

Newbern Jan 8 1862

Dear Aunt Maria

I have long been trying to write to you, but my time has been so occupied that it has been very difficult for me to commence, but I have seized this moment, and my aunt shall have a letter from her nephew. No doubt you have heard ~~from~~ of me, viz uncle George every time he has written; he has written everything of note that has taken place in Newbern; but uncle George did not go on the expedition; so I have the start of him here, and write from experience what he was not permitted to witness. On our first expedition it was not my fortune to see the rebel army, what little ~~there~~ there were that run from us. But this time we have met the rebel horde, been under the fire of his heavy guns, and come off victorious & in the combat. From the time we left Newbern we had the post of honor, in guarding a supply train

of over 200 wagons as far as Kinston; and a greater part of the time we were 6 or 8 miles in the rear of the main army (by we, I mean the 5th reg.) liable at any time to be attacked by guerrillas. During the battle at Kinston, (which fought on Sunday,) we were halted 6 miles in the rear beneath the shade of a beautiful grove, all day we rested here, and if it had not been Sunday I should have called it a pic-nic; but alas our quiet was disturbed ~~at~~ about noon, by the booming of artillery at K; I could not help thinking at every discharge but that numbers were called from time to eternity. At eve our colonel was officially informed that the rebels had been put to flight, and in retreating over the bridge fired it behind them, so that our boys could not follow them; but our cavalry was to close upon their heels; the rebel in his haste to fire the bridge got some turpentine on his clothes which ignited and he was burned to death, the cavalry quickly put out the fire and charged the rebels terribly; trampling them

down beneath the hoofs of the horses. 400 prisoners were captured ten heavy cannon, and military stores in abundance. We lost in this battle 120 killed & wounded. The next morning before we resumed the marches we had a breakfast that did us a "heap of good" we had coffee, and we confiscated corned pork, sweet potatoes, &c from a seesh house in the neighborhood. It was a dainty meal in comparison with hard crackers that we are fed with on marches. About noon and before we were aware of it we came upon the hospital where the wounded of yesterday's battle were quartered; a little ~~bet~~ beyond this we entered the woods where the battle commenced the boys left the ranks, and scoured the woods for bullets &c for relics; trees were scathed by bullets, and shivered by cannon balls, rebel blankets were found saturated with blood, and cartridges boxes laid scattered in all directions. The rebels contested the ground inch by inch, until they arrived in front of Kinston where they made a stand; here the battle lasted two or three hours, when the rebels were forced to retreat in the manner above described.

Here we passed the baggage train and rejoined our brigade in advance, while some other regt was ~~ordered~~ doomed to occupy our late position. We marched this day 23 miles, and to night I feel tired enough to turn in to rest, but I shall feel better in the morning if I sit up a while, I have wandered some 500 yards from camp to a fire in the woods where some half dozen men are cooking poultry they foraged on the march there is no place on the march where so much comfort is taken as at night after a days weary march, around a camp-fire; there the events of the day are rehearsed, "jokes pass round, & merry chat," until the small hours of night, steal upon us unawares: and then we never have a camp fire without we have something to cook by it. The troops have coffee and hard crackers served them by the government, but we have the privilege of foraging what ever we can find, so we have a good supper usually. The nights this time of the year are very cold; contrasting strongly with the day-time, when the sun pours down his hot rays with as little sympathy for the human race as regards their comfort as on a day in June

The next morning (Tuesday) before we broke camp (10 o'clock) we could hear the cannonading at Whitehall; we marched leisurely along for 2 hours, when we halted about a mile from the scene of action, capped our guns &c, and were ordered forward; we all expected to be thrown into action, but we were not however permitted to fire a gun, we filed around a hill in front of the enemies fire; we kept on toward Goldsboro leaving some to finish the work nearly completed (of whipping the rebels.) Company G had none wounded, and company B (mine) had one wounded by a spent ball Truly the farther we advanced the more we see of war. The next day we dried day about noon we came upon the railroad at Everettville about 6 miles this side of Goldsboro; the sight of several rebel reg'ts in an open field called forth a salutation from our artillery in advance. The troops

halted in the road, and presently General Foster rode through the lines to the front accompanied by his staff; they were immensly cheered as they passed. Several batteries of artillery followed them, thundering along the road at double-quick. The rebels had taken refuge in the woods where they were well fortified; their position was ascertained, the batteries formed in line of battle, and we were ordered forward to support them; the artillery poured shell & shot into the woods at a fearful rate; the 5th regt was formed in the woods along the line of railroad, where the shrub-oaks were so thick that we could scarcely move. The rebels after a short time were driven from the woods and in full retreat toward Goldsboro. Then the 3rd Mass regt was ordered to destroy the railroad; the first thing they done was to burn the railroad bridge and a "mill that stood by it." They tore up 4 miles of rails, piling them upon the sleepers and then setting the sleepers on fire, in this way the rails were warped so as to render them useless for future use. This done we filed out of the woods into an open field where the other

