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11/21/61 Jackson American Citizen

NEWS FROM THE 9TH REGIMENT

Letter from Captain DeLand

Camp George Duffield
Headquarters 9th Regt, Mich Inft
West Point, Hardin Co., Ky.
Tuesday, Nov. 12th, 1861

Editor Citizen,

Thinking a few lines and items from the 9th may interest you, I will fulfill my promise to "write occasionally." As you already know, our regiment received orders immediately after arriving at Jeffersonville to march to this point; we found our first camp one of the most unpleasant, malarious, muddy and intensely secession points in all Kentucky. We found already here the 37th Indiana regiment and a battery of "Home Guards." We camped in an old orchard; the soil was a nasty, damp river-bottom clay, and the second day after our arrival it rained most gloriously, and then drizzled for the rest of the week. Of course the ploughed ground of the orchard was quickly puddled into the softest yellow "sticking solace," and for five or six days you never saw so nasty and muddy a set of men, even in a brick yard. Alas for those new "store cloths" and neat regimentals you saw when we passed through Jackson. They were a mixture of blue cloth and reddish yellow-gray Kentucky mud. Sentinels paced their lonely rounds ankle deep in soft mud. Officers tugged wearily along with a "bounty and warrant" clinging to their feet.--Squads of men marched to and fro upon billows of mud. Fatigue parties shivered all day in soft fresh mud, and horses rolled in the mud, provisions and water felt, tasted and looked like mud. Verily, it was the perfect realization of the poetic idea of

"Earth to earth, dust to dust"
in the muddiest sense. We drank and cooked with rain water, which added to our previous fatigues, soon produced an enormous crop of sick soldiers. Added to this the measles appeared in camp and during the first week in November full one half of the regiment was unfit for duty. Just imagine then with what joy we hailed the order of Thursday last to break camp and move to the high meadows on the opposite side of the Salt River. Since our change to this camp our men have rapidly regained their usual health and spirits. Ten cases of sickness now in company C are mostly measles. We have five now down with measles, none dangerously; six have had them and recovered and about a dozen more will probably have them before they are "played out." There are about 150 on the sick list of the regiment now. Dr. Smith and his Steward, Mr. Palmer, are indefatigable, but they are both worn and weary with their unceasing labors. An assistant was furnished from Louisville last week by order of Gen. Sherman else there would have been an immense amount of suffering. Why does not our Regimental Surgeon appear? If he cannot

— Smith

leave home it would be a good idea for the Governor to appoint a man who can--what think you?

On Saturday last we were reinforced by the arrival of the 1st and 18th Ohio Regiments and two cavalry companies; now the four regiments form a brigade, under Col. Hazzard of the 37th Indiana, and are euphoniously styled the "Salt River Brigade." Some of us are of opinion our worthy acting Brigadier General must have been hard run for a name or else had been living for a few days on "bacon rations."

This point is one of the two gates by which the rebel forces are threatening Louisville. We are camped at the west end of Muldrough Hill, a precipitous and inaccessible mountain, which extends up the Salt River for about thirty miles. The Louisville and Nashville railroad runs around the south eastern end, and there is General Sherman's main force.

The Louisville and Nashville macadamized turnpike runs down the Ohio to West Point, where it diverges to Elizabethtown, running on the south-west side of the hill. Another turnpike runs from here down the Ohio to Owensborough and Paducah. The "bottom" between the Hill and the Ohio is about half a mile wide. This "bottom" is traversed every fifty or seventy-five rods by deep ravines, which can be crossed by teams only on the turnpike bridges. On the west of the town, between the hill and river and commanding these bridges, are camped two Ohio and the 9th regiment. On the top of the mountain 100 feet above us we have constructed a strong earth work fort, which will mount twelve guns, with redans(?) on each flank, and breastworks for the infantry. These works are occupied by two companies from our regiment, and command the roads and rivers perfectly and I imagine if the enemy see fit to attack us a large number of them will feel as though lightening had struck them before their attempt was successful.

