

Manchester Highway, whereupon he took Hoover's Gap without the enemy really understanding his intention, and he then led his whole army through towards Manchester in order to reach the flank of Tullahoma.

The march was certainly somewhat delayed because of the heavy rain that began the morning of the 24th and continued for four days, so the road became almost impassable for wagons and cavalry; yes, there was also a fear that the campaign would have to be abandoned and the army would be forced to return to Murfreesboro. But the commander's unbending will overcame these obstacles and the army continued the march. They made a two-day halt at Manchester waiting for the road to improve, but on 2 July the army turned toward Tullahoma, where they expected to find the enemy before the sun set.

In the meantime, Bragg had turned the heavy rain that had slowed down Rosecrans' army to his advantage, and he withdrew toward Chattanooga, something he could never have done if the weather had been favorable to his opponent. Rosecrans now marched into Tullahoma without resistance.

His unexpected maneuver confused the enemy, and this is regarded as the first of the great flanking maneuvers which would later prove to be so effective.

Rosecrans followed the Rebels the next morning and continued the march to the foot of the Cumberland Mountains. On this trip many deserters and stragglers were captured.

McCook's division, which the 15th belonged to, pitched camp at Winchester on 3 July. The town's citizens were sympathetic to the Rebels, but well-bred people.

Immediately after the soldiers had made camp came the happy news that the Union troops had won at Gettysburg and about the surrender of Vicksburg.

Heg's report:

Headquarters 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, 20th Army Corps, 6 July 1863.

Sir: I have the honor to report that, in accordance with our orders, my brigade left camp near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, on the morning of 24 June 1863, with three-day's

ration in their backpacks and nine-day's rations in the wagons, and proceeded on the Shelbyville road as guards for the baggage train; we reached Millersburg in the evening.

25 June: Took command of the baggage train and the corps, which advanced on the Manchester road. The 25th Illinois and 15th Wisconsin, with battery, pitched camp near Hoover's Gap; the 8th Kansas and 35th Illinois stayed near the baggage train at Millersburg.

26 June: Reached the Manchester road near Hoover's Gap with the whole brigade and bivouacked near the train.

27 June: Left camp around two o'clock in the afternoon and traveled on to Beech Grove.

28 June: Marched from Beech Grove to Manchester, where I arrived around midnight.

29 and 30 June: The brigade remained in camp near Manchester.

1 July: Left around two o'clock in the afternoon for Tullahoma, where I arrived around midnight.

2 July: Continued around five o'clock in the morning on the Winchester road; bivouacked in the evening near Elk River Sound, a short distance below the railroad.

3 July: Proceeded over the sound and marched to Winchester. Made camp around three o'clock in the afternoon.

The march had been unusually difficult and exhausting because of the almost continual rain and muddy roads.

I have no losses to report and only one man is missing—John Tennis, drummer in Company E, 35th Illinois. He stayed behind with the train in Manchester and has not been heard from since.

I have taken 16 prisoners along with some of their weapons and other equipment.

The prisoners have been turned over to the division's provost marshal.

Very respectfully your obedient servant

Hans C. Heg
Colonel and Brigade Commander

Captain T. W. Morrison
Acting Adjutant General 1st Division

Here Colonel Heg received the following communiqué:

Headquarters, 20th Army Corps, Inspector General's Office, Winchester, Tennessee,
31 July 1863.

Colonel! I have herewith the honor to turn your attention to the following excerpt from the daily report for 22 July 1863 from Captain H. W. Hall, acting assistant inspector general of the 1st Division, regarding the condition of the camp of the 3rd Brigade. Excerpt:

The 8th Kansas and 25th Illinois regiments' camp is the best in the division. All the regiments in this brigade are good. These regiments treat each other in an excellent manner in all respects and are worthy examples to emulate for all of the troops I have the honor to be acquainted with. The remaining regiments' camps in this brigade do their brigade and regiment commander much honor, and they have repeatedly been reported to me.

With great respect your obedient servant

(signed) Horace N. Filcher
Lieutenant Colonel and Assistant Inspector General

Henry Hauff,
Captain and Acting Assistant Adjutant General

Headquarters 20th Army Corps.

With admiration for the commanding officer of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Division: the commander of the corps is very pleased to receive such favorable reports about the brigade.

On the orders of

Major General Sheridan

G. H. Thurston
Acting General Assistant and Chief of Staff

The Regiment's camp lay in a beautiful grove here, and health conditions were superb. Nothing of interest happened here until the 17th, when they again moved out and the army crossed the Cumberland Mountains to Stevenson, Alabama, where they pitched camp on the 20th. The Regiment was assigned to build pontoon bridges over the Tennessee River, since many of the 15th's men were from timber areas and could handle an ax. They chopped timber, built pontoon bridges, and began to cross. The Regiment then marched in a circle in order to divert the attention of the enemy's sentries, marched up along the river, and bivouacked on the Tennessee bank around 10 o'clock in the evening. At dawn the next morning, the 28th, the bridges were laid out and at sunrise were placed across the river. The 15th was first to reach the opposite side, the outposts were immediately sent out, and the Regiment advanced carefully about two miles from the river and rested for a couple of hours at the foot of Sand Mountain.

The 15th thus began this remarkable campaign with success, a campaign that ended with Bragg's surrender at Chattanooga and with the Battle at Chickamauga, this campaign that military scholars regard as one of the most brilliant in the history of the world.

In the afternoon the ascent was completed and the 15th bivouacked on the mountain overnight; they marched on from there the next day and pitched camp at Winston's Gap on 3 September.

After the crossing of the Tennessee River Colonel Heg received the following:

Headquarters, 20th Army Corps, near Stevenson, Alabama, 29 August 1863.

Colonel!

The following excerpt is from a communication received from the chief of staff,

Brigadier General Garfield:

"Major General McCook!

The commanding general is thankful for the speed and success with which you crossed the river.["]

General McCook is very glad to be able to send this compliment to you and your troops, whose conduct justifiably entitles them to the praise of the high command.

I am, Colonel, with great respect your obedient servant

G. P. Thurston
Assistant [Adjutant] General and Chief of
Staff

Officially by

Henry Hauff
Captain and Acting Assistant Adjutant General

Colonel Hans C. Heg,
Brigade Commander, 3rd Brigade, 1st Division

Ole C. Johnson, who now served as lieutenant colonel and commander of the 15th, gives the following account of the Battle at Chickamauga:

General McCook's corps stood on the right flank and was sent over Sand Mountain to Will's Valley, about 40 miles south of Chattanooga. Thomas took the center at Trenton; Crittenden was on the left flank and was supposed to move into Chattanooga as soon as the enemy left it and keep the enemy from crossing the river and taking Stevenson, because then our supply line would be cut.

We waited in Will's Valley for three days in order to allow the rest of the army to take their positions and bring in sufficient supplies.

The country was mountainous and only very small loads could be taken on the wagons; there was considerable worry over how the army would get enough supplies for a long period of time in this place.

Bragg now began to be anxious for his own safety and left Chattanooga, whereupon McCook got orders to go over Lookout Mountain to harry his rear, which we did on 9 and 10 September, and then we stopped in a big valley while the cavalry reconnoitered the landscape to the front and on the flanks of our position.

It was soon discovered that Bragg had gotten reinforcements, and his intention was to do battle with us, whereupon the corps received orders to immediately support General Thomas, who was about 25 miles closer to Chattanooga and on the east side of Lookout Mountain, just as we were.

This order was received on the 13th, but it was impossible to cross through the valley on the east side, so we had to cross the mountain again. Instead of now continuing on our way along the crest of the mountain, as we ought to have done, we climbed down again into Will's Valley and stayed there until the evening of the 15th, whereupon we again turned around in order to cross this mountain for the third time. On the 16th we marched north along the crest of the mountain, as we should have done two days before. This turned out to be an unfortunate delay; McCook reported that he had received incorrect directions from the inhabitants of the area, who had told him that the road up the mountain was not passable at this time. All this time Bragg continued to concentrate his troops with the intention of winning back Chattanooga and destroying Rosecrans' army. Rosecrans was not able to unite his army until the evening of the 18th, but then he immediately moved toward Chattanooga. We marched about six miles that evening and after spending an unpleasant and—because of the cold, sleepless night—we again moved forward. At breakfast I found a bullet in my coffee cup, and the cook shook his head uneasily and said this was a bad omen. I just laughed at his fright, naturally; but this incident ran through my mind a few times during the day anyway. I soon drove these thoughts away, thoughts that were so unsuitable for a soldier.

Now and then during the morning cannon were heard, but later in the day the sound was more and more frequent so we knew that some parts of the army were already under fire. By dinner time we passed Rosecrans' headquarters, and soon after we were sent off at a quick march and thrown right into the battle line in order to fill in a break in our line at that point. The Rebels had already seen this opening and tried to take advantage of it by throwing their troops in here, thereby attempting to cut our army in

two. Three regiments from our brigade were set up in the first line—the 35th Illinois to the left, the 8th Kansas in the middle, and the 15th Wisconsin to the right. The 25th Illinois was held back as a reserve.

We immediately received orders to advance, which we did, and we soon met the enemy's vanguard, which we drove back without difficulty, but we were met with stronger resistance by their main line. Then, even though our comrades began to fall quickly all around us, we continued to advance until the 8th Kansas on our left began to hesitate and fall back. The entire time we were completely exposed on our right, and now that the 8th Kansas had also exposed our left, there was nothing else for the 15th to do than to follow them. We retreated, fighting the whole time, but we could not bring our dead with us. Yes, even some of the wounded fell into the hands of the enemy, but we did manage to take most of them with us.

Among others who were left behind on the battlefield that day was Captain Johnson of Company A. This was a sad loss for us, because a braver man than Johnson has never drawn his sword in defense of his Fatherland. A bullet passed through his head and he died immediately.

In the meantime we soon received reinforcements and drove the enemy back for a while, but again had to succumb to superior numbers. Colonel Heg, who commanded our brigade, was everywhere and tried through his personal strength and ability to encourage our insignificant numbers; he was successful in this for a time, but we could not succeed against such a superior force, and we had to retreat over an open field. Our Regiment was stationed in the reserves and had only been there a few minutes when the line to our front fell back. General Davis rode past at just this moment and ordered us to hold our own position, at any rate. We lay down while the 25th Illinois withdrew around us. Its commander, Captain Taggart, told me he wanted to halt behind our line and then re-form his regiment, but instead of doing this, he retreated through a column of reinforcements which just now arrived. The Rebels followed right behind them and we

gave them a warm reception, but since the troops behind us believed that the 25th Illinois was the last regiment in front of them they began to open fire. We were prepared for everything but this. With the Rebels firing from one direction and our own soldiers from the other, we were in anything but an enviable position. Naturally there was no other solution than to give each and every man leave to save himself as best he could. The Regiment was completely scattered, of course, and it was unthinkable to get it re-formed that day, but there were no cowards among these soldiers, skulking around outside the battle lines. For the meantime, both officers and soldiers joined the first regiment they came to and fought for the rest of the day.

We retook the lost ground and held it until shortly before sundown, when we were commanded back to re-form our Regiment. Now we received word that Colonel Heg was wounded, but we hoped that it wasn't so serious that he would not recover quickly.

Reader, imagine now how such a gathering appears after a bloody day's work is over. For the whole day one has seen in every face the solemn determination to destroy the advancing enemy. He, who could watch unmoved while his friends fall around him, has now become heartsick and his face bears the stamp of the most heartfelt sympathy when he learns a dear comrade's sad fate, or of anxiety while he eagerly seeks information about those whose fate is still unknown. Some scatter here and there over the bloody battlefield to look for their friends and acquaintances, sometimes for a beloved brother, among the killed and wounded. Their wild, battle-hungry natures have now given way and they are full of sadness and pity. Oh, what a contradiction of feelings can be found in man's breast!

The Regiment's losses were very great that day; half were killed or wounded. Captain Johnson fell, Colonel Heg was fatally wounded. Major Wilson and Captain Gasman were seriously wounded, Adjutant Nelson along with Lieutenants Tanberg and Rice received minor injuries; Captains Hanson and Hauff were missing, and the former was subsequently found dead, the latter fatally wounded.

After dark, when everything had become quiet, I set out for the hospital that lay about three miles from our camp in order to get more exact information about the condition of Colonel Heg and others in our Regiment. When I had done the little I could to get them under a roof, I returned to my unit. Sad, melancholy thoughts filled my mind. I knew that I had seen the face of our beloved colonel for the last time, and he was dearer to me now than ever before. He told to me that he was happy that the 15th had stood in the ranks like men and done their duty to the end. As great as our losses were, we still had the comfort that our honor was preserved, and the soldier prizes this more highly than his life.

The night was terribly cold, but I went to bed anyway and slept for two or three hours. At three o'clock we were awakened, and we took our position on a hill near Chattanooga, a little behind the rest of the army.

The sun rose beautiful and clear, but the smoke from the previous day's battle still lay in tight clumps over the field. There was almost complete silence everywhere, only broken now and then by the sharp report of a rifle, which bore witness to the enemy's proximity, and every soldier knew that this was just the calm before the storm; they walked around with thoughtful faces, knowing that many thousands who now watched the sun rise would never see it set.

Around 10 o'clock in the morning skirmishes broke out along the left flank, and immediately after that the battle raged with great violence on the edge of the battlefield. Sheridan's and Davis' divisions of our corps were immediately ordered forward. Our division consisted of only two small brigades, and both of these had lost approximately half of their men the day before. The 2nd Brigade under General Carlin was sent into the battle line to the right of General Wood, while our brigade, now commanded by Colonel Martin of the 8th Kansas, stood as reserves. Now came the fatal blunder that became so dangerous for our division as well as for the whole army. Wood's whole division was taken out of its position and moved farther to the left, and its place was supposed to be

taken by our little brigade, whose size now didn't exceed six hundred men eager for battle.

