

Camp near Decherd Tenn.

July 8 - 1862

Dear Father:

I have been waiting until we should get settled down somewhere for a few days, to write you an account of our doings, since June 29th. It is, perhaps well that I did not send it before, as the good news from Breckinridge & Kamm must be enough for one time.

About 2 o'clock of the 29th we received orders to move outwards, all packed up, and a courier came for a man at four o'clock the next morning to see if we were in camp so that an insurance amount of \$1000000 could be collected in case of a loss, and the trouble of packing up the necessary things for the camp, I was obliged to write about you, when I had to pack my own kit and write a letter to you, which I did not send to leave to be sent, but I feel as communication should be responded to.

July 10 - 1862 - I got to Co. at 10 o'clock there was a battle in the camp, getting the order to get on feet for the men. About 8:30 - I was in the line and saw a man more severely wounded by an arrow than the other ones which need no supposition it was only a wound - going out in a moment; then we learned that the whole Division had orders, and at length that the entire Corps was to move; finally some one from the 2nd Sth R.C. came over & said they had orders to leave Bradyville at the same time. It was not until

Temper. - jokes were sandiest about and suspect the same,
 things assumed an air of almost cheerfulness. The quick
 & spirited report of a howitzer, on the hill above us, and the quickly
 following explosion of the shell started some one of us into the
 latter thought in contact. The soldier who shot, and in the same
 and distance. The soldiers looked to one of their pieces had been well
 event. The officers wrote there - and to the work and in all this
 even - quite normally - just while we were in a trice of anxiety to know
 the nature of the alarm - waiting for another round or for
 something to give us a clue to the cause of this - then came another
 from the westward, a noise, a shouting, a cry - the little "pioneer"
 battery opening into its path with, but the rapid voices of Napoleon
 our "and" "pioneer" guns, speaking the induction business of a determined
 enemy. Again and again, we had shouting repeated. A truly rapid result
 note of relief, then Napoleon's name in a trumpet would have tumbled
 before the determination of Napoleon's successions. His brave throat
 was in a trice a silent witness to the same in the matter of it.

It was the welcome which McCook was meeting at Liberty and
 the little raucous which are first and one side give from the
 North at a retreating force which had held the gap just before
 us. Then came a reply from the right for some moments and
 then came, such as you might call it, the enemy had fired
 but that sweet stammering kind of artillery fire - the eighth one
 cutting up to a very heavy gun - with an almost
 continuity and the same as were repeated and the noise
 continued. The pieces were in a line - a line of our side with steps
 and regular sides on which some erected several rows of guns - some
 with the same. No assistance was made in the hills but
 finally when the position could not be forced. The truth is they
 were surprised and the small force who were stationed there
 after skirmishing awhile with Wilder, broke right in line - when
 the terrible "pioneer" voice pierced through the hills and on
 rapidly. He passed on to the right and captured the
 signal station "G" - and attached a rebel train. The following
 in an hour or two miles from the entrance of the gap were just pre-
 paring to disengage, when the skirmish line in front became changed
 heavy guns were mingling their voices with the fragments of parts of
 "Wilder's gunnery" - now we could distinguish the horses of the

(Men)

of Wilder's Brigade, coming back over the brow of a dis-
 tant hill. They were pressed by a superior force, and were fall-
 ing back. The accompanying gear heavier. You could see
 the peaceful band as the cannon balls came over the hills
 and the soldiers were packed. We could
 see the little howitzers run right up with their impotent
 shells to the singly found guns whose shot rained
 through the trees beside them, as if they had been pushed. The
 soldiers of a battery ranging not half a mile from us
 and we could share its dangers and terrors soon
 unless darkness or the evening drew off. Our Division
 commander - Reynolds - was anxious. The Corps Com-
 mander, ^{Thomas} rode to the front to consult with him. His horse
 was a white one and he was ready for a general engagement
 and could not risk a repulse at the opening of the cam-
 paign. Wilder had exceeded his orders, he had gone too far. He
 said of Col. ^{Wilder} dashed up with "The enemy are pre-
 paring to advance in force upon my right. Unless
 I can see help I must fall back. The position I
 am in is a ^{very} ^{precarious} ^{one}." Reynolds looked at
 Thomas. "The position must be held," said the latter man.
 "Fall in! Take arms! Charge! Bayonet! Shoulder Arms! Battalion
 in right face! Forward March! Double quick March, and
 the commands which rang along the line, and our Brigade
 after support Wilder. The 3rd Brigade (Gen Crook) followed

