

JULY 29TH

IN CAMP: RICHMOND VIRGINIA.

DEAR BROTHER HENRY.

ON JULY 15TH OUR NEWLY MUSTERED REGIMENT THE 2ND FLORIDA VOLUNTEERS UNDER COL GEORGE T. WARD AND LT COL ST GEORGE RODGERS, BOARDED THE TRAIN AT JACKSONVILLE STATION AND RATTLED DOWN THE LINE TO RICHMOND VIRGINIA.

I KNOW THAT YOU WOULD HAVE LOVED THE JOURNEY AS I KNOW YOUR LOVE OF LOCOMOTIVES AND I DO CONFESS THE CONTINUAL TICK A TACK TICK A TACK OF THE RAILS WAS VERY HYPNOTIC. IF YOU SHOW THIS TO MOTHER AND NO DOUBT AT GUNPOINT WILL YOU BE FORCED TO DO SO, SHE WILL HAVE SKIPPED THESE LINES, MOTHER SHOULD YOU BE READING THESE LINES I CAN ALLAY ANY FEAR YOU MAY HAVE ON ACCOUNT OF YOUNG BILLY, HE IS WITH ME IN THE RICHMOND TRAINING DEPOT AND ADAMANT THAT HE JOIN.

IT IS MY OPINION THAT YOU SHOULD IN NO WAY BAR HIM FROM IT, I AM HERE AND WILL TAKE CARE OF HIM AND TO THAT END YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO KEEP HIM NOW HE IS HERE, LET HIM STAY AND SEE HOW HE LIKES IT, BELIEVE ME IT IS HARDER THAN IT LOOKS, IT WILL EITHER BREAK HIS WILL TO JOIN OR HE WILL BECOME AN EXCELLENT SOLDIER, WHO WILL KNOW WELL HOW TO BRING HIMSELF TO BATTLE.

I MUST BEG YOUR FORGIVENESS FOR NOT WRITING SOONER, THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE TO WRITE ABOUT SINCE BILLY CAME IN, THE CAPTAIN HIS PLEASED WITH HIM AND SAYS HE IS A FINE BOY, THE SERGEANTS LOVE HIM (THOUGH ARE NOT SOFT ON HIM) BECAUSE HE CAN TELL HIS RIGHT FROM LEFT AND IS, THANKS TO MOTHER AND BESSIE OF COURSE, FAIRLY WELL EDUCATED. NOT LIKE THE RECRUITS WE GOT BACK HOME, HALF OF WHOM COULD NOT TELL RIGHT FROM LEFT, WE CALLED THEM STRAWFOOT'S BECAUSE THE SERGEANTS HAD TO THREAD STALKS HAY AND STRAW THROUGH ALTERNATE TROUSER LEGS, AND CALL OUT THE STEP RESPECTIVELY.

WE ALSO HAVE A FIRST CLASS PARSON OR "PADRÉ" AS WE ALL CALL HIM, A FINE UPSTANDING GENTLEMEN WHO GIVES THE MOST ENLIGHTENING SERMONS ON SUNDAY'S. DRILL CONTINUES, MARCHING AND COUNTER MARCHING, BAYONET DRILL IN WHICH SACKS OF SOME SORT OF SUBSTANCE ARE SUSPENDED FROM POLES AND ON COMMAND WE STAB TWIST AND RETRIEVE, LEAVING THEM IN A SHOCKING STATE,

THE STUFFING POURING OUT OF THEM, FORMING SMALL POOLS ON THE FLOOR AND FIRING DRILL,

WE PARADED FOR A COMPLETE FIELD DAY NOT LONG BACK, IT WAS A FINE THING TO SEE, MANY SPECTATORS ARRIVED TO WATCH US AND BILLY AND I FELT MOST PROUD, WE AT FIRST MANOEUVRED IN COLUMN SHAKING OUT INTO LINE AND ADVANCING WITH BAYONETS FIXED TO FIRE A BLANK VOLLEY INTO THE "ENEMY"

WE WERE CHEERED OFF OF THE FIELD, AS USUAL RUMOURS ABOUND ABOUT WHEN WE WILL GO OFF TO WAR PROPER, SOME SAY WE ARE JOINING AN ARMY OF 70,000 AND MARCHING IMMEDIATE OF WASHINGTON, OTHERS SAY FIRST WE WILL WAIT AND LET THE YANKEE'S COME TO US, GIVE THEM A BLOODY NOSE AND CHASE THEM TO THE GATES OF THE CAPITOL, ONE THING IS CERTAIN, WE WILL BE GOING AT SOME POINT, THAT? I AM AS IN THE DARK AS YOU.

THE CORPORAL GOT HIS BOX IN TODAY HE HAD JAM IN IT, GOOD STUFF TOO, HE SHARED IT WITH US AND WE WERE ALL VERY GRATEFUL TO HIM, WE HAVE HAD SOME ABSENTEE'S HOWEVER, THE SPIRIT OF DESERTION IS NOT RIFE HERE, MORE THE IDEA THAT WE MAY COME AND GO AS WE PLEASE, WE BEING VOLUNTEER'S IT SEEMS NATURAL TO UN-VOLUNTEER FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS TO CATCH THE TRAIN HOME TO CHECK ON THE FAMILY.

THOUGH TO ALL THOSE WHO DO NOT COME BACK I CAN AS YET NOT FATHOM WHY, WE LEAD A RATHER LUXURIOUS LIFE HERE ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, THE DRILLS ARENT NEARLY SO TIRING AS SOME CHORES WE HAD TO DO BACK HOME, I CANNOT THINK OF ANYONE WHO I WOULDN'T RECOMMEND SOLDIERING TO, WE LOUNGE ABOUT MOST DAYS, WEARING MOSTLY WHATEVER WE PLEASE, THOUGH FOR PARADE WE DRESS SMARTLY, WONDERING HOW BRAVE WE WILL BE WHEN WE GET SHOT OVER FOR THE FIRST TIME OR HOW MANY YANKEE'S WE'LL GET TO SHOOT, BILLY WANTS TO CAPTURE A FLAG AND PARADE IT TO THE WHITE HOUSE!

WE ARE ALL HALE OF HEALTH HERE AND IN NO NEED TO COMPLAIN, MOST THINK THAT THEY WILL MAKE ME CORPORAL NEXT CHANCE THEY GET, AS OUR OTHER ONE IS A LAZY SON OF A MULE DRIVER BUT AGAIN RUMOURS SHOOT AROUND THIS CAMP WITH THE SPEED OF A CAT, FROM MOUTH TO MOUTH UNTIL THAT MOUTH FINDS ANOTHER THING TO SPECULATE ABOUT.

I MUST RUSH TO CATCH THE POST NOW.

MY LOVE TO ALL THE FAMILY, TAKE CARE OF THEM WELL.

YOUR BROTHER.

JOSH D PROVAN.

PRIVATE 2ND FLORIDA VOLUNTEERS.

YOUR OBEDIENT SERVANT

(AND FRIEND OVER THE WATER)

PVT JOSHUA PROVAN