

Fort Washington April 13th 1862

Dear Father

We have recieved our marching orders to day to join our Regt at Fortress Monroe. and from there into the field I hope but I expect we will garrison some of the forts Lately captured on York River we being good artillerists.

I have not got a minutes time to write for I have got every thing to see to and the whole baggage of the company to pack You need not write untill you hear from me I will write as soon as get to Fort Monroe so no more at present? from yours

William Bird

Camp Scott Near Yorktown Apr 24th

Dear Father

We left Fort Washington on Tuesday the 15th for Alexandria and laid there two days waiting for Shipping we left Alexandria Thursday night and arrived at Ships Point the next day and marched to camp about eight miles the same night when we reached camp we found the Regt out on the Picket duty we pitched our tents and went to bed pretty tired for it had been quite a hot day and our knapsacks were heavy and we had been laying on the deck of the Steamer three nights about two deep.

The next morning we were ordered out to support a battery which was threatned with an attack we were posted in a piece of timber about thirty rods in rear of the battery which was six twenty lbs Parrott guns behind an earthwork about 800 yds from the enemys works.

The Rebels kept pretty quiet untill near night when they opened on our battery and for the first time we heard the schreeching of shels but we were under cover and they did not touch us and our battery soon silenced them dismounting two of their guns and shelling them completely out of this works it was a fine night. The rebels made bad shooting only exploding one shell inside our battery which slightly wounded one of the artilly officers while every one of our shells burst inside of thier works we could see the boards flying off from their barracks.

On Tuesday the regiment was ordered out on fatigue duty to build roads for the country here is flat and marshy and McClellan has built over fifty miles of good road to move his artillery

On Wednesday night we were ordered out protect a working party which was throwing up a masked battery right under the rebels nose but out of their sight it is to mount 10 100 lbs rifled guns and it will make Secesh tremble when it opens for it is only 400 yards from one of their strongest batteries and completely commands it it is so near them that they only work in the night they are building it of baskets filled with earth which are called Gabions and make very strong work

We were marched in just after dark and found the 4th Maine Regt digging in the trenches and we laid on our arms all night to protect them we were so near that we could hear their sentries chalange and one of their bands played Dixie and various other Secesh airs in the evening. just before light we were marched out and came home and I have just had a sleep.

The trees are leaving out here and the Peach and Apple trees are in full blossom. We are camped in a piece of timber in a very comfortable place only the water is bad but I don't drink any water nothing but coffee.

I don't think there will be much of a fight here I think they mean to evacuate the place or if there is a fight it will be principally artillery engaged. The Paymaster has not visited us yet and will probably recieve four months pay about the 1st of May and will send you some money.

I am tough and strong and there is not a sick man in the company

yours

Willaim Bird Jr

Headquarters Camp 37th NYV Reg't Co.
Camp near Williamsburg
May 7 1862

Dear Father

I suppose you have been uneasy about me for some time back but I have had no chance to write for more than a week for I have been on duty all the time. You have probably heard of the evacuation of Yorktown on the night of the 3rd. our brigade took possession on the morning of the 4th of their works and the same afternoon Sickles Brigade and ours which is the 3rd in Kearns Division of the 3rd Corps were advanced in pursuit of the rebels on the Williamsburg road. our brigade as halted at dark and camped about three miles from Yorktown and the other brigade was pushed forward. We were called up at three in the morning and held in readiness to move, about 9 O C the order came to advance it was raining heavy and the road was heavy traveling but we made a forced march of 16 miles over the worst road I ever saw and when we were within four miles of the fight we met an express to hurry us up for the day was against us so we threw off our knapsacks and overcoats and pushed through in double quick four miles and got there just in season to save the day for they had taken one of our batteries and were driving us back and it was like to be another Bull Run affair we were pretty tired but there was no time to rest and we were ordered to charge them. So the 37th and the 5th Michigan dashed at them we found them in a strong possession is a piece of wood and a slashing so we had to try the bayonet on them they could not stand the steel but we suffered severly the regiment lost 22 killed and 73 wounded our company lost the most of any being the color company and they fired on the colors we had 5 killed and 9 wounded. I was in the thickest of it and escaped without a scratch We had hard fighting through the slashing from log to log but we had got them started and we kept them going and just at dark we were reinforced and they were driven from their works and routed through the town of Williamsburg.

