I hope Edmund has his pony now. I am waiting to hear from him.

I would be very glad to write you every day, but there is no chances to write now. You have no Idea how much the people down here are suffering. It is awfull. Wemen and children, left homeless, and fatherless by thousands. I can see no more.

Good night. God Bless you all.

Your own
HANS

To Gunild, October 16, 1862

[Van Doren Mss.]

Camp near Crab Orchard, Kentucky. His troops are standing their hard service well, none of them better than himself. Bragg is hurrying out of this State very fast, going to Cumberland Gap.

To Gunild, October 18, 1862

[Van Doren Mss.]

Crab Orchard, Kentucky. Compliments Gunild on her management of her affairs—you have sold the Ponies first rate, and done well. You will make a good bussiness man if I stay away long enough. *On conditions in Wisconsin:* I see the crops have been poor. It will be quite hard for the farmers in Wisconsin to pay thier heavy taxes with poor crops. *On the recent fighting:* The part we have taken in the Battle of the 8th and the skirmish at Lancaster, has done our men much good. They feel much more confidence in themselves and in me. *He comments on the soldiers' belief in his good luck for the regiment*—you know the Norwegians are superstitious.

IV. THE BATTLE OF MURFREESBORO

To Gunild, October 23, 1862

CAMP NEAR LEBANON KY
October 23d 1862

MY DEAR GUNILD.

I wrote several letters to you by Mathews and others, from Crabb Orchard, the most of which I suppose you have not recieved. Mathews started for Louisville on last Sunday, and has been taken Prisoner by Morgan.[1] He was paroled and I understand has since been sent to Camp Chase Ohio—so I suppose Mr. Morgan has had a chance to read the letters intended for you. I am sory now that I have not written in Norwegian, and no one down here could have got anything out of it. But the best Joke is on the Quarter Master. The day of the Battle of Perryville—he lost all his *teeth* by being thrown from his Horse and he was very anxious to go to Louisville to get a little rest, as he was quite unwell after the fall he had. Well, I suppose he will get some rest now. It is very probable he will get permission to go home a short time. Since we left Crabb Orchard we have marched 3 days, to get to this place. The March is very hard as it is so very dusty. I am as well as usual, and am enjoying myself first rate.

Clauson has returned, and I got all your good letters—and wrote you several in answer to them that I suppose you will not get. I am very glad to know that you have disposed of the Ponies and the Sheep so well.

Dr Himoe, Clauson, McKee and myself are boarding together. We have just commenced a mess together and we are living first rate. The longer we are in the Army the better we learn to take care of ourselves.

[1] General John H. Morgan, Confederate cavalry raider. For a critical account of this figure see Howard Swiggett, *The Rebel Raider* (Indianapolis, 1934).

I was up to Lebanon to day, and there I met Dr Walcott of Milwaukee, and several others from Wisconsin going out to Perryville to see our sick and wounded Soldiers.

We are looking anxiously for some mail, but we get it very slow.

I should like very much to take a trip home, and stay long enough to get my Regiment filled up — and long enough to see you all, and especially to see that little rat *Elmer* that you write so much about. I have not time to write more now. I want to go to bed. Good night my Dear. I will write again to morrow if we stay here.

Your own
HANS

To Gunild, October 26, 1862
[Van Doren Mss.]

Headquarters, Fifteenth Wisconsin, near Lebanon, Kentucky. Moved to new camp yesterday. Necessary to get our men clothed up — our Horses shoed &co — we may stay here a week or more. *Tells of rain and snow:* As the men have no tents I ordered them to build rail huts, and cover them well up with straw. *Reports removal of Buell and elevation of Rosecrans. Opinion of Rosecrans:* He is the best general in the service — and he knows me and my Regiment also.

To Gunild, October 31, 1862

ADDRESS MY LETTERS [*Ms. mutilated*]
BOWLING GREEN KY Oct 31st 1862.

MY DEAR WIFE.

Last Sunday I wrote you a letter from near Lebanon Ky. I had hardly got my letter sealed up before I got orders to march in the morning. I had no time to write again, and have had no opportunity to write since. I have not been well for a few days, and yesterday we came to a place called Cave City where the cars pass through, and I got Clauson

with me and went on the cars to this place, got me a good room at this Hotell, The Morgan House — where I am now staying waiting for the Regiment to come up. It will probably be here to morrow some time. We left it 30 miles from here. I am not sick, but I have hurt myself riding, so that I can not ride Horseback. I am getting better though, and in a couple of days, I shall be all right again I think. I hurt myself first on the day of the Battle at Perryville, but did not pay any attention to it. I have since caught cold and it has laid me up.

I am very comfortably situated here, but miss you very much. It is lonesome to be obliged to lay still, but I have had plenty to read to day, and have passed the time off first rate. We are going on to Nashville, and the Regiment may stay here a day or two to get some shoes, and clothing and be paid off.

There is a good many of my men here — who were left when we passed up towards Louisville, and some have come up from Louisville yesterday and to day. Bart. Willard I have understood is here, but I have not seen him. A good many of my men have been up here to see me to day.

The weather is very fine here now, and we are all feeling first rate at the prospect of being put once more under command of Gen. Rosecranse. We will be away from Buell, as soon as we get to Nashville. There will no doubt be very important work done before New Year down here, and I hope the same will be the case on the Potomac. The war ought to be closed up by the 1st of April anyway, and can be if the Generals in command do their duty.

I have seen pretty thoroughly what it is to be on duty in the field, and I am prepared to stand anything most. All I am anxious for, is to get well enough to get on my black Horse again.

I have had only two letters from you since we left Louisville. We have had no mail for many days. I hope and trust you are all well. I know you can be comfortable if you

are well. I can not hold out any hopes for you that I am comming home. If I should, I will try and let you know before hand. Kiss the children for me. I will write again to morrow. Good bye. Sleep good tonight. Your own

HANS.

To Gunild, November 2, 1862

[Van Doren Mss.]

Morgan House, Bowling Green, Kentucky. I am still stopping at the Hotel where I have a good comfortable room, and live tollerable well. *Predicts peace by spring.* If we can defeat the rebels in Virginia, the whole rebellion is gone up. *Information about family finances.*

To Gunild, undated fragment

From Bowling Green.[2] I have just been up to Rosecranses Head Quarters, and had a shake of the old fellows hand. He always calls me Heck. You do not know how pleased everybody is at the change of Buell for him. *Has had no mail since letter brought by Clausen.*[3] *Refers to Erick Erickson Scheise.* I have not been able to hear from him yet. I am afraid he was taken Prisoner, or that he is left sick at some house. We missed two men from Company C. at the same time — Erick, and a German boy that we have not found yet.[4] *As to a picture:* If I can get a chance to morrow I will have my picture taken and send you in my next letter.

[2] This letter was appended to a partial draft of a letter to the editors of the *Racine Advocate,* in which Colonel Heg began a report on the participation of Wisconsin regiments in the battle of Perryville. The report seems not to have been printed in the *Advocate,* but as has been noted, the *Wisconsin State Journal* of November 8 contains Heg's report to Governor Salomon.

[3] Clausen had been north on leave. It should be noted that because of ill health he resigned his position as chaplain and left the regiment on November 27. A soldier of the Fifteenth wrote to *Emigranten* that the chaplain "in his unassuming manner" had "certainly done much good," and that "it is with sorrow that we see him leave." *Emigranten,* December 8, 1862, and Jorgensen, "Claus L. Clausen," 139.

[4] In the Wisconsin roster "Erick Erickson" is recorded as having been discharged on February 7, 1863, because of disability. *Roster,* 1:810.

To Gunild, November 5, 1862

[Van Doren Mss.]

Morgan House, Bowling Green. The Regt. left yesterday for Nashville. I have been quite sick and unable to travle. I am better now — but will not be able to join the Regiment for several days. *About twenty of his men are in hospitals in Bowling Green. Refers to fight at Perryville and speaks of the important part played by his brigade.*

To Gunild, December 5, 1862

[Van Doren Mss.]

