

Camp in Lookout Valley four miles from Chatanooga
Sunday Nov 8th 1863

Dear Mother

I take the very first opportunity that I have had since leaving Bridgeport, to write to you. We left there on the 27th of last month and after a very fatiguing tramp over a very mountainous road we reached camp about a mile from the Tennessee River, Sometime after dark in the evening of the 28th. This valley is a very narrow one between the Raccoon and Lookout ranges: both of which being very high the latter looming up 2800 feet above us. Between us and the base of Lookout is a ridge about one fourth as high. The sides of this ridge are very steep but it has gaps at intervals through which are roads. Between this ridge and Lookout is Lookout Creek.

Perhaps you may get some idea of our present position from the above profile. To return to our doings: The Twelfth Corps stopped some three miles behind us. We had been shelled considerably while marching down but were not injured any although we were in full view of the Rebs nearly all the time for six miles. We were all sleeping soundly about one o'clock when we were called up by the assembly sounding. The first sound that I heard was the rattle of musketry up in the direction of the Twelfth. We were soon on the road back, half asleep, fatigued and not knowing what was ahead of us we were rather in a bad condition to face an enemy but there was no dodging. The musketry deepened into a constant roar intermingled with artillery, and in a few minutes the sharp whiz of balls warned us that we were getting close to our foes. The 2nd Division of our Corps was behind us and received a sharp fire from the top of the ridge. The Corps was halted. It was evident that we must take possession of this ridge or else we would soon be in a bad fix. So the 2nd Div was ordered to storm the hill where I have marked and we were ordered up to our position. The 2nd was at work immediately and met with a determined resistance. Three times did the 73rd Ohio & 33rd Mass charge and three times were they driven back. With a yell that woke the echoes for miles around they started on the fourth charge and three cheers told us the position was theirs. Our Regt was deployed as skirmishers while this was going on and "Forward" was the order. The side of the ridge was densely covered with trees and large boulders and although there was a full moon we were not able to see any distance. It was about a quarter of a mile from the road to the top of the hill. The 82nd Ohio joined us on the left and up we started. Not a sound could be heard except the firm sullen tramp of the men and the low orders or cautions from the officers. On they went not knowing whether that dark object five yards ahead was an enemy or a harmless tree. Not knowing whether the next step would be their last or not we gradually approached the crest of the hill without meeting any resistance and commenced to congratulate ourselves on the easy completion of our task when bang bang bang came right into our faces the blaze from a score of muskets. Forward "Men" "Forward" "Charge" and up we were in less time than it takes to tell it with no one hurt and the Rebs running down the other side. After taking breath I was ordered to move my company to the right to connect with Capt McGroarty. I walked to where he was and gave him orders also from the Genl to

move far enough to hold the gap. I was still talking to him and walking toward the gap when a Reb stepped out from behind a tree and fired and the Capt immediately sank to the ground. the man with one jump was out of sight. It was done so suddenly that I could hardly realize that it had been done at all. All assistance possible was given to the Capt but of no use. He died sometime after daylight. He was one of the most intimate acquaintances I had in the Regt. and a splendid fellow His death has left a gloom over us which it will [be] hard to remove, and we each look around on the few now left and wonder "who next"

During all this time the fighting still continued on our right with unabated fury. It appears that as soon as our Corps passed along the road the Rebs took possession of the road between us and the 12th supposing that they could whip the 12th and then turn around and perform the same operation with us. They found a mistake in their calculations, for before they could do anything with Gen Slocum Gen Howard had ordered up some of his spare men and got Secesh between two fires and just at daylight they retired through the gap and across the creek. where we could not harm them We laid in position until Sunday and during the very hardest kind of a rain with nothing to eat scarcely and no sleep at all

We left all of our wagons behind us and carrying three days rations in our haversacks. I will not say how little we had to eat for fear you would not believe it, but I saw an officer give a quarter for two ears of corn to parch.

Will came to see me the day after the fight and I returned the visit this week. He looks very thin as in fact all the officers and men do of Rosencrans Army Boys that I saw in the Regt look like old men and so dirty and ragged that it is a shame. Will complains of rheumatism but I don't think he is any worse than the most of us. In fact it would be a wonder if we escaped it.

The first time I saw Will we sat down and had a long talk about home as unconcernedly as if we were seated in the long room with a good fire: while the Rebs were shelling us continually. Persons get accustomed to almost anything. There is not an hour of daylight passes but what they shoot from Pt Lookout more or less, some at Chatanooga some at us and others at our wagon trains. Today they are banging away more than usual, our camp is in full view but they are so high above us that they cannot shoot with any accuracy. Although the shells come plenty near enough for comfort. There has been a dozen or more come down around us since I have been writing this, the closest being about thirty yards off. As long as they could blockade the River and stop boats from coming up Lookout was a good position for them, but Hookers occupation of this valley allows the boats to land at Kellys Ferry six miles below this and wagon trains have supplies from there so that Grant is in a measure independent of that part of the River that can be shelled by them so Lookout does us no harm in particular and them no good. We may lay here a long time or we may not. If the enemy thinks it worth while to hold his present position we may be here a long time as it is an impossibility for us to make him leave unless Grant recieves reinforcements enough to cut off his supplies

At this time we are no[t] very comfortable or safe position for we are entirely dependent on the Rail Road from Nashville to

Bridgeport for our supplies and if Bragg should happen to tear it
up we would as the boys say have to Light out