

W. L. 23rd Wash. Light Vols
 near Strawberry Plains Tenn Feb 25th 64

Dear Wife

I will take the opportunity now while every thing is quiet to write you. I have come to let you know that I am well and have it ready for the first mail that goes out. We marched from Knoxville yesterday, to this place near Strawberry Plains and fought 12 miles from Knoxville. The rebels did not attack us at Knoxville as was expected and as soon as our wish, but on Monday they made a rear movement and all our front crossed the river at this place on their pontoon bridge and it sunk with them and drowned three hundred ^{of their} men. They have been repairing roads and building bridges up to the time they left one we crossed yesterday three miles from here, they built it and we used it. We are now laying in camp awaiting orders to continue the pursuit. I do not think we will move to day or we should have had orders before this time. What caused Longstreet to move back I am unable to say unless some one is in his rear which we have reason to believe for their communication with Virginia has been cut and a Rail Road Bridge burnt and it is also reported that our forces below are threatening Atlanta Georgia.

and we also heard that forage was so scarce that they were obliged to fall back their animals had nothing to eat for several days and they could not get one day more forage for them before they would starve and the last I heard of them they were making for Bulls Gap about 60 miles east of here. I do not know whether we will follow them or not. I think not at present as we left all of our baggage behind and only brought two day rations. The Cars can come as far as here and bring all we want but they can go no further the wagon roads are now good and the weather is fine and splendid for campaigning. We all now march on foot and carry our pup tent and blanket the same as the men. The Brigade Commander has one horse and his whole staff are on foot. We sometimes get off and let the horse take turns riding the one horse, I stand it as well on foot as ever. I did not carry my blanket and tent however. I carried my canteen and over coat. I left the rest of my baggage at Knoxville and only carried a few sheets of paper in my haversack to write on if I had time. I saw Capt. Bingham yesterday as he passed with the 9th Corps. I have now wrote all of the news worth mentioning that I know. so I will lay this by a few minutes.

After dinner.

All quiet and I return with a sharpened pencil to finish the letter which seems to be long. I am sitting on a flat stone with my back against a Cedar tree. My Haversack on my lap to write on same.

next to the last chew of tobacco now in my mouth that
you sent me by ^{3rd} Davis. The day is fine and the Camp is
still the men are lounging about some reading some
asleep some playing cards and you would not know
that there was more ^{than} a few men here everything is so quiet,
but if there was a call from Head Quarters to fall in you
would hear bugles in every direction repeating the calls
and every man would be on his feet. Lieut Lewis is well
and is writing someone a letter he sits where the wind has
blown ashes all over him Capt Woodruff is at Kenosha
Convalescent or not well enough for field duty Capt
Raymond of Bay City is Comd^g the Regt at present
Lt Chapin is home on sick leave I expect to be relieved
from duty as Lt Adj^t by the Adj^t who is coming back
to the Regiment again at least he told me he was but did not
know how soon. Then I shall have to go with my Company
which is now Commanded by a 2nd Lieut from another Company
We have only officers enough present to have one for each
Company the others are all absent either detailed or sick
Lieut DeWergne is well and present. A train of Cars have just
arrived here loaded with pontoons for a bridge which will
soon be built across the river so I expect we will march
that way in a day or two. and if you do not hear from
me very regularly do not get alarmed about me for it
may be so that I can not write however I will
write as often as I can I hope we shall be able to follow
Longstreet up and keep him moving until he leaves
East Tenn

I do not think the war will last another year
and perhaps it will be ended this coming Summer
The most of the rebels are all ready sick of it and nothing
but the officers keep them together now a great many
deserters come in to our lines and give themselves up
day before yesterday one Capt and a Quartermaster come
in so you see some of the officers are sick of the rebellion
I do not care how quick they submit for I know you
want me to come home the sooner the better will I care will
keep up your spirits and be patient and we will be happy
as clams when my time is out, as soon as I see a prospect
of getting an application for a leave of absence approved
I will try and come home take good care of our Frankie
and let her grow as fast as she can Frankie was very kind
to buy her a set of pins which pleases her so well

Give my best regards to all my dear friends and
write soon excuse this not very clear paper and pencil
for I left my ink at Knoxville in the desk I am
well and I hope you are the same we have a plenty
to eat so do not worry about my starving I will
take good care of myself for your sake and as ever
believe me your affectionate Husband

W. H. Hester
J. H. Hester