

Letter 4

Camp Suffolk Va Mar 1 1863

Dear Cousin

I rec'd your very welcome letter last week and would have answered it before had we not been busy making out our muster rolls which together with fatigue and picket kept me pretty busy. I was sorry to hear of your illness and you have my deepest sympathy in your affliction. We must all have more or less sickness to prepare us in a measure for our last sickness of which none but God can cure. I rec'd a long letter from Uncle Dick last week, they were all well. Last night I rec'd a letter from Sister Nannie. The Friends were all well except Aunt Whitbeck. She has been afflicted with rheumatism for some time but is improving slowly. I have had a sore throat for a few days past but is some better now. Friday night last there was quite a scare in our Division, the news came in that our pickets had been driven in and the enemy was advancing in force. In less than ten minutes after the long roll had sounded we were on the march, to gather with Company F, the rest being held as reserve. We marched some ten miles out of Camp and took our positions when we learned that it was all a scare, when we returned to Camp some what tired. Since I wrote you last our Reg't has been under fire. On the morning of the thirtyith January we left Camp at one AM together with a force of some six thousand Infantry, one Reg't of Cavelry and two Batteries of Artillery. After marching ten miles over the worst road I ever traveled, some of the time in water up to our knees and at quick time at that we came upon the enemy with a force equal or larger than our own. As our advance Guard drove in their picket we were ordered forward on double quick to support one of the Batteries. As our Company was in advance we were first on the field, and had hardly time to take our position when one of our boys was slightly wounded by a shell. We then opened our Artillery on them which they promptly returned. By this time the ball was faely opened and I never wish to lay under an other such a fire. The fire lasted nearly three hours when it became light enough to make a charge which we did, and drove and drove them from the field capturing some prisoners. There was not an interval of five minutes during the whole time. It was quite a sight to see the shell coming over us and a stream of fire balloning. One shell struck a cason about ten feet to my right killing two and wounding one. I helped the poor fellow off the field and that was the last I saw of him. In our Company we lost one killed. The reg't lost seven killed and nineteen wounded. Our whole loss was twenty four killed and eighty six wounded and forty horses.

The enemy's loss was nearly double ours, and since then we have not been troubled with them. This is a poor description of what I saw. Last week I rec'd a nice present from Brother Frank of a set of first Lieut's Shoulder straps which are very nice. I prize them more for the givers sake. Allow me thank you for your congratulation in regard to my promotion. I am not Cap't as you supposed but hope to gain the position by hard work. There has been some talk of our leaving here. The Colonel wants to go to Texas which place I should like to see. Whether we go or not is more than I can tell.

My lady Friend's Husband is not a war man although it seems that he goes for Union. For my own part I think I shan't marry till after the war and I don't know as I can then for there are so many getting married that there will be none left. The weather is quite spring like, the buds are starting quite pretty(?) and today I saw some of our early flowers in bloom. What a change. At home they are having good sleighing and good times. I must tell you we had for dinner a nice Chicken pie and a nice Apple pie. I don't know but it is a little out of regular Army fare but as we have a good cook it is no harder to eat good things than it is to eat hard tack. Well I must close this poorly written and wandering letter.

Good bye. From your affectionate Cousin Sam

PS My best regards to your people. Write soon.