I cant tell much about the battle excep what we had a hand at but but you will get it in the papers it is a great victory and our brigade has the honor to have won it. We were highly complimented by Gen McClelland and he has ordered that we have Williamsburg inscribed on our colors. I think that the war is over for we hear that Richmond is taken at any rate I don't think that our Regt will have any more fighting to do for as we suffered so much we are to be left in possession of Williamsburg it is a fine old city of 5000 inhabitants

We had two commissions officers killed in the Regt and Major Jones has just told me that I am to be appointed to one of the vacancies. I am well and tough and can stand as much service as any of them and remain yours

William Bird

Direct Segt William Bird
Co I 37th Regt NYV
Williamsburg Va Via Washington D C
Care of Capt Clarke Co. I.

Camp Near West Point Va May 11th 62

Dear Father

I am on the road to Richmond chaceing up the Secsh but I am afraid we shall not see any more of them for I dont believe they mean to fight any more at least it looks like it now and our prisoners ar all pretty sick of Secsh.

On the 8th of May I was for Gallantry on the battle field of Williamsburg promoted 2nd Lieut and the best of it is I am still in my own company and Trivett has been appointed to 1st Lieut in another company to fill a vacancy so I am all right now.

We are haveing a pretty rough time at present for we have to travel without our baggage or tents the roads are in such a horrible condition that the waggons cant keep up except the waggons with our grub and we sometimes dont see them for three days at a time and then we have to carry it on our backs I have not been under cover for a week and I am getting so I can sleep out doors on the ground just as well as I can any where when it dont rain but when it is wet we have it tough all I carry with me is my Canteen an Haversack. Overcoat and Rubber blanket besides my arms I have a great deal easyer times now than I did before.

Our living is pretty rough and scant now for they cant get stores throug but it will be better as soon as we get to West Point where we strike the York River at the head of navigation and where I suppose we shall take the Rail Road to Richmond

We are in the reserve of the army and most of the troops are ahead of us and in case of another battle we would not be in it unless it was a general engagement and that is very improbable so you need not be uneasy about me. We have been marching for the last two days through the garden of Virginia but with as many troops ahead we fare very slim. I would send you a little money but I have to buy my own rations since my promotion and when the Commisary Department is out of gear the officers fare much worse than the men for they have to buy their living any where they can find it.

The Government dose not furnish the officers rations but they draw the money instead and the Government sells them the rations at cost price but when they are behind hand we are hard up. We had to pay \$1.00 a lb for poor coffee and 20 cts for Sugar in Williamsburg and very glad to get it for we could not live without hot coffee.

We march again this afternoon and as soon as the luggage comes up again I will write

The weather is getting quite hot we have been marching through wheat that was almost heading out.

No more at present from

yours

William Bird

Direct

Lieut William Bird
Co. I. 37th Regt NYV
Washington DC

Write soon

Cumberland Va May 16th 1862

Dear Father

I recieved your letter of the 4th and was glad to hear from home for it is the only word I have recieved since I left the fort.

We have marched two days since I wrote you last and are now camped at a little landing called Cumberland on the Pamunkey River 27 miles from Richmond.

There are a good many troops here but the main body is in advance of us some of our troops are within 15 miles of Richmond and I think my next letter will be from there. I dont think there will any for fighting this side of Richmond and McClelland says he will be there in three days. The weather has been quite warm and dry untill the last two days and we marched 8 miles yesterday in as heavy a rain as I ever saw and as the baggage did not come up last we had to sleep in our wet cloths in the rain around the camp fires but it was warm and I feell as well this morning as ever I did.

It is a very fine country here and very old but it is pretty well skinned. I am having pretty easy times now I dont have any thing to carry on the march only enough to keep myself comfortable and my arms sword & revolver.

