

STAND BY THE COLORS:
THE CIVIL WAR LETTERS OF LEANDER STEM

EDITED BY JOHN T. HUBBELL*

To the Soldiers of the 101st

Everything is ready at Camp save the blankets. Each man will take with him a blanket or comforter to use until Government blankets are supplied, when those taken from home may be returned.

Citizens will undoubtedly contribute to those who have no blankets or comforters. — Regiment to go into Camp on Monday.

August 20, 1862

L. Stem¹

The "Soldiers of the 101st" who answered this quaint call to arms were the 101st Ohio Volunteer Infantry, a fragment of the great outpouring of young men who won the Civil War for the Union. While a professional elite, comprised mainly of West Point graduates, dominated positions of greatest prestige, it was the volunteer soldier and officer who did the fighting and dying.

The "L. Stem" who signed the notice was Leander Stem, Colonel of the 101st, who, like his troops, assumed his duties with no particular notion of the trials that awaited him. He did know of his own fears, the greatest being a torturous doubting of his ability to lead men in battle. These doubts he kept to himself, except as he confessed them in letters to his wife; even the soldiers of his command, who had small regard for military authority, at least unproven authority, knew little of these fears.

The 101st was sworn into service on August 30, 1862 at Camp Monroeville [Huron County], Ohio. Most were sons of Seneca County and its environs, farmers, and small town men and boys, with a sprinkling of professional men among the

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¹ Sandusky (Ohio) *Daily Commercial Register*, Aug. 22, 1862.



Leander Stem, Colonel, One Hundred and First Ohio Volunteer Infantry.
Courtesy of Rutherford B. Hayes Library, Fremont, Ohio.

officers. Of the 1044 men who began the long campaign, 329 remained at the mustering out three years later. Many had left the service via medical discharge, but the melancholy statistics of war showed that eighty-six had died in combat; 118 died of disease; thirty-four died in prisoner-of-war camps; and eleven were unaccounted for. But, as the historian of the regiment later commented, the high-spirited boys could not foresee the bloody trials to come, even when the Colonel predicted that many would not return.²

As the 101st left Monroeville, the prevailing attitude was an already jaundiced view of the army and its workings and a desire to get in a few licks at the Rebels before the war was over. On September 5 [1862], they arrived in Cincinnati, amid rumors of an imminent attack on the Queen City. They did not linger among the cheering crowds but crossed the Ohio River into Kentucky and in a clearing some two or three miles south of there [Covington] set up "Camp Stem." There they remained for several days, trying through long hours of drill to learn the martial arts. The distinct possibility of a Confederate attack lent vigor to their efforts. Or perhaps, as one soldier put it, the sweat and strain under the Kentucky sun made them angry enough to fight the rebel army and welcome the chance.³

While his men paraded and drilled, encumbered by their obsolescent twelve-pound Austrian rifles, Colonel Stem dashed about on duties of his own. His primary concern was that he not injure his men through his own inexperience, a thought that weighed even more heavily upon him because there was no one to turn to for advice. He had to rely on his common sense and profit from his mistakes. Fortunately, he possessed common sense to an uncommon degree and learned quickly.

The monotony of camp life, even when spiced by dashes to defensive positions, was finally broken by orders to move to the

² A. J. Baughman, *History of Seneca County, Ohio* (Chicago and New York, 1911), I, 197-98, for a short account of the raising of the 101. L. W. Day, *The Story of the One Hundred and First Ohio Infantry* (Cleveland, 1907), p. 18.

³ *Sandusky Daily Commercial Register*, Sept. 4, 1862: Day, p. 27.

Louisville area. There the 101st joined the main Union force under Major General Don Carlos Buell in time to pursue the Rebel army commanded by General Braxton Bragg. The routine became march, camp, march, camp and march again. Stem's concern for his men increased at this point and his confidence in the high command wavered. At times he wondered if he was partially to blame for the hardships of the march, even if he could not furnish water where there was none nor supply his men with necessities when none was available.

The first taste of fighting was only that, a taste. At the battle of Perryville, on October 8, the 101st remained on the periphery. They could hear the cannon and musketry and later got a close look at casualties of both armies. Stem expressed revulsion at the carnage but at the same time regretted that Buell had not seized the opportunity to commit his full strength against Bragg and possibly, as some officers stated, destroy his army. Stem's criticism of Buell was not unique. Somehow the green Ohio troops recognized what the professionals seemed to miss — the great military task was to close with the enemy army and destroy it.

Following the disappointingly inconclusive clash at Perryville, the 101st joined in the arduous series of marches into Tennessee, always tantalizingly close to Bragg. Stem's leadership was again severely tested as his men suffered from the heat and dust of the day and the chill of the fall nights. The shortage of tents and blankets became critical, but, according to Stem, the main damage was done through the erratic pace of the march. Instead of a steady pace, with appropriate periods of rest, the day's march seemed to consist of a series of dashes. In consequence, he would find the regiment strung out for miles, with even the most conscientious soldiers falling by the wayside. Late in the evening, the stragglers would drift into camp, there to fall asleep without bothering to eat or care for their aching, blistered feet.

