He is certainly deserving of being promoted, time and again has he been complimented by Maj. Genl. Hunter, Benham & Williams, for the good discipline of his detachment, and the prompt execution of all orders, he would make an excellent Colonel & one that would be much respected by all under him.

I hear from different sources that we will not be sent forward for probably a month or six weeks.

I am well & enjoying good health.

I remain your humble servant
Thos. S. Christ-

T.S. Chirst July 25/62 [*This text in the top margin is written in a different ink and handwriting from the body of the letter.*]

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Dr Sir

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This is the cause of my not answering Sooner. I have really been working very hard and ever Since we have been re-united. I will arrange matters So, that I will be able to give you a weekly Statement of what transpires among the Sick & wounded of our Reg't. there is but few from our own immediate neighborhood, what does belong there are all well, Walls, Blair, Isaac Rawn & Mitchell, Son of the Rev. Mitchell of Williamsport. Should anything occur of note, you Shall hear from me. we brought all but a few of our Sick with us here, a few were Sent to New York. the rest are doing very well. Joseph [Monsell?] of Co. E. died yesterday in the General Hospital here. he was taken very ill just before leaving Hilton Head. he had Typhoid Fever. he is from Centre County, near or at Rock Springs, I believe.

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I hear from different Sources that we will not be Sent forward for probably a month or Six weeks.

I am well & enjoying good health.

I remain your humble Servant
Theo. S. Christ

Brooks Station, Aug. 7th 1862.

Near Aquia Creek, Va.

Hon. E. S. Lifer,
Harrisburg,
Pa.

Dear Friend.

Your letter of the 9th July, sent to Port-Royal, reached me on board the Elm City, just as we were leaving Newport-News for this place, we left Newport-News, on Monday morning last, and landed next evening at Aquia Creek, where we remained for the night, next morning 8 Companies of our Regt. was sent to this Station, & we are now guarding the Rail Road for $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles, the other 2 Companies, Col. Welsh kept with him at Aquia Creek Landing, which is his Head Quarters, Genl. Stevens's Head Quarters, (in whose Division we are now) is at Fredericksburg, about 13 miles from here. we are all in Maj. Genl. Burnside's Army Corps, the rest of his Command has passed on up the road to different points.

We receive our Mails daily, from Washington City, I am now only about 40 miles below Alexandria, where I was a month last summer, since that time I have traveled a great many miles, passed through a number of States, seen many changes,

I am pleased to learn that I am marked for promotion, and that Surgeon General Smith, has taken an interest in me. You will please accept my thanks for the interest you have manifested in my behalf. I feel grateful to you, for this, as well as for a number of instances in which you have proven yourself my friend, if I am ever able, in any manner to serve you, I will do it with the greatest pleasure.

I suppose you have already heard of Dr. Potter resigning & leaving the Regiment, he has no one to blame but himself, he was never at his post, since the Regt. has been re-united, his duties fell upon my shoulders, consequently I had double duty to perform, he was never sober, & often beastly drunk, which made it very unpleasant for me, & more laborious, I am now enjoying my position more than I ever did, just because I am not sworn at by a drunken man, he was placed under arrest by our Col. for drunkenness, he trespassed his order & left Camp, cursing & damning every Officer in the Regt., he was then arrested again & would have been Court-Martialed, which would certainly have given him a dishonorable discharge from service, which he deserved, but many of us knew his family, relatives & friends, we asked that he would be allowed to resign, which would allow him to go home in a more honorable way, it was granted, & he handed in his resignation & left next day. I feel sorry for him &

freely, forgive him for his un-gentlemanly + un-professional conduct towards me, he is not a friend of mine, to my face he was friendly, behind my back he said many bad things, which the Officers have told me, all because they would praise me up in his presence, the day before he left, our Hospital Steward went to Phila. to appear before that board, for promotion to an Asst. Surgeonship, since then I have had to do the work of three, no help whatever, I had Medicines, beds, bedding &c &c to pack + take care of, sick to attend to, Medicines to put up, &c, and I assure you I never worked half so hard before, with all this work + confusion in breaking up Camp + moving. I went through it all in less time + with more pleasure than if Dr. P. had been with me, I expect our Hospital Steward back this week.