We scarcely had time to fall into line before the Rebels attacked us, but we were well protected because we had set up barricades of timber and fence wood, and we gave the enemy a warm reception. The first attack was repulsed, a great setback for the enemy, but resulting in relatively small losses for us. We fought bravely and did our jobs well and had just repulsed a second attack when we saw, to our surprise, that the troops standing to our right and left had retreated and thereby left our flanks completely exposed. We still waited for a while in the hope that we would get reinforcements, but no help came. In the meantime, the Rebels pushed forward through the resulting openings in the battle line, surrounded us on all sides, and subjected us to a murderous crossfire. One more moment, and the Regiment would scarcely have had the choice between surrender and death. When we discovered our critical position there was naturally nothing else to do than attempt to save ourselves with a quick escape; but we had to cross an open field that was controlled by enemy fire, so as a consequence many were killed, wounded, or taken prisoner; among the latter were Captain Gustavson and I.

So reports O. C. Johnson. The continuation of this battle and the Regiment's history up to the Battle of Missionary Ridge is told according to Captain Mons Grinager.

An attempt was made to reunite the scattered troops near the Chattanooga road, but the terrain was unsuitable as there were absolutely no natural barricades. The attempt was therefore successful only after we reached the hills a mile south of the road, where we took a favorable position. Here we met up with some of the division along with troops from several different regiments of the corps; they were now fleeing, separated from their units.

Here we waited for about an hour and were determined to offer the enemy defiance if he should get it into his head to pursue us. In spite of his superior strength, he was

certainly so exhausted from the last two days' hard fighting that he had no desire for further pursuit. Perhaps he feared a similar affair to that at Stones River and was therefore satisfied to be the victor on the battlefield.

Around five o'clock in the afternoon, the 15th, along with the rest of the division, was commanded to move toward Chattanooga, and after three or four mile's march they bivouacked for the night.

Here the remains of the Regiment were reunited. Of 176 men, including officers, only 75 men came out of the battle unhurt. It had therefore lost 101 men: 10 officers and 91 enlisted men.

Among the fallen the unfortunate loss of our brave and greatly admired Colonel Hans C. Heg, who was now brigade commander, is especially regrettable. He was fatally wounded on the 19th and died on the 20th. His death was deeply felt, not just in the Regiment, but in the whole brigade, whose respect and confidence he had won. In the camp he was friendly and forthcoming to everyone, on the battlefield the bravest of the brave. With the eagerness and courage he showed in the Battle of Chickamauga, he had attracted General Rosecrans' attention, and the general, when he was informed that Heg had fallen, said, "That saddens me very much, to hear that Heg has fallen; he was a brave officer and I had intended to promote him to general."

Among the missing were also the Regiment's commander, Lieutenant Colonel O. C. Johnson, whose loss we felt deeply since the Regiment had in him a brave and capable leader, just as he had their full confidence and respect. Major Wilson was badly injured and had left the battlefield only after he had been wounded three times.

Since all the staff officers had fallen, I took over the command of the Regiment.

The remaining 75 men were completely exhausted the next morning from two days' intense fighting as well as earlier exertions; they were also so cold that they could scarcely get up, but had to rub and work their limbs before they could get them to work. It was, in fact, extremely cold at night, and tents, blankets, yes, even coats and

hats had been lost during the tumult of battle. There was also a certain dejection in the Regiment because there was no one among the survivors who had not lost one or more friends. To see a dear friend fall into the hands of the enemy or maimed, without being able to help, is a difficult sight, and it was bitter to think that they had had to give way to the enemy, and the only comfort we had was the conviction that we had done our duty. But there wasn't time to hang our heads; when we were finished with our meager breakfast, Companies G and I, who had not been with the Regiment since it left Island Number 10 on 11 June 1862, arrived. This awakened great joy, and they were received with three hearty cheers.

These two companies had more than 80 experienced men, who were a great reinforcement for the Regiment.

In the morning, the brigade got orders to form a battle line and throw up barricades; an attack was expected at any moment, but the Rebels did not appear.

Around 10 o'clock in the evening, the 21st, we received orders to go back to Chattanooga. Since the road was blocked by troops, our march went very slowly, and we did not arrive until daybreak on the 22nd, whereupon we went right to work on the fortifications.

The army now took an advantageous position and formed a battle line in the shape of a horseshoe around the city of Chattanooga, with the right and left flanks running up against the Tennessee River.

The Rebels occupied Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. They had planted their batteries on the former spot and could bombard the city and our camp, but in spite of this they inflicted only insignificant damage.

For a week we worked on the defenses and got almost no rest or sleep, but worked night and day. The Regiment was divided in two shifts, which worked two hours apiece.

After a day's work we were already rather well defended, and it wasn't seldom that statements were heard from both officers and enlisted men, that this was as far as they intended to retreat and they would either defend their positions or die trying.

A certain anxiety reigned in the army when we came to the city on the 22nd because several large houses were burned and everything indicated that Rosecrans was thinking about evacuating the place. But when we later found out that this was done to confuse the enemy and to get rid of the houses—they stood in front of our defenses—many hearts were relieved of this burden, and the men went back to work with renewed strength.

General Rosecrans rode along the line almost every evening and always had a friendly word for everyone; when he approached he evoked loud ringing cheers that resounded toward Lookout Mountain and other places occupied by the Rebels.

On the 24th the Rebels opened several batteries on Lookout Mountain and kept firing the whole day. More than a dozen shells fell into our Regiment's camp, but they did no damage. The work on the defenses and fortifications went on as usual; nobody paid any attention to the Rebels' bombardment.

On the night of the 24th, the Rebels attacked our line with a division, but were so warmly received by both the infantry and artillery that they found it most advisable to withdraw as soon as possible. They attempted several night-time attacks for a week, but they always found that the Union troops were at their posts, and all these Rebel attempts ended with the same result as the first.

Now came a period in the course of a soldier's life on campaign that should be noted. The soldier's lack of one or another of life's necessities and conveniences is so common that it often goes unnoticed, but now it exceeded the normal limits. All the hardships seemed to join together and in a united attack made all the shortages so much more severe, but they were all overcome because everyone battled against them with good will. The work was hard, and the troops, who were exhausted after the recently

endured suffering, thought it was even more difficult, and for a long time there was almost no rest to be had. It was cold and began to rain, and the soldiers had been poorly supplied with clothing before they went into the battle. During the battle they had lost most of what they had, so now they had only the clothing they stood in for protection against the raw and cold weather. Provisions had to be brought by wagon from Stevenson, Alabama, 75 miles over mountains and roads, over which it must have seemed impossible to supply an army. But the hundreds of dead mules and horses and broken wagons which lay along the way were proof that the Cumberland Army was kept alive through provisions that were transported this way. The transport was well organized and well guarded, but it was nevertheless impossible to avoid losses when a large force of Rebel cavalry constantly tried to destroy it. The Rebels also destroyed several wagon trains, and that was a serious loss for us. Because of the transportation difficulties, the soldiers' rations had been cut to two-thirds, and they were now cut to less than half, so now the soldiers were really suffering from hunger. It was often touching to see, when a wagon train was expected, how the convalescent and the soldier who wasn't on duty met the wagons some three or four miles outside of town in order to get a piece of cracker or collect crumbs that fell out of the wagons. At places where the wagons had overturned, and the cracker crumbs had been trampled into the mud, one could see soldiers down on their knees, scrambling for crumbs in order to quiet their hunger. When the wagons were unloaded by the commissary, as many soldiers as the wagons could hold jumped into them and as good as fought over the crumbs that fell out of the crates. The poor horses and mules suffered even more than the people because forage was not to be had, and all the draft animals that were not being used for transportation and that could be done without in any way were sent to Stevenson. Those that were left got only corn every day to keep them alive. While they devoured their food they had to be guarded so the soldiers would not eat it instead. The cold came, as mentioned before, and the only means for the soldier to fight it was a good

bonfire. But for that we needed firewood, and we had absolutely none. The few trees which stood between the town and the picket line were soon used up, and since our line and the Rebels' line were scarcely a short rifle shot away from each other—although the pickets did not fire if one showed oneself on the barricades—one could not show oneself beyond the picket line without risking a bullet in the body. All the same, many risked their lives to get an armful of firewood to cook up their rations and warm their frozen limbs. The only place where firewood could be found in more significant quantities lay on the north side of the Tennessee River; it was connected to Chattanooga by two pontoon bridges over which all the supplies to the army had to be brought.

The Rebels, who could easily see us from Lookout Mountain and otherwise had to know our situation, fastened together large timber rafts upstream from the bridges and let them drift downstream, where the river always runs fast, especially after the long period of rain. These rafts did serious damage to the bridges, and for three days once nothing could be brought over except what could be put in a boat, and this was sorely lacking in relation to what was needed. To guard against further damage in similar situations, a guard was stationed on a little island upstream from the bridges; this guard was to watch the river and collect all the timber and similar things from the river.

In spite of these hardships, no grumbling or complaints were heard; the soldier goes to meet certain death when it is required, and with willingness when something can be won by it. They saw very well the advantage that was won in taking Chattanooga, which was the goal they had had in sight at the beginning of the campaign, and they realized the necessity of holding the advantage they had won and paid for with the lives of so many faithful friends; they therefore accepted their fate with patience.

Captain Gordon, commander of Company G, had been delayed on the road from Island Number 10, so he did not arrive to join the Regiment until 28 September. As the oldest captain, he took over command of the 15th on the 30th.

On 5 October, the Rebel batteries on Lookout Mountain opened fire again. Approximately 20 shells fell in and around our camp, but we were so well defended that we suffered no damage that time either. On 8 October the Regiment was on guard duty; everything was quiet because the picket lines had been in agreement for a week not to shoot at each other. The outposts in some places were no more than 30 yards apart. The officers had permission to exchange newspapers; they only needed to give a signal with a paper, and it was immediately answered with a similar signal from the Rebels, whereupon both laid down their weapons and met each other half way. Several conversations were conducted with the Rebels in the course of the day, and a peaceful situation prevailed between the two armies, but this trust ended in the afternoon with the following catastrophe. A Rebel made a signal with a newspaper and Lieutenant Clement of Company K went to swap. He walked into a grove of trees so he couldn't be seen by the Regiment. There the Rebels, treacherously enough, had hidden three or four armed men who took him prisoner. This treacherous course of action awakened great resentment among us and ended any meetings between us for a long time. After this incident the Rebels stayed behind their fortifications, which was best plan for them because otherwise pieces of lead would have been sent toward them as payment for their villainy.

Lieutenant Clement was first sent to Longstreet's headquarters, and from there to Libby Prison in Richmond, from where he was sent back to our lines after a month.

The Cumberland Army had now been completely reorganized; Rosecrans was relieved and General Grant took over the overall command.

On 11 October, the order came that the 15th Wisconsin was to be incorporated into the 1st Brigade, 3rd Division, 4th Army Corps. The brigade, which was under General Willich's command, was made up of the 15th Wisconsin, 15th Ohio, 25th Illinois, 35th Illinois, 89th Illinois, 32nd Indiana, 68th Indiana, and 8th Kansas regiments. General Wood commanded the division, and Major General Howard the corps.

Since the Battle of Chickamauga we had lain in trenches, and the little sleep we got was with our rifles at our sides. Now we were relieved by the 1st Brigade, to our great joy, because now we would be able to go into camp and get the rest we so desperately needed.

In the meantime, we moved to the 1st Brigade's camping place and had already gotten comfortable when we got orders on 14 October to send one hundred men from the Regiment into Stevenson to guard a supply train. This was not particularly news welcome to us; the recent days' incessant rain had made the ground so wet that one sank in the mud up to the ankles. This, along with the Regiment's poor supply of footwear and clothing, resulted in this trip being extremely unwelcome. With a half-day's rations in their haversacks the march began, and it would be at least five or six days before we would reach Stevenson, where the soldiers could first expect their bread bags to be filled. Nevertheless, those who were sent out on this expedition were better off than those who remained behind because the Tennessee farmers' chickens, pigs, and sheep had to suffer. They stayed in Stevenson for two weeks and got full rations and were also supplied with clothing and tents, which were dearly welcome. They first came back to the Regiment on 4 November.

On 17 October those members of the Regiment who were still in camp got orders to report for service to General Smith, commander of the department's Corps of Engineers. As explained before, it was a business of great importance to keep the pontoon bridges over the Tennessee River in usable condition. The 15th was now put to work cutting timber and building pontoons. To comply with the orders, the Regiment moved over to the north side of the river, right across from Chattanooga, where there was a surplus of timber, and the timber cutting was started immediately. Some cut timber, some drove it to the river, others fastened it together into rafts, and still others floated these to the sawmill.

We were occupied with this until 7 November, when we got orders to return to the brigade.

Several forts had been under construction for some time. Our division had built Fort Wood, so-called after the division commander, but later, on orders from division headquarters, it was renamed Fort Creighton in honor of Colonel Creighton, who sacrificed his life on the altar of his Fatherland. We were now put in a garrison in this fort, which was regarded as a post of honor. This was proof of the respect and confidence they still had for the Regiment. The remaining regiments in the brigade did picket duty and worked on the earthworks, and we were similarly occupied until the 28th, when the Battle of Missionary Ridge began.

On the 21st they got orders to send a recruiting unit to Wisconsin to fill the shrunken ranks, and Captain Grinager and 10 noncommissioned officers, one from each company, were chosen for that. This order was greeted with joy because anyone would gladly have traded Chattanooga's meager entertainment for Wisconsin's well-supplied kitchens and cellars.

Captain Mons Grinager's report:

Headquarters 15th Regiment, Wisconsin Volunteers, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 29 September 1863.