The Colonel wondered if he could in some way alleviate the situation, or, more importantly, if the men blamed him for their hardships. Evidently they did not. As one trooper wrote, his

conversation with other men in the regiment "confirmed the opinion formed some time since, that the men have confidence in Col. Stem, and fully believe that he did all in his power to relieve their wants during their severe exposures."⁴ Had he known of this expression of confidence, Stem might have rested easier, but in the absence of such assurances he could only harden himself to the suffering and resolve to do his best.

In December, the 101st arrived in the vicinity of Nashville. Major General William S. Rosecrans, who had replaced Buell, was admired by his men and under his lead they would soon get their fill of Braxton Bragg's army. The place was near Murfreesboro, some twenty miles south of Nashville. Here, along Stone's River, was fought one of the bloodiest battles of the war. Stem's boys, as he referred to them, were as ready as new troops could be, their confidence reinforced in part by the issuance of new Springfield rifles and by some successful skirmishes with the Rebels. Perhaps they reflected also the new confidence of their Colonel, as Stem now seemed to assume an air of command that was understandably missing earlier. And perhaps the hard marches would now force the decisive battle many had hoped for.

On December 30, the regiment arose quietly without benefit of reveille, and at 3:00 A.M. formed in line of battle. It maintained contact with the enemy that day, uncomfortably close at times, but the two sides did not come fully to grips. That night, many of the soldiers sensed that the Rebels were moving. As the regimental historian later wrote: "All night long we could hear the movement of troops and artillery to our right. So serious did this seem to us that we several times sent word to Regimental headquarters calling attention to the fact. Colonel Stem forwarded the report to Brigade, Division, and Corps headquarters, but nothing was done about it. To this day it seems strange that no attention was given the matter. The very

⁴ Letter signed "L" in the Sandusky Daily Commercial Register, Sandusky, N.Y., 1862. The letter was written from Edgefield Junction, Tennessee, near Nashville.

existence of the army was jeopardized by the failure to do so."⁵ The last may have been a slight exaggeration but the Confederate movement proved nearly disastrous to the regiment and in fact fatal to its highest ranking officers.

In the early morning of December 31 the southerners attacked the Union right in full force. As the 101st met the assault, Colonel Stem had dismounted and was standing quietly by his horse, a picture of calmness under fire. As the battle developed, the regiment was ordered to its left, presumably to a more tenable position, as it was in danger of being flanked. As the movement began, Stem was hit and went down. His second in command, Lt. Col. Moses Wooster, rushed to his side. They spoke briefly, but shortly thereafter Wooster also fell, mortally wounded.⁶ Major Isaac M. Kirby, who assumed command of the regiment, later reported that Stem was hit at 8 A.M. just as he had shouted to his men: "Stand by your colors, boys, for the honor of the good old State of Ohio." Because of the terrific exchange of fire both Stem and Wooster were left on the field and taken prisoner.

Wooster died the next day but Stem lingered until January 5 in the nearby home of a Mrs. Bedford. She transcended her Confederate sympathies to attend the Colonel, but his wound, which had paralyzed his lower body, was too much even for his powerful constitution. On the evening of January 5 he slipped away, his last words being a prayer that his successor would look after "his boys" in the 101st.

A few days later, after the debris of battle was cleared somewhat, Mathias Stem went to Murfreesboro and began the sad return home with his brother's remains. And the funeral at Tiffin was doubly sad, as Maggie Stem, the Colonel's four year old daughter, was buried with him, a victim of scarlet fever. A great crowd witnessed the services, aware it seems, that the quiet lawyer and family man was after all more than ordinary, that he represented something good in their lives and that his loss was part of the terrible sacrifice demanded by the god of

⁵ Day, 101 O.V.I., p. 82; ch. 9 deals with the battle of Stone's River.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 353-359, for accounts of the deaths of Stem and Wooster.

war. A local editor expressed it well when he described the fallen leader as "what a Colonel should be, both the commander and the friend." A fitting epitaph to a brave man.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Leander ("Lee") Stem (September 19, 1825 — January 4, 1863) was a graduate of the preparatory school at St. Mary's College in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and returned there for a year of college. July 31, 1851, he married Amanda Marshall (September 9, 1830 — December 2, 1889). In addition to formal schooling, he and his brothers and sisters were taught by private tutors in the home. His father, Jacob Stem, was born in 1792 in Carroll County, Md. Ca. 1830 he came to Tiffin, Ohio where he bought about 1,200 acres of land, including a sulphur spring, from which the village of Green Spring (later, Green Springs), takes its name. The Stem family remained prominent in the area for the rest of the century.

Leander Stem was a law partner with his older brother, Jesse Stem (1820-1854). Jesse became an Indian agent in Texas and was killed there in 1854 by renegade Indians (who were later punished by their own people for the murder). The brothers had studied law in law offices, after the custom of the day.

