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MC200: Folder 20: Rockwell, Joseph J. to [Fowler], May August 16, 1898

This transcription from the original letter contains language contemporaneous of the time and is being presented as part of a historical record.

In the field
Near Santiago Cuba
Tuesday Aug 16 – 1898

My Dear May,

Your letter of the 27th I received a day or two ago. If your imagination is good and you stretch it as far as possible you may be able to appreciate how glad I was to get it, (the letter, not your imagination), Joke!

It was very proper for you to be ashamed for not writing sooner but I am very glad that you were not too ashamed to write when you did. And then you know you can very easily do penance by writing say once a week for the next month or two without waiting for answer. Of course you can make it as much oftener than that as you please. I don't care if you write every day.

You ask me how Herb looks and feels. He looks very well and feels as well as any of us which is to say that he feels well but lazy and weak. Like everyone else from the Colonel down he has had his whirl with the malaria and it sort of "takes the tuck" out of a fellow. The regiment has had very little serious illness however and has shown up quite as well as the "seasoned regulars" supposed to be so hardy. The "Daud First" is not so delicate you see after all.

We expect to leave here now any day, other regiments in our division are pulling out from all around us. A week of the fresh sea air and another in the camp at Long Island will make us "fit" as ever and that is saying a good deal because if ever a regiment started out on an expedition in prime condition it was "ours" when it left Tampa. So you were glad that "our particular boys" didn't get into a battle. And so were we; but we were also sorry. We sort of got into it you know as we had a chance to hear a few bullets whistle and untill [sic] the surrender was officially announced we fully expected to get into the fiercest kind of a fight – but we didn't – and I guess now we never will as if all reports be true it will not be long now untill [sic] peace is declared and the Spanish-American war a thing of the past, a something to add to the troubles of the schoolboy who don't like to study his history. But the world will be a little wiser and a little better for it, and any country – God bless her – shall have added new laurels to those which already rest upon her royal brow. There! That's poetry enough let's try a little prose. We have just been enjoying an unusual treat in the shape of a little ice-water. It tastes very good you may be sure. Don't hurt yourself working for that auxiliary society my dear May as I am quite confident it will prove to be more work and worry to you than good to us. Not you know because of any lack of care or thought on the part of the members but for many reasons outside of their control. Ask "sis" what I told her about it.

And Lee has been writing fables about me has he? Well don't believe but half that you see and nothing of what you hear. That's first rate advice. Lee is a great "con" man and then sometimes he says some very ironical things. I may be larger than when I left home and am unquestionably browner but if you look for the handsome fellows when the regiment gets back you won't see me.

I don't know any of the 'Rough Riders.' They were on our left in the trenches and of course we saw and talked with a good many of them but there was no one that I knew personally.

I saw Herb writing a day or so ago and suppose he was writing home. I presume he told you of all our wonder-ful experiences since we landed? But you needn't think you will get a years talk out of us when we get home because while I myself am pretty long-winded as you know, I can very well make a years talk out of a six weeks experience. And I am sure Herb don't talk as much as I do. I am afraid you will find this letter rather prosy as some how I can't think today, don't know whether it is the heat or not. As I hate prosy letters I guess I will stop and I will try to wake my next more interesting but remember if I get plenty of letters I can always write better ones, inspires me you know. I got bit on the ankle this morning by a scorpion. I guess the beast was in my tent all night and woke up about the same time I did only he was a little more wide awake than I. The sting felt like a cross between being stuck with a needle and getting an electric shock. No harm done. Give my regards to all the family and believe me

Sincerely your friend, J.J. Rockwell