Sir: I have the honor herewith to deliver the following report about the part the 15th Wisconsin Volunteers played in the Battle of Chickamauga Creek, Georgia, the 19th and 20th of this month.

Around one o'clock in the afternoon on the 19th, we were ordered into battle lines on the south side of the Chattanooga Road, three miles east of Crawfish Spring, our left side coming up against the 8th Kansas Volunteers. We marched with the right flank through some thick groves of trees until our right rested in a corn field about three-quarters of a mile from the road. Then we marched in battle formation over a small hill,

and when we reached the top the enemy's outposts opened fire on us without much effect. We drove them back. After we had advanced a short distance, we received a heavy salvo from the enemy lines, now right in front of us. Now the fighting became general. We held our position for some minutes and had shot six or seven rounds when we were commanded back 10 or 15 steps because we were exposed to a heavy crossfire from the infantry to the right and a Rebel battery to the left. We held this position for some time and had fired 10 or 12 rounds when we were ordered: Set your bayonets and storm the line in front! The command was obeyed, but our left flank was so hard pressed that it could not make any progress; it had no support, and the 8th Kansas to the left had partly dispersed and was a short distance behind. We were thus exposed to a devastating crossfire. Then we got orders to fall back, which we did slowly and in good order, holding the enemy in check, until we were relieved by the 2nd Brigade, General Carlin's, which advanced and occupied the enemy. We re-formed behind the 2nd Brigade, which was soon forced back behind us, and we again fired some rounds, but were met with a force so superior in numbers that we were driven back over an open field directly to our rear. At our arrival in the edge of the woods on the north side of the field, the 3rd Brigade of Sheridan's division advanced to the right and engaged the enemy. Twice we tried to cross back over the field, and the second time we advanced as far as a timber house on the south side of the field, where we captured some pieces of artillery; we held this position until new troops arrived. We were then ordered three-quarters of a mile back and bivouacked until three o'clock the next morning. Our losses on the 19th were seven officers and 59 privates.

Among the dead was our Captain John M. Johnson, Company A; among the wounded, Colonel Heg, who commanded our brigade, later deceased; Captain Hans Hanson, Company C, seriously wounded and left behind on the battlefield; Major Georg Wilson and Captain Gasman, seriously wounded; Lieutenant C. E. Tandberg, Company D, minor wounds; and Captain Henry Hauff, missing.

Around three o'clock on the morning of the 20th we were commanded a short distance to the left and we took up a position on a hill on the north side of the Chattanooga Road, where we were held as reserves until 11 o'clock in the morning, when the battle resumed and we were ordered to the front. We formed a battle line on the south side of the road and advanced through an apple orchard and a thick woods. After we had changed position several times, we took our final position behind some barricades put up in all haste, our left side butting up against the 8th Kansas Volunteers, and our right against the 25th Illinois. We hadn't quite come into position when the enemy advanced towards us from a wood on the opposite side of the field in front of us. When the enemy came within firing range we opened fire and drove their first line back, but they advanced again with far superior numbers. We held our position until we were outflanked on the left, exposed to a devastating crossfire and almost surrounded, when we received orders to retreat. We made a quick retreat to the hill on the north side of the Chattanooga Road where the battalion was soon separated. Around four o'clock the brigade was sent to the rear.

Our losses on the 20th were three officers and 32 privates. Among these were Lieutenant Colonel O. C. Johnson, who led the Regiment; Captain Gustavson, Company F, and Lieutenant O. Tompson.

I did not have the honor of leading the Regiment during the battle, as Johnson was not gone before we retreated from our first position on the 20th, but I observed that both officers and men conducted themselves bravely during the battle, and it is no more than fair to name the following officers who showed more than average courage and bravery: Lieutenant Colonel Ole C. Johnson, Major Georg Wilson, Adjutant L. G. Nelson; Captain John M. Johnson, Company A; Captain H. Hanson, Company C; Lieutenant Simonson, Company F; Lieutenant Clement, Company K; Lieutenant Brown, Company H.

I have the honor to be, Sir, with respect your obedient servant

Mons Grinager
Captain, Commander 15th Regiment Wisconsin Infantry Volunteers

Colonel John A. Martin,
Commander 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, 20th Army Corps

Although this battle has now been described by both Lieutenant Colonel Johnson and Captain Grinager, it is very tempting to include an excerpt from a report by Colonel Martin, 8th Kansas. His writing is lively and he understands how to illuminate details with few words. It is natural to repeat what has already been reported, but the part of the report that deals with the 15th ought nevertheless to be included because it is part of the Regiment's history:

... As soon as the other bank was reached, the regiments were quickly lined up, the 25th and the 35th Illinois assigned to guard the bank while Colonel Heg, 15th Wisconsin, marched over the bottom to the foot of Sand Mountain; there the 15th remained behind while the 8th Kansas took the mountain road and reached the top at 10 o'clock in the morning. The 15th Wisconsin was ordered up at three o'clock in the afternoon. In the dusk the two regiments marched three miles over the mountain and camped. They remained in this position until 2 September, then marched 16 miles to Will's Valley; on the fourth, five miles to Winston's [Gap]; on the ninth, over the mountain 14 miles; camped at the entrance to Lafourche (Neals?) Gap; on the 10th marched south along the crest of the mountain and climbed down in the valley through Henderson's Gap, bivouacked near Lord's Farm; on the 15th, marched back to Winston's [Gap]; on the 16th, over the mountain to Steven's Gap; on the 17th climbed down in the valley and camped near Lee's Spring; on the 18th four miles north on the Chattanooga Road. On the 19th they set off around eight o'clock, and around 11:30 reached a spot near Rosecrans' headquarters. The brigade went in line through the woods to the right, and after a mile's march was quickly formed into a battle line—the 15th Wisconsin, 8th Kansas, 35th Illinois in the line, the 25th Illinois as reserves directly behind them.

The brigade advanced three-quarters of a mile to the right, as did the left flank forward. We had not advanced more than a hundred yards when the enemy, hidden behind old timber, opened a destructive fire on us. The men answered with accuracy and

effect. The din of rifles was now deafening. The 25th Illinois was ordered forward and came directly into the line. The stream of wounded that was taken to the rear was almost without comparison; nevertheless, the brigade stood firm, encouraged by the brave, but unlucky, Colonel Heg, who was everywhere without worrying about the danger. The enemy was reinforced the whole time and flanked us on the left, spewing a destructive rain of fire on our ranks. We had then held our ground for three-quarters of an hour. Colonel Heg gave an order to retreat, and the men withdrew slowly as they sought refuge behind trees and fired on the advancing enemy, defending every inch of ground to the maximum. Fifty yards farther back, the Regiment was again formed in a line and advanced, almost winning back the original ground, but it was forced by overwhelming numbers to retreat. Again and again a front was formed and advanced, only to be driven back. Colonel Heg was fatally injured, but the remainder of the brigade, falling back toward a fence a little ways away, held the enemy in check until fresh forces came up and relieved them. The Regiment now retreated over an open field and took up a position behind a barricade of windfall timber at the edge of the woods. What was left of the brigade now re-formed here with Captain Morrison's help and advanced again over the field, took our old position behind the fence, and remained there almost until it was dark. Then both our ammunition and our strength were exhausted and we again pulled back to the barricades in the grove of trees. As soon as it was dark we were pulled back in, accordance with orders from General Davis, and we camped near the battlefield.

During the night of the 19th the brigade shifted position, crossed the Chattanooga Road, and took up a strong position on the hill in the woods to the north. Our ammunition had now been replenished with sixty rounds. At noon we got orders to support Sheridan to the right. We advanced again over the road and formed a battle line, then advanced near a small barricade in the woods, our front toward the open battlefield. When we found this occupied by our troops, our brigade was moved with the right flank

behind General Carlin's brigade and ordered to lie down in a small trench. This order had scarcely been executed when I received orders to move back with the left flank and take up a position to the right of General Carlin's brigade; the troops who had held their ground were moved to the left. I understood the maneuver, passed General Carlin, and maneuvered with the right flank over toward the barricade. The three regiments to the right reached their position, but the 34th Illinois, the regiment on the line's left, hadn't yet reached its position when the enemy jumped up out of the high grass in the front and advanced toward us, four columns deep, spewing a destructive rain of fire. The brigade's left flank was completely exposed; the troops who had held that position had been moved so far to the left that they were out of sight, and we were quickly flanked and exposed to a terrible crossfire. The enemy in the front was horribly punished when he approached. Our people fired cold-bloodedly from behind the barricade and with a frightening effect; in the enemy's closed ranks and tight columns the losses were very high. The brigade held its position until the enemy climbed the barricades. Then, flanked to the left and overpowered by an overwhelming force in the front, the men fell back in confusion; they partially regrouped themselves about two hundred yards back, but when they found that all support was gone and the line to the left in disarray, they broke again. On the hill in the woods, directly across the road, they were again reunited, re-formed their line, and—as ordered—left the field at the rear of Sheridan's division, which had also re-formed itself here.

Here follows the general reckoning of dead and wounded; but as far as the 15th is concerned, these losses have already been mentioned in the previous reports.

General Bragg had held Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge since the Battle of Chickamauga, probably in the hope that Grant would have to abandon Chattanooga. As mentioned above, Grant's army had to receive its provisions from Stevenson by wagon on a 75-mile-long and almost impassable road over the mountains, while the Rebels did their best to

destroy the transport convoys. Bragg naturally understood this situation and clearly expected that Grant would retreat to Stevenson with a starving army and then engage him in battle. But on 25 October, Hooker attacked the Rebels at Wahatchi on the N. & C. Railway, six miles from Chattanooga, and after an intense battle he forced them to abandon their position and pull back to the top of Lookout Mountain. This opened the way for Grant; now he could get supplies from Bridgeport to Wahatchi and from there by wagon on the north side of the river, six miles up to the camp. Grant now began seriously to prepare for battle, and on 23 November an attack was launched. Sherman began to cross the river upstream from Chattanooga—right across from the mouth of the Chickamauga River—in order to attack the enemy's right flank, while Hooker was supposed to attack his left and Lookout Mountain.

Bragg's line stretched almost from the point where Sherman crossed the river in a southwesterly direction along Missionary Ridge to a point just south of Chattanooga; from here it ran directly across to Lookout Mountain, on the top of which the left flank rested. The line was several miles long and formed a half circle which enclosed in Chattanooga on three sides.

In the afternoon the whole army was ordered to take up their weapons. The vanguard at the center of the line—Wood's and Sheridan's divisions—got orders to advance.

When the army was lined up in battle formation, all of its movements could be seen by the enemy's generals from Missionary Ridge, but nevertheless they were completely surprised when the attack began. They had clearly regarded this maneuver as a large military review.

The Rebel vanguards were soon driven back from their forward positions out in the open some distance from the hill, just inside the line that was stationed at its foot. The Union troops halted by a few low hills called Bald Knob and Orchard Knob, where they rested. They had met less resistance than had been expected, and the losses were very small. The Rebel batteries now began to send their shells among them, but these did no serious damage.

On the 24th, Sherman moved his troops over the river and attacked Bragg's right flank, which stood on a rise at the north end of Missionary Ridge. But after several attempts and a serious battle, he was forced to pull back and give up further attempts to drive the enemy

from this position. He nevertheless held his position at the foot of the hill. Bragg had collected a large force at this point, since he probably believed the main attack would be made here. Hooker was more successful on the enemy's left flank, which was left to its natural defenses; only two brigades were stationed there and these were primarily composed of prisoners from Vicksburg who were released on parole and never exchanged. They knew this themselves, but were forced by the Rebel government to line up in the ranks.

Lookout Mountain ends here by the Tennessee River in a steep slope around 50 feet high; below it is a terrace from which the mountain cuts down to the river, the slope no steeper than a man can walk up. On the east side a road zigzags to the top of the mountain.

On this terrace the Rebels' vanguard line stretched around the end of the mountain; the reserves and the huge artillery were positioned at its very top.

Hooker marched down the valley and the Rebels assumed he would climb the mountain at a pass farther down, but they were safe at that point because it was well protected. Hooker, however, had another plan; when he had marched three miles he stopped and formed his battle line, which stretched up along the side of the mountain, and then he moved toward the north and attacked the Rebels in the rear before they knew he was nearby. The surprise was so complete that they did not offer real resistance. Some got away, but most were taken prisoner. Many of them had not even fired their rifles, and this they were eager to prove because they knew that prisoners, released on parole according to the laws of war, would be shot for having borne weapons before they were exchanged. This was also a reason for their weak resistance; in the moment of surprise they understood that it was better not to shoot. The Rebel authorities were thereby rewarded for their treachery.

The enemy still held the top of the mountain, but fled during the night so Hooker got possession of the whole mountain.

Wednesday, 25 November, Grant prepared a major attack with the entire army. Hooker was supposed to go south over Lookout Mountain, climb down, and attack the Rebels' left flank, and at the same time Sherman was supposed to attack their right and thereby force

them to diffuse their strength, while the main attack would happen in the middle. Bragg could hardly think that Grant would attack his center since Grant's troops would thereby be exposed to a fierce fire when they were to climb the mountain. But scarcely had the battle begun on the right flank when Grant moved the center of his army, came closer to Missionary Ridge, drove the enemy back, and pursued him up the mountain. Here the Rebels attempted to re-form their ranks, but the Union troops rushed them with such violence that they were divided in two and quite scattered. It was the old "Cumberland Army" that carried out the attack. This army still felt the pain of the defeat at Chickamauga, and now the thousands of brave comrades who had had to remain there in the grass had to be avenged. This revenge was achieved: 62 pieces of artillery, two thousand dead and wounded, seven thousand prisoners, and the Rebel army dispersed. These were the marks of vengeance and victory.

