

Baton Rouge, La. Mar. 23, 1863

Dear Father,

As I informed you in my last letter (sent by a friend) we were ordered to march. I will now try & give you some account of our expedition:

We started from here Mar. 13<sup>th</sup> at 4 P.M. [Colonel] Edward [Leslie Molineux] had command of an expedition to destroy a bridge on the Clinton road, by which it was feared the enemy could send a force in our rear. He commanded our regt., 3 companies from the 26<sup>th</sup> Maine, 1 section of Artillery (2 guns) & 1 comp. of cavalry. With this force we started on our undertaking. As we filed past the different regiments drawn up in line waiting for us to get ahead, cheer after cheer greeted us along the whole line, and many expressions for our welfare & good luck greeted us. In a few minutes we were on the road, and a more beautiful road I never saw. It runs in a straight line for 33 miles and is as flat as a pan cake. On each side are thick woods except an occasional plantation, which helps make the scene more beautiful. We were now in the enemy's country, so two companies were sent ahead as skirmishers and our company right behind them as a reserve. The cavalry went ahead of the skirmishers to keep the road clear. It was slow work for the skirmishers, for the woods are almost impenetrable owing to the grapevines which hang from nearly every tree & the reeds which grow so thick it is almost impossible to force a way through them. At about 10 o'clock P.M. we were startled at having about 20 shots fired by our skirmishers & our company closed up on the double quick to the place where the shots were fired. It turned out to be nothing but a Darkie they were firing at for attempting to put up a signal torch & not halting when ordered to. After one or two good cracks on the head with the butt[t] of a musket the Darkie subsided & gave in. Just above here we were halted for about 30 minutes to repair a bridge the rebels had destroyed. Two miles further on we again halted for another bridge was burnt down and as it took some time to fix it, we threw up shelter tents & camped for the night. Next morning at 7 a.m. we started off again. (I forgot to say we marched 8 miles the 1<sup>st</sup> night.) About two miles from the camp we came on about 80 rebel cavalry pickets. Immediately one piece of artillery was run up, loaded & fired & to see those rebs go up the road was a caution. For security we fired two more shells into the woods and then off we went again.

We had hardly gone 10 paces before we were halted again for our scouts saw a strange looking object in the road ahead of us, which could not be made out, so we fired a shot at it, and then sent some of the boys ahead to see what it was. It turned out to be a huge iron boiler mounted on stocks and at a distance looked like a huge cannon. The boys upset it and then on we went. About 6 miles further up the road we were halted for now came the object of the expedition. This bridge "Red wood river bridge" is 18 miles from Baton Rouge & on a direct line east from Port Hudson. Above it was stationed a force of 1,500 cavalry & 4 pieces of artillery. We lay 2 miles below the bridge. Our cavalry & 1 piece of artillery were ahead of the infantry, and as it was the Colonel's object to make the enemy burn the bridge themselves, He ordered the cavalry, supported by the Artillery to charge. So down they went, and the enemy did just as he expected for they set fire to the bridge and when the cavalry got there it was pretty well destroyed. They had a brisk skirmish across the bridge in which our artillery fired and fired one shot killing & wounding thirteen rebels. We did not lose a man and as the object of the expedition was finished, we about faced & fell back 6 miles, when we camped. Our boys immediately

went to foraging, and if that part of the country did not suffer it was not our fault. The men brought in Geese, chickens, turkeys & ducks. Some had horses; some had mules and such a sight you never saw. We also had plenty of pork, Beef & mutton, and the boys made a bigger feast than they have had before in a long time. The people were all secesh, but did not dare say a word. I heard one say that "she had heard the Yankees were a decent people but she had altered her opinion." Next day (Sunday) we marched two miles further down the road for security. We were camped in a swamp, behind a fence, in front of which we threw brush & small trees, the better to conceal our position.

The next morning (16<sup>th</sup>) a darkey came riding into camp covered with blood with a report that our Colonel & the Captain of Cavalry were captured. In a minute every man was on his feet and in less time than it takes to write it our regiment was going up the road with the determination to retake him, if we had to go to Clinton to do it. We had not marched far before an orderly of cavalry came riding back saying it was a false alarm and soon the Col. came riding down. As he passed the boys gave him three rousing cheers (for which, as he told me afterwards, he said he would not take \$500).

He said he was riding up the road in company with the Cavalry Capt. followed by one of the cavalry and a darkey, when they were startled by hearing several shots in their rear. They immediately stepped in the woods, and well for them they did, for right after the shots were fired 10 rebel cavalry passed them at full gallop. The cavalryman was not found and the poor darkey was shot in three places, but none of them serious. It was a narrow escape and we were all glad that nothing had come to our Col.

Monday night it rained in torrents and we were all drenched through, so we slept but little. Next night we slept sound enough to make up for it. Nothing of interest happened till Thursday night when we received orders to join our brigade. So next morning we marched off and after two hours, pulling through the mud we got to our encampment, where we were heartily welcomed as many disastrous rumors had gone before us. That same afternoon the whole army received orders to fall back to Baton Rouge, so just one week exactly after we started out we found ourselves back in the same old spot. Our regiment gained great credit for the manner in which they acted and we are now thought one of the best regiments here.

Our division is now under marching orders. Where we are going I cannot say, but will let you know as soon as I find out.

I have enjoyed excellent health for the past two weeks, and have grown fat as can be. Army fare agrees with me perfectly and I am perfectly satisfied with things at present.

Whatever Lieut. [Jacob] Fingar [of Company I] told you in regard to the regt. was false. He is a notorious blower and puts as bad a face on matters as possible. He was dishonorably dismissed the service and swore he would do the Regt. all the harm in his power. I am glad we are rid of such a scoundrel.

Harry [Tiemann] is quite well and appears delighted with his present position.

I enclose you a sample of seed cotton which I found on the road to Port Hudson.

Hoping to hear from you all soon & with love to all, I remain

Your affectionate Son

Frank