I left my sickest men, + all those unfit for active service, at Newfort News, Genl. Hospital, 28 in all, I have now 4 men in Hospital, the general health of our Regt. is better than it has been for months, our present Camp is, I think, a healthy one, I wish I could give you some late news, it is rumored here that Genl. King is having a brisk fight at or near Belmont, I cannot say how true it is, I have really been so busy arranging Tent, Medicines &c, that I have not taken time to ask questions.

By I am to be promoted + that very soon. I hope it will be
in this Regt. I have not asked any one but yourself, to see
about my promotion. I will let the Officers + men of the
Regt. speak for me, of their own accord, if they think I am
deserving of it, + able to fill ^{the position,} they I have no doubt will say so
in due time. + if I am unworthy, I never want it; I would
like to be promoted for meritorious conduct, this is the only
true way to gain the highest posts of honor. I am able to fill
a Surgeons position, if made Surgeon of this Regt. I hope I will
receive good assistance, which I have no doubt will be the case.
Excuse this hastily written letter, it is late in the night + I have
worked hard all day + more for to morrow planned out.
Kind regards to your family + all enquiring friends.

I remain Yours truly.

Thos. J. Christ
Asst. Surgeon, 45th S.V.

Direct to me
"Burnsides Army Corps."
Via - Washington.
"At Aquia Creek"
D. C.
Via.

J. J. Christ
Aug 7 / 62.

Brooks Station Aug. 7th 1862
Near Aquia Creek, Va.

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Theo S. Christ
Asst. Surgeon, 45th P. V.

Direct to me & c
"Burnside Army Corps."
Via Washington, D. C.
"At Aquia Creek"
Vir.

Acquia Creek, Vir. Aug. 9th 1862

Hon. E. Shifor,
Harrisburg, Pa.

Dear Friend

Yours of the 6th inst. is

rec^d. Congratulating me on my promotion &c. please accept my thanks for your kind wishes, also for the interest you have always taken in my behalf. your many kindnesses towards me will never be forgotten.

I wrote you a lengthy letter a few days ago, informing you of our whereabouts &c. since then but little has transpired of note in this vicinity, except among our advanced troops. The 21st N.Y. while moving forward, left their sick in the rear, about 70 in all, and they were captured by Stewart's Cavalry when in sight of Fredericksburg, the Regt. could have re-taken them by firing into the Cavalry, but they feared killing their own sick, so they left them go.

I will endeavor to do my duty as Surgeon of this Regt. in every particular, and prove myself worthy of promotion. Col's, Welsh & Beaver, and our town boys wish to be remembered. Excuse haste, Kind regards to enquiring friends. will write you, whenever anything of note transpires.

Yours truly -

Thos. F. Christ, Surgeon, 45th P.V.

Acquia Creek, Vir. Aug. 9th 1862

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Yours truly-
Theo. S. Christ, Surgeon, 45th P. V.

Camp near Lovettsville, Vir. Oct. 28th 1862.

How. Eli Slifer

My dear Friend.

A much longer time has elapsed, than I had intended should, without writing to you, but owing to the illness of one of my Assistants, since the battle of South Mountain, and the additional duties devolving upon me, (since Oct. 1st) of Acting Brigade Surgeon, of 3rd Brigade, my time has been so much taken up, that I was compelled to neglect my friends unwillingly, therefore, I ask to be excused for my long silence, and will endeavor to be more punctual hereafter.

At this time I wish more particularly to call your attention to the position now occupied by our Noble Colonel, Thomas Welsh, he is now acting Brigadier General, of 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, 9th Army Corps, You know very well of his Gallant Conduct at the late battles in Maryland, at the head of the 2nd Brigade, Genls, Burnsides & Wileox, have given him publicly, a splendid name, for his bravery and Coolness, during those engagements, the whole Brigade have the highest respect for him, and really love him, and will go unflinchingly wherever he may direct, having such unlimited confidence in all his Movements.

