

Excerpts of Archer letters. (James J. Archer, a captain at that time.)  
Fort Simcoe, W.T., Sept. 14th, 1856.

"... everybody is busy making bricks, cutting timbers, digging foundations and working at building quarters.....and promises to be one of the prettiest posts in the country.

"The commanding officer and captains quarters, each one of the latter being a separate and distinct cottage containing a hall, three spacious rooms and attic, with a back building for a kitchen, on one side of a square, on the opposite side a hospital, a quartermaster's store and on one-half of each of the other sides are the company quarters of the lieutenants. There is no hope however that any more buildings will be completed this fall than just what is sufficient to afford us all shelter against the cold of winter, viz two of the company buildings and one house in which all the officers will have to live together."

Fort Simcoe, W.T.

20th Oct. 1856

"We are still busily engaged in preparing for the winter which is rapidly closing in on us. None of the quarters will be finished by Nov. 1 but I think by the 10th the quarters will be ready.

Maj. Garnett has been rushing things forward with much vigor but he just got a leave of absence and will probably not be back before 1st April....

Fort Simcoe

18th November 1856

Our quarters are a little nearer to completion..Today and tonight the wind is too high for fire in front of my tent and it is too cold to take much pleasure in writing

3rd Dec. 1856

The winter is at last upon us. On the 20th of last month we had a fall

consisting of Mrs. Black and Mrs. Hege<sup>R</sup> and little Emma Black to dinner and spend the evening.

With love to all good night  
affectionately

J. <sup>G</sup>. Archer.

Ft. Simcoe W.T. 2nd Nov 1856

Dear mother:

In my last letter I intended to enclose a letter from Wickliffe which may be interesting to you but when I was finishing the letter, Maj. Garnett by whom I was to send it down came up to the door all ready to start and in my haste Wickliffe's letter was not enclosed.

I differ from <sup>WRIGHT</sup> ~~W~~ as to the greatness of the Indian fight which I hardly understand could have been a fight at all but his is the opinion of all C<sup>ol</sup>. Wright's officers and of the people generally of Oregon and Washington territories.

yours

J. <sup>G</sup>. Archer

I send this by a soldier who is going to the Dalles on leave and will probably be in time for the eastern mail.



Fort Simcoe, W.T.

2d December, 1856

My Dear Bob:

I don't know whether or not you ever received my letter I wrote to you from the Isthmus of Panama and from Vancouver or from my first camp on the Naches river last May.

I would be perfectly satisfied if I could exchange any one of the officers here for you so that I would have you with me. I know you would not be satisfied with less than captain or less than command of a company.

The situation of Fort Simcoe is quite pretty, being an oak grove <sup>of</sup> about ten acres at the head of a valley of some 10 or 15 miles in width.... about midway between the points where the Simcoe and Topinish come down through gorges of the mountains and enter the valley and about 30 miles from the point where they have joined there after about eight miles they empty into the Yakima. Our little grove is watered by three never failing springs, of finest water.

It is slightly elevated above the valley, all of which with the mountains on each side we have a full view for thirty miles yet in this whole distance there is not a tree to be seen except in our little grove and in two similar groves to the right and the fringe of trees along the Simcoe and Topinish which are however too distant to be distinguished. All the timber in the country is either the pine which is ~~found~~ found on the top, the slopes and in the gorges. The mountains are high enough for the snow to rest upon during the greater part of the year, thus affording moisture necessary for the willow, birch, alder and cottonwood which fringes the water course.

We get our timber for building from a gap in the mountains two miles back. The game in the country is grouse, of which there are four varieties, <sup>[Perumming]</sup> the downring (?) pheasant, such as we have at home, the pine grouse which nearly resembles it but is inferior in brilliancy of plumage and boldness of flight, the sage hen, about the size of a large chicken cock and the



the prairie chicken, a little larger than the pheasant. The flesh of both the sage hen and pheasant grouse is dark and not very strong. I have not seen the <sup>[Drumming]</sup> drumming (sic) grouse this side of the Cascades but there are plenty of them between that and Vancouver which is all a well wooded country. There is, as you know a tradition amongst us at home that the red foxes are not "aborigines" of the country but that they were imported into Maryland a long time ago. This may have been true for our eastern states but they are not likely to have been imported into this country.

One was caught alive the other day by our Indian interpreter and brought into camp. It was a veritable old fashioned red fox.

I enclose to you two feathers, one from the wing and one from the tail of a fletcher that you may observe closely the difference in color.

