

The following transcript is part of a letter written circa June 19, 1862 or a few days later. General Dumont's 3,000 man expedition to Pikeville and return was June 11-18, 1862 and crossed the Cumberland Mountains twice in high heat, hence the unusual night marches. The Third Minnesota rode in army wagons part of the way.

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Once on the mountain we got aboard and hoped for a better road, but it was a very bad one tho passable – with frequent smaller hills almost as rough for 28 miles. We steadily pushed on all night hardly halting to water the mules & horses which suffered severely for want and about 1 o.c. [o'clock] reached the brow of the range on the other side. Below lay a valley running almost N. & S. of about five miles width and dotted with farms and groves, indicating a tolerable section of country, that by the way, over the mountains was miserable in extreme, scarcely a dozen poor appologies [sic] for farms the whole distance, and old poverty stricken comfortless places of sojourn they are. The mountains are almost entirely covered with timber, mostly oak. These poor people doubtless depend largely on the rifle for food, as it is a grand game country. Well, for the de[s]cent was awful, at times fearful, winding round the edges of the ledging bluff wher[e] you could toss an apple down a sheer de[s]cent of 300 feet and only room for our team. The road down was like the ascent “only a little more so” – and about 4 miles. After a terrible rough passage we reached the foot of “Cumberland” range, and found ourselves in the “Sequatchee” Valley and still 5 miles from our destination. We pushed on without stop and around about 3 o.c. 21. hours, in one of hardest

[Addendum added upside down at top of page: “The ostensible reason for the expedition was to clear out Starns [sic – J. W. Starnes' 4th Tenn.] rebel cavalry and I think to act as a counter irritant to the rebel force at Cumberland Gap.]

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we think often[?] made, and in terribly hard way. The rough shaking & jolting of the heavy wagons was very hard, entirely precluding sleep – the contact “tumbling in & out” – everything - dust 3 inches deep added its thick cloud to our utter discomfort. So utterly exhausted a set of men I never before saw and yet 75 had to go on guard that night! What did we find?” Nary butternut tho. a few had been in the town that day. they heard of our coming of course by a boy

courier whose Father was one of them and they took to the mountains double quick. We found Pikeville a little county seat of 7 or 800 inhabitants old decayed – thriftless of no possible account to us or rebels.

The valley was romantic – walled in in its entire length some 60 miles by the Cumberland range on the west and “Walling” range on the east. Averaging some 5 miles in width, it is quiet secluded – old - by far removed from the turmoil of the busy world. As you will readily suppose we had heard [of] East Tenn. and found very much of that Union sentiment an[d] feeling we believe to be still there. O how glad the Union people were – and what sad tales of oppression they told us too – forced & driven into the[i]r present position of silence & acquiescence or partiall [sic] assistance. They had not heard from the North save thru southern channels and you can judge of their information. Our little army gave a direct lie to all the[i]r statements by its presence. As one man said,

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“If you can spare such a force as this to come here what must you have.” I regret that our boys hungry tired & reckless, committed most unwarranted excesses in “hooking” chickens, vegetables, and whatever might contribute to their comfort, so as to mar very much the excellent effect of our visit. Believe me, we slept sound that night. I have rarely been so weary and still unwell too.

Next day our cavalry scoured the country but found nothing. Do we go on to Chattanooga? for we were within 50 m[iles] was the question. We were ordered to move at 4 that afternoon. and to our sorrow took the back track! -- The ambulances now full of sick so I had to take a wagon but found a good place, with plenty of blankets for cushions. Starting at 4 we wen[t] until 9 o.c. in climbing the mountains 8 m. from P. Our boys had no heart in the matter at all. I exchanged with a friend unwell and rode a horse all night & till 7 o.c. when we again exchanged. The train steadily pushed on and reached McM. About 4 o.c. next afternoon without stop. I could hardly realize how hard a march was accomplished - it seemed more like a dream – and we were terribly sleepy on the march for it was unusual and in the night. I slept well going in the ambulance - returning about 2 o.c. I was so sleepy I could scarcely retain my seat in the saddle,

often nearly falling out. When I turned out fastened my horse and lay down to sleep in my overcoat – o how nice – I slept an hour

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and awoke - the train passed – when I jumped on my horse & galloped up & to the head of the train again, much refreshed. I learned that of cavalry men. Returned. We learned that word had reached Genl. Dumont that we were fighting and getting whipped - so he ordered all the remaining force to follow and did move then about half way, when a return messenger reached him! --Perfectly ridiculous! -- That mountain nearly killed those other regts. for they were afoot, and their men straggled terribly. At Mc again and another night & day of rest till 4 o.c. when we are off for home afoot o[h] so wearily. – We marched that night 22 miles to Woodbury arriving at 2 o.c. morning- and in very few minutes am in comfortable bivouac. I, as each night, in a good blanket bed and a change for night shirt! The other Regts failed to keep up with us and straggled in till morning. On[e] came in after I got up!— I rode half this march & then walked in. at 4 o.c. P.M. again off. – and marched all night arriving here about 6 morn. I had a mule all the way most fortunately. Our Regt was this time in the rear -- the others complained so bitterly of our fast marching! Our whole distance was 160 miles in 8 days! –The whole expedition was futile, save to give the people an impression of our power. A flag was raised at Mc with proper admonitions to the citizens. Since returning we have change[d] our camp and seem now settled for some time to come perhaps for the hot season. Buell is to do the work in E. Tenn. I am glad I went . Twas very hard & useless, yet the fatigue is no more to be remembered for we have some what to talk about. Tell our children 20 years from now. I am quite well. The trip did me good and no harm. Everything quiet in our vicinity.



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