

Port Hudson, June 9th, 1863

Dear Father,

Your letters of May 9th & 13th came to hand on May 29th, those of Apl 29th & May 23d yesterday. I was glad to hear that all were well as we had not heard before in some time. The day after my last letter was written we left Simmesport by the transport Empire Parish & passed slowly up the Achtafalaya river to its junction with the Mississippi. Here we came to an anchor to wait 'till night before going to our destination. At dark we started again & about 11 O'Clock brought up at Bayou Sara. Here we landed quietly & marching ½ mile inland we lay down to rest. We were not allowed to rest long for after the lapse of an hour we were marched a mile further & then laid down to sleep in the cemetery of the church of Bayou Sara. Next morning early we were roused up & started off again. This time our regiment was marched to the extreme front to support a section of artillery planted in the road to sweep anything that dared to approach. Our cavalry was out scouring the country, and soon the regiments were ordered forward. We retained our post until our brigade came along & then off we went. The march was very slow as our skirmishers could not go very fast through the dense woods & up the steep hills (for this portion of Louisiana is very hilly) but we got along very well. It was tremendously hot & dusty. There was hardly a breath of air stirring & it was pretty hard work to get any water so we suffered a good deal. I think it was the 20th when we left Bayou Sara. We marched two days & on the 22d joined [Gen. Christopher Columbus] Augur's forces from Baton Rouge. This was our object & we had expected that the rebels would try & stop us. They did attack Augur but he repulsed them with some loss. The 23d we lay quietly in camp, but next morning we started for Port Hudson. There were two Brigades ahead of ours, the 2d Brigade of [Gen. William H.] Emory's division & the 2d Brigade of our Div's. The march was very slow, our skirmishers driving the rebel pickets slowly before them. At 11 ½ O'Clock A.M. we came to the outer rifle pits of the works & the action commenced. These pits were only ½ mile from the fort. They had two pieces of artillery here which they opened on us, but getting some of our 30 pdr's [pounders] in position we soon quieted them & drove the rebs to their breastworks. Before going any further I will give you the position of our forces. The rebel front covers an immense tract of ground, the works being 7 ½ miles around. The river our gun boats occupy above & below. On the extreme right were Genls [Godfrey] Weitzel and Payne [Charles J. Paine], next on their left being in rear of the fort is our Division & on our left Genls. Augur & [Thomas West] Sherman. So you see we have them entirely surrounded. Now I will go on. Our regt. with the 13th & 25th Conn. were posted in the woods on the right of the road up which we had marched. The rebels kept pouring shot & shell into the woods, but luckily they were all aimed too high to do us any damage. It was a horrible sound to hear the shell go screeching over our heads & then burst with a terrific report. Our guns kept up a steady fire & soon succeeded in knocking over two or three of their guns & then the firing slackened. Next day we were marched up to the front as support for the skirmishers, who were busy driving the rebs out of the woods. We heard terrific musketry firing on our right in the woods, which we were told was Payne [sic] trying to get his position. He succeed in routing the rebs & they fell back to their breastworks. Our loss was small compared to that of the rebs. On the night of the 26th my company with four others of our regt. were picketed in the woods. Now this was pretty dangerous work for the sharpshooters of the rebels would try & crawl down & get a shot at our boys, but they

kept their eyes peeled & nary reb dared show himself. On the 27th at 1 O'Clock P.M. we were relieved & told that our regiment was ordered to charge a work of the rebels which it was thought they were just building. After a march of about 2 miles through the woods we came out of the woods, marched down a road under a heavy fire from the rebs who happened to see us, struck into a ravine filled with logs & fallen trees, so we had to march single file sometimes crawling under the logs & then jumping over them. After a tedious march of only ½ mile, but which it took us about an hour to go, we reached the base of the hill up which we were to climb before charging the works. We rushed up the hill & the major giving the command "forward," the men dashed ahead, but may I never have to go through such a place again. The rebels opened a heavy enfilading fire & our men dropped like sheep. It was no use, they could not stand it & reluctantly they fell back. We were only about 50 yds. from the breastworks when we charged & our color sergeant succeeded in getting on the works but fell shot in three places. Our colors were riddled with balls, the flag staff was shot right in two & had it not been for the bravery of our Major our colors would have been taken. We lay under the brow of the hill 'till 11 O'Clock P.M. It was awful to hear the groans of the wounded and their cries for water, but we could not help them as it was sure death for a man to show his head. At 11 O'Clock we quietly & without noise evacuated our position – lucky for us we did for about ½ hour after coming away the rebs poured whole volleys of musketry into the position we had just left. Next day we lay in rear of one of our batteries. On figuring up our loss we found that out of 140 who had gone in we lost in killed & wounded 47. The 25th Conn. was with us but they fell back the minute the rebels had commenced firing, leaving us to do the work.

We lay quiet 'till last Thursday night when we were sent to the front to man the entrenchments. The rebels threw three or four shells at us, but did not hurt anybody. We were relieved last night and are now resting ourselves.

I cannot understand the way in which this siege is conducted. In the first week, [Gen. Nathaniel] Banks tried charging the works but was repulsed every time. In 5 days our force lost 1,600 men. Now they are planting heavy siege guns all around the fort. They have been engaged at this work for a week or more & yet are not done yet. With the exception of a gun once every half hour or so they do nothing. I hope they commence the bombardment soon, for if a force comes in our rear, it will disarrange matters somewhat. Deserters coming from the fort say they are all sick & tired of the siege & want to surrender, but Gen. [Franklin] Gardner who commands is a brave & determined man & will hold out 'till the last moment. There are two regts of Irishmen in the fort, conscripts, and they swear by all that is holy they will never fire a shot against the North. When we do get to work, I expect it will make a noise as we have some 130 guns & mortars planted around the fort.

Our mode of life here is somewhat rough. We lay in the works which keep us cool, but weakens us when we have to go out in the sun. Our shanty we make as follows. We cut 4 poles & stick them in the ground. Then we stretch a rubber blanket across. This is our roof. Next we cut a lot of boughs & stick them up on three sides of the blanket to keep off the sun & make the sides of the shanty. We then lay a rubber blanket on the ground, lay a log under our heads for a pillow & our house is done. Our bill of fare for the past two weeks has been poor coffee & beefsteak with either hard tack (army bread) or soft bread for breakfast, the same without coffee for dinner & repeat for supper. Every

thing is done in a reclining posture. We eat, drink & sleep while lying down for out here in the woods we cannot get any thing to sit on & then it is much the easiest position when one gets used to it. I am afraid I will be awful lazy by the time I get home. I am glad to hear that Edward [Leslie Molineux] has arrived in safety and is doing so well. You may rest assured he will be gladly welcomed back here again if he ever returns. All are anxious for his speedy return to the regiment. Our regt. has got a name now & I am proud of belonging to it. We are thought a great deal of at Headquarters & I think it is all owing to Edward's exertions that it is so.

Harry [Tiemann], I believe, is quite well. I have not seen him for 4 days. I am not as well as I have been but still enjoy good health. The weather is getting extremely warm and I think this & our rough life disagree with me. I hope we will be in camp soon, for I am tired of traveling all over the country.

We all wait anxiously for news from the Army of the Potomac as it is expected [Gen. Joseph] Hooker intends to make things fly when he moves again.

From all a/cs. [accounts] [Gen. U.S.] Grant is very successful in his operations against Vicksburg. I hope to hear soon that that place has fallen.

I do not know when this letter will reach you as it is said Banks does not allow any letters to be sent from here.

Give my love to all at home. Remember me to Drake & Edgar & tell Edward I hope soon to hear from him.

I remain
Your affectionate son,
Frank

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