I have not time to write more now for we march again this afternoon Write again as soon as possible and I will keep you posted about our movements every chance I get and I remain

yours

William Bird

Direct William Bird
37th Regt NYV
Washington DC

the letter will
follow the regt
wherever it goes

May 22th 1862
Camp 2 miles from Bottoms Bridge

Dear Father

I recieved your letter of the 17th yesterday. We camped here last night 2 miles from Bottoms Bridge across the Chickahominy River and 10 miles from Richmond it was expected that the rebels would make their final stand here as it is a very strong place there is an almost impassible swamp on both sides of the river and a long wooden bridge to cross but our troops succeeded in crossing three days ago with only a slight scirmish they could not stand our artilery and now they are allmost all across except the reserve to which we are atached Kearney's Division

It is very dificult for us to hear what is going on in the advance we generally get the first news in the New York papers which we get every day.

As near as I can find out our advance is within five miles of Richmond and there is a report in camp to day from pretty good authority that Richmond is being evacuated at any rate the rebels have been driven past strongest position for the defence of Richmond and I think it is very doubtful if they make any other decided stand in Virginia or any where else if Halleck is sucessful in South West and of which there is little doubt.

This the finest countrey here that I ever saw and have got ripe strawberries for the last few days and the wheat is headed out but it has been pretty well skinned by the war the fences along roads where the troops moved are all destroyed and most of the grain and the rebels have done a great deal more damage than we have.

Since Capt Clarke went home I have had most of the business of the company to attend to for Bailett if not capable of commanding a company and I have had almost every thing to see to but I have had much easier times since my promotion than I did before. We had it pretty easy since the battle of Williamsburg we have made short marches and sometimes lay still two or three days and the weather has been a very good and not very hot.

I recieved my commission to day which I send to you for safe keeping for I have not any safe place to keep it for I lost my trunk and all my clothes when we left Yorktown every thing I have got in the word is two shirts and two pairs of stockings and two blankets but is enough untill we get to Richmond for if I had more I would not carry them but I shall have to buy a new uniform and a sword etc. for officers have to furnish themselves but I can save \$50 a month clear out of my pay and if we are kept in the service untill fall I can give you quite a lift.

My health is first rate I can stand as much hardship as any man in the company the men are generally well the most that ails any of them is disentery and there is no need of having that if they are careful what they eat

Write soon and let me know if the commission gets safe home and I remain
yours truly

William Bird Jr

Direct Lieut William Bird
37th NYV
Kearneys Division
Washington DC

Camp of 37th N Y V May 29th 1862

Dear Johney

I recieved your note yesterday and was glad to hear from you

We have been at our present camp four days it is about eight miles from Richmond and we would have been there before now but we have had a heavy rain storm which has made the roads almost impassible again for you have no idea of the amount of teaming that is necessary to move and supply an army. We learned last night the Gen McDowall had formed a junction with our Right Wing near Newbridge and that our forces on the right under Gen Porter had an engagment with the rebels and took 1300 prisoners and a field battery and drove them with great loss within 1½ miles of Richmond If this be all true we will have no hand? In this coming battle as our Division (Kearneys) and Hookers are the reserves as we suffered all the loss at Williamsburg it will be onley fair to let the rest of them have the next chance of distinguishing themselves so unless the fight is desperate we will have no hand in it we are stationed in rear of the Left Wing about three miles form Bottoms Bridge across the Chickohominy.

I am at present in command of the company as Bailett is sick with the disentery and has been sent away to hospital to day so I am getting along pretty fast form a Sergeant to Lieut commanding the company is three weeks.

We have had pretty easy times for the last two weeks short marches and we generally stay two or three days in a place.

I have not got time to write any more at present as we have just had orders to move

so I remain yours
William Bird Jr

Write soon
Direct as before

New York June 8th 1862

Dear Father

I arrived here from Boston this morning I landed at Boston yesterday morning from the steamer Daniel Webster she had 250 wounded soldier on board we were five days at sea and had a very rough passage most of the men were sea sick but I was not my wound is getting along first rate it only requires rest and quietness to make me all right again

I will be home about the middle of the week and get nursed up amongst you. The surgeon told me it would take about two months to straighten me up. I am stopping at the Bulls Head I might have staid at the Hospital but I could not bear to stay amongst so many wounded men I could not sleep nights for their groans and as soon as I get rested a little I will come home. My wound is not very painfull and as I am in first rate health the Surgeon says it will soon heal up but it will be some time before I get back the strength in my shoulder. I wrote to Mary from White House Va about a week ago I suppose she is stopping with you so this letter will do for both for it is quite a job for me to write my arm is stiff. I see by the papers the 64th got badly cut up in the battle on Sunday and I see Col Bingham's name in the list of wounded.