Letter No. 1

Head Quarters 101 Reg O.V.I.
Near Ft. Mitchel, Ky, Sept. 7 1862

My Dear Wife

This is the 2nd day of our sojourn in this state and hot days they have been, and days of hard labor [and] heavy responsibility to me. The men are all so raw and I so much more so than some of my officers greatly increase my labor and responsibility. If I only had a full understanding of my duties I could get along much better.

As it is however, I have so much work to do that I have no time to learn.

Our trip from Monro[e]ville to this place was very satisfactorily accomplished, but the latter part of [it] was attended with a great deal of hard work. After passing Tiffin [county seat of Seneca County, in northern Ohio] on Thursday the 4th we got along comfortably but slowly to Cinc., riding all night was at the city at 7 o.c. A.M. of Friday the 5th inst. Found the business houses all closed and a good deal of bustle and confusion abt. the Rail Rd Station. Got our men and baggage off finally [and] march[ed] up to 5th St. Market, where after a long spell of waiting we got some breakfast. And I then reported myself to Genl [Maj. Gen. Lewis ("Lew")] Wallaces⁷ Head Quarters for orders, and was ordered to report myself with my Regt. to Genl Judah⁸ in Covington Ky. We then marched across or rather march[ed] to the Ferry [and] rode across into Covington on the Ferry and then marched up into the town. It was very hot and stopped in the streets of Covington for the men to get water, and then were conducted a street or two farther to the Head Quarters of Genl Judah.

I reported myself to him and he assigned me to his Brigade and ordered me to march out on the Lexington [Road] 2 miles [and] a half [and] select a camping ground. We started [and] by this time with my running about looking after this that [and] the other I had got pretty tired and felt the necessity of having a horse. Saw a livry stable close by [and] offered to hire one, [and] was told they were government horses [and] that if I needed one I had the right to take it.

So I went in, picked out a nice looking young horse, had him saddled [and] started on after my men, who had by this time got a good

⁷ Lew Wallace: *An Autobiography* (New York, 1906), I, 603ff, for the events of fall, 1862, and the defense of Cincinnati. Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), pp. 535-536.

⁸ Maj. Gen. Henry Moses Judah (1821-1866), West Point, 1843; classmate of U. S. Grant. Warner, *Generals in Blue*, pp. 255-256.

deal ahead of me. I found that I had got a right smart horse but he was untrained [and] trotted, oh, so hard that I wished I had trusted to my own feet; but then it seemed to me quite necessary that I shd. go ahead and select the camping ground, before the men came up in order to avoid keeping them standing in the hot sun so long.

So I whip'd ahead, took the Surgeon⁹ [and] the Lieut Col¹⁰ and rode on forward to select a camp ground. Such a bumping as I got — finally by whipping, kicking [and] jerking I got the animal into a sort of gallop, and on over the hills of "old Kaintuck" we came, until we had made the 2½ miles; and such a barren hilly country I haven't had the fortune to find lately. Narrow knolls with deep ravines all round, so that one can hardly find an even piece of ground large enough to encamp a Regt. on. But one great thing to be looked to was, water we must have water — riding where we could [and] walking where we had to sweating and anxious [and] perplexed, I almost regretting the undertaking [and] though I should feel better carry [ing] a musket — Finally we [?] up the narrow ridge where I am now writing and squatted down on it in the open face of a hot sun [and] spread ourselves out [,] laid out a camp[,] unloaded our plunder [and] fit to spend friday night the 5 of Sept —

Well wife it is almost 11. o.c. I am tired [and] must get some rest have been busy all day excepting half an hour when [I] tried to sleep, will make an effort tp write you further tomorrow.

Your husband

Leander Stem

Love to my little ones [.] I hope they are all good children.

Write to Me

Col L. Stem
101 Reg. O.V.I.
camp near Covington Ky

⁹ Dr. Thomas Cook, surgeon with the 101st OVI, entered the service at age 45, Aug. 12, 1862 and mustered out with the regiment June 12, 1865. *Ohio Roster Commission. Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio* (Cincinnati, 1888), VII, 447.

¹⁰ Lt. Col. John Franz, 101st OVI, age 50, entered service Aug. 12, 1862 and resigned Oct. 14, 1862 on surgeon's certificate of disability. *Ibid.*

Letter No. 3

Head Quarters 101st Reg O.V.I.
Near Ft Mitchel Ky
Sept 13 1862

Dear Wife

I have commenced twice today to continue my little narrative, but was interrupted both times [and] now begin the third time rather late at night.