regts had been formed in line of battle. Three cheers were proposed, and given for the accomplishment of the expedition, which was to break the railroad communication between Richmond and Charleston. Prepar was nearly completed for our return to Newburn when we heard the rebels cheering in the woods where they had retreated but a short time before. It seems that they in their retreat were reinforced by more rebels, and turned back to assail us; but we were soon ready for them, our lines were formed, and Belger's Battery was ordered to the front, and the 5th, ordered to support it. On came the rebels charging on us at double-quick yelling like demons. We were ordered to fix bayonets; while we were doing this Capt Belger had sighted one of his own guns and gave the order fire we waited a few moments to see the result. Oh! it was a splendid shot; the shell burst in their midst, scattering them like frightened sheep but many of them never lived to run; many of them lost their limbs, many were ⁱⁿ killed sever-

al feet in the air, and fall to the ground: many a traitor was seen to "grin in the pangs of death and bite the ground." Our artillery by this time was pouring shell and shot into rebel ranks at a rapid rate. While we were directing our fire at the rebels in this open space some rebels on our left opened on us with artillery: the first discharge was grape shot which ploughed up the ground ten feet in front us throwing the sand in our faces. The 5th reg't was then ordered to lay flat on the ground. The rebels finding that their shot fell a little short elevated their guns a little, and if we had been standing would have cut our ranks terribly; but the most of them passed over us. One of my company was struck in the hip by a spent grape-shot which caused quite a bruise, he secured the ball and has it now in his possession as a relic. Others in our company were wounded slightly. Capt Belzer after he fired his gun, and had given some orders to his men, he went to the rear, as he was passing our company he inquired what reg't this was? the fifth mass was replied; very good said he, and for Gods sake! dont let them capture my battery! For two hours we laid flat on the cold ground shivering with the cold, and rebel shot and shell flying above, around, beneath us; everywhere we could see them striking in the ground or cutting off the tops of the trees.

It pained me to hear the profanity on the battle field; the "powder monkeys" as they are called, were quarreling continually as to which had carried the most cartridges, each ascertaining that they had carried 3 to the others two. Just before the close of the battle these cartridges had got low & there were none at hand, ~~near~~ but those in the baggage train, far in the rear, in consequence of this, the gunners did not fire as rapidly as usual, in order to make them last longer. Capt Belger noticing this came to the front and inquired the cause; the reply was that the powder was nearly exhausted, never mind about that said Belger. Load and fire as fast as you can; and make every shot tell. What shall we do when the powder is gone? inquired the gunner. Load and fire h-l & d - n - nation at them replied Belger; and then went to the rear, to order forward ammunition. The battle did not last more than half an hour after this, the rebels could not stand the shower that was cutting them down.

like grass, and they retreated once more in
haste toward Goldsboro, leaving us victors of
the field. During the battle, the rebels destroy-
ed the dam to the mill, letting the water
fill the vally in our rear; through this we
had to wade with the water up to my waist.
You can imagine what our feelings were on
this occasion; it was a cold winter's day, we
had been laying on the cold ground, shivering
for two hours; to make the scene more gloomy
and dismal, darkness was fast throwing her
mantle over the battle field; here we stood
on the edge of the flood, dreading to take the
step, the stream was full of floating timber and
rail fences; the current was very strong as much
as I could do to stand on my feet. After we
had gained the opposite bank our Col made
his appearance climbing up the bank, dur-
ing the battle our field and staff officers sent
their horses to the rear so they with the men
had to wade; one of the men asked the col
if he had to go into the water? yes boys he
said I had to polly-wog it with you. The

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Major got beyond his ~~depth~~ depth and had to swim the stream. After crossing and everything was ready to start I was detailed as one to report to the chaplain at the hospital; the ambulances had gone on in advance with the wounded, but by some mistake two were left behind at the hospital; and these we were to carry by hand until we could be relieved. This is the saddest experience of a soldier's life, to take care of the wounded. In a battle we can see our companions fall on our right hand and on our left, and the excitement of the ~~in~~ conflict will not permit us to notice it. But when the combat is over, and it becomes necessary to bury the dead and look after the wounded it is then the sensitive heart feels sad and mourns over the wreck that war has made. I entered the house, and at the door as I entered lay a man that had been killed. I went into the room on the right of the entry first; there was a faint fire burning on the hearth, that cast a flickering light around the room which was relieved of fur

interior with the exception of a few chairs and a table that stood in the middle of the room on which the wounded had their wounds dressed, as they were brought in from the battle field the tables and the floor around it was covered with blood. A large pile of cotton-wool was in one corner of the room used to dress the wounds. In the room on the left laid the two wounded men, one in a ~~chair~~ ^{the floor} ~~chair~~ ^{through} the head. It was some time before we could find any thing suitable to carry them on, and then we had to take a form bench as the best thing we could find. Gently we raised the wounded man, worked his rubber blanket under him, and lowered him on the bench: we placed a gun under each end of the bench so that four could carry him, while two walked beside him to steady him on the bench. By this time the troops were two miles in the advance and we were in the rear of everything but a few cavalry who were acting as rear guard. we had carried him about a mile and a half when he died. we were ordered to leave him by the roadside, we learned afterward that he was buried by the rear guard.

Poor fellow; none of his friends, (but a cousin who was with us) knows his last resting place: he sleeps beneath the tall pines, by the roadside, far from his native home; if I was an artist I could draw a touching picture of a soldier's grave. I hastened forward and rejoined my reg't. That night we encamped on the same ground that we did the night before.

Our march to Newbern was made in quick time without any disaster. Now I have written you a good long letter Aunt Maria and I want one from you in answer. We are all well, enjoying good health which is the greatest blessing we can receive from our Heavly Father. From your affectionate nephew George.