No more at present from

yours
William Bird Jr

Yorktown Aug 21st 1862

Dear Jim

I write this on board of the steamer Forrest City laying in the stream off Yorktown we arrived here yesterday and embarked this morning report says for Alexandria to be held in reserve there but we really don't know for where we may join Burnside or Pope. Herntelman's and Keys Corps are embarked here and more troops are loading at Fortress Munroe.

We have been on the march about a week and without baggage so I have had not chance of writing before. I believe all the troops are withdrawn from the Peninsula they made a very orderly retreat and brought off every thing there has been no pursuit that I have heard of. There is to be a new line of operations taken up with the Potomac for a base I suppose and I dont think that much will be done untill the new troops are brought into the field.

We had very hot weather at Harrisons Landing the hottest I ever saw but it is much cooler now

Capt Clarke has been sick and I have had command of the company ever since I got back he rode in the ambulance on the march but is better now we have 30 men present for duty

We have not been paid yet but will be as soon as we get settled somewhere you must be hard up for help in haying you had better hire somebody and you can promise them pay soon I dont know what I should have done without your \$25 for I had to pay my fare all the way

I hope they will not draft you you must write and let me know how the draft is getting along and who are drafted.

I have not time to write more now but will as soon as we get somewhere

yours

William Bird Jr

My shoulder does not trouble me any and I am hearty

Direct as before

Alexandria, Sep 4th 1862

Dear Father

I wrote you last on the Steamer at Yorktown ^Aug 21^ and since that time we have been knocked around so that it has been impossible to write I have not seen my baggage untill to day for three weeks nor had a clean shirt on nor been in a tent or any shelter have marched 200 miles been in three fights and been under arrest for three days so you may believe I have been buisy.

When we landed at Alexandria on the 22nd of Aug we were shipped on the cars and taken out to Warrenton we advanced five miles beyond that point and staid there two days and while there I was placed under arrest by Gen Kearney on picket for not having a sentry on a post where I had no orders to post one but I was honorably released when the facts were known. From Warrenton we were marched back to Centreville and near there on the evening of the 29th we had a smart skirmish with the enemys cavalry and routed them without losing a man.

The next two days we were with Pope & McDowell four miles from Centreville and had a very bloody battle which lasted two days and we were forced to retire on Centreville our Regt was in the reserve but we were under fire both days and lost four men. We staid at Centreville two days and marched for Alexandria but met the enemy in force on the road we made an attack on them and routed them but we suffered severly and had our brave Gen Kearney killed our Regt lay on the field of battle all night the enemy left before daylight the battle was fought in the middle of a heavy thunder storm and lasted untill after dark our regt was luckey again in not being brought in but other Regts fought who had laid still at some of our other fights.

We have not been at any place long enough to be paid but we will probably be here some time and I have got six months pay due and will send you some as soon as I get it.

There is some chance of our company being put into some of the Forts around Washington as Artillerists which would keep us out of harms ways Major Haskins had charge of the Fortifications about Washington and I think he will get us detached to some of them. I am anxious to hear from you about your loan money whether you have had an answer yet and what the prospects of the draft are I hope they will not take Jim I don't know what you would do without him. I have not heard from home since I left but I think some of the mails have lost

Let me hear from you soon and I remain

yours
William Bird Jr

Direct as before
I am as hearty as a buck

Camp Near Alexandria VA Sept 18/62

Dear Father

I recieved your letter of the 10th and was glad to hear from home but sorry to hear that Jimmy had enlisted I think he ought to have stood his chance of the draft however I don't think he will see much fighting if I knew where to direct I would write to him I wish you would let know what company he is in and the number of the Regt.

