

Lieutenant H. Paine Letter 26th Tennessee

Camp near Tullahoma Tenn.

January 10th 1863

Dear Sister

I well know how anxious you all are to hear from me and would have written sooner, but this is the first opportunity that I have had for many days. Since I have written last to any of you, I have participated in a great battle, and god [sic] through his divine wisdom and mercy has seen cause to spare me. I was struck by a spent ball on the leg, also had a finger glanced but escaped unhurt. For eight days and nights we stood in line of battle, in all kinds of weather, with no covering or tents save the heavens above us, and although we were not engaged fighting ourselves all the time, still there was not a day passed but what we were more or less exposed to the enemy's shells. I shall not attempt to give you a history of the fight for you can get a more accurate account of it from the papers than I could write myself. I will tell you what Brigade and Division our Regiment belongs to, and then from the newspapers you can find out what part we acted in the bloody drama. Our Regiment belongs to the Second Brigade of General Breckinridge's Division. We were in the memorable charge made on Friday, the 2nd January. We took the enemy position and drove them half a mile, but their batteries poured such a murderous and destructive fire upon us that we were compelled to retreat. I was afraid in the retreat that they would get many of us prisoners, still, they got but few. I really thought your humble servant as the boys say would go up a spout. We had to march back for half a mile through an open corn field and many were so much exhausted that they could not go faster than a slow walk. The enemy all the while were pouring in a murderous fire of shells, grass, canister, shot and minni [sic] balls upon our retreating column. I thought once I was so much exhausted [sic] that I would not be able to get back across the field, but I staggered slowly on and reached the woods on the other side when our forces rallied and held the enemy in check.

Our Regiment went into the fight with about three hundred men and officers and lost ninty [sic] six killed wounded and missing. Our Company went into the fight with twenty three men and officers, and lost seven killed wounded and missing.

Capt. Jos. A. Cash is missing, supposed to be killed, or wounded and in the hands of the enemy. Seagt. [sic] W.L. Rice is sevierly [sic] wounded and taken prisoner. Henry Hughes is missing and supposed to be killed. Stephen Spence is sevierly [sic] wounded and a prisoner. William R. Singleton was slightly wounded in the right hip and F.M. Loftis slightly in the face. The three last mentioned were merely scratched and are with us safe and well.

The yankees [sic] got possession of the battle field before we could get our wounded off was the way they came to fall into the enemy's hands. It was the only portion of the battle field but what we held. That night we took our original position and staid [sic] there

until the next night. About twelve o'clock when we commenced our retreat, we trudged on through mud knee deep that night and by sunrise next morning were ten miles away from Murfreesboro on the road towards Manchester. Our retreat was conducted quite orderly and quietly. We passed through Manchester which is on the McMinnville Rail Road and from thence to Arazona [sic] [Alisonia is handwritten above] on the Nashville and Chattanooga Rail Road and from thence to Tullahoma, which is distance from Murfreesboro about forty miles. In the charge we made upon the yankees [sic] on the 2nd January we lost two thousand men killed wounded and missing in thirty minutes and the yankees [sic] must have lost from three to four thousand, for I am satisfied that where I went over the battle field we killed and wounded two or three of theirs to where they killed or wounded one of ours. I know it is generally the cry that we kill more of them than they do of our men, but I know it was certainly the case there for I saw how it was with my own eyes. I expect that you have heard that I was wounded and suffered much uneasiness on that account. W.A. Crawford from what I can learn wrote that several were wounded who were not. That was because he was not in the fight and knew nothing about it, consequently he had no right to write anything about it. Him and Riley were neither of them in it. They were five miles distant with the waggons [sic]. Riley was waggon [sic] master and Henry don't belong to the army, but he has been with us all the time. He was letting on to be sick. Either of them might have had the best chance in the world to have fought if they had only had a willing inclination to have done so. But I prophecy that if the war lasts to [sic] years that they will neither of them ever be in a fight. So if you ever hear them telling what they did in the Battle at Murfreesboro you can tell them that they were not in it. We lost our Regimental Flag in the fight, but captured one from the Yankees, so we made a set off in the flag line.

Many of the boys lost all their clothes and blankets. I lost my quilt and blankets in the charge and am now without any bed clothing. But I am doing fine and am truly thankful that I have escaped with my life. Perhaps I may be able to procure some more blankets. If you have any opportunity you can send me one, but put yourselves to no unnecessary trouble, for I am old enough and have seen enough of the world to shift pretty well for myself.

Tell Ann and Jane that I have received some letters from them but could write nothing more at present that I have written to you. So I intend this as a general letter to you all. Tell them they must write to me again and then I will write to them. The problebilities [sic] are that we may have another battle ere long. Bragg I think intends giving them battle if they advance somewhere about Tullahoma. If they don't advance likely he will advance again towards Murfreesboro. Tell Uncle Green that I saw his son James Mathis a few days before the fight. He belongs to Savages [sic] 16th Tenn. Regiment, Donaldsons [sic] Brigade, and Cheathams [sic] Division. I have not seen or heard from him since, for aught I know he may be killed or wounded in the fight. In the fight altho [sic] we have retreated we have lost nothing except that many brave men killed, and have come out winners at last. It is estimated that we have taken:

Five thousand prisoners 5,000

Sixty one pieces artillery 61

Small arms seven thousand five hundred 7,500

Destroyed nine hundred and fifty wagons 950

Killed and wounded the enemy nine thousand 9,000

Our losses killed 1,000

Our loss wounded three thousand five hund. [sic] 3,500

Recapitulation

Federals killed three thousand 3,000

Federals wounded six thousand 6,000

Federals captured five thousand 5,000

14,000

Our loss four thousand five hundred 4,500

9,500

I shall send this letter by Mr. William Roddy, brother to G.P. Roddy who is a Lieut. in our company. If he calls and stays all night or gets his dinner, don't charge him his bill. I also send by him two hundred and thirty dollars \$230.00 which I want you to put away and keep until I come home or if Jo comes home before I do, give it to him and tell him to give me credit for it on our books. I send my letter by him because it [rest of sentence is missing] I want you to write to me as soon as you get this letter and let me know whether my money arrived safe or not. Direct your letter to Tullahoma, Tenn. I have no more news of interest to write. The army is in good health considering the hard time we have seen. I hope you all had a Merry Christmas and Happy New Years. Present my kind regards to all enquiring friends, and tell them I am still in good health, and ready to meet the invader and his hosts. All of the soil that Rosencrans [sic] gains now is going to cost him [rest is missing]