Louisville Hotel, Louisville, Kentucky. The letter is misdated November 5.[5] *Came in afternoon and will leave at eight the next morning for Nashville.* I learned before I left Milwaukee, by Dr Himoes letters to Andrea that the Regiment has started from Nashville and was going south slowly. *He left Milwaukee at two o'clock on the preceding day and arrived at Louisville twenty-four hours later. Discusses property in Waupun.*

To Gunild, December 8, 1862

[Van Doren Mss.]

Camp five miles south of Nashville. Heg arrived Saturday and was welcomed right heartily by the boys. *Gifts for*

[5] Heg was returning from a leave of absence of thirty days. The *Racine Advocate* for Wednesday, November 12, 1862, announced that Colonel Heg had visited its office on the preceding Tuesday. He had suffered an injury when his horse fell with him in the battle of Perryville and his leave was granted him "to come home and recover his health." "Colonel Heg," wrote the *Advocate,* "gives a glowing account of the change produced in the army by the removal of Buell and the appointment of Rosecrans." The notice concludes with the statement that Heg would remain at Waterford, Racine County, "during the next ten or fifteen days." Lars O. Dokken in a letter of December 12, 1862, reports the return of Colonel Heg to his regiment on December 7. Heg brought with him, he says, a mass of gifts of shoes, overshoes, and socks for soldiers in Company C. Ager, *Oberst Heg og Hans Gutter,* 116. It may be noted that General Rosecrans in a special order of November 24 gave honorable mention to the Fifteenth Wisconsin and the Thirty-eighth Illinois for the capture of forty-six prisoners and some equipment taken from guerillas. *Milwaukee Sentinel,* December 4, 1862.

soldiers: The packages for Company C's Boys, you can hardly suppose how gladly they recieved them. *Reports that Erick Scheise was last heard from at Bardstown Hospital.* I am glad I brought the Butter, it costs 75cts a pound here. *Speaks of sale of house in Waupun and plans to buy new house for Gunild.*

To Gunild, December 11, 1862

[Van Doren Mss.]

CAMP NEAR NASHVILLE TENN
Dec 11th 1862.

MY DEAR GUNILD

I would have written to you yesterday being our *marriage day* — did you remember it?

Eleven years ago — in the old log house — it does not seem so very long to me — how many changes since then. I think we have spent those eleven years as happily as most people — 14 years more, and we can have our silver wedding. I hope we may. I find myself very well contented in my old tent once more, the officers and men are rejoiced to meet me. I have got me a cotton Mattrass, a Stove, and I have not much to do. The enemy is said to be close by us, but there is not any prospect of an imidiate Battle. We can not tell though, a Battle may occur any time. We are prepared for them. They will not find another such a lot of men as they found at Hartsville, where the rebels took a whole Brigade prisoners. You must not think that because I say that I am so well contented down with my Regiment, that I was not as much contented while at home. I did feel as happy as I ever did in my life and nothing in the world would have pleased me more than to have stayed with you all right along, but I felt ashamed when I got to Milwaukee and Madison and saw so many officers loafing around the streets. I felt as if it was a shame for an officer to be away from his command. As I sit here writing the report comes that Rich-

THE HEG MONUMENT AT MADISON, WISCONSIN
PAUL FJELDE, SCULPTOR

mond is taken. It is too good to be true — but may it not be. I hope to God it is true for once.

My last letter was written to Edmund, and I ought to have written to Hilda this time. I can not now, but if I have time I will write to her to morrow.

We have orders to give up our tents, and go into what is called *Shelter tents*. They are very small just big enough for Three men to lay in. I have a right to keep three big tents for the Head Quarters, one for myself, one for the Major and Lt. Col. and one for the Adjt. and Quarter Master. I may have Doctor Himoe with me in my tent — Though he is Brigade Surgeon, and as soon as another Surgeon comes for our Regiment, he may go up to Col. Carlins Head Quarters.

We moved our camp yesterday, we are now in a fine grove about half way between the Franklin and Murfreesborro Pike — about 5 Miles from Nashville.

The rebels are not very far off, as they are seen every day by our Pickets.

To Morrow I am Field Officer of the day, and shall take a ride along our lines and see what I can see.

Good bye again my Dear wife.

Your own HANS.

To Hilda, December 13, 1862

[Van Doren Mss.]

Camp near Nashville. Plans to send Hilda a saddle next spring. Asks her to commence taking music lessons again. Assures her that every body likes Hilda Heg. *Postscript to Gunild. Speaks of the happiness of the soldiers in receiving mittens and socks.*

To Gunild, December 15, 1862

CAMP NEAR NASHVILLE, Dec 15th 1862

MY DEAR GUNILD.

Yesterday was quite a long Sunday but I did not get time

to write any letter for the reason that I had considerable other writing to do. The wind has been blowing terribly from the south for several days, and shaken my tent so as to almost tear it down. The enemy is close by us in front, and we see them every day. Co. B. had quite a skirmish with some of the enemys cavalry yesterday, being sent out with a forage train. None of our men were hurt, while they claim that several of the rebels had to bite the dust. I got orders last night to keep the men up and under arms after 4 o'clock this morning, which was done, but nothing occurred. Every thing is now quiet. I hardly believe we will have any fight here. Rosecranse is evidently waiting for the enemy to attack him. If we can get them to pitch into us, we can give them a big threshing. Matters are looking better now than they have ever done — and the war can not be a very long one. I am feeling remarkably well. We have good living and plenty of it, for instance we had for supper last night — Roast Turkey, Roast Beef — Potatoes, Pickles, soft Bread — Peach Sauce, Apple Pie, and cake — with tea and coffee. I think that we are beating you just now, in the way we live. We bought us a small cooking stove, and we have got hold of one of the best and neatest cooks I ever saw. I bought me a Moss Mattrass for 7^{50}, also a stove for my tent for $5.^{00}$ so that, if I only had you with me, I could be as comfortable as any one in the world, but oh — how I miss you. Time passes off so fast, and I have so much to attend to that it is very easy for me. I remember you most — while alone on my cott, at night. I have been away so long that I trust you will not fret as much as you have done. If you will only have patience, it will be so pleasant when I can come back again for good, and stay with you all the time. It would not be pleasant for me to come back untill I have done my duty in this crisis. I would rather stay the entire Three years than return to have people point their fingers at me as a coward, who got too homesick to stay in the army.

Whatever you and I have to suffer now by being seperated

we will make up for sometime hereafter. I think we will make a short march to morrow to some place. I just rec^d orders to that effect.

I will close again. I may not get chance to write again for a few days.

Good Bye — my own.

Yours,
HANS.

I sent $400. by express to Farmers and Millers Bank — and ordered them to send you the certifficate.

To Hilda, December 19, 1862

[Van Doren Mss.]

Camp near Nashville. Next fall I am comming home to stay for good, and then we will have nice times, wont we? *Touches on many matters.* I want to hear that Hilda Heg is the best girl in Waterford. . . . When I get into Battle I might get shot, but if you are a good girl and Edmund is a good boy, God will take care of me for you.

To Gunild, December 22, 1862

[Van Doren Mss.]

Camp near Nashville. Yesterday his birthday. Received letters as presents. Description of routine of day. Wrote long letter to Holton of Milwaukee yesterday.

To Gunild, December 24, 1862

CAMP NEAR NASHVILLE. Dec 24th 1862

MY DEAR GUNILD.

For two days, I have not been able to write to you, as I have been on duty part of the time, and this morning at 5 oclock we were called up and ordered to march at daylight. We got up and was ready, but did not march till 2 oclock in the afternoon. When we started, we headed south, but went

only two or three miles, and got orders to go back to camp. I have no idea what this march meant — it is kept entirely dark, but there is no doubt but that there will be lively times here pretty soon. We got back to camp a little before sun down, and got our tents up again in the same place and everything fixed in nice condition. This evening we were all invited by Heyer to take a Christmas supper with him. He is boarding the officers, and has his Hotel in a school House close by the camp. I have just returned from the party. We had a nice little time. The best fun was got up by me, getting one of the boys dressed up in wemens cloths, and comming into the house just as if I had a lady on my arm. Dr. Himoe also had the same kind of a woman with him, and we kept the house roaring for a good long time. The boys — including myself — have had a jolly *Christmas Eve*. It does not seem to make much difference, even if there is a prospect of fighting soon. The men are in good spirits — and as jolly as ever.