But I want to keep up a brief sketch of my progress and must work at it when I can to bring up to the present time [and] I wish you wd. preserve my letters that I may refer to them hereafter for dates [and] facts —

I left off last night with stating the excitement that prevailed in Cinc. on last Saturday the 6th inst. — People were going out into the center of Vine St. [and] looking over the river into Covington to see if the rebels were not coming — I heard frequently repeated the remark that the rebels were within four miles of Covington [and] fighting had commenced. Armed citizens were hurrying down to the ferry [and] crossing over into Ky to aid in keeping the rebels out of Cinc. — [and] I soon met near the Gibson House with Mr. Phelps, Doct. Brown, E. S. Bartlett [and] others from the Springs [Green Springs, Seneca County] who had come out at the call of the Gov. — And learned that there were large numbers from all parts of the state who had turn[ed] out to defend the border — I felt as though I was very much out of place [and] ought to hurry back to my regt. — but after making what inquiry I could, I heard things that I knew could not be so, as to the situation of matters out here [and] so set down the great alarm about an immediate attack to be without foundation and went hurriedly to finish up my business [and] return to the Regt. at Camp Stem, — as the boys persist in calling it. Judge Seney¹¹ was with me in the city on business pertaining to his department and was of my opinion as to the foundation for any alarm — After we had finished our business in the city we rode out to Camp (which you will remember is 2½ miles from Covington on the Lexington Pike.)

We found that there had been some anticipation of trouble and that several Regts had been drawn in line of battle, but no real expectation

¹¹ Judge George Ebbert Seney, b. May 29, 1832, in Uniontown, Pa., was from a prominent local family. As regimental quartermaster, he resigned from the army, Nov. 22, 1864, and pursued a distinguished legal career. *Ohio Roster. Commission*, VII, 447; *History of Seneca County, Ohio* (Chicago, 1886), pp. 825-131, for a sketch of Seney; a photograph and other information is in Day, *101 O.V.I.*, p. 33.

of an immediate engagement, although there was a determination to be ready for one if necessary.

I found that a verbal order had been left at our camp for me to report at the Head Quarters of the Brigade at once — Our Regt. had been assigned to the 1st Brigade commanded by Genl Judah (who is a Kentuckian I believe) [not a Kentuckian] whose head quarters had been at Covington. I rode back quickly to Covington [and] report[ed] myself [and] found myself in presence of Genl Lou. Wallace who was occupying the rooms in which I had found Genl Judah the day before — He was seated in an armed rocking chair at one side of the room; while in the centre sat a table surrounded by aid[e]s [and] clerks writing [and] answering questions — I should have mentioned that in front of these rooms there were some ten horses held by om [one?] orderly sergeant, while nearly as many more were tied to posts, [and] that aids [and] orderlies were going [and] coming in great haste, many of them undoubtedly riding in more haste than the business required—

On being shown to Genl Wallace I informed him that I had been ordered to report myself there, [and] just then up steps some anxiously officious fellow [and] addressed him upon business concerning something or somebody, when the Genl quietly observed to him that he was "talking to this gentleman" — The Genl asked what I was to report there for — I told him I had not been informed what I was to report for. He then asked me what Brigade I was in [and] what Regt I had — I told him [and] he said to me Genl Judah's Head Quarters to which [I] was to report, had been changed, that Genl Judah's Head Quarters were in the field with his Brigade — It occurred to me at once that I should not trouble Genl Wallace with questions as to where Genl Judah's Head Quarters in the field were. So I turned away determined to find a guide — I knew that the Brigade was composed of some 6 or 7 Regts [and] that they were stretched out [and] scattered somewhere about the Lexington Turnpike — Coming down from Genl W's Head Quarters (formerly Genl Judah's) onto the pavement I asked the men who held horses [and] were on their horses where Genl Judah's Head Quarters were, but no one knew — I got on [and] started back to hunt up the Head Quarters of Genl Judah. It was growing dusk [and] I began to reflect, as I had already done that I had been absent from my post [and] some mischief might come of it [and] that I might have a long ride in the night to find the "Genl's head quarters in the field" — I was so occupied with these reflections that I crossed the "Lexington Pike" without noticing it [and] rode on out of Covington a short distance before I discovered that I had not taken the road I intended to. I felt tolerably safe from any censure as the order left for me had been verbal — when I discovered [I] was not on the Lexington Pike: I made inquiry for it [and] for the Head Quarters of Genl Judah — I was soon directed to the Pike [and] putting spurs to my horse soon overtook a young fellow riding along on a bay mare with a sword by his side.

(but evidently both horse [and] rider were novices in the military service) I inquired of him for the Head Qrs [and] recd. the gratifying ans. that he was going there, so I concluded to go with him although he didn't so fast as I thought I probably ought — The young man sd. his name was Colwell, that he had been riding hard all day bearing messages [and] was tired — We passed horsemen [and] wagons going both ways, most of the horsemen riding quite fast — We reached the Head Quarters a little after dark [and] found them located in a nice farm house. What was very agreeable to me they were close to my Regt. [and] all that was wanted of me was to send out two Cos. for picket duty — I rode back to my camp [and] found that Lieut Col Franz had recd. a second message while I had been hunting Head Quarters [and] had taken the Cos. over for duty —

So I settled down, looked after the necessary business of the regt [and] late at night — got to bed very well satisfied —

On the next morning Sunday the 7th inst. the men got their breakfasts, washed cleaned up, [and] abt. 10 a.m. we had religious service for those who chose to attend.

