

Albert H. Gallatin

Monday Feb 1st 1864
Norwich, Vermont

Dear Fred,

I received your very welcome letter last Saturday. I thought when I first left home that receiving letters would be merely incidental, -- but I find now that the reception of one is an event. To the post office I go every day, and am disappointed if I don't get a piece of paper directed to me, -- If I do, I cut it solemnly open, I in my easy chair, lest impatience should injure a scrap of my little conversation with the home circle which of a necessity is all on one side. I am obliged to you for tending to my little affairs, and hope you will write me soon that they are happily concluded. My private class numbers 16 men (the Junior class) besides several from the other classes. Next term I have the Seniors in Physiology and Geology. I have tried to render myself agreeable to my pupils, and flatter myself I have become popular, -- indeed from several sources I have been given to understand that my connection with the University has been a profitable and pleasant one hither to, -- this I say not boasting, but to please those who take an interest in me. With those students who are not immediately under me, of course I cannot expect to be either on very good or very bad terms; one of the latter class amused himself this morning taking aim at me with snow balls whilst engaged in sawing wood for my laboratory furnace, -- but if all men would treat me in the spirit that actuates my own students, my temper would change into a very sweet and amiable one.

Yours aff. Brother,
Albert H. Gallatin

P.S. I haven't got my first copy of the Herald yet; tell me the news

P.S. no. 2. I shall soon send to Jim a list of what I want and shan't trouble him again--

P.S. no. 3. Weather not very cold although there is now a snow storm.

P.S. no 4. Please tell Perrin to send me a little of his old Bourbon (night-cap to keep out the cold)

Thursday Feb 17th, 1864

Norwich University, VT

Dear Father,

I received your letter – enclosed \$20 – I need not have sent for it, for since Fred left, the President visited me hinting darkly at \$100, I cleared \$25 by a little effort of which more hereafter, and my medical practice has just begun to blossom, the leaves of said blossoms showing decided symptoms of “green backs” – The party I gave on my birth night started the fashionable ball rolling here; a number of select entertainments have been given and yet more are on the tapis. I found out at a party the other night that scalloped oysters, and currents mixed at 12 o’cl at night will not give the night mare. I readily promise what you require, not only because you ask it of me, but because after to-day all the dangerous experiments of my course will be over.

Your aff. Son
Albert H. Gallatin

Norwich VT, Thursday Feb 18th 1864

Dear Mother,

The cold weather has come at last, -7^o f yesterday morning, but bless you I don't mind it; when I am out of doors warm furs protect, and the rich clear, cold air invigorates me so, arteries bounding, blood flashing, skin crisp, nerves tingling, I feel quite another man, or rather like an ethereal being and not mere flesh and blood. In-doors the log crackles and ruddy light welcomes --if the welcome is not boisterous enough to suit my 'shivering timbers' then, ho, for a pull at the wood-saw; finishing with a glass of anisette, (the first democratic, the latter truly noble). 6 o'cl yesterday P.M. -13^o f and mercury rapidly going downstairs how far it went down, can't say whilst I lay snugly dreaming between blankets and reminiscences of quilting parties - Received your letter day before yesterday. Receive Herald regularly, how welcome it is, only a poor city waif ice-bound in far off semi civilized country harbor can know. So for illustrated papers, it would be hard work to say how they cheer me up, if I should light on the Police Gazette words would fail altogether. Every morning the President reads a list of those late or absent from their duties; sometimes the students deny these charges against them and a steady flow of wit and humor is sure to be kept up each morning between president and boys -- Here are a few examples, light trifles, which happened to gather and stick in my memory out of countless numbers of similar "jeux d'esprit":

"Mr. Sweetzer, late at reveille this morning".

"Please Sir, somebody sewed up my coat-sleeves."

"In future sir, contrabands will be supplied to keep coat-sleeves open."

"Mr. Otis absent all day from quarters."

"He went to Boston Sir."

"Ah! He is running backwards and forwards all the time to and from Boston, probably he has procured a situation as express agent."

"Mr. Thorndyke, absent from Prof Gallatin's lecture."

"No sir, I was only late."

"Some (One) of these days you will be late to your own funeral Sir."

"Mr Bird got up too late this morning, not present at 2nd drum beat. Remember in the future Sir, that it is the early Bird which catches the worm."

Your aff. Son -
Albert H. Gallatin

P.S. Do persuade some nice young lady to write me a letter, I can't find any here to talk to.

