

Head Quarters 159th Regt NYV
Mar 25/63

Dear Sir

I have just received yours of 9th inst & note contents.

I learn you have been called upon by (former Lieut) Finger who gives you a precious account of the regiment. I have never met a more unprincipled rascal than that man, a robber of poor men & a disgrace to humanity. I had him dismissed the service. If he entered the store again I should order him out.

About the New Orleans Accounts as soon as I received them I applied for leave of absence to go down for a day or two – it was refused. I therefore enclosed them to Genl. James Bowen Provost Marshal General who answered desiring me to come down about them. I have again applied for leave but as we are under marching orders it is again declined. A Colonel or even a soldier is a poor one for a collector he knows not what moment he may have to move. I therefore have again written to Genl Bowen asking him to put them in the hands of some responsible party & also have written to friend Fanning to call up upon Rthier & Fancheux & Sykes in my name (he could not in your being in Baxer's employ) I will let you know if there is any result & you can depend that as far as I can I will leave no stone unturned but I think half a dozen lines from DFT to Genl Bowen would do more than anything else.

I must say that no chance is shown here toward Union creditors – I might say more about the management of affairs here but will not for fear you should get the idea that I grumbled, was dissatisfied or "homesick" all I can say is read a letter in the Tribune of Mar 11 (1st page) it is true.

As for the little fizzle to Port Hudson if the people at the North are satisfied I have nothing to say against it. I did my duty, was spoken well of at head quarters & have obtained the confidence of my men by that trip – it was "pleasant practice" but it is war, or if war is thus to be carried on, I might as well be selling paint in New York. Operating on a separate road with a small detachment of the three arms of the service I succeeded in accomplishing all I was ordered to & by way of variety collected for the army some 20 or 30 horses 10 Bales Cotton &c from men who had shot at & wounded some of my command. What result? Why the horses are delivered back again to these very men's wives upon their coming in to claim them! – And these horses are probably now again in use with rebeldom. All right I suppose of course. –

I am very certain few persons would blame soldiers for taking away rifles found in farms where the male owner was away & left in charge of women. We are blamed however & ordered to protect houses not fifty feet from woods where guerrillas shoot at us – a Kiss for a blow with a vengeance! –

I am glad you have succeeded in obtaining the store at such a reasonable rate & hope the vermilion & other articles will soon begin to move off far. – You speak of Tar &c mark a General Order read by my adjutant at Dress Parade by order of Genl Banks – Any Officer dealing in any of the products of the country shall be dismissed the service. Then follows a tirade about pillage closing with the remarkable passage & beautiful express to use towards half starved volunteers feeding on the enemy! Chickens &c "he fights the fools fight & dies the dogs death". – This remarkable General Order will probably appear in print North it is worth reading & sorrowing over. Are we playing or are we at War?

Please send some Post Office stamps

Yours truly
ELMolineux

Respects to all & a good kiss to Master Hermann

Note:

In an extensive dispatch from Baton Rouge dated Feb. 26 and published under the headline "From Gen. Bank's Department. Condition of the Department -- ...," the Tribune's unidentified correspondent reports on a public assembly in St. Charles where planters spoke out against Federal martial law, although they had taken the Oath of Allegiance. Rather than disband the gathering, General Nathaniel P. Banks attended a subsequent session and, to the astonishment of the journalist, "apologized for being in Louisiana" and "excused his acts as the acts of his Government." He "talked of peace with the fervor of a Copperhead Democrat ... [and] spoke like an envoy sent to patch up a truce rather than like a General at the head of an army."

The next day, when Union-held prisoners were to be boarded on a steamer for exchange, Southern sympathizers gathered to wave Rebel flags and cheer Rebel leaders; "Yankees were insulted [and] soldiers spit upon."

The Tribune's opinionated correspondent continues:

"This tendency of treason to grow rampant has not failed to attract the attention of the soldiers. They freely discuss it, and its cause. The testimony is undisputed that it is the product of the mild policy now pursued. The men whom Gen. Banks brought to this department concur with the soldiers and officers whom Gen. Butler had with him in condemnation of this attempt to win favor with these people by kindness. They are not to be reached by any influences except those which war offers; and if ... there is a belief at Washington that our soldiers here are satisfied with events as they have happened for a few weeks past, and are now happening, I beg to say, after the most ample means of knowing, that a more gross error in belief never existed.

"There seems to be nearly absolute unanimity on the subject; indeed, absolute it may safely be said to be. They are not demoralized at all. They are in good spirits and good health. But they see the fruits of their sacrifices here lost to the country, and treason springing up behind them, from a lack of vigor and earnestness in some quarter responsible for the orders under which the army moves and acts. Besides, there is deemed to be absolute danger of losing some of the territory now held by our arms. It is the belief of many that an attack will be made here by the Rebels long before any shall be made by us at Port Hudson; and the danger certainly exists. ...

"The troops want to do something. That is the spirit which animates the soldiers, whether regular or volunteer. But it is undeniable that many officers act as though they would like to pass an easier life than that of the fields of conflict."