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Thomas L. Evans letter to his parents from on board steamboat Louisiana, January 13, 1863

Thomas L. Evans

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I received your letter of the 2nd since the little I look
quite heartily to think of the difference between your
chickens & others mine though I let I neglected
mine the most.

On board Steamboat Louisiana

Jan 16th 1863

Dear Parents.

I wrote a few lines the other day with a pencil which I suppose you will get before this but It was written in such haste I am sure it can give but little satisfaction even if you can read it at all.

On the 9th of this month we lay on the ship some 160 miles below Memphis (the place) That morning Jessy Perry died. He had had the measles & after that the diarrhea for two or three days & we knew him dangerous but he went more sudden than we expected. I closed his eyes a little after daylight as he died without a struggle.

We placed him in a snug coffin & laid him in his grave some distance from the river by the side of some others of the Reg.

That afternoon we moved up white river & hence up the Arkansas & landed next day a few miles below Ft. Hindman while we could distinctly hear the shelling the rebels in the ^{distance} though. That was Saturday the 10th quite painful

our Brigade as well as others started for the field so as to be ready for action next morning. Our Reg. mustered two hundred & forty men the rest being unfit to march. I went about a mile & gave it up & went back to the boat. Next morning I started again & by taking it slow & resting often I made a five mile march to the Reg. by about noon. In going to it I had to pass successfully two of the rebels intrenched position from which our Gunboats had driven them the day before. I found our Reg. less than half a mile from the fort & the 11th Ohio Battery in front of us which we were to support. When I came up Capt. Hamilton not being well started back to the boat leaving me in charge of the Corn.

In a few minutes Our Gunboats & batteries all opened with a roar & the rebels instantly replied & we lay chained to the ground as the rebel shell cut the bushes & whizzed close above us. Thus it went on for perhaps an hour when we had silenced most of their guns. & the command was forward. We all felt relieved to get out from under the shell though we knew we were going right into the fight. We moved quickly forward within easy range of their rifle pits here we could lay down & load & raise to fire

occasionally making an advance of
a few rods until ~~at~~ we got into
pretty close quarters, & the gunboats
kept playing away on the fort
with renewed vigor. about an hour
by sun they raised the white
flag we raised to cheer and a perfect
volley was poured into us. We hugged
the ground again close as ever.

But continued firing as did also the
gunboats & I feared it was a rebel
ruse but when I got up again & took
a second look I saw the white flag
still I saw too that the gunboats &
the rebels right could not see it from their
position but in two minutes more all
was understood & thousands were rushing for
the rebel works & I have no doubt their
shouts could be heard for miles.

After we had seen the sights at the fort
we marched back to the place of our hardest
fighting & camped for the night. here I left
the company & went to see our wounded
I found him at the hospital boat amid
hundreds of others wounded in every conceivable
way. His wound had been properly dressed
& he greeted me with his usual smile not
seeming to suffer much pain though
he said his arm was quite painful

I then went back to the Com, & after eating a good supper of crackers meat & tea & all telling our narrow escapes we wrapped ourselves in our blankets & lay down with our feet to the fire to sleep. I took a good nap & got up about 3 next morning & sat by the fire as I got too cold to sleep well. Monday was spent in Burying the dead. Monday night Tuesday & Tuesday night we remained in the same place without tents & got along first rate until the rain set in on Wednesday morning that day we came on this boat amid the rain & had a bad time of it generally. Yesterday morning it was snowing & there is yet a couple of inches of snow on the ground. The boys have a pretty cold time of it but are really healthier than they have been for sometime. Simon Moore died on Tuesday night after being transferred to a hospital boat. He was properly placed in a coffin but the boat moved and took him away before we had time to bury him.

Thomas Wheeler is getting well. Sumner is better I have much hope of him now. Hill is getting well Elliot is pretty sick. We have 2 or 3 with whom you are not acquainted I think are dangerous. & many are complaining. We are now on our way toward the Miss. River & whether we will go up it or down it I don't know.

Love to all

P.S. I think we go to try Vicksburg again
Write soon

On Board Steamboat Louisiana,

Jan. 16th, 1863.

Dear Parents:

I wrote a few lines the other day with a pencil which I suppose you will get before this but it was written in such haste, I am sure it can give but little satisfaction even if you can read it at all.

On the 9th of this month, we (the fleet) lay on the Miss. some 160 miles below Memphis. That morning, Jessy Perry died. He had the measles and after that the diarrhea for two or three days and we knew him dangerous but he went more sudden than we expected. I closed his eyes a little after daylight as he died without a struggle. We placed him in a snug coffin and laid him in his grave some distance from the river by the side of some others of the Reg.

That afternoon we moved up White River and hense up the Arkansas and landed next day a few miles below Ft. Hindman while we could distinctly hear the Gunboats shelling the rebels in that vicinity. That was Saturday the 10th. In the afternoon, our Brigade as well as others, started for the field so as to be ready for action next morning. Our Reg. mustered two hundred and forty men, the rest being unfit to march. I went about a mile and gave it up and went back to the boat. Next morning I started again and by taking it slow and resting often, I made a five mile march to the Reg. by about noon. In going along to it, I had to pass successively, two of the rebels entrenched position from which our Gunboats had driven them the day before. I found our Reg. less than a half ^{mile} from the fort and the 17th Ohio Battery in front of us which we were to support. When I came up, Capt. Hamilton not being well, started back to the boat leaving me in charge of the Com.

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Monday was spent in burying the dead. Monday night, Tuesday and Tuesday night, we remained in the same place without tents and got along first rate until the rain set in on Wednesday morning. That day we came on this boat amid the rain and had a bad time of it generally. Yesterday morning it was snowing and there is yet, a couple of inches of snow on the ground. The boys have a pretty cold time of it but are really healthier than they have been for sometime.

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Thomas Wheeler is getting well. Sumner is better. I have much hope of him now. Hill is getting well. Elliot is pretty sick. We have 2 or 3 with whom you are not acquainted I think are dangerous and many are complaining. We are now on our way toward the Miss. River and whether we will go up it or down it, I don't know.

Love to all.

Thomas.

P.S. I think we go to try Vicksburg again. Write soon.

I received your letter of the 29th since the battle and took quite hearty laugh to think of the difference or contrast between your Christmas supper and mine though I bet I relished mine the most.