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FRANCIS P. FLEMING IN THE WAR FOR
SOUTHERN INDEPENDENCE

LETTERS FROM THE FRONT

edited by EDWARD C. WILLIAMSON

Part III

I hate to avail myself Bivouac near Jonesboro, Ga.
of the franking Priviledge Sept. 15th, 1864 ¹
having no stamps

My dear Aunt Tilly

Your kind and welcome letter of the 26th ultim has just been received, and the personal of it gave me great pleasure. I don't know what becomes of my letters. I wrote you a day or two after writing Mother, and have written her several times since, but received one from her dated the 6th inst, in which she mentions only having received one from me since I left. But I hope they mill all turn up after a while. I just got back in time for about a weeks hard work after leaving Atlanta, such as marching day and night, throwing up breastworks, skirmishing, and one days hard fighting, but I went through it all much better than I expected. Except getting perfectly exhausted in the charge on the enemy's works on the 31st inst. In going forward the excitement kept me up beyond my strength, but in the "fall back" I gave out, and could scarcely have gotten out at all but for the assistance of a sergeant of my Company. In a letter to Mother I gave something of a detailed account of our movements since leaving Atlanta. Get her to let you see the letter. On the 1st inst Gen. Hardee's Corp was attacked by nearly the whole Yankee Army, successfully repulsing them twice. When they charged a third time in great force, *ten* lines deep and succeeded in breaking a portion of our line, thereby causing its evacu-

1. The main army under Gen. John B. Hood was at Lovejoy's Station 39 miles southwest of Atlanta. Thomas Robson Hay, *Hood's Tennessee Campaign* (New York, 1929), p. 17.

ation. But they paid dearly for their *name* of a victory, losing about six thousand men.²

We are enjoying an armistice of ten days agreed upon, to allow of the removal of citizens from Atlanta, Sherman having ordered them either North or South.

I was rather amused at your lecture about keeping in good spirits. I am not often troubled with a depression of them, but merely mentioned a feeling of homesickness that I had after leaving you all at Monticello. Mother writes that Matilda is on a visit to Tallahassee. I hope that she will enjoy it. I presume that Capt. Maxwell is at home by this time, having left the hospital several days ago.³ I have just received my shoes by Mr. Oakley, a very nice pair and good fit. Write me and tell me all about your visit to Tallahassee and all my friends etc. With much love to Aunt Rebecca and yourself.

Your affe nephew
Frank

Camp near Tuscumbia, Ala.
Nov. 6th 1864

Dear Aunt Tilly

After an absence of about four weeks at the Hospital at Macon, with ercipelas and my chronic complaint, I arrived here a few days ago and found three letters from you awaiting me, which I read with great pleasure and interest the first was dated in June and directed to Newman-the last Sept. 29th. I had a long and tedious route to get back to my command after leaving the Hospital occupying two weeks-had to march about one

2. For Gen. Hardee's report to Jefferson Davis concerning this fight see *Official Records of the Rebellion*, Series 1, XXXVIII, part three, p. 696. It was only a minor part of the Atlanta campaign and did not affect the outcome. Gen. Hardee was very dissatisfied with General Hood's handling.

3. Capt. David Elwell Maxwell, Co. D, 1st Florida Cavalry Dismounted, Army of Tennessee. Capt. Maxwell was seriously wounded at the battle of Atlanta, July 22, 1864 and was compelled to retire from active service, remaining on crutches long after the war. After the conflict D. E. Maxwell became a prominent Florida railroad man. Rowland H. Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida* (Atlanta, 1902), I, p. 622.

hundred and fifty miles after leaving the railroad before overtaking them.

I am glad to hear that you enjoyed so much your visit to Tallahassee and vacation generally - Poor Elwell! We hear that he has lost his leg. I very much fear for his life but hope that the report may prove untrue. I feel towards him as a brother, and would almost mourn his loss as such.⁴

The army is lying quietly at this point on the banks of the Tennessee, having been here several days. The first rest since leaving Jonesboro - rumor says that we cross the river and start for Tennessee tomorrow - which may, or may not be the case.⁵ We never know beforehand what our movements are. "The War Eagle of the West" alias Gen. Forrest has made another descent upon his Yankee prey capturing two gunboats and three transports on the Tennessee river, with a large amount of clothing etc. He is certainly the greatest Cavalry leader of the age.⁶

The weather is raining, cold, windy and disagreeable generally particularly as we have no shelter from it.

I rec'd a letter from Uncle George sometime ago, saying that he expected his wife out soon. He is still at Thomaston.

Write soon. Your letters are very interesting and a great pleasure to receive them. On a campaign like this it is only now and then that we have a chance to send off letters, so don't wait to hear from me-letters directed to my Regiment-Army of Tennessee will always reach the Command. Remember me any of my friends you may see.

