

Steamer Northern Light
off Bahamas, Dec. 9th 1862

Dear Father,

My first letter will not contain much information as you know that there is very little occurs onboard ship of any consequence, the same thing occurring day after day, but what we have seen I will try and relate as it occurs.

As you know we left the Pier at about 3 P.M. Dec. 3d and anchored in the stream. On the 4th we weighed anchor at 4 a.m. and started for our unknown destination. We made "Barnegat Light" at 12 M [midday] & going slowly along we continued in sight of land for a long time. We tried to get things in order as fast as possible which as you may imagine was no easy matter for (I forgot to say we had taken another Reg't. 161st N.Y. on board on the same night that we anchored in the stream) among so many men (1,200 or more) crowded up in ship board it is hard work to get things straight. Some sleeping on deck others in bunks jammed together in any kind of a way it is "cram jam" full. This occupied all my time on the 4th & 5th. On the night of the 4th we lost by death one of our Color Guard. He was buried at 10 O'clock 5th Dec. with the usual honors, as far as could be done. This made a slight depression on the minds of the men, which very soon wore off and things went on the usual way. I was seasick all of the 6th. On the 7th I was perfectly recovered although rather weak. We had divine service in the morning by our Chaplain. The Chaplain of the 161st gave a short prayer reminding the men of the homes & families they had left behind, which brought a tear to more than one of the men's eyes. The day passed off quietly. Nothing happened yesterday 8. Today 9 we saw the first land seen since we started. It was "Isaac's Light house" on a small key, the tail of the Great Bahama bank. It was first seen at 12 M.[midday] and we soon passed out of sight of it. At 3 P.M. we passed the "Double headed keys," on which is a Government Settlement of Wreckers. It is an island about 6 miles long, low and rocky, but has a beautiful sandy beach. There are a few trees scattered along the top, or I suppose Banana bushes. It was here we saw the first human beings since leaving N.Y. They came out in a small boat to meet us and the steamer was hove to to wait for them. When they got near enough to see who they got near enough [sic] to see who they were We discovered them to be "Darkies," with Bananas & Sugar Cane to sell, but the Capt. did not give them time for as soon as he saw what they were he gave the orders to go ahead, so we left them. We passed another light house about 4 P.M. and since then have passed out of sight of land. Harry [Tiemann] and I both enjoy excellent health. It has been hard work to write this letter amid all the noise and bustle of about a dozen Officers talking around me, so I will try and be more explicit. Love to Nettie, the Children, Grandfather & Mother and all the rest. Will send my address in the next.

Your loving son,
Frank