

Fort Ridgely Minn. Nov. 10. 1862.

Dear Folks at Home

Since I wrote to you I have been with the regt. on a ten days expedition into the Indian Country west and Southwest from this point. The return from Sibley's Camp where I wrote to you (if I rightly remember) to the Lower Agency 12. m from this post, on the 24th of ^{23rd} followed in two or three days by the whole camp of 1500 ⁽²⁰⁾ soldiers 400 Indian prisoners & 1500 squaws & papozes. We made ourselves very comfortable, and supposed that we should remain there till the trial & execution of the savages was accomplished & then fall back to Ft Ridgely. We found an immense quantity of household furniture from which we selected dishes cooking utensils stoves (2) &c. all we wished, made large captures of pigs & chickens and also all required vegetables, and were living high and further forage for our horses was plenty and the weather fine. But there was work to do & the 3^d must do it.

One fine evening the order came to march next morning to Lake "Slatek" (60. m.) to make that point H^d Qrs. of the expedition - thence to send out smaller ones westward - to bury the dead of Aug. 20 - to secure the corn - forage - traps & calves - running at large &c. - The latter hated to leave our warm nests, and to risk being caught on the prairie in a terrible snow storm and worse than all to drive our horses on dead prairie

grasses. We left the Agency in the morning of the 30th 450 men with a train of 24 wagons.

Our course was along the south side of the Red Wood nearly due west. We had several guides scouts &c. one indian one half breed one Frenchman one white who had spent a large portion of his life among the Indians & trapping in this region and two settlers of Lake S. The first day march was 25 miles. the road was the unmarked prairie, and a most lonely day. Had a most comfortable night, a nice supper & breakfast which - coffee & steak - I cooked myself. and indeed have run the commissary dept. for myself & team all the way round. We had with us an abundance of blankets, a very necessary thing too. Next morning an expedition was detached to proceed still up the red wood to Lyons trading Post. to come to the Lake the second day. while the main body turned due south for the Lake 100 m.

This days march was in the first real marshy country I was ever in. There was between the lakes just enough dry land to enable us by constant twisting & turning to winkle thro. that long days march - at no time out of bullet range of a marsh or lake, and in a perfectly level country. Towards night we struck a dryer region. fortunately and we enabled to move in the dark. we reached the Lake about 9 p.m. in the evening without halt since early morning thoroughly exhausted. It has been a bitter cold day. not uncomfortable in the morning the wind damp & bitter cold rose with the sun - & blew very hard all day. I suffered much - and about 11 p.m. got in a moving wagon

stripped & put in an extra shirt & drawers! -

We found at the Lake a company of soldiers from New Ulm who had gone out for the purpose of burying the dead. 15 in number who had been killed on the prairie since Aug 20.

We found here the homes of seven families - some 45 persons of whom 15 were killed 12 taken prisoners (6 of whom have been recovered) and the remaining ones either escaped after incredible suffering & hardship or were at the time absent. The attack was made on the second family at the N end of the Lake. where one man was killed and the woman directed from some friendship (for they were well acquainted) permitted to go home - 65 miles across the prairie! - The third house was visited the same the man killed. but the woman escaped & alarmed the settlement while the savages plundered the houses already reached they all reached a house at the lower end of the Lake. where they thought to make a stand. but concluded to try to escape and started out on that wide prairie. 18 m. to one house 35 more to a second. they were immediately followed a cattle of an hour & a half ensued and the men all killed or wounded but one when the women & children fell into the hands of the savages an easy prey. one woman wounded twice & beat on the head till apparently dead was said to reach the settlements & die. one man twice wounded the same. one boy of 12 years carried his infant brother the whole distance & when overtaken the wounded man was requested to leave his bro. & go forward for assistance refused. saying he had promised his dying mother never to leave him as long as both lived. They escaped by being hidden in the high grass. The utter desolation of the settlement was its most peculiar feature, the Indian had plundered the houses, taken the arms & driven off the cattle, but all else seems

In haste - I have several letters to write before the mails leave -
as the the people had gone to church. We expected to find here
a good deal of corn, but it had been mostly destroyed by hogs
wild geese & blackbirds. Vegetables of all kinds were found in
great abundance and the finest I ever saw. The lake is
some seven miles long by one to three broad, gravelly shores
low & covered, only on the east side with timber mostly oak, along
which the farms are situated, and all surrounded by an ocean
& level prairie. An expedition started after one day rest N.W.
for the Mountain Pass, 100 strong, leaving the rest of us to enjoy ourselves
on vegetables fresh pork chickens calves & wild game, in abundance.

The second day out they found ^{a fine day} ~~an~~ old trail followed it a day
found the Indians were running away and were obliged to turn
back, by way of the Red Pipe Stone Quarry & Great Oasis, due
west from the Lake. During the 3^d days out they lost 5 horses.
Returning we seem to recede in the snow in three very
comfortable ^{days} marches 65 miles at which place, our regt was
divided into three Battalions and ordered one here, one to
St. Peters one to Henderson - We reached this post Saturday
having been out 10 days from the Agency. - I have enjoyed the
trip well - have been in excellent health & gaining fast. I regard
myself as almost quite well, with an enormous appetite.

What will become of us I don't know yet - we may winter here or
go south, rumors of both are rife, and I must wait and
see - and don't care which - A winter here will be dull &
useful ^{to himself} as one has a mind to make it - a winter campaign full of
excitement & work - I have hardly heard from the busy world
you live in for more than two weeks & know little of the
progress of war. Good bye

Your affecⁿate son Miller



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