"Continuing 'A' - 'A' - 'A' - Thomas - cut them upon
 the hill side, carelessly swinging his feet in the stirrups,
 and examining the field with a glass. He was hardly passed
 our mounted ranks, before a round shot whizzed over
 our heads and struck the bank near my position as if
 afraid to do any injury to the victor, invariably ac-
 corded to the victor shot or shot. There was a fine volun-
 tary salute on our right. "Head of column to the right," ^{was the command.} ~~into the volun-~~
 tary salute, and began the ascent of the opposite hill. The shot
 came faster and faster. The enemy were getting our range
 and seemed determined to do us mischief. But all this time
 what has become of our little howitzers to the
 rear, that has been about. You see go his little howitzers to the
 rear, but not smoking. They always remind me of terriers,
 small but ugly. There were two very big dogs for them, and
 they did not budge off. How willingly they go. As the shot
 fly over me, from a bilinary, or some strange determina-
 tion to see and think of anything but danger, I could
 think of nothing but "where is the other?" I ask myself.
 One of the mounted boys, who is limping to the rear, replies
 to me, "They have taken it from us, sir." I believe
 it will be a more serious than he did the smarting wound
 in his thigh. But hark! The enemy have charged upon the
 brow of the hill just before us, on the crest of which two of
 Wilders regiments are posted. ~~The~~ thick verdure of the
 woods, hides the combatants from view, but by listening
 the practiced ear can tell precisely, how the fight is going.
 Crack, crack - the skirmisher are closing up to us.

There goes half a dozen shells, and a few rounds of grape
 and canister, from their batteries. The attacking
 column is closing up and they are firing over
 them. The ranks have some backing. Their front are the
 way. But pop! pop! from right to left it runs along
 the line ~~coming~~ ^{coming} ~~near~~ every time. Our skirmishes
 are being driven in. Do you hear that cheer. The enemy
 are charging up the hill. What a sweeping volley!
 The enemy's line have ~~emptied~~ ^{emptied} every gun at our base.
 What an answer they are getting from our side the hills!
 There are three brigades of them two regiments of ours. But
 those "Repeating Spencers" keep up a perfect stream of
 fire. Every man has eight rounds at his shoulder
 and only to pull trigger. Yet, on they come with the
 bayonet, first fiercely then hesitatingly. But our
 boys have fired their eight rounds and snuck up to load.
 They fall back, then they come out of the wood. The enemy
 halt in the edge of the woods, and open fire on them. But
 they are up and at them again. Now the enemy's turn has
 come to retreat. How the Repeating Rifles blaze upon them!
 Hear that shout! It is a full strong manly shout, such
 a Demasine shout like that of the "Crack." It is
 "the battle-cry of freedom": Buck - Buck - they drive them
 The enemy's guns open again, and shot & shell fly
 amongst us. We move to a healthier location, and
 the ridge on which our boys have been fighting. But let us
 to our left just opposite where we fired to the right, the

to the left to avoid a hill, which rises sharp & prominent
 like some of the detached Berkshire hills - right in
 its former course. Do you see those houses that for the last
 half hour have been dragging something up the steep sides? They
 are coming away now and even are busy carrying in heavy
 loads of ^{some} ~~some~~ ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ ^{strong} ~~strong~~ ^{leather} ~~leather~~ ^{sacks} ~~sacks~~ ^{toward} ~~toward~~ ^{an opening} ~~an opening~~
 in the wood upon the crest. Do you see that man on the high
 cream horse, as trim & straight as an arrow, peering through his
 field glass toward the enemy's batteries? That is Capt. Harris
 of the 9th Ind. Bat. "the model artilleryist" said to be the best
 shot in the army. It is his battery which is just coming
 into position ^{in that hill}. Here comes an old friend, Lt. Stovemyer
 of the "Napoleon" battery, "sir" he says to his superior. "You'd see
 a good place to work?" continues the Capt. "A good
 place to work but a good hot place to stand, answer
 Stovemyer. The pieces are carefully aimed. The enemy's
 battery is in full view ^{in fine range} but do not seem to have any idea of
 the welcome that is preparing for them. In rapid succession
 the six "Napoléons" and "Parrots" send the shell right into
 the midst of the opposing battery. There is a kill in the fire
 of the enemy's artillery, but thick & fast come the shells
 shot from ours. "Second Brigade Forward!" is the command
 and as we go in line, over bushes, fences, ditches & all, on
 up the next hill and into the woods where Webster's men
 had fought. The enemy had fallen back along the front and
^{we relieved Webster's men every night & during the day} ~~we relieved Webster's men every night & during the day~~
 but the enemy had ordered ^{their} ~~their ^{artillery} ~~artillery ^{to} ~~to ^{retire} ~~retire~~ ^{while} ~~while ^a ~~a ^{battery} ~~battery~~ ^{of} ~~of ^{artillery} ~~artillery~~ ^{was} ~~was ^{engaged} ~~engaged~~ ^{at} ~~at ^{the} ~~the ^{sight} ~~sight~~
 of our advance. The shell had just begun to fly among the
 trees in good earnest, when a fierce army ^{burst} ~~burst~~ ^{burst} ~~burst~~ ^{burst} ~~burst
 out upon and right and another yet fiercer~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