3rd Dec, 1856

The winter is at last upon us. On the 20th of last month we had a fall of snow 14 inches deep which I suppose will lay on the ground all winter. The weather is becoming intensely cold. I had to thaw my ink before I communicated with you and it freezes in my pen as I write so that I have to hold my pen to the candle to melt it although there is a big fire just in front of my tent.

Woodruff's Co. arrived here on the 21st in the midst of the snow.

Thursday, Dec. 4, 1856

While I stopped writing a few minutes to warm my fingers last evening the ink again froze in the inkstand and I concluded to lay by my pen until morning. This morning I find the weather a good deal milder. But Thursday there was more snow.

Lt. Myers who has been absent from the company since Oct 5 arrived with the expressman. They encountered snow in the mountains two and a half feet deep when it was not drifted. The direct route to the Dalles soon will be impassable but there is another by the Yakima



river which we hope to keep up our communication with you.

Tilton's brother is one of the expressmen. ~~He~~ He was here two weeks ago and staid in my tent with me.

Guthrie wrote me by last mail that all is quiet there (on the Sound) as far as the Indians of the territory are concerned but that he had a brush with a party of Northern Indians from British Columbia who were committing depredations in his neighborhood. He drove them off but he says they have committed numerous acts of hostility along the Sound and that the steamer, Massachusetts had gone in pursuit of them and it was surmised had an engagement with them. It was also surmized that they were about making an attack on Capt. Pickett at Bellingham Bay. Those northern Indians are very numerous and warlike and Guthrie seems to anticipate a lively time. All is quite and peaceful this side of the Cascades.

We are still busily engaged in building and preparing materials. For the last month we have a saw mill at work with horse (or rather mule power) which has superceded the whip saw we had <sup>been</sup> working with. With the exception of one or two citizen carpenters all the labor of building the post is done by the soldiers. Every man of whom is for that purpose on "extra duty" in the quartermaster department. Company D (Woodruff's) and G (Late Cowman) went into quarters last Sunday. My company and Co. C (Patterson's) will get in by next Sunday, sure. The officers will get into ~~quarters~~ quarters about a week later. Each officer will have for the winter one room about the size of a tent. When our quarters are all finished however, which will not be before next fall, we will have ample room. Each captain will have a separate one-story house with a hall and three rooms on the first floor and a back building for kitchen and servants' room. Each lieutenant will have the same except that the quarters of two lieutenants will be under one room. In the meantime we will be very glad to

get the scantiest quarters where we can have shelter.

Capt. Woodruff, who arrived the second day after Maj. Garnett left, will command the post until Garnett's return.

I occasionally get a letter from Oliver Thomas. From what he tells me I should think San Francisco the last place in the world for a young man to start to make a fortune or even to live in. He writes me that he saw in the Hartford paper that Henry was supporting Filmore, the "Know Nothing" candidate for presidency. I was very sorry to hear it for I know he always desires to be right and I think he made a vast mistake, not that Filmore would not make a national president as he did before if elected but because he would not be elected and the defeat of Buchanan would result in the election by the flash republican congress of the infamous Fremont.

We are as yet uninformed as to the presidential election and are looking for the returns by the next steamer with great interest. Give my love to little Henry.

(letter addressed to Robert H. Archer of John Bilton ??? Hartford, a brother.)



Fort Simcoe, W.T.

4th December, 1856

My dear mother:

I doubt very much that the communication will be kept open. The ~~quarters~~ quarters will be ready and I will move my company into them next Sunday.

Garnett left for the states, 19th ulto. Woodruff arrived with his Company on the 21st and will command the post until Garnett's return in the spring. Lt. Myers who has been absent from my company since Oct 5 came in with the expressman 2nd inst.

There are now at this post eight officers, Capt. Woodruff, Lts.

Frazer, Douglass, Howard, Allen, Carr, Myers and I. As yet our messes are separate as they necessarily were in the field, the officers of each company forming one distinct mess. But as soon as we get into quarters all our arrangements are made for uniting into a single mess to include all the officers at the post.

People at home are very much to blame who do not write to the absent ones.

?⑤

Lt. Douglass came to my tent yesterday with a letter from his sister, the first since he joined us at Old Point. I never saw a child so delighted with an orange as he was with that letter. He held it up and waved it in front of me and showed me a flower she sent and made me smell it and acknowledge that it was sweeter than any flower I ever saw and talked about her and the letter and looked happy and forgot all about how shameful it was for her to neglect writing him for so long and then tell him she had not time before

of snow 14 inches deep which I suppose will lay on the ground all winter. I had to thaw my ink before I communicated with you and it freezes as I write,...although there is a big fire just in front of my tent.