My comming back to the Regiment, has made a great change. It was a very good thing for me that I went away — the men, and the officers have learned something by my absence.

We have got orders to move again to morrow morning. Where we are going, no one knows I suppose, except old *Rosy*, as he is called.

It is 10 o'clock, and I have to get up at half past three — but I do not know how soon I will get a chance to write again, and I would not go to bed before I finished a letter to you.

I hope you will not feel uneasy for me if you do not hear from me for a few days. I shall write again as soon as we have an opportunity, — there is so much uncertainty about our movements, that we can not tell a half an hour before what is to happen — or where we are to go. We may not move at all to morrow. We have often had orders in the evening that were changed again in the morning. If we

should not march to morrow, then I will write you again to morrow evening. I have fully recovered, and I think I am just as well as I have ever been. I am taking good care of myself — and if a Bullet should not hit me, I have not much fears about standing anything els that is to come.

The weather is splendid. It is just as warm as May or June in Wisconsin. The men are most all well — and feeling in good condition. We have enough to eat, and I think our men are capable of standing more than anybody els in the service.

You may expect to hear that the rebels are soundly whipped down here, after we get hold of them. I do not think there will be another such affair as at Fredricksburg.

I should like to fill my sheet — but I must have a little sleep and I must close.

It is Christmas to morrow. I wish you all a merry Christmas — and a happy New Year — and I shall hope to spend the next Christmas with my Dear wife and little ones.

God bless you all.

Your own
HANS.

To Gunild, December 25, 1862

CAMP NEAR NASHVILLE Dec 25th 1862

DEAR GUNILD.

I wrote to you last night, and promised, if we did not march this morning I would write again to night. As I expected, we did not go this morning, but I was ordered to take my Regiment out with a waggon train after forage — so I started out at 7 o'clock this morning, and I have spent Christmas out amongst the Secesh. We met the enemy — and got a good chance to fire at them, but they run as usual without trying to fight. They fired a few shots at us and put spurs to their horses.

We went out about 8 miles on the Franklin road. They

say in camp that they have heard firing all day in the direction of Nolandsville, and I should not be surprised if there has been quite a fight out on the left of where I went out. We have orders to be ready to march at an early hour to morrow morning, but I think it is like the order we got last night. At all events we can not march very far, for the rebels are very strong not but a few miles from us. I am very tired, and can not write you a very long letter. I did not sleep much last night, and have been in the saddle since 7 o'clock till just now, and it is 8 o'clock now. I must stop again. I am feeling first rate. Good bye to you all. I send you a Christmas *Kiss*.

Your Own
HANS C.

To Gunild, December 26, 1862

[Van Doren Mss.]

Camp near Nashville. We shall move this morning, where to I am unable to tell. *Reports change in number of brigade and division* — it is now 2d Brigade — 1st Divission.

To Gunild, December 27, 1862

ON THE BATTLE FIELD NEAR NOLANDSVILLE
December 27th 1862.

MY DEAR WIFE.

I am still safe and sound. The 15th imortalised itself yesterday.[6] I charged with my Regiment up to a Battery and captured one Brass Cannon, 7 Horses, 3 Prisoners and one Caison — and what is the best of all — not one man wounded. We fought yesterday for 4 hours, after having marched during a heavy rain, through mud knee deep some places. We have driven them so far, and we are bound to do it all the time.

[6] The action here described took place on December 26 at Knob Gap, near Nolensville. See Cist, *The Army of the Cumberland*, 87–89, and Van Horne, *History of the Army of the Cumberland*, 1:220.

Several of my men were knocked down by shots, and pieces of shell but strange to say not one is scratched. The Brigade has lost as far as heard from som 5 or 6 killed and 12 or 14 wounded.

We left camp yesterday at 7 A.M. Marched till 12 o'clock through heavy rain, and fought the rest of the day till nearly dark.

The cannon captured by the 15th is the only one taken, that I know of — and belonged to the 14th Georgia Battery, and the Prisoners say it was captured from us at Shilo.[7] Give this to Ole & let him give us credit for what [we] have done — in the Sentinell.

Good bye my Dear. Your own

HANS

To Gunild, December 28, 1862

IN CAMP NEAR NOLANDSVILLE
ABOUT 18 MILES FROM NASHVILLE
Dec 28th 1862.

MY DEAR —

I am afraid you are becomming anxious for me. I know you have had no letter from me for some time. I wrote yesterday with a Pencil stating that I was safe and sound, after a sharp Battle, in which we (the 15th) captured a Brass Cannon and Three Prisoners. We have only moved two miles since day before yesterday and are laying quietly in camp drying up. Dr. Himoe is well again. The men never felt any better. I was myself first at the Cannon and secured it, and the Prisoners.

Even is going home and will of course give you all the news. I am as well as I ever was. The rebels have no doubt left Murfreesboro — and we shall have no fight this side of Chattanooga.

Our Brigade lost in the fight three killed and 10 or 12 wounded. The 15th lost none.

[7] Cist states that two guns were taken. *The Army of the Cumberland*, 88.

We have won a reputation now, that will be hard to beat. It is very probable that letters will get through very unregular, and that we will not have chance to write as often as heretofore, but you must not get uneasy. I shall take as good care of myself as possible. You must do the same. The rail road between Louisville and Nashville has been torn open again I understand, and we will not of course get any mail for a few days.

I have given an account of our exploit, in capturing the Caisson, to the Govornor, and Fleischer, so you will see an account of it in the papers soon.[8] I have not time to write as much as I would like. I will do better next time.

I have now gone through several sharp fights, and I am getting quite well used to the music of war. Providence will yet lead me through this terrible struggle, and send me safe home to my nice little family.

I never fail in courage. You will not hear that I have ever played the coward.

My Dear wife — I hope you may always have occation to feel satisfied, and prowd of my behavior.

Once more good bye.

Your own
HANS.

To Gunild, January 4, 1863

BATTLE FIELD NEAR MURFREESBORRO
Jan. 4th 1863

MY DEAREST WIFE.

Thank God I am still able to let you know that I am safe and well. We have fought a terrible Battle, and lost a great

[8] K. J. Fleischer was on the staff of *Emigranten*. A letter from Colonel Heg to Governor Salomon appears in *Emigranten* for January 12, 1863, accompanied by one of Colonel Carlin, the brigade commander, praising the regiments of the brigade for their part in the action. *Emigranten* of the same date also publishes a very interesting letter of December 28, 1862, by one of the officers of the Fifteenth. Another detailed report written by a soldier of the regiment appears in *Emigranten* for February 2, 1863. It includes a warm tribute to Colonel Heg.

many men.[9] My noble Regiment is badly cut up. We were in Three heavy engagements, first on Tuesday evening, when I lost between 40 and 50 men killed & wounded. Amongst the killed was Capt. Ingmandson — and wounded, Capt. [Mons] Grinager, and Capt. [George] Wilson, the latter only slightly. I had my big Horse shot from under me. On the next day we fought twice. The 1st time Lt. Col. McKee was killed. Lt [Christian E.] Tanberg wounded & taken prisoner, also our new Lt. [John N.] Brown who belonged to Co I, but was on duty in Co E. I will give you the names of the killed, wounded and missing in Co. C for information to their friends. Killed — Mathis Krashus[10] — Gunder E. Hanson & Knud Finkelson. Wounded and supposed to be taken prisoners — Hans Jacobson Ronningen — Samuel Johnson — Knud Hanson — and Jacob Jordd [Jordahl]. There are some more missing in Co. C but not from Muskego. I can give no description of the Battle. I have lost one Horse and saddle, all my baggage except what I have on my body which is my old coat and Pants. Send by Even Skofstad one wollen under shirt and one over shirt also a pair of Drawers and a good pair of gloves.

My Dear — for your own sake as well as for my own I beg you not [to] feel uneasy for me. I have passed through thus far unhurt and Providence will yet bring me safely through the struggle. I have been in the thickest of the fight and led my men whereever they have fought. The official account of my action will be no disgrace to you or me. Lt. Col. McKee was shot through the head, but his body has not been recovered.

