

Silver Grays
Correspondence of The Alleghanian
April 10, 1862

Letter from the "Silver Grays"

Camp Curtin, April 2, 1862

Since I last wrote you, there has been little or no change in the routine of events in camp, each day being a counterpart of its predecessor and a precursor of that which is to follow. As I have already informed you, this military post is now a regularly established depot for recruits, who are first assembled here, and then distributed to their respective commands. There is, as a consequence, no fixedness of numbers, the recruiting officers in different portion of the State sending in large numbers daily, and there being a regular depletion going on, in the way of forwarding the recruits to the Regiments in the field.

Under the direction of Capt. DODGE, the Superintendent of the recruiting service in Pennsylvania, the quarters for the men have undergone a complete overhauling. These have been thoroughly renovated and improved. Distinct apartments have been arranged for cooking, eating and sleeping, which separation has conduced much to the comfort of life in camp. The gentlemanly Superintendent has likewise made provision for having all the officers connected with the post, quartered within the camp. Buildings are being erected for their accommodations. In a few days, each officer will have his own little home or "snuggery," in which he may practice in the domestic accomplishments connected with housekeeping, without fear of being annoyed or treated to a curtain lecture for any and every violation of strict propriety. I have no doubt that our mess will be distinguished as the mess of *the* camp—noted for the neatness of its apartments, and the hospitality of its members. That you may be safe in endorsing this assertion, suppose you "come along" by way of a visit and then judge for yourself.

The new order of things here has been followed by new associations. A number of officers who had been detailed for the recruiting service in Philadelphia and elsewhere, have been ordered to the camp. A more agreeable, open-hearted, out-spoken, and chivalrous body of gentlemen can not be found anywhere. My brief acquaintance has already attached me to them, one and all. I will very much regret our separation, when the time shall have arrived for saying *adieu*.

The last week has been one of mingled rejoicing and sorrowing—rejoicing at the contemplation of the distinguished victory achieved by the Federal army at Winchester—sorrowing for the death of the noble, heroic martyrs for Liberty, whose blood attested their devotion to their country and its flag. When the news was received here of the engagement of SHIELD's command with the rebel forces under JACKSON, the most intense anxiety was manifested to hear of the result. Quickly upon the heels of the first reports, came the news of victory *and* death. The intelligence of the participation of the gallant 54th in the hottest of the fight was accompanied by the sad announcement that its valiant Colonel had fallen upon the field of battle. How can I describe to you the gloom and evidence desolation of heart, which at once seized upon the community in which the hero and martyr had been known from his boyhood? Old and young have vent to the feelings of deep sorrow that came up from their heart of hearts—the sympathy, whose depth, like the stream's current, is known by its stillness, was whispered into the ear of the Mother and the Sisters—The Representative of the People—the Executive of the State—the Head of Departments—those who had been companions of the deceased win the halcyon days of youth, vied with each other in giving testimony to their appreciation of the worth, virtue, and patriotism of him whose corpse spoke his love for his country and his devotion to the Union.

But why mourn a death, such as was that of William Gray MURRAY? It was such a one as he himself would have chosen. Had he not been prevented by circumstances over which he had not

control, he would have drawn his sword in the defense of the "Stars & Stripes," at the very out-set of this war against rebellion. Death freed the sword to his iron grasp, and heath has glorified it in victory. What was life to such a man when duty beckoned "onward"? There is every evidence that he reckoned its value at a less figure, than that which he had set up as a willing sacrifice upon the altar of Liberty. When in the agonies of dissolution—when his noble soul was about leaving the tenement of clay, to go to its reward beyond the skies, he even then forgot self, and ordered "to the charge--."

There are incidents connected with the death of Col. MURRAY, which stamp him as having been "born to command." I have not space to speak of more than one, but that one is, of itself, sufficient to establish a character for coolness in conflict, thoughtfulness in the adoption of causes for effects, and indifference to personal danger, which may be envied by those who were his compeer. It is this: In the death struggle with the foe, when the bullets whistled wildly around, overhead and through the ranks—when the columns were being thinned out by the fire of the enemy numbering two to one—when victory hovered between the contending hosts ---at that moment, the brave MURRAY turned to his men, at whose head he was, crying out in a voice that arose above the roar of artillery, "*Men, falter not—if you feel like wavering, look upon that Flag-- it will nerve you up; ___on___on.*"

The ashes of the fallen Hero will rest at the base of your mountains. His memory will live in the hearts of the inhabitants of that region in which Liberty delight to dwell. His virtues will be spoken of in terms of praise by the old, who will point to them as worthy of emulation by the young. His fame will outlive his County's travail. His children and his children's children will revere his memory, while seeking, at his tomb, the inspiration to do right. The time has arrived. "*Let his epitaph be written.*"

High Private