

Elizabethtown N. J.

August the 2<sup>nd</sup> 57

Dear parents

I received your letter of the 11<sup>th</sup> of April yesterday and was glad to find that you were all well. I am well and I hope that these few lines will find you in the same state of health. Henry's letter came to hand at the same time. I am still here at Elizabethtown where I may stay for sometime yet.

I have seen General Walker here in New York, though I never saw him in Nicaragua. You wished to know something about Col. Titus and about the operations in the San Juan River. I am sorry you did not get my letter dated at fort Slatter for I took great pains to give you a description of the operations and of the country. I gave the letter to Capt. Bradley who resigned immediately after Col. Titus's defeat at Castillo. He neglected to put it into the office I suppose and that is the way of it.

I think Col. Titus the most arrant coward that ever went to Nicaragua. The day we arrived at Greytown we were immediately transferred to the iron steamer Rescue and the same night we encamped within two miles of the enemy thirty miles above Greytown and two days after we made a sortie on the enemy. But they were on the wrong side of the river and we could not get at them. We had a sharp fight however losing seven men killed and as many wounded and killing eleven of the enemy who were on our side of the river. They had cannon however and kept us at a distance. Two days after we dragged our cannon up and having thrown up entrenchments in the night immediately on the bank of the river we opened on them the next day together with about 100 rifles and the next morning they were gone.

Col. Titus as usual claimed the credit of whipping them and the language he used on the occasion was ridiculous and vain as well as vulgar. How he stepped when we marched back to camp. Why he looked so buoyant that I think that if his suspenders would have been cut he would have went up like a balloon.

Leaving Col. Frank Anderson's battalion at Serrapiqi Col. Lockridge went on up the river with Titus's battalion. Titus claiming as a privilege, the right to go before. When we arrived within half a mile of Castillo we landed and went up by land. We had a bayou to cross which was lined with a dense thicket when we got over we were discovered and instead of rushing on the fort as he should have done Titus gave them time to set the boats (the J. N. Scott and Wheeler) on fire and then as we could not see more than a dozen Greasers Titus appealed to the chivalry of some of the boys to put the fire out several of the boys ran out and jumped into the river and got on the Scott and others followed and kept up a scattering fire on the greasers who went into the castle on top of the hill and behind a barricade which they had thrown up across the road to the upper end of the rapids. Several of us went up behind the national hotel and kept up a sharp fire on the barricade. The boys now began to flock in like so many lazy men at a fight with our redoubtable Colonel at their foot, there was not regard to order and company A. B. and C. were mixed up as promiscuously as you could mix a pint of corn and beans with a quart of punkinseed. It was at least then minutes from the time the first shot was fired and by the time the enemy had brought a six pounder to bear on us at the foot of the hill. The first shot was fired at the boat which some of the boys

had turned loose and was floating down the rapids the shot made the splinters fly and brought down a couple of the boys and frightened some of the rest over board and to cap the climax 20 or 30 of the boys behind the national hotel started off and hid themselves in the woods, in the meantime the Wheeler was in

a great blaze and it set fire to one of the buildings of the hotel. Now if Titus would only have charged the battery which kept up a fire all the time so that no one dared to go in the street we could have taken it and then put out the fire. But being afraid to charge the battery Titus ordered some of the boys to put out the fire. Several of the men ran up and some tried to punch the shingles off and some of them kept up a fire from the corner of the kitchen. Not being able to punch the shingles off of the shed a young fellow and myself got a kettle full of water and returned to go out in the street and pour it on the fire but the enemy had anticipated this and the minute we cleared the corner of the kitchen the cannon went off and we were both brought to the ground. Poor Peacans (?) legs were both carried away but I was unhurt save a burning pain on my right thigh when a ball just tucked and carried away part of my pantaloons. That was the last attempt to put out the fire and the national hotel was soon in a blaze, and we had to retreat carrying with us poor Peacans who died about midnight.

Col. Lockridge in the meantime had came up with the boat and was out in the middle of the river firing away on the castle with a little four pounder while they were returning the fire with a twenty four—which made the hills tremble every shot. Lockridge soon went down the river out of the way and in the morning Titus followed.

But Lockridge could not stop at this and wanted Titus to charge the fort. So, in the evening we went back to try again but Titus backed out and so we surrounded the hill the castle was on and kept up guard while Lockridge went down to Serrapigi for detail of Andersons man on the second day. Titus commanded Col. Cauty to surrender when Cauty said that he would send the terms up to San Carlos to Gen. Mora to see if he had any objections and Titus the ineffable fool allowed him to do it and the consequences were Mora sent down three hundred men to let Titus know that he could not surrender which they did by driving our Frigets in and scattering our men like sheep through the woods at the time of their arrival we were scattered through the woods while our camp was on top of a high hill overlooking the castle and not more than two hundred yards distant. It was an old breastwork thrown up in a circle and capable of holding 800 men and had been thrown up a hundred years or more. We might have held out against one thousand men here but the moment the firing commenced Titus gave the order to retreat I was up the river when they first landed and they got within 80 yards of us before we could see them on account of the thick bushes when they commenced firing our boys turned and made for the redoubt & every one his own road, I nearly got lost in running through the woods and came on a greaser streaking it though the woods for the fort. When I got to the redoubt there were all gone but two or three and we followed. Lockridge could not make Titus go back again and went down to San Carlos river and threw up a fort where we remained until the next reinforcements arrived you know the rest. Mother you make to much out of my sufferings and dangers. I never thought I had suffered so much till I read your description I do not think that they were any worse for not having a friend to wait on me that was made up by having worse cases than myself around me which helped me amazingly.

Your son

E. S. Baker