

Camp Bulah, near Mobile, February 4th 1863

Dear Sister,

In looking over your letter again this morning, I see it is dated 5th of October. I however did not receive it till after I left Montgomery about the 20th of November. It has been so long since I wrote to you that I hardly know where to begin so I will go way back and try and write you a long letter. As I wrote you last year, I am the Commissary of the 18th Ala. [Alabama] Regiment. My rank is Captain and I greatly prefer being where I am to being a Captain in the Lines, as a Captain commanding a company. My rank is the same and my pay ten Dollars a month more (being \$140) and the Government feeds my horse. So on a march, I can always ride, and Captains of the Line have to walk, where there are neither Railroads or boats.

I think I wrote you last year that we had been stationed at Tupelo and Saltillo on the Mobile and Ohio Rail Road, and the first of August we came to Mobile as Gen. Bragg [Braxton Bragg] was going on to Tennessee with his army. We were left here and those other regiments to hold Mobile.

I left for home the 20th August quite sick with fever and had a long spell of Typhoid fever. I went to the Warm Springs in September and remained a short time and never returned to my Regiment till the 20th of November, [ma]king three months I was absent, & [fit] not even yet, recovering my weight. I got a week to go home last month and was in Montgomery several days. I got my leave of absence extended and staid [sic] at home ten days, and took one to go and one to return, making twelve days.

I rented out my house in town [until] October and expect I will sell it. Sue is at the plantation and her mother with her and I have an overseer, Mr. Hale, who is upwards of forty five years of age. He is not liable to conscription. Sue [went] down to Mobile and remained four weeks before Christmas at the Battle House. [The] camp is four miles from there but [at] the outskirts of Mobile. I went and staid [sic] every night except [five?] when she was there. She is coming down this month about the middle, to [stay] one month or more, probably two [or] three months if we remain that long. I [hope?] we will remain here till April or longer. We have fixed up for winter. I now [have] my tent (I occupy one to myself) planked up four feet high, with a plank floor and door and small brick chimney at the end. I am quite comfortable and I have a cot and a mattrass [sic], my shawl blanket, quilt, and a pair of sheets. When we leave this place I expect to see [sights?], as some of our army are now doing, and poor Cos [Cosmo O. Bailey] I expect among the number for it is cold here and no doubt very cold where he is.

Sue is getting on tolerable well

I keep Phill with me, but let him go home last Thursday on a visit and he is to be back tonight (which makes several days). We leave Mobile at 7 in the morning and get to Montgomery at 10 at night by Rail Road and the same way returning.

When our Regiment's new clothing [came?] they disposed of one suit generally and I got Phill to buy me enough woolen coats and pants for all my negroes. That were worn some but very good and I have laid in fourteen pairs of pants and eight coats for next winter, which Phill took up last week. I cant get woolen cloth any other way. Everything is very high and very scarce. I fortunately had meat enough for last year and I have killed stock [????] pigs and stoats on hand. Sue writes me she has four cans of lard to sell, a can weighs from 70 to 80 pounds. I furnish my overseer with 400 pounds of pork and sold him four hundred. He has a wife, four children and a negro girl.

The State is making salt in Clarke [Camp?] near the river between this place and Montgomery. I hired Dave, my blacksmith to the [??] commission last September 29th for three months at \$40 a month to be paid in salt at \$3.00 a bushel—when I got my salt the first of January it was worth \$25 a bushel and I got 40 bushels; so if I had bought it, it would have cost me one thousand dollars.

I paid eighteen dollars yesterday for a pair of kid shoes and sent up to Sue & have bought her some spools of thread at 60 cents, and pins at one dollar a paper.

[??] was in Montgomery and wrote me to get [s??] to make her boys linens or under clothing, and I could find only one piece in Mobile—I bought twenty yards and paid \$1.75 for it of \$35. It was such as formerly sold at 15 or 20 [cents]. Everything here is in that proportion. Sugar, 50 cents a pound and molasses two & a half dollars a gallon by the Barrel—I have some flour, any this year, have six acres of wheat sown.

We always manage to keep in coffee. Sue says she wants to go to Europe and leave the Confederate States, where she can get coffee. It is now selling at \$3.75 a pound in Mobile.

I expect you have heard that Mrs. Hall's older son, Anders was shot dead in some of the Virginia last year. His remains were brought home.

I enclose you some notes, given last year. They are dated March but I never got them out till Fall. I use and circulate them in the army and they are very current in Mississippi and Ala. [Alabama], Georgia, and West Florida. [They?] are unlawful [notes?] after the first of next April in Alabama and Navy can't redeem [any?]. I put out three [ten?] thousand Dollars, and hope they are so scattered that I will make some money by it. I send you all the different sizes and issues—

[Close of letter, extending into margins, missing segments] Now farewell, I will write promptly if you will reply to this soon—Your affectionate brother, Wm. H. Osborne. My love to the children and let the negroes hear from me

... can—where is Cos & S— and Jeb . . . as we have a man detailed to get them [??] . . . and bring out the letters—Capt. W.H. Osborne 18th Alabama Regt., Mobile, Ala.

You are the only near relative I have . . . as I want to visit you. I want you to come and see us soon. Life does not last always. Let me hear from you (note 3rd margin).