

On Picket Near James cross road

20 miles north east of Knoxville

Dec 24th 1863

I commenced this letter the 6th expecting to finish it the next day but as I wrote you before we were ordered off in pursuit of the rebels. I don't know as I can make this letter more interesting than to copy from my memorandum the events of the 18 days siege. Before beginning this I will tell you our situation at the present time.

Our knapsacks came up Tuesday night, but yesterday we were ordered out scouting and went about 4 miles returning towards night we had hardly time to draw one half lb. of flour and meat before we were detailed to go on picket nearly three miles from camp, so here we are stationed by the road side burning any quantity of rails and securing the passes of the great numbers of citizens who are now returning to their homes, having staid within our lines while the rebels were attacking the same.

A great many young men living east of here who were surrendered at Vicksburg they fear the rebels will put them in their service again, so they seek protection within our lines. I went out foraging this morning succeeded in buying a cask full of cane molasses ^{or} and one dog of onions 10 cents the people are in a state of destitution nothing hardly to be obtained at any price what scarce there was left by the Rebel and quartermasters take leaving but little for the owners use thousands are despoiling of their effects and starting north feverishly for Ky. they all say they will ^{starve} to death if they stay here. All the rebels seem to want here is to get the supplies and the conscripts Oh! you had ought to hear the people here express their hatred of the rebels.

Many of the conscripts and paroled prisoners say they will never be taken alive by the rebels, they will starve to death first in our lines. We are on half and quarter rations yet but we have been able to forage so as not to suffer, but foraging is about flying out, but every day since Grants big victory brings us news north by R.R. and steamboat from Knoxville, has steam boat loaded

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Our knapsacks came in Tuesday night, but yesterday we were ordered out scouting and went about 4 miles returning towards night we had hardly time to draw out half lb. of flour and meat before we were detailed to go on picket nearly three miles from camp, so here we are stationed by the roadside burning any quantity of rails and examining the passes of the great numbers of citizens who are now returning to their homes, having staid within our lines while the rebels [?] the country. I have conversed with a great many young men living east of here who were surrendered at Vicksburg they fear the rebels will put them in their service again, so they seek protection within our lines. I went out foraging this morning succeeded in buying a canteen full of cane molasses 50 cts and one [?] of onions 10 cents the people are in a state of of destitution nothing hardly to be obtained at any price what corn there was little let by the Rebel our quartermasters take leaving but little for the owners use hundreds are desposing of their effects and starting north principally for Ky. they all say they will starve to death if they stay here. All the rebels seem to want here is to get the supplies and the conscripts Oh! you had ought to hear the people here express their hatred of the rebels

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of supplies have reached us via Tennessee river
and soon we expect the luxuries of hard toast and
pork which last year we complained of.

by the way tonight is the night before Christmas and
while I am sitting by the big coal fire Town Hall
Market is swarming with a promiscuous crowd of
goose buyers.

Memorandum

Monday Nov. 18th The long roll was beaten at 5 A.M. and
we left our neat little houses built of pine timber
houses we had worked so busily on the week previous
and fell into line marched to the semicircular
ridge north of the city and formed a line of battle
covering the depot and buildings.

Nov. 19th Left on our arms cold and frosty night
on 19th We moved into the city the rebels are in our front
and occupy our camp ground they are engaged in planting
batteries and digging rifle pits on the side of our little
city.

20th Our pickets, no firing on our line the rebels are mostly
on our left, several pickets in our front the numerous
dwelling houses stores and hotels north of the depot
buildings are ordered to be cleared ready to be burned
no man are left at any house ready to apply the torch
as soon as the rebels drive in our picket lines.

The citizens have left their dwellings in a great hurry
some leaving most all their furniture cows and pigs
and the soldiers have commenced pilaging we all get
a lot of rations in the shops potatoes, flour, pork, meat
molasses &c &c.

Nov. 20th Relieved from picket at 6 A.M. fell back to the
city and dug rifle pits with the assistance of negroes and
citizens on the bluff east of Bay street During the day was

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of supplies have reached us via Tennessee river and soon we expect the luxuries of hard tact and pork which last year we complained off.

by the way tonight is the night before Christmas and while I am sitting by the big rail fire Faneuil Hall Market is swarming with a promiscuous crowd of goose buyers.

Memorandum

Monday Nov 16th The long roll was beating at 5 AM and we left our neat little houses built of pine timbers we had worked so busily on the week previous and fell into line marched to the semicircular ridge north of the city and formed a line of battle covering the depot and buildings.

Nov 16th Slept on our arms cold and frosty night

“ 18th We moved into the city the rebels are in our front and occupy our camp ground they are engaged in planting batteries and digging rifle pits in the site of our little city

19th On picket, no firing on our line the rebels are mostly on our left cavellery pickets in our front The numerous dwelling houses stores and hotels north of the depot buildings are ordered to be cleared ready to be burned two men are left at evry house ready to apply the torch as soon as the rebs drive in our picket line.

The citizens have left their dwellings in a great hurry some leaving most all their furniture cows and pigs and the soldiers have commenced pilaging we all get a lot of rations in the shape potatoes, flour, pork meat molasses &c &c.

Nov 20th Relieved form picket at 5 AM. fell back to the city and du rifle pits with the assistance of negrows and citizens on the bluff east of Gay street During the day I was