

3-28-1863

Newfresboro Tex.

79th Ind.March 28th 1863.

S. Best's BRG

My dear General:

Had it not been for a few remarks which you made at the reception of Maj. Genl. Burnside reported in the Gazette - I would not have known your whereabouts at this time. I almost doubted that you were yet in the land of the living. It is a matter of great regret, a misfortune, that you are not in the field, at the head of a good command. I would undertake to find somebody better fitted for the President of a Commission who could be spared from the field without detriment to the service. I frequently think about your position and it worries me a great deal that you cannot have a position more suitable to your reputation, and requirements. General! I am thinking sometimes that it is not only the West Point influence which has done so much damage in this war generally - but a set of officers whom you have actually made what they are, and who otherwise would have existed only in very subordinate positions, if at all, and in obscurity, have done all they could directly, and indirectly to injure you. I mean such men as Morgan, S. Smith, Hovey etc. and I believe there is still another meaner, and lower class who have not scrupled to defame you at home, and abroad; who done all they could with low dirty cunning to prevent your advancement. The time will come yet when you will find the whole truth of assertion I have made here - who were not able to assail you publicly, only because had no character, and their influence is only owing to their positions obtained through

You will find out some of these days, how hard they have labored to create false impressions, and how well in some respects they have succeeded. During our stay last summer in Indpls I have heard many things which I could scarcely believe, - and since, I have been almost convinced that they were true there is a time coming when these matters will come to light.

General: I have seen very hard service indeed since last summer the service in this Department bears about the same relation, that our last campaign bore to the service in the 3 months. It seems to me now that I did not know anything about the service when I joined this army. The facts will bear me out in the assertion that my regiment has done more marching, hard duty, and tough fighting than our 11th Ind. since its organization two years ago almost. It is a continued series of hardships of which I did not dream before. - Since October we have marched over 700 miles for 52 days of our march we bivouached as we had not a single tent - and had to subsist upon half rations of bread, and meat sugar, and coffee sometimes two days rations were issued to last seven days, and the balance had to be supplied with parched corn, when we arrived in the neighborhood of Nashville half the regiment was almost barefooted, and instead of resting from our march in the vicinity of Nashville we were put in the advance and the whole regiment done picket duty every other day till we left for this place on the 26th Dec. - Then we took a big part in the battle of Stone river - out of 13 officers, and 328 enlisted men engaged the regiment lost 1 officer killed, 7 badly wounded, and 121 enlisted men killed, and wounded, this looks frightful but General we were put in a position where frightful sacrifices were necessary

When Mr Cook's corps was surprised and so terribly driven back on the morning of the 31st Decr. "Beatty's Brigade" to which we belong, was thrown to the front to check the advance of the rebels. - Under the immediate command of Genl. Rosecrans - who is as brave, and gallant as Julius Caesar - we formed line of battle - may you never see such a spectacle - Mr Clemand's Division at Donelson - the field of Shiloh when we arrived, were pleasant sights compared with this. Inf. Cav. Art. came flying in inextricable confusion - horror depicted upon all their faces - our line was torn and trampled down - we were compelled to fix bayonets to preserve ourselves from what seemed almost inevitable destruction - you can imagine my feelings commanding a new regiment this was certainly a terrible initiation for recruits who had never been under fire - I trusted in God, and the valor of Hoosiers which you invoked on a certain day in our State house yard - there was no use talking - no human voice could have been heard above that tumult, - at last the fugitives cleared our front and as far as we could see, the rebels coming in solid columns, howling, and yelling - I knew the first few minutes would decide the fate of the regiment - and I thank God that we did not disgrace Indiana or ourselves. Such a storm as broke loose at that moment, we were facing each other in an open field - there was no lying down - it rained lead and iron. men were falling in all directions dead, and wounded it was horrible & beyond expression - my horse got frantic and nearly ruined me, any other time I would have thought myself badly hurt, but that was not the time - my boys stood up like heroes - Genl. Rosecrans cheered them on - not a man, not one flinched, they stood like a wall

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In about 10 minutes the rebel ranks began to break, we advanced rapidly we fell on them like a storm - drove whole ranks behind us, as prisoners. my boys captured one of their flags, and we drove them clean back to their fortifications - there is no doubt and it is universally conceded that the Brig. saved the day for the Union - and I am glad that I can tell you that no new regiment in this army has the reputation of the 79th Ind. - After that fight we were again engaged but that was merely jockeying when compared with our debut. - Had it not been for the invincible bravery and skill of Genl. Prosser's - his stubborn resistance the army would have retreated to Nashville - no other General could have restored the battle or led the army as successfully as he did after Mc Cook's surprise - We will soon have another battle but I look forward to it with confidence my men have been tried and not found wanting - my ranks are as full again, as they were, as many convalescents have returned - I have the lucky regiment from the 6th District - the 33rd is used up - the 70th Ben Harrison's is guarding roads and bridges. the 101 has done nothing - the 79th has done all the fighting for the entire batch of them - I hope General. the conduct of your old subordinate, and scholar, and his regiment raised, and trained upon principles thought by you and gratefully remembered will meet your approval, and be assured that your good opinion will be most highly valued under all circumstances by

Yours most respectful,

Servant + friend

Fred. Kniefler.

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Please remember me to Mrs. Wallace + Col. Elston and other friends