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The Occupation of Jacksonville, 1864 And the Battle of Olustee, Letters of Lt. C. M. Duren

C. M. Duren



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THE OCCUPATION OF JACKSONVILLE, FEBRUARY
1864 AND THE BATTLE OF OLUSTEE

LETTERS OF LT. C. M. DUREN, 54TH MASSACHUSETTS
REGIMENT, U.S.A.

Charles M. Duren of Bangor, Maine, enlisted in 1861 in the 24th Massachusetts Regiment and saw much service, including the battles of New Bern, the noteworthy attack on Fort Wagner, and others in that area. He was promoted to 2nd. Lieutenant (1863) in the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry (a Negro regiment with white officers) and commanded Company D of that regiment in the battle of Olustee, the only major engagement of the War in Florida. This brought a promotion to 1st. Lieutenant. Some time later he was shot in the knee and thrown from his horse, breaking his leg. He was honorably discharged for disabilities in 1865. He never fully recovered and died in 1869 at the age of twenty-seven.

The following letters were written to his father and mother during the Florida campaign of 1864, largely from the field. The originals are in the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida.

The illustrations following of the Federal force at Sanderson and the skirmish at Barber's the day before the battle are from sketches made by an artist of Harper's Weekly who accompanied the Union Army, and were published therein several weeks later. If he drew similar ones of the defeat at Olustee and the retreat to Jacksonville, Harper's forbore to publish them.

[In another hand:]

No. 219, Mailed at Port Royal, S. C.
Feb. 15. Recd. Feb. 20.

Jacksonville, Florida
Feb'y 9. 1864

Dear Father -

I will try and write a line to you from this new position. We arrived at this place day before yesterday morning, 7th inst Three companies of our Regt. (Cos A. B. & D.) were on board Stm'r [steamer] "Maple Leaf" with Gen'l Seymore" [Seymour] commdr of Expedition-as advance-we approached the city-following close to the gun boat-As soon as the stm'r could get up to the wharf Co "D" was the first to land. Your son was in command. (Capt. Jones was sick) With my Co. (Maj. Appleton landed with Co.) advanced and scoured the city-as we were landing. The enemy were drawn up (about 50 cavalry) fired a volly into us and at stm'r wounding one man. They then "skedaddle" - we followed them up as fast as possible-firing into

them. They being on horse-back got away, but succeeded in cutting off two of them. I deployed Co. as skirmishers, and advanced cautiously. captured two men and one Horse. After Cavalry landed-of course they went on ahead I followed on as support-with my "Co." Our cavalry captured 10 of the enemy's cavalry. We returned to city about dark. Reported to Genl. with prisoners He said I must take charge of them during night-that I was responsible for them. Then my Co. must do Provost duty and guard at Hd Qurs [Head Quarters] I did not sleep at all. He kind of scared me. Joined Regt. yesterday morning doing Picket duty and here I am-now all safe and sound feeling well-but not much to eat.

Cap't Webster has gone with his Regt. I saw him as he passed us Genl Seymore-with his Army has gone on with intention of attacking enemy He had *good success* as far as we learn-captured quantities of guns-etc "Finnegan" [Finegan] with his reb's SKEDADDLED

Col Hallowell is left in Command of Post.

Hope to hear from you soon-write often as you can.

We are roughing it - I can tell you, have not anything with us - living under Gods own sky - sleeping on the ground with big fire at our feet - but when we are on duty at picket line can not have the last named comfort.

Jacksonville is, or was, a very pretty place - but War has *ravished* it. It is made desolate and lonely.

Must close

Your affc Son

C. M. Duren

Lieut Commdg Co. D

54th M. Vols.

[In another hand:]

No. 220. Mailed at Port Royal Feb. 24

Recd. Feb. 29

Baldwin Florida

February [! 15. 1864.

Dear Mother

Five companies of our regiment arrived at this place day before yesterday the 13th Well tired out. This station is the junction of four railroads - and is quite an important place to hold. The main body of our Army have advanced some 60 or 80 miles in the interior of the State. We are 30 miles Have captured large quantities of stores, and immense quantities [!] of cotton-one full battery rifled guns-and one or two stray guns.