Thursday, Dec 4, 1856

..the direct route to the Dalles will soon be impassable.

We are still busily engaged in building and preparing materials. For the last month we had a saw mill at work with horse, or rather mule power, which has superseded the whip saw we had ~~been~~ been working with. With the exception of one or two citizen carpenters, all the labor of the ~~building~~ post is done by soldiers.

Company F went into quarters last Sunday. The officers will get into their quarters in about a week. My company and Co. C will get in by next Sunday. Each officer will have for the winter one room about the size of a tent. Each captain will have a separate one-story house with a hall and three rooms on the first floor and a back building for kitchen and servants' rooms. Each lieutenant will have the same except that the quarters of two lieutenants will be under one room.

Fort Simcoe, W.T.

14th Dec. 1856

Congratulate me. I moved into quarters yesterday evening and hope in a few days when I shall have become used to living in a house, to be quite comfortable. We did not get in a day too early. Two thirds of the men of my company were frost bitten before they got in--just one week ago--and nearly all of the officers including myself were more or less frostbitten. I have learned a remedy for it: Stir salt and fresh ashes into boiling water, bathe the feet from 10 to 20 minutes. The ~~best~~ bath should be as hot as the feet can bear it....the snow is now between three and four feet deep.



He mentions with much feeling although very briefly of the intelligence of the death of his father.

The severity of the winter we hope, is past. A week ago it became suddenly warm and has continued mild ever since. The snow has entirely disappeared from the valley and mountain gorges are pouring out rivers of water.

Port Simcoe, Feb 1, '57

My dear mother:

I have <sup>been</sup> dispossessed of the pleasure of writing to you at my leisure by the arrival this morning of Owhi and several other Indian chiefs who came to have a talk and by whom I have been bothered out of all my little spare time I should have today. This is one of my busy days when I have my returns to mail out and official letters to write. I did not get through with it until 1 o'clock at night.

Nannie asks me who is my other sweetheart besides Carr--tell her Lt. Myers and a very nice fellow he is, too. He arrived Dec. 1 from a leave of absence. Lt. Sergeant whom I left on recruiting service has resigned. He was not in my company at the time of his resignation. Carr, when he arrived at Vancouver being anxious to be in my company mess applied to Colonel Wright and obtained an exchange.

We hope shortly to have some ladies at the post. Capt. Black recently promoted to (late) Bowman's company, Major Garnett, who went home to get married and perhaps Lt. Reynolds, who Nannie writes me was married the other day ~~was on~~ and will bring their wives with them. My Lt. Myers has a wife when he is at home in Cincinnati but she was here or at least at the Dallas in other days and I believe "lives so sweet shell" ask for no more."

We have managed to get through the winter here thus far very well. Besides the few books belonging to officers the company quarters, yet in their infancy contain about 150 well selected books. Carr's room is on one side and Meyers on the other of my sitting (or parlor) so I

can talk to them through the cracks when I am reading.

(end..no signature..evidently some missing)



Twí-wí-an Creek W.T.

12th Aug, 1858

My dear mother:

I neglected to say in my letter yesterday from the Atanum that most likely I will not have another opportunity to send a letter to the "white settlements" for 40 or 50 days so without having anything else to communicate I will write again to to prevent your being uneasy on account of not hearing from me. I have no way of sending this that I know of for although we expect one mail it is expected to be brought by a man who will remain with us when he arrives but it is possible that some friendly Indian will be going in by whom I can send this and I take the precaution to have it ready for such a chance.

Our march was short, only 10 miles. That of tomorrow will be shorter to the Nachess.

By these three days of marches the men will have been gradually broken in so that the long march we commence on the 4th day will not be so hard.

We got in today at 10 a/m. and have spent the day ~~00000~~ bathing, fishing and I caught a fine mess of trout, one of them 14 inches long. It is now twilight and our mail not yet come.

affectionately

J. G. Archer

Entinun Creek, 13th

Maj. Garnett sends an express to Simcoe this evening. We are 45 miles on our way, being slow traveling but we will get along faster today.

Last night we were at Nachess river where I spent two months in the summer of 56. I will write whenever I have an opportunity but don't expect to have another.

yours

J. G. Archer.

We-na-cha River, W.T.

