

Bragg Hospital, Ward 5, Newnan, Ga., May 29 [18]64

Dear Father,

Here I am shut up in a room with three other sick ones, but Albert Drysdale [3rd Florida] being one of the number makes it much more pleasant than it otherwise would be. I have had two days rest and feel much better, but Dr. Steele [Capt. Holmes Steele, surgeon] think[s] it will be some time before I will be in a condition to warrant my returning to the field. I hope that as my disease has not been running [too] long to be able to check it in time for me to command my Company in the general engagement expected. I regret very much having to leave the boys just at this time, for I believe that they would rather have me with them in time of battle. At any rate, I would prefer it, knowing that no one would feel the interest in them that I do. Most of my Company are good soldiers, cheerfully obeying all commands. There are some few who will shirk duty, and you will find them in all commands. All of the surgeons of this place went to the front this morning in compliance with a dispatch received last night from the Medical Director of the Army. This indicates a general engagement, but as yet we hear of nothing more than heavy skirmishing all along the lines. Whenever the struggle comes I feel confident of success. We have a large army and all are in fine spirit, although it has been somewhat dampened since we left Dalton, but still the confidence in our chief is unshaken by a move calculated to discourage troops, and on the other hand has increased by his action of each succeeding day. This retreat has been a masterpiece of Generalship, we falling back slowly giving ample time to the citizens to move all things into the interior, and while we have presented a bold front by offering battle on several occasions, each time repulsing handsomely and with great slaughter the charging columns of the deceived enemy, at the same time defeating every attempt to cut our communication, that being now protected. Gen. Johnston has issued his battle order- telling us that he will now halt, about face and meet the advancing columns. There are quite a number of wounded and sick soldiers at this place and seem to be getting along finely. This ward is known as the Florida Hospital as there are men from all parts of the country here at present. Dr. Steele, formerly Surgeon of the 3rd Regiment, has charge of it, and is very attentive to all. Mrs. Harrison of Monticello is matron and is kind and attentive to all, particularly to Floridians. I have been very fortunate in getting in the hands of Dr. Nash & Lady last Fall and now with Dr. S. and Mrs. H. I saw Dr. Nash in Atlanta on my way here, he had not been assigned to duty since he left Cassville, but expected to establish his Hospital at Thomaston, a station on the railroad between Griffin & Macon. He was very anxious to have me with him and said that as soon as [he] got fixed he would let me know and try to get me transferred. He has certainly been very kind, and I wish farther that you would put up- if you have an opportunity- a lot of fish this fall for him. Mrs. Nash says that she is very fond of them. I will now try and give you a partial account of our works since we moved out of winter quarters.

Several times prior to the 7th of May we were ordered out of our little towns of log huts to meet the enemy, and as we thought to return no more, but each time, much to our surprise, we were allowed to return to camp. On the 5th and 6th heavy firing was heard in the direction of Ringgold and it was ascertained that the grand army of Sherman [Union General William Tecumseh Sherman] was advancing slowly but surely on our position in

front of Dalton. On the following morning our Army bade farewell to the little huts, and was thrown into position two miles beyond Dalton. Our line forming a crescent or perhaps it would more properly be called a horse shoe- the left resting at Dugout Gap on the west, and extending to the right and terminating at the "New Spring Place Road" on the north-east. The enemy made their appearance late in the afternoon and were busily engaged maneuvering until night put a stop to all further operations. During the next four days the enemy made several attempts to force our line at several different points, most of which were feints to draw our attention from the real purpose, which was to force our lines at Mill Creek Gap,—(Through mistake I spoke of this as Buzzard Roost Gap in my former letter). They losing heavily while our loss was comparatively small, from the fact that we were protected by breast-works. While in this position we were obliged to keep a half of the companies up, so that by the time the retreat began we were pretty well worn out. On Wednesday while on a scout I killed two of the "Blue-birds," I shooting one of them myself. Thursday night we commenced moving Southward and continued marching until late in the afternoon of the next day, when we formed line of battle in front of Resaca. I with my own and two other companies were sent out on picket a half mile in front, with orders to hold our line against any line of skirmishers the enemy could bring up against us. I went immediately to work building breastworks to better enable me to hold my ground. The enemy however did not make their advance until next day at 10 o'clock, and then not against my pickets for I had been relieved by Captain Smith of the 7th Regiment just in time to gain the breastworks (those built by the Brigade) when I heard the skirmishers becoming engaged all along the lines. There the enemy succeeded in driving in with a heavy line of battle, but not until we had inflicted a pretty heavy loss. Today (Saturday) and the next, there was pretty heavy fighting, the enemy making a number of desperate attack[s], but were repulsed with great slaughter; particularly on our right in front of Stevenson's Division, Hood Corps, where they charged in five lines. Our men being behind breastworks our loss was very small. Our Regiment lost between thirty and forty, the other regts of the Brigade losing in about the same proportion. Here Gen. Finley was struck by a limbs cut off by a cannon ball, and pretty severely wounded. He is now at the hospital. Soon after dark we again commenced the retreat, stopping next (Monday) afternoon in front of Calhoun and fought. Our Division was not engaged. Soon after dark we again took up the line of March and reach [reached] Adairsville, about noon of the next day. Here we were resting very comfortably until 4 o'clock, when we were startled by the report of musketry on our rear, and the command "attention." Line of battle was immediately formed and everything had the appearance of a big fight. The enemy advanced against our line, but only with skirmishers. I was again sent out on picket. The army left soon after dark but the pickets did not withdraw until just before daylight. I rejoined the regiment Wednesday in bivouac between Kingston and Cassville. No fighting today. Early next morning I was sent out to relieve Capt. Smith, who was on picket the night before. About 10 o'clock I was relieved, and sent out again between eleven and twelve in command of six companies. I suppose that I had been out nearly two hours- heavy skirmishing all along the lines- when I received orders to report to Cass Station. Our army had withdrawn leaving on a line of skirmishers in front of the enemy. This was a bold [word omitted] but was successful. At the latter named place we had a very severe fight just before dark. As usual, we commenced moving as soon as it was night, and next day (Friday) crossed the Etowah River. After marching three miles

beyond we halted and here rested until Monday afternoon, when we took up the line of march to the West, in the direction of Dallas, Georgia. Arriving at the latter place late Tuesday night during a severe rain and thunder storm, we formed a line of battle. No fighting up to twelve o'clock next day at the time I left. From the 7th to the twenty-fifth there were only two nights that my rest was unbroken. I was on duty all the time. When not in command of my own company, [I] had others out. When I asked why it was that I was kept on duty, was told by Col. Bullock, comdg [commanding] the Brigade, that he did not know the reliable officers of the flank companies. This was paying me a compliment, but one that I paid dearly for I assure you, as it broke me completely down. Do you wonder at it? I think that Gen. Lee will soon place Gen. Grant in his true light. Albert Drysdale begs to be remembered to you, Mother, and all other acquaintances.

Give my love to all friends and relations, and accept the same from your affectionate son,
D.E. Maxwell

Transcribed by Christopher A. Baker, University of Florida, 2008.