Headquarters, Manigault's Brigade
Near Shelbyville
April 9, 1863

Special Order
No. 39

The following officers having passed satisfactory examinations before the Examining Board and by them recommended for promotion are hereby announced as promoted, viz.

2nd Lieut. J. B. Mitchell, 34th Ala. Regt. to be 1st Lieut. Co. B., 34th Ala. Regt.

By order Col. A. M. Manigault, Com. of Brigade
C. I. Walker, adjutant

Lt. Mitchell through Com. Officer, 28th and 34th Ala. Regt.

Headq'rs 34th Alabama Regiment
Shelbyville, Tenn.
April 12, 1863

I want, who does not want, a wife
  Affexshonate and fair,
In all my waze to take a part
  And all my joys to share.

Mr. Edyter

Havin not hear enny thing frum my ole frend "the Advertiser" in several dais I am at a los to know the reson. May be its prest or supprest as the cas may be, bekase it dont praize Gineral Bragg like the tother papers that cums to us. Leastwise, thar's sumthin in the wind an I'm sorry fur it. I want to giv you an ideer or too on the abuv lines that struck me yesterda whilst I was on drill. Our regiment goze out to drill evra evening here. Thar's just lots and kords ov the purtiest wimmen you ever seed in you life who flox out in gangs to see us manewver. They hav grate long black frocks on that reaches mity nigh on too the ground--with little small tiny hats bout as big as a sawcar, and sum on um hav black feathers stickin out behind ther hats. Some offesser fallers rides along side ov um, and talks to um. Who ever has the most gold lace on his arms, ginerally sets by the purtiest ones. My blood bils, an my pore hart throbs an akes to think that all these "Red tapes" will have to marry and get out ov the way afore eny privet can ever get a chance after the wars is all over. Ef the blessed little creaters dux evra what else like tha doo here the next generation will nighly all be offessers. Thar wont be nary privet born in 40 years. Leastwise, that's my opinyun, but:

These wimmin ar comical things
  As ever I knew in my lefe,
Companyans for Erls and for Kings,
  And who wood not like a good wife.

A lass! How will an humbol individoal okupying no hier possishun than a "gun carraer," "a hewer of wood an drawer of water" ever attane so desirabol an objec as a wife. Human natur tha sa, is the same evera whar, but I have some leetel hope that it aint edzactly so with all ov ower blessed and deer Ala. galls. What duz sum uv my old lady friends sa to that? (I dont mean old ladies but old friends.) Even now my pen draps, and the gentle zephir that fans my sad brown, cummin from my fur off summa home, whispers gentla and softly into my ear: "There is one who will never for sake you, nor love you less bekaze you don't ware the sashes and sholderstraps and gold laces ov the upper 10." Ah! Oh! hem! Wish I could see her now, this beutiful Sabbath mornin, as my imaginashun picters her out. After fixing up her own house hold affares with her own hans, she is drest in a neat home spun dress, maid with the same hans, and gon to church to hear the gospil preacht.

My wants are many, and of told
  Wood muster many a skore,
And ware each want a mint of gold
  I still should long for more.

I want you, ladies, to read how the Inglish papers today and crunch over the mariage ov the Prince ov Wales. Ricollect that you ar tryin to live in a Republikan and free government. I want you then to abolish todyism in our glorious country. When you send us a shirt or a pair of britches, we'll rekollect that butie's fingers giv them form, and that the sweet melody of her voice is ever ringin in our ears, animating us to increase exertions. Work in the garden too, and send us some vegetables whenever you can. We never git nothing good to eat unless you send it to us. We are gwine to whip old Rosuncrank the wost you ever heard of now, in a few days, and may be the war'll klose in the next six months. Oft in my dreams I think of you.

Your old friend

Nehemiah Saunders Co. Q, 34th Ala. Rigt.