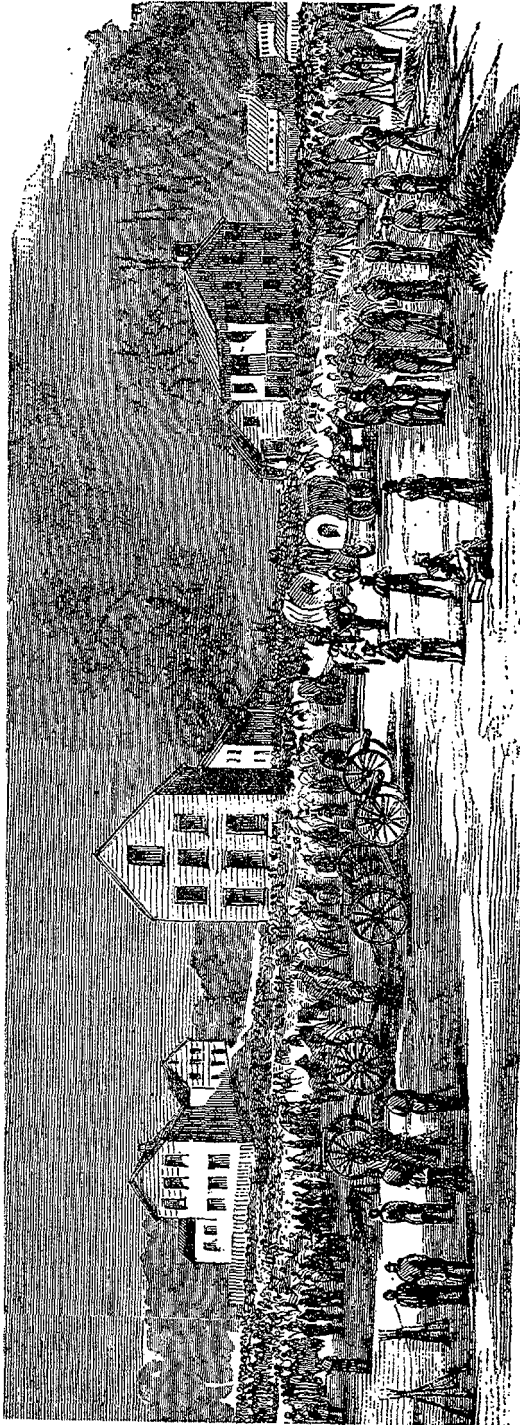
There are three or four officers in my "shanty" talking and fooling so that it is rather hard to write. Tis hard enough any way-You would laugh I think if you could see me just now. The "shanty" spoken of consists of four timbers about 5 feet high with rails across the top shelter tents hanging at each side and ends-and rubber blankets-for a floor are boards-torne from fence-have to build floor from ground two feet to keep out of the wet. The men have merely their shelters.

This is a misserable country all swamp

We are entrenching ourselves-so as to hold this junction.

There are bands of the enemy all over the State who will attack us-if there is the least idea of success. Our telegraph wire was cut by some of these rascals night before last between this post and Jacksonville-

You will recollect I told you in letter written after we landed -about my company and what we did-well the horse I captured Genl Seymore sent for the next morning-and of course I had to give him up. It was a very good horse-belonged to Rebel Cavalry - altho the man who rode him was not armed at the time. Was sorry for I wished to present the horse to Col Hallowell.



Sanderson, Florida, occupied by our advance before the Battle of Olustee.

Men captured are a greater part of them Florida men belong in state they are glad to take the oath-and go to their homes, but I would not *trust* them as good Union Men out of my sight, thats as much confidence as I have in them-

Our Army have had several skirmishes, but no fight as yet. Genl S. himself with staff returned last night. Said they had to stop on account of short supply of provisions. The country is poor. we are dependant upon our own Commissary for food

The Whites who are living here still are *wretchedly poor*. they are women and children-hardly enough clothing to cover their backs-and food I can not tell you what they live on.

It is a pitiful sight. I assure you.

No mail yet has come to us. I console myself in this way when we do get a mail it will be a rich one

Pleas give love to all. I hope soon to hear from you Shall write as often as possible-

Affc son

“Baby Lieut” *Charlie* -

[*In another hand:*]

A Rebel sheet paper
& envelope
Envelope endorsed

No. 221. Mailed at Port Royal Feb. 25
Recd. Mch. 2/64

Jacksonville, Fla. Feb. 23
after Battle 20th of Olustee
“All right.”

[*All of Lt. Duren's letters are endorsed in the same hand at the top evidently by his father. The above endorsement indicates that Lt. Duren, who was in the thick of the fighting at Olustee, added “All right” to the envelope before mailing.*]

Baldwin Station

Florida - Feb'y - 18. 1864

Dear Father

I think I wrote one letter just after arriving at this place. Well we are still here and no one hurt yet-Have had several alarms but they proved to be false-more *scared* than *hurt*-We are enjoying the full benefit of a *true* soldiers life-not a *fire* is allowed after *sunset* - and all loud talking stopped - orders

are very strict-Men sleep with clothes all on Equipment on- and gun by their side-Officers sleep with pants on-sword and belt by their side-last night I did break over I run the risk and took my coat off and boots-giving my boy (Henry) instructions to hand me my coat and boots the moment he woke in case of an alarm.

Last night is the first time I have had a whole nights sleep undisturbed-and under cover since leaving our Camp at Hilton Head S.C. with the exception of one night at Camp Finnegan, a *rebel* camp-on our way here from Jacksonville

Now my quarters are in a house-or what they call one. My company has little shanties which they have built-from the *fences etc* - they are quartered in the *front yard* - House is a miserable one but answers for a shelter from rain and cold. What should you think Father, if a large Army were to come along through Bangor-and our Company of noisy soldiers-or a Regt-should take up Quarters in your *Yard* - and the officers should take up quarters in your house It is awfull-War is-

The man who lived here we have sent inside our lines to Jacksonville-Family-furniture and all. He is a Rebel and is not safe out here so near our advance position

