

American Legal History – Russell

Oliver Wendell Holmes to Emily Hallowell, 16 November 1862, Mark De Wolfe Howe, ed. *Touched With Fire; Civil War Letters and Diary of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., 1861-1864* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946).

Nov. 16 ? 1862

Sunday Ev'g--

This was begun to Emily Hallowell

but I thought I'd write you instead--

My Dear Amelia

"Pity the sorrows of a poor" young "man"--After being compelled to wait in Washn longer than we wanted to--(for the utter absence of comfort is the least fault of that modern Gomorrah) and after a night in Alexa, we started this morning at 11 A.M. & at 4 ½ PM arrived at Warrenton, where we now are, only to find that tomorrow we must go back to Catlet or Catnip or something Station leave our valises perhaps forever & wander off the Lord only (& no provost marshal) knows where, in search of our vagrant Divn There you have our history thus far and now for the moral. While I'm living en aristocrat I'm an out-and outer of a democrat in theory, but for contact, except at the polls, I loathe the thick-fingered clowns we call the people--especially as the beasts are represented at political centres--vulgar, selfish & base--2ndly there are only two civilized places in America--Boston, known for its Statehouse and some cultivation, and Philada celebrated for the Hallowells, cold slaw & large grained hominy--

Nov. 17. Monday ev'g--Today has been a day of trials--woke up at 6 ½ and found no landlord--last night he "doubted whether he sh'd be up to call us at 6 & they had only one nigger & in these days there was no making a nigger do anything"--We accordingly cleared out without paying a cent (wh.,

considering, we didn't much regret) got on to the last train fr. Warrenton (wh. we are leaving)--cars didn't stop at Catlet's--went 5 miles beyond--left valises (to be stored at Alexa) in charge of Revd Fuller, brother of Margt, 16th Mass. V. & walked back; at 2 P.M. tasted first food and water of today at camp of 16th Warrenton Junctn. & started cross country for main road to Fr'sburg--Went on spite of warning of some soldiers (pickets) about "gurillas" likely to pick us up--At dark (rainy) struck a nigger hut, but no road, & here we are, intending to pass night & I'm writing by light of the woodfire & the oddest resemblance of an antique Roman lamp I ever saw it shows the origin (Sketch of lamp omitted.) It's going out & I must stop--

Nov. 19. Yesterday was another direful day--A. & I walked over 20 miles stopping occasionally at Secesh houses & finally put up (after fears of camping out in rain) at a good house with a motherly old gal who advised us to go home & get stronger. The women are freer in their expressions than the men & swear the South will stick it out to the end--one of 'em had a brother shot in the face before Richmond--This morn'g went on on the dreary march, roads already getting muddy & cut up--passed soldiers who of course quietly sneered at us as straggling officers (a rare & disgraceful sight) & had got on about 5 miles when we were accosted by an old fella and lo! on t'other side of road THE REGIMENT. So here we are, a week after starting & I'm writing by candlelight in Mason's tent--we move tomorrow but there's a rumor (very likely false,) that we shall guard either Aquia or Fred'sburg--Well I can't say but a word more now but imprimis with the crack brained Dreher & obstinate ignoramus Shepherd as act'g Col & Lt. Col. the Regt is going to H---L as fast as ever it can or at least no thanks to them if it isn't--I wouldn't trust it under them for a brass tuppence in a fight--They'd send it to the devil quicker even than Gen. Sumner and I've pretty much made up my mind that the South have achieved their independence & I am almost ready to hope spring will see an end--I prefer intervention to save our credit but believe me, we never shall lick 'em--The Army is tired with its hard, & its terrible experience & still more with its mismanagement & I think before long the majority will say that we are vainly working to effect what never happens--the subjugation (for that is

it) of a great civilized nation. We shan't do it--at least the Army can't--Well
best dearest love to all

Your Aff. brother

W.

I'm well.

Nov. 20--Still rainy. had a bath & feel bully--only moved a mile & have a good
place here--

Friday

Still rainy . Same place--Cold but well

EOD