left. The 3rd Brigade with Lilly's Battery, 21st Ind. had stolen a
 round among the hills to our right, and Rousseau's Regulars
 with their crack "Napoléons" were on the left. It was too small
 for the rebels. They ceased their fire and drew off. The sun
 which seemed to have shined for an hour or two, began to
 sink down again. We searched about for bushes to lie
 upon, scrambling, now and then over some grassy fields
 who had that day met his quarters there. It rained incessant
 and directly all night. The pickets of the two forces were
 not 100 yds apart during the night, and at daylight firing
 commenced between them. We remained in our position
 all day. The bullets of the enemy's sharpshooters were flying
 over us all day. ^{Several were wounded in our baggage by them.} About 3 P.M. the rain ceased, and at
 9 P.M. we were relieved by the Regulars, and fell back to
 the position we had when ^{Webster's men} ~~Webster's men~~ ^{was fighting} ~~was fighting~~ ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ ^{the} ~~the ^{morning} ~~morning~~
 after 26 hours of the most exhausting duty we had yet
 performed - at 11 P.M. and a quick sleep. The rain began again
 next morning. About 10 A.M. we were ordered back into
 our ^{old} ~~old~~ ^{position} ~~position ^{on} ~~on~~ ^{the} ~~the ^{left} ~~left~~ ^{of} ~~of~~ ^{the} ~~the ^{road} ~~road~~. From this we were
 ploughed into our position in the line preparatory to a general
 advance. We were on the extreme left. Cos. "A" & "G" were
 thrown out as skirmishes under command of Capt. ^{Stovemyer} ~~Stovemyer~~
 Though I was under arrest, I was assigned to them
 account of ^{my} ~~my~~ ^{being} ~~being~~ ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{line} ~~line~~ ^{we} ~~we~~ ^{were} ~~were~~ ^{soon} ~~soon~~ ^{engaged} ~~engaged~~ ^{with} ~~with~~ ^{the} ~~the ^{rebels} ~~rebels~~
 skirmishes and had a sharp little time for~~~~~~~~~~

They were divided, however, and we were
 After passing ^{the} Beech Grove, we re-
 sumed the march in column and marched without incident
 or incident, worthy of mention, to within four miles
 of Manchester, where we bivouacked (marked +3). The next day we
 marched in ^{the} rain and towards evening we
 marched over & camped just in the outskirts of the town
 (marked +4 on my map). The next day, the 25th, was Sunday.
 Our noble General respects this holy day and it was well for
 us that he did, for men never more needed its special boon
 rest. On the 27th we marched on down the R.R. track
 towards Tallahoma. The roads were ^{very} bad, to quote the word
 we had seen. It rained as usual. We marched a
 six miles and camped late at night in the thick woods on
 the road side. (This station is marked +5, and is just below
 Concord on the V.R.). The next day we marched back to Concord & then
 on to Tallahoma. We were not in advance, though a part of our brig-
 ade, were the first who stacked arms in this stronghold of rebels.
 The rest, as you know, no resistance. The place was being
 reconnoitered by our men, when we entered. You cannot imag-
 ine what a sorry place it was, before we had been there two
 hours. Buildings were first "pulled" & then "peeled". What sorry
 faces the women had. I saw many, a woman fleeing with
 a few treasures in her hands - and tears in her eyes, the
 evidence of our soldiers. In my heart I pitied them. God whom
 had they to blame for all their misery? As a poor farmer said,
 whose only means of sustenance had been "seized" by our

stragglers, "If we had staid in the Union you would not
 have dared do this!" I went to see the family at which
 I had dined last winter. The old lady was like most, all teeth
 but her daughter was more resigned and seemed to regard the reign of the
 "Yankees" without much terror. We marched across one of the
 branches of the Duck River, at 11 - and bivouacked. The evening
 evidently left here in haste, as thousands of tents were scattered
 over the old encampments. (This station is marked +6).
 Early the next morning we started on, but only a few miles
 miles, as the roads were heavy, that the teams & artillery could
 not pass. There was heavy firing at the Elk River Bridge in
 the afternoon. We turned to the left & bivouacked at the
 ford of the Elk, near the mouth of Bear's Creek. (No +7).
 The next day, July 3, we marched down to the bridge and, after
 a tedious operation for the wagons & artillery to cross, we
 remained here until the next ^{morning}. On the fourth, we crossed
 a few miles of the worst road I ever saw, and camped in
 the worst spot on that road (+8). Salutes were fired
 from & answered, at all Corps Headquarters. On the fifth we
 arrived on to our present encampment (No 10) a pleasant lo-
 cation enough for this region. I thought I would
 write a letter to you, not expecting to interest you
 so much in the substance, as to give you a more definite
 idea of our especial location. The march has been
 respects been a very severe one. During the first
 of this long camp, we had to march

