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Thomas L. Evans letter to his Brother from Camp Elmwood, December 9, 1862

Thomas L. Evans

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10 o'clock we arrived at camp well pleased
with our trip if it was on picket duty

Thomas

Camp Elmwood Dec. 9th 1862

Dear Brother,

This is Tuesday evening & Lt. Cline is gone to town & Paul is engaged with some things he just received from home, by express. Among the rest is a cheese I shall be glad to help him store away.

I have nothing to do but to give you a little account of my trip on picket from yesterday morning until this morning.

We went ^{540 of us} about a mile & a half from camp past the most beautiful residences as it was just in the outskirts of the corporation where the ^{men} business of the town lavish their wealth on their homesteads

2. Everything seemed so quiet & retired in fact some of the houses were entirely deserted & some were inhabited by ladies whose men are in the rebel service. One large new building we used for a kitchen while the day was so pleasant we had all outdoors for a sitting room. At night we I posted the pickets around so as to make all secure and occupied the house as a sleeping place for the reserve. It was moon light as day & warm as May so we had a pleasant time generally.

I met with an old planter the owner of some 40 Slaves & a farm of 1000 acres here & one some 30 miles south of this in Mississippi. The most of his Slaves are away now some are gone off with the different

& Reg. & some 30 are up here
in town working on the
fortifications They run away
from the Miss. plantation
for fear of being run off to
the South,

One of them was at the picket
station when his master was there,
The planter said they could get
no work ~~to~~ out of their slaves
now they ~~they~~ thought they
were going to be free so they
do just as they pleas. He
remarked something of his
slaves having everything they want
I asked him why they should
run away then? He ^{said} simply to be
free. I said that showed ~~&~~ they valued
freedom & were willing to risk much to
obtain it. But, said he, a nigger
dont look at freedom as we do they look
at it as simply gettin rid of work
aint that it Solomon what did
you run away for (Speaking to his slave)

25
Sol. Said he wanted to work for himself
& he did not want to be sent off south.
His master wanted to know what he
wanted to work for himself for when
he got him all he wanted.

He ^{said} he wanted to rest when
he was sick anyhow protesting
he had worked for days when he
had a chill every day & could get no
(quinine) The master protested he
he had sent quinine & Sol. Said if so
the overseer had carried it off & the
migger could not get it. & so they had
it. The master then tried to hire Sol
to go home & work for him offering him
ten dollars per month till this difficulty
is settled then said he you & your work
is mine telling him there was no
possibility of his getting free as they
are going to send a member to congress
from ^{this district} & telling him it was better to
come home peaceably than to get into a fuss
with his master for said he you know
you always get yourself "licked," when it
comes to that. The master returned home
& Sol. went on his way and left me
to my own thoughts & musings.

This next morning just at daylight
an old slave came along with something in
a sack. He said he had walked five miles
carrying his clothes and a some "tatters" & was
not going back for they whiped him too much
just as the relief came this

morning and we were ready to come
to camp a paroled prisoner of the 12. Ind. Mt.
came in from Tallahatch. & told us a
company of Rebel Cavalry had camped
some 20 or 30 miles out from us so we
got so near the rebels if we did not
get to see them. We have hear nothing more
of the rebels since & suppose they skedaddled
when they heard there were so many troops
here. We arrived in camp about

Camp Elmwood, Dec. 9th, 1862.

Dear Brother:

This is Tuesday evening and Lt. Cline is gone to town and Paul is engaged with some things he just received from home by Express. Among the rest is a cheese I shall be glad to help him store away.

I have nothing to do but give you a little account of my trip on picket from yesterday morning until this morning.

We went, 40 of us, about a mile and a half from camp past the most beautiful residences as it was just in the outskirts of the town where the business men of the town lavish their wealth on their homesteads. Everything seemed so quiet and retired, in fact some of the houses were entirely deserted and some were inhabited by ladies whose men are in the rebel service. One large new building we used for a kitchen while the day was so pleasant we had all outdoors for a sitting room. At night I posted the pickets around so as to make all secure and occupied the house as a sleeping place for the reserve. It was moonlight as day and warm as May so we had a pleasant time generally. I met with an old planter, the owner of some 70 slaves and a farm of 1000 acres here and one some 30 miles South of this in Mississippi. The most of his slaves are away now. Some are gone off with the different Reg. and some 30 are up here in town working on the fortifications. They run away from the Miss. plantation for fear of being run off to the South.

One of them was at the picket station where his master was there. The planter said they could get no work out of their slaves now they thought they were going to be free so they do just as they please. He remarked something of his slaves having everything they wanted. I asked him why they should run away then? He said simply to

be free. I said that showed they valued freedom and were willing to risk much to obtain it. But said he, a nigger don't look at freedom as we do. They look at it as simply getting rid of work. Ain't that it Solomon - what did you run away for (speaking to his slave). Sol. said he wanted to work for himself and he did not want to be sent off south. His master wanted to know what he wanted to work for himself for when he got him all he wanted. Sol. said he wanted to rest when he was sick ahyhow protesting he had worked for days when he had a chill every day and could get no (quinnine.) The master protested he had sent quinnine and Sol. said if so the overseer had carried it off and the nigger could not get it and so they had it. The master then tried to hire Sol. to go home and work for him, offering him ten dollars per month till this difficulty is settled then said he, you and your work is mine - telling him that there was no possibility of his getting free as they are going to send a member to Congress from this district and telling him it was better to come home peaceably than to get into a fuss with his master, for, said he, you know you always got yourself licked when it comes to that. The matter returned home and Sol. went on his way and left me to my own thoughts and musings.

This morning just at daylight, an old slave came along with something in a sack. He said he had walked five miles carrying his clothes and some "taters" and was not going back for they whipped him too much.

Just as the relief came this morning and we were ready to come back to camp, a paroled prisoner of the 12 Ind. Vol. came in from Tallahatch and told us a company of

#3.

Rebel cavalry had camped some 2 or 3 miles out from us
so we got so near the rebels if we did not get to see
them. We have heard nothing more of the rebels since.
I suppose they skedaddled when they heard there were
so many troops here. We arrived in camp about 10 o'clock.
We arrived at camp well pleased with our trip if it was
on picket duty.

Thomas.