1864-09-14 Nathan Webb writes Governor Cony regarding the effort to promote Major Shepherd over Lieutenant Colonel Talbot

Nathan Webb

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Portland Sept. 14, 1864

Hon. Sam'l. Cory

Dear Sir,

Having been informed that there is an effort making to induce you to supersede Capt. Col. Thomas Dr. Talbot of the 1st Me Heavy Artillery, I take the liberty to address you on that subject.

A long and intimate acquaintance with Col. Talbot I think justifies me in saying a more upright, faithful and patriotic officer cannot be found in the ranks of the whole army. His devotion to duty under all circumstances is conspicuous. It is easy for those who are acquainted with him to understand how with his influence of heart and purpose and his delicate and high toned sense of right, he may have failed to win that popularity among his
Companions, which careless and loose attachment to principles might win in
the Camp, and which many really unworthy officers enjoy. But a careful and
frequent inquiry among veteran officers and soldiers, particularly the sick and wounded
has invariably resulted in replies altogether favorable to the personal and military con-
duct of Col. J. I know, nothing less
than the thorough understanding of his
whole duty, and the most exact and gen-
ereal discharge of it would satisfy him. All
the testimony I have been able to gather
concerns in the statement that he has won
distinguished honor in battle and has labored
zealously for the good of his regiment
and of the Country. Now to supersede
such an officer because some one below
him has succeeded in gaining greater favor
among the subordinate officers and privates
whether by merit or intrigue matters little
would hardly conduce to the good of
the service of Compost with what is justly due to every man, who forsakes his home and voluntarily assumes the labor and peril of a soldier's career. Nothing can be surely dishearten, and discontent our armies as the conviction that a regiment is to be controlled by intrigue and maneuver, and that anything but courage, and capacity and devotion to duty are to be the stepping stone to promotion. Regular promotion, except in cases of manifest and decided merit, valences, should be invariably adhered to. Perhaps if the policy of Company talents were adopted, and rigidly carried out, there would be necessary in the army an almost universal transposition of officers. For every where would be found cases where the inferior surpasses in valuable qualities his superior. This can not be avoided, or it would not be so. But no man will consent to be at the mercy of any such test, so long as he feels that he
possesses power adequate to the position he holds and to the rights in...citizen to that position—on military affairs the right of regular promotion—though another may be found to whom he would cheerfully yield the place of a higher order of talent or a loftier genius.

Mr. Talbot has many warm friends in the vicinity, who will feel keenly any injustice done to him, and who will emphatically protest against his being overruled by any action of his associates in behalf of a greater favorite. We do not believe the vote of officers and privates a safe rule for the guidance of the executive in cases of this kind. If the superior of Col. T., who have observed him, pronounced him unqualified and undeserving, and their verdict were free from suspicion of prejudice or passion, we should sorrow at his failure, and sadly acquiesce in his degradation, but as the matter stands, we urge upon you to give him his right and place him in the position his rank entitles him to.

Very Respectfully Yours, Nathan C.

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