I expect Major Jones will be Colonel and he promised me look after the boys and the Colonel of the Regt is a good friend to have the Major is trying get me appointed Major the new Regt but I don't think he will succeed so you need not mention it but I shall get my promotion to 1st Lieut in a few days. I have had a severe attack of dihariea for the last week but am better now but I don't feel very smart yet. Our Division is holding the line of fortifications in rear of Alexandria and are likely to stay here for some time we had a tough time before we got here and got pretty well reduced and we are now getting the rest we needed so much the Regt is getting a good many recruits from New York our company has got ten.

The weather is getting quite comfortable now and we have got a very good camp near Fort Ward one of our largest forts.

The paymaster has not been here yet I dont know what keeps him away so long but I shall get six months pay when he comes and will send you some money immediately for you must need it badly. I have not had a cent in six weeks and have hard work to get along I dont believe there is \$10 in the Regt.

I am anxious to hear if you have made any arrangement about your loan money yet I wish you would write and let me know.

I will write to mother in a few days.

Le me know if you have heard from George and I remain

yours William Bird Jr

Camp 37th N Y V Oct 6th

Dear Father

Our long looked for Paymaster has at last made his appearance and paid us off.

I send you a check on A G Rice & Co for \$100 which if you dont need for any thing else I think you had better lay out in sheep if they are not too high.

The new Regiment has reached here all safe Jim & Alick have been up here and passed the night with me and yesterday I was down to see them they are in pretty good shape and will get along very well and if the boys behave themselves they will soon get promotions.

I can only write a short letter this time for the mail carrier is waiting for me to close.

We are in the same place where I wrote from last and I think we are likely to stay here for some time.

Let me hear from you as soon as you recieve the check and I remain
yours

Wm Bird Jr

Skinner will cash the check you must endorse it on the back

Camp 37th Regt NY Vols
Near Edward Ferry Md Oct 21

Dear Father

I send you a check for \$75 Stowell Chamberlain & Co bankers in Olean Mr Harmon will cash it for you.

We are still guarding the fords of the Potomac.

We crossed the river yesterday on a reconisance with our Regt and a squadron of cavalry and scouted the country as far as Lecoburg but saw no rebels.

We forded the river it was about waist deep and rather cold.

We are having very fine weather but the nights are getting cold and we have had several frosts just enough to open the chestnuts.

Our division has been attached to Gen Burnside's command he is at Harper's Ferry and I suppose we will join him there soon.

Every thing is quiet here there is no signs of any advance of the army of the Potomac

Our division has been under the command of Gen Stoneman since Kearney's death.

You had better lay this money out in sheep and if you can get a good lot to take on shares you had better take them I should think you could winter 100 sheep

I have not time to write any more to day let me hear from you as soon as you recieve this and I remain

yours

William Bird Jr

Camp near the Rappahannock Va Nov 12 1862

My Dear Mother

I recieved Fathers last letter in due season but have had no chance to answer it. We crossed the Potomac into Virginia on the 28th of Oct and since that time we have been on the jump. We forded the river it was about waist deep and very cold and slept in our wet cloths but I took no harm from it.

We have had a rough time of it amongst the mountains ever since if you will take a map and find Leesburg Va It is bout 80 miles above Washington we crossed the river about 10 miles above there and crossed the mountains South West and have driven the rebels across the Rappahannock and followed them across near Warrenton we are now in Culpepper County about two miles from the river near the villiage of Waterloo.

We have had very good weather the most of time about a week ago we had a severe snow storm we were in the mountains of the Blue Ridge and had a hard time of it but the weather is warmer now but the nights are cold but have got plenty of blankets and manage to keep pretty comfortable.

Cap Clarke and Harmon have both left us I have been promoted 1st Lieut and am in command of Harmons company and I shall probibly soon be Captain of it

I had a letter from Jim a few days ago. The boys are well and are at Fairfax under Seigel I also had a letter from George he is at Corinth and well

The order has just come to move so I must close this up in a hurry.

I sent Father a check for \$75 to buy sheep with about three weeks ago and I have not heard from it yet but I suppose he got it.

