Tennessee Army

Jan 25 1863

Dixon Co. Tenn.
Sunday Jan 1st 63

My dear Wife

I know that you are anxiously expecting a letter from me. I wrote you hastily on the other side from Murfreesboro 16 days ago. Since which time I have not [illegible] and to you we have been on a great military excursion since Fri a week ago, an account of which I will try to give you. I will begin with our earliest engagements with the enemy and tell you of my rounds up to date. You remember that I had been writing from camp on Stewarts Creek for some

time On the 26 of Dec. which was Friday I think, the news came to us that the whole Yankee army were advancing from Nashville). And at the same time orders from Gen. Wheeler (to whose brigade we are now attached) for all the cavalry to come to Le Verne as quick as possible. here we first met the enemy. It was Gen. Bragg's orders that Wheeler should fall back to Murfrees boro slowly, fighting them at every opportunity. We killed about 60 of them so they reported + prevented them from getting to Mur. until Monday about night, which was their 4th day from Nash. (a distance of 25 miles

We lost in days skirmishes only 3 men. One was Lieut. Fitts from Tusca. a relative of Mrs Gilham + a most gallant soldier. On Monday afternoon I, in company with 2 others rode along Gen. Braggs line of battle for a short distance + was delighted to see the men in such fine spirits + anxious for the fight to begin. I remarked to some of them that we had brought the Yankees there + they had them to whip. Our cavalry were ordered to the extreme right where we

encamped for the night (or rather a part of it). At midnight, Col. Morgan gave me the countersign with orders to take some sick men back to camp wagon-train. I took them to Murfreesboro, sent them on and I stopped for the night so that I could be there to witness the fight next A.M. At daylight the battle opened in good earnest & raged fiercely all day. But at the close of day the entire right wing of the enemy's forces had been driven back ~~to~~ the distance of some 4 miles by Gen. Hardee's corps. With great loss on their side (the enemy's) Early next A.M. the battle

was resumed, was waged fiercely at intervals during the day. At night or towards night the enemy succeeded in massing about a 100 pieces of artillery & turned them loose on Breckinridge's division which was badly used up in an attempt to charge them. I was on an eminence during part of the battle where I could witness the fight & render assistance to the wounded. I hope I will never witness another such for it is not in the minds of anyone to conceive the awfulness of such a battle-field. The roar of can-

non & musketry was without a moment's cessation & reminded me more of the burning of a reed bridge than anything else, Occasionally hearing the groans of the killed & wounded.

But back to our command Gen Wheeler was ordered to attack the enemy's rear, & at 12 o'clock the same time that I left the command he moved out from our right in the rain, and by daylight next A.M. was far in the rear of the enemy. He made 2 successful attacks on the enemy's wagon train capturing & paroling a large number of prisoners & burning over 200 wagons. Our regiment figuring most

successfully. The following night they returned to Murfreesboro. The next day Wheeler was ordered to return to the enemy's rear, for the purpose of burning the enemy's wagons. This trip also proved successful, he burning about 40 wagons and capturing over 100 prisoners, negroes, horses & mules, & returned the same evening. When he was ordered the 3rd time to the enemy's rear which he attacked within 5 or 6 miles of Nashville, near the lunatic asylum. [It was this time he ran afoul of quite a large number of the Yankee cav-

pantry which gave us more than we bargained for. We lost no men but had a few slightly wounded [among them was Prentiss son of Ed. of Louisville Journal, shot thro thigh] Wheeler drew off about sunset + traveled all night thro a very cold rain, ~~at day~~ + over one of the worst roads I ever traveled. At daylight next morning we were at Murfree's. We were ordered to feed our horses + be ready to move by sunrise. One of our men kindly proposed to feed my horse + I laid down on my saddle-blanket for a nap which I assure you I much enjoyed. At sunrise we were in our saddles + the

next news was that Bragg was retreating + that we were to cover his retreat. This was entirely unexpected to us for we all knew that up to this time Bragg had had greatly the advantage except in numbers + had driven the enemy back from his enemy's first line of battle 3 or 4 miles. We thought that Bragg knew more than we did + doubted not but that it was a good move. 6 miles from Murfreesboro, on our retreat the enemy attacked our brigade when a hard engagement ensued lasting for half an hour. We lost 1 man

killed from our regiment & 4 or 5 wounded, which was almost the entire loss of the brigade. The enemy's loss was 12 killed & 40 wounded. After the fight we retired some 10 or 12 miles to Beech Grove. [Y. C. Buel] Half way between Murfrey & Manchester. Here we remained 2 days for the purpose of resting, & on Friday last we started back for the Cumberland River. I will give you some extracts from my blank book —

We left Beech Grove on the 9 of Jan. traveled to Middleton midway bet. Murfrees. & Shelbyville. Next day the brigade traveled 25 miles & camped at Trinne. Dr

Pitts + myself stopped at Eagleville + stayed all night. Sept. 11th (Sunday) had our horses shod we thought that the command had gotten far ahead of us, being in the vicinity of Nashville expected constantly to be met by some of the enemy + taken prisoners, but as luck would have it we met none and by noon we were in sight of our command with our haversacks full of provisions + our horses shod, just that much better off than most of our men. That night we camped on a creek near Brentwood here we emptied our haversacks. Early

next morning Pitts & myself went on ahead to get some breakfast. We had not gone more than 2 miles before we came to a small log house occupied by an old lady and her son & his family. They were "true blue" especially the old lady & while she was preparing our breakfast about the Yankees at a terrible rate; said they were the worst thieves on earth. But a few days since they had been there & had stolen all her eggs & chickens & she hoped we would kill the last one of them. By & by she announced "breakfast ready" & at the same time a little boy came running