I hear that Penna. is entitled to a great number of Brig. Generals, &

that a number will soon be appointed, how could not Col. W. be one of the first appointed. I know Gen. Burnside has recommended him for it; besides his commission dates farther back than any Penna. Colonel, in the 9th Army Corps, and he has been in service longer, therefore has a stronger claim than any other. You civilians at home, may not know how unpleasant it is for a worthy Officer, to be commanded by his Junior in rank, besides after conducting his Brigade all through Maryland, with credit to himself, his Men, & State, he is suddenly relieved by his Junior Officer taking his place, the Col. W. returned to his Regiment again, two days afterwards re-instated to the command of the same Brigade, is not only unpleasant & discouraging to himself, but all his friends here, & at home, now if to be appointed a Brigadier, & commissioned as such, could it not be that his name should be among the first, then he could make his calculations accordingly.

We all expect it, we look for it, and will be very much disappointed if he is not appointed, had Col. W. been mustered into the U. S. Service when first offering his services, to the State, there would be, but a few in our whole Army that would out-rank him. I knowing you are well acquainted with Col. W. I feel free to write & recommend a valuable & good man for an honorable & reliable position, he often speaks of yourself & Wm. Frick Esq., in the most praiseworthy manner, should you feel interested in his behalf, as I know you are in all good & loyal Men, please urge his appointment, & I feel free to

say you will not only please him and his friends here, but at his own home and vicinity.

I am well and in excellent health & spirits, the health of our Regt; is very good, never better, we have not had one death from disease since early last; I have endured more hardships & exposure since that time, than at any time before, since we are a Regiment, I certainly feel flattered to be able to say as much.

We crossed the Potomac, on a Pontoon bridge, at Berlin, Md. on Sunday last. it rained & stormed all day and night, was very unpleasant I assure you, we was the 2nd Division across after the Cavalry, we went into Camp same day within 1/2 mile of Lovettsville, where we still remain, our whole 9th Army Corps is now across, Genls. Nichollan & Burnside are here, we move forward in the morning.

Please remember me to your family, & all enquiring friends.

I remain Your Humble Servant

Geo. S. Christ

Surgeon, 45th Regt. P. V.

3rd Brig, 1st Div. 9th A. C.

Camp near Lovetsville, Vir. Oct. 28th 1862.

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I hear that Penna. is entitled to a great number of Brig. Generals, &

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that a number will Soon be appointed. now could not Col. W. be one of the first appointed. I know Genl. Burnside's has recommended him for it. besides his commission dates farther back than any Penna. Colonel. in the 9th Army Corps, and he has been in Service longer, therefore has a Stronger claim than any other. You Civilians at home, may not Know how unpleasant it is for a worthy Officer, to be commanded by his Junior in rank, besides after conducting his Brigade all through Maryland, with credit to himself, his men, & State. he is Suddenly relieved by his Junior Officer taking his place, & he Col. W. returned to his Regiment again, two days afterwards re-instated to the command of the Same Brigade, is not only unpleasant & discouraging to himself, but all his friends here, & at home. now if to be appointed a Brigadier & commissioned as Such, could it not be that his name Should be among the first, then he could make his calculations accordingly.

We all expect it, we look for it, and will be very much disappointed if he is not appointed. had Col. W. been mustered into the U.S. Service when first offering his Services to the State, there would be but a few in our whole Army that would out-rank him. I Knowing you are well acquainted with Col. W. I feel free to write & recommend a valuable & good man for an honorable & reliable position. he often Speaks of yourself & Wm. Frick Esq. in the most praiseworthy manner. Should you feel interested in his behalf, as I Know you are in all good & loyal Men, please urge his appointment & I feel free to

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Say you will not only please him and his friends here, but at his own home and vicinity.

I am well and in excellent health & Spirits. the health of our Regt. is very good. never better, we have not had one death from disease Since July last; & have endured more hardships &

exposure Since that time, than at any one time before, Since we are a Regiment. I certainly Feel Flattered to be able to Say as much.

We crossed the Potomac, on a Pontoon bridge at Berlin, Md. on Sunday last. it rained & Stormed all day and night, was very unpleasant I assure you. we was the 2nd Division across after the Cavalry. we went into Camp Same day within ½ mile of Sovitsville, where we Still remain, our whole 9th Army Corps is now across. Genl's McClellan & Burnside are here. we move forward in the morning.