I dont think there will be much fighting done this fall I think we will soon go into winter quarters

I would write more but they are waiting to take the tent down so I remain
your affectionate son

William Bird Jr

Camp Near Bulls Bluff Va 17th 62

Dear Father

I recieved your letter of the 13th to day and am glad to hear that your check got home safe

I would not go in debt for any stock I will send you \$75 more and you can lay it out in sheep if you can get a good lot without paying too much for them for I think sheep and wool will be likely to be high for some time to come as long as this war lasts at least.

I think if Litchfields sheep are good you had better make a trade with him and take some of his on shares I would take as many as I could winter well.

I was promoted 1st Lieut about a week ago with rank and pay from Sep 13th and I think I shall be Captain before three months

We left our camp on Uptons Hill on the 11th and made two days forced march to intercept Stewarts Cavalry in their return from their Pennsylvania Raid but we were too late to stop them we are now in camp new Edwards Ferry Md about 30 miles from Washington on the Potomac guarding the fords and ferries we have just got in from two days picket on the bank of the River we had a quiet time and were not disturbed but the rebels crossed the river just above us and stole the Col and Lieut Col horses of a new Regt that were on picket there and carried them off I dont know how long we shall stay here the impression here is that we shall go into Winter quarters near here or at Harpers Ferry

I send you Kearneys picture it is a correct likeness he was a gallant soldier he insulted me badly but he took it all back and made all right.

I will send you a check in a day or two as soon as can get it.

I only saw the boys twice before we marched they were well Major Jones had gone to take command and he will look after them.

I am well and hope this will find you all the same

I remain

yours

William Bird Jr

Camp Near Fredrickburg
Nov 23rd 1862

Dear Father

I recieved your letter of Oct 27th last night it was the first mail we have had in three weeks.

We have had a pretty hard time of it lately the weather has been cold and wet and the mud deep and we have made some very heavy marches.

We are now just across the Rappahannock River from Fredricksburg and the rebels are on the other side and in possession of the town but Gen Burnside sent them word yesterday to get their women and children out of it we have got our batteries planted and I expect will shell them out to day

I dont think there will be much of a fight here for we have got our immense army here and as near as we can find out the Rebels are not very strong here.

The River is about 25 rods wide and not fordable but there is a part of the bridge standing and we can soon throw a pontoon bridge across.

I dont know whether we will go into Winter quarters here or advance on Richmond I hope we will lay up some where soon for the weather is getting pretty cold and disagreeable.

I have not heard from the boys lately but they are still at Fairfax with Seigel and are not likely to see any fighting soon for they are the reserve of the Grand Army of the Potomac.

I hope you have got some stock to suit you and will get them safe through the winter let me know how much stock you are wintering

I expect we will be here some time and if you write soon I shall get an answer before we leave here.

I am well and hope this will find you all well at home and I remain

your
William Bird

Camp 37th Regt NY Vols
Near Fredricksburg VA Dec 4th 62

My Dear Mother

I recieved your letter of Nov 23d yesterday and was very glad to hear from home and that you are all well.

We are still laying quietly in camp here our pickits are on one side of the River and the rebels on the other they are not farther apart than from the house to the old barn but they do not fire at each other the rebels are fortifying the hills on the other side and we are doing the same on this side but there is no fighting going on it is believed here that we are going into Winter quarters here and it is time for the weather is quite cold but the roads are pretty good yet.

We have got a pretty comfortable camp here Capt Clarke has come back to his company we have got one large tent for the officers of both companies with a hole in the top to let the smoke out and we build a fire on the ground in the middle but it smokes Jake has gone to day to see if we cant find some bricks to make a fire place. There are four of us in the tent and the Surgeon messes with us he is a son of old John Philips of Philip's locks on the Erie Canal and went to school with me at the Widdow Swarts.

He has told me all about the Van Housens and Van Olindos etc. Old Tom Ireland still keeps a grocery at the locks and is well off Young Tom is dead. Billy Qua lives there yet and Paddy Hagerty is a breakman on the Central Road and Black Bet is still alive. I did not know the Doctor till one day he was telling about doctoring old John Van Housen and then it turned out that we had been at school together

I have not heard from the boys in some time but they are in the Reserve with Seigel and at Fairfax and are not likely to see any service this Winter. I am glad that you have got a lot of sheep and hope that you will get them safe through the Winter and have good luck with them and you will have quite a flock by another year.

