

commander of a black company.

Arr Camp near Fort Anderson,  
Paducah, Ky. Nov 16<sup>th</sup>, 1864.

My Dear Seville:-

I don't know, nor do I care, whether I  
write you a letter or not - (I don't write out, however) but I do intend  
to write you one.

I left Philada. about two weeks ago for this place having  
been ordered to report here for duty. After a long and somewhat  
tiresome journey of six days I arrived safe and sound at Paducah  
Ky. Half an hour later I was introduced to Col. W. H. Barry,  
8<sup>th</sup> U. S. C. Art (Heavy) at his Headquarters in Fort Anderson, my present  
and future command. He assigned me to Co "C" of his regt.,  
encamped near the fort on the bank of the Ohio. The adjutant  
came over with me, introduced me to the company, and I was  
ready for duty. My Co. is permanently detached from the  
company, as by rank the command devolves upon me, and you  
may judge of the magnitude of my duties, considering that I'm  
only a verdant youth of nineteen, and have one hundred and forty  
black, brave, and ignorant men to look after, and care for. My 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Lieut is a good fellow, and of course helps very much, still there is plenty  
of work left for me to do. All the responsibility rests upon me - yours

ammunition, clothing, rations, camp equipage etc. etc. I am happy  
in the discharge of my new duties. I am not obliged to long  
for leisure any more. My anticipations are now being realized.

As to these colored soldiers, I have only this to say, they make  
the very best of fighting men. The other day we had an alarm  
and call to arms in camp, with the expectation that Forrest would  
with his landish band sweep about & attack us. At a single men  
of the regt. flinched, sick and well, all turned out, declaring that  
they were ready for "dat ole man Forrest." And they filled their  
boxes with cartridges as coolly as if merely going out to drill,  
or dress parade. Forrest may attack us any day, but if he does  
he'll get a good dinner of cold lead and iron from Paducah,  
free, gratis, for nothing. We hear every thing in readiness to re-  
ceive any foe which may attempt to take us.

This camp is situated on the ground of a battle lost  
spring, where the guns of the fort raked the rebels. They were  
buried all around us. A brand at a time through which  
cannon balls then passed.

Paducah is, or rather was before the war, a town about  
as large as Fulton and nearly as beautiful and wealthy too.  
But war has worked sad havoc and desolation with it. Scores  
of houses have been leveled to clear the way for cannon ranges  
and destroy places of lodgment for short showers. The company  
was prominent among the fighting men of that battle which destroyed

so much of the town. As you see it today & a company, which  
in other times and in other hands, does good well, and it now remains  
to be seen how it will behave under my management.

Serville, when "this cruel war is over" I hope to see your face  
again, and to grasp your hand as I have done so many times  
in the days gone by, when we were happy schoolfellows together  
at Tally. These days I love to think of, and recall to my mind  
with as much pleasure as any of my best life. I long to see  
hundreds of miles from you and all my friends, yet I seem to my-  
self to live more here than here. My mind will wander back  
amid those good scenes and I cannot, nor do I wish, to ban-  
ish it from those pleasant walks.

My brother is paroled, and at Annapolis in hospital, hav-  
ing been sick. I am very happy in this, but Alfred is still  
a prisoner of war. How long he will remain so, I know not, but  
earnestly hope he may be released very soon.

I will not write more tonight, but close, asking you to write as  
soon as convenient, believing that your letters will always be hailed with  
delight, & are here in the wilderness.

Truly Your Friend

P.S. Don't think of signing my name with a "Lieut."  
for Colonel. 'Tis that your letter may surprise  
reach me.

Lawrence Johnson

1st Lieut. Co. C 8th U.S.C. Artillery

Paducah

Ky