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A Letter to Christine Van Raalte from Her Brother, Ben

Ben Van Raalte

Clarence Jalving

Nella Kennedy

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In the field in front of Atlanta, Ga., July 30, 1864

A letter to Christine Van Raalte from her brother, Ben, who writes that
"Gen. Sherman looks like an old broken-down farmer but he's a sharper.
I have had the pleasure of seeing most of the generals in this army."
The battle for Atlanta is furious.

Original in the Archives of the Netherlands Museum.

Translated by Clarence Jalving.

*Re-translated by Nella
Kennedy, 2008*

In the field in front of Atlanta
Georgia. July 30th 1862

Dear Sister.

A few days ago I received your kind letter and was glad to hear that you was in good health and to hear what good times you have had at the wedding, that must have been quite a good time indeed well we have such good success in this Army that we often feel as much rejoiced as we should be at a wedding. the Rebels have had such heavy losses in front of Atlanta that it is awful they fight most desperate make charge after charge, and repulsed time after time and still they keep on. Gen. Hood seems to be great for charging it is great foolishness to try to take strong

[2]

works by storm for any General. we had satisfaction of that at Resacca. the party behind the works has all the advantage and if they stand firm the works can not be taken. the Rebs have had a loss of at least twenty thousand since the twenty second. Some say in the last three days of Battle. but I will take it since the twenty second. than I am sure of the thing. we have taken a large number of prisoners and every charge they make the dead and wounded has fallen in to our hands. our losses have been but small as our fighting has been mostly behind the works. I hope that Gen. Hood will stay in command than the sothern confederacy will soon play out. I often wonder how it is that the Rebs: don't charge our Corps. it must be that our works are too strong. we have never had the luck to fight behind the works but have had to take it in the open field. our corps is now the extreme left.

[3]

Gen. Howard has taken the old command of Gen: McPherson and has had great success he is our one arm General a splendid looking looking man. I think the best looking on the job Gen: Sherman looks like an old down broken farmer but a sharper. I have had the pleasure to see most all our Generals in this Army in this campaign. there has been heavy fighting on our right this Afternoon we have not yet heard the result but the report is that we took a large number of prisoners. we are getting so close on them that they are very uneasy. our boys do not give them rest night nor day. our boys through shell night and day once and a while they reply with a hundred pounder or such a matter. a day or two ago they opened all their guns on us. I tell you what they made us lay low and struck a few tents for the boys. it was fun to hear our guns open they gained the

[4]

day and the Johnnies had to knock under. Now I must come to a close the boys are in good health and good spirit the brass bands play every night. to spite the Rebs.

Give my best regards to all
Your Brother B Van Raalte

R. De Vries is getting along fineley.

[Unaltered transcription: Nella Kennedy,
November 2008]

#32 This letter written in English to sister Christine Van Raalte.

In the field in front of Atlanta Ga.

July 30, 1864

Dear Sister:

A few days ago I received your kind letter and was glad to ^{was} hear that you ~~were~~ were in good health and to hear ^{you had} what you had had a good time at the wedding. ~~That~~ That must have been ^{quite} a good time indeed. Well, we have such good success in this Army that we often feel as much rejoiced as we should at a wedding. ~~The~~ The Rebels have ^{had} such heavy losses in front of Atlanta that it is awfully ~~They~~ They fight most desperately, make charge after charge and are repulsed time after time. Yet they still keep on. Gen Hood seems to be great for charging - it is great foolishness to try to take strong works by storm for any general. We had satisfaction of that at Resacca - the party behind the works has all the advantage and if they stand firm the works cannot be taken. The Rebs have had losses of at least 20,000 since the 22nd. Some say in the last three days but I will take it since the 22nd, then I am sure of the thing. We have taken a large number of prisoners and every charge they make the dead and wounded have fallen into our hands. Our losses have been small as our fighting has been mostly behind the works. I hope that Gen. Hood will stay in command, then the Southern Confederacy will soon play out. I often wonder why the Rebs do not charge our Corps - it must be that our works are too strong. We have never had the luck to fight behind our works but have had to take it in the open field. Our Corps is now the extreme left. Gen. Howar has taken the old command of Gen McPherson and has had great success. He is our one-armed general, a splendid looking man - I think the best looking on the job. Gen Sherman looks like an old broken-down farmer but he's a sharper. I have had the pleasure of seeing most of the generals in this army. In this campaign there has been heavy fighting on our right. This afternoon we have not heard the result but the report is that we took a large number of prisoners. We are getting so closely on them that they are getting uneasy. Our boys do not give them rest night or day. Our boys throw shells night and day and once in a while they reply with a hundred pounder or such a matter. A day or two ago they opened up all their guns on us. I tell you they made us lay low and struck a few tents of the boys. It was fun to hear our guns open. They gained the day and the Johnnies had to knock under. Now I must come to a close. The boys are in good health and good spirits. The brass bands play every night to spite the Rebs. Give my best regards to all.

Your brother

B. Van Raalte

P.S. R. De Vries is getting along finely.

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Holland Historical Trust Collection
of the
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In the fields in front of Atlanta
Georgia. July. 30th 1864

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