I must tell you before I go on-how happy I was in receiving a letter from home-It was night before last - I was officer of advance picket-The Field Officer of the day came around to visit my posts about 12-at night-and he brought them to me. Just think here I had those letters one from you one from *Fred Smith* (for a wonder) and one from *Lucy Emerson* - and could not have a light to read them - I told the Col. that he placed before me a great temptation to disobey orders-but as you would say-it was a *self denial* which I should exercise- waited patiently until morning & just as the day was breaking-while you at home were sweetly slumbering in your good comfortable beds-I stood at my post-and opened and read the letters-The number of your letter was 235 - date Jan'y 31-I received by

same mail a good lot of papers-a file of Boston Journals from Jan 31 to Feby 6-This is just what I want-I thank you for ordering it for me-Rec'd also Harpers for Feb'y-two pictorials-

I rather think Freeman is wise not to accept Commission in Wilds Brigade-and just as likely as not under Fletcher don't urge it.

Would Freem accept it I fear he would regret it-Just before I heard of F's refusal I was going to propose his name to Col. Hollowells for a position in this Regiment-We are short of officers, and a full regiment. Ask Freem if he would accept a position in the 54th Mass. Of course I can not say that he would get it *surely* - because I have said nothing about it-

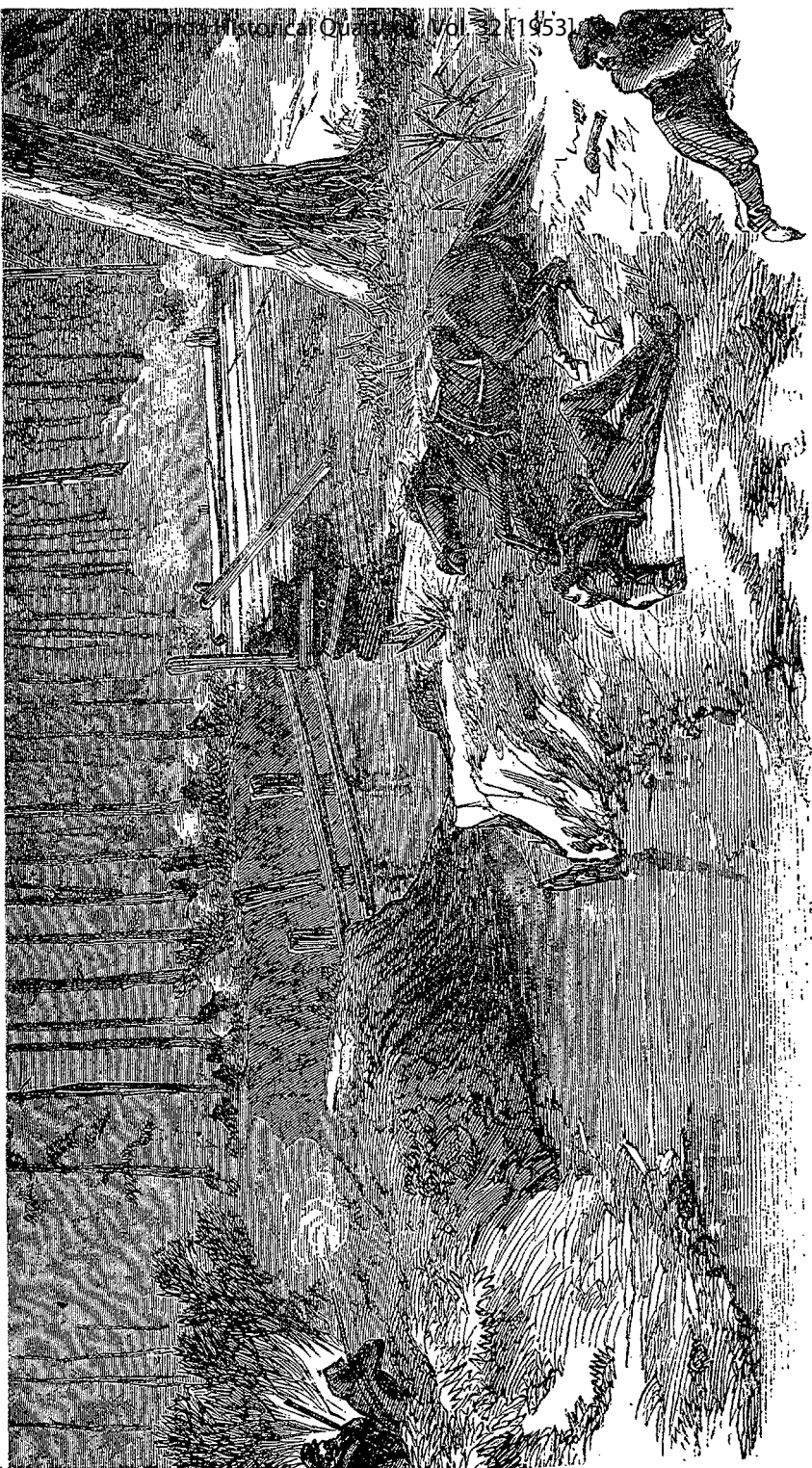
The officers will not consent to have any one in the regiment accept they have seen some service, that is if they can help it- And we can help it only in this way-protesting against it and if they choose to fill up the regiment with officers from Civil life-shall offer our *resignation*-