The sermon was a very good one [and] attendance very fair — many of the men seem to be members of church — I spent most of the day preparring orders for the Government of the Camp [and] attending to the many little wants of the men [and] in writing to you — I hope you will be able to read this but expect some of it will trouble you —

Kiss the babes for me [and] give my love to all. I have been looking for a letter from you [and] have recd. but the one — Good bye —

yr husband
L. Stem

Letter No. 7

Head Qrs 101 Reg O.V.I.
Camp Gilbert Near Jeffersonville
Inda. Sept 25 1862

I have only time my dear wife to write you a very short letter tonight — it is after 9 o.c. P.M. On the evening of the 23d., Tuesday last, I recd. orders to be ready to march in 1 hour — goods all packed in wagons ready to go to Cinc. and take the cars for Louisville Ky. — It was just dusk, I had just eaten a light meal and thot. to go to bed and sleep off the last linger[ing] shades of my fever and chill. But I set to work, issued the order and hurried things along and about 10 o.c. was ready to

and did move off. The whole Regt marched along cheerfully in the starlight followed by two ambulances carrying sick men, and by a train of ten wagons all but two of them drawn by 6 mules.

We went to Cinc. took the cars and got started a little before 4 o.c. A.M. for Louisville Ky. We got to this place last night abt 10 o.c. with scarcely anything in our haversacks for supper. After a good deal of trouble and vexation the men stowed away for the night. Have had rather short allowance of provisions for the men today. This is because they hurried us away without teams to haul everything and without giving us time to obtain rations to fill the haversacks.

Tonight I recd. an order to move tomorrow to Louisville or a little back of that, between Louisville and Bragg's Army.¹²

So you will write to me as *camped near Louisville Ky* hereafter.

Good night kiss the little ones for me. I hope Freddie is better, but fear I hope in vain —

your affectionate
Husband
Leander Stem

Letter No. 8

Head Qrs 101 Reg O.V.I. Near
Louisville Ky — Sept 30 1862

One thing has crowded upon another in such rapid succession and many duties to perform new to me, that I have been unable to write my Dear Wife half the letters I would like to, much less write a narrative of events as they pass. I have been suffering some inconvenience from the cold I took while at Ft. Mitchell, to which I have made frequent additions by the way.

Since we have been here, we have had to rise every morning at ¼ before three and stand under arms 'till day light. This has been a double burden to me as I have most of the time had to be up until 11 o.c. [and] am often awakened in the night by inquiries about a hundred little things which the men ought to determine for themselves.

This morning while the men were standing under arms I recd. an order to [be] ready to march by 4½ o.c., with three days rations in haversacks. We made ourselves ready as soon as possible. I supposed the men would have to eat their breakfast of hard crackers or rather hard

¹² General Braxton Bragg.

bread as it's called as they march. Nevertheless, they persisted in having the Company cooks make their coffee, and (we were to wait further orders before moving) ate their breakfasts with their knapsacks on their backs. By the time this was done we recd. another order to stack arms and await orders, all which we were already doing — And now it is 11 a.m. and we are still waiting.

Where we are going or why we dont know, and indeed we may be ordered to remain where we are. Orders have been issued cutting down baggage and the number of teams so that it is altogether likely that I shall have to buy a valise and send my trunk, coat and other surplus home by express.

Major Genl Nelson of this army slapped Brigadier Genl Davis¹³ commanding this Division in the face yesterday morning whereupon Genl Davis shot Genl Nelson. Nelson died in a short time. He has the name of being very abusive and tyrannical. Davis is an Indiana man was formerly a member of Congress. Tis said that Nelson and Davis had some sharp words in relation [to] the business of the Army in which Nelson is represented to have told Davis that all Indianians were cowards and some such wholesale charges.

The general feeling seems to be that Davis did right. A very wide spread dislike, I dont know, but I may properly say, hatred prevails against Nelson in the Army for his tyranny and abuse of his inferiors.

I have seen Col. Gibson,¹⁴ Phil Spielmans son, John McCormick, Dr. McMeens and other acquaintances here all looking well.

Gibson's men and some 45,000 of the troops of this Western Army have made a very severe march from Northern Mississippi to this point in pursuit of Genl Bragg and his Army. They say that if Genl Buel¹⁵ had permitted it they wd. have whipped Bragg and captured a good part of his Army.

A strong current of feeling prevails among these men that Buel did not want to capture Bragg, but of course they know very little of what they talk about. Why dont you mail a Tiffin paper to me occasionally?

Louisville is a larger, richer, finer looking place than I expected to

¹³ Maj. Gen. William Nelson (1824-1862), Warner, *Generals in Blue*, pp. 343-344. Maj. Gen. Jefferson Columbus Davis (1828-1879), veteran of the Mexican War. After the set-to with Nelson, was relegated to secondary roles. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

¹⁴ Col. William H. Gibson, 49th OVI. Entered service, July 31, 1861 at age 38. Commanded the 6th Brigade at Stone's River. *Ohio Roster Commission*, IV, 489.

¹⁵ Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell (1818-1898), West Point, 1841. Warner, *Generals in Blue*, pp. 51-52.

find it. It is indeed a beautiful place and bears marks of hav[ing] much wealth in its population, especially if you estimate the "Cold. pussons" worth anything. They are very numerous and of all shades. I noticed at the upper windows of some of the houses as we marched through the city some very handsome women, fair complexioned and gracefully formed, (most of them very amorous looking however) but the hair, even in the 3d. stories had very visable curl, and the eyes were large with a full share of the white visable. They mix up a good deal I take it. The country about Louisville is very fine and in an excellent state of improvement so far as we have come and that is only outside of the city. I saw yesterday abt. half a mile from here a sort of country tavern stand kept by a German. He has 10 acres most beautifully improved with grape arbors[,] shade trees and a little basin of fresh spring water. But this Army of men is leaving its impress upon it. Almost everywhere the men tear down the board fences to make themselves shelter from the hot sun and rain and heavy dews. The[y] burn the rail fences to cook their victuals, dig the sweet potatoes[,] pick the apples and peaches to eat. Kentucky is paying dearly for her neutrality.[?] The whole interior and Southern part of the state must be completely ruined and devastated by the passing and repassing of the two Armies. Those who remain at home securely in the Northern States can have but a faint conception of the ruin that wd. overtake them if the rebel army shd. succeed in getting a foothold across the Ohio river.

The boys are generally quite well. Henry Pittinger¹⁶ stands it bravely and cheerfully so does Frost.¹⁷ Henry Taylor¹⁸ has complained some but I have relieved him from all heavy duty. I am disappointed at not getting any letter from home since here. Why dont you all write. I long and fear to hear from Freddie. Give my love to all and kiss them for me.

your affect. husband L. Stem

¹⁶ Pvt. Henry Pittenger, Co. I, 101st OVI, 18 years of age when he entered the service, Aug. 12, 1862; mustered out with the company, June 12, 1865. *Ohio Roster Commission*, VII, 475.

¹⁷ Pvt. Josiah Frost, Co. H, 101st OVI, age 19, entered service Aug. 11, 1862, was discharged Feb. 14, 1863, at Nashville. *Ibid.*, 470.

¹⁸ Pvt. Henry Taylor, Co. I, 101st OVI, entered service at age 17, Aug. 11, 1862. Discharged May 17, 1864 at Columbus, Ohio, (to date) with a surgeon's certificate of disability. *Ibid.*, 475.

Letter No. 9

Head Quarters 101 Regt O.V.I.
On Salt River Ky
Oct. 4 1862

I was very glad indeed my dear wife to get your letter of 29th inst. and feel better to hear that Freddie was improving even so little. I am writing now before breakfast on my saddle flap lying down myself on my blanket on the ground. Troops and fires al[1] round men intermingled with wagons and mules. Some question to ans. every 5 minutes and sometimes oftener.

We are marched off without our camp kettles and have a hard time cooking anything. We left Louisville on the 1st and marched abt 11 miles. It was pretty hard for the men, not used to marching — Evening 9 o.c. by light of the Camp fire — I was interrupted just there this morning by the order to march. Have [been] marching slowly most of the day over hills and through valleys and made about 10 miles and are now encamped 10 miles north of Bardstown Ky. The troops and camp fires cover the side hills and the large valley. When interrupted this morning I was speaking of the march. Yesterday was the first time our regt. forded a stream. It was a shallow one however and those of the men who had good boots got over without taking them off. The stream was Fern Creek.

This morning we cross Salt River at a point where it was so low that a few rails thrown in enabled the men to get across without even taking off their shoes. Bragg and his army are said to be at or near Bardstown. It was reported that he was fortifying himself there to give us battle, but I have no confidence in the report. Yet it may be he will.

Army and seems to give very fair satisfaction. [Col. Stem's regiment was at that time in the 31st Brigade, under Col. William P. Carlin]. Its Ginny St. John's husband. He saw service in the Mexican War, it seems. I have had three short conversations with him. I found him today on the side of [a] steep hill on horseback, waiting to see the artillery safely up a steep hard pull. I slept out on the ground last night and shall have to do the same tonight. Our teams have not been able to keep near to us and may not reach us tomorrow. I put two blankets under me and my thick overcoat over me. I slept warm enough last night, but it was very damp and will be tonight I think. We find a good many negros here who are ready to go along with us.

¹⁸ Maj. Gen. Robert Byington Mitchell (1823-1882). B. Mansfield, Ohio, served in the Mexican War. Commanded 9th division of Gilbert's Corps at Perryville. Warner, *Generals in Blue*, pp. 328-329.

Oct 5/62

The fire burned low and I wrote by the light of the moon last night, until the clouds obscured its light. We were arouse[d] this morning at 3 by an order to prepare to march immediately. It is now broad day light and we are not started. They must mean to chase old Bragg right up [?]. I have a chance to send this to Louisville and must close it.

Write via Louisville
Ky — Kiss the babies
in haste your
husband
L Stem

Letter No. 10

Camp near Perryville Ky²⁰—by
the campfire Oct 9 1862

We had a little battle here yesterday, but 101 did not get the Artillery. We were marched up along with it into line of battle to defend it. The shot and shell flew over us pretty fast and we expected the rebels to pitch into us, but they didnt, with musketry. We have a large Army and our line of battle must have extended 6 or 8 miles, comprising several divisions, under the command of different generals, while the whole is commanded by Genl Buel. Genl Rosecrans[']²¹ command had some hard fight tis said with musket, and reports differ very widely as to how much was done on each side. [Rosecran's was not in the battle of Perryville.] One thing is certain however, we are on the ground occupied yesterday by the rebel army[.] Their killed and wounded are here in a very neglected condition, but perhaps they do the best they can for them. The men behaved charmingly under the feeling of almost a certain fight. Some of course pretended sick and staid, others were really sick. Henry Taylor and Frost are well. They were not in line of battle with us. Henry has not been able to carry a gun. I

²⁰ For battle of Perryville, see Thomas L. Connelly, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee, 1861-1862* (Baton Rouge, 1967), pp. 256-267. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XVI, pt. 1, pp. 1076-1079, for report of Brig. Gen. Robt. Mitchell, 9th div., 14th Army Corps.

²¹ Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans (1819-1898), West Point, 1842. Warner, *Generals in Blue*, pp. 410-411. W. M. Lamers, *The Edge of Glory: A Biography of William S. Rosecrans* (New York, 1861).

bought a mule and put my blanket and overcoat on him and Taylor ride [rode] him. He did not come up last night, probably because of the danger so I had to sleep on the ground without anything but my rubber coat and I did [not] rest very much as I got cold.

I dont feel first rate tonight and as I may start any moment I propose to stop writing and go to bed. I have my coats and blankets and will be warm enough tonight.

The rebels are said to be far enough ahead, 10 or 12 miles tis said.

Kiss all the little ones for me. how many times in this short absence would I have given most anything for one quiet hour with wife and little ones and friends at home. We are moving with no baggage and deprived of all comforts nearly and may not get your letters for a week or even more. But write, write to your affect. husband and tell the girls to write. Tell me to[o] when I left off my comment [?] narrative of events and I will try to resume it. These hasty notes by camp fires are very incomplete.

Your Husbd
L. Stem

Letter No. 11

Head Qrs 101 Reg O.V.I. Near
Danville Boyle Co. Ky Oct 13, 1862

Here again my Dear Wife am I, not in a first rate humor for writing however.

I have [been] quite well since I last wrote you, but woke up this morning a good deal sick at my stomach, not however to the extent of vomiting.

I couldn't eat hard bread at all, I did however drink a little coffee and eat a small piece of tolerable bacon.

We have been moving constantly since I wrote you of the battle near Perryville (which was the last letter I wrote you), moving with only what we can carry on horse back. I bought a small mule, on which I carry my blanket and some provisions. Henry Taylor being to[o] feeble to stand the marching I have had him ride it, and take care of the things. If Henry dont improve soon I shall make an effort to have him discharged and sent home. We are rouse[d] at 2, 3, and 4 o.c. in the morning, march sometimes steadily along all day with intervals of halting, some-

times moving rapidly for an hour or two and then halting an hour or less; marching sometimes 'till 10, or 12 o.c. at night, not often though, so late as that. While we are marching this way I cant write often nor long letters, and doubtless many of my letters will fail to reach you for a long time and some may fail altogether to reach you.

I forgot abt the wood; let Mr. Keen see Mr. Clevidence and then buy the winters wood, and then let Clevidence make his arrangements to haul it in as fast as possible before bad roads.

I intended to have sent you a chk on—————[?] before this, but Keen did not inform me what they said about paying it. I will send you in this a check for 30\$ at all events and will try to bear in my mind to send you some money in good time again. I infer from what you say in the last letter I got from you going somewhere in the buggy that you still have the horse then. If so you ought to let him be kept at the farm, as doubtless you do. You can send the cows to the farm if you like. If they give any milk Mrs. Clevidence might milk them and make butter and give you a share. If they dont give enough to make butter, you ought to have at least half of it and that brot. to you every morning by one of his boys.

If they give enough to make any butter of any account after you have what milk you need, you ought to have half of that I think. At all events the cows kept on [the] farm and afording plenty of good milk for the family is better than to buy a quart or so a day. You can use milk so as to supply the place of much other provision which you wd. have to buy. By the way how do you get along with keeping an acct. of your household expenses and paying as you go. I [am] afraid it is going to be a couple of mos. yet before we draw our pay.

Doct. Cook is not promoted. The Brigade Commander, Col. [Wager] Swayne, at Ft Mitchel had him acting as Brigade Surgeon for awhile and some of the boys then thought he was promoted. He at first [thought] there would be a chance in it for promotion and so did Seney who was offered a chance to act as Brigade Q U [M], but both of them after reflection were sharp enough to see that was "all in the eye."

