

Dear Grandfather!

So this year 1883 is the 5th Christmas Festival I should be celebrating or observing on this side of the great Atlantic Ocean, which most years has been poorly observed because of my place of residence, namely the woods. I do not mean that living in the woods is so cramped and bad. No, far from it. Out in the woods all of the men who are in good health have in all respects everything marvelously well provided. But, according to God's Word, which I am not always in the proper position and not always thoroughly experienced to quote: "God's Kingdom is not eating and drinking, but in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit". Understand this is what is most lacking and should be of the utmost importance.

But in this respect it is better than many believe and think it is. Even though there are no churches or ministers in the vicinity, one finds everywhere in the woods quite good conduct and order. I will say better than in many large cities which are deplorable in one respect, but also praiseworthy on the other hand. Here I see much is implied and gives the occasion for posing many questions, which I am constrained to pass over for the lack of space.

Just that I will give a short explanation of, namely, How does it happen they live more orderly in the woods? Answer, because many who are in the woods are addicted to the pleasure of strong drink, and which makes them nearly rave when they live in town, but which is very seldom in the woods because then it is a long way to the nearest town, and therefore more difficult to get the hard liquor. Enough of this for one time.

With regard to America's religious situation, I believe and others with me, that it is good, especially here in town as there are no less than three Norwegian Lutheran Churches and how many more of other nationalities, I cannot with certainty say. There are many many churches, but there are also many sects or different teachings. Here also are good and Christian ministers who can measure up with the present pastor in Storen parish. Yes, this I maintain is not saying too much.

I am working yet on the railroad which I mentioned in my last letter to you all, but we are just now finished here and if I have no opportunity down there I will ^{have} go to the woods a while. The snow was long in coming this fall, but now two days ago there came about 16 inches, which enlived the woods traffic considerably. I do not have much news to report to you. Dead is your acquaintance Ole N. Sneensflaatten who slept away into his last rest 5 days ago after a few days illness. Kari N.D.* Estenstadsøien slept away a month ago. Your words of the 26th of last month I received 4 days ago and for which I say many thanks. We see thereby that you are well and I say that this is the greatest blessing which we have here on earth. I can read every word in the letter. I see you wistfully say "Were I in condition for that" -

In condition for that we believe of course that you are, and how joyous it would also be for us to see you. But it is, I suppose, doubtful, and we won't believe it until we see it. You are greeted fondly by your grandson

A.P. Solem

Finally I must greet you and Siri most affectionately from my wife. Also, a happy New Year.

* N.D. is apparently Anders way of abbreviating Nilsdatter or Nils' Daughter.