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### A Letter to A. C. Van Raalte from His Son, Ben

Ben Van Raalte

Clarence Jalving

Nella Kennedy

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Shelby Co., Ky., July 21, 1863

A letter to A. C. Van Raalte from his son, Ben. He would have enjoyed being home for the 4th of July celebration.

Original in the Archives of the Netherlands Museum.

Translated by Clarence Jalving.

+transcriptia  
+noisim

Eminence, [Ky.<sup>1</sup>] July 3, 1863

Worthy Father,

With great pleasure, and in good health, I take this opportunity to write you. I hadn't had any letters for a month, but last night I did receive four. One of our boys had been to Louisville and he brought them with him. We are having the best time these days in camp.

[2]

At present sheep lie in Camp and honey,<sup>2</sup> just walking into camp, and all kinds of fruit. I don't know where they come from. We go out scouting at night and then we bring all kinds of things back with us. In this way the Secess are also doing something for the Union.

Our party, at the present time, consists of 34 men and one lieutenant. As you know, we were divided into two groups—the one group was under command of Capt. McCrary [sic – McCreary?] and they went to Louisville and were dismounted there because they had accomplished nothing and did not behave well. The Rebs stole two of his [sic] best horses. Most of our boys were attached to this company and they went home or went to their own company.

[3]

Fortunately I was under the command of Lieutenant Frisbee of Co. F, a good officer. I am the only non-commissioned officer. We do a lot of riding and last week we rode for two days and two nights without getting out of the saddle. We were after a party of twenty Rebs or rather horse thieves, but we couldn't catch them. They were hidden in the mountains and so it continues—first here and then there. Day before yesterday we got the news that the Rebs had captured a train only 12 miles from our Comp. We followed them like the wind for 25 miles, in full gallop, but couldn't catch them. They burned the train, stole 80,000 dollars, and robbed the passengers of everything.

[4]

We have taken twenty prisoners since leaving Louisville. Most of them were soldiers who came home to visit their folks, and among the twenty was a Lieutenant Colonel and an Adjutant, so those men are having a pleasant furlough in the Louisville prison, or rather, the bull pen, and [we also captured] twenty horses. We use up many horses because we think nothing of riding fifty miles in one day. If one goes lame, we simply take another, voluntarily or otherwise. I now have my fifth horse, a very excellent one, which I chose from among 150 in a pasture. This life agrees with me, and every day I am getting stronger and healthier, and I never get tired. There are two Dutch [*Holliche*] boys with us, P. Ellen and J. Brouwer.

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<sup>1</sup> There are two towns named Eminence in the U.S.A., one in Kentucky and the other in Missouri (the latter was destroyed by the Union Army in 1863]

<sup>2</sup> The word *honing* (honey) was clearly written which makes it difficult to translate it as anything else.

Your loving B. Van Raalte

[Revision of C. Jalving's translation: Nella Kennedy,  
January 2008]

July 21<sup>st</sup> Shelby Co Ky: 1863

Waarde Vaader,

Het is met plijzier dat ik uw bij deze geleegenhied in goeje gezondheid mag schrijven wij hebben sins de 5de geen tijd gehad haast altijd in de zaadels geweest nacht en dag de Rebs waaren dik maar altijd in klijne squads van dertig tot honderdfiftig en zoo wild als haazen wij hebben maar een kans gehad om ze een enkeld schot te geeven en een gevannen genoomen en die hebben wij een dre mijl chase gegeven en toen viel zijn paard om van moejighied. Zij hebben nu de vlugt genoomen en zijn weer verdweenen dus nu zullen wij wat rusten onze kliene Comp: heeft al twintig paarden op gebruikt

[2]

en als er een uit valt dan maar weer een nieve wij hebben wel geweest dat wij van fiftig tot sestig mijl daags reeden het was ontzetend heet en droog stof in overvloed wij waaren wat van de tijd met het neegend Ky. Calv: het speet mij dat wij ze niet hebben kunnen krijgen zij hebben hier te veel vrienden dit mounted buissiness staad mij goed aan en blijf er zoo lang als moogelijk al is het ook during the war riejen is beeter dan loopen het is wel wat onplijzireg dat ik geen brieven krieg van huis en ook niet van Dirk hoor maar het heeft ook zijn goede zijde het is gezonder en men ziet meer van de country en de tijd vliegt verbij want er is alle dag wat te doen er zijn hier vijf Co: daar ik haast zo goed bekend

[3]

in ben als in Ottawa maar zijn ontzend ruf Onze jongens moeten een moije vierde July gehad hebben Ik had er wel is graag bij willen weezen dan had ik de de [sic] vierde ook kunnen houden met haar lui Ik heb al zo lang naar een fight gezogt maar het wil niet en zo is het dat ik hier gekoomen bin om dat ik dacht dat de jongens in Louisville tog noit geen kans zouden krijgen maar dat was mis.

Ik moet nu eindigen want een van de jongens gaat de brieven naar de post brengen

groet alle huisgenooten  
van mij

Uw. Lief: B. Van Raalte

Met de eerste geleegenhied zal ik weer schrijven

[Transcription: Nella Kennedy,  
January 2008]

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Holland Historical Trust Collection  
of the  
Joint Archives of HollandJuly 21<sup>st</sup> Shelby Co. Ky: 1863

Waarde Waader.