I an well and hope that this will find you all the same I remain
your affectionate son William

I enclose a line for Eddy

Dear Eddy

I recieved your little letter and was glad to hear from you and to see that you could write so good a letter.

I am afraid that Johney and you will have pretty hard work to get the wood but you must be good boys and help all you can but you must not neglect your school.

We are so near the Secsh here that we can talk to them I was down at the River yesterday to see them and they look pretty ragged and poor but we dont fire at each other at all now.

I send you a dollar for a Christmas present and one for Johney I hope you will buy something good with it and have a good time.

Tell Johney to write to me and write again yourself for I like to hear from you all

your Brother
William

Camp near Fredricksburg Va Dec 17

Dear Father

We have been through another big battle and I am still all sound.

Every thing was ready for crossing the river on the 11th and we attempted to throw our pontoon bridges across but were repulsed several times but succeeded in crossing just before dark and took possession of the city after some sharp fighting. The enemy were strongly posted on a range of hills back of the city with a level plain in from one to two miles wide. the enemy made no resistance after we got the city untill our whole force was across.

Our Division crossed on the morning of the 13th and took a position below the town in the second line of battle supporting Meads division of Penn reserves.

About 2 Oclock they advanced to carry the hills in front of them and were repulsed three times with heavy loss.

The enemy then advanced on us we had one light battery of 6 guns on a knoll in front of us with two Pennsylvania Regiments supporting it they broke and run to the rear and the 37th was ordered up to take their place. The enemy had 5 Georgia Regt and they were coming double quick but the Battery behaved splendidly they poured in Shell and Canister into them and when they got within about 15 rods the 37th opened on them and they could not stand it and broke and cleared out.

They killed and wounded most of the men of two of our guns and I manned and worked them with my Company.

The Colonel complimented me and my company very highly and Gen Berry mentioned it in his report.

The Regt lost only 33 men killed and wounded my company lost only one and Co I lost four all wounded but we were very lucky and had a knoll in front of us which sheltered us considerable for the enemy raked every other part of the field with shells

We held our ground two days and nights under fire all the time and were then moved back across the river and are now in our old camp.

When our Brigade marched into the field the Rebel General Hill was looking at us with his glass and we formed our line and dressed as steady as a parade under a terrific fire of Shells. We sent in a flag of truce that night for our wounded and when it came back Gen Hill sent his compliments to Gen Berry and told him he had a splendid Brigade.

The 154th Regt is near here and Alic was over to see me last night they are all well but Jim was left behind at Fairfax with a bile on his knee Col Jones was also here to see us and he told me that he was going to make an Officer of Jim the first chance he had.

I think the Winter Campain is over and we will go into Winter Quarters now for men can not stand it we have been laying out the last five days without fire or tents and we suffered a great deal and the weather was warmer than it has been for some time. I am well and tough and am getting along well and remain

yours

William Bird Jr

Camp Pitcher VA Jan 8th 1863

Dear Father

I received your letter of Dec 30th in due season. We are still in our old camp near Fredricksburg now called Camp Pitcher after the Major of the 4th Maine Regt who was killed at the battle of Fredricksburg.

We have got a very good log shanty built 8 x 16 feet with a good fire place and chimney built of mud and sticks but it works well and we are quite comfortable there is four of us sleeps in our new house and we use our tent for a kitchen and mess room and Jake sleeps there.

Every thing is very quiet here and looks as if we were settled down for the Winter.

We have had another small Regiment consolidated with us the 101st N Y V their officers were all mustered out of the service and we got 230 men from them.

I have got 90 men in my company now and 75 of them are present and and for duty my company is one of the largest and best companies in the Regt.

Our whole corps was reviewed by Gen Burnside the other day our Regt was the first in the Column and the men had all new cloths and looked and marched first rate and was one of the best Regt present out of 54

I have been promoted Captain but the promotion has not been published yet and I suppose will not be untill the commission comes from Albany but I am drawing the pay since the 2nd of Dec.