There is no use denying the fact we were badly whipped the first day — for the same reason as usual — an infernal fool of a General allowing himself to be surprised. Gen [R. W.] Johnson on our right was attacked while his men were

[9] On the battle of Stone River, or Murfreesboro, which Heg here describes, see the account and accompanying footnotes in the introductory sketch.

[10] See note on Mathias Mathiasen, *ante*, p. 66, n. 18.

in bed, and whipped.[11] This being the case were outflanked, and we fought to no purpose. The Rebels had it all their own way till about 12 °clock when old Rosy met them himself — and routed them terribly. There has been two or three severe Battles since Wednesday in which the rebels have been badly whipped. We have not got Murfreesborro yet, but they will be beaten out of there before many days. Thousands have been killed and wounded on both sides. So far I think the rebels have suffered the most. I have no means of writing any more. Dr Himoe is well. I have had a hard time, but it is soon forgotten. We are resting to day. Let Ole see this. I have no time to write to anybody els. Maj. Johnson writes to Emigranten.[12] M[a]y God bless you, and save me for your sake. Your own

HANS.

To Gunild, January 6, 1863

CAMP NEAR MURFREESBORRO January 6th 1863.

MY DEAR

I am able at last to sit down and give you a full account of the tremendious Battle we have just fought. On the 26th of Dec. we left our camp near Nashville, and sent all our teams back to the city. On the same day, after marching 10 miles in a heavy rain we had an engagement with the enemy, drove them, and my Regiment captured one cannon without losing a man. The next day it rained very heavy, and we advanced only about 2 miles and camped near Nolandsville. The next day was Sunday and we remained quiet, the weather being good. Monday morning we started

[11] An account of the Stone River campaign may be found in Van Horne, *History of the Army of the Cumberland*, 1:ch. 17.

[12] A long and interesting letter from Major Ole C. Johnson to his brother John A. Johnson, dated January 7, appears in *Emigranten* for January 17, 1863. "It is unnecessary," he writes at the close of this letter, "to say anything about Colonel Heg's part in the battle. You are acquainted with him and you know that he would not swerve an inch from his duty. He has always been at his post and has done everything in his power to ease the sufferings of his soldiers. The regiment has a devotion to him that increases daily."

again towards Murfreesborro, but met no enemy that day. In the evening we camped about 6 miles from Murfreesborro, so near the enemy that we were not allowed to have any fire. About 6 o'clock Tuesday morning we left our camp, in line of Battle, expecting to have a fight that day, and about noon, having come four Miles we met the enemys skirmishers in a heavy piece of woods. Lt Col. McKee was ahead with our skirmishers, Captain Ingmandsons Company, and they kept up firing till 2 oclock, when Capt Ingmanson was killed, and one more of his company badly wounded. My Regt. and the 21st Ill. was in advance, and was ordered to attack the enemy. This my Regiment did in fine style. Advancing clear up to where the enemy laid, under the heaviest fire I ever saw, both from Cannon and musketry, but the Regiment on my right gave away and run back. Nothing then was left for me but to fall back as well as I could. I fell back only one Hundred yards to a rail fence, giving the enemy two solid volleys as we retreated. In this engagement Capt Grinager was shot through the leg, but stayed with his company like a hero till he fainted from loss of Blood. Capt Wilson was slightly wounded, also Lt [Thor] Simonson of Co. F. In this charge fell also Gunder Hanson of Co C. son of the old man at Oles Store, and about 6 others killed and about 30 wounded. Our dead and wounded we got off to a House near by, and they were well taken care off. We had no fire during the night, and remained on the field where we fought. My Horse was shot through the head while I was on him, a ball evidently intended for me. After that time I remained on foot. Before daylight in the morning we were up and ready for an attack, — but the attack was made on our right, General Johnsons Divission. He, it is reported was taken by surprise, his men being mostly in bed. His men off course run, but it was not known by our Brigade commander that Johnson had given away and we remained in our place till the enemy came upon us in force. After moving around a little I stationed my men behind a rail fence and waited till all the

other Regiments had given away and retreated past us, when I ordered the men to fire.[13] I gave commands to my men, and kept up fire till the whole force of the rebels had almost sorounded my little band of heroes, for they are nothing els. Lt. Col. Mc.Kee fell here — shot through the Head — Lt. Tanberg was wounded, Lt. Brown of Co E. also, and both taken prisoners. We now had to retreat through an open field while the rebels poured into us an awfull volley of musket balls. What men I had left, about 100 — I again rallied on the other side of the field, and in company with what was left of the Brigade, retreated towards the Murfreesborro Turnpike where we knew old Rosy was stationed with the center of the Army. We made one more stand just before we came up to the turnpike and gave the rebels another warm time, but there was too many of them and we were again forced to give away. Here Mathis Krashus was killed. As we retreated, the Rebels came pouring along shouting like Indians, through a cedar t[h]icket little dreaming what they had to meet. No sooner were they out of the cedars, than old Rosy opened on them. It is impossible for me to describe the terrible slaughter they met. All his Artillery and his best Infantry were here massed and for the first time the victorious rebels found themselves checked. During the rest of the afternoon our Brigade remained quiet, and I rode up to witness the Battle as it raged. Not satisfied with their first repuls, they again rallied three or four times, only to be routed anew, with the most terrible slaughter. When night came we had beaten the enemy but they still held the ground that our divission fought them on in the morning, and held the Hospital we had established the evening before taking all the wounded prisoners. This was the last day of the Year 1862. The longest day I have ever spent in my life and I hope never again to see so gloomy a day. The night came, but we could off course have no fire. It was a cold frosty night,

[13] Someone has drawn a line through the first six words of this sentence in the original letter.

and as I walked along my little regiment, watching the men sitting on the rocks and cold ground shivering from frost, I could not help but think how little the people at home know of the suffering of the soldier.[14]

The bright New Years morning came, and with it the same rattle of cannon and musketry. We however remained quiet, and built a strong fortification in front of us. All the fighting that day was done by the forces to our left, excepting a skirmish, in which our skirmishers took part, where we captured over two Hundred Prisoners and never lost a man. The fighting altogether was against the rebels. Another cold night and no fire. A sharp engagement on Friday morning where the rebels were again beaten. About 3 oclock in the afternoon another terrible Battle commenced on our left, at first the rebels drove our men a little but it soon changed. The Rebels were put to flight, and old Rosy came galloping down the Pike where we lay, the sweat pouring down his face, and sent for Col. Carlin. He told Carlin the enemy was routed and ordered him to advance with his Brigade to persue them. His exact words to Carlin were — "I beg you for the sake of the Country and for my own sake to go at them with all your might. Go at them with a whoop and a Yell." I had the honor of leading my little regiment in the advance. The place belonged to the 21st Ill. but we had earned the reputation of doing the best fighting on the Tuesday and Wednesday before, and Carlin remarked to me as he ordered me to lead — "I can rely on you all the time." We advanced over two miles, driving the Rebels towards Murfreesborro in a perfect rout. Again the Balls flew around us, but no attention was paid to that. We never fired a Gun but pressed on capturing a great number of Prisoners. It soon got too dark however, and we were compelled to give up the chase. This

[14] "The cold night fell," writes James K. Hosmer in his historical account of the same event, "the winter heavens dimly lighting up the groups shivering by the camp-fires and the dreadful field with its burden of mutilation and death." *The Appeal to Arms*, 233 (*The American Nation: A History*, vol. 20 — New York, 1907).

time the whole Rebel Army was routed, and two hours of daylight would have enabled us to have captured and routed the entire force. We did not halt till the moon was up, and we were within one and a half miles of Murfreesborro. Now came the most trying time of the whole Battle. It commenced raining, and again we were to spend another night without tents or fire. The next morning we found ourselves knee deep in mud, and the rain still pouring down. We were now without any thing to eat, no coffee, and every man wet to the skin, and the mud getting deeper and deeper. It was no doubt Rosy[s] intention to have attacked them during the day, but the rain and mud prevented it. This was Saturday. As night came on there was another heavy engagement on our right, after dark — in which it is reported that the Rebels lost heavyly and were defeated. About two oclock in the night we got orders to leave our position and retire to the rear. We then marched back to this place, and for the first time for five days and nights were again where we could build comfortable fires. Sunday morning, the sun came out bright, and as we sat by our big fires rosting our pork and cooking our coffee, the report came that the Rebels had left and that old Rosy was persuing them with fresh troops. I am still ignorant of what Rosecrance is doing. Yesterday we heard heavy firing, and all sorts of reports are in circulation. One thing is very certain, we have got Murfreesborro, and driven the rebel army, what there is left of it, towards Chattanooga. While we have lost a great many men, it is also certain that the Rebels have lost much more. I have thus far given you an account of what I know about the great Battle. Now I will say a little about myself.

