

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: "Letter Sept. 12th 1863.tif"
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

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Headquarters 23rd Regiment Michigan Volunteer Infantry
2nd Brigade 2nd Division 23rd Army Corps
Near Loudon, East Tennessee, Sept. 12th 1863

Dear Wife,

I suppose you feel anxious to hear from me, but no more than I do from you, but the way we are situated communication is not to be had. I imagine how you feel by not hearing from me and if there had been any way of sending you word of my whereabouts I should have done it before now; and even now there is no communication with the north, and I only write this now to have it ready when a chance occurs to send it. I know there are a great many anxious to hear the result of the expedition. Well, it is one of the exploits of the war and we now have virtually undisputed possession of East Tennessee and the railroad between Richmond *{VA}* and *{General Braxton}* Bragg's Army. We have accomplished what has been look at as an impossibility; that is, to march an army of any considerable number over the Cumberland Mountains through an uninhabited and unfrequented region where there were, as you may *{know}*, no roads. What there was were the worst I ever saw or ever expect to see. We climbed up mountains and down mountains, some so steep that we had to hoist our artillery and wagons up with ropes, and marching at all times of night and day until we reached our place of destination, which we done at the appointed time, which no other portion of

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the army, to which we belong, did. And if called forth the highest compliments from the major general commanding and he regards is as a guaranty of the efficiency of the 2nd Division when called upon in any emergency. When we reached Emery Iron Works (we having the day before joined General *{Ambrose E.}* Burnside's whole force except the 9th Army Corps) we left everything: tents, baggage, wagons, and took 5 days rations of coffee and sugar and salt and started immediately to have a battle and after a days march we found that the rebels had left their fortifications and gone to Georgia, having been drove away by our advance guard. They burned a splendid railroad bridge across the Tennessee River when they left, which will cost time and money to replace. The bridge was over 1/4 of a mile long and 75 feet high. Our whole division is posted here and we have men now building a pontoon bridge before we go any further. The town is on the opposite side of the river and I have been too busy to visit it yet. They say there were a heap of rebels here until we came here from ten to 15 thousand and they might have given us some trouble before we could have taken the place. Knoxville *{TN}*, which is 30 miles above here, is in our possession and we have trains running every day between here and there, and I do not know how much further that way. Yesterday, we receive the glorious

news of the surrender of Cumberland Gap with two thousand prisoners to General Burnside's troops. So now we have got another important hold away from the rebels and everything here progresses finely.

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I would like to hear how they get along in other parts of the world. We have not had any news since we left Kentucky and I would like to see a newspaper very much. I suppose now Cumberland Gap is in our possession will soon be opened so we can get and send a mail to and from here. As it is now you cannot send a letter at any price and God knows that I would like to send you one to let you know that I am alive and well. I only write this now to send when an opportunity does arrive so you will know that I wrote when there was no chance of send it so as not to get out of practice. I suppose you wonder how we live now. Well, we are living better than we did when we first got here and part of the way on the march. We were on less than half rations part of the time or part rations of what is issued for rations. We had green corn issued to us in place of hard tack, three ears for a days ration. The men stood it without much complaining and never refusing to take anything that they could eat. We now get plenty of fresh beef and flour. The rebels left us a good flouring mill and we found among the rebel farmers plenty of wheat, so we won't starve, no fear of that. Our wagons joined us again here in five days after we left them and we have our tents and are camped in a grove a few rods from the Tennessee River in sight of Loudon. We expect to stay here some time and build up the bridge again and if they were as successful in other places as we are the war would not last much longer. We have communications with

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General *{William Starke}* Rosecrans and will soon have, I hope, with the north. There is no rebels between us to prevent it, only the roads is what renders it impossible, which will soon be fixed now that the Cumberland Gap is in our possession. We have been here 8 days now and it is the 12th of September, one year since we were mustered at Saginaw {MI} ????. We were eighteen days on the march here and we were on the move every day except two days that we were waiting at Jamestown {TN} for the other part of the army to come up. The men stood the march well. Very few were sick and scarcely any now. The men are always healthier on a march than when being in camp eating everything that they can get hold of. We have plenty of good ripe peaches here and an abundance of them, and also apples. The day before we reached this place we passed a sick old rebel and he had a plenty of everything that we could ask for and the brigade halted, and the quartermaster loaded all of the wagons from his stores and completely stripped him and left him as bare as his Union neighbors that the rebels had foraged from. We find more Union men here than anything else and deserters are coming in from the rebel army quite fast and the Union men are returning from the mountains where they have been hid to escape rebel conscription. There is nothing to sell in town, not even a plug of tobacco, and I do not see how they have lived here lately on anything but corn and wheat. N----- are scarce, they having been run off by the rebels to Georgia.
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Wd Qd 23^d Regt. Mich Wd Drpty
2nd Brigad 2nd Division 23^d N. C.
Near Loudon East Tenn Sept 12th 1863

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