

Letter From Scott, James written Monday, January 5th, 1863

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Soldier: Scott, James

Allegiance: Union

Unit/Service Branch: 23rd Infantry

Date Written: Monday, January 5th, 1863

Location: On board the Ohio Belle

Correspondence Type: Letter

Subjects: Battlefield, Combat Description, Commanders, Comrades, Daily Life, On the March, Patriotism, Warfare, Weapons, Western

We are on the backward at present but how far we will go I can't tell. We started from Millikens Bend yesterday afternoon where we all fell back to on the 2nd, 15 miles above the mouth of old river. It took some time to get the boats all in their proper position after coming out of the Yazoo for they all got out just as they could get out. There is different stories in regard to where we are going. Some say to Little Rock, Ark., some to Helena, Memphis, Columbus, Cairo, Nashville, and a number of other places, but I guess no one knows where we are going for certain. I think we made a very narrow escape in getting away from Vicksburg as safely as we did although it has cost the Government an immense sum of money and great many lives in the four days fighting. There must have been between killed, wounded & missing not less than 1,000 and some say more and some less. I have no correct way telling anything about it. I know from the way they kept firing the two days that I heard them they must have done considerable damage. At any rate the expedition has proved a failure as far as I am capable of judging and from all I can learn. The Union cause is growing darker all the time. I had a letter from Wes day before yesterday and he said you sent on some Christmas fixings. I am sorry you did for even if we do go as far back, they will all be spoiled before we get them. I should really liked to had them for we spent a hard Christmas & New Years. I would like when you write again to let me know if father got that money from Hodson or not. The few lines I got from Wes day before yesterday was the first I got since the 15th of Dec. His was dated 22nd so I think you are not very punctual in answering or there is some letters behind. I think the Fayette & Wyota Co. is having a good time in the North. I should not like soldiering very well in a cold country. It has never seemed like winter at all to me so far.

Tuesday, Jan. 6th:

We are still working our way North and I can feel the difference in the atmosphere. The air this morning is clear and cool. More invigering than it was down in the swamps near Vicksburg. I should not like to be in there in the summer for I think it must be very sickly. For the short time that we were in it made several of the boys sick and some of them I think is dangerously sick. We have not now more than 46 men that is really fit for duty. Capt. Warring is very sick now and has been for some time and I don't think he will ever get so that he can stand this kind of business. He is not the right temperment for a soldier and there was some taken very sick when they heard the firing the first morning we were in the swamp. Well it was tolerable scary for fellows that never heard anything of the kind before. We are making rather slow progress this morning for we are towing the gunboat Cincinnati, one of the best gunboats we have. She carries 13 guns and some of them 9 inch bore and I find it makes considerable difference in our sailing.

Wednesday morning, Jan. 7th:

We are tied up for wood this morning on Mississippi side a short ways below Gasters Landing. There is no more light on the subject of where we are going or what we are going to do then [when] we first started back. We are getting up the river very slow. It is very difficult to get wood along the river. They have to take teams off the boat and draw it out of the swamps where it is corded up and the boat uses about 20 cords a day. If ever the war is settled wood chopping will be good business for these expeditions are clearing up all the wood that was chopped. The talk is this morning that part of the fleet will go up White River and the rest up the Arkansas River, but whether it is so or not I can't tell. We hear all kinds of stories in regard to where we are going and what the rebels are doing, but nothing that we can rely on. I should like to go back to Memphis to see if we could get that box of stuff you sent. I expect the things are rather old by this time but I should like to get the butter even if it is old. This backward move has discouraged the boys considerable. They all talk as if they would be willing to settle on almost any terms. Things look rather dark at present. The whole army of the South West is moving back and not without considerable loss and the slowness of the pay department is rather discouraging.

Thursday morning Jan. 8th, 1863:

We are laying at the mouth of White River. We got here about midnight. The whole fleet is here now. I do not know what it all means. Some say the fleet is to be divided here and part up White River and the rest go to Memphis, but which course we will take is more than I can tell. It is raining and quite cold this morning but we are comfortable here in the cabin of the Ohio Belle. I would just as live, stay here all winter as not for we have no duty to perform, only our

cooking and washing. We got a mail this morning but I did not get anything from home. I don't understand why I do not for Frank, Bob and Asa all got letters this morning. I have seen some papers today and they come down hard on Burnside & Sherman and I think they deserve it all and more too. I guess I shall have to send you another letter without being finished up as I should like a chance of sending it off this afternoon and I do not know when we may have another opportunity for our mail is very irregular. We may have a chance in a day or two and we may not for two or three weeks just as it happens. I mean to write some every day and send it off when ever I can and I want you to write and direct as usual till I tell you different. No more at present.

I remain yours truly,

James Scott

To Miss M.J. Scott