rights without pain. Of course the roads were out-
 raged and every day we were met to the side.
 On the other side it was quite embarrasing and
 and came into camp late at night, after passing
 through mud and wading, and all day we were
 wash our socks & pants, - the latter being covered with
 mud to the knees, - and lie down with our rubbers
 over us & the rain pattering down upon us - and sleep
 as sweetly as we could wish. I was almost sick
 when the snarl began but have been as tough & hearty
 as well could be since. - Col. Hall has not been with
 us having been left sick at Murfreesboro. Col. Rob-
 inson of the 75th Ind. Vols. has had command of the brig-
 ade. Col. Toller was also sick & Maj. Perkins has
 had command of the reg. I like him better than
 any other commander we have had.

As to the affairs of
 the Court Martial it has been over this long time
~~for~~ but the decision has not yet been published
 by General Orders so I can not yet assign
 the duty. As Maj. P. says "You are under arrest
 Lieutenant always except when there is a fight." He
 will not touch my sword so I wear that & am in all
 respects the same as ever except that I go where I
 please & do nothing. The order will not be published
 in review of the proceedings of the Court until we get
 settled somewhere for a few weeks. I have a record of all
 the proceedings which will give you some amusement some day.

Camp near Decherd Tenn
 July 11th 1863

Dear Father:

I have written you a long letter
 which I fear may be too long to interest you much.
 I have written chiefly because I had nothing else to do.
 I had such a capital chance to watch the fight at
 Gap that I thought I must describe it for you. Pardon
 me if I have made it too long. You can read it short
 by skub & smoke it for several sittings.

This morning we received news of the death of Col
 Hall. He died at 7 last evening of typhoid fever.
 He was my enemy and has done me great wrong
 and increased its virulence by repeated & stinging
 insults, yet "peace to his ashes" say I. The evil he
 has done me shall not live after him in my memory.

He was undoubtedly a man of no little military
 ability. I might be a quick, discerning & tenacious and
 he had that confident boldness which not unfrequ-
 ently snatches success from surrounding peril, when
 prudent & reliable judgment would have failed. He had
 come to be in very many respects a very competent & val-
 ueable brigade commander. Had these good qualities
 united with an inflexible resolution to do right,

He possessed that conscientious regard for
 truth and that earnest devotion to the cause
 of liberty which characterize Col. Walker, he would
 indeed have been a man to admire & a leader we
 might have been proud to follow. I believe it to be
 well for his good name that he died when he did.
 His inordinate ambition, & cool disregard of the
 means by which his ends were promoted, his idea
 (you may smile but it is certain that he possessed it)
 his idea, that in character, appearance & ability he greatly
 resembled Napoleon I, would have led him to a
 dopt measures even more deleterious to his reputa-
 tion than some which he has used, to forward his
 cause. But he is dead. He died in a good cause in
 which (if not for which) he had labored long & earnestly.
 May his memory long be green & those who bear
 his name be ever proud of the honor he confer-
 red upon it. Had his ambition been a true one,
 he would have been a great man.

Our latest news are glorious indeed. ~~W~~ Made
 giving you particular fits - Bicksburg surrendered!
 Bully for Mend! Hurrah for Grant! What a differ-
 ent tone it gives our army. The boys are talking about
 eating turkeys at home over Thanksgiving. If
 these successes are as complete as we hear "Confed" states
 is worth but very little today. The last news is that
 Morgan is an Indian. Is he trying to cut his way

through to Canada and escape the bonifall of the
 rotten thing he has left behind? I think er. If
 people let them get out of there I shall think the war
 any knot to end these many years. If we are not wide
 awake enough to catch a fox far from his hole we ought
 to lose our poultry. If we are only forced to surround
 the Rebellion will be down in three months, and our
 troops home in six. Of course the later night will
 many of them be kept for present duty for a long
 time after the fighting is done & until a heavy force
 of Regulars is organized. But I will not say any
 longer.

Give my regards to all friends and
 believe me

Affectionately Yours Son

Albin W. Surges

Address -

2nd Reg. 4th Div 14th A.C.
 Dept of Cumberland

Nashville