All but one officer now in the Regt has seen at least 9 months service-It is the best colored regiment in service-and were they paid as *U.S. soldiers* the full pay-of a *soldier* - Which I trust before many months they will-There could not be a better body of men in our Army-I will not except any *Volunteer Regiment* - You can tell Freeman this and see what he says-dont influence him either way yet-Ask him if he can't find time to write to me-

His time is out very soon-and I have no doubt he will find a good business some where-If his heart is set upon going home don't urge him to accept a Cols position for you my [may] have occasion to regret it-He has passed through many dangers -God has been pleased to spare him-it is for some good-

God grant that next July you may have him with you safe and as sound as when he left-

This your baby *Lieut* - who write to you now his life is his countries-he is not so good a boy as the other-I know he is



Scene of the fight at the Plank Bridge over Big Creek, at Barber's, February 19, 1864.

wicked-he *smokes* -and drinks a little *whisky once in a while* when wet and cold sleeping out in the wet and swamp grounds of Florida - I know he is a bad boy-

But there still lies a heart a Duren yet and he shall never disgrace the name if he does-never own him-he ought to die-but until he does suffer these slight offences Tis not because he is ashamed-Tis not because he can not break it off. He can but does not wish to

Goodnight Love to all-

Affcly Your loving Son

C.M. Duren

Will you send to me by mail 1/2 dozen Envelopes-I left all mine in my *trunk*- This is captured paper rebel So is the envelope -C-

[*Battle of Olustee**]

No. 222

Mailed Port Royal S.C.

Recd. Mch 9

In the Trenches Again

Jacksonville Florida Feby. 27, 1864

Dear Father

We are back again to this place from whence we started two or three weeks ago. have had a hard campaign. pushed 30 or 40 miles into the interior had several skirmishes. one

*The above letter is written with a pencil on a ragged scrap of paper torn from an account book. There is a fuller account of the battle in Lieut. Duren's letter of March 7 which follows. Olustee (or Ocean Pond, as it was called by the Confederates) was the only major battle of the War in Florida.

For a full narrative of the battle from the military standpoint, with map, see: George F. Baltzell, Col. U.S.A., "The Battle of Olustee," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, vol. ix, no. 4 (April 1931) pp. 199-223.

This regiment was not on the field during the first part of the engagement and its losses were comparatively small, its casualties being but 83 of a total loss for the entire Federal forces of 1806. Col. Baltzell writes of "the gradual withdrawal of the 54th Mass. regiment" in contrast to the severe losses and precipitate flight of some of the other Federal regiments.

For an account of the battle by an officer of this regiment (54th Mass.) see: Louis F. Emilio, *History of the Fifty-fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 1863-1865*. Boston, 1891. 410 pp. This contains a portrait of Lt. Duren.

fight here the enemy made a strong stand in force, too large for us to contend with-We fought them two hours when we retired in good order. Ammunition getting scarce as well as provisions.

I have had an opportunity to try my success in command of a company of men in action-got along very well-considering that there was but one officer, when there should be three. When we came out of the fight had felt so much care and responsibility that when the order came to fall back-I was perfectly exhausted, faint, and entirely worn out. here is an instance where a drop of whisky from the flask of the Surgeon builds one up. I think I should have given out if it had not been for this.

I can not say how long we shall remain here-but we are here now-living on the ground no shelter and not much to eat-but we are tough-can stand it

(Love to all)

Your Affc Son

C.M. Duren Lieut-54th M. Vol.

Friday P.M.

Have just been made very happy by reception of letters from you. No 236 Feby 2-237 Feby 5-238 10inst. & Feby 11. No 237 Feby 5 came in package by Capt. Hutchins. This package was very acceptable, for I needed towels much. Glad to get slippers too for my feet are pretty sore.

No. 223
mail'd Port Royal Mch 6
rec'd Mch 15

Jacksonville Florida
Feb'y 29. 1864

Dear Mother

Don't be frightened Mother, but this is the only sheet of paper I have or can get-and this was given to me for the purpose of making some kind of a *report* on to send in to Head Quarters Its so long since I have written a letter on a decent

sheet of paper that I could not resist the temptation. I guess can beg another sheet from the Adjutant in some way. For a wonder we have been in camp *two days* without a move. When we came in from the front we were quartered in the city- next day were ordered outside about 1/2 mile, at a beautiful *grove* just at night and as we had got fixed somewhat comfortable-firing was heard at Picket-line report came that enemy was 4 miles out in force and would attack us in the morning Well we had to give up this spot remove nearer town-were drawn up in line of battle-commenced throwing up works- and in less than two hours we had a complete line of earth works-about the quickest piece of work I ever saw done- Each officer in command had to exercise what Engineering Capacity he could scrape up and it was not bad-if I do say it, for when the engineer corps arrived they had very few suggestions to make Don't need to show men who have been in front of Wagner much about earth works. Well we remained in trenches two nights when we came to the conclusion that we were *sold*, rebel videttes around disturbing our line, next day came out side took up our camping ground. Yesterday as soon as we got a little fixed-had to go to work making out Muster Rolls-and monthly reports, etc. to day we had muster and inspection.

