

“HIS WIFE CRYING OVER HIM”:

MISSOURI, FEBRUARY 1863

Taylor Peirce to Catharine Peirce

Union forces were able to prevent Missouri from seceding in 1861, but the state remained bitterly divided between unionists and secessionists and became the scene of the fiercest guerrilla conflict of the war. Although the Union victory at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, in March 1862 halted Confederate attempts to invade the state, Confederate irregulars in Missouri continued to harass Union troops with ambushes and raids. Taylor Peirce mustered into the 22nd Iowa Infantry as a sergeant in August 1862 and was soon sent to southern Missouri, where his regiment guarded railroad lines, supply depots, and wagon trains. He wrote to his wife from the Ozarks describing the summary treatment often meted out to suspected guerrillas.

Eminence, Mo Feby 16 1863

Dear Catharine

I again set down to write you all again. I wrote you last week but the mails are so irregular in this region that I do not know how long it will take this to reach you but Col Stone and the Chaplain leaves this for Rolla to-morrow and I think you will get it in about 6 or 7 days. I am well and in good heart. We have been on the move for 3 weeks except 3 or 4 days that we lay at West Plains. We are now about 60 miles from Rolla and will either go to Rolla or to Pilot Knob. One Division of the army started this morning to the Knob and we will either start for that place or Rolla to morrow. The rebles are all gone from this country except some few Gurrillas and them we gather up as we go along and shoot them. They are a set of murderers and are not fit to live to encumber society. Some of the cavalry took one yesterday morning who has shot at Gen Bentons Courier the night before not knowing that the cavalry was about. So yesterday morning they caught him in his house and took him out about a mile and shot him. When we came along he was lying by the side of the road and his wife crying over him but she was no better than he for she kept on swearing

vengence against the Federals and said she would make them kiss his blood and so we left her. It looks hard to me to see a man shot and his wife and children left alone but these men are the ones that keep up the cruelties that are continually being practiced in this part of Missouri.

We have been traveling through the Ozark mountain ever since the 1st of this month and a rough country it is. There is some pretty vallies in through them and now and then a very good settlement along some stream but the land is generally stony and poor covered with oak and yellow Pine. Some of the timber is very good and some day will be valuable. We are now on the Currant River some 25 miles from the Arkansas line and 3 miles from Eminence a town with one house and a court house and jail in it and an old mill which constitutes the whole town. I have been running a mile for two or three days grinding corn for the brigade as our rations have run short and the roads are so bad that our supplies can not reach us and we have been on $\frac{1}{2}$ rations for some time. But I have enough to eat all the time and more than I need but some of the large eaters grow terribly about it. I expect that we will have short allowances until we get to the Rail Road for the trains can not reach us through this god forsaken country.

Lieutenant Murray starts home in the morning and has promised to call and see you and tell you how I get along and what I am doing. And if it is possible for you to get your pictures taken I mean Cyrus & Mary & thine and the babys I would like you to send it by him. The paymaster has come and has paid me my money and as soon as I get to the Express office I will express it home.

I would send it by Murray but the Col thinks that it will be safer to keep it until we get to the office as they might be attacked by a forrageing party and robbed as they will only have a small escort with them. So I concluded to keep it with me untill we get to the Rail Road. Cap Ault and I have fell out and I do not hold any communication with him any more than just what is nessessary for me to have to do my duty. He has shown himself just as damned a dog as lives and if he was not afraid of me he would be overbearing as the devil himself but I have the upper hand and he has to keep mum. The Lt can tell you about it and so you need not fear for me but I will get along all right.

I must now close for we will have to march in the morning and of course the time is precious with me. Give my love to all. Tell the children to be good and Pap will try and get home to see them this spring. Give Cyrus my best respects and tell him he could make some money following the army and buying up the worn out horses and mules and if I get my commission to raise the negroes I will come home and put him on the track.

I remain affect your husband father and brother.

Taylor Peirce