30th August, 1858

My dear sister Nannie:

I have an opportunity tomorrow morning of sending this to Fort Simcoe. I received your letter dated Rock Run June 30th. My last was from Entinum creek on left bank of the Yakima about two miles above the place where I spent the month of August, '56.

Lt. Allen went out that evening with a party of ~~25~~ 15 mounted men to attempt the surprise capture of a band of ~~about~~ Indians about 25 miles off. The next day we marched 16 miles further up the Yakima--- had scarcely started before a messenger met us from Allen's party saying was wounded (it was supposed mortally) at the moment of accomplishing his success, about 4 o'clock p.m. (sic) He was brought into our camp, dying and expired in 15 minutes. He was an excellent officer and greatly esteemed and respected by ~~and~~ the whole command. Capt. Frazer with a small mounted escort immediately carried his body to Fort Simcoe.

Next day, 16th Aug., marched 15 miles and camped at a beautiful lake, Cleallum about two miles wide and six long--the last two days marches ~~is~~ <sup>were</sup> through woods and here the high mountains came down with a regular slope and covered with pine and fir to the very edge of the white pebbly shore. The water was clear as crystal and cold. You may imagine what a glorious swim I had. Next morning the bugle of reveille was answered by a series of echoes which I heard as I was leaving with the mounted party to explore the river (Yakima) 20 miles above the lake. Maj. Garnett with the rest of the command descended the river 5 miles to a point where there was better grazing and then awaited my return. I returned to his camp about 4 p.m. having ridden, altogether, about 45 miles. In the course of my ride as I returned at the head of the lake I found a very pretty bell shaped flower of your favorite blue color. I send it to you but the pretty shape is gone and before it reached you I fear the color will be faded but it will help to show that I always think of you.



Fort Simcoe, W.T.

2nd Oct, 1858

My dear mother:

"e returned from our expedition against the Northern Indians on the 23rd September, having marched since 10th August, 550 miles including a three days scout when I left Maj. Garnett's command about 20 miles above the mouth of the We-Na-Che river and crossed over the Columbia.

...Maj. Garnett goes home 12th of this month. His wife died a few days before our return to Simcoe and his son a few hours after his mother. Both were well when we left. Maj. G. did not know that his family was ill until he was encamped 15 miles from here. He sent a messenger to tell his wife he would be there the next day, hungry and thirsty, as much as to say he wanted lunch postponed for himself and officers. The messenger came back immediately with the sad intelligence.

Capt. Judah's and Lt. Crook's companies of the 4th inf. have left us and gone to Vancouver so there are now only our three companies here.

affectionately

J.C. Archer

Fort Simcoe, W.T.

2nd Oct. 1858

My dear mother:

We returned from our expedition against the Northern Indians on the 23rd September having marched since 10th August 550 miles including a three days scout when I left Maj. Garnett's command about 20 miles above the mouth of the We-na-che river and crossed over the Columbia.

Our column was not so successful as Col. Wright's. Most of the hostile Indians having fled over to that side of the Columbia.

Qualchen and Ow-Hi, the chief disturbers of the peace have been taken-- that and the chastisement inflicted by Maj. Garnett and Col. Wright will I think finish the Indians' war for some years to come.

Maj. Garnett goes home 12th of this month. His wife died a few days before our return to Simcoe and his son a few hours after his mother. Both were well when we left. Maj. G. did not know that his family was ill until he was encamped 15 miles from here. He sent a messenger to tell his wife he would be there the next day, hungry and thirsty, as much as to say he wanted lunch postponed for himself and officers. The messenger came back immediately with the sad intelligence.

Capt. Judah's and Lt. Crook's companies of 4th inf. have left us and gone to Vancouver so there are now only our three companies here.

all well

affectionately

J. G. Archer



at home.

Left the Yakima 18th Aug. and arrived here 20th. This river, (Wenachi) you will find I think on the old maps under the name Pischous. Tomorrow we start for Lake Chelan and Ft. Okinakane.

Maj. G<sup>5</sup>Ernett expects that we will be back at S,mcroe by 20th Sept. We will not have a fight nor meet with any further success. The remaining hostile Indians will avoid us.

The gold stories concerning this country I am satisfied are humbugs, although no doubt there is some gold in the country.

Affectionately

J. G. Archer

Fort Simcoe, W.T.