But I think you would a good deal rather have me tell you about how I manage to live without tents, without our trunks and all the luxuries of camp life without money too I'll try and tell you something about it. My shelter consists of a small board hut just large enough to crawl into-something like this [drawing of a tent-shaped hut] in front of this is a square place built out just high enough to stand up in open at top. This is made of green *bushes* makes it very pleasant indeed here is where I am writing now tis eve candle burns very quietly-large fire is burning just in front. here is where I *eat*

(Army rations) & I wish that bbl. would come which Gilman has sent then I would live

9 PM. Have just had Roll Call gave men a few instructions about keeping equipments on gun close by their side. Call my non-commissioned officers to my quarters gave them a lecture-now I'm seated again to finish this letter.

Mother I want some more of my *Photographs* you may think I'm going *strong* - but I get others in return-all the officers of Reg't I want to get. My book which you gave me is full and more than full. I want a dozen more.

The duty of taking names of those in Rg't who have not been *vaxenated* has been assigned to me. Tomorrow morning I go with them to the Surgeon in town and see that it is done. There are a few cases of "Small Pox" in Hospital (not ours) but one established about mile away from any one, in the woods, great care is used. Have I had it. no fear of it but should like to know.

I rec'd letter from *Capt Hutchings* to day sent his Photograph-tis good-he has not forgotten me.

I must close letter and get into my "Kennel" and rest. I have a great deal of care just now. Men all lost knapsacks and clothing in the fight, and we have to draw new for them. This is hard work-Government will probably give them a new *outfit* -so that I shall not be accountable for much

Aft.

Charles

Give very much love to all at home-I long to hear once more from you

Me your affc Son Charles

No. 224 Mail'd P. Royal Mch 7
Re'd Mch 15

Jacksonville Florida
March 3. 1864

Dear Mother

I have just rec'd another of your *sweet letters* how much

it does cheer my heart-to read your letters I can not tell you how much I enjoy them. Only my dear Mother I do not love to have you *greive* so much about my *sabbaths*. This is a subject which I have often had it in my mind to speak about-even as often as you have.

I know it is to be regretted some what that we have *no sabbaths* or what can be called sabbaths-in the Army *Chaplains* I think very little off-never seen but one since I have been in the Army who was worth his salt-he was *Chaplain James* of 25th Mass. he was one who knew his duty and did it well. A Chaplain is a good deal like a *Sutler* never see him about except when in permanent camp good comfortable quarters-and about *Pay day*. You may think me severe-but I dont believe I'm any too much so. Now on such a campaign as this, when we have it *rough* live in the open air-no shelter no clothes except what you can carry on your back-live on government food-"Hard Tack" and "Salt junk" etc. you dont often see a Chaplain near by. Our Chaplain is a colored man-have forgotten his name now-is a very good kind man-Looks out for our *mail* very well and has once or twice held services in camp, I believe but I saw nothing of him after leaving Hilton Head S.C.

Now I have expressed to you what I would not to every one for even if my opinion in relation to Chaplains is not in their favor I would not for this world say a word ever to discourage their duties- (or efforts in their line of duty)

We are inside the trenches once more, had a little *picket* firing day before yesterday-and orders came to move inside the trenches. So here we are up every morning at 5-and stand under arms until day-light.

Have had very severe cold the past 4 or 5 days-cold in head -and very *hoarse* hardly speak loud-but as long as my legs will support my body I'm at my post-don't fear of my making myself sick working too hard Dont think I shall-

Excuse me if I forget to answer fully your letters-for I'm on

duty now and have not your letters with me shall write again
in a day or two. . .

I must close for it is commencing to rain

Good night

dear Mother

Affcly Your Son

C.M. Duren

Lt.-54th M.V.

P.S. Bbbl. not rec'd yet but its all safe Capt. H. will see that it
is forwarded to me if there is good chance

Charlie

[OLUSTEE]

No. 225

Mailed P. Royal Mch. 12

Rec. Mch. 17

Our Post Picket

Near Jacksonville

Florida March 7. 64

Dear Father

Yesterday noon was a *gala* time on the picket line The barrel
arrived and I had four of my men bring it out to me there
were four of us officers at this Post we all gathered around &
it was opened. Made a hasty examination of the contents-
took out a few things which I wanted here-put the head in
again-and sent it to our Camp. I thought it hardly safe to
keep it here for if Mr. Reb were to come down and we have
to fall back which of course we would do-the barrel and all
would be like to fall into enemy hands

You would be pleased to look upon such a scene as the
opening of such an express from home-All join in the pleasure
all as interested as the *owner*. It was splendid all came in first
rate order. The *Sausage* meat tasted a little bad-can was not
air tight-but would not be noticed-at least by such hungry
ones as we are-not hungry for food exactly but for something

besides *Army rations* the *knives* and *forks* are beautiful-table cloth also is *fine* just what I wanted-dont think its too large. The books are very acceptable-reading is called for on every side-not just now tho for we are all very busy all are on duty. The *Doughnuts* were good-did taste splendid please ask Mother to thank Mrs. Godfrey very much-for me. The linen and cotton are very handy to keep. Am very glad of a Diary have lost all reckoning without one.

