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Letter from John Henry Jenks to Almina Crawford Jenks; September 6, 1863

Jenks, John Henry, 1823-1864

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Washington   September 6th 1863

Dear Wife   Yours came yesterday, and today the Barre Gazette from the officer I conclude you ordered them to send it - "cant get outa my mind who that Hill was what deserted and was shot, unless it was the one who lived 1½ miles South of the village, but I did not think him so old. I have to inform you that my coat has been found, I think W S Dunbar ought to send it out to me free of expense, In regard to you selling the Organ I will leave that wholly to you, I think you ought to get $200, or $225, I presume they could get one at the manufacturers for $200, if you come out to settle with me in Western Virginia when the war is over it may be it will be better for you than the money at interest, so you will have quite a pile which runs up fast, by being on interest, you have told me nothing about your money yet whether Foster has paid you or not. I am in hopes of being able to make a pile before I go home. I think now I shall not go home this fall when I count the cost, I fear if it wont pay and you will need all the money you get, and those that go home say they wish they had not gone, for they hardly got home before they had to come back, and the old sore was ruptured and left a running sore. I shall send you back the money you sent me, had I not bought my coat should have been able sent you more; as I have before been able to send you considerable of the $7 I retain for my own use. being an officer I have to buy many things which a private does not. The Government clothes are not suitable for Sgts (that is all of them.) There is a man in the city who owns 35000 acres of land in Western Vir. which is heavy wooded and never cultivated, left to him by an uncle, which he wants settled so as to bring it into market, and offers to give 100 acres to any New England man of good steady habits -and will build a saw mill and give to them use, it is located on the South side of Alaganny Mountains well watered and very healthy if we can get up a colony together I may be one, when the war is over, I am going to be on the lookout for a situation before I go back, this is the country for peaches grapes melons and the many good things which a kind providence lavishes upon us. I could build me a house on it , in three weeks time with an outlay of $25. which would be comfortable for us all, and then we should have a home all our own, in one of the healthiest climates, in the country where the cold frosts of winter do not freeze you up. I know how to build a log house, yes and many things I never knew untill I came out in the army. It is my opinion when the war closes a great portion of the soldiers will settle in the Southern states and the immigration will be lured there instead of the West; and you will find those vast tracks of land hitherto unsettled, peopled with live Yankees, and
in a few years these rivers will be lined with mills of all kinds and the skill of the mechanick will be seen in evry village, and prosperity plenty and happiness will be stamped upon those oppressed states, now bleeding under the galling hand of the tyrant. Monday morning I am most sick to day. I never had so bad a cold settled on my lungs, but I think it is looser to day.

I bought some onions and fried them for my breakfast. I am so as to be on duty in camp as usual. Mrs. Rust from Marlboro is sick and the Doct. says she is threatened with thypoid fever. I hope she wont have it, for it is a hard place to be sick but Mrs. Adamans who came with her will be here to take care of her. Masons Brother is out here taking care of Charles, they think there is some hopes of his recovery his throat is better but I did not know before that diptheria came out in sores. his commenced on his foot which swelled up twice the usual size and if he peals the skin from any part of his body a membrane forms the same as in the throat. Chas Mattoon is some better and there is hopes of his recovery. Haynes is so he begins to do a little light duty; he had a box from home Saturday with dried currents, Berries Apple; jelly Porter, wine, and such things as a sick man would be thankful for - I send you a paper to day What a beautiful little piece "Our Idol" is. We have smoothed out his ringlets and closed his blue eyes, I can see it now, I feel it. "When we have crossed the crystal sea" is another beautiful piece those two bits of poetry are worth twice the price of the paper which is 5 cts. a copy. When you send paper, you can send two or even three for two cents each just as well if they dont weigh over 4 OZ. Dear One I see you in all your trials and struggles through life, and I am not unmindful of them, and I pray that you may be sustained under them, trusting the time will yet come when the dark clouds will blow over and the blue sky be to us as delightful as ever. One year is nearly past since I was mustered into service, and the second will more quickly fly, and then we can begin to count the months should the war still continue, which I trust will be closed during the next year. I shall try to do all I can for your comfort now and be making plans for your future when the war shall close, in all probability we shall not be called into action this winter, and if we do as well in the future as we have in the past, our chance is good to stay here a long time. There was one Regt. that was liked here very much staid 18 mos. and now they are not to the front. We are called the best Regt. that ever was in the city. Although some of the N.H. folks call us a band box Regt., baby Regt. etc. and seem to feel real bad that we have not been in battle and killed off most of us, but I am satisfied to stay here, and let folks talk, for our reputation is made. I think we shall be paid about the 20th Cap. Combs is still sick. I think he love to all and much to you and Flora (may go home)
I am glad Freyse, and her health so good. I think you will enjoy yourself better when you get to housekeeping. I shall want my things sent me in about a month I think. You are making me a pr of socks are you from Your Affectionate husband J.H. Jenks