

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.

{Page 2:}

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 *{TN}* he is going to get most awfully whipped. Day before yesterday our regiment was out on a reconaissance 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

{Page 3:}

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 Cavalry and to tell them if they came that way that the 23rd had been out according to contract and today two hundred of that same 4th Kentucky Cavalry got most beautifully whipped by one hundred of the 23rd. That makes twice that we have now fought and licked that cavalry. I gave the rebel adjutant my name and address and he

{Page 4:}

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 Cavalry 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 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 be 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

Camp Quarters 2^d Regt Mich Infy U.S.
Winnerville Tenn Feb 20th 1864

Dear Wife

Yours of Feb 7th I received to day 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. I will I have a plenty
of good rations and I have not been hungry yet
for more than a half of 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 to endure without any complaints 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 any thing that comes up.

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 Peter Longstreet attempts to take Keno will he is going to get most awfully whipped. Day before yesterday our Regiment was out on a reconasance 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 in a scout in the same direction. they started about 12 o'clock and marched out within a short distance of the enemys 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 day light and hid themselves in the brush and cedars by the road side. 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 to frightened to do any thing but run they only fired three shots and none of them took effect.

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 rebels 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 reconnoissance I left word to
the house where we were that we were out to meet the
4th Ky Cavalry and to tell them if they came that way
that the 23rd had been out according to contract. and to
day two hundred of that same 4th Ky Cavalry got most
beautifully whipped by one hundred of the 23rd that makes
twice that we have now fought and decided that Cavalry
I gave the Rebel Adjutant my name and address and he

gave me his and told me if I should ever get taken
a prisoner to let him know and he would help me
all that lay in his power & 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
Ky Cavalry as per agreement, and so we argued each
other until 3 o'clock at night on the the folly of the rebel
cause and the justice of the Union & 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 leave, So you must not feel alarmed if
you hear that we have a fight at Tenorville. 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 rather 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 here that
our Division is to go with Buinside and that we are to
report at Cincinnati by March 5th 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 Frank get sick
and be patient and the time will come when I will return
to you to stay and then we will not be 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

H. D. Keeler
Adj. 23 Regt Mich
2d Bregd 2d Division
20 Army Corps

As ever your
Affectionate Husband

H. D. Keeler
Adj. 23 Regt Mich