Wednesday, Feb 24th 1864

Norwich University. Norwich Vermont

Dear Grandpa,

Knowing you would like to have another letter from me, I thought I would send you one. The weather here hitherto severely cold, has once more changed and changed very greatly, for the thermometer at present is near 60^o, the warmest time we have had yet and most of the snow has turned into water, and I have to go slop, slop, slop in my India rubbers up and down the roads –Truly the weather here is wonderfully and fearfully constructed. In 24 hours it went from 26^o below zero to about 20^o above. I am very busy indeed now, working from sunrise to sunset in my laboratory, and at night writing lectures and reading scientific works. Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays I spend partially in studying German, and Arabic. I thought I would take advantage of the dreary country hours to study the tongue in which the adepts in alchemy wrote many of their masterpieces in the 14th and 15th centuries and which still lie buried, untranslated in the musty libraries of Spain of all the relics of the ancient civilization which conquered that territory by far the most interesting to me. I find time occasionally to pay attention to town meetings, concerts and Saturday night's sparkings, all of them also interesting subjects for study to the Physiologist. At the town meetings, long haired, blank-faced, dirty hatted, coat-buttoned Yankees stick their elbows into each other, and make mighty orations, where every 5th word is emphasized by a violent clap on a board produced by the hand, horny and knobby, widely spread. "Considabul kalkilatin' " goes on, and on turning to a lady and explaining a deep point: "I want to know" dissolves the romance. The concerts consist of much Yankee, black haired, black eyed, coat to the heels, the women fat, abolition songs and big fiddle. Dirty little boys kicking tinpans, disturbing the music and their elders who "kalkilate they'd give them a quarter to quit the hall." But I see I have no more room so goodbye.

Your aff. Grandson,
Albert H. Gallatin

P.S. give my love to grandma and Uncle John

Friday, 18th March 1864

Norwich University. VT

Dear Grandma,

Fred having suggested to me that you would appreciate a letter in the 'antique' style and would answer such a one. I hereby offer you this which is gotten up after the manner of ancient Aztecs, it being as you may perceive below, a specimen of 'picture writing' on a time worn slab of stone. It is supposed by antiquarians to represent the first row of students in my class room. They hold that it is symbolical of their immense extent of brain, only the skulls being represented as you perceive, the buttons stomach and boots, being left to the imagination. Is this sufficiently "antique" to suit?

Your aff. Grandson
Albert H. Gallatin

March 31st 1864—

Norwich University, Norwich VT.

Dear Mother,

I describe for you the gaieties of our classic haunts -- When I arrived here I was overcome with sleep, having tasted but little of it for several nights. I looked forward to sleep with pleasure but didn't get it -- the night of my advent was marked by the event of the season, my landlord Smith gave a grand entertainment at which figured the elite from Norwich, Hanover and Lyme. I refused at first to join the gay and festive, but a deputation of damsels charged my door, broke through all smiling, blushing and giggling, and I instantly surrendered. As wagon load after wagon load arrived filled with the beauty of Vermont and New Hampshire, my firmness gave way entirely and I left for the grand saloon, and there mingled freely. At least four of the girls were very pretty. 2 of them asked me to come and see them -- and I asked myself to go see the other two -- the rest I didn't notice -- though one asked me to ride 7 miles to see her, hinting that she had 4 more sisters and all of the same sort. Presently courtesies and courtly amusements begin -- consisting principally in taking a girl by both hands, and pulling her as hard as you can through the house from the front door to the back and then chassee back again -- And then supper, oysters, ice cream, pound cake and pop corn -- the pop corn is chucked all over the house and the girls and boys reclining softly on staircase eat it 'cum grano salis' as it pops about. After supper I hold a levee in my room. I get all all the pretty girls in here, having just enough beaux to keep them, and then fly from flower to flower, flirting to my heart's content. And now flirting gets fast and furious, the young folks are decidedly merry, handkerchiefs are stolen by one sex from the other, cadets' pockets are filled with saucers and the brass buttons are eliminated or merely amputated and pocketed. One damsel talks French with me she is a minister's daughter, another talks Spanish with me and gets decidedly the best of me, as I can only say "Si Signorita and No Signorita". She is a doctor's daughter. One young lady is very highly educated and very well dressed and behaved. I talk with her most of the evening and inquire who she is -- she is the tin man's daughter. Then I think "Glory and Honor" to New England where the children of the poorest and the humblest are as free to partake of the blessings of education as those who in other sections are able to pay for it, and yet so often neglect to obtain it -- What a contrast in the South.

But I have no time to write more now as I must prepare my lecture for this afternoon --

So Good bye,
Your aff. Son
Albert H. Gallatin