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5-3-1869

### A Letter of Christine Van Raalte to Her Brother, Ben

Christine Van Raalte

Clarence Jalving

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Amelia Court House, Va., May 3rd, 1869

A letter of Christine Van Raalte to her brother, Ben, reporting on the family's new life in Amelia. She is very positive about her experiences there but is a bit homesick for her family and friends in Holland.

Original in the Archives of the Netherlands Museum.

Translation by Clarence Jalving.

My dear Ben:

Here I am in the land of Dixie where the negros grow and where there is plenty of corn bread. My goodness, who would have thought that we would be walking on wooden floors here. Dear Ben, at first I didn't like this place because I found everything so strange but I and the others are getting accustomed to it and are well satisfied. Our house, it is true, is rather rickety - the down spouts are hanging loose, there are several windows broken etc. but we have put up some blinds and with a little money we can make it look quite respectable in time. One good thing - even though it looks rather slovenly, the Johnnies pay no attention. They are so used to it after the war that they think it can't be any different. Well, we miss a lot of the conveniences which we had at home but it doesn't make us feel discouraged because it is a beautiful country. In one word, it is a nice place, rather small but there are so many beautiful trees and the trains liven things up here. This morning a train ran off the track -- nobody hurt but it created quite some consternation and it took a long time before they had it back on the tracks. Oh Ben, how backward these southern people are compared to those in the north when it comes to farming. Father has a very good garden and a good hired man to work it. The garden and the land are being tilled in the northern manner and then when some of these southern gentlemen come to see them they are amazed. Yes, you would get a big laugh because you know a lot more about farming than Father. If you were to farm here they would probably think that you were a wonder from heaven. The climate is very agreeable. Anna feels like a big lady because everyone here calls her Miss Annie. Every day more people are coming here. Today a surveyor and his son arrived to buy land here. His wife and two other children are still in Richmond. He is quite a gentleman and I am glad to see men of his type come here. One would be ashamed of many of the people here as some of the men stand around working dressed in nothing but their red flannel underwear. Now, dear Ben, I wish to congratulate you on your birthday anniversary and hope you may be richly blessed. But above all, dear Ben, do not forget the one thing necessary because without that you cannot be happy.

I wish you could be here on a Saturday -- then I would bake a corn bread for you as a birthday present. You probably wouldn't appreciate it very much but we are just poor folks now. You will remember the adage, 'Who gives of that which he has is worthy of living.' Ben, I am not exactly homesick but I would like to see everyone again. This noon we received Dirk's letter. The same old scoffer and teaser. Well, I am glad that he is so contented and that all of you have things to your liking. You cannot imagine how anxious we all are to see Karel - what a fine boy he must be now. Does he still throw the (?) and hams out of the window?

Now Ben, will you please write me? I would appreciate a letter very much and ask Dirk if he will please answer my letter. Give my love to Helena and Dirk and to Cornelis if you see him. Kiss the children for me especially that sweet Karel.

Your loving sister,

Christine

rijkelijck mag geygund enenle maan  
om al hoo Ben vergut het een  
vordige niet goudin dat ken je niet  
gelukkig zijn. An wmo dat je hier  
en zaterdag maan is was dan zon  
ij je en Thomme hond aan je verfaavedag  
prijantje grem het zo niet niet uit in  
je orgenem maan my zijn om maan  
voor folks in je weet het speukeromel  
is die guff wat hij huff - is waand  
dat hij leuft. Ben ik ben niet hme eek  
maan o ik jou finlie tij is zo graag willen  
zijn my hebben van vijfddag in brief aan  
Dink ont vangen het is niet de zelfde  
oude epten en jelaag gect niet ik ben  
hly dat hij zo te vreden is en dat finlie  
het allentmaal zo goed maan je zijn hebben  
je weet tij niet hoo graag my kaart is  
ganden willen zien oek wat zal dat loz  
reel en lieve jonge eyen. Gort by ons  
of de knete en hammen int het raan  
Ben wil je my om eek is teing e duijen  
ik een zo graag is in brief van finlie  
hebben vraag id aan Dink of hij mijn  
brief is wilt ant vonden. De giet aan  
Helen a en Dink om aan konelicals by hem  
giet en hoo de kinden omal die hebben  
Kaart. U lieffellende huten. Christina

55

Anglia. 10. 10. May 3<sup>d</sup>. / 69  
Mijn Lieve Ben:-

Hier zit ik nu  
in het land van Dixie, maan de re-  
gus prijzen en het koren hond splent.  
Horden mijn lieve tij had ik dat  
oort gedacht dat my hier op houten  
fleurin ganden leven maan dat  
kan ook tog al hoo Ben in het recht  
vreden ik is maan niet aan want  
ik vond het tog zo vromel maan  
ik kan er my om tog al goed in-  
schikken, en ik wrey allen zijn tog  
goed te vreden. Om hoo is wil in  
en voralen te vreden de gten hangen  
en in hetje vromelijck tog en in zijn  
reel wat vromen geboden maan my  
hebben in tog blinden aan en niet-  
sen hetje vromen kunnen my het heel  
respectable maan niet de tij.  
Een goed ding al giet het in ed hetje

slindig uit dat maken de Johnies  
toeg niet of want die heeren dat  
al zoo gewoon na de oorlog dat ze  
denken dat het niet anders behoort.  
Och wy misen en heb van de con-  
veniences die wy te huis hadden  
maar dat maakt ons toeg niet  
mismoevig want en hebben  
hier en ruwige legging het is  
in een woord een mild plaats  
het is wel klein maar het heeft zoo  
veel ruwige boom en de care  
makar het ook zoo vriendly van  
morgen is er tuin van het track of  
gelofte niet anders begeret maar  
het was toeg quite en constructie  
en het duurde nog al den lange  
poos voor dat ze hem er een of  
kegen. Och Ben want zijn die ginder  
mensen toeg verwacht de ston die  
mensen in het garmen. Gade heeft  
een hale beete tuin en dan ook  
een goeij man om op het land  
te werken en de tuin en het land