The 15th conducted itself admirably in this battle—as in all the others it participated in. Since they were now part of Willich's brigade, Wood's division, they were part of the attack on the enemy's center and among the first to break through the Rebels' lines. Because they had only been in Willich's brigade since the reorganization after the Battle of Chickamauga, he had not seen them in battle before, and he thanked the officers and men over and over for their soldierly conduct, and from that time on the 15th Wisconsin was his favorite regiment; even his own old 32nd Indiana, which was formed with him as its colonel, had to give way. If he spoke about something big he was planning to do, he usually said that he would take "his little 15th with him," and his "little 15th" never disappointed him.

Major Wilson now came back from his leave and took command of the Regiment.

Captain Gordon's Report:

Headquarters, 15th Wisconsin Infantry, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 27 November 1863.

Captain: I have the honor to report that my regiment, the 15th Wisconsin Infantry Volunteers, consisting of 130 men, left the camp on the afternoon of the 23rd and made up a part of the second line in our brigade, formed in the front at Fort Wood. We continued with the brigade to the spot where they took the first line of the enemy's rifle

pits and remained there the whole night, resting on their weapons. In the morning, the 24th, we moved to the left of the front line and were relieved by the 35th Illinois infantry, and the next morning, the 25th, we formed a part of the vanguard that so bravely drove the enemy from his last defenses at the foot of the mountain. At one o'clock in the afternoon we were relieved in our turn by the 35th Illinois Infantry, and we took up a position as reserves in the rear guard of the 68th Indiana and 8th Kansas Infantries; we followed along in this position with the brigade to the top of Missionary Ridge. Our losses were negligible, only six men with minor injuries.

It would be especially unbecoming of me to point out where each individual sought to do his duty.

I am, Captain, with great respect your obedient servant

John A. Gordon
Captain, Commanding the 15th Wisconsin Infantry Volunteers

Before the battles of Chattanooga, Bragg had sent General Longstreet with his corps toward Knoxville to retake that place again, if possible. General Burnside was well fortified there, and Longstreet began to lay siege to the town. Burnside had to be rescued from this position and, as much as the troops needed to rest after all these battles and marches, they had to move out once again. General Sherman left with part of the army—among them Willich's brigade, including the 15th—on 28 November, and marched to Knoxville, which he reached on 7 December. In the meantime, Longstreet had received word that Burnside was expecting reinforcements, and he decided to take the town by storm, but was repulsed with great losses and withdrew farther into Tennessee.

The march to Knoxville, 110 miles, was very difficult because the continuous rain made the roads almost impassable, and because it was assumed that the unit was only going on a short expedition, no one provisioned themselves with more than the absolutely essential

clothing. The rations were also very small; there was certainly some foraging by some units, but only on foot, and since these units had to keep up with the army, they accomplished little.

General Willich was always looking out for his soldiers' welfare, and they hadn't even pitched camp at Knoxville before he forced all the millers in the area to go into his service. Horses and wagons were sent out to bring in grain, which was ground for his brigade. While other parts of the army suffered because of inadequate provisioning, his troops had everything. There was plenty of meat, pork, and potatoes because the army had been in the area only a short time and the grain supply came from two mills near Maryville, which were guarded by a small unit of soldiers.

On 9 December Willich heard that the mills at Maryville were in danger of being attacked by the Rebel cavalry, and the 68th Indiana was sent to the town as reinforcements; in the evening, the 15th was also sent as guard for some wagons and with orders to be there by dawn.

It was twenty miles over terrible roads, but at dawn the goal was nevertheless in sight and no Rebels had appeared.

There was plenty of food here and the 15th took up quarters in the courthouse, where they were very comfortable. On the 11th they were called again to Knoxville, since it was the intention that the army would return to Chattanooga. But when they arrived, the program had changed: the division was to stay in East Tennessee. The Regiment got permission to stay in camp now after the difficult march, and another regiment was sent to Maryville.

The soldiers were now as good as barefoot and shoes were not to be had; they certainly received leather, but there were no tools so the leather was of no use. Willich confiscated all the shoemaking places in the town, and some men in each regiment were chosen to make shoes, but the work hadn't even begun before the army got orders to be ready to march, and on the 16th they moved out and marched 13 miles in a northerly direction to Blane's Crossroad, where the enemy was expected. But everything was quiet. Here the Regiment did picket duty until Christmas, on which day they marched six miles from Knoxville along the East Tennessee &

Virginia Railway to Strawberry Plains. The same day, Captains Montgomery and Rosing were sent home with some privates to recruit soldiers who nevertheless weren't sent to the Regiment.

At this spot, where the Regiment stood to the far right in the Ohio Army, they were set to rebuilding the bridge over the Holston River and to general guard duty. Here the soldiers lived quite well; the area's mills were confiscated and there was meat and pork in abundance.

At this time the orders were given that all the regiments in which three-quarters would re-enlist for three years were to receive one month's leave in their own state.

In just a few days all of the 15th, except for about 15 men, had re-enlisted, but since the same was true of many of the other regiments, not all of them could take home leave at the same time. So they cast lots over who would go first. The 15th picked number four. Now the happiness was over. Many had looked forward to the comforts of home, which they thought they would soon be enjoying for a while. Number four was a disappointment, but they were now so busy with the bridge work that it was immediately forgotten. All the timber cutters, boat men, and sailors were put to work there; the rest did guard and picket duty.

On the morning of 14 January 1864, they went over the bridge and marched 18 miles; the roads were terrible so they did not reach Danbridge until the next day. In the evening they met up with the convalescent unit, which had been left behind in Chattanooga when the Regiment left there on 28 November, along with some officers who had had leave. This increased their number to 190 fighting men. The baggage train had now also arrived from Chattanooga together with the convalescents, and now, for the first time in two months, the soldiers could pitch their tents and dare to make things a little comfortable, when suddenly they heard intense shooting: Longstreet was approaching. They formed battle lines twice in the course of the day, but there was nothing more than a cavalry skirmish. It was peaceful the whole night and into the evening the following day. Then a sharp skirmish between the advance guards began; artillery was used on both sides. During the night everything was peaceful again, but when the men had gone to their quarters the orders came to pack up immediately and withdraw to Strawberry Plains. Now the 15th came in an unfortunate position because its three

supply wagons were out foraging. An old farm wagon was taken into use and whatever could not be loaded in that or carried by the soldiers was burned.

The Regiment was sent on picket duty while Willich's brigade was supposed to cover the retreat.

During the night, the watch heard the Rebel sentries talk about how they were going to beat the Yankees in the morning.

The cavalry, which was also supposed to move out, had to burn a portion of its baggage because of the lack of transport wagons; among other things that were burned were several cases of Spencer rifles (seven-shot rifles). Many of the 15th's soldiers would gladly have gotten hold of these, but they did not have that kind of ammunition and the enemy was also expected at any moment; therefore, the seven-shot rifles had to go in the flames—which was annoying!

The road was muddy, as usual, and it was difficult for the baggage train to advance, so it was morning before the 15th got moving.

Around 10 o'clock in the morning, the Rebels' cavalry came, but they were easily held back.

On the 19th, the army reached Strawberry Plains. After having crossed the Holston River, they continued on to Knoxville, and from there to Maryville, where they arrived on the 24th.

This was an unpleasant march. First they thought how humbling it was that they had had to withdraw, and then their thoughts turned to the continuous rain, miserable roads, poor rations, and scanty clothing. Such things were poorly suited to giving soldiers good humor, and the camp had scarcely been made at Maryville so they could go inside the tents, when Major Wilson got orders from General Willich to go up to McKee's Landing and take all the flat-bottomed boats and ferries he could get his hands on in order to send grain to Nashville. Then the next day he was called back to Maryville so that his veterans could get ready for their leave. So they marched 28 miles to Loudon and arrived there on the 31st, but they hadn't even put down their weapons before the order came to turn back to Maryville immediately; the

enemy was expected. Major Wilson went up to General Granger's headquarters and attempted to get this order rescinded, because Wilson knew what a disappointment it would be for the soldiers to be forced to turn around now, but without success; they had to march back.

On the march back they were ordered to halt at Le Noir Station and wait for further orders. There was now hope that the trip home would be continued, but no such order was issued; on the contrary, they had to join the brigade in Maryville.¹⁴ Here they were set to doing guard duty until the evening of the 16th, when they got orders to march. The night was dark, the road miserable, and, since the 15th marched behind the baggage train, they did not get to Knoxville until the afternoon of the next day. Here the atmosphere was agitated because Longstreet had gone back over the Holston River, and an attack on the town was expected. Units from every regiment were set to work on the defenses, and all possible preparations were made to give Longstreet a warm reception. Here the Regiment was paid up through 31 December 1863, and this had its effect. No one who has not experienced it can have any idea what an influence this has on the troops; it gives them new life and it is especially good for the officers, who have to buy their own rations. For a time they could now season their food with "luxuries" like butter and eggs; until now they had lived on crackers and coffee.

On the 24th the army was ordered to be ready for a quick march; Longstreet had fallen back and had to be pursued. The soldiers could only pack lightly, which meant uniform, rifle, and a blanket. Before daylight the next morning they broke camp, and they reached Strawberry Plains in the evening.

The bridge had been destroyed again, so they had to cross in boats, and this was done the next morning. They now got five-days' rations per man, and one hundred rounds of ammunition. In the morning on the 27th they stood again in marching order. They marched first to New Market, then to Morristown, where they arrived on the 29th—they met no enemy. It had rained the entire time since they left Knoxville, and it was muddy everywhere, and

¹⁴In a participant's writings it says that they waited in Le Noir for six days; but in the records it says that they came back to Maryville on 1 February after a difficult march.

then a plowed cornfield was chosen as the camp site—perhaps because the mud was softer to lie on here than in other places. They turned back to New Market on 3 March, and to Strawberry Plains on the ninth¹⁵, in order to guard the railroad bridge, do field guard duty, and work on the defenses.

Although the work was difficult enough, the soldiers bore with it well; they had good quarters and full rations, which was unusual now. Here they again got the opportunity to re-enlist and travel home on 30-days' leave, but the soldiers were irritated that nothing had come of this the last time, and only five re-enlisted again.

On 7 April they left Strawberry Plains with orders to join the Cumberland Army, which they had been separated from the whole winter; they were now to prepare for the summer campaign. They took the road around Loudon and camped at McDonald's Station, near Cleveland, where the 15th and 20th Ohio, who had been home on veteran's leave, again joined them. Here they were busy with drilling: one hour's company, one hour's regiment, and one hour's brigade drilling daily, and the officers were busy with preparing their reports, which they had not done since before the Battle of Chickamauga.

On 3 May the Regiment left McDonald's Station, along with the 4th Army Corps, and on the 5th joined General Sherman's army near Ringgold in Georgia.

On 29 April General Howard, who followed General Granger as commander of the 4th Corps, had held an inspection and drill in advance of the march. When it was done, the brigade commanders went up to the division's headquarters to greet their new corps commander. When Major Wilson, the commanding officer of the 15th, was introduced, the general said, "I have heard about your Regiment and Colonel Heg; it is an excellent regiment. I wish we had a whole brigade of them."

Returning convalescents and some recruits from Wisconsin increased the size of the Regiment to 320 men, a number they had not mustered since the Battle of Murfreesboro.

¹⁵The dates in Johnson's book do not agree with the records; the latter are followed.

That winter Grant had been promoted to lieutenant general and had been given command of all the armies of the United States. Sherman had become his successor in commanding the army in Tennessee and Georgia and had, as said before, made considerable preparations for the summer campaign. In April he had collected his army, which was scattered over the country from Huntsville, Alabama, to Knoxville and Morristown in East Tennessee. The actual gathering point was Chattanooga, which was well-defended, and large quantities of supplies were stored here.

Johnston was now the leader of the Rebels. He had stayed at Dalton the whole winter and spring, had collected recruits through the most drastic conscription, and had succeeded in getting his army in good condition after the defeat at Chattanooga.

On 3 May Sherman set the old Cumberland Army moving; its ranks were now full, so it was as big as when Rosecrans was defeated at Chickamauga. Besides, Sherman had the 38th Corps under Schofield, the 20th Corps under Hooker, and the 15th, 16th and 17th Corps under McPherson, so now Sherman's whole army was about three times as big as it was when it fought the Battle of Chickamauga.

Johnston's army here was smaller than Bragg's when he met Rosecrans at Chickamauga, but Johnston had posted his army on the fields in front of Dalton. He thereby took up a strong position and could control the approach to this place. The mountains are quite high and the slopes steep, so they were very difficult to climb. This mountain was rightly called Bird's Roost.

Here Johnston awaited the Union army's arrival. The pass where the road goes through to Dalton was strongly defended. To climb the mountains and drive the enemy from his strongly fortified positions would be much too costly, if not a completely impossible undertaking. Sherman had to figure out something else; nevertheless, he drew his army up to the front of the mountains and made preparations for a main attack—as a bluff?

The army advanced to the foot of the mountain and the vanguard was thrown forward as far as possible. The Rebels had fun and rolled stones down with such an effect that the lines

had to retreat, and the Rebels ridiculed them and made remarks like, "Yankees, here's your road to Atlanta!"

That part of the mountain which lay in front of the 15th is called Rocky Face Ridge. Indeed, the ridge had a stone face and was extremely difficult to climb. The enemy troops that were posted here were horribly troublesome because of both the stone-rolling and the rifles. The Rebel regiment up on the mountain and the 15th below had been in each other's hair many times before, and when the "blues" bivouacked at the bottom of the mountain in the evening and made their coffee, the "greys" called down and asked for some Yankee coffee. (We remember the anecdote from before, but it is good enough to repeat):

"Come and take it!" answered the 15th.

"Who are you?"

"The 15th Wisconsin."

"So we can walk straight out of the realm of the Rebels and into Hell—but you would undoubtedly come after us and drive us out of there, too."