Although I have lost a splendid Horse & Saddle, my Blankets and Bedding, my sachell with all my cloths, and have nothing left me except what I have on me, I am thankfull that Providence led me through the terrible struggle safly. Poor Mc.Kee, I believe he expected to be killed. He was very gloomy the day before, and in the morning before the

fight began, he asked his hostler to take his horse — and wanted him to take his watch, and also gave D[r] Himoe most of his money. I did not see him fall, but he was not more than two or three Hundred feet from me. The smoke, and noise was so heavy, that little could be seen or heard. Peter Stangeland saw him fall — but we did not get his body till yesterday. When we found him he was stripped of all his clothing except his drawers and shirt.

I stood behind a small tree,[15] giving commands to my men, and heard the balls strike the tree several times. Yesterday I counted five Balls in the little tree in front of me. One ball the first evening went through my over coat. During our hard suffering from frost and hunger, I often had opportunities to feel thankfull to my men — as they would often come to me and enquire about how I got along and divide a cracker, or a cup of coffee, when I was willing to take it. Many of them came to me with tears in their eys, as they shook hands with me. It is well worth the suffering I have had to go through, when I remember how bravely and how faithfully these men have stood by me — and how well they have sustained our reput[at]ion for coolness and bravery in Battle. But I will let some one els do justice to their valor. I went into Battle with 304 men. I have 13 killed, 70 Wounded and 34 missing. Nearly all the missing were wounded and afterwards taken prisoners. Out of 9 Field officers in the Brigade, 3 were killed and one badly wounded. I have not seen the report, but one half of the Brigade is gone — mostly wounded. About 150 are killed. My noble Horse was not shot dead at the time he was hit. I found him the next morning, and thought I could save him, but had to leave him when I retreated, and yesterday I found the poor fellow on the Battlefield with at least a Dozen more Bullets in him.

Even Skofstad has been trying to go home for sometime, and will leave again to morrow. I shall send with him my

[15] These words in the original letter have been crossed out.

black horse as I have got a couple of good captured Horses in my possession that I will try to get. I am also sending home with him one of the best negro boys that I have yet found. You will find him honest and faithfull, and he considers himself as belonging to me. I am sure you will like him. If you have not work enough for him during the winter, you may let him work for Ole if he has anything to do for him. I want him on my farm when I come home. He will take good care of the horse and I have told him to get him broke for a Buggy, and you must get a light Buggy Harness, and use him for yourself and the children. I also want you to get me a coat made at the same place I got the other one. *Mr Tracy*, in Milwaukee, they have got my measure. Get me also a Sachell, like the one I had, a couple of the same kind of shirts you made me, an under shirt and a pair of Drawers, also a pair of slippers, or light shoes. I happened to have 2 pairs of Socks & 2 towels in my Saddle roll — this is all I have left. I have got only my old coat and heavy Pants on, but I do not want any new Pants. I can not think of any more to write at present. We shall probably stay where we are for some time, and should I get to any place where I could see that you would be comfortable, I, as well as Doctor Himoe intend to send for our Darlings, to come and stay with us. I have written several letters to you since I left Nashville, most of which I suppose you have not got. We are to move camp again. Good bye my Dearest Wife. You may let your friends see this letter.

Your Hans

To Gunild, January 8, 1863

In Camp near Murfreesborro
January 8th 1863

My Dear Gunild.

I hope that by the time you receive this letter, you will have heard of my being safly and comfortably situated again.

Even Skofstad started for home yesterday, and took with a letter that I wrote the day before giving a full discription of the great Battle, or at least the part I took in it. We have since moved our camp so that we are now about 3 miles south of Murfreesborro, on what is called the Franklin Pike. The Rebels left in great hurry and have no doubt gone to Chattanooga where we will have our next tussle with them.

Old Rosecranse can, and will whip them every time. He will be the great man in this war yet. I think he is the best, bravest and biggest general we have got. We have lost a great many men in this Battle, perhaps six or eight Thousand killed and wounded, many of them however are not much wounded and will soon be fit for duty. The Battle ground covers several miles and you can fairly say that the ground is covered with dead men and dead Horses. It is no doubt the biggest Battle yet fought during the Rebellion. Our men suffered tremendiously, as we had very little to eat, and were not permitted to have fires, and for two days and night[s] the rain poured down upon us, making the mud almost knee deep. You have no idea up in Wisconsin what we have had to go through. But it is all forgotten again as soon as we get back into our comfortable tents talking over what we saw and did. I can not say that any time during the fight I had any such thing as fear. I seemed to feel certain that there was no ball intended for me. There is only one thing that would have any tendency to make me a coward, and that is when I remember that it would be so terrible hard for you to loose me. During the heaviest fight on Wednesday the 31st I stood for about half an hour behind a small tree, and I heard the Balls strike the tree very often. As I went down on the spot a couple of days ago I found the little tree and found five Balls in it opposite to where I stood.

I have been very bussy to day making out my Report, and just sent it in this evening. I shall send a copy of it, and also a copy of Col. Carlins to the Milwaukee Sentinell or State Journal, so you may look in one of those papers for it.

Col. Carlin pays me a very fine compliment in his report.[16] I have got hold of a very fine Mare to ride instead of the Horse I lost.

The Army is being reorganised and put in order again, and in a short time you will hear of old Rosy heading off towards Chattanooga, and give them another good threshing.

My Regiment is very small now. I have only a little over 200 men left, but I think perhaps I may get my two companies from Island N° 10 now that the Island is evacuated.

The whole country from here to Nashville is completly ruined. Every house is burned and not a fence rail to be seen. What has become of the poor wemen and children I do not know. I begin to feel almost glad to see this destruction, for I have come to the conclusion that nothing will ever bring these people to their senses, and the sooner their places are filled by some others the Better and if the country is ruined and their farms destroyed they certainly can not raise anything for the rebel Armys to live on.

It makes a man pretty hard hearted to be a soldier long. I have got so I almost feel indifferent as to how rebels suffer, although many of the[redacted]doubt have been forced and fooled into this war.

We miss McKee considerable, at least I do for he was good company. He was not very popular with the men. Dr Himoe has had his hands full for sometime now. Our new Doctors have none of them arived. It is very curious that men can be so negligent when it is well known that we need them so badly. I hope *Phelan,* my Darkey will come home safe and that you will be pleased with him. He has been so faithfull to me that I can not doubt but that he will be just as faithfull to you. You may not have much to do for him

[16] Carlin's report is printed in *War of the Rebellion,* series 1, vol. 20, part 1, p. 279–283. Colonel Heg's official report seems not to have been included in the *War of the Rebellion,* but it is printed in the *Wisconsin State Journal* of Madison for January 17, 1863, together with a letter of transmittal to Governor Salomon Colonel Heg's report was dated January 9, 1863.

yet, but you can find enough when spring comes, and when I come home I will put him to work on my farm. It is quite late, and I want to go to bed so I must stop my scribling. The Regiment is on Picket, and Major Johnson is in command with it. I am taking it quite easy now. I will write often again as soon as the mail begins to run regular. I have had no mail at all since we left Nashville, but are looking for some every day. You must not fret for me now. Take good care of yourself and the children and trust my chances to a kind Providence. You can do no good by feeling uneasy for me. There is no prospect for any more fighting this month and perhaps not next.

My Dear One Good Bye — Once more

Your own HANS.

To Gunild, January 10, 1863

CAMP NEAR MURFREESBORO Jan 10th 1863

MY DEAR.

For a couple of days I have been so bussy that I have had no time to write to you. I have worked very hard making out my report and other matters that had to be attended to, as well as taking a little rest. I was nearly used up when this fight was over — but I have had a good long time to lay still in, and I expect we will lay here at least a week or two. I have been so quiet in my tent that I have not heard any news — but to morrow or next day I intend to go up to Murfreesboro and see old Rosecranse.

