



Archive of 12 Civil War letters [Gettysburg] \$1,400

Archive of Letters (Twelve) from the 20th Maine Volunteer Regiment to the Father of a Fallen Soldier. The 20th Maine was mustered into service on August 29, 1862, and was assigned to the Army of the Potomac in the 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, V Corps, where it would remain throughout the war. The unit is best known for its decisive role in the defense of Little Round Top at the Battle of Gettysburg. They came under a heavy attack by the Confederate 15th and 47th Alabama regiments and, when they ran low on ammunition, their brave members charged down the hill with bayonets fixed, surprising and scattering the rebels and ending the attack. Arguably, this was a turning point in the war.

The writer of ten of these letters was a member of "A" Company named Hiram Norton and all are addressed to a Mr. David Sanford of Palermo, Maine, whose son William H. Sanford, of the same Company, had died of Typhoid Fever on February 17, 1863. The first letter, of the same date, was from Addison W. Lewis, a lieutenant in the 20th Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment, informing him of the death of his son: "William has been a good soldier ever ready to do his duty in camp or on the Battle Field..." Lewis

wrote again just over six months later from near Beverly Ford, Virginia, dated September 2, 1863, transmitting seven dollars "which came in my possession - belonging to your Son Wm H Sanford when he died" and informing him that another \$135 is due and will be paid by the government. The next letter is from Hiram Norton, a friend of the deceased, and is dated February 22nd. This was the start of a long and touching relationship between the two men: "He was a young man of steady habits and one who performed his duties as a soldier with manly courage..." In a letter dated October 13, 1863, Norton states that "...I was wounded July 2d at the Battle of Gettysburg in the left hand but I have recovered so that I am on duty in the Hospital..."

An eloquent letter dated October 15, 1864, from Norton gives Mr. Sanford the news that he had recently married and was sorry to have missed his visit the previous spring. Addressing the state of the war and the upcoming presidential election, he writes: "Mr. Sanford we have nothing to fear from our Armies in the field for it is confidently asserted that Gen. Grant will capture Richmond before the first of January 1865. And we have every prospect of a speedy and an honorable peace. But my Dear Sir believe me the great contest for the life of the Nation is not with our arms in the field, but it is with you the loyal People of the North. It is for you to decide on the 8th of November next whether we shall have an honorable peace or dishonorable peace with Eternal War..."

The last letter in the group is dated November 2, 1864. All are in ink on a variety of different papers, a few with original envelopes of transmittal. An interesting and unique series of soldier letters. Some weakness and splitting at folds, generally fine.

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