

Letter 6

Yorktown Va June 27 1863

Dear Cousin

I rec'd your welcome letter a few days since & was very glad to hear that you were all well. Since I last wrote you we have been on the move nearly all the time. The night that I returned to the Reg't Six Co's were ordered out, for the purpose of capturing some bushwhackers who had been firing on our Cavalry pickets, & had the night before killed one of them. We left camp at light and marched three miles, took our position. We didint succeed in getting any thing but a thorough soaking for we had a regular virginia thunderstorm. I couldint help thinking as I stood in the drenching rain, of the difference of only a week where at the same hour I was quietly sleeping at home but such is a soldiers life. On the twelfth we rec'd orders to march with three days rations and started for our old ground, Blackwater – the first night out we camped about fourteen miles out. Started next morning and continued marching from place to place & returned to Camp after six days marching. Our Reg't had the honor of the advance & our Co. the Advance of the Reg't consequently we had all the skirmishing to do. On the morning of the sixteenth we came on their pickets & drove them a cross the River. We lost no men that day. On the bank was a fine plantation house which was completely riddled of every thing it contained. I was fortunate enough to get a nice Flute which I shall keep as a memento of the place. After we had joined the Reg't the house was set on fire & before we left was a heap of ruin. I hadn't much sympaty for the owner as the house had been used as Head Qr'e for the Rebs. The Cavalry got two Reb mail bags in the house.

From there we marched to Franklin and again advanced to the River with the intention of crossing but found the Bridge torn down & the stream too deep to ford. They opened fire, where a sharp skirmish followed in which I lost one man killed & one wounded. After I had established my line of skirmishers I returned to the left and stopping for a moment near one of my men, I saw a Reb across the River. I took his gun & fired & before I had time to bring the piece down the poor fellow was hit by a ball in the side. He was close by my side. Why he was taken & I spared God only knows. I was with him when he died. He died with out a struggle. When we returned to Camp order were waiting us to move to Yorktown. We started the next day and arrived here on the morning of the twentyeth.

Yorktown is a poor old Southern town with scarce any enterprise. They are full fifty sears behind the times & judging from appearance they have not put up any houses since the Surrender of Cornwallace. The advantages it has by having good water communication with all the seaboard towns one would think it a place of importance. We have a very pleasant Camp Situated in a fine peach orchard & half a mile from the River. Our front is in a field where Cornwallace Surrendered his Sword to Washington. On our right and near the River bank stands an old house said to have been the Head Qr's of Cornwallace.

Yesterday I took a walk & went down to where McClellan had his Head Qr's some two miles from Camp. A person has no idea of the amount of work that has been done here till they see for them selves. I saw the graves of many poor fellows who have lost their lives in this Campaign & none to mourn their loss except those who were dear to them. When the history is written of this unholy Rebellion their names will be left out. Some have not even a plain board to mark the spot where they rest. Our Brigade left here on Monday morning for Williamsburgh as have nearly all the force from Suffolk. I was ordered by the Surgeon to remain in Camp much against my will but as I was a good deal worn down by the six days march I thought it might be well for me to stay. The Colonel gave me the Comnd of the Camp in which capacity I have been acting. I hope the Reg't will return soon or me ordered on to join it. Is very lonesome with out the boys. They were sorry I could not go with them. As soon as the Reg't Returns I expect to be Acting Reg't QM. I shall have it much easier but think I will not like it as well as to be with the Co. I heard this morning that our force was near or at the White House. If so, it looks like a move on Richmond. I Rec'd a letter from Libbie last week. She was well. Her Husband is at Newbern N.C. His time must be out in about a year. My time will be out in two years and two months. I think I shall wait till after peace is declared before I get married and the prospects are good for waiting still longer, for I am not even as fortunate as many not even a beginning. I should be glad to have you take tea with me when I get settled, & perhaps with your assistance I might be successful. I pray this war may soon close & we all return once more to our comfortable homes. Won't there be rejoicing then. The majority will I think know how to appreciate a home. I think I shall. I expect a letter from home to night & shall be disappointed if I don't get one. Nothing does me as much good as to receive a letter from my friends. I shall wait patiently for your Fotograph & hope you may be successful in obtaining good ones, as you are intitled to them. I have just learned that our mail has gone up to the Brigade & if I have a letter I shall not get it for some time. Allso that our Cavelry had a fight near the White house & were successful. Captured forty prisoners. I must close this wandering letter. My love to all, From your Affectionate Cousin Sam

PS. Direct to Yorktown, Va via Fort Monroe.