I shall wait very anxiously for Even Skofstad to come back, with the articles I wrote for. I was lucky enough to find my stove in one of the waggons, and my Cott bed — but my Blankets and Mattrass are gone. I have got Blankets enough again however. What I need, and what I am most sory for is my new Suit of Cloths, and the nice shirts you made. Luckily I have one of them on me.

I have sent a copy of my Report to the Govornor, and also a copy of Col. Carlins report, both will be published, and I want you to get a copy of those and keep them. I hope you will keep a copy of all corespondence &c. of the 15th that you find in Newspapers. It will be interesting hereafter to have it. I am writing to E. D. Holton of Milwaukee and I see he publishes some of it in the Sentinell. You must take the Sentinel all the time. I would like to send you a copy of Carlins report, but it is too long to write out. I copy what he say[s] about somebody that you have some interest in. He says — "I deem it my duty to call the special Attention of the Genl. comanding the 14th Army Corps (Gen Rosecranse) to Col. Hans C. Heg, 15 Wis Vols. and Col J. W. S. Alexander 21st Ill. vols. While every field officer under my command did his duty faithfully — Cols Heg and Alexander in my opinion proved themselves the bravest of the brave. Had such men as these been in command of some of our Brigades we would have been spared the shame of witnessing the rout of our troops and the disgracefull panic encouraged at least by the example and advise of officers high in command." [17]

I can assure you that however badly the troops were beaten on our side at the time he speaks of — The 15th conducted itself with more credit than any other Regiments during the day. I know that you will say that you do not care — if I only was at home again with you. I know you do care though. How would [you] like to have said by the newspapers that Col. Heg ran like a coward? I will be back home again, but not untill I have done some good in this war. I have already done some, but there is much more yet to be done. I hope you will feel satisfied and contented, and be happy to know that I came out of this great Battle with good credit, and did my duty bravly — and that Providence spared

[17] This part of Carlin's report is printed in *War of the Rebellion*, series 1, vol. 20, part 1, p. 282. There are a few minor changes in Heg's version of the statement.

COLONEL HANS CHRISTIAN HEG

[From a portrait in Grand Army Memorial Hall, Madison, Wisconsin.]

my life. Good night my Dear One. Kiss the children for me.

Your own HANS

To Hilda, January 12, 1863

[Van Doren Mss.]

CAMP NEAR MURFREESBORO Jan. 12th 1863.

MY DEAR LITTLE HILDA,

I have expected to get a nice letter from you, but the mail does not come very regular and I have not got any letter since the big Battle from any of you. Yesterday was Sunday, and it was a very nice warm day. We have no snow down here, and no cold weather. I wished very much yesterday that I could have been at home with you, and seen how you got along.

I have sent home my Black Horse now, and I want Edmund should keep him and give you the Pony. He is just right for you. And I have sent a Negro home to take care of your Horses for you. Ma says in her letters that you are a good girl and I am so glad to hear it. I have been in a big Battle, and the Balls came very thick around me, but I was not hurt, because you were good children and God took care of me so that I could get home again to you. A great many little girls like you, have lost their fathers in this Battle. You must be good to Elmer and to your Mother. The Negro I have sent home is a very good man, and when you get aquainted with him you will like him. I am going to try and get you a present for your Birthday if I can. Next time I will write to Edmund. I have written so many letters to Ma — that I do not owe her any now. Tell Ma that I am well, and I have everything very comfortable. I sent my Black Horse home, because he was getting poor, and I was afraid I might lose him. Good Bye. Your Pa

HANS.

To Gunild, January 13, 1863

[Van Doren Mss.]

Camp near Murfreesboro. We are resting ourselves and fixing up after the great Battle. *Speaks of his losses:* My Regiment is not what it used to be — I have got about 200 men for duty. *He is boarding at the hospital and living well. Postscript to Nebby.*

To Gunild, January 14, 1863

CAMP NEAR NASHVILLE TENN
Jan 14th 1862 [1863]

MY DEAREST.

To morrow our whole Brigade is ordered to go on Picket for one day. I do not think we go more than a mile or two from camp but as I shall not have chance to write to morrow, so I must do it to night. It is raining very hard this evening, but it is mild as summer. I am very comfortable however in my tent, and I have got some exelent company. Dr Wooster of Racine and Dr Trenckler both came here last night.[18] Wooster stops in my tent with me at present. I went out on a Forage expedition yesterday and returned in the evening. To day I went down to Murfreesboro and called on old Rosy. He shook hands with me as cordially as he generally does and asked how my Rgt stood it after the fight. I send you a very nice piece of Poetry, but you must not think that I am quite as homesick as that represents. I saw that it was reported in the papers that I had lost 7 captains in the Battle, and Dr Wooster said the report came to Wisconsin that the whole Regiment was almost destroyed. Not quite so bad as that. I have yet over 200 men with me here for duty. I suppose when I have fought till all my men are gone that I will get permission to go home to my little

[18] Dr. Oscar Trenkler of Eau Claire was appointed first assistant surgeon of the regiment on December 15, 1862. Dr. Daniel P. Wooster of Racine had been made second assistant surgeon five days earlier. Dr. Wooster resigned on March 2 and Dr. Trenkler on June 1, 1863. *Roster*, 1:804.

family. I am glad to hear that no report came that I was killed. I was afraid such things might be reported and that you would feel so bad about it. I am living well and just as healthy as I used to be. I am getting as fat again as I was before I got sick. I am only waiting for Even Skofstad to come back and bring me those things that I wrote to you about. I am quite ragged and dirty — but as there is no *Ladies* down here to shine up to so that it makes but very little difference.

I have nothing more to write about and must therefor stop.

I hope you have seen my report printed by this time — and I know you will feel happy to know that I did my duty and came through safe.

Good night my Dear Gunild,

Your Own HANS

To Gunild, January 17, 1863

[Van Doren Mss.]

Camp near Murfreesboro. Refers to his many letters telling about the recent battle. Commanded the brigade on picket duty. Sadly in need of new clothes. Interested in Wisconsin reports of battle. Postscript to Edmund.

To Gunild, January 19, 1863

[Van Doren Mss.]

Camp near Murfreesboro. The letter is incorrectly dated 1862. Heg reports little to do except picket or escort duty. Many of our wounded men have died since the Battle. The weather and everything els has been unfavorable for sick and wounded persons. *He acknowledges gifts of articles from the Soldiers' Aid Society in Norway. Again refers to the battle and his own escape.* I am going to return home all safe to you and my little ones after I have done my duty in this war.

To Gunild, January 21, 1863

[Van Doren Mss.]

Camp near Murfreesboro. Letter is incorrectly dated 1862. Yesterday I had quite a Spat with Jeff. C. Davis—our Division Commander—he is a proslavery General, and he is down on the Abolitionists. I had some plain talk with him, and told him what I thought of proslavery Generals—I have no good feeling for him, and I have made up my mind that I will not go into another Battle under his command. *Heg and Carlin have asked Rosecrans to relieve Davis from his command of the division.* I shall not remain in the service longer than till next fall, I dont think, whether the war closes or not.

To Hilda, January 22, 1863

[Van Doren Mss.]

Camp near Murfreesboro. Letter incorrectly dated 1862. Asks Hilda to try to persuade her mother to get her a music teacher. I hope by this time my Horse has come home, and also my Negro Boy Phelan.

To Gunild, January 23, 1863

[Van Doren Mss.]

Camp near Murfreesboro. Every Battle I have been in, I have gone into with a certain conciousness that I would come out of it all right. *Refers to his luck:* I have always been fortunate, and you know I never look on the dark side of any thing. *Sentimental recollection of days when he peddled cranberries. Heg calls this letter his love letter to Gunild.*

To Gunild, January 26, 1863

[Van Doren Mss.]

Camp near Murfreesboro. Commanded brigade on picket. Hopes for promotion and for favorable influence of Norwegians in Wisconsin. Violent outburst against all the traitors at the North. I send you a nice piece of poetry.

To Gunild, January 29, 1863

[Van Doren Mss.]

