

Simmesport, La., May 19th, 1863

Dear Sister Eliza

Yours of the 27th is just received by a boat up the Atchafalaya upon whose refreshing banks our weary limbs are stretched. I do not remember from what place I wrote you last but my letters have been few since we have been upon the march. Our Brigade was halted within 12 miles of Alexandria. The rest of the army went to that city and a part of it some thirty miles beyond, I believe, up the river.

Last Wednesday p.m., we received orders to march at 4 o'clock the next morning, and as it was evident that we were to about face and go to the southward, Col. Warner, Capt. Cornwell, and myself immediately mounted for our evening's gallop to Alexandria and back. I had talked some about "watering my horse" in the Red River and was bent on doing so. The chaplain rode up twice that day; as he said, the second time because his first horse wouldn't drink a drop. Mine was glad to take a little of the muddy stream.

Alexandria is an important place, though not yet a large one, now destitute of eatables and drinkables. The road on the Bayou near Alexandria was lined with elegant residences, gardens, and plantations. On one place we saw a large gang of negroes at work hoeing cotton - very much after the picture of the scene in old Smith's Geography. It was the first time I had seen them minding their usual work.

Our officers are in knots on the bank, looking at the monstrous reports of the battle of Irish Bend in some of the N.Y. papers. One paper says that Gen. Dwight accomplished with the loss of 7 or 8 men what Col. Birge failed to with a loss of three hundred.

I believe this to be an outrageous falsehood by somebody's (blower?). The fighting and the winning was all done by and at the expense of the 3rd Brigade. The 1st, Gen. Dwight's, not entering the woods till the enemy ran. They were not ordered up till the fighting was just over. The truth of that battle will transpire some time. I am sure of one thing: that the 13th did its duty.

We left our camp near Alexandria the 14th and reached the Atchafalaya yesterday at 10 a.m. On the west bank are a few houses and plenty of dirt and sun. The 13th had the good fortune to be ordered immediately across in flat boats and proceeded up the stream about a half mile to a fine place, to guard Gen. Banks' headquarters. The place is called Simmes' place, very likely the Confederate Senator Simmes.

In the evening we had orders from Gen. Banks' chief of staff (the Gen. himself is not here.) to march at 5 o'clock this morning on a five days' march with four companies of cavalry and battery - probably for reconnaissance on the Mississippi. The order was countermanded late in the evening and we are still here. The rest