

From Benton Barracks--Col. Doubleday's Cavalry on the March--How Forage is Procured of the Secesh.

SECOND CAVALRY O. V., CAMP BENTON, }
MISSOURI, January 20th, 1862. }

EDITOR PLAIN DEALER:--We left Cincinnati on Thursday night, 15th instant, and proceeded by the Ohio and Mississippi Railway to East St. Louis, which we reached about four o'clock, A. M., on Friday the 17th. It was a miserable morning, foggy enough for London itself as described in the opening chapter of DICKENS' "Hard Times." If that facetious contributor to the light reading of the age desires to see old "Hard Times" himself, let him go for a soldier. If he don't see him in all his ruggedness (the Dickens is in it.) We were anxious to cross the river at once and find those comfortable quarters in Benton Barracks, with a vision of which we consoled ourselves during many hours of our tedious ride, but we learned in due time that the Mississippi was so effectually blockaded by an icy fleet, that the ferry boats could not break it--differing from the blockades of rebel ports on the atlantic coast in the fact that it couldn't be "run." Our horses were taken from the cars and picketed in a grove of cotton-wood trees. Having been fed little or nothing since leaving camp Donnison they looked miserable enough. A Secessionist, a few miles below, was applied to for the purchase of hay and corn, but flatly refused to sell. A detachment of Cavalry made the old fellow a call, and he was so much taken with them that he changed his mind, and our horses fared sumptuously.-- A supply of bread and ham was furnished to the men. The hams were eaten raw, as our Camp kettles were boxed up and stowed away. Friday and Saturday passed drearily, Saturday night the blockading fleet began to move down the river, and Sunday noon the river was sufficiently clear of ice to permit us to cross. We proceeded at once to Benton Barracks, which are situated in and adjoining the Fair Grounds at the distance of four miles from the river. The barracks nearly surround the camp, which is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length by half a mile in width. They are white-washed and look clean and neat. The arrangements for cooking are excellent, the stables admirable. It is very muddy here at present.-- There are about 15,000 troops here, mostly cavalry. Revolvers were issued to us to-night, and we are ordered to be ready with one day's rations, to march to-morrow (Tuesday, 21st) at 9 A. M.

We march to St. Charles, 20 miles from here, where we take the railroad for Fort Leavenworth. A member of Co. F was shot in the leg by a prowling secessionist last night while strolling outside the lines, and his leg will be amputated. We are all in good spirits. More hereafter.