We are looking for the Paymaster every day to pay us four months pay as soon as he comes I will send you money enough to pay your taxes.

Jim was here the other day and staid all night with me they are all well they are about two mils from here I have only been over to see them once for I have been very buisy lately I have had a great deal of writing to do making out the accounts of my new men.

We have had very fine warm weather for the last two weeks but it has turned cold again and the ground is frozen hard but the most of the men have built shanties of one kind or other and are pretty comfortable. Our camp three weeks ago was in a fine piece of timber but now it is all cleared Our Brigade has burned over 150 acres of timber in the past month and before Spring we will have to haul our wood 3 miles.

I have nothing more to write about to day. I recieved Johney's letter of the 26th Dec I am well and hope this will find you all the same I remain

yours
William Bird Jr

Camp Pitcher Va Jan 25th 63

Dear Father

I recieved you letter of the 17th yesterday. We have got back to our old camp once more all safe.

We left here on the 20th and marched about eight miles up the river and halted in a piece of woods close to the river intending to throw our pontoons across in the night and cross the next morning but it commenced raining soon after dark and soon took the frost of the ground and then the mud was bottomless and they were not able to get the pontoons nor artillery in position in season as we intended to surprise them in the morning.

We passed a very miserable night as we had no tents or baggage with us and were not allowed to make any fires and the rain poured down all night and was quite cold so that sleeping was out of the question we had to stand and shiver and take it. In the morning we made some little fires and made some coffe which warmed us up some and then we were sent out to make roads and help to drag the pontoons and artilery through the mud. The pontoons are big boats about twenty feet long mounted on wheels they are anchored in the river and a bridge built on them they are commonly drawn by six horses they had to put on twelve horses and a company of men to ease and then they had to give it up as a bad job for it was impossible to get them along so after waiting three days in the rain the move was abandoned and we are back to our old camp to spend the rest of the Winter I hope for I think this move has shown Gen Burnside the folly of trying to move an army here in the Winter where an hours rain will make the roads impassible.

I found my shanty and chimney still standing but all my furniture was gone and I am buisy now trying to get fixed up again lumber is very scarce here and we have to make our tables and chairs doors etc? out of hard tack boxes but we get along pretty well and are quite comfortable again.

I lost eleven of my new Dutchmen they have deserted on the march they were are very much dissatisfied at being transfered into the 37th but I think I shall catch them again. I tried three of my men by Court Martial for cowardice at the battle of Fredricksburg and they were sentenced to have their heads shaved and two of them drummed out of the service which was accordingly excicated.

The weather is quite warm now and Spring like but the mud is awful every thing is very quiet and likely to remain so for some time. I saw the boys when we were on the march they had been working for some days before the move building roads I believe they are back the their old camp they are well.

I have nothing more to write about to day I am well and hope this will find you all hearty I remain

yours

William Bird Jr

Camp Pitcher Va
Feb 3rd 1863

Dear Father

It is some time since I have heard from you. We are still in our old camp we have a terrible time of mud but now it is frozen hard and the weather is very cold we have nothing to do but make ourselves comfortable and it is pretty hard to do that for wood is getting very scarce. when we first camped here our camp was in the middle of a big forrest but now there is scarcely a tree standing within a mile of us.

I hear that Jimmy has been promoted 1st Sergeant and Col Jones told me yesterday that he would soon have a commission for him. I have not seen the boys for two weeks it has been so muddy but I am going over tomorrow.

Our long expected paymaster has been here and paid us two months pay and we have three months more due. I send you \$10 to pay your taxes and would have sent it before if I had got it.

We have been having great changes in the Army of the Potomac. Burnside has been relieved from his command and Hooker takes his plase and it is a very good change. Burnside is a very good man in a small way but he was not eagal to the command of the Army of the Potomac. Hooker is one of our very best fighting Generals he is a little too fond of Whiskey but is a first rate man for the plase I believe the best we have got.

I have nothing more to write about to day let me hear from you as soon as you recieve this and I remain yours

William Bird Jr