October ( no date) 1858

My dear mother:

I duly received a letter from home by the last mail. They come so regularly that I am absolutely certain of a letter every two weeks. I am afraid however that we will be cut off from mail facilities by the snow this winter. The Indians predict for us such another winter as that of '56. This morning the range of hills surrounding the valley to the south and the hills to the west are white with snow that fell during the night. The inspector Gen. (Col. Mansfield) arrived yesterday on his tour of inspection. Maj. Garnett starts this morning for the east on leave of absence. He intends to apply for leave to visit Europe, never to return to this post if he can help it. This leaves me in command of the post at least until next spring. I move into Maj. Garnett's house at once. Have brought all his table kitchen, bed room and other furniture indispensables to the to the comm and officer of a post who is obliged to entertain visitors at his post. Col. Mansfield will I expect, be my guest for a few days.

The Indian war is at an end. All the tribes east of Columbia river, Palouses, Coeur de Lanes, Spokanes, Cayuses and Sand 'orays have surrendered at descretion and given hostages for good behavior.

Our own expedition, on this side I think was equally productive of good. The hostile Indians were captive in their mountain fastness where they believed the foot of a white man would never follow, and have been chastened sufficiently to impress them with the belief that there is no safety but peace.

We took no hostages and killed but 10. As far as we went out work was thorough and peace/ established. Col. Steptoe is going home on leave.



We think he has been badly treated by Gen. Clarke in not being given an opportunity to retrieve his fortunes--people who do not understand the circumstances of his defeat and few care to look beyond the facts of success or failure are I supposed disposed to censure him severely---Gen. Clarke, by not giving him command of either Wrights' or Garnetts<sup>AD</sup> column(He was<sup>S</sup> entitled to Garnetts<sup>AD</sup> position) but leaving him in garrison at Walla Walla has done a great deal to confirm the first bad impression in the minds of the public.

I shall miss Maj. Garnett whom on the whole I like as commanding officer in spite of some little offences. He is brave, intelligent, impartial (except toward himself) truthful and full of energy.

I was afraid I would not get time to write this --so much business has crowded into the last week...viz: president of a general ~~and~~ 4ND garrison court, both sitting on the same days--garrison court sitting during the ~~success~~ recess taken by the general court--6160 drill twice a day, paying off , inspecting troops and taking charge of the post and direction of the various pieces of work that come on and about to be--I mention all this in excuse for for the hurry and apparent carelessness of my letter. With love to all.

affectionately

J. G. Archer.

Fort Simcoe W.T. 1st Nov. 1858

My dear mother:

I duly received Nannie's welcome letter--if it was short it was very sweep. I only receive letters from her and Mary and cannot thank them too much for their never failing kindness in writing to me.

Nannie and Mary have both written as if they were ? of it and thought it was ? on account of not being able to engage in the speculations consequent on the Frazer river excitement--such is by no means the case I have only thought or written or talked about it to amuse myself or to show my superior knowledge and if I had any amount of money to speculate with would be just as likely to lose it as not.

And now my dearest mother I will    to the letter I was so proud and happy to receive from you and tell you that nothing could be further away from my thoughts than the idea that you were in any way unkind or thoughtless or inconsiderate of me on the contrary, the greatest pleasure I had in my visit home and the greatest pleasure I have in recalling it ever day and every night when I lay down to sleep was the warmth of your welcome and the gratification I saw my visit gave you. I have never in my whole life doubted that you would cheerfully make any sacrifice, entirely personal to yourself even to the laying down of your life to secure the happiness of your children.

Maj. Garnett left the morning of the 16th ulto. Gen. Harney has come out to take command of the new department of Oregon which has been established for that part of the old department of the Pacific lying north of California.

The inspector general, Col. Mansfield, staid about a week with me and kept us pretty busy while here. I think he made a very complete inspection. The last day however he and we were at leisure he took that day he said for pleasure. I had all the ladies of the post,



Fort Simcoe, W.T.

20th Nov, 1858

My dear mother:

For nearly two weeks I have been anxiously expecting a letter from home. Every alternate day have I sat up until after midnight waiting for the arrival of our expressman--I have now become satisfied that some accident has happened to the mail steamer.

On account of the detention of our expressman at the Dalles waiting for the eastern mail we have missed the opportunity of sending letters by the coast steamer from Portland to San Francisco and I am obliged to send a special messenger to carry some letters which cannot wait.

On the 10th inst. I sent out a party of 39 mounted men under Lt. Alexander with orders to proceed to a point 35 miles above Okinakane on Columbia river and about (blurred) from this point to attempt the capture of some hostile Indians and murderers of white men. This party, on account of the weakness of their animals, went only as far as the crossing of the Columbia 75 miles--by the assistance of some friendly Indians however they succeeded in taking five Indians who had murdered white men in time of peace. They returned yesterday.