Camp near Murfreesboro. No letters from home. What is the matter? *Dr. Wooster, ill, has left. Dr. Himoe may go to a Nashville hospital.* I see that I did not make as much as I might by selling your Gold. It seems that gold keeps going up all the time. *As to the war:* Everything is very quiet with us. I do not believe this Army can move very soon.

SUPPLEMENT

The following three communications were written by Colonel Heg to E. D. Holton, a prominent merchant of Milwaukee, and by him communicated to the Milwaukee Sentinel. The first is unsigned; the second is written over the initials "H. C. H."; and the third bears the signature "Index." Internal evidence leaves no doubt, however, that all three are from the pen of Colonel Heg. The letters form an interesting supplement to those written to Mrs. Heg.

From a Letter by Colonel Heg, December 15, 1862

[*Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 23, 1862]

A private letter from an officer of the Scandinavian regiment dated "near Nashville, Dec. 15th," says:

"We are still lying face to face with the enemy, little or nothing being done on either side. Rosecrans is evidently trying to bring on an attack from them. We have orders to move tomorrow—I suppose it means to the front. It seems to be a settled opinion among our officers that a stand will be made between here and Murfreesboro. I have doubted it, for the reason that I could not see what the enemy could gain by fighting here, unless they really suppose that they

can get possession of Nashville. It is rumored to-day that Pemberton is on his way to reinforce Bragg at this place; if so, he will undoubtedly make an attack soon. We have all sorts of rumors from Virginia. Papers are very scarce, and we get none but the Louisville *Journal*.

The entire tone and spirit of this army seems to have undergone a wonderful change since I left it in November. Change of commanders has made a different army of it. There is none of that insubordination and marauding that existed to such a terrible extent while we were in Kentucky. There is system and management everywhere — even in our mail arrangements. If this army meets with defeat, I shall be terribly disappointed; I do not think it possible unless from causes not under men's control.

I have never known the health of the troops as good as at present, especially amongst the old volunteers.

Very truly your friend, Etc.

A Letter by Colonel Heg, December 21, 1862[19]

[*Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 5, 1863]

Camp near Nashville, Dec. 21, '62

Dear Sir: — It is Sunday, and everything is so quiet and still that I will endeavor to write a letter — not that I can entertain you with anything interesting, but more particularly to pass off time which, during a monotonous camp life, generally drags heavy. No troops in the field really needed rest any more than my regiment, after a continuous march of over 1,100 miles, during a hot and dusty summer; still, a quiet camp life is only an enjoyment till you are rested. It soon becomes tedious, and men long for changes and excitements incident to active operations. Such is the case with the troops here in general. I do not believe that any army exists anywhere that is better organized, better taken care of, and more systematically managed, than are the troops

[19] The newspaper uses the heading "Private letter from Rosecrans' Army."

of Gen. Rosecrans' command. The only redeeming trait of Gen. Buell, as was contended by many, was his order and system. I heard of that long before I knew anything of him personally. I failed to discover any such quality in him in the management of his troops. Whether he was to blame, or some one else, it can never be contradicted that a looser disciplined army could hardly be expected to hold together.

With the exception of a few of the new regiments, who are suffering from camp fever and measles, I can say that there is hardly any sickness in camp.

I can see no immediate prospect of moving on the rebel forces said to be between here and Murfreesboro. I still believe they will not make any stand here, but on our advance will fall back towards Chattanooga. We cannot with safety advance any distance until we can rely on the river for supplies. — The prospect for a rise is not flattering. There has been no rain here to speak of since my return. The days are most beautiful; just cold enough to be pleasant. We have generally a strong wind from the South or West, with a bright, clear sky.

Last Thursday I was ordered to take two regiments and a battery, and go outside of our lines, with 125 forage wagons, to collect forage for our animals. There are very stringent orders on the subject of foraging. (I send a copy enclosed.) Forage is taken for the Government wherever it is found, but we generally prefer to get it from out-and-out rebels. I found a large field, containing two hundred acres of corn unhusked, and upon making enquiries at the negroe quarters I ascertained that the magnificent brick building standing on a fine eminence to the left was the former residence of the rebel owners. — A Mrs. May, with two sons and a daughter — all married — had resided there, or rather the female portion of Mrs. May's family had stayed there, till recently — the two sons and son-in-law had joined the rebel army long ago. When I asked the fat negroe proprietress of the establishment where I halted, where and how she had

procured so much elegant furniture — for her log cabin was filled with sofa chairs, bureaus, tables, bedsteads, and large expensive mirrors — she answered that "Misses gib de brack folks all de nice things when she gone away, and tell dem to take good care of it till she come back" — evidently fearing the "Yankees" might break open her house and destroy her *nice things*.

One hundred and twenty-five wagons, with four men to each wagon, will gather a good deal of corn in one day, and by three o'clock we had spoiled the corn field of Mrs. May quite badly. All our wagons were filled, excepting eight, which I sent up to a man by the name of Williams, who was reported to have several hundred bushels of sweet potatoes. It went against the grain for the old man to open his cellar for us; but he, too, was reported as a prominent rebel, although his wife was from New York, and strongly denied that they had ever sympathized with the rebellion.

We may talk about being tired of this war, and of suffering from it, but the suffering on our part has no comparison with that of those poor, deluded wretches that live on the lines where the armies are moving. How dearly, and how justly too, many are paying the penalty of their folly!

While looking at the splendid residences, and improved farming land lying within our lines about Nashville, owned by rebels, and in many instances like Mrs. May's plantation, no other tenants on them than the negroes they have not been able to bring away with them, it has often occurred to me that government should make use of them immediately.

When we remember that our armies have always suffered for want of vegetables; that thousands upon thousands of acres of the prettiest land in the world — virtually belonging to the government — is lying idle, and at the same time our camps are crowded with blacks, seeking liberty and employment, it seems that government ought to avail itself of these circumstances. An energetic person with the proper authority from Washington, I think, could collect negroes, and by their labor put land under cultivation, next season, the fruits

of which would be of great benefit to the army, and at the same time give employment to the negroes that we are forced to turn away from us. If the emancipation after the first of January next shall be carried into effect, the negroes will have to be taken care of in some way by the government, at least for a while, by employing them on the confiscated plantations, where at the same time they ought to be educated to take care of themselves, and made to understand their duties as freemen. This has worked well, I believe, in South Carolina, and it ought by all means to be adopted here in the West.

I must close. My opportunities for writing are poor. I am, however, well and comfortably situated — have a good tent, stove in it, and plenty to eat.

Very truly yours,

H. C. H.

Colonel Heg to E. D. Holton, January 9, 1863[20]

[*Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 21, 1863]

Camp near Murfreesboro,
January 9, 1863

Friend Holton: —

I find that I am no prophet; for, contrary to all my expectations, we have had one of the bloodiest battles of the rebellion here. I could see no good reason why the rebels should make a stand here, unless they were really in hopes of capturing Nashville. It is evident now that they had not only strong hopes of effecting this, but actually felt sure of completely destroying Gen. Rosecrans' army. I am satisfied that they had concentrated a much larger force than we had in the field.

Their deserted camps are stretched over an immense area of ground, and they had no doubt arranged themselves in fine

[20] The newspaper caption is "Interesting Private Letter from the Fifteenth Regiment." Note Colonel Heg's allusion, in his letter of January 10 to Mrs. Heg, to his correspondence with E. D. Holton.

style. Every tent had its fire-place and chimney of brick. The woods for miles around are covered with these vacant fire-places.

We have fought one of the bloodiest battles yet on record on this continent. I will attempt to give you a short description of what I saw myself, and by adding it to what you may get from other sources, perhaps it may be interesting:

The army under Rosecrans moved from Nashville on the 26th of December, in three *corps de armes*, denominated the right, left, and center. The center moved on the Murfreesboro Pike, the right and left supporting on each side. My command was in the right wing, commanded by Gen. McCook, and his force was composed of Johnson's, Sheridan's, and Davis' divisions, I think. I am not certain whether Rousseau's division is attached to this corps or not.

Our division (Davis) met the enemy at Nolansville, drove them, and captured some of their artillery — changed our direction from them towards Murfreesboro, and on the 30th of December, ran into the enemy in force, about three miles from that place.

We were well satisfied that the last day of the year 1862 would be a bloody one, for we were satisfied that the enemy, instead of leaving his stronghold, was receiving reinforcements every hour.