The Regiment had orders to move forward and, if possible, drive the enemy from his position, and early the next morning—at dawn—they took off their caps, put down their haversacks, and began to climb the mountain—something that was not in the least expected. Here and there some trees and bushes grew in the crevices and clefts; the soldiers used these to climb. When some had come a ways up, they leaned over and pulled the others up after them with their hands—all in silence. Finally they were up on the edge (Sergeant John O. Wrolstad of Company I was the first man up), drove the enemy back, and occupied the top of the mountain, although there was serious resistance. They now held this position until they were relieved by part of General Newton's division.

General Willich could not praise the Regiment enough for this heroic deed—a heroic deed it was, too—and after that he always seemed to believe that no one could successfully resist "his little 15th."

This account is according to oral communications; the records[#] report it in the following manner:

From Ringgold the army was set in motion on the seventh and, after hard skirmishes throughout the day, our troops took Tunnel Hill in the evening. That night the 15th did sentry duty in front of Willich's brigade and in the morning was sent forward to spy out the enemy's position on Rocky Ridge, near Dalton. The Regiment advanced in four companies under Captain Gordon, and proceeded, unit by unit, as the vanguard in the front. After a serious engagement, they were successful in pushing the enemy back from his strong position on the highest ridge, which was immediately occupied by the reserve companies and held by the Regiment until the morning of the 13th, when the troops were hurried forward to pursue the enemy, who had fled Dalton during the night.

While these operations were taking place in the front of the Rebel army, McPherson was sent to Snake Creek Gap, a pass in the mountains 30 miles southwest of Dalton, and it was taken without resistance. He thereby flanked Johnston, who now either had to drive McPherson from this pass or withdraw, and the night of the 12th he retreated with his entire army to Resaca.

It can be said parenthetically that it isn't easy to understand why Johnston left the pass unguarded. Had he not enough people to defend it? Or did he think that Sherman would not dare to divide his army in two and risk that the various units would be beaten individually? Probably the latter, because he certainly could not know that Sherman had divided his army in two equal parts and therefore he did not need to be afraid to meet in open battle with either half.

[#] Translator's note: It is unclear which records Buslett was referring to (i.e. whether there was a single source he called *The Records* or a number of different sources he referred to collectively as "the records").

The following day they came upon the Rebels at Resaca, where they were commanded to storm the enemy, and a terrible battle began during which the Rebels' first line of defense was taken with a loss to the 15th of four men killed and 14 wounded.

The Regiment, as well as the whole brigade, had hot and bloody work, and General Willich was seriously wounded.

When the Rebels found that they had been driven from their position, they gathered their forces against General Stanley in order to drive the left part of the main line back and retake the lost ground. But this plan was discovered so quickly that they were precluded from carrying it out.

With a terrible rage, the Rebels stormed down on Stanley's division, which was driven back in confusion; but when the Rebels pursued them, they found to their misfortune that some of Hooker's corps had been sent against them, and this force stopped them and drove them back to their earlier position. The Union troops had won a great deal, but they also lost a great many men, about two thousand.

On Sunday [Saturday?], the 14th, General Hooker tried repeatedly with four cannon to take an earthwork right in front of him, up the steep side of the mountain, but he was beaten back every time. So he sent just a few men up to dig out the earthen bank, and they attached a rope to the cannon, which were thereby hauled away from the enemy's ranks. The Rebels, who stood behind the earthwork, were forced by the rifles to stay hidden behind their breastworks, from where they saw that the cannon were being dragged away.

On Sunday night the Rebels made a desperate attack, but the Union troops were prepared for it; there was serious fighting, but at last the enemy had to retreat. During the night the enemy fled from their position at Resaca, burning railway bridges behind them and continuing their retreat through Adairsville and Kingston to Cassville, a small town where Johnston again halted as if to fight; but soon he retreated from there and took a strong position on the Altoona [Allatoona] Mountains.

On 17 May Sherman set out to overtake him, and the 15th crossed the Coosawatee around dinnertime, pressing forward through steady outpost skirmishes until the enemy retreated, and they arrived in front of the enemy's position at Dallas on the 25th. The 4th Corps, in which the 15th stood, was immediately ordered to support the advance under General Hooker, who had been in a difficult battle with the enemy. The 15th arrived at the battlefield at midnight and took up their position the next morning, which they began to fortify. This division—the 3rd—was relieved by the 27th, and immediately moved to the farthest left and was commanded, as we shall see, to attack the enemy's defenses.

In passing it should be said that the 15th was, in every battle, commanded such that they were standing in the front facing the terrible salvos—under Heg as well as Willich.

The Allatoona Mountains, like all the other ranges in this part of the country, stretch from northeast to southwest and can only be crossed through passes in the mountain chain. The Rebels had naturally occupied all these passes near their position, and an attack on their front would be like going to a blood bath with every probability of being beaten back. Nevertheless, Schofield got orders to cross the Etowah River with the 23rd Corps and prepare to attack at the front, while Sherman, with the rest of the army, marched down along the river, crossed downstream from Cassville, and continued southwest to flank Johnston, here as at Dalton. But Johnston understood this maneuver and immediately set off to meet him; however, he came too late to prevent the passage.

While Hooker's unit crossed the river after having traveled two thirds of their way through the Allatoona Mountains, he met the Rebels' vanguard and the battle began immediately.

The Rebels were driven back, and the army continued its passage in safety.

On the 26th both armies were peaceful, except for some skirmishes here and there.

On the 27th the Rebels attacked the Union troops' right flank, and soon the battle raged terribly, but the enemy had to retreat with great losses. The Union troops were not so lucky on the left flank, though. When the Rebels attacked Sherman's right, he decided to send

his left flank against their right and, if possible, drive them out of their position. General Wood's division, including the 15th, and Hazen's brigade of Newton's division were chosen to carry out this attack. They had to go behind the 23rd Corps and continued the march in an easterly direction for about two and one-half miles, then formed a battle line with the presumption that they would meet the enemy's flank.

Hazen's brigade stood in the first row, Willich's brigade including the 15th in the next, and the attack began around four o'clock in the afternoon. The Rebels were certainly well-prepared. The landscape was uneven and the woods were so dense that they could not be seen by the Union troops before they had the Rebels right on top of them and received a murderous fire from their breastworks. Hazen's brigade fell back with great losses. Willich's, including the 15th, was then commanded forward and advanced determinedly against the strong lines that were set up at the top of the hill. The line advanced towards this top bravely, but none could come over it alive. In this, "the most desperate storm of the campaign," many of the 15th's men were killed on the Rebels' defenses, and "its lines were set up within 45 feet of the enemy without a screen against his fire except for the slope of the hill, on which his batteries were planted", say the records. They continue: "Although exposed to a destructive crossfire, they held this position for five hours, until the enemy received new forces and stormed the 15th's now shrunken ranks, forcing them to retreat, leaving behind their dead and fatally wounded in the Rebels' hands."

In this "sanguine" battle the Regiment began with 160 men and lost 83. Over half lay behind near the enemy's defenses!

It has been said that orders were given to retreat, but this is probably just a fabrication because the records say nothing of such an order and neither do the participants; but one of the soldiers, who ought to know what happened, says "that had they received the order, then they would have retreated if they had to withdraw on their stomachs; but as long as they did not receive any orders, they held their position, hoping for reinforcements."¹⁶ This was not so

¹⁶Apropos: It actually happened this way: The Regiment stormed forward, but it could not

"sanguine" after all! And the general was right when he said, "I have heard about the 15th; I wish we had a whole brigade of such men." If this had happened in any other war than the American blood bath, usually called the Civil War, the 15th's courage and conduct here would have been broadcast over all of Christendom and hailed by all poets in Alexandrine verse; the soldiers in the blue jackets would have been set side by side with the heroes from Thermopoli [*sic*]*—*but here it is described as "sanguine" and "the most desperate storm of the campaign."

It was a hard battle, this one, and nothing was won; it was especially painful for the 15th, which had fought so courageously and lost so many. From the time the Regiment left McDonald's Station until this time, their ranks had been full for the most part; now there were so few again! Among the prisoners were Lieutenant Simonson of Company F and Lieutenant Erikson of Company K. They were immediately sent to Macon, where they found Captain Gustavson and Lieutenant Dahl, who were already in prison.

On the night of 4 June, Johnston again retreated and thereby allowed the Allatoona Mountains to be crossed by the Union troops. He now took up a position at Pine Mountain, where

drive the Rebels back since they were well-defended and had superior numbers; the soldiers certainly could not withstand that strong fire, so they lay down. The woods were quite thick, and it became dark; the ammunition ran out, but they received no order to retreat—they saw nothing of the officers. It was about midnight when they heard the Rebels coming through the woods. They took many of the men in the Regiment prisoner, but many could have gotten away if they had known the landscape; in the dark and unknown territory it was not so easy to manage.

The one who reported this is a respected and trustworthy man who says that in the dark they could not see the enemy until he was right up close to them; they took the informant's comrade who was at his side, but he himself did not have a cartridge to shoot into the body of the enemy, so he jumped out over a rocky ledge—he actually stood on the edge—and, when he came to after the fall and had tested his limbs, one of the Regiment's junior officers came along, breathless: "Is that you, John?" "Yes." "Let's get out of here! All the men are captured; we can't do anything, come quickly!" "Oh, there's no rush now; here come some more." A third comrade came and they waited for a while for more. When no one came, they were finally going to turn toward the road to the lines. But now each of the three wanted to go his own way, and none of them would give in. "Yes, fine! Go where — you want!" said John, who was well acquainted with the woods from home. "I'll go my own way," and so he went. The others followed him and they found their way through the dark and rough country; but many had lain down under the bushes to wait for dawn because during the battle's tumult they had gotten lost and didn't know which way they should go. "This was the retreat; but the order to retreat was given by the Rebels." Although if the soldiers had had more cartridges there wouldn't have been any retreat and they would have held out until the last man.

the usual skirmishes and more serious clashes between the outposts continued, until he retreated to Kenesaw [Kennesaw] Mountain.

The 15th followed with the army to Marietta under almost continuous enemy fire. They also participated in the attack on Kennesaw Mountain, where six were killed and 11 wounded. The Union troops attacked here, but were repulsed with a loss of about two thousand men.

The 15th remained in the trenches in front of the defenses until 3 July, when they again pursued the enemy, who during the night had withdrawn from the defenses. On the 17th the Regiment crossed the Chattahoochee River and followed with the army's general movement towards Atlanta.

The Rebel General Johnston had now been relieved of his duty, and Hood was his successor. He now attacked the Union army's center, which was commanded by General Hooker, but Hood was pushed back with big losses. A few days later he attacked the left flank, which stood under McPherson, and with such violence that McPherson's troops fell back and he himself was killed; but this unit soon re-formed and now the Rebels were driven inside their own defenses. But Hood did not want to surrender and after a few days he attacked Sherman's right flank; he was again driven back with big losses. Now General Hood had indeed tried the strength of the Union troops; he now entrenched himself in Atlanta and waited for Sherman's subsequent movements.

Sherman besieged the city, but there were still two railroads which could bring supplies to the Rebel army.

For over a month Sherman's army surrounded Atlanta, and in all this time there were almost constant skirmishes—night and day—between the armies, and now and then also more serious clashes on individual parts of the line. The armies stood so close to each other that the bullets from the outposts hit directly into the main line and people were killed continually. The soldiers were always ready to fall in at a moment's notice because no one could know where

the enemy would attack. The soldiers were indifferent, as if the enemy were a thousand miles away; they were now quite accustomed to Hild's game.[#]

But we have now strayed from the 15th. The Regiment participated in the siege and other tiring duties at Atlanta, on the far left end of the line, until the evening of 25 August, when they left the trenches, accompanying Sherman's forces in order to break the enemy's communication lines to the south and east of the city. After having marched in a circle around Atlanta for forty miles, the troops arrived on the 31st in Jonesboro, 20 miles from Atlanta. Here they built temporary defenses and bivouacked for the night.

On 31 September the 15th took part in a battle here and marched through the town, pursuing the fleeing enemy. On the third they camped near Lovejoy Station, broke camp on the evening of the fifth, and turned back to Atlanta where they arrived in camp on the eighth, four miles from the city by the Atlanta & Augusta Railroad.

With the taking of Atlanta the most important part of the 15th's history is over. It would soon be mustered out, and the higher-ranking officers thought it reasonable that the Regiment should get some peace for the few weeks they still had left to serve. For more than two years it had shared the troubles and triumphs of the Cumberland Army, its defeats and its victories. It had, before this army got its name, marched with it through Tennessee and Kentucky during the difficult campaign of 1862; it had fought together with it at Perryville, Knob Gap, Stones River, Chickamauga, and Missionary Ridge; it had taken part in the winter campaign in the mountains of East Tennessee and now in the last major campaign had distinguished itself at Rocky Face Ridge, New Hope Church, and innumerable skirmishes. If ever any living soul were to come home from "the little 15th," it was about time that they left.

On 29 August the Regiment left the camp near Atlanta with orders to report to Chattanooga. They arrived here on 1 October.

The higher-ranking officers from the unit the Regiment belonged to were sad at losing it, and General Stanley expressed to Colonel O. C. Johnson his sadness that he could not always

[#] Translator's note: Hild was a battle goddess in Norse mythology.

have the 15th with him; he said he regarded it as one of the very best regiments he had in the army and that he had learned to love its men for their bravery on the battlefield and their good discipline and honorable conduct in the camp. The different regiments in the brigade and the division also came with many a friendly word of farewell; they had all seen that the 15th never faltered in the hour of danger. On the way to the railroad cars the Regiment halted in front of the division commander's—General Wood's—headquarters, and he, although so weak from his wounds that he could scarcely walk with crutches, came out to say farewell. He made a little speech and thanked the Regiment for what it had done since it had joined his division and said, "But the war is still not over; your country still needs your service. When you have been home to see your loved ones, and your country again should call on you, then we expect to see you back with us. Will you come?" The whole Regiment answered with an emphatic "Yes," and after giving three cheers for General Wood, the 15th went down to the station.

