

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Oct. 29th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

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Headquarters 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry
Camp Near Loudon, Tennessee, Oct. 29th 1863

Dear Wife,

It has been over a week since I have wrote to you, and as now an opportunity affords itself I will improve it knowing it would be more to your satisfaction than to improve it any other way. I am well and in good spirits, and since I wrote you before things have changed somewhat. The day after I wrote the rebels made their appearance in considerable force in our fronts, and completely surprised our cavalry, which was stationed at Philadelphia *{TN}*, a place six miles south of us, and drove the cavalry in, taking a few prisoners and killing and wounding considerable number. How many, I have not heard yet. We were out and supported a battery and at night returned to camp and went to throwing up fortifications and digging rifle pits and we have been packed up ever since. Skirmishing has been going on every day since, the rebels having too large a force for us to make an attack. Yesterday our whole force retired to the north side of the river and took up the pontoon bridge and now there

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{is} no way of crossing the river and they could not pursue us if we were to move back any farther. The 23rd was the last regiment across and covered the retreat and the pioneers while taking up the bridge. The rebs did not make their appearance until everything was done to prevent their crossing and when they did come it was with a flag of truce and after that was ended they retired out of sight and we moved back a mile and camped where we are now. We expect to move further so as to be out of range as our battery are going to shell the town and rebels which are now in considerable force in sight. We cannot take any part in the fight for a musket will not shoot far enough, so you must not worry about me for I am safe. The 9th Army Corps is here and I saw several old acquaintances: Captain Emil Morris, Lieutenant Oliver Davidson, and several other Saginaw {MI} men, also Jimy Rey. Michigan is now pretty well represented here now, 7 regiments of infantry and two regiments of cavalry, viz. 2nd, 8th, 17th, 20th, 23rd, 25th, 27th Infantry and 8th and 9th Cavalry. Orders are coming to move so I will have to halt and finish this some other time.
Later. Oct 30th.

Since writing the above we have moved camp twice and are now camped two miles from Loudon and four from Lenoir Station *{TN}* on the Knoxville road. The rebels occupy Loudon and their pickets and ours blackguard

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one other across the river. No firing is allowed on either side although they are in plain sight and within rifle range. How long things run as smooth I cannot tell.

We have to go to the river for all our water and are exposed to their fire more or less, but they do not offer to molest us nor we them, and if they do commence we can soon make it a hot place for them and they know it. We have had plenty of rain lately and it has rained most all day today and does not look like stopping. A few nights ago we were out on a scout with the 13th Kentucky Infantry. We started about 12 o'clock with as fair a night as I ever saw and before morning it rained hard and long and we got as wet as we could be, and with nothing with us to eat we were anything but comfortable. We returned about 9 o'clock a.m. and soon forgot about it. I bought me some brick and built me a fireplace in my tent and was fixed so I was as comfortable as could be and I had to leave it with my bed to the rebels, so now I have to make a fire outdoors in front of my tent and smoke my eyes out sitting around it. Yesterday I drew another horse and turned over the one I had. Major Wheeler (a cousin to John Wheeler, the lawyer in Saginaw) is in command. I like him very well, but some of the men do not. He is a good military officer and knows his profession well. He is for more discipline and that makes some of them growl a little. He is as kind and lenient as he can be and do his duty. He can enjoy fun as well as anyone when not on duty, but when on duty he is a soldier and wants the men to be. Tomorrow is the last day of the month and we muster for pay. I have made out

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my rolls and will be ready in time, so tomorrow we will have four months pay due and no signs of getting any of it yet. However, it will come acceptable when we do get it.

I shall be busy now for a few days making out monthly returns for the month of October, but I will write as often as I can. The way it has been during the last two weeks is pack up and be ready to move at a moments warning. Well, we would do so, then unload again and repack. One night we struck tents and pitched tents three times during the night. Yesterday we did the same thing twice. We have been out at all times of the night in fighting trim and never a fight yet, but it is not our fault for we have obeyed orders and never run yet. We retreated across the river and that may be for some purpose unknown to us, not that we were not able to hold our position, for we were strong in position and numbers. And if we could not hold the position we could retired safe had we been forced to. I believe we soldiers do not know all that is going on. Plans are kept secret off-times and I believe we will gobble all the rebs in there, Loudon, yet before long. We are all confident of success and in the best of spirits. Very few are sick. The regiment is in better health than I ever saw it before. I made application to General *{Ambrose E.}* Burnside to issue an order for me to be mustered. I have not yet heard from it yet, but expect to next week. I hope it will be favorable and I think he will grant it if it is not inconsistent with propriety or beyond the limits of his authority. Write soon and direct as before. Give my love to all inquiring friends and take good care of little Frankie, also yourself. I will do the same with myself so do not worry about me for I will be a good boy and write often to my Affectionate Wife.

D. D. Keeler

W. O. 23rd Mich Vol Infy
Camp Near Loudon Tenn Oct 29th/68

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D. A. Wheeler