The winter is later coming than it was in 1856, but the Indians who seem to possess an instinct in such matters predict a very severe one. You must therefore not expect any regularity in my letters until next spring.

Yours affectionately

J. G. Archer

Fort Simcoe, W.T.

3rd Dec, 1858

My dear mother:

I received Nannie's letter of 15th Oct last night just after I had given up all expectation of the mail arriving on that day

I am sorry you should allow any newspaper accounts to give you any anxiety.

Two thirds of the news from this post received ~~from the~~ at the Dalles, Vancouver and Portland and nearly all that finds its way into public print is as new to us as it is to you.

Capt. Black, Lt. Camp and Dr. Heger With five prisoners to be tried and a dozen witnesses leave the post tomorrow to attend a general court martial at Ft Dalles. All the Walla Walla cases also are to be tried before it. I have some doubt of this being able to get through the snow. I have but little hope that they will be able to get back before spring if they are not turned back before they get there. When they have left us then we will have one officer to each company, Capt. Frazer, Lt. Alexander and myself who with Mrs. Black and Mrs. Heger will constitute all the society at the post. This promises a rather dull Christmas.

I had applied for a court here and expected three or four officers from below and that they would be weatherbound and stay all winter. I do not despair however of getting through the winter pleasantly enough. I have just commenced on the books you gave me which with a few others on hand I think will fill up my moments. I like Jeffrey even better than Macauley and Allison not so much but very well. Next time I write I will not ~~be~~ allow myself to be so much ~~concerned~~ pressed for time. Now the arrival and departure of the mail is hardly sufficient for the composition of my official correspondence, returns and reports

With love to all, affectionately, yours, J. G. Archer.



Port Simcoe, W.T.

25 Dec. 1858

My dear mother:

I am almost afraid sometimes that I annoy you with the frequency of letters containing nothing. My excuse for this one is that this is a man going to the Dalles tomorrow who can take it if it is possible through the deep snow. Something else may delay the mail I always try to send out by regular express the 1st and middle of each month.

We have had thus far a very mild winter with but little snow and only about two weeks of severe weather, last winter, I am told, was the same. I want to apologize thoroughly for the description of the climate, previously given, which was based on my first winter's experience here.

Considering this and only three officers and two ladies present, we managed to get through Christmas very well. The two ladies are living together

end

Port Simcoe W.T.

2nd January , 1859

My dear mother:

Our mail is just closing and I have time only for a few words just to say good night before we go to bed.

New Year's day passed off very pleasantly. The absentees had returned from the Dalles and together with Mrs. Black and Mrs. Heger dined with me yesterday.

I was very glad to learn by Nannie's letter, received a day or two ago that she got the flowers I sent her from Lake Kleallum(sic) and Chelan and that she was so glad to receive them. I was a little surprised to hear of Robert Archer's marriage. I think is .....right for a man with a family of children.

I agree with Nannie that Norman Williams' family do not believe he is going to marry the pretty French girl and that if they did believe it they would not have taken off their mourning. With love to all

affectionately

Yours J. G. Archer.

Fort Simcoe, W.T. 13th January, 1859

My dear mother:

I have not quite recovered from my old habit of procrastination and although it did not cause me to neglect any of my official duties or to be too late in their performance, it compels me to be very, very (underlined very) about the last hours and sometimes when the mails are going off leaves me but little time for the more pleasing duty of writing home. Such is the case now especially.

Nannie's letter telling me of Ellen Murry's (?) marriage reception, dinner etc. was duly received a few days ago. The mails ~~have~~ have been but little impeded by the ice and snow, indeed we have had a winter thaw.

Day before yesterday I proposed filling the ice house with ice six inches thick, the first sufficiently thick this winter. Yesterday we had a snow six inches deep and today it is becoming warm again. The work at the post it seems will never be quite done.

I have had since Garnett went away and expect to have for some months to come 20 to 30 men (soldiers) employed as carpenters, blacksmiths, laborers etc. ~~in fact it is as soldiers, hewing wood and digging ground and it is very seldom that they are able to indulge in military exercise~~ in fact it is as soldiers, hewing wood and digging ground and it is very seldom that they are able to indulge in military exercise ~~enough to enable them to preserve the appearance of a regular army.~~ enough to enable them to preserve the appearance of a regular army.

If you have not, read the Virginians by Thackeray.

affectionately J. G. Archer