

Morgan's Raid

ST. CLAIRSVILLE, OHIO

July 28th, 1863.

DEAR PA:

Belmont County has for the past few days been the scene of a great deal of excitement, consequent on the unpleasantly near approach of John Morgan to her borders.¹ You are aware that some time since Morgan and his marauding band crossed over into Indiana and after raiding arround in that state for awhile came over to pay a visit to the "Buckeye" State. He crossed over at Butler Co. and after being hotly pursuid on all sides and having a good portion of his force killed and captured in the Southern County he directed his course northward. It was evident that he found himself entrapped and was seeking an outlet by way of the Ohio river. On last Thursday night our Citizens were aroused and alarmed at a late hour by the ringing of the Court-House bell. Word had come that Morgan was in Guernsey Co. and was heading towards Belmont and it was not long before the whole town was in a perfect "furor" of excitement. A meeting was called to determine what to do. As the Governor had not called out the Malitia of this Co. and we were perfectly defenseless. Before this however the Military Committee had dispatched to Tod, knowing of the near approach of Morgan, to know if he could find us arms. He replied that he could not in time. They then sent word to Governor Boreman of West Va. to know if he could furnish arms but he replied that they were all in the hands of his own Malitia. There was no other alternative then, than for each man to furnish his own gun, and all who would agree to go to put their names down

¹ The following letter was secured by W. L. Lynch from Loring C. Halberstadt, who obtained it from Mr. West of Terre Haute. It was written by Mr. West's grandfather to his great grandfather.

that night, which a great many did. The morning found the excitement unabated. Men were running to and fro, hunting up fire arms, moulding bullets and girding on their armour, making one think of the "Scenes of '76" described in history. It was not long before quite a "squad" had collected among the number might be seen the "military figure" of your humble servant. The Omnibuses were ordered out and we started in the direction of Morristown, (30 or 40 in no.) as we heard that Morgan was at Washington coming down the pike. The panic had likewise spread all over the Co. and everybody that could raise anything in the shape of a gun or pistol "rushed to the rescue." At Morristown we were joined by the Companies of Loydsville, Belmont, Barnesville, Flushing, Morristown, etc., and stragglers from the surrounding country, swelling our force to about 3 or 400. We now took up the line of march toward Fairview as we heard the rebs were there and our intention was to try to head him. When we were west of Morristown some two miles on Taylors Hill we were met by a courier who stated that Morgan had had a skirmish with the "Malish" at Washington, crossed the pike and was going in the direction of Cadez. We then retraced our steps and remained in Morristown waiting further orders. Col's Poorman and Cowen were our field officers, and John A. Work our Captain. In the meantime the Citizens of Morristown had prepared eatibles and the way the lot of hungry men pitched into them was a caution, as a great many had not had anything to eat all day and it was now evening. This spoke well for the hospitality of the people of Morristown and they will always be remembered by all who were there for their kindness. We remained there about four hours when word came that Morgan was striking for the pike again and we were ordered to the road leading in past the Infirmary as it was supposed that if Morgan came at all he would strike the pike at that point. So we encamped here for the night sending mounted scouts out in that direction. As this was my first experience at soldiering, it puzzled me somewhat to know how I was to put in the night. Presently Elb Kinnon came along and proposed that we go and hunt some place to sleep. Not fancying the idea of lieing on the ground, we

placed four sails on the ground and stretched ourselves lengthwise with our guns for our pillows. But finding this rather too hard a bed we began to look around for a softer one, when we found a haystack close by where a good many of the St. C. boys were resting. Here I did not sleep much for laughing at "Bob Buff" keeping watch with his "Gunboat" as he called his old rusty musket. The most of the soldiery that were out that night were rather "verdant" and not well versed in the rules of camp. So "Cuba" was inclined to have a little sport. A great many would come to the stack to hunt a soft place to rest or some hay to make a bed with. "Cuba" would halt them with his "Gunboat" pointing at them, demanding their business and warning them against coming any nearer, telling them if they wanted hay to go around to the right and get it. They all very willingly obeyed his orders, saying that they were not aware that they were transgressing. We were all very thankful that we had "Cuba" along that night as he kept us in sport, and kept our sleeping place clear of all intruders. John Morgan may have come through our camp that night but I "couldn't see him." The next morning part of our crew took breakfast at John Rattman's in East Richland, part at other places and part didn't take any. Soon in the morning a courier came with the word that the rebs had taken breakfast that morning at New Athens, Harrison Co. and that his next point was Harrisville. We then all came back to town and after further consultation among the officers, they concluded to march toward Harrisville and try to render some assistancy in intercepting the raiders before they reached the river. But we were too slow for their fleet footed steed, for by the time we reached the creek (Wheeling) they had passed through Harrisville and gone in the direction of ----- Our next "strategic" move was to go right down the creek and stop the "gentlemen(!)" if they attempted to come down the plank road and come up the pike. We arrived at Barnards at one oc'lk and partook of a few "rations." Now the excitement, already great, increased. People came flocking in on horseback, in wagons, busses, and on foot, old and young, some armed and some not, some coming to fight and some coming through curiosity, and swelling the force to