wordt of de vonden manier  
behandeld en dan komen er toeg  
zoo gedurig wat van die Leiden  
heeren hieten en dan staan ze toeg  
verbaad ja je zoo nog wel is haalen  
want je weet meer van farmer of dan  
Vader en als je hier is begon dan  
gonden ze niet denken dat je een eende  
uit de hemel was. Het klimaat is  
hier zoo aangenaam. Anna die wett  
hier toeg zoo bij want ze wordt een atje  
Puis Anna ze noemt. Da komen hier  
de heela tyd maar menschen aar van  
daag is een landmeter met zijn zoo  
overghomen om hier ook te hoefen zijn  
vann met nog twee kinderen zijn in  
Richmond hij is en hele gentleman  
ik ben blij dat er ook is wat fat eendelyke  
komen want o somnige zoo je de orgen  
een uit schaamen de mannen staan  
zo maar in begin rode flannel ginder  
buchen te wiften. Dan nu lieve Ben om  
Feliciteit ik je wel met met de verandering  
van je paer en hoop dat in dit jaer je



My dear Ben:

Here I am in the land of Dixie where the negros grow and where there is plenty of corn bread. My goodness, who would have thought that we would be walking on wooden floors here. Dear Ben, at first I didn't like this place because I found everything so strange but I and the others are getting accustomed to it and are well satisfied. Our house, it is true, is rather rickety - the down spouts are hanging loose, there are several windows broken etc. but we have put up some blinds and with a little money we can make it look quite respectable in time. One good thing - even though it looks rather slovenly, the Johnnies pay no attention. They are so used to it after the war that they think it can't be any different. Well, we miss a lot of the conveniences which we had at home but it doesn't make us feel discouraged because it is a beautiful country. In one word, it is a nice place, rather small but there are so many beautiful trees and the trains liven things up here. This morning a train ran off the track - nobody hurt but it created quite some consternation and it took a long time before they had it back on the tracks. Oh Ben, how backward these southern people are compared to those in the north when it comes to farming. Father has a very good garden and a good hired man to work it. The garden and the land are being tilled in the northern manner and then when some of these southern gentlemen come to see them they are amazed. Yes, you would get a big laugh because you know a lot more about farming than Father. If you were to farm here they would probably think that you were a wonder from heaven. The climate is very agreeable. Anna feels like a big lady because everyone here calls her Miss Annie. Every day more people are coming here. Today a surveyor and his son arrived to buy land here. His wife and two other children are still in Richmond. He is quite a gentleman and I am glad to see men of his type come here. One would be ashamed of many of the people here as some of the men stand around working dressed in nothing but their red flannel underwear. Now, dear Ben, I wish to congratulate you on your birthday anniversary and hope you may be richly blessed. But above all, dear Ben, do not forget the one thing necessary because without that you cannot be happy.

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Your loving sister,

Christine



*Calvin ACVR*  
*May 19, 1869*  
Amelia C.H., Va. May 3rd, 1869

My dear Ben:

Here I am in the land of Dixie where the negroes grow and where there is plenty of corn bread. My goodness, who would ever have thought that we would be walking on wooden floors here. Dear Ben, at first I didn't like this place because I found everything so strange but I and all the others are getting accustomed to it and we are well satisfied. Our house, it is true, is rather rickety - the downspouts are hanging loose - there are several windows broken etc. but we have put up some blinds and with a little money we can make it look quite respectable in time. One good thing - even though it looks rather slovenly, the Johnnies pay no attention. They are so used to it after the war that they think it can't be any different. Well, we miss a lot of the conveniences which we had at home but it doesn't make us feel discouraged because it is a beautiful country. In one word, it is a nice place, rather small but there are so many beautiful trees and the trains liven things up here. This morning a train ran off the track - nobody hurt but it created quite some consternation and it took a long time before they had it back on the tracks. O, Ben, how backward these southern people are compared with those in the north when it comes to farming. Father has a very good garden and a good hired man to work it. The garden and the land are being tilled in the northern manner and then when some of these southern gentlemen come to see and they are amazed. Yes, you would get a big laugh because you know a lot more about farming than Father. If you were to farm here then they would probably think you were a wonder from heaven. The climate is very agreeable here. Anna feels like a big lady because everyone here calls her Miss Amie. Every day more people are coming here. Today a surveyor and his ~~family~~ son arrived to buy land here. His wife and two other children are still in Richmond. He is quite a gentleman and I am glad to see men of his type come here. One would be ashamed of many of the people here as some of the men stand around working dressed in nothing but their red flannel underwear. Now, dear Ben, I wish to congratulate on your birthday anniversary and hope you may be richly blessed. But above all, dear Ben, do not forget the one thing necessary because without that you cannot be happy. I wish you could be here on a Saturday - then I would bake a corn bread for you as a birthday present. You probably wouldn't appreciate it very much but we are just poor folks now. You will remember the adage 'who gives of that which he has is worthy of living.' Ben, I am not exactly homesick but I should like to see everyone again. This noon we received Dirk's letter. The same old scoffer and teaser. Well, I am glad he is so contented and that all of you have things so much to your liking. You cannot imagine how anxious we all are to see Karel - what a fine boy he must be now. Does he still throw the (?) and hams out of the window? Now Ben, will you please write me? I would appreciate a letter very much and ask Dirk if he will please answer my letter. Give my love to Helena and Dirk and to Cornelius if you see him. Kiss the children for me especially that sweet Karel.

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Christina