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Letter to Margaret E. Cahill, 1862 January 29

Thomas W. Cahill

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Ship Island Jan 29th 1862

My Dear Wife I take hold once more to write
you about nothing in particular save to say that
I am in good health but not in the best of spirits
from the fact of not having heard a word from
home since your letter of the 25th of November we
have had a Herald of Jan 9th and Major Frye had
a letter from his wife of Jan 4th in which she says
that herself and Col Jones and the other Officers wives of the
26th applied to Gen^l Butler for leave to come out again
but was refused. she had not time to Connecticut as she
found her children at their uncles in New York and would
not go home until spring. Lieut Sheridan received a
letter from Peter of some time in December I take it for
granted that you were all well or he would have men-
tioned it. The steamer Connecticut brought us nothing
save Mrs Fryes letter and a box to him our folks were
completely discouraged as we expected a full mail
by her. Some of the navy officers say that a vessel
will leave here to day for New York and I write
this in hopes to get it on board in time we cannot ima-
gine what the matter is at Boston no news of the Constitution
we fear she has been wrecked as the Boston papers say
the crews were on board of her on the 3 of January
I consider her a miserable sea boat and have great
fears for her safety. Though perhaps the talk of war
with England may have caused a change in the

in the Programme and perhaps they are not coming
at all and this Expedition may be given up I cannot
say that I shall be sorry if it is; although this is a very
important point but if anything is intended for us
I am to hold this sand bank it will require a strong
force to do anything worth notice so far we have
had a very comfortable time of it and excellent oppor-
tunity to learn our business under a very competent
(Military Commander whatever may be his political
views) this has been a very tedious dry labor for our
officers as you know the most of them have not been
peculiarly fitted by their previous social position
or Education for such purposes. people wonder why
our Armies do not accomplish more than they do in
the field people over ^{look} the fact that it requires a long
and careful training of even the brightest intellects
to master the innumerable intricacies of the Regulations
laid down for the Government of this vast machine, and
the slightest word ^{or figure} dropped or misplaced destroys the
labor perhaps of weeks; this is apart from the duty
of Military instruction which is of itself a very
serious labor quite sufficient for most men
I consider myself very fortunate in the choice of my
Adjutant he has been a patient careful and indefatig-
able worker ever since ^{he joined us} and he is a thoroughly instructed
Book Keeper and has given our Officers a great deal
of Assistance in that line. I. M. Hamard has been a good
deal troubled with the Blues since his arrival and proposed his
resignation but the ^{govt} will not hear of it at least until his

his accounts are fully adjusted which would some time with
our means of Communication with Washington I have written
to Patrick Maher about the matter but it remains at a stand still
at present; Shaw of C^o C has resigned and will probably go
home in the ship George Green in a few days with
some 8 or 10 of our men discharged for disabilities acquired
prior to Enlistment; apart from these who are sent home
we have no inmates of the Hospital and the men and
Officers are enjoying very good health; with a perceptible
improvement in drill and decorum generally, but sadly
deficient in Clothing I have already shipped over 200
flannel shirts from the Port Butler and 26 pairs
of shoes I only wish he plenty of Pants and Coats
and I would seize everything the men need and
let him settle with the Government for it, I am rapid-
ly getting over any delicacy of feeling about these
things and will protect the men as far as I possi-
bly can; I suppose there is no use of scolding
or fretting about leaving from home and take it
for granted that you have written plenty of letters
if I could only get them, Every letter that has arrived
here has been directed simply to Ship Island
Mississippi the Post Officers where they know enough
to do it then send them to the Naval Lyceum Brook-
lyn and Every vessel that leaves for the Gulf brings
them to Key West Pensacola or Mobile whence they
are sent down here; I wish you would say to
Mr. Brewster if I have not mentioned it before
that his Flag waves as the Emblem of Freedom

in the sight of the secessionists from the other
shore) from the Flag Staff of Fort Massa-
chusetts and is the only article in the shape
of an American Flag on this Island in
the possession of any of the troops and there
it is a singular fact that they came out
without anything of the kind and had
it not been for his kindness this Expedition
would have been without ^{a flag} anything of the
kind. The General called upon me to allow him the
use of it as a garrison flag. I explained its
history to him and he said I ^{must} send his compliments
to the donor and say that it was clearing out
in the service of the Country and he might
send another, at any rate it would be a shame
to have the Island without a flag while we had one.
Dr. Gallagher is about half crazy he has not ^{had a} line from home
since we left and is afraid that his wife is in trouble
for money or something of that sort. If she is ^{so} and you
had any to spare I wish you would let her have ^{some} money
if you could. I hope you are easy on that score if
you are short do not hesitate to raise it if the property
will bring it. I do not know when we will be paid
off and you will probably know about ~~that~~ before
we do here; the poor fellows are coming to me
frequently asking how I think their families
are getting on for money. Some hard stories
come on about the conduct of self Amen in some of the
Country towns to the families of the men if I can get some
well attested cases I will bring it to public notice.
Do not remark about this writing we are out of pens all worn
out writing letters home and now news back.
Kiss the Babies for me your loving husband

Thos W Cahill