Camp near Shelbyville, Tenn.
May 10, 1863

Dear Father

"Recubans sub tegmine patulae fage," I meditate upon the beauty of the surrounding scenery, the quiet and peaceful appearance of the neighboring country, and the horrid wickedness of this war, which I fear will soon transform this fertility into a barren waste. But whenever this struggle does terminate, I believe it will be with our independence. If in the consummation of that I fall, I am willing. My brothers and yourself will remain to enjoy it. I have strong hope that by the 4th day of March next year peace will smile upon our land once more. I do not think our President would have ventured the opinion that this would be the last year of our war without a very good foundation. If our army here would give them as severe a thrashing now as that which they lately received in Virginia, I believe the North would not be disposed to continue the contest much longer. A great many think we will certainly be victorious in the next engagement. I cannot say how that will be, but there is one thing I feel certain of, that if our brigade enters into it under the leadership of Col. Manigault it will not come out with any honor to itself. The troops have no confidence in him, the officers have none, he is altogether a weak man. All of our detatched officers have returned except Col. Mitchell. We are expecting him every day. Our regt. now numbers about 600 for duty. Its number have been very much decreased by sickness. Within the last 2 weeks 9 men of my company alone have died. Yesterday, one poor fellow, with nothing apparently affecting him lay down and went full asleep. In about an hour and a half afterwards someone going to wake him found that he was dead. He had died without a sign or struggle. He was in my company and when I say there was nothing apparently the matter with him, I mean that he was not excused from duty by the surgeon and placed on the sick list. Of course, the man was sick, really sick, and ought to have been excused. I believe now that the army surgeons have lost all sight of disease and examine simply to find out whether or not the patient is playing off.

Today is Sunday. I heard today two Baptist sermons, the first I have heard in 5 or 6 months. One of the preachers was a missionary and the other a hard shell. They had a good audience and a few went up and requested to be prayed for. As I passed by the stand where the meeting was held, one of them stopped me to get me to take a tract to read, he said, for my mother's sake. I read it.

The time is now close approaching when we shall be at liberty to apply for a furlough. I think I shall send up my application at the earliest opportunity. If I were rich enough now to go to a hospital I could very readily obtain a furlough, but I believe I am about well now with the exception of a bad cold. Crawford is still complaining. I received your letter of the sixth two or three days ago. Your description of preparations for the picture are quite natural and life like. I almost fancied I could see Jerah playing the pompous gentleman and Willie the ardent lover. But if I had been at home I would not have went off to this frontier to leave you to think of melancholy things. I am sorry to learn that brother is not as well as the rest. Many times already have I rejoiced that he has succeeded in quitting the service. I believe it was necessary to the preservation of his health. He was fortunate in being soon enough. But I do not wish it to be said that of 2 able sons you have neither in the war. Therefore I will remain and if God spares my life till then, the termination of the war, it will find me in the army. If Col. Mitchell comes back and commands the brigade I may obtain an easier position than the office that I presently hold, but I think it very doubtful about his taking command. I fear that Col. Manigault has placed that beyond his control by some military wire working. Col. Mitchell has been informed that if he would return soon he would perhaps command the brigade, but he seems to have disregarded that fact as carelessly as the earnest complaints of the whole regt. I received a letter from Grandma today. Tell her I will answer it soon. My love to all the family. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

PS Please excuse the dirty hands with which this letter was written. I have just noticed them. I will wash them immediately.

Camp Near Fall Creek, Tenn.
May 20, 1863

Dear Mother

Your very welcome letter lies open before me. You remark that you have not written for some time because some member of the family was doing it every few days. Do not let that deter you again. I should not care if all of you would write every day. Your letters would not weary me but on the contrary be a source of the greatest pleasure. I am rejoiced to learn that you are well, feasting on such luxuries and drinking to my health so merrily. I join you in your wish about the chickens. It has been a long time since I have had a good fry. My health continues good. I will engage earnestly with you in a prayer of Thankfulness for past and hope for future preservation.

We are expecting something now and stirring every day but still the monotonous routine and our daily duty remains unbroken. After the present crisis is past I may perhaps get a chance to come home.

I do not wonder that poor Uriah hated to leave. He has had such a pleasant time. I am sorry to hear of Col. [John W.] Felton's ill health. Do you know whether or not he has secured the appointment of adjutant of his regiment for Herndon Glennie. I have not heard from him in some time. Cousin Jule has returned and taken command of his regt., but as I anticipated by some wire working of Col. Manigault with the generals he has been deprived of the command of the brigade. Nevertheless, he has sent up his protest, but I do not think it will avail him anything. The consolidation is now disolved, much to the satisfaction of all concerned and we now have our own field officers. I am glad to hear that Willie has become such a good boy. Return him my thanks for the kind care he has taken of Nellie and say that he has my consent to use her for a pleasant drive with his Junie whenever he pleases. Tell old Clodhopper I am pleased to know that he is growing so rapidly, both in size and mind. Let him study Latin and Greek thoughtfully. After that even mathematics will not be so much esteemed as formerly. I am glad that all the Mitchell boys are safe. I would like very much to hear Randolph speak of his impressions during the battle. Well, Mother, I can't write any more now, as crowds of boys are just at my side talking about their dear killing exploits in old Coosa and disturb my situation. My love to all the family.