But there is no present danger of an attack. The enemy is now falling back, and if a little more energy was manifested in this department, I am confident the enemy would all be cleared out of Kentucky during the present month.

This county and village, previous to our coming, was one of the most rampant secession holes in Kentucky. At the last election the vote in West Point stood Union 16, "Secesh," 178. But we have been very successful in our "missionary labors," and have worked more astonishing miracles by way of commissions than even the celebrated Sandwiche Island missionaries. The most persistent and insolent secessionists are the women. But probably they only say what their husbands, fathers and brothers think and talk in private, but are too cowardly to avow in public.

A word about arms. Our regiment has been supplied with a lot of old condemned muskets, heavy, clumsy, old-fashioned things that are unfit for a Russian to carry. Not half of them will shoot ten rods with accuracy, and many will not shoot at all--In short, they are worthless. The men have no confidence in them, and could not be made to enter a fight with any kind of spirit or confidence with such guns. It is

a shame to thus impose upon a brave and willing set of men as the 9th such old cast-off fire-locks. We have been trying to get better ever since we came here, but with poor success so far. We insist, if the injustice is not speedily remedied it will be the duty of our State authorities to lend their aid and influence to procure for us arms in which the men will have a fair degree of confidence.

The weather, now the rain is over, is delightful. During the day coats and vest are generally dispersed with, yet the nights are quite cold. It is just like "Indian Summer" in Michigan. We do not expect any more cold weather until about Christmas, and by that time hope to be "way down in Tennessee."

As to health my own is extremely good. We have passably good living, and the only unpleasant thing is sleeping on the cold damp clay ground. Lieut. Lott is in the best of health and spirits and is a capital officer--"Curt" Purdy is really growing fat. He is as universally popular here as he was at home. It would do your soul good to see him with a gang of men on "police" or "fatigue" in the fort, coat off, pitching in like a wheel horse. But "the laugh come in" when he does the "double quick" on half mile heats.

The following is a list of our sick. Serg. Chase, Hennialguag; Serg. Owens, and Frank Barker, diarrhea, all convalescent; F. B. Knickerbocker, liver complaint and kidneys strained; Dewitt, Pierce, George Clifford, Arnold Lamdin, William Thompson and Jo. Stiles, measles, nearly recovered; George Bowser, Charles Snow, Clancey Bronson and Frank Lester, measles; and H. Cranmore, Frank Palmer, and Wm. Rednor, fever; and Levant Bangs cut his foot while chopping. All are doing well and I am confident, with the present pleasant weather, a good camp and pure water another week will find us without an invalid in our company

Respectfully,

C.V.D.

Wen., Nov 13.

Last night about an hour after the above was finished we enjoyed a little of the "spice of war." The camp was suddenly alarmed by firing from the pickets, the long roll was sounded and the whole brigade was turned out to repel a night attack. The alarm was four times repeated, and the men as often called to arms. The cavalry was quickly thrown out as scouts, and scouted the road for about five miles. Company C was the first company out, and not withstanding the sickness, we rallied seventy men--we were detailed to patrol the mountain and for two hours

" _____ marched up the hill,
And then march down again ..."

finding no enemy and retiring after a fatiguing march to dreams of laurels and glories lost for the want of somebody to fight. The whole regiment behaved with admirable coolness and quiet, and I verily believe would have made a stiff old

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fight. Of company C, I am proud to say, they did nobly. Every man who was able to stand fell into the ranks and all behaved orders like veterans--when detailed for scouting the mountain, they started off on double quick and every man followed the officers with the step and mien of determined men, most eager for the fray. We returned at two o'clock and turned-in in merry mood, and today the topic for jokes is the "last battle" of the Salt River brigade. The only accident recorded is the tearing of Lieut. Purdy's pants while spanning a ravine. I will send you a full account of the next skirmish -- *provided always, &c*

In haste,

C.V.D.

- the Jackson American Citizen
Nov. 21, 1861