about 500. Couriers were placed on every mile from Bridgeport to camp and from camp to town. I was placed on the first mile from town.

It was soon ascertained that it was not Morgan's intention to come up this way and therefore considering the "Stone Bridge" on the big Hill "Safe" the "Malish" all came up to town to quarter for the night. Provisions were bountifully donated by the citizens which were spread out in the Court-House and all who were not fed at private houses eat until their appetites were fully satisfied. They were then disposed arround town and in the C. H. for the night. I quartered about 15 in my room and sent 4 up to the house. The next morning, Sunday, they again partook of breakfast in the C. House and now the streets might be seen full of men with guns in their hands, lounging about on the stone, boxes, on the steps, and standing up awaiting anxiously to hear what was the next on the programe. It was by this time pretty sure that Morgan was so completely hemmed in Jefferson Co. that there would no longer be any need of the Malitia here and they were accordingly dismissed and all went home, hoping soon to hear of the capture of the indomitable Morgan. At noon a dispatch came, announcing that a battle had taken place at town beyond Stubenville in which from two to three hundred of Morgan's men and one hundred and fifty horses had been captured, Morgan himself narrowly escaping. All was quiet now until about 5 o'clock in the evening when everyone was again aroused by the ringing of the bell, caused by a courier coming in from Harrisville reporting that the "rebs" were within a few miles of that place marching back towards Flushing to the pike. In the meantime however a dispatch had been rec'd that Morgan himself and four hundred of his men had been captured and his force scattered. It was thought best to dispatch courriers in the direction they were reported to be coming and ascertain the truth of the matter. I in company with some others mounted old "Billy" and galloped off to Harrisville. (I expect you will get out of patience reading this long letter but I want to tell you all about this affair). All along the road we found the people very much frightened expecting to see Morgan dashing along every

minute. But when we told them that Morgan was captured they seemed to discredit the other report somewhat. When we arrived at Harrisville we found that it was all a "ruse" and that the "rebs" were not more than fifty miles of there. This morning (Monday) we have the official report of the capture of Morgan and the balance of his crew. Thus Ohio has the name of taking prisoner the indomitable and hitherto "invincible" John H. Morgan, of the force of nearly five thousand men, all well mounted, with which Morgan crossed the Ohio river, only a few stragglers less than one hundred have escaped death or capture. He was so hotly pursued all the while that he had no opportunity of doing much mischief and his raid was converted into a flight. He passed all around Belmont County but never came into it. He stoled a great many horses on his route but a good many will get their horses back. He took two horses at Washington belonging to Sam Lewis, Mr. Lewis has got one of them back and will probably get the other one, Neiswangers also had one taken. In crossing the C. O. R. R. they burnt Campbells Station, 14 miles above Barnesville. I think Morgans raid has done more good than harm, as it has arroused the people out of their lethargy and tended to unite the people. This evening the Citizens had a little jolification over the good news. Speeches were made by Col Poorman, Judge Kennow and Cowen, R. S. Clark, R. E. Chambers and others. Tar barrels were burnt and everybody rejoiced. This ends the great "Morgan raid." The family are all as well as usual. There is no other news of importance. Let Hie Craft read this and it will answer for both. I would like to be hearing from Spig soon as he has not written for sometime. Chun Carroll came home last week. He has been sick but is some better. He and Mary are now in town for a few days.

Your son,

J. EBERLE WEST