

Daniel Harvey Hill to William Latta

Saltillo, Mexico, 19 November 1846.

Autograph letter signed, 4 pages.

Saltillo Mexico

Nov 18th. 1846

My Dear Friend

I intended to have written to you long ago, but neglected to do so from mere indolence. I am now determined to make some amends for my negligence, although I am shivering with cold and my fingers so benumbed that they can scarcely grasp the pen. I will not trouble you with details of the battles, as you doubtless have had them ad nauseum in every paper. However, I do not hesitate to assert, that much as you may have read of the operations around Monterey, you have not seen a single word of truth. All the statements as yet published, official and private, are shamefully inaccurate, perhaps the most incorrect of all is Gen^l Taylors own report. Not that the honest old soldier meant to be partial, but because the scale of operations was so extensive that, twas impossible for him to give his personal inspection to every thing. He therefore had to rely upon the interested statements of others. My youthful fancies in regard to the battle field have been sadly altered of late. I had always pictured to myself an extensive plain, covered with armed hosts in gay uniforms, with banners streaming, music playing, bright armor glittering in the sun-beams &c &c. Instead of which, we had to wade deep streams, climb mountain heights and charge upon strong batteries without any other music than the concert of cannon balls and without any other banners than our ragged clothes streaming in the breeze, and then after the battle had been won, we had to lie down among the dead and dying in the wet and cold without food, fire or blankets. During the four days siege, our Division though constantly & laboriously employed got but one meal per day and I have heard of some who ate nothing but green corn from the Mexican fields in the two days of most active employment. And then the afterclaps, the lies that are told to pull down this man and exalt that, the miserable tricks & [2]intrigues to gain newspaper notoriety. There were several letter writers in our Camp and never did the Autocrat of Russia have a more loyal and loving set of toadies then did these contemptible scribblers. The letters of the correspondent of the Picayune have been copied into nine tenths of the papers in the

Union and yet human ingenuity never invented a grosser tissue of falsehoods. The Scribblers have extolled the gallantry of men, who ran from the Mexican guns like hounds from the lash. One thing however, I believe, almost all admit and that is that our Division effected every thing and that too, with but trifling loss. But unwilling that the Military Academy should be elevated in the estimations of the people by the judicious manner in which our operations were conducted, they have studiously striven to give all the credit to Worth. The true cause of Worth's success and Taylor's failure, was W's having scarcely any others than Regular troops and Ts having few else than ignorant, cowardly Volunteers – In the last few days we have annexed another large Department to the conquered territory, the Capital of Coahuila has fallen without firing a shot. Three days ago, Worth's Division at present but seven hundred strong entered this city of fifteen thousand inhabitants. Never was a more rash or foolish expedition projected. Saltillo is sixty miles from Monterey and the road to it passes through the strongest defiles in the world. Gen^l Taylor accompanied us with an escort of two hundred Dragoons, although he did not know when in a mile of this place, whether or not he would have to fight an immense Army on his entrance. As we filed in, there were more than five thousand men in the streets and Plaza, enough to have driven us back with broom-sticks. Worth's Division has always been selected to perform whatever of difficult, laborious & dangerous was to be done and in consequence, it has melted
snow
away like ^ in the sun-beams. Two months ago, it numbered eleven hundred [3] at present but seven!! The bones lie scattered from Point Isabel to Saltillo. One Brigade of this Division (the Brigade to which I belong) though but five hundred strong, for three weeks were encamped at Cerralvo within sixty miles of twelve thousand of the enemy. We lay down every night expecting to be woke by the war bugles or our copper neighbors. We do not know at present where Santa Anna is, some believe him to be in San Luis, some on the road to Monclova and some very near to us. Gen^l Taylor returns to Monterey tomorrow. What he has decided to do,
battle
no one knows, but all are satisfied of one thing that another desperate ^ is to be fought and whenever fought, the brunt of it will fall upon our Division. And if fought soon we will have it all to do. I honestly believe that our seven hundred men will beat any seven thousand in Mexico upon a fair field but they will never advance upon us with less than ten to one and such odds

is indeed fearful

under such a leader as Santa Anna ^ . Was ever greater folly committed than in releasing that Arch Fiend to lead the hosts of Mexico? Many officers believe the fate of our Division to be sealed and that few, very few will ever see their native land again, the most sanguine do not believe one half will ever recross the Rio Grande. As a specimen of the mortality, in the company that we brought from Old Point three were killed in battle, three have died of disease, several were wounded and some seven or eight are completely broken in constitution! – Tis thought that in about ten days, troops will come up from Monterey, when Gen^l Worth expects again to be thrown far in advance. The survivors of our little Division will scarce have reached the United States when they will be attacked by M^r Black, the Honorable M^r Black and other lying scoundrels as “worthless, effeminate & inefficient.” Truly we have a bright prospect before us. However I am not [4]dissatisfied and could I hear from home, would be just as happy here as in the United States. But I very rarely get a letter, I believe I have received but three from the two Carolinas since I have been in Mexico. I wished to have given you some account of the manners and customs of the people, but find that I have wasted my paper in trifles. The women are more intelligent than the men, frank & warm-hearted, but generally, impure. Some of them are the most beautiful beings, I ever saw. The men with few exceptions are suspicious, jealous, cowardly, mean, effeminate & contemptible. We are advancing the general interests of humanity by killing as many of them as possible – Tell M^r Ross that I have not heard from him and in fact from any one in South Carolina for nearly three months – Write soon and direct to Gen^l Worths Division at Saltillo. Your letter will probably reach me at San Luis Potosi. Do not let the little children forget me. I would be delighted to see them once more. Tell Mrs Latta that I hope she will occasionally remind my fair friends that the Dons have not yet taken my scalp – My kind regards to all who pray friendship to inquire about me. Yours &c

D H Hill

[*Address leaf*]

Saltillo, Mexico

Nov. 19th. 1846

W^m Latta Esqr

Yorkville

South Carolina