For all this Dear Father I am indebted to you-of course I intend to transmit to you the amount you expend for me, but still I have much to thank you for-

The slippers are a little small-but can wear them with thin socks very well-if I was to have another pair should wish them a little larger-

I have received no pay since Oct 31. there has been some delay-rascally delay about my discharge and final statements -which enable me to receive final payments as enlisted man-and *bounty*

Capt Bell of Co. C. 24th M.V. delayed answering several letters written to him asking him to send papers-etc-now he has gone home on leave of absence-Capt. B. has acted very *mean* - he has taken this mean, low way of revenge, or spite-he has tried *hard* three different time to get me *back* to the *company* but has been defeated each time-and it occasioned him some *chagrin* - When I see him I shall just tell him what I think of him

The Boston Journal comes regularly-and affords me a great deal of interest-coming from the office direct I get news a good deal later date than any one-was much interested in the account of the reception 24th Mass. Expedition to Florida etc. I can not tell you half, should like to about the flurry [Olustee] down here-if I could sit down with you for a little time-could & would tell you a good deal but can't put it on paper-The press are pretty severe on Gillmore as well as "Seymore"

-they have the latter under arrest-tis not so-he is on duty here and has not been placed under arrest at all he is in comm'd of a Division-The truth of the whole affair is that Gillmore sent orders to Seymore - *not* to bring on an engagement, but wait for an attack from enemy-Seymore did not receive the order untill nearly his whole force was engaged after receiving these orders he got his troops out as well as he could.

The most disgraceful of all was those two *regular batteries* going in-and losing their guns as they did. Why some of our Volunteers would have looked upon the affair with wonder-and disgust. They gave it-as one reason that their horses were all shot-men all shot away from the guns-another that they were not *supported* - that the reg't in support broke and run-

Can not say as to the latter I did hear that one white reg't broke and run-but I saw the Limbers and Cassions-fully horsed and men enough to drive them leaving the field without their *guns* Shameful-

Must bid you adieu

Much love to all

Affc'ly Your son

C.M. Duren

P.S. About the box sent in Dec-No one I know feels the loss half as much as *myself* - The *dressing case* something which I wanted very much a sponge etc-then made by my *Mothers* hands - the little mememtoe from Carrie [?] I would rather given a great deal than to have these lost-the hat-coat-etc-need much - but then what can I do-but to be reconciled-I have made close inquiries written to Express Co-several times -and have been compelled to come to conclusion that the whole thing was lost on board the illfated steamer-Edwin Lewis-C.M.D.

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FLORIDA HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

226

Camp Near Jacksonville Fla

March 12- 1864

Dear Father

I have just time to write a word - *only*

Am full of business-Pay Rolls-etc to make out-this writing with other duties *Picket* -etc-leaves but very little time for rest-but *I'm tough-*

If you can get a "New Bedford Mercury" Feby 26-you will find an article in relation to this expedition to Florida speaks of Lieut *Durand* with his Co. landing first etc-One of the Officers saw the paper-I knew nothing of it-

Have your letter and Mothers before me was just happy as am always in reading your letters dates of Feb'y 28. (244)

Yes-I have a good deal of *care* for one so young-Guess I *can stand it* if nothing breaks

Am very well-Love to all at home

Aff'ly your son

C. M. Duren

Lieut Co "D"

No. 227 Rec'd Mch 31

Out Post Pickett

N Post Jacksonville Fla.

March 15, 1864

Dear Father

Again I am on picket-this is the 3rd day and it has been a pretty tedious tour of duty Hope to be relieved this evening-

These boys are so fond of firing at *shadows* etc-that it keeps the officer of picket pretty nearly all the time running-this is there only fault-if it can be called a fault. No man-nothing moving can pass-their line-it is a "Halt" (sharp and loud) if not obeyed "*click, click*" "*bang*" -Why in going around at night to visit the line-I have to be very careful-keep my ears wide open-and when ordered to "Halt" I have to *halt* at once. tis dangerous-even to take one *step* after ordered to "Halt"

During the three days out here I have occupied my leisure time in reading "Cudjo Cave" the book which you sent-I was very much interested indeed in the story.

I have been luxuriating in many good things since the barrel came. It came along in just the right time. Have not yet risked my self inside of white sheets. We are too near the enemy-but they are carefully laid away in my trunk and as soon as we get settled in some permanent camp then I shall use them-our men sleep with equipment all on & guns by the side.

I have not slept one night with clothes off since we left Hilton Head Feby 6

I wrote a hasty line to you just before leaving our camp for picket duty-I think I spoke of an article published in the New Bedford Mercury-Feby 26 about the first landing of the expedition in Jacksonville-I thought you might possibly get a copy-by sending for it-to cut article out for your scrap book-

I forgot to mention how glad was I for the blank books they will come handy-I assure you-

Have just happened to think of mothers request- must look about here and see if I can find any flowers or *leaves* to send. Will go now before I seal this letter-

Am very well-Cold is very much better

Love to all at home

Your Affc Son

C.M. Duren

Lieut 54th M.V.

No. 228
Rec'd Apl 1

Jacksonville Fla.