Your affe nephew
Frank

4. *Idem.*

5. Hood had two alternatives after defeat at Atlanta: one positive-to maneuver against Sherman's line of communications and force him to follow; one negative-to await with a badly demoralized army Sherman's next move and harass him. Hood decided to choose the positive. Hay, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

6. Forrest's raid into Middle Tennessee accomplished nothing of military importance, beyond creating a momentary stir of apprehension at Nashville. He did not reach his principal objective, the Nashville and Chattanooga R. R. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

Nov. 12th 64

Since writing the enclosed letter I have been obliged to return to the Hospital with a severe return of my old complaint. So much for starting to my command before I recovered in opposition to the judgment of the Surgeon. I'll know better again. "Experience teaches a hard school, but fools will learn at no other". I am at an Officers Hospital at Uniontown Alabama.⁷ A good place in a rich Country. If I don't get well soon I'll make an endeavor to get a leave of absence and visit Florida. Don't say anything about it.

Write soon, directing to this place - Officer's Hospital.

Affy yours
Frank

Quincy Fla. Dec. 9th-64

Dear Aunt Tilly,

I arrived here today on my way home to Monticello with a sixty day leave in my pocket. As soon as you can make it convenient, I hope to see you in Monticello, when I will remain for some little time. Write to me at any rate. I'll drop this at Station Q. on my way down tomorrow.

Present my respects to Mr. Gadsden and Mrs. Weston, though I only know the latter through yourself.

Your affe nephew
Frank

Madison Fla. May 3-65

My dear Aunt Tilly

I have just received your kind letter and must offer you very many thanks for your further trouble you have taken in endeavoring to get me a horse as well as your kind offer. I feel very, very grateful to you, and hope that I may have some opportunity of showing it. But it is too late now. Gen. Johnston has surrendered with the last army on this side of the Mississippi, and in-

⁷ Uniontown, Ala., lies 134 mi. north of Pensacola.

cluding this Department and I suppose we will all be paroled in a few days.⁸ This is an end of the matter on this side of the Mississippi. Kirby Smith may hold out there for a while, and if we get Foreign assistance our Country may be reclaimed.⁹ God in His mercy grant it - it is our last hope - what a terrible and sad result after four years of desperate fighting and suffering. Poor, dear Seton - it somewhat reconciles me to his death to think that he has not lived to see the Country that he fought so nobly to save plunged in this disgrace and humiliation. I don't think that I can live under Yankee rule. Had I only myself to care for I would not hesitate a moment but we must wait and see. Hope I'll see you soon. Excuse this hastily written scrawl but it is most time for the mail to close.

Your Affe Nephew
Frank

Madison, Fla.
May 16th 1865

My dear Aunt Tilly

Yours of the 5th inst I received only last night. I would like very much to visit you, but must postpone it for a little while. I have just made arrangements to visit Marion County, and spend some time with Col. Summer, a friend of mine, and an old member of the 2nd Fla. a rich old bachelor living a few miles south of Ocala.¹⁰ I'll probably be absent some two or three weeks and on my return will be happy to avail myself of the kind invitation of Mrs. Wethington and yourself. I'll probably go to Lake City today and remain there several days before starting for Ocala.

8. Gen. Johnston surrendered at Durham Station, N. C., April 26, 1865 to General Sherman.

9. In April 21 Gen. Kirby Smith had published an address to the soldiers of the Trans-Mississippi Department appealing to them to continue the fight; however, his soldiers were fast deserting and he gave up the struggle on June 2. Joseph B. James, "Edmund Kirby Smith" (unpublished master's thesis, University of Florida, 1935), pp. 320-323.

10. There is a W. Summers listed on the roster of Co. D. 2nd Fla. *Soldiers of Florida*, p. 93.

Quite a number of persons went down to Jacksonville some days ago to claim their property. Miss Swait and Miss S- and Mrs. Willey among the number. They have not yet returned.

It is said that the place is filled up with Yankees-it will be a worse Yankee hole than ever. I would not live there again for anything.

I have been quite well for several weeks, in fact ever since I saw you last. I must try and recruit up my health somewhat, but I believe that an entire change of climate is necessary for its complete establishment and this I trust I will have before long. Have you determined upon any Country to move to? My friends-that is principally the Daniels and Frank L'Engle as well as myself think that Brazil offers greater inducements than any other.¹¹ Let me hear from you at Lake City if you get this in time I will probably be there a week.

Your affe nephew

Frank

11. For an account of the experiences of Southerners who went to Brazil following the war see Lawrence F. Hill, "Confederate Exiles to Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, VII (1927), p. 192.

(Concluded)