During the night I lay with my regiment within four hundred yards of the enemy's line, and within half a mile of the main body. At daylight I saw solid columns of troops moving through the woods toward our right, without making any demonstrations toward us. Johnson's division was stationed on our right, and a little to our rear. Soon we heard lively musket fire in the direction of his column, which grew heavier and heavier, and fast getting into our rear. It was an indication to us that we were being outflanked, but still we had no information of it. The truth is, there lay nearly twenty thousand of the best soldiers the world has ever seen, destined to be the victims of the imbecility, treachery, or whatever else it may have been, of one of our Generals.

Gen. Johnson was not with his command when he was attacked. His men had not even been called out of bed. His artillery horses were half a mile off at a creek, watering. In that condition, the concentrated force of the rebels, under command of Bragg, Hardee, and Buckner, found our right flank. And, what was still worse, no intimation was given us of the state of affairs, only as we judged from the direction of the firing, as it kept getting into our rear. The reports will show how desperately some of our troops fought, only to find that when they had beaten the enemy in front, heavy bodies of the rebel troops would assail them in the flank or rear.

When I look at the real condition of things it seems almost a wonder that the entire army was not completely butchered or captured. Nothing prevented it but the fact that the rebels at first feared that the movement was one of Rosecrans' old tricks to draw them into a trap, and consequently they pressed us slowly and cautiously giving us time to get out of the way. The whole of the right wing then fell back on the center, followed by the jubilant and victorious rebel horde — but here they ran against a snag. Column after column came dashing towards the turnpike, like ocean waves against a solid rock. The turnpike and railroad run parallel, and about 200 yards apart, where old Rosy made his stand, the railroad making a deep cut through a hill. — In this cut he would mass his infantry and station his artillery on the hill, which had command of the country around. Here at several times, I understood, he had concentrated from forty to fifty pieces of artillery, and as the rebels came pouring on in their drunken revelry, they were slaughtered like sheep in a pen, and our infantry would pour out of the railroad cut as if they came out of the ground. I have noticed in all the engagements I have been in that the rebel troops are always supplied with whisky while in action, I think they intend always to fight while under the influence of liquor. This accounts partly for the recklessness they generally display during their first charges, and it is also a notable fact that they

never fight well after the first day. Rosecrans was himself on the field; I saw him while riding to and fro at furious rates, the sweat pouring down his face, and his clothes spattered over with blood, and I could not help expressing my gratitude to Providence for having at last given us a man that was equal to the occasion. A General in fact as well as in name. When the sun set on the last day of the year 1862, victory was on our side. Although we had lost many men and considerable artillery, the enemy had battered its brains out against our solid centre. But they were not satisfied; they knew we had lost heavily; their cavalry had succeeded in destroying much of our supply train coming out of Nashville, and they even flattered themselves that Rosecrans would withdraw during the night. On the 1st of January they made several charges at different points on our lines, but by that time we were well protected by temporary breastworks and rifle pits, and all their attacks resulted in our favor.

On Friday afternoon, the 2d, they made their last desperate attack, waiting till about an hour and a half before sundown, in order to have the advantage of the night in case of failure. Our lines wavered at first, but it was only temporary, the rebels were forced to give away in disorder. Two hours of daylight at this time would have given us the whole rebel army. But darkness set in and with it a heavy rain, which continued during the whole of next day. Before the persuit was given up, however, we captured a great many prisoners and one or two batteries. From that time they began to pack up and leave. One of my captains was a prisoner at Murfreesboro at that time; he represents the excitement there as perfectly terrible. Many of the prisoners they had captured from us escaped during the excitement, even without being paroled.

That we have gained a splendid victory is very certain; what will result from it can only be conjectured. They have undoubtedly fallen back on Chattanooga, but they have at all events lost Tennessee. It will not be possible for this

army to move again immediately, for there are many repairs to be made — in fact much of the army will have to be reorganized. There are a great many officers whose shoulder straps should be torn off and given to others who deserve it. It is very nice to be a good General or a good soldier, while all is quiet, or even in engagements, while victorious; but to conduct a command in retreat, and during defeat, then is the time that qualities are called upon. I am better satisfied than I have been before, that many of our generals are made of very inferior stuff, and that before we reach the object we are striving for, many of them will have to be sent to the rear.

As for the generality of the soldiers, there are, perhaps, none better in the world than ours are becoming. It takes a few months of severe hardships to make fighting soldiers. Men just out from a luxurious home have not the proper fighting quality in them. They may be brave, and all that sort of thing, but until they have tasted the realities of soldier life, I will not give much for their valor or bravery.

The army is in excellent spirits, and when Rosecrans has filled up the gaps, and made the necessary changes and repairs, you will again here of our entering victoriously into East Tennessee.

I have written in a hurry, a few of the facts as I have found and seen them. I shall be happy if I can communicate anything of interest to you, and shall be glad to do it whenever I find anything worth writing about. But of 308 men I took into action, I lost 119 killed, wounded, and missing. I send my report as well as the report of my brigade commander, to Wisconsin for publication.

By the way the Col. commanding our brigade, is a young officer from the regular service, and he is looked upon by Rosecrans as one of the best officers in the army. Such he is in fact, I wish I could say as much for our division commander, but I can not.

Very truly yours,

"Index"

V. CAMP LIFE NEAR MURFREESBORO

To Gunild, February 10, 1863

Franklin, Tennessee. Is in command of brigade. Headquarters established at house of Mr. Merrill. He is a very rich planter and has a beautiful establishment here, but they are very hard up for anything to eat &c — as this place has been in the hands of the rebels so long. *As to the general situation:* The rebels are leaving Tennessee and going south. We are also recieving very large reinforcements and I do not believe these old troops that have seen so much hardships and fighting as we have will be called on to go to the front soon. Franklin is a very pleasant place, somewhat larger than Waupun, and with some Union men living in it.

To Gunild, February 14, 1863

Camp near Murfreesboro. I am once more back in my old tent and at our old camp, having been gone just two weeks. *Heg refers to a letter received from Holton in Milwaukee.*[1] I am too ragged to show myself anywhere.

To Gunild, February 16, 1863

CAMP NEAR MURFREESBORO
Febry 16th 1863.

MY DEAREST.

I promised you in my last to write a long letter next time, and to day I am alone the Regiment having gone as an escort to a foraging train, and having caught cold so as not to feel very well, I am left at home.

Time is wearing away quite rapidly. It is already past the middle of this month, and we are beginning to see signs

[1] E. D. Holton is mentioned in Heg's letter of January 10, 1863.

of spring. The weather is warm, and the Birds and Frogs are singing as they do up in Wisconsin in April. If I had you and the children with me I could live and enjoy myself first rate in such a climate as this is.

The same complaint as usual — I get no mail from home. Yesterday, a large mail came, but nothing for me. To day we had a small mail, but it is all the same. I got a letter from Ole dated Febry 2d when I came back from Franklin, but he says not a word about how you are getting along.

But I am getting used to most anything. I think I can bear this too. Before the Battle I got the mails very regular and your letters came through in about 6 or 8 days, but it seems all disarranged since. The Waterford boys are all in the same fix that I am. The Paymaster is here and preparing to pay us off for four months. I shall send my money to Holton with the same instructions as I did before. I have written a couple of letters to Ole, asking him to tell me if he can loan out my money on a good Mortgage to any body, or if he knows of any way of investing it in anything safe and paying. If there is any way that you could find to loan out the money I am sparing, as youd to Thosten, you had better do it. I can not give you any news. Everything moves on as usual. There does not seem to be much prospect of moving yet, though we will not remain here longer than can be helped. Rosecranse will let the rebels know soon where he is — and you may make up your mind to hear some more good victories again.

The only discouraging thing we get down here are the reports of the *Northern Rebels.* I begin to fear them as much as I do the *Southern Rebels.* I wrote Ole a wholesome letter to day in regard to the course their party is taking — *misserable, cowardly Skulks.* It is not enough that they are allowed to stay at home, sleeping on their Featherbeds, living in Luxury and making money, but they must use every opportunity they have to help the enemy we are fighting. Let them now just drive it far enough to start a civil war at