My dear Mr. Hope,

You see my promises are not like that traditional pie-crust, for lo! here is the letter. My time has been so entirely taken up by my duties since I reported here, that I have scarcely had time for writing to any one. However, I did not care to write until I had visited all the Batteries, I seen the situation. The day after my arrival, I ran the gauntlet to Sumpter, the principal point of attack, & beheld one of the most interesting sights I ever beheld. The fire of 200 pdr. shot & shell was rather severe, but our boat was undisturbed. It was one of those that ran over, & the other two were struck & sunk. The gunners of the Yankees is superb. Nearly every shot takes effect. "Sumpter" has been struck 2,000+ times. To give you an idea of the immense force of one of those 200 pdr. iron bolts, I was standing in "Sumpter," talking to the Capt. Officer, when hearing a louder noise than usual, I looked up, & after the fall of a mass of masonry, over came a 32 pdr. carriage gun, knocked entirely off the parapet down into the parade. Within the fort, it is a galant sight: timbers are cracking, great arches of masonry falling, but the officers are seen coolly walking the parapet, & the men laughing, chatting, scuffling, except when some poor fellow is brought by on a stretcher. The discipline is that of the regular army; the officers the first gentlemen in Carolina. The flag was shot away, but the men reached out, although in the line of fire, quickly raised it again. The North & South faces were badly breached then, all the guns on them being dismounted, or so disabled as to be unfit for service. The sea-face is however, very little hurt. On yesterday evening, I ran over again, carrying dispatches to Col. Latt. The fire was heavier than ever, but no one in our boat was hurt. The whole of the North facing is almost entirely gone. I think the whole North wall will fall either to-day or to-morrow, and there is scarcely a gun in the fortress that can harm the enemy. As my guns have not
arrived from Richmond, Genl. Henry has placed me upon his staff as Act. Adj. Genl., so of cause, I see where a great deal, which it won’t do to talk about, except to you, “a quiet man has his little way.” I have also visited H. Sheff, Shell H. Battery, Battery Beatty, 3 Battery Magazine. I saw two Hill on the latter fort, who engaged very particularly about you. This battery is the strongest position I have seen, but the enemy are strong in front, standing growing, finding their parallels separately, approaching closer, but surely. The fire upon this fort is terrific, the “Crenel,” 127 mm. howitzers, batteries back, batteries howitzers, batteries howitzers, batteries howitzers, all the time. Sumpter was meant to sweep the front of this fort, but of course, it has not been able to do anything. Nothing but an assault every night at a terrible loss of life, can stop the enemy’s working parties. It is my impression that “Sumpter” will fall by Tuesday or Wednesday; there will accumulate the formation of both “Crenel” batteries, the falling back to one second line of defense. The “Sumpter” and “Crenel” batteries will then probably try to run on, pack “Crenel.”

“Sumpter”  shelled the city. As I have never seen any big gun fire, it is, of course, very interesting for me to see. As batteries are our mission, all batteries firing. We have no weight of mortars, however, that can compare with that of the enemy. Gunfire knowledge over a shell is looked upon as very much a matter of course. We are all very hopeful of the final issue, but everyone is in fighting the city to the last. Theborn (122 mm) blakheye guns are to be bought here from Wilmington, having just run the blockade into that port, but in account of their immense weight, it will take some time to get them here. These guns are 13 ft. around the breech, 16 ft. long, shoot a wrought-iron bolt, weighing 800 lb., the guns weigh 22 tons; these are only two of them, a fort will have to be built to bring them over the city.

As far I find my position very agreeable, the officers here are very kind to me in every way.

I have made the acquaintance of H. Sheff, who expressed himself highly qualified that you shall have thought well of his praise from. I find that he, I agree exactly as to Thompson’s capacities. Too fellow, he is the local editor of the “Monroe,” the “reb augmentor sem” having compelled him to take the position.

Shopton’s flag has been shot away for the sixth time, the guns on the face are badly used up, but the red coats beyond is floating now as proudly as ever from its shattered battlements. As Mr. Thomas Lapsor would remark, “slightly disfigured,” but still in the fight.

Genl. Hiley commands all the defenses of Charleston, occupying the position of Major-General. He looks very much like “Grant’s face,” which is as honest slightly as an old Tom Brown. I like him but, his speech, quick voice, as he gives his orders with the rapidity pre-eminently of an old soldier. Beauregard looks very much wrong, the light in his eye rather dim. I hope the fire is only sleeping, lasting the time. I think that, when we fall back to our lines, there will be a great battle fought on James’ Island, we must hold that, we must hold them there, or Charleston must be lost. I am always, however, very hopeful as to the final result. I send you Beauregard’s order, in regard to the observance of 1st-day.

Direct, "Care of Lieut. Hiley, Capt. H. Sheff, R.A."

God bless you, my dear friend, wish you well.

Sincerely affectionately yours,

[Signature]