

Head Quarters Judicial Dept. of Key West

Key West,

May 2, 1862

Dear Friends,

The mail arrived yesterday via Havana bringing us dates from the Second to the 23rd of April. Your letters of the 5th, 14th and 21st were recd. As it was the first mail we have had for several weeks you can imagine how it was received. We had heard, incidentally, of the battle of Pittsburg Landing but had no details and the triumphant looks of well known rebels in town rendered us somewhat fearful that we had been defeated. The mail set us all right but I am inclined to think a few more victories like that of Shiloh would finish up the Army of the West. There was evidently negligence somewhere on the picket line as the accounts show our officers being bayoneted in their tents.

Things move on steadily here without change except a large accession to the mosquito force of the Key. They have become so numerous you can scarcely open your mouth without swallowing a dozen. Sand flies are bad, scorpions are dangerous, centipedes are annoying but mosquitoes are all combined. You have no idea of their number. In eating, one man is required to keep them off. I have drawn bars for my men which they have rigged up in their tents and are thus enabled to sleep in comparative peace but on guard they are compelled to build a fire and stand in the smoke of it. If they get under your bars at night, which is frequently the case, woe be to you. Last night I was about an hour in ejecting about a dozen that had effected an entrance into mine while they drove Lieutenant Oyster altogether out of his. He came into my tent in a very pious frame of mind but at least by drip of patience and fortitude succeeded in burning and smoking them out. In town most of the citizens, when they are so bad, have bars over tables while they are eating. They are disappearing gradually, however, and I think we will have some rest until we get a shower when we can expect another influx. I think Job of Bible notoriety was never tried by mosquitoes particularly of the Key West style.

A schooner arrived here last night from New Orleans and its Captain reports the successful bombardment and reduction of Fort Jackson and the landing of 15,000 men above it. General Butler had demanded the surrender of the City and the authorities wished to know upon what terms. His reply was - an unconditional surrender. The Ram *Manassas* and seven steamers were captured. Was lost one Gunboat and about 100 men in the affair. I think you can reply upon this as Gen. Brannan also received a letter from there anonymously the fact the capture of Fort Jackson gives us New Orleans with very little trouble. Fort Philip and St. Cooke are of very little account comparatively. Salutes were fired here from Fort Taylor and the Barracks in honor of the victory.

There seems to be a strong probability that we will be ordered to the neighborhood of Port Royal or Savannah. Gen. Wright was compelled to evacuate Jacksonville, Fla., and the rebels returned, burned the town and hung a number of citizens who had claimed the protection of the U. S. Government and announced their loyalty to the Union. There are more men here now than are needed and we could be of use elsewhere. It is mortifying to us to be compelled to lie here inactive while other less effective Regiments are earning laurels. Gen. Brannan feels this and I am satisfied will give us some active service in a short time.

The Yellow fever has made its appearance at Havana but we think by observing a short quarantine to avoid it here. Very little communication is allowed with the Island on that account. A number of us were desirous of visiting it but the General informed us he could not grant us permission on account of the fever. The health of our Regiment is much better than it has been since we have been here. My men are, with a few exceptions, all well. The exceptions are Lieut. Keefer who has been very sick with fever but is about again and only needs strength, Wm. McNew and J. B. Gardner but both are improving. The rest are all on duty or about Camp. Peter Wolf is alive and well. He says he has written home. I have made Theo. Kiehl write in this mail. A little laziness is all that effects either of them. Did you get the books, shells and saw sent North by Capt. Keck. I will write again in a few days. Write soon and often.

Yours, Shindel