Please remember me to your family, & all enquiring friends.

I remain Your Humble Servant
Theo. S. Christ
Surgeon, 45th Regt. P. V.
3rd Brig. 1st Div. 9th A. C.

Theo S. Christ

Dec 29/63

Blenois Cross Roads, East Penn.

Dec. 29th 1863

Hon. Eli Blifer

Dear Sir,

I have often thought of you since in the Service, and have written you a number of letters, & have had them answered, for which I am truly thankful, I would have written more frequently, but knowing the great amount of business you are constantly engaged in, I feared I might be trespassing upon your valuable time, I only write now, informing you of my whereabouts &c.

The doings of our old 9th A. C. & more particularly our old 45th Pa. Regt, you have read before this in the Newspapers, therefore I will not repeat it here, suffice it to say, since our Corps is in this department we have suffered more

for the want of food, clothing + shelter,
than we have ever before experienced since
in service, we had comfortable winter
quarters erected at Lenoir Station, 23
miles below Knoxville, + was just begin-
ing to enjoy them when we were forced
to retreat from there, + by mis-manage-
ment on the part of some one, much
of our baggage was destroyed, Sents + c.
we came to Knoxville where we were
held by Longstreet for 18 days, here we
were all fed on $\frac{1}{4}$ rations most of the
time, that ration was fresh beef or pork,
salt, bread made of unbolted flour, bad
at that + Corn, occasionally a little coffee
+ sugar, here was spent many sleepless
days + nights, expecting an attack on our
front every hour, the fighting you have
read about before this, with all of this
hunger + hard marching, I never seen
our men in better spirits + health + more
anxious to fight, in fact our whole line
had sworn to die at their post, at one

time we all expected to be taken
prisoners, and to tell the truth
had Longstreet advanced on us at any
time the first five days he could have
taken the City, but he delayed, & we
made good use of our time, by working
day & night, and when we was ready
we were willing for him to come, he
did try it on the 29th the result you know
all this time I was busy in the Hospital
operating upon the wounded. we lost
in our Regt; but 20 in all. most of
them slight wounds. After the siege
was raised we started after the retreating
enemy & followed them as far as Bean
Station, where we halted for several days
& then fell back to this Cross Roads, 18
miles from Knoxville, the past two weeks
we have been skirmishing with them
daily & have taken a great many Prisoners
where we will go next I am unable to
say, but begin to think we will have
a winter campaign, if so we will suffer

still more for the want of shelter & clothing, as yet our trains has not reached us from Kentucky. the weather here is as rough & stormy as at home at this season.

The result of the Elections in the North, & especially of our own noble State, has been most glorious & cheering news to our troops, when I heard it first, we were returning to Knoxville from the Blue Spring battle, I announced it to our Regt: & then proposed three cheers for our Governor & soldiers friend, & the State, I do wish you could have heard this noble band of Veterans giving full vent to their feelings, it would have pleased you I know they were prouder of this, than the victory they just had gained on the battle-field, we are satisfied now, & if you will keep down the infernal copperheads at home, we will whip the Rebels in due time.

Re-enlisting in our Corps is progressing finely, I think we will be able to get our Regiment into it, as a Regiment.

Please lend me a few state documents occasionally during the winter.

Please remember me kindly to your family & all enquiring friends, if you have time to answer please do so.

Sincerely your friend
Thos. P. Christ

"Wined"
Surgeon U.S. Regt. P.V.
1st Brig. 1st Div. 9th A.C. Knoxville.

Theo S. Christ

Dec 29/63

[This is written above Christ's place and date lines in the handwriting of someone other than Christ.]

Blenn's Cross Roads, East Tenn.

Dec. 29th 1863

Hon. Eli Slifer

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I have often thought of you Since in the Service, and have written you a number of letters, & have had them answered, for which I am truly thankful. I would have written more frequently, but Knowing the great amount of business you are constantly engaged in, I feared I might be trespassing upon your valuable time. I only write now, informing you of my whereabouts &c.

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Truly your friend
Theo. S. Christ

“Direct -
Surgeon 45th Regt. P. V.