Your son

J. B. Mitchell

Camp north of Duck River
May 24, 1863

Dear Father

You will see from the name of our camp that we have changed our position and now occupy a point further toward the front and nearer our breastworks. Our lines are slowly moving up and a fight seems to be not far distant. We have a very pretty campground on the riverbank and our rations now are tolerably good, but water for drinking purposes is very scarce. We get about 4 canteen's full of spring water a day, any more than this we can only obtain from the river, which is filled with filth of various descriptions. Col. M[itchell] has been sent away from us to superintend some operations on the breastworks in front. His contest for the command of the brigade has thus far been unsuccessful. Gen. Withers you know is a South Carolinian and of course will favor Col. Manigault. If he becomes a candidate for governor of our state I hope he will not receive a single vote. Do you think Gov. Shorter will be reelected? Who will? Col. Echols has not yet returned. Charges have been preferred against him for absence without leave. Dr. Pitts came back last night. He brought me news of Jule. He saw him in Montgomery at a party given by the governor. We leave here tomorrow morning at 6 o'clock to go on picket. I would like very much to send some of my winter luggage home but there is no available person to carry it. Will you not let Jule come up again soon? I wrote to him yesterday at Pollard's. Has Gen. Cantey left that place for Mississippi? We have been very much disturbed for the past 2 or 3 days by news from that quarter, and today I learn that Gen. Pemberton has been defeated and 30 pieces of artillery taken. If this is true I lose all hope of a speedy peace. If Vicksburg falls the war will be protracted at least 3 years. I understand that Breckenridge's Division is preparing to leave here for that point. I fear, however, it will be too late. I was in hopes that if Col. Mitchell would not be allowed to command the brigade they would at least suffer him to take his regt out, and perhaps we would be sent to Mississippi. But I recon they think the 34th Ala. has not seen enough hard times yet. If it were not for the cause for which we contend I would be willing to take a substitute as you recommend. Really, I cannot understand how the Yankees fight as well as they do in such a cause. Another order has been received here lately regarding substitutes which require that the substitution receive the approval of the commander of the department. In your next letter please send me some postage stamps as we can procure none here. Write me longer letters. I care not much for news. I want your opinions upon the different topics of the day. Purchase some good large paper like this and fill the whole sheet. My love to all the family. Tell the little boys to write. Goodbye. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

P.S. Please send me some postage stamps as I can procure none here.

Pickett Station, Fall Creek
June 7, 1863

Dear Father

Since I have lost all hope of a furlough and my mind is at ease on that subject I am becoming more cheerful and content. I have no idea now when I shall be able to see home again. I have no particular and urgent business to take me there and as long as my health remains tolerable I will never go to the hospital again. Hence you perceive I have no special plea to urge and consequently would be unsuccessful in any attempt I made. The authorities think that a soldier who is not unable for duty at a time like the present ought to remain at his post in front of our enemy thereby ensuring a speedy termination of our struggle. I am certain that if I should make an application now I would fail to pass. I await a more convenient period. If, however, I get sick again as I was at Chattanooga I will do my best to come home. I wish to see you all very much, especially mother, because she would not come to see me.