March 23- 1864

Dear Father-

The many kind letters from yourself & dear Mother which have arrived recently were read with more pleasure than you

can imagine- The answers to those letters have not I know been so full or so frequent as I would have wished but you know well that I have had a great deal to do much care and responsibility for a long time now. Capt Jones I am happy to say is with me once more and I am in a great measure relieved from a portion. Capt. J. returned two days since-is quite well with the exception of his shoulder which will probably trouble him always. It may be very nice to go home even on account of a wound, but if I have got to have a wound before I get home-I hope it will be a long time. I may envy the going home part-but I do not envy the *wound* There is nothing very new to relate excepting that we have our camp all laid out just got our tents up, the men *Shelter's* and it begins to look quite nicely all about, got trees of various kinds laid out around our tents etc. will cut a leaf from one of the trees and send

Yesterday I was Officer of the Guard and had the first fight with unruly men, it was a fight of short duration tho'-one of the men in one of the Co-struck his Orderly S'g't-I heard of the fight and of course it was my duty as officer of the guard to interfere and arrest the offenders-I took a Corp'l and file of men and went over-stepped up and parted the men or attempted it-they were two strong men-my guard got them apart. the man was wild with rage-made a jump for the man again I stepped in to prevent it-liked to have gone on to the ground myself-I ordered the guard to take the man to the guard house-he got away. I took hold of him-told him to go quietly with guard-he attempted to strike me but I jumped back, drew my revolver & knocked him down with the *butt end*, stunned him so that we could drag him to the guard house. If that had not been effectual I should have shot the man on the spot-for I always said if a man ever offered to strike me in this Reg't-I should shoot him.

Im very glad that I did not-this man for when he revived

and thought a moment he seemed very sorry for what had passed-

Drums are beating retreat & I must attend "Roll Call" of Co.
then I will finish-Good night

Affc Son

C.M. Duren

No. 229

Jacksonville Fla

March 26 - 64

Dear Father. . . .

Major Appleton has just this moment left our tent-he came, what do you think for-brought to me and placed into my hand my Commission as 1st Lieut - 54th M.V. at same time taking my hand with a word of congratulation upon my promotion-etc-Well-so it is-I've nothing to say Tell William Hyde that his straps need a *bar* sooner than he or I expected . . .

I must bid you good night for it is *late*-

Love to all

Your Affc Son

C.M. Duren

1st Lieut 54th M.V.

No. 230

Jacksonville Fla.

March 29- 1864

1 A.M.

Dear Father

I am Officer of the guard-and of course am expected to keep awake all the time-rains hard my tent is a poor one-(the guard tent) and leaks badly. Still Im going to try notwithstanding these disadvantages to write to you.

The last dates from you were happily received yesterday (Sunday) what could be more pleasant on that *day* -than those blessed messengers from home. . . .

. . . In your letter you speak of the Anniversary of battle of

Newbern- did not once think of it actually-true we shall never forget the 14th of March 1862-two years ago-a private in the ranks-stood up with my comrades in the fight-fired volley after volley-that was the first and last fight where I went in with a gun-to day a 1st Lieut. well *Promotions in the American Army are rapid* -I dont know what I have done to deserve the position-but-that is something for others to decide- I have tried to do my duty-if I have succeeded I am glad-for it is not only an honor to my self but to *you* my parents-

Ah! *I* know you would have given me a dinner & a good many other things had I been near by-

About Sergeant Swailes there is some doubt about his being a black man. I know he is not black, but I mean a negro-he is very nearly as white as I. He was the Serg't Major of the Reg't behaved well in the fight-got a wound in the head so Col H- proposed his name after a consultation with us for a commission-and Gov. A. gave it. White or black he is brave-and deserved some notice-he is well qualified for the position of an officer-and altho' I'm not in favor of mixing colored officers with white-if it is proposed to commission them-

When this is proposed I hope to see this whole Reg't officered with them-then I am ready to step out. . . .

I should enjoy a visit from you very much I wish you and Mother could come here-but I hardly know how or what reason you could give for coming were you to make a request.

I do not think there would be much trouble in getting a boarding place in the city for a short time.

I must close it is raining right through the tent upon my papers and blotting it. Excuse it.

Love to all at home will finish answering yours and Mothers letters some other time

Your affc son
C.M. Duren

No. 231
Mail'd P. Royal Apr. 5
Rec'd Apr. 14

Jacksonville Fla
April 2nd 1864

Dear Mother

I have just returned from picket duty-been out four days pretty tired but write a line or two merely to let you know that I am well. . . .

I know that I have received good lots of precious letters from your hand and I know too that my answers to them recently have been poor, hurriedly-and infrequent-but I think were you to know all the reasons you would not blame me.