The Regiment, which had previously been on military police duty—which is an honorable duty at the same time as it is necessary—stayed in Chattanooga until the 17th.

Following orders from General Steedman, the Regiment now marched 14 miles along the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad to Whiteside Station, where it guarded a very long railroad bridge through the winter. Colonel Johnson was given command of the post and the Regiment remained here until the term of service for most of the companies had expired.

This guard duty was easy; the bridge was well protected with good blockhouses that the soldiers occupied; these houses were like a small fortress, one could say—one at each end of the bridge.

Since they had been on Island Number 10 they had not had any real rest, and this was as welcome as it was well-deserved.

While they stayed here, the Rebel General Hood moved past Huntsville toward Nashville, forcing Thomas to withdraw to this spot, and he thereby cut off the connection between those who were stationed south of Nashville and the North until after the battles on 15 December, when Hood's army was beaten and driven back in disorder and with great losses.

Colonel Johnson had to find out what was going on in the area, and he was forced to confiscate some of the farmers' horses, thereby forming a small cavalry that was constantly sent out on smaller raids, especially to gather intelligence about whether there were any enemy bands in the vicinity.

Company B's term of service expired on 1 December, but since Hood was still between them and Nashville, they were not mustered out until the 20th, when the terms of service of Companies A and E also expired. Company C was mustered out on 1 January 1865; Companies F and G on 13 January; I and K on 10 February; and D and H on the 13th.

This is probably correct; but the records, as found in *The Lieutenant General's Reports for the State of Wisconsin*, report it this way:

When their term was over, Company B marched to Chattanooga and was mustered out, paid, and formally discharged on 1 December; Companies A and E at the same place on the 20th; Company C at the same place on the 31st. The rest of the Regiment remained in the garrison at Whiteside until 13 February 1865; then the last company was mustered out at Chattanooga.

There were 72 noncommissioned officers and men who could not claim discharge and who, pursuant to orders from the War Department, were transferred to the 24th Wisconsin, in which regiment they served until it was mustered out.

In the reports from the Atlanta campaign of 1864, the 15th is named in Brigadier General Bradley's, in Colonel E. Opdyck's, in Colonel C. T. Hotchkiss', in Colonel W. H. Gibson's, in Lieutenant Colonel Wm. D. Williams', in Colonel Frank Askew's, and in Lieutenant Colonel Samuel F. Gray's reports. Here follows Lieutenant Colonel Ole C. Johnson's report in its entirety:

Headquarters, 15th Wisconsin Volunteers, near Atlanta, Georgia, 15 September 1864.

Sir: I have the honor of giving the following report about the 15th Wisconsin Volunteers' operations in the battle that began at McDonald's Station in Tennessee on 3

May and ended with the taking of Atlanta. On 3 May, around 12 o'clock, the Regiment marched with the brigade under Major Wilson's command on the road that leads through Caloosa Springs to Tunnel Hill, which we reached on the seventh at around 12 o'clock noon. The 15th was moved forward as the vanguard and advanced to the foot of Rocky Face Ridge, where they remained through the night. On the morning of the eighth the Regiment was ordered to advance and take the hill, if possible. Around eight o'clock in the morning, four companies who had been used as outposts on our right were ordered to join with the outposts from General Hazen's brigade. Then advanced under a terrible fire from the enemy, who was strongly fortified at the top of the hill. After a sharp skirmish between the outposts, our left was successful in taking the hill, where we took up a strong position which we held until relieved—as ordered—by troops from General Harker's brigade. When we found it impossible to take the hill in front of our right through an attack, the troops remained at this place in the line in position on the hill's northern slope, in constant skirmishes with the enemy, until the afternoon of the 12th, when we accompanied the brigade for one and one-half miles to meet a reported movement of the enemy in force in that direction. Around six o'clock in the evening, we relieved a part of the 32nd Indiana and 89th Illinois Regiments' outpost lines, where we remained through the night. In the morning, the 13th, we discovered that the enemy had fled from his position at and around Rocky Face Ridge and Dalton. Our losses were one man killed and one wounded.

The Regiment immediately followed with the brigade in pursuit of the enemy, passed through Dalton around 11 o'clock in the morning, then south on the left of and along the railroad line. Around 12 o'clock on the 14th intense shooting was heard at the front. The brigade was defended in three battle lines and marched forward some six hundred yards over an exhausted stretch of land, and then found the enemy strongly fortified around Resaca. In the afternoon, around four o'clock, our Regiment and the 35th Illinois were ordered to relieve a part of Sherman's brigade, Newton's division, around two

hundred yards to the right. This position was terribly exposed to crossfire from the enemy's artillery and would have been impossible to maintain if we had not been partially protected by the first line of the enemy's breastworks, which had been taken earlier by the 23rd Corps. The Regiment had been occupied here for about two hours when the ammunition ran out and, relieved by a regiment from Sherman's brigade, we withdrew some two hundred yards, where we rested through the night. Around six o'clock on the 15th we relieved the 49th Ohio in the front line. During the night the barricades had been erected quickly so we were partially protected, and from this position we kept a battery of two cannon near our front completely quiet; we controlled the enemy's breastworks with our rifles so he could not show his head over the fortification. About six o'clock in the evening we were relieved by the 15th Ohio and we formed a double column in the second line. Around 11 o'clock that night the enemy made a desperate attack on our line; but he was nicely beaten and severely punished. On the morning of the 16th, the enemy had disappeared from the front and our outposts took his defenses' main line; it was discovered that he had crossed the Oostenaula River by Resaca Station and burned the bridges behind him. Our losses were now four men killed, 14 wounded.

Around two o'clock in the afternoon we marched over the Oostenaula on the railroad bridge and then went in line in a southerly direction along the railway, passing through Calhoun towards Adairsville. In the afternoon on the 17th, General Newton's division met the enemy in considerable strength near Adairsville. We were lined up to the right of General Hazen's brigade and threw up breastworks at the top of the hill. The Regiment was sent as a vanguard two hundred yards in the front and remained in this position overnight. On the morning of the 18th—the enemy had retreated—we moved in a southerly direction, passed through Adairsville and Kingston on the 19th to within one mile of Cassville, where we met the enemy in force. The 15th was positioned in the third line as support where the line might be pressed, but we were not engaged. The

next day, the 20th, we discovered that the enemy had abandoned his position. On the 23rd, around 12 o'clock, the Regiment marched together with the brigade and with twenty-days' rations in the baggage train in order to flank the left side of the enemy's line at Allatoona Pass. We crossed the Etowah River on a wagon bridge about six miles southwest of Cassville, then marched in a southerly direction through a rough landscape and crossed Pumpkin Vine Creek. At four o'clock on the afternoon of the 25th, we heard intense shooting at the front; the cause of this was that the enemy had hastily abandoned their position in the Allatoona Mountains and quickly threw themselves at General Hooker's advance force (the 20th Corps?), which was the leading column on this road. Our corps was immediately pushed ahead as support. After crossing Pumpkin Vine Creek the road was blocked by troops from the 20th Corps, and since it began to rain in the evening we bivouacked for the night on the left side of the road, around nine o'clock. At four o'clock the next morning, the brigade was positioned to the left of General Newton's division, on the east of the front. The 15th was to the right of the 35th Illinois in the second line, then advanced with the brigade to within 250 yards (750 feet) of the enemy's defenses. The 32nd Illinois was pushed forward as an outpost and drove the enemy back nicely, and in a position accordingly secured, we fortified ourselves on a bridge where the batteries were immediately set up. Around six o'clock in the evening, our Regiment relieved the 32nd Indiana in the front line, where we remained overnight. Around nine o'clock in the morning, the 27th Brigade was relieved by a part of General Stanley's division and moved about one mile to the left past Pickett's Mill, where the brigade was lined up in two battle lines behind General Hazen's brigade, supporting it; the 15th comprised the middle of the first line, with the 89th Illinois to the right and the 32nd Indiana to the left. Our division, stationed to expose the enemy to the right, moved with the left flank about three miles passing the 23rd Corps' rear troops who were to the left of our previous position. At two o'clock we came to a place which we presumed was the right flank of the enemy's lines. At

four o'clock—General Hazen's brigade had been beaten back—the front line of this brigade was ordered forward, followed soon after by the second.

When our Regiment crossed a valley area, it was flanked (attacked in the flank) by one of the enemy's batteries. Charging with a yell over the second brigade, the Regiment stormed so close to the enemy's defenses that some were killed within 10 feet of them. When the Regiment discovered that it was impossible to drive the enemy back, it lay down about 15 yards from the enemy's breastworks and maintained an effective rifle fire, Companies A and F shooting diagonally at a battery that held the position some 60 yards to the right, so it flanked our battle line. The fire from the enemy's muskets and artillery was very heavy, but we held the position until about nine o'clock in the evening; then we were ordered to fall back. When we attempted to carry our wounded back, the enemy charged and stormed down on us, taking many of our people prisoner, among them most of the wounded. At 11 o'clock that night, the Regiment held a position some three hundred yards to the right on a bridge and two hundred yards from the enemy's defenses, where we fortified ourselves well. In this position we remained in constant skirmishes with the enemy until the night of 5 June, when the enemy fled from his position. At eight o'clock the next morning the Regiment moved to New Hope's Church, where it was deployed in a position at the south end of the front, connecting on the left with the 25th Illinois in the first line. Our losses in this battle were one officer wounded, one missing; 14 men killed, 40 wounded, 26 missing.

At nine o'clock on 6 June, we moved in a southerly direction to within one mile of Pine Mountain, where we bivouacked overnight. The next morning, the seventh, we moved about six hundred yards toward the front and left and were positioned three hundred yards from the enemy's defenses on Pine Mountain, our right connecting with General Harker's brigade and our left with the 14th Army Corps, the front almost directly to the south. On the morning of the 14th, our line advanced about two hundred yards to the left and ahead, where we lined up on a high ridge, our right abutting the

35th Illinois and our left the 49th Ohio. In this position we set up defenses within two hundred yards of the enemy's defenses on the eastern slope of Pine Mountain. The next morning, the 15th, the enemy had again disappeared from our front. At nine o'clock in the morning, we advanced to the abandoned defense works and formed a column on the left of the second line, loosed our rifles, and rested until Generals Stanley and Newton's divisions lined up and advanced about one mile; then the enemy was found behind another line of defensive works. Our division, now in the reserves, moved into the defensive trenches abandoned by the enemy and bivouacked overnight. At seven o'clock on the morning of the 17th, we marched through the enemy's second line of defensive works—he had retreated during the night—and we relieved General Stanley's division, which was involved in skirmishes. This brigade, formed in two lines, stood to the right of Colonel Knefler's, to the left of the 14th Army Corps, and advanced with the 89th Illinois, pushing ahead as the vanguard, and drove the enemy from his rifle pits and into his defenses' main line one mile away. From this position five batteries launched shells against the enemy in the direction of Kennesaw Mountain. On the evening of the 18th, at six o'clock, our Regiment took up a position some three hundred yards from the enemy's defensive works and quickly set up barricades. In the morning we relieved the 25th Illinois in the outpost lines, which were so close to the enemy that we opened fire on the main line of his defenses and in return received heavy fire from his whole battle line. We were relieved at two o'clock in the afternoon and fell back to the main defensive works, where we remained until the night of the 19th when the enemy fled from their third defensive line in front of Kennesaw Mountain.

Passing through his third line at 10 o'clock in the morning on the 20th, this division relieved a division of the 20th Corps a half mile to the right of Kennesaw Mountain and five hundred yards from the enemy defenses' fourth line. Some 150 yards right in front of this brigade lay Bald Hill, where the enemy was strongly entrenched in their rifle pits. On the 21st the brigade was ordered to storm the enemy and drive him from the knoll.

At 12 o'clock noon, the 15th Ohio was moved forward as a vanguard, and the 45th Ohio (it should be the 49th), as support, stormed the enemy and drove him from his position and took many prisoners. Our Regiment was ordered to relieve the 15th Ohio immediately, which was done under heavy enemy fire. We barricaded ourselves immediately on this hill, which we held until night of 2 July; then we moved together with the brigade a half mile to the left and relieved Wood's brigade (division?) of the 15th Corps. The Regiment lined up to the brigade's left in a single line and occupied the strong defenses which were erected by the troops we relieved, about two hundred yards from the enemy's defenses on Kennesaw Mountain. On the morning of the 3rd the enemy fled from his position on Kennesaw and retreated towards the Chattahoochee River.