'em & said the Yankees were in sight. Pitts & I jumped up & were about to leave without our breakfast but as soon as I got out I saw our command coming up, I knew I could eat my breakfast before the fight was over so I pitched in & ate a hearty breakfast, Pitts urging me to go all the time, but I told him I was bound to have my breakfast. It turned out to be a false alarm we moved off after the column had passed we feeling 'em a much better plight for traveling than we

did before breakfast. We traveled all day over a broken country without anything to eat. About one o'clock at night Gen. Wheeler halted the command on the top of a small mountain where we were allowed to remain until daylight without fire and our bridle reins in our hands. Pitt Hunt Morgan & myself lay down close together by a big log & slept quite comfortably until daylight when we mounted & started for the river. We captured three transports & one gunboat. The transports were loaded with wounded & sick & hospital supplies. We burned the gunboat & all but one of the transports but

me which was allowed to pro-
ceed on its way. A few miles
above this the Yankees had a
large lot of commissary supplies
such as bacon, coffee, candles
molasses, sugar, etc to the amount
of half a million $. Major Holman
with about a hundred men was
sent over to burn them. They
had to swim the river but the
gallant fellows plunged in and
went over and applied the torch
which soon effectually destroyed
the whole pile. Not a gun was
fired the small yankee guard
having fled in haste. After this

the command moved on down the river, after going some ten miles we heard of another gunboat coming up. The command was hurried down in the swamp and attacked the boat with their rifles. The enemy threw several shells in the woods. I took a big white mule or rather got in the ditch side of one, before we could get our artillery in position the boat pulled off + left us, completely whipped with rifles. So you see we don't care a whit for gunboats, our cavalry has become a great terror to the Yankees. We now left the river and went up in the hills to camp. Pitts, Street

& myself pitched our fire under a large apple tree. In the night it began to rain, Pitts took the apple tree for protection, Street & I lay on the ground until daylight when we fed our horses and went out to get ge' some breakfast. And when we returned the command had moved off, we did not overtake it until noon, it was raining very hard, Col. Webb who had been complaining for two or three days became quite sick & was compelled to fall out from the command & stop, Lapsley & myself remaining with him. This was a

most fortunate circumstance for us, for in the night it began to snow and continued all next day. Yesterday we left there & came some 10 miles to this place, Mr. Roberts's, a most excellent man & thoroughly alive to our cause. Col. Webb is improving, & tomorrow we will start on after our command, which we have just heard has gone back to our camp near Manchester, about a hundred miles distant from this place. The snow is still 3 or 4 inches deep but melting rapidly. We are still in the neighborhood of the Yankees, but a full stream is between us. And by the time it is low enough for them to

cross we hope to be out of their reach and when we get back to our wagon train I will close my letter.

Jan. 25 1863. Dear Wife, just a week ago I wrote you the foregoing letter which would have been sent to you before this time but lo. We being so unwell, we had to travel very slowly & we did not reach camp until yesterday evening. We have we may say, been in the swamp's line all the week so that there has been no chance to mail a letter to you. I am on account of

Wheeler's exploits in the papers, most of which is true. I have no doubt but that we destroyed a $1,000,000 worth of property for the Yankees. His gallantry on this occasion has made him a major General, as I understand. It is impossible for me now, to write you all the little incidents of our little rounds in this letter for I haven't the time. At his A. M. the W. Train was ordered beyond Duck River, some 40 miles from here and I am left here in charge of some 15 or 20 sick, 2 of whom will die. Jim Raiford has been sent to hospital during my absence from the wagon camp. If I had been here I would

not have let him go. The 2 Matthews boys are well + quite fat. Manly White is complaining I kept him here with me this Ad 4. Joe King is also with me but not sick. As soon as I can leave the men I will go on to the regiment. I have not had a letter from you since December, but find that some have been sent on to the regiment to me by the q-master, which I hope to get soon. Bro. Connolly brought the daguerotype but I must confess I was very much disappointed, the pictures of the children I think as sorry pictures as I ever saw.

I wanted yours + theirs in a small frame together, I have but little room to carry them, will be compelled to keep them in my saddle bags when I wanted to carry them in my pocket. But I reckon it was the best you could do. I sent by surgeon Watson to Hardy + Robbins 200 dollars which you can get by sending or calling for. Will send you more the next opportunity. I wish you would get old man Huntington to clean my watch + send it back by Watson or Capt. Robbins.

I am growing very anxious to see you all and do hope the time is not far off before it comes

I have a strong faith the war will close this spring & have long prayed for it. I am almost certain that it will come, but at the same time my dear wife if it is the will of providence that it shall go on, let us try to do our duty & endeavor to submit to His will

I know that you are anxious to see me but no more so than I am to see you and my darling little ones. We are indeed undergoing great trials but I trust it is all for the

best. I never appreciated my
home + family until now —
if Providence should allow
me to return to you it will be
the happiest hour of my life.
But while we are fighting for
a — peace you pray over it

AFTER 5 DAYS RETURN TO

JEFFERSON COUNTY
BUILDING AND LOAN ASSOCIATION
113 N. 21ST STREET
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

Original of letter written by Mr.
Jackson's father to his wife during
Civil War/