Since leaving Hilton Head-truly I have not written to any-one-excepting to you & father. once to Emma-I have not even written to Carrie Cushman-one of my best friends-the best friend outside of my home-the only one who loves me-or cares for my sustaining the good principals-and lessons, you my dear Mother taught-to me

After finishing this I shall write to Carrie-

We have occasion to rejoice in the action of Congress in relation to the pay of our men-

The Bill has I believe actually passed-it should be the occasion of rejoicing over all our country-for we shall have better men-a better Army

A change already is manifest in the camp-to this Reg't above the others great credit is due-Not a man has received one cent - twice during the past year they have been offered the 7.00 but they have been united-have been firm-they said they would serve the country 3 yrs for nothing-rather than take one cent less than 13.00 from the U.S. Gov't-They have now I trust gained their reward for if there is one Regiment in service who have *earned* their pay-it is the 54th Mass - -

Well Mother-your "baby Lieut" has a bar to his straps-It was quite an unexpected step to me - I presume my success

in the last campaign-success in command of a company alone
It was hard work but I got through well-and we are rewarded-

Dear Mother I must close now-with love to *all* at home.
I will try to do better in my letter writing hereafter

Good night

Affc'ly Your Son

C.M. Duren

1st Lieut 54th M.V.

Mother-I send a rose-got it from the woods near my *picket line* today C.M.D.

No. 233

Jacksonville Fla

April 9 - 1864

Dear Mother

The Co.'s of the regiment are falling in for picket duty-
I am not on this time on account of being appointed on a
board of survey - as I'm junior officer of the Board of course
as is the custom have all the *writing to do*. I'm going to take
my time about it tho'-so will commence with a letter to you.

The picket have gone and the camp is very quiet. How much
you would enjoy it, Mother, if you could walk into our en-
campment-and into my tent-and sit down for a short time
this afternoon-I wish you might-Why won't you some after-
noon-come [from Maine!] early and bring your knitting-If
you don't like to come alone-Why ask Grandma Hyde, Emma
& Mary to come too-should be delighted to see them all. Shan't
ask the gentlemen for we have enough without them, unless
one wishes to enlist then come with all my heart. You may
think I could not find room for you all, but don't allow this to
trouble you the least-providing you will all leave your hoop
skirts at home there'll not be any trouble.

At 4.30-I should have to go out with my Co. on Dress
Parade but you would all be interested in this, for its a very

fine parade of good clothes and white gloves-and blacked boots and shining brasses. So I would direct you where to stand to witness all-after this is over-you may laugh-but I should insist upon you all taking tea with Capt Jones and myself-the table should be spread upon the large table covered by the new table cloth.

Well I can't say what we should have for supper a cup of tea I know John would have, and that would suit Grandma and you-some nice bread and butter warm biscuits-and tarts the which John makes very nice-upon this occasion-I should send for some peaches for desert at any rate we would have a good supper for you for we boast of as good a Cook as there is in the regiment-as to cleanliness I don't think you would have occasion to find fault, for I am very particular you know about this-every morning just before 9 - P.M. I go to every tent in the company and see that every man has swept out, folded his coat and blanket (if not out airing) see that his clothes are neatly packed in knapsack, equipment hung up etc. at this time I inspect both the Co. cook house and our own-and if I find a dirty dish-or any thing out of order they *catch it* - the men tho' are generally quite neat and try to keep clean always-

You asked me I think in your last-about the intelligence etc. of our men-about the reading and writing-there are but very few perhaps 6 men in the Co. who can not read or write. You are right they are by far a more intelligent class-better educated-a great deal than southern negroes.

You ask how our wounded men are etc. they are all getting along well-are at Beaufort S. C. in Hospital-the two men who were reported as missing have turned up-they came in two days after the fight-the reports in relation to the treatment of colored soldiers taken prisoners are often exaggerated more or less-there are some cases of cruel treatment but not always -by Flag of Truce we learned that our men-Northern men

were treated as prisoners, but southern negroes from Regts raised south-they are returned to slavery to masters-on plantations when not wanted for serving on earth works etc. One of our men a Serg't-on the retreat-was helping along a wounded man-when he was overtaken by reb cavalry-and ordered to surrender, he dropped his comrade brought his gun to his shoulder-but the officer in charge of reb cavalry aimed his revolver at his heart-both fired at once-the Sgt. shot dead-the officer wounded. A case of firmness and bravery-don't you think so-We are looking with impatience for another mail-next Sunday will bring one I think.

Love to all
Your Affc. Son
C.M. Duren

No. 235

Jacksonville, Florida
April 13 1864

Dear Father

. . . The mail boat arrived yesterday afternoon-I was off on duty at the time with fatigue [duty]-and had a hard time-some of the men did not behave well, during the day and at night I came to camp feeling *cross*, *very cross* - but when I entered my tent and found these letters with one from *Gilman* a quantity of newspaper all lying on the table awaiting my arrival-I jumped for them, seated myself in a chair and never stirred until they were all read (the letters) did not take sword belt or cap off-

While I am seated here I can hear singing along the line-tis good-some of the officers have some of the men in their tent with *violins* & *banjo* - they make good music and may [!] good singers-

. . . On the 30th of last March I was mustered into the service of U.S. as 1st Lieut to serve 3 years (unless sooner discharged)

from this date. We are all busy this morning getting ready for a *review*. Gen. Hatch, our new commander reviews us. the drum beats now and I must close.

Capt Jones is sick again and the command of Co. falls upon me

Love to all

Your Affc. Son

C.M. Duren

Lieut 54th M.V.