The same morning we moved out with the brigade, passed through the Rebels' defenses a few miles southwest of Kennesaw, then in a southeasterly direction past the military academy in Marietta, crossed the railroad one mile south of there, and marched in line to the left along the railway some six miles, where General Stanley's division met the enemy in force. At one o'clock in the afternoon on the fourth we moved one mile to the left where the brigade took up a position on the far left of the army, the front almost facing the east. On the fifth the enemy had again disappeared from the front and around eight o'clock in the morning we marched through his defenses, then to the right, until we ran into the railroad, which we marched along to Vining's Station where Hazen's troops discovered the back of enemy's rear guard over the Chattahoochee River at Pace's Ferry. Our Regiment took up a position two hundred yards to the left of the road which leads to Pace's Ferry, on a rise some two hundred yards from the river, our right meeting the 35th Illinois and our left the 25th Illinois. We remained in this position until the ninth; then we moved some seven miles up along the river and bivouacked for the night. At seven o'clock on the morning of the 12th, we moved two miles along the river where a pontoon bridge had been built, which we crossed at one o'clock. On the 13th

the division moved along the river to Pace's Ferry, drove the enemy from that position, and made it possible for the 14th Corps to cross over. When General Davis' division had crossed, we were relieved and withdrew to our earlier position. On the morning of the 18th the Regiment marched along a road that leads through Buck Head to Atlanta. On the 19th, we went on a reconnaissance mission and found the enemy strongly fortified on Peach Tree [Peachtree] Creek's southern bank. Colonel Knefler's brigade was successful in driving him from his first defensive line to the right of the road. The 15th Illinois pushed ahead as the vanguard, crossed the stream at the same time, and occupied the defensive works to the left. The brigade followed the vanguard over the stream and quickly built a bridge. When it was dark, we were relieved by General Newton's division, marched back to the position we had taken the previous night, and rested until morning; then we marched some two and one-half miles and took up a position to the left of General Newton's division on the north side of Peach Tree Creek, in a single line, our right meeting the 15th Ohio and our left the 89th Illinois. On the morning of the 21st the enemy was gone again, and we marched on a side road that runs through the first defensive lines before Atlanta and leads to the main road to that city. About one mile from the first line we met the enemy in force. We took up a position within two hundred yards of his line, where we set up defensive works; two companies were sent out as outposts. On the morning of the 22nd, the enemy had fled again from his position and we moved into the abandoned breastworks, hoping to be able to take the city without any notable resistance. But the enemy was found strongly defended behind his forts and breastworks around Atlanta; our Regiment took up a position within rifle range, defended itself, and kept up a heavy fire from the outposts.

Up to this time the Regiment was under Major Wilson's command, but he was now sick and preoccupied and therefore in no condition to complete this report, and I am Adjutant L. G. Nelson of this Regiment; my thanks are due to the above.

I came back and took command on 24 July, and from that time no moves were made until the evening of 25 August when we, pursuant to the orders given us, moved quietly with the rest of the brigade and marched some four miles. The Regiment marched with the brigade around and to the rear troops by Atlanta to Jonesboro, then to Lovejoy's Station, where one man was wounded; then back to Atlanta and into camp four and one-half miles southwest of the city on 9 September.

The losses, not mentioned before, were one officer wounded; one man killed and seven wounded.

I have the honor to be, with great respect,

O. C. Johnson
Lieutenant Colonel and Regiment Commander

Lieutenant W. McGrath,
Assistant Adjutant General
First Brigade

In the Atlanta campaign the Regiment suffered as a whole a loss of two officers killed, two wounded; 21 men killed, 27 wounded, and 32 captured and missing. Total: 84.

Companies G and I on Detached Service

When Corinth was evacuated, Island Number 10 became a reserve post. There was no longer any need for a larger garrison, and therefore eight companies were ordered to join the main army. Companies G and I under Captains John A. Gordon and Augustus Gasman stayed behind and comprised part of the garrison on the Island. It was assumed at the time that this service would only be temporary, but it turned out to last much longer than expected—from 11 June 1862 to 21 September 1863, the march from the garrison to the Regiment included.

After the departure of the eight companies, Companies G and I of the 15th and Company L of the 2nd Illinois cavalry were commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Quincy McNeil of the latter regiment. The whole post consisted of about 150 men besides officers.

The cavalry was kept busy spying out the area and bringing back reports about the plundering guerrilla bands, which could attack the camp at any time. Companies G and I, sometimes on horseback, were also occupied with this kind of work.

As should be remembered, several thousand prisoners were taken at the same time as the Island was captured. But in order to avoid being taken prisoner, many of the Rebels had deserted their army and hidden in small timber hideouts and among the local inhabitants while they waited for the opportunity to slip through the Union lines to their friends in the South. One of the garrison's duties was to track down these Rebels and take them prisoner.

The garrison was now not on the Island itself, but right across on the Tennessee bank in New Madrid Bend. At first "Bend" was an island in itself because of the high water, with the Mississippi River to the front and Reel Foot Lake behind, while flooded marshy areas ran between the lake and the river on both sides. The result was that the Rebels who were hiding here could not get away; many were captured and there was every prospect that all of them would meet the same fate sooner or later. But soon came reports from the few Union-friendly whites in the area and from the Negroes that there was a secret passage that the fugitives were making use of. How they could cross the water that surrounded them was a mystery because every means they could have used for the crossing had been destroyed.

Under these circumstances, 1st Sergeant C. B. Nelson wanted to find out where the underground route to the land of milk and honey could be. He did not take on this job blindly; he trusted in luck. He made preparations for an intelligent investigation, which the following illustrates: among a thousand other things which were taken from the Rebel camp were some of their uniforms and other equipment, among them lists of the different companies in the captured garrison. By going through these lists with some care, he could find out what he wanted: the different soldiers' ages, height, weight, appearance, skin, hair and eye color, place of recruitment, personal property, etc.

With the commanding officer's permission, the sergeant deserted from the Union army and became a member of the Memphis Light Artillery, C.S.A., which had as its motto "Victory

or Death!" But before he "deserted" he had examined this artillery company's rolls down to the description of each individual person, and here he found a description which fit him exactly in every way. The Union sergeant's "twin" was a James Percival, recruited in Walham P.O. Sumner County, Tennessee. The sergeant now became "Jim Percival from Sumner" and wanted "mighty bad" to get out of range of "the Yanks." He could "reckon" instead of "guess," and dressed in a Rebel uniform he left the Union camp to find a way across Reel Foot Lake. It did not take him long before he found out that "little Bob Thompson," so-called because his father was called "big Bob," was the man he had to deal with.

These two Thompsons, father and son, used to fish in the lake and shoot in the fields before the war, and for a while "Little Bob" had been the ferryman over Reel Foot. When the Rebel army came, he became a Rebel soldier, or rather a guerrilla and a poacher or freebooter; but when the Rebel flag was lowered and the Stars and Stripes raised, he became a Union man because it was safer. Now, "Little Bob" became a Union man in name and was especially diligent in making this fact known in the neighborhood. The sergeant found his cabin by a swamp near the lake. At first the story about escaping from the Union army did not seem to win any favor with "Little Bob." However, he was cunning enough to act like a Union man and did not give the sergeant any advice or hope. While these two stood talking, a unit of the cavalry came in sight and turned toward the cabin. Then Sergeant Nelson became so scared that Thompson lost all doubt and advised Nelson to run down to the swamp where the cavalry could not follow. He himself would come and help as soon as the riders were gone. The sergeant followed this advice, but was seen by the cavalry and pursued. Nelson waded through water up to his waist until he finally found a hillock that had formed around a large tree trunk. From this point he saw the riders ride away, but nevertheless he did not dare to come out of hiding. Soon he heard a couple of oars, and then a boat came gliding by and Bob Thompson looked around carefully as if he were looking for something that was missing. Nelson called to him in a low voice, and Bob came smiling up to the hillock and said, "You are too good a Rebel to fall into the Yankees' hands; I will row you across, friend." On the way across he told his passenger

about how he had hidden his boat in the swamp so that he would not be forced to destroy it, and about how many he had taken across to the Rebel lines.

The sergeant, now put ashore in the middle of enemy territory, took the road to the military district's headquarters in Columbus, Kentucky, and returned by boat on the Mississippi River. The day after he came back he made another visit to "Little Bob" Thompson's cabin, but this time in a Union uniform and with a unit from Company G and orders to arrest the ferryman who had transported one passenger too many. It is unnecessary to say that the order was obeyed. "Little Bob" did not recognize the sergeant immediately, but when he realized the connection, he exclaimed, "It was a damned contemptible Yankee trick!"

"Little Bob's" reward was military prison, Sergeant Nelson's: promotion to lieutenant in Company G and, when this company was mustered out, to captain in the 47th Wisconsin Regiment.

During the dry period in the summer the water level went down, so the roads around the lake became passable and a night watch was now more necessary than ever. The cavalry and a part of the infantry, who were mounted, kept constant guard and observed the movements of the scattered Rebel bands that roamed the area.

Late in the evening in October 1862, the scouts came back after an unusually long march. They had made a circle of 20 miles without hearing or seeing a single enemy. Everything seemed to be safe. The men went to bed, feeling as secure as if they had been in Wisconsin. The scouts, who had just returned from their hard ride, were in need of the rest and sleep that was so well deserved, but then shots from the picket lines raised the alarm. With a speed that only trained soldiers can manage, all the men came in line at the point in the front where the shots came from. It was dark, just before dawn, and nothing could be seen, but voices could be heard and the pickets, who had fallen back, reported that a significant force was marching up the road, and when this force had been fired on it had turned into a field to the right.

The line advanced and took up a position along a fence between this field and the camp. From here the dark contour of a column could be seen. The day dawned, but no movement was

made by either side. Then suddenly a unit of mounted soldiers came as if to attack the enemy force that had attempted to surprise the garrison. In any case, this force believed that the mounted soldiers wanted to dispatch them because the riders had turned around, and numerous volleys were aimed at the riders, who responded forcefully to this attack. The Union troops here had the unusual spectacle of seeing a skirmish which they apparently would not participate in. It still was not light enough to see the uniforms, but it is quite certain that the silhouetted riders, who had sneaked through the picket lines, were Rebels, and therefore Colonel McNeil ordered "Fire!" and after a few volleys both the riders and the men on foot fled as fast as they could. A "charge" by the small garrison cleared the field quickly, and the wounded and captured explained how this whole affair had come about. The Rebel force, which consisted of about three hundred cavalry under Colonel Faulkner, had marched some 30 miles the previous day and night. The plan was to attack the camp in the rear and on the left, and in the front and on the right, at dawn. The unit that the pickets had fired on was supposed to attack the reserves and the left flank; the other unit was supposed to make a one-mile circle to the right and then march around to the front. Both units had strict orders to dismount and attack as infantry. When the force that was supposed to approach from the right heard the shots from the picket line, they assumed that the movement had been discovered and the unit to the right had been attacked.

Without paying attention to their orders, the cavalry set off over the field to come to the aid of their comrades. These men saw a unit on horseback come galloping towards their line, and thought they were Union cavalry—it was not light enough to distinguish the colors from one another—and they opened fire. This was the reason for the battle that the garrison had watched, and its attack was a great surprise for the Rebels who then hastily took to their heels.

Colonel Faulkner and his adjutant were taken prisoner, together with 10 or 12 others.

In Love's *Wisconsin in the Rebellion*, page 472, where Companies G and I are mentioned, the following report can be found about this affair: "Early in October 1862 these two companies

and the 2nd Illinois cavalry, all under Colonel McNeil of the 2nd, were attacked by three hundred Rebel cavalry under Colonel Faulkner. The Rebels were driven back and suffered a loss of seven men killed, nine wounded, 15 captured. Our losses: one killed, three wounded." Colonel McNeil wrote to Governor Salomon on 19 October 1862, "The companies from your state, now under my command, are very reliable and brave. The Companies are G and I, 15th Regiment, under the command of Captain John A. Gordon. About Captain Gordon I will say there is no more courageous man in the service, and if your Excellency should find it appropriate to promote him, be assured that he can fill any position to his own and the state's honor."

Although this attack was unsuccessful for the enemy, it was now quite clear that this small garrison was far too exposed in its current position. It therefore received orders to move over to the Island, where the quartermaster's and all the other supplies and provisions were also moved. Under this new arrangement the cavalry company of the 2nd Illinois Regiment was sent away, so now only the two companies from the 15th were left. These were now under the command of Captain Gordon.

A safer place than this island could not be found; here no attack such as that just described could be carried out.

Nevertheless, on Christmas morning, 1862, something completely unexpected happened. A small boat came down over the river carrying a messenger from Brigadier General Thomas E. Davies, who had command over the military district with headquarters in Columbus, Kentucky. The messenger carried with him a small piece of paper, perhaps three inches wide and four long, and it was addressed to the commanding officer. It contained the following message: "The enemy is expected. They will certainly visit you. The moment you receive this you shall spike the cannon and destroy the quartermaster's and commissary's supplies and throw all the ammunition into the river." This unusual message was signed "Thomas E. Davies, Commanding Brigadier General." It was not sealed, but open, so anyone could read it. The sergeant who commanded the watch at the landing place read it, assumed the messenger was a spy, and arrested him. The sergeant believed that the enemy wanted to

play a trick and fool the garrison into making itself defenseless. The messenger was sent under guard to headquarters, where he repeated the same thing—the orders were actually both oral and written—and explained that he had been assigned to this secret mission, that the previous night General Davies had come to his headquarters and ordered him to climb into a little boat immediately and bring this order to Island Number 10. The order had already been written and was handed over immediately. Moreover, he was ordered that he must in no way allow the order to come into the hands of the enemy, but if there was any possibility that this would happen, he was to eat the order. He also had with him a whole bunch of small, rattail files that he said the cannon were to be spiked with. The general himself had given him these and they were to be delivered to the commanding officer for that purpose. Further, he said that General Davies had been very uneasy and worried before the message was ready to go and had accompanied him to the boat to convince himself that there was no delay.

This order was so strange that it didn't receive any greater acceptance from the commander than from the sergeant. Without ceremony, the messenger—who was in the general's secret service—was sent to the guardhouse as an enemy spy.

All security rules were observed in order to prevent the Rebels from taking the Island, which under the current circumstances could only be taken by a stratagem—the Rebels could take a pontoon boat and try to land with the help of a Union flag. Consequently, the guard at the different batteries was doubled. Every ship that signaled with a steam whistle and steered toward the landing place was stopped with a shot of blank ammunition fired over its bow; if this did not have the desired effect, then another shot was fired with live ammunition. In the meantime, Davies was informed that a man who claimed to be his messenger, bringing an order to destroy the ammunition, had been arrested as a spy. This information was sent with the first pontoon boat that passed. Later in the day a special boat came from Columbus with a complete explanation from the general. He explained that the Rebels were in the process of making great inroads in the Columbus area, Island Number 10, and other places; the goal was to take some, if not all, of these points, cut off General Grant's communications on the river, and

force him to give up the campaign against Vicksburg. The order from the previous night was repeated more precisely than it had been written on the small piece of paper. The general himself seemed to have some doubt with regard to the paper; in any case, he doubted that the order would be obeyed, because in the formal order he said, "I hope you will follow my orders from tonight, if you have not already done so."

