



Camp, with Regt. Tenn. Artillery
Near Port Hudson La.
March 27th 1863

Miss G. A. Brigham
Stewart County
Tennessee

Beautiful Lady,

I have traveled, since I saw you, from Danvers field, to the cold Lakes of the North; from there to Sulphur Springs savannas; from the bleak shores of the Gulf, to the land where the father of waters is; as the hills in his hand, to drag them down to ocean. I have passed a gloomy winter in Louisiana. But winter has passed away, and spring has brought back verdure to the trees, and flowers to the fields. The sun pours his golden flood upon the meadows, the hills, and the vales. The woods seem all alive with the songs of myriads of feathered choristers. The hum of insects has begun. The streamlets ripple in their crystal transparence. In a word, every thing seems to sympathize with the poor soldier, but yet his bleeding heart aches with the monotony of camp life.

Q were it possible for me to go forth, (with one of Nature's loveliest flowers by my side) beneath the green foliage of the venerable Tennessee oak, then could I appreciate the vernal beauties of the opening spring.

We have not witnessed the fiercest ordeal through which some earlier pass on sea than on Saturday March 14th, from dinner time, until night, the mortar bat, stationed below during the preceding night, indulged in a promiscuous, and almost harmless shower of bomb shells, not affecting the eager boys, who welcomed the noisy demonstration as the harbinger of an approaching engagement.

They were not disappointed, General Banks, seems to have made up his mind, for an earnest effort to carry out the orders of his Master Gen. and the fleet was ordered to strike a brilliant blow to wash out the shame of their late naval disasters.

At eleven o'clock when it was supposed the Rebels would be bathing in a profound sleep which knits up the raveled skein of war.

The enemy thought they would pass our batteries with six vessels of war, but for which they were doomed to disappointment. In each battery lay silent men, watching with gleaming eyes, the dark forms of the Yankee ships, gliding slowly and silently over the placid water.

On they came without a word or warning of success. The batteries as they were fired, on our right, remained silent, still onward they crept, until the desired point was reached, at 800 yards an eight inch gun opened fire, and a loud puffa greeted the crashing sound of the shell striking the ships sides! This was the signal, and from a bow and below us front and in rear, our batteries poured their deadly missiles in the devoted ship and her consort who followed close in her wake.

They then attempted, but with little success, to make a bold dash at our batteries, from broad sides at point blank range, and drive our guns from their post, but our brave cannoniers were prepared for this, and their grape and canister either buried itself in the soft earth, or pass harmlessly over the parapets.

At length the ship shot out and found their broad sides at a distance of 150 yards, our batteries replying to them, in more than thunder tones.

The night was very dark, and the flashes of lightning, belched forth from the bowels of the dreadful cannon, became more frequent, followed with terrific peals of thunder, till at length, they grew so rapid in succession, that one could not attach the rock to the flame. The roar was awful, it seemed as if rocks and mountains were pouring in a stream, making the very bottle walls and foundations shake.

Pandemonium, let loose, would only give a faint idea of the terrific roar that shook the earth for two dreadful hours.

In the mean time, the smoke veiled the river, causing our men to withhold their fire, until the flash of the enemy's guns would reveal their position. By this time ships, the Hartford, and Monongahela were enabled to pass up, but not unscathed. The Hartford, mounting 26 guns, was taken up by Monongahela, who carries 16 guns.

The Richmond, carrying 26 guns reached our lines and was completely disabled, and when floating back, within 100 feet of our battery commanded by Capt. Stankovich's 1st Lieutenant, she cried for quarters. That she was in a sinking condition, and was answered by 12 double charges of grape and canister. Two more, Pinco, and Genesee, who did not reach so high, drifted with the current helpless.

The Mississippi, who was the first to stand our fire, was a first class frigate carrying 24 guns, was fired by hot shot from our battery, and ran ashore on the other side, before she could reach the landing she was completely disabled, and shot after shot struck her as she lay growler and silent. She had a crew of 300 men, and her loss of life on board was truly painful, 30 was killed, 75 wounded, who perished beneath the flames of the burning ship. He was captured, not moving and brought over by our Cavalry. The platoon made good their escape, and saw only the killed was her captain, (Melancthon Smith)

The burning ship presented a grand and fearful scene, lighting up
the whole river, and enabling us to see clearly the position of the enemy.
Finally she swung around and drifted with the current, causing the entire fleet
at the morning below to beat a precipitate retreat, lest a general conflagration
should result. Her guns and shells would burst as the fire would reach them, adding
to the grandeur of the scene by their loud explosions.

At half past four o'clock in the morning, the fire reached her magazine, and
she blew up with such a crash, that shook the very ground round Port
Hudson, and at that time she must have been ten miles down the river.
Besides the six who tried, and failed to pass, the enemy had
the Brooklyn, Pensacola, Essex, and several gun boats
and five Mortar boats, who remained below, giving us a
splendid pyrotechnic display of hundreds of bombs, many
of which bursted high in the air, whilst others fell to the ground
perfectly harmless. Illuminating the heavens like so many
falling stars. It really was a most magnificent scene.

In the action we lost 3 men killed and 5 wounded, and not a
gun was hit, and but very little damage done to our Paraguts.
This splendid achievement, has fully demonstrated that open
and fort can fight gun boats with an advantage, when defended
by stout hearts and cool heads.