We are still on picket yet, but our duties are not very serious. I go out about once a week. Last week some considerable excitement arose in camp on account of an order to cook rations, reduce baggage and send to the rear all who were unable to march. Gen. Forrest had dispatched Gen. Bragg that he would attack Franklin on a certain day. Gen. Bragg sent two brigades Anderson's and Deas's of our division to support him and we received orders to be ready to go in case we were needed. But Forrest defeated them without any trouble and yesterday those two brigades came back. We are very much encouraged since learning the late Vicksburg news and our boys seem to be in pretty good spirits. Another Kentucky trip I think would be conducive to the health of our army and would surprise no one, for we all expect and are prepared for it. If it were not for the anticipation of such another march, I believe I would rather not own a horse for in a stationary camp he is much more trouble than profit. Occasionally I send Crawford with him out into the country to forage and he brings in butter, eggs, onions, lettace and etc. which are indeed great comforts. If you would come up to see me and happen to arrive at one of these favorable times I could give you a dinner that you would not be ashamed of at home. But then two or three days afterward perhaps I would have hardly anything at all. Thus it is in camp one day a feast, next, a famine. I would be exceedingly delighted to witness the commencement exercises of the female college, and indeed I should be there, were it not for the grand commencement which Madame Bragg assures us as about to take place up here in a few days, and at which I feel myself constrained to be present. Messers Bragg and Rosecrans, presiding, sermon by Bishop L. Polk and addresses by these three celebrated gentlemen -- Breckinridge, Cheatham, and Withers. Music lively and solemn, mostly instrumental but frequently vocal. I hope it will be a glorious affair and the southern actors will aquitt themselves with extraordinary credit. If you succeed in obtaining an overseer and it is convenient come to see me. My love to all the family. Remember me to Miss Sarah. Goodbye. Your son.

James B. Mitchell

Picket Station, Fall Creek
June 9, 1863

Dear Mother

Here you will find a ring made of the muscle shell from the bank of the Duck River. The only instruments used in its manufacture were a bayonet and an old broken file. It has cost considerable toil and ought to be highly appreciated. As I could think of no particular girl that I loved best I send it to you since I know you will esteem it highly, coming as it does from me so far away from home. If it had a nice set put in it, it would look very pretty.

I have been exceedingly homesick in the last 2 or 3 weeks. Your letters speak of such fine things, especially prepared and waiting only for me that it seems such a shame not to be allowed to go for them. But, at the present time there is no chance whatever to obtain a furlough. One of my men had a wife and 6 small children. A few weeks ago his wife died and left his helpless little ones without a protector and no near relatives either of his wife or himself living anywhere close by. This man applied for a furlough and yesterday it came back disapproved. Would it not be useless then for me to ask for one? I think a battle is expected and every available man is to be retained. I wish you all would write longer and more frequent letters. I received Jule's letter yesterday. Tell him to come up and see me. My love to all the rest of the family. Crawford sends his compliments. Goodbye. You son.

J. B. Mitchell

Picket Station near Shelbyville
June 10, 1863

Dear Father

Your long letter has been received and has given me more pleasure than any I have got in some time. Instead of wearying, it interests me more because of its length. Continue your favors and let them be more frequent. A few days ago also I received Jule's letter containing a delightful account of his situation. I am well pleased to know that he is surrounded with such an elegant association.

I cannot comply with your suggestion that I send Crawford home. It would too greatly inconvenience me. He is the only negro in the mess and I would be much hindered without him. There is no chance either to send these clothes home unless someone comes after them. I am very sorry for I dislike very much to lose them as I may be compelled to do.

We are in expectation of the Yankees every day. Yesterday, we received information that they were advancing and had driven in our cavalry pickets. This morning at daybreak we fell in line of battle, but they have not come much nearer up to this time. It will be the duty of our brigade to deploy as skirmishers and to dispute their advance and to fall back gradually to the breastworks. I dislike this kind of work very much, for I had much rather be killed in the great battle than in an inconsiderate skirmish. I hope, moreover, it will be my lot as it was before to be prepared and brought out by the hand of an All Wise Providence safe from all these perils. If the enemy attacks us here they will be beaten as bad as at Vicksburg. Col. Mitchell has returned from the breastworks. He says that were it not for the near approach of this battle he would apply for the transfer of this regt. to some other brigade. Gen. Claytoon has one of the finest brigades in the service. Col. will try to get in that if he attempts the transfer.

I saw in the Chattanooga Rebel of yesterday a list of the casualties of the 2nd Georgia Battalion in an engagement on the Rappahannock. Randolph Mitchell's name was mentioned as having a leg amputated. How malevolent and unfortunate! What sad intelligence for his mother! It grieves me deeply to learn that it is so. But, God disposes and no man knows what a day may bring forth. It may be my time tomorrow. You see from my letter to Mother that there is no possibility of my obtaining a furlough yet. I am now faring tolerably well. Had a blackberry pie for desert today. It troubles me very much that I cannot yet get any of those good things which are prepared for me. Don't forget me, however, for I may come when you least expect it. My love to all my family. Good Bye from your son.

