Hilton Head Dec. 5th 1863

Dr Sister - As your letter comes first on the paper (date 22 & received Dec. 3rd) I will write you a few lines although there is not much to write about. Your letter came by the Steamer Fulton which runs regularly between this port & N. York carrying the Mail and sometimes capturing a (?). She arrived 3rd and brought news of the defeat of Braggs Army and at noon the Fort and intrenchments [sic] fired a salute of 34 guns. Today 4th noon a battery on St. Helena Island fired the same number. The part of the Island on which the battery is situated is nearly opposite where we are, about North East some 3 or 4 miles distant. It was about 15 sec. after seeing the smoke that we heard the report. We were eating dinner at the time. We could feel the pressure of the air as we heard the report.

Sorry to hear that Tom has cut him [self?]. I should like a swig of good cider but can’t see it. Is Welch in the Parker House yet? Who is in the house that Sheldon left? Hen (?) writes that Eaton is going into business. Hope that he will put it through. He wants to know whether it is best to buy a cow. If he has got truck enough to keep the 2 I would. He says he has been trapping. I should like some of the game. But we are trapping down here a little. We have trapped several Rebs (or the pickets have). There is one great tall fellow, his name is Bill Savage and he looks rather savage. He says that he has killed a good many yanks, as he calls us. The prisoners are kept in the Provost Guard house down on the beach. Co A. E. F. H. and I. are doing Provost Guard duty. The other companies are up in camp. I do not know how many there are in the Regt. but I believe I have heard say there were about 800 in all. Some are on picket duty on the west side of the Island and some more on detached service and scattered about here and there. The 7th Regt is encamped on St. Helena Island just across the channel 3 or 4 miles distant. I suppose Seth & Dodd are there.

How does the next draft set in Mansfield? Will they get any volunteers? I see by the Journal that Mansfield is down for 22.

I make out to get along very well as to fare by buying a little butter & cheese. The butter goes very well on wheat bread. Butter is 40 cts lb & cheese 20 cts. The weather down here is rather cool just now. We had a thunder shower last Sunday night about 7 o’clk. It lightned [sic] very sharp. The thunder sounded like cannon. Water froze to the depth of ½ inch Monday night. Have you had any snow yet? I expect a letter on the Arago which is due here next week Friday or Saturday in answer to the one that I sent for money. Not much more to write at present, so Good Bye.

Henry E. Hall

Hilton Head

 S.C.