The enemy has received severe chastisement, and they will strike
but with advantage in the passage of the two boats named they
have already found a Lyon in their path. The Indianall
was far more powerful and she lies a wreck at the bottom of
the river. The Queen of the West who passed Richburg before
the Indianology makes us quite a formidable force, and affords
us a distinction of the enemy's vessels since the beginning of this
year, seems a providential Omen of our future success.

At all events Port Hudson is not taken, and our batteries are
fully prepared for any new plan of Commodore Paragut's.
(General Banks official report, admits of a loss of three vessels)
Since they landed troops on this side some 6 miles below, and at many
times did our pickets cause them to retreat in disorder.

However our brigade had a hand in this to some extent
They found out that we were marching upon them, which caused
them to abandon quite a lot of Comensary stores, which was quite
about to our poor fellows, whose rations, of course have grown short
and very inferior.

The enemy's vessels is still lying off the Point, in sight, yet the
distance is five miles, and with long range guns they
continued to shell us six days in succession, after the fight
but the distance being great, they effect nothing.

And my opinion is, they have entirely abandoned the idea of attacking us by land.
There is some think, a bloody conflict is not far distant, but be it
so the Boys who defend the mud forts of Port Hudson, know what
they are about. And fully intend to avenge at least some of the
wrong, and insults, that was offered them, whilst armless
and chained, within the walls of an abject Yankee prison.

Listening complacently to the howling of the tempest, and the rattling of
the rain, and the soft, soft hum of the wind, and the shudders of the
singly drawn, and the fire burns cheerfully, and crackles and sparkles merrily,
and the lighter candles add to the comfortable aspect of the room, and all
your daily wants are supplied, and you have not to look anxiously forward to

The morrow uncertain whether you shall find means to obtain a
meal. - Then do you ever give vent to an expression of faith, for the
poor Soldier, who understands not only for home and friends, but for
every high and noble principle of our nature. "For your faith, and warm
purity, for which he hath slept many dismal nights, and no better blanket
than the moon, and a warmer coverlid than the great stars. And for which
his trumpet is heard upon his beat, when night comes with Egyptian darkness, and
the rain falls in torrents; or when the snow and sleet patters upon his head, and
the earth freezes beneath his feet. Suffer me to give you a thought, while standing
at his post, as the storm arises, when his flashes of lightning grow thick and rapid
followed with loud peals of thunder and the wind and rain whirl in a perfect hurricane,
sweeping the earth as it onward speeds. He surveys the angry clouds, with a sad
heart, and thinks of his far off Home - of sweet content, where all things
alike engaging prove; He thinks of his graceful streams soft and slow
flowing amid the verdant landscape, where his young heart often led him
to fish or to sport. He knows when he is thus, his breath no longer labors
in his bosom, it comes and goes without his knowing it; his heart
no longer beats against his aching sides. The thought of the green fields and
blue hills of his native land, where his youthful hands were first taught
to labor, causes his pulse to quicken, and his cheeks to glow. He can
imagine he sits once more beneath the shade of some dear familiar
tree, and feels the same gale that fanned his infant brow rustling
through its leaves. Thus through the dangers of the tented field he dreams,
his soul tossed with various tempests, his hopes air turned, his prospects
changed, and wondering where this war will end. But there it is
a lovely star that lights his darkest gloom, and sheds a peaceful radiance
over his prospects. It is his beautiful star, more precious, and more
bright, than all the joyless mockery the world esteems delight; and by
which he looks forward with sweet anticipation, to one day going home
to see his dear ones, his long divided mind. But out of this
bleeful center, he finds a noble port, where summer pleasures fill his
breast causing afflictions winter gloom to brighten in to vernal day,
his hopes, and sighs, a fresh to bloom as the fragrant blossoms of Spring
There his tears can be healed by a mothers gentle hand. There his
anguish can be soothed by the sweet murmurings of a sisters soft
loud voice. "It is well said in the following lines"

O what are all our contrivings, and the wisdom of our books.

When compared with their caresses and the gladness of their looks
Could I like Daquirre commend the pencil of the sun, and have Laurentie
show me how to render my thoughts eternal, and Locke to teach me the secrets
of my own mind, and Simmaeus to spread before me the beauties of leaf and flower
and Lyell to clip the crust from the ancient rock, and read the earths autobio-
graphy, Newton and Laplace to bear me softly along the stary pavement of
the milky way, and Galileo to hold to my eye the magical mechanism that
draws within its range the rings of Saturn, and the satellites of Jupiter
and Torricelli to make the heavy mercury the prophet of the storm and
Harvey to tell me why the crimson mounts to my cheek, and Jenner to
flangely me against his most direful foe, perhaps in these treasured
resources I might find language sufficient to thank my encomium as they merit.
But time and space both fail at once. Present my highest regards to Aunt
Jack and Aunt Mary, and Miss Nancy and Miss Mary,
also to all enquiring friends, reserve a large share to your self
I will bad writing and spelling, my knee is my desk upon which
I write, the above drawing I made one day with my pencil,
while sitting in the right pitto waiting for the gaudies to
advance upon us. I close by requesting you to write to me

I am yours very respectfully J. W. Brown
1st Lieut. Co. B. 43 Regt. Ill. Inf.