Het is met plezier dat Ik  
uw bij deze gelegenheid in goede  
gezondheid mag beschrijven mij  
hebben sinds de 5 de geen tijd  
gehad haast altijd in de Laadels  
gemeest nacht en dag de Rebs waaren  
dik maar altijd in kleine Squads  
van dertig tot honderdfiftig en zoo  
mild als waaren mij hebben maar  
een kans gehad om se een enkelde  
Schat te geeben en een gevonen gevonen  
en die hebben mij een drie mijl  
chase gegiven en toen viel zijn paard  
om van onveghheid. Zij hebben nu  
de vlugt gevonen en zijn meer  
verdweenen dus nu sullen wij wat  
rusten onse kleine Comp: heeft  
al twintig paarden op gebruikt

en als er een uit valt dan maar  
meer een niere mij hebben mel  
gewest dat. mij van fiftig tot zestig  
mijl daags reeden het was ontzettend  
heet en droog stof in overvloed  
mij maaren wat van de tijd met  
het neugend Ky. Calv. het spiet mij  
dat mij ze niet hebben kunnen  
krijgen zij hebben hier te veel  
vrienden. dit mounted business  
staad mij goed aan en blijft er  
zo lang als onmogelyk al is het  
ook during the war vier is beter  
dan loopen het is mel wat onplynnyng  
dat Ik geen brieven krijg van  
huis en ook niet van Dirk hoor  
maar het heeft ook zijn goede  
zijde het is gezonder en men  
ziet meer van de Country en  
de tyd vliegt verby want er is  
alle dag wat te doen er zijn hier 5  
vijf Co: daar Ik haast zo goed bekend

51  
in ben als in Ottama maar zijn  
ontpend ouf omse jongens moeten  
een moije vierde July gehad hebben  
Ik had er mel is graag bij millen  
wezen dan had Ik de de vierde ook  
kunnen houden met haar luy  
Ik heb al so lang naar een fight  
geroof maar het wil niet en  
so is het dat Ik hier gekoomen  
bin om dat Ik dacht dat de  
jongens in ~~Louisville~~ Louisville  
toch nooit geen kans zouden krijgen  
maar dat was mis.

Ik moet nu eindigen want  
een van de jongens gaat de  
brieven naar de post brengen  
groet alle busgenooten  
van mij

W.A. lief. B Van Raalte  
met de eerste gelegenheid zal Ik  
weer schrijven



Respected

Dear Father:

*write you at this time and being in good health*

I am happy to report that I am well. I hadn't had any letters for a month but last night I received four. One of the boys had been to Louisville and he brought them with him. We are having <sup>the best</sup> a good time at present in camp. Sheep <sup>and honey</sup> come walking into camp <sup>besides</sup> all kinds of other produce but where it comes from I don't know. We go out scouting at night and then we bring all kinds of things back with us. In this way the Seceders are also doing something for the Union.

Our party, at the present time, consists of 34 men and one lieutenant. As you know, we were divided into two groups - the one group was under command of Capt. McCreary <sup>and</sup> they went to Louisville and were dismounted there because they had accomplished nothing and were careless. The Rebs stole two of his best horses. Most of our boys were attached to this company and they went home <sup>or</sup> to their own company. <sup>3</sup> Fortunately I was attached to the

command of Lt. Frisbie <sup>of</sup> Co. F., a ~~very~~ good officer. I am the only subordinate officer. We do a lot of riding and last week we rode for two days and two nights without getting out of the saddle. We were after a party of Rebs or rather horse thieves but couldn't catch them. They were hidden in the mountains and so it continues - first here and then there. Day before yesterday we got the news that the Rebs had captured a train only 12 miles from our camp. <sup>We followed them like</sup> we rode like the wind for 25 miles but couldn't catch them. They burned the train, stole 80,000 dollars, and robbed the passengers of everything.

[4] We have taken twenty prisoners since leaving Louisville. Most of them were soldiers who came home to visit their folks and among the twenty was a Lt. Colonel and an Adjutant, so those men are having a pleasant furlough in the Louisville prison or rather the bull-pen. <sup>and</sup> We also captured twenty horses. We use up many horses because we think nothing of riding fifty miles in one day and if one goes lame we simply take another, voluntarily or otherwise. I now have my fifth horse, a very fine <sup>excellent one</sup> animal which I chose from among 150 in a pasture. This life agrees with me and every day I am getting stronger and healthier and never get tired. There are two Holland boys with us, P. Ellen and J. Brouwer.

Your loving

B. Van Raalte

*Under non-commissioned*

*under the*

[2]

[4]

#12

Shelby Co..Ky. July 21, 1863

Dear Father:

I am happy to be able to announce that I am in good health. Since the fifth I haven't had any time to write having been in the saddle almost day and night. The Rebs were numerous but always in small squads of 30 to 150 men and they were wild as hares so we had only one opportunity to deliver some shots. We took only one prisoner after a three mile chase and that was because his horse was so tired it fell down. All have now fled and disappeared so we should be able to get some rest. Our small company has used up 20 horses already. When one drops we get another - it has happened that we will ride 50-60 miles in one day. It was very hot and terribly dusty. For a while we were with the 9th Ky. Cavalry. I am sorry we couldn't capture more of them but the Rebs are among friends here. I like this mounted business and will stay with it as long as possible. Riding beats walking. It is rather unpleasant that I do not get any mail from home nor from Dirk but the pleasant side is that it is more healthful and one gets to see more of the country and time goes by very fast. There is something doing every day. Throughout five counties here, I am almost as well acquainted as in Ottawa Co. The boys must have had a good time the 4th of July. I would have enjoyed being home to celebrate the 4th with them.

I have been looking for some fighting for a long time but no luck. I joined up with this group because I thought the boys in Louisville would never get a chance.

I must close now as one of the boys is bringing letters to the postoffice. I will write again at the first opportunity. Best regards to all.

Your loving

B. Van Raalte