To this last order the response was that public property would not be destroyed, especially none of the larger guns and ammunition, and the general's attention was drawn to the fact that the garrison could hold the Island because it was secure against everything except a trick. He also received a detailed report about all the security rules that were being observed to prevent any ship from landing before its true character was clear—whether it was friend or foe. The boat carrying this message was not out of sight up the river before a large flotilla was seen coming down river. Blank ammunition was fired several times without any effect, so two or three live rounds were shot over the bow, but the flotilla behaved as though nothing had happened; it really seemed that the enemy was coming. One more shot from the best cannon and the shell went so close to the chains that held the smokestack that the machine was stopped immediately, the wheels reversed, and a flag raised. Then a boat was launched and manned. As it neared the Island, it became clear that it was under the command of a Union officer. It was Colonel Bissell of the Michigan Engineers. When he came close enough that he could be heard, he demanded to know, with a voice that could not be mistaken, why he was being stopped by troops under the flag of the United States. The answer was that he would have to come ashore to get an explanation. To say he was indignant when he climbed ashore does not describe his emotions; he was furiously angry "because he had been shot at and stopped in such an unseemly manner on the government's right of way by troops who were supposed to make sure that the river he sailed on would flow uninterrupted to the sea."

A few words from the commanding officer were enough to convince the colonel that nothing had been done here that duty did not demand; when the garrison commander had taken on the heavy responsibility not to obey the orders of a higher-ranking officer, he had to see to

it that this did not bring about negative consequences. Colonel Bissell had orders to report to General Grant for engineer duty at Vicksburg, and he gladly took the responsibility on himself to bring Grant a report about the circumstances that the Regiment found itself in.

It will soon be evident how well he accomplished this.

Towards evening on the same day it was became clear that the district commander, General Davies, was employing the same tactics he wanted to be used on Island Number 10. Large quantities of supplies began to float past the Island: crates of crackers and full barrels of pork filled the river from the Island to the Tennessee shore. It later became clear that all this debris came from Columbus and had been thrown into the river on the orders of the district commander, who was determined that the Rebels, whom he presumed were approaching, would not get so much as a crumb of Yankee crackers and pork. But the strangest thing about the whole affair was that not a single Rebel was seen anywhere in this part of the country. The fear was completely groundless. When all these pork barrels and cracker crates, thrown into the river by the agitated, overwrought district commander, began to float into the fork and, since the supplies on the Island were also doomed to go the same way so there would be nothing left to satisfy their gourmands with, the soldiers' joke here was that they were going to make a right face and march to Dixie¹⁷—dissatisfied and contemptuous—in order to see where the enemy could be, because there wasn't a Rebel soul in the vicinity of the Island; there also were no Rebel forces at Columbus or anywhere in its vicinity.

The following morning brought orders once again from the district headquarters; this time the assistant adjutant general himself came with both oral and written orders to carry out the assignment that had been given to the garrison in the previous orders. The garrison chief answered that neither he nor any of the officers would destroy a single dollar's worth of the government's property, but, if the adjutant wanted to carry out the order himself, then he could get a squadron to help him.

¹⁷Dixie: The Negroes' Clarassen Land, or land of milk and honey, where there was such an abundance of all good things. The word was also used to refer to the Southern states.

This proposal was accepted, and a unit of soldiers was put at his disposal. General Davies' orders were thus carried out under the supervision of his adjutant general.

The records show that the 15th always did its duty willingly and with the greatest seriousness, but this time Companies G and I did their duty unwillingly—in short, they did the worst job they could. Some of the cannon, which were later sent to the arsenal in St. Louis, were very well spiked; this was done under the eyes of the officer. But in most of the cannon the spikes were driven in so loosely that there was no difficulty in pulling them out again—yes, they even spiked several cannon with wooden plugs. But for the moment there were 80 unusable cannon.

A great deal of ammunition was thrown into the river, but it was remarkable how the load shrank on the way from the magazine to the banks of the river. However, later it was understandable because ammunition bags, cartridges, shells and ammunition of all kinds were found under the bushes along the whole way. The instinct for self-preservation, if nothing else, had led the soldiers to do this because otherwise they would have been completely defenseless and—pay attention to this—they had not received orders to abandon the Island. Everything indicated that General Davies was a traitor.

Now that this order had been carried out the provisions were mercifully spared, but the garrison was left behind their defenses for several days without a usable cannon, although this certainly wasn't forgotten. Colonel Bissell, true to his word, had reported to General Grant, and General Asboth was sent immediately to relieve General Davies, who got orders to report to a military court in St. Louis. This court's actions are difficult to explain, as far as Davies' conduct is concerned; not one witness from Island Number 10 was summoned. Colonel Wm. R. Rawley from General Grant's staff, who had visited the camp and knew all the circumstances when General Asboth took over the command from Davies, was summoned; but when he appeared, the court was recessed indefinitely and he was never required to appear at a later time. In the end it can be concluded that, if this case was pursued any further, then it happened without the testimony of anyone familiar with the circumstances.

Under General Asboth's command the cannon were repaired and all the ammunition that had been hidden away was brought back to the magazine, and the Island was made ready to defend itself. After that nothing of great significance happened. Everyone tired of the life they had to live here, and they were very happy when they finally got orders to join their comrades at the front and share the honor and the reputation that the 15th had already won.

The foregoing chapter about Companies G and I is according to the account of Captain Wm. A. Montgomery, and in order to make the affair with General Davies even clearer a portion of a private letter with an anonymous author is included:

The affair concerning General Davies has never been made public, as far as I know. It seems to me that this is one of the most remarkable episodes of its kind from the war. Colonel R. has told me that General Grant was extremely angry when he was told the facts, but at that time was so occupied with preparations for the Vicksburg campaign that all his energy and all his thoughts ran in that direction, and when this campaign was over the case against General Davies was also forgotten. Colonel R. has also told me that Davies was a rich merchant from New York City; he had retired from business but had many influential friends, and when the war broke out he was generous when it came to enlisting troops, etc. As payment for this patriotism he was appointed as brigadier general, although he was old and completely lacking in experience and therefore incompetent to fill any military position.

General Strong, also a rich New York merchant who had retired from business, like Davies, and who also had many influential friends, like Davies, and was his friend, was the presiding judge in the military court that was supposed to handle Davies' case—consequently, the case was rejected quietly.

The Convalescents

After the Battle at Missionary Ridge, 25 November 1863, the 4th Corps, including the 15th, marched toward Knoxville in East Tennessee, where General Burnside's army had been surrounded and besieged by the Rebels under General Longstreet.

Since the sick and wounded had been left behind at Chattanooga, the convalescents comprised a significant force—in the middle of December some five thousand men—who were divided in the meantime into brigades that were supposed to come to the aid of their respective units.

Eighty-seven men, officers and enlisted men, from the 15th served under Captain Skofstad's command.

On 24 December this army marched under Colonel Leiboldt [Laiboldt?] of the 15th from Chattanooga as guard for a supply train that was on the way to the troops in East Tennessee.

On the evening of the 25th they pitched camp in and around Charleston, which lies on the south side of the Havauset River.[#] Early the next morning the troops began to cross the river. The brigade that the 15th belonged to was assigned that day as the rearguard.

At seven o'clock in the morning, only the 2nd Brigade and the brigade that the 15th belonged to—both from Woods' division—and some 20 wagons were left behind on the south side of the river. The crossing went slowly because the earthen banks on both sides of the railroad bridge were difficult to climb up from the low land below them. The temporarily-appointed brigade adjutant had just given orders to march when a Negro came running at full speed and shouted that the Rebels were coming. At the same time, a line of enemy cavalry was seen approaching directly towards the front out of the woods with their sabers drawn. As soon as the adjutant realized the position they were in, he sent the convalescent units from the 15th

[#] Translator's note: This does not appear on the map. Perhaps he means the Hiwassee River, which does lie just north of Charleston.

and 68th Indiana out as an advance force. (The commander of the brigade, Major McEldvin, was, in fact, absent.) These met the attackers with such a strong volley that they halted; their victory yell also stopped. The adjutant spurred on his horse and rode off to report to the commander about the situation. He found Colonel and Division Commander Esby of the 68th Indiana along with brigade commander Major McEldvin of the 35th Illinois by the bridge. Orderlies were immediately sent to Colonel Leibauldt [?], who had gone a little ahead, to inform him about the attack. He soon came back with some of his troops, who were set across the river, and also with part of a company from Colonel Long's cavalry, who were stationed here to guard the bridge. In the meantime the adjutant was busy deploying the troops in the best way to meet any new attack that the enemy might want to undertake. The division commander tried to get a foothold behind a church that lay approximately in the middle of the town.

When Colonel Leibauldt [?] came back, the orders were given to attack. Everyone was anxious, but ready to go to battle. No one knew how many of the enemy there were; certainly enough so that the Rebels outnumbered them two-to-one because their lines could be seen on the other side of the open field—a distance of over a mile.

Things looked a little dark for the small army, but there was no choice; it had to defeat the enemy or itself be driven back down to the rapid current right behind them.

The trumpet sounded and the attack began. The line pushed forward with determined steps until it was about three hundred feet from the enemy; then it was ordered to march double-time, the battle cry sounded from every single mouth, and the echo resounded in the surrounding mountains. A single volley confused the enemy, and the convalescents had won.

Now the cavalry took part in the work; they had stayed back in reserve until the enemy turned its back, but then the lines opened up so they could get through them and after the Rebels. They pursued the enemy for five miles, and people on foot pursued them for four miles.

The quiet that prevailed in the ranks before the battle was now broken by a victory yell that can only be heard in a camp of victorious soldiers.

Losses: six wounded, one captured; the prisoner was Peter Johnson from Company C.

How many of the Rebels were killed is not known, but 15 were wounded and 157 prisoners fell into the hands of the convalescents.

The 15th was praised by the high-ranking officers for this affair, as well as for services rendered on the crossing over the Tennessee River when the whole baggage train had to be taken across on two small ferryboats.

In London [Loudon?] they delivered their prisoners and began the journey "hopping and jumping for joy." When they arrived in Knoxville they found out that their corps was stationed at Strawberry Plains, and they hoped to join them on New Year's Day, but after a day's march they got a message that the army was out an expedition towards Dandridge.

On the morning of 2 January they continued on the way, and after 15-hours forced march they joined their respective units, who greeted the convalescents with three cheers.

About the Regiment's Health System

In October 1861, when Company A, Captain Thorkildsen [sic], had come from Chicago to Madison, Dr. E. J. Hansen from Koshkonong was summoned by Colonel Heg to supervise this portion of the Regiment's sick men. When Company B, Captain Johnson, arrived, this "famous" medical activity was expanded to include this company as well.

At the end of November both companies moved from their quarters in town to Camp Randall, where a temporary hospital for the sick was equipped in one of the larger barracks, but after the companies arrived the hospital barracks became too small. In December a Regimental Hospital was outfitted, and it was only now that an organization more or less in accordance with army regulations could be set up here. A. O. Øien was now named steward, just as the hospital also got its commander of the watch, cook, and other staff.

In January 1862 Colonel Heg's brother-in-law arrived, Himo, from Kansas. He was appointed as the Regiment's chief doctor. Hansen now became the second-ranking doctor, the

American, Newel, the third. The two first got their commissions as officers from the United States military; the last, as usual, was named by the state.

The hospital was soon too small; the barracks were rather miserable and the weather was cold, and consequently many became sick. The hospital was also cold and in February they moved the sick out of the camp to a good warm house in the town, where they stayed until the Regiment broke camp and moved south.

As far as sickness in the Regiment up to this point is concerned, the number of sick men was not unusual, but there were many who were not well-suited to military service—some were too young, others had various physical defects and therefore could not tolerate the cold and the unfamiliar camp life so well. In the fall nervous fever[#] and dysentery raged, in the winter tuberculosis and measles were generally widespread, and also erysipelas.^{###} But the deaths were insignificant: only two percent of the sick died. Company A lost the most.

When the Regiment left Madison, the sick who could be moved were put on board in a railroad car specially outfitted for them. Only a very few remained behind. Those who came along were at first under the care of Doctors Hansen and Newel, because Dr. Himo stayed behind in Madison for a time for personal reasons.

When the Regiment left Bird's Point to take part in the siege of Island Number 10, the sick remained behind, and their numbers were soon increased because of the terrible diarrhea that was so common in the army in this area. This illness almost always took on a chronic character and often, if not always, ended with death. The reason for this was the unfamiliar influences these men came under, but above all the stirred up river water that even when it

[#] Nervous fever probably refers to both typhus and typhoid fevers; the two were not clearly distinguished from each other in the nineteenth century. In *Norsk-Engelsk Ordbok* (J. Brynildsen, ed., 3rd ed., s.v. "nervefeber") the term is translated as "a nervous fever, typhoid (fever)." In *A Dictionary of Medical Science* (Robley Dunglison, rev. ed., [Philadelphia: Henry C. Lea, 1874], s.v. "typhus mitior") nerve fever is identified as *typhus mitior* and is said to be characterized by "slight shiverings; heavy vertiginous headache; great oppression, peculiar expression of anxiety, nausea, sighing, despondency, and coma or quiet delirium." In addition, *typhoid* (s.v. "typhoid") is defined as "appertaining to or resembling typhus."

^{###} Erysipelas is a sometimes fatal (before antibiotics) skin infection caused by *Streptococcus* bacteria. It is accompanied by fever and often by headache and vomiting (*Encyclopedia Americana International Edition, Deluxe Library Edition, s.v. "erysipelas."*)