Family Home Page

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Feb. 20th 1864.tif" Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

{*Page 1:*}

Headquarters 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry Knoxville, Tennessee, *{Saturday}* February 20th 1864

Dear Wife,

Yours of February 7th I received today with one from Sarah and Lottie. I am glad to hear that you and Frankie are well but I am sorry that you worry so much about me, etc., etc. Well, I have a plenty of good rations and I have not been hungry yet for more than a half a day, except once and then I did not have time to eat if I had had every so much. I can stand all that we have been called on the endure without any complaint and I hope you will give yourself no further trouble on that account, for I assure you that we are now well supplied with good rations and clothing and no thoughts of starvation has occurred to us. As for hardships, I do not expect we are going to have it easy, but not so hard as a great many think that know nothing of the service. I hope that you will not worry about me any more for you may rest assured that I am good for anything that comes up.

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We have moved camp again and are now to within two miles of town and within supporting distance of our fortifications. We have received large reinforcements and more are arriving every day and if *{General James G.}* "Peter" Longstreet attempts to take Knoxville $\langle TN \rangle$ he is going to get most awfully whipped. Day before yesterday our regiment was out on a reconnaissance to within two miles of their lines and met with no opposition and after going about a mile further than we were ordered we returned to camp before dark. Last night we sent out a detail from our regiment of one hundred men and two officers on a scout in the same direction. They started about 12 o'clock and marched out within a short distance of the enemy's lines and discovered nothing. They then returned to within three miles of camp to a place that they were ordered to halt and remain until relieved. They reached the place by daylight and hid themselves in the brush and cedars by the roadside. About 9 o'clock two hundred rebel cavalry made their appearance and when they were abreast of them and were passing our boys opened fire on them and completely routed the whole pile of them. Our loss was nothing as the rebels were too frightened to do anything but run. They only fired three shots and none of them took effect

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Our fire did better as several were killed and more unhorsed and wounded. They left and did not return as heard of yet. Tonight we sent another hundred men out to the same place and two regiments of cavalry have gone out further in the

advance. The skirmish took place on the same or nearly so where they once attacked our pickets and near our old camp. I guess that the rebs know the 23rd Michigan Infantry by this time; at least the 4th Kentucky rebel Cavalry does. I had a long talk with their rebel adjutant. He said that his regiment could whip ours. I told him that no rebel regiment could do it. He said that he would like to try us and in a joking way. I promised to meet him with his cavalry the next week in that vicinity and we would have a fight. He promised to be on hand and so did I, little expecting that such a circumstance would happen. Well, when we were out on the reconnaissance I left word to the house where we were that we were out to meet the 4th Kentucky Calvary and to tell them if they came that way that the 23rd had been out according to contract and today two hundred of the 23rd. That makes twice that we have now fought and licked that calvary. I gave the rebel adjutant my name and address and he

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gave me his and told me if I should ever get taken prisoner to let him know and he would help me all that lay in his power. I thanked him for the interest he seemed to take in me and remarked to him that I would have him first if he would bring down his 4th Kentucky Calvary as per agreement. And so we amused each other until 3 o'clock at night on the folly of the rebel cause and the justice of the union, etc. However, I could not convince him that he was wrong nor could he convince me that he was right and so we concluded to fight it out unless he would cave. So you must not feel alarmed if you hear that we have a fight at Knoxville. You want me to resign and come home. Well, Susan, it is as I have stated before, that is, as long as I am well I can neither resign or get a leave of absence. I do not want to resign for my services are needed yet. We must give them another big whipping before the war is ended. It is a current report report here that our division is to go with *{General Ambrose Everett}* Burnside and that we are to report at Cincinnati *(OH)* by March 15th. It seems to come from a pretty reliable source and most of our officers credit it. I am afraid it is too good to be true and do not worry myself about it. I hope you will keep well and not let Frankie get sick and be patient and the time will come when I will return to you to stay and then we will not by sorry that I have had to be away so long. As soon as I can get a leave of absence I will come home. My love to all and the most to you. Good night, dear Susan, and believe me. As ever,

Your Affectionate Husband D. D. Keeler Lieutenant & Acting Adjutant

Lieutenant D. D. Keeler Acting Adjutant 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry 2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps

Bad Quarters 25 Begt Inich & mfty Alls Dear Wife your of Feb 7th Priceived to day with one from Saret and Ste Dam glad to head that you and Thankie are well but and Sorry that you I worry somuch about me. & De Melle have a plinty of good rations and & have not been hungry yet for more than a half of a day, except once and then I didnot have time to leas if And had every so much, Dean stand all that we have been called on to enduce without any complants and Shope you will give your self no further trouble on that account for assure you that we are now well supplied with good rations and clothing and no thoughts of Advation has occured to as as for hardshipedbdo not expect are going to have it easy but not so hard as a great many think that Tomor nothing of the service, hope that you will not worry about me any more, for you may rest assured that Sam good for any thing that comes up.

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