J. B. Mitchell

To Mr. A. C. Mitchell, Glennville, Barbar Co., Ala.

In the Trenches
Tullahoma, Tenn.
June 30, 1863

Dear Father

I have no conveniences for writing. I have borrowed from the major [Slaughter] this paper and envelope. I would not write now were it not to relieve the uneasiness which I know you will feel at not hearing from me at this critical time. We left Shelbyville two days ago and after one of the hardest marches that ever was made reached this place the same night. I was more completely exhausted than I ever have been before. We had to march in mud over our shoes and that night we slept in wet blankets with the rain pouring down on us. Crawford says his Mass Jule saw hard times but never any like these. When the regiment stopped to camp, Capt Wood had but four men with him of a company of sixty. All the rest had fallen out exhausted on the road. All day yesterday and today we were at work on the trenches, most of the time in the middle of the mud and rain. The ditches were nearly half full of water. They are now about complete and we are taking a little rest. We are now upon the eve of a great battle and I think a victory. All our troops are confident and it seems to be the general opinion that if the enemy advances upon us in this position they will be beaten back with terrible slaughter. I hope and pray that it may be so and I may come out safely and I ask you to join your support to mine. I am tolerably well now and in good spirits. I will write the first chance I get after the fuss is over. Address your next letter to Tullahoma, Tenn. My love to all the family. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

PS Mother spoke of coming to see me. I think she had better not come though I am exceedingly anxious to see her. She could get no accomodations here at all and it would render her greatly inconvenienced.

Camp near Corps Headquarters
Chattanooga, Tenn.
July 20, 1863

Dear Father

Your good letter of the 14th has been received and I am pleased to learn that you are in good health. It finds me well and in tolerable spirits. I am looking for someone from home by every return train, but so far have gone unrewarded. I can readily understand how the exigencies of your business necessitate your close personal superintendancy at home, but then when I hear all around me the boys welcoming some kind friend from home you know I cannot keep from feeling a little lonely and expectant. Our regt. has been detatched as Provost Guard of Chattanooga. We are camped very close to the town and near Gen. Polk's headquarters. Anyone coming from home can very easily find out from the guard who are posted over the doors of the Crutchfield house, the place of our encampment. It would afford me the greatest pleasure to have Mother come up and see me, but I fear from the circumstances, which I have already mentioned, that she would be too greatly inconvenienced. If however, you can spare Willie for a short time I can make him very comfortable here with me in camp. I have a very good fly, fortunately saved out of the general wreck, to shelter me and a nice bunk made of plank to sleep on. Let him bring with him a boy to cook for me while I send Crawford home with my horse. If you still think it best for me to keep my horse, send Alfred, Jenny's brother, Phil, or some other little negro who can attend to him. We saved all our clothing and camp equipage except tents of which we have not any in the company. We are faring now tolerablly well as regards substantials, but have no vegetables at all. From eating salt bacon and beef, my mouth has become very sore indeed. I am glad to learn that Randolph is doing well and anxious to ear from Uncle and Bowie. My love to all the family and please remember me to Mrs. Price. Goodbye. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Camp near Chatanooga, Tenn.
July 24, 1863

Dear Mother

Your highly interesting letter was received yesterday and I now hastily proceed to answer it. I have been in great trouble all day trying to find out what I stood in need of, but rather unsuccessfully I fear. In truth it is very seldom a soldier thinks of necessities unless they are immediate. With Crawford's aid, however, I have managed to make out the following list: 2 pair of summer socks, 2 nice white shirts fit to see ladies (you see, I intend to make the acquaintance of some of the Tennessee ladies since it seems I am destined never to see Alabama again), 1 pair of grey uniform pants and 1 black silk cravat. Quite a slim list, you will no doubt observe. So much for the quartermaster department.

Next comes the commissary with which I am more intimately acquainted. I can give you a pretty good list of this department drawn from my own experiences and personal observations. Crawford's suggestions too are valuable. I begin with cake and wines, very particularly acceptable, next butter and eggs, always welcome, a nice bottle of strained honey, a jar of pickles, also one of preserves and some dried beef would be choice delicacies. Lately to, I have learned to appreciate very highly Irish potatoes, cabbage, cucumbers, beans, tomatoes and in short any vegetable that is good to be eaten. Peaches, apples and ground peas would serve very well to fill up the cupboard. I would like very much also to have some watermelons grown at home, but I know they would be too inconvenient. They sell here for eight dollars apiece, small ones too. Now, Mother, I think I have given you items enough to fill a pretty good sized box. Don't put any biscuits in it. We get plenty of flour here. Now my list is completed I leave you to supply any little omission I may have made.