I want a good pocket map of the slave states of [the] United States, the latest publication that can be had. If you can get me one at —?— or —?— send it to me by mail; I [am] not particular about it having a back to it. Get a cheap one and send by mail right away (one like Ez Stone has in his house) and I will send to Cinc. for [a] better one.

Where is Bob [Bud?] and his better half[?] Dont forget to let me know where I left of [f] my connected narrative for I shall have to write it out soon or I will forget most of it. When I commenced this I tho. I wd. only have time to say a few words, and indeed stopped once because troops by the side of us were moving off and I suppose [d] to [o]. I got ready and have written half my whole letter

knee sitting on the ground. I dont need at present any more cloths than I have — have had no chance to change a thing since [I] left Louisville 2 weeks ago. I ought to write to the folks all around but cant of course. Have been here at a temporary halt from about 10 A.M. to 4. P.M. expecting an order to move every minute and have just now been notified that we do move very soon. How far or where we are expected to march to before we stop for the night I dont know. We have had rain or drizzle now for three nights. I have been so fortunate as [to] have a fellow taking care of my own and Col Franz and Maj Woosters horse who had found Battery canvass and secreted it in one of the wagons, under which I have kept dry. We are off.

L. Stem

Letter No. 12

Head Quarters 10/Reg O.V.I., 1 Brigade
9 Division — Camp on Duck [Dix] River near
Crab Orchard Oct 16 1862

The last hasty letter I wrote to you my dear wife was abruptly terminated by an order to march. We arrived here last night or rather last evening about 4. o.c. and encamped. About 7. o.c. while I was busy with sundry little matters connected with the Regt. Doct. Reid of Norwalk and Hon W. P. Thomason of Louisville Ky members of the Sanitary Commission came into Camp. They had been following us up from Louisville after the battle of Perryville to look after the wounded [and] sick. I gave them [some] of my beef and tea. They ate heartily and one of them Thomason who is an old grey haired man laid down with us on the ground. He was in the War of 1812 and gave me his address in Louisville an invitation to call for any favor he could render.

We are lying by here to day resting the army, have been after Bragg and Morgan²² as fast as the men cd. stand it and indeed more rapidly than many of them cd. endure. As a large number have dropped out, more or less of them every day, a few of them sick but most of them simply worn out with hard marching and sleeping without sufficient protection from cold and heavy dews. For two or three days I had but little that I cd. eat but beef without salt and rather raw roasted on the fire. This living induced a looseness of the bowels that made me quite weak and listless yesterday. I felt very sleepy. Last night had no appetite for beef or hard crackers, but managed to get a couple of sweet potatoes and this morning a couple of Irish potatoes, and feel comfortable now. If I can manage to get some potatoes today and tomorrow I shall get out of the difficulty straight.

²² John Hunt Morgan.

Yesterday morning at the town of Lancaster[,] Ge[a]rrard Co. w had a little skirmish with some of Morgan's men. One of the enemies shells bounded through our lines and a fragment struck one man on the skin bruising it some, but did no other injury.

We are approaching the Cumbelin [Cumberland] Mountains and shall soon find ourselves where food for man and horse will be scarce for a time. We are expecting as I understand it to press on after Bragg and Morgan by quick marches until we either have a fight or drive them where we shall be compelled to give up the chase[.] The latter would seem to be the most profitable result, judging by the past.

Lieut Col Franz of Bucyrus has an old fever sore on one leg which has broken out again with great virulence and compelled him [to] resign. Some considerable desire is manifested to have Capt. Kirby²³ take his place. This would be violating the regular order of promotion (although authorized by law) and is likely to give me some trouble.

I forge[o]t to put the check in the other letter and will put it in this. I must stop now and attend to some business and try [to] write to Watson and Booth [?] to day.

Love to all and
kiss the babies

Your afft husband
L. Stem

How I would like to see you all. Willie, Maggie and Freddie are all good children I hope and learning to read to me when I come home. I shall expect a letter from Willie.

How is Mag Molly Ginny and all the rest. Here are some Ky flower seed given me by the young man who presented the Bouquettes [bouquets?]. He says they are handsome.

Letter No. 13

Head Qrs 101 Reg O.V.I. Camp on
Dick River near Crab Orchard Ky
Oct 19 1862

Here we are still my dear Bro. I closed my letter of [the] 16th abruptly in order to forwd. it, but I didnt get it off until the next day. I ought to have found time yesterday and day before to have written you

²³ Capt. Isaac M. Kirby, entered service July 30, 1862, at age 27, as capt. C F, 101st OVI; promoted to major Oct. 14, 1862; to colonel, Dec. 26, 1862; brev brig. gen., Jan. 12, 1865. Commanded brigade after June 10, 1864; mustered out with regiment June 12, 1865. Commanded the 101st after Stem and West were wounded. Ohio Roster Commission, VII, 447. Day, 1865, 1866, 1867, 1868, 1869, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1874, 1875, 1876, 1877, 1878, 1879, 1880, 1881, 1882, 1883, 1884, 1885, 1886, 1887, 1888, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898, 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 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