I am exceedingly glad that you have decided to come. I was afraid you would not do so. Bring Pa with you if he can leave his business. Tell him not to be troubled about the conscription but come up and join my company. I will provide for him any discharge. I have been out to see Aunt Bettie and told her that you were coming. You must not put off your visit to the 5th of August for we are liable at any moment to move our camp. I saw Sam Driggers in town day before yesterday and he said he saw Pa in Columbus on his way to Montgomery. Sam was looking very hearty and fat. If I could get home I would get fat too. I am very sorry for poor Randolph's affliction, but glad that it is a wound. If I come through this war with only the loss of an arm I shall think myself favored. My love to all the family. Remember me to Cousin Martha and Mrs. Price. Goodbye. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Encampment 34th Ala. Regt.
Manigault's Brigade
July 30, 1863

Col.

I respectfully ask for leave of absence of thirty (30) days in order to visit my home in Barbor Co, Ala. I have never received a furlough on any account, sickness or otherwise, since I have been in the service, and this is the first time I have asked for one. At the present time also there are three commissioned officers besides myself for duty in the company to which I belong. I am sir.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant.

J. B. Mitchell
Co B, 34th Ala.

Col. George W. Brent
AAG

Headquarters 34th Ala. Regt
Chattanooga, Tenn,
July 30, 1863
Lieut. J. B. Mitchell
Co. B, 34th Ala. Regt.
Application for leave of absence of thirty (30) days.
Approved respectfully
E. B. Wood, Capt, commanding co.

Respectfully forwarded on disapproved
A. M. Manigault
Brig. Gen, commanding brigade

Respectfully not approved
Z. C. Deas, Brig Gen. comm. Div.

Forwarded, not approved
L Polk
Lt. Gen. Commd Corps

Hd Qt Army of Tenn.
August 3, 1869
Disapproved by Command of General Bragg
Kinlock Falconer, AAG

Camp near Polk's HQ
Chattanooga, Tenn.
August 8, 1863

Dear Father

Mother's visit has been very agreeable to her and exceedingly pleasant to myself. I am only sorry that she leaves so soon. I wish you could have come up with her. I know you would have enjoyed yourself. I had sent up my application for furlough before Ma arrived. It came back disapproved. It seems to me very unlike equity to pardon a deserter and allow him twenty days to remain at home while every application of a good soldier who has always done his duty is refused. I send you enclosed the official document. Gen. Manigault, you know, has a grudge against Col. Mitchell and I know it did him good to disapprove my furlough. I am afraid I will not see home any more till the war ends. I am in good health now and improving. A few more visits and boxes from home I think would about set me right. Mother will give you an account of her visit. I will write again soon. Crawford is well and wants his boy named Gen. Cantey. Write soon. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Chattanooga, Tenn.
September 10, 1863

Dear Father

I arrived here without any difficulty occurring. Citizens, I believe, are not allowed to come any further than Ringgold. We reached here this morning at about 5 o'clock. I went up to the Crutchfield house and found it guarded, which like the one at Tupelo you could not enter without a permit. But on the door was posted an order from Gen. Sam Jones requiring all officers and soldiers who were returning from a sick furlough to report themselves to Maj. [Thomas W. W.] Davies, the commander of the camp established to receive them. Following this order, unfortunately, I reported and had been assigned to duty. I found out afterwards that if I had not reported I might have secured board and lodging at a private house close by the camp with the aid of Mr. Glenn and be able at the same time to know all that was going on in the camp and report as soon as they received orders to march so as to join them. But as it is I am placed in a tent with two other men and have only one blanket to cover with. There are about 500 men here belonging to Wither's Division of which number the 34th Ala. claims 42. I am the only officer of my regiment present. The Major Davies of whom I had already spoken belongs to the 28th Ala--Col. [Jonathan W.] Frasier, which you know is in our brigade. I was acquainted with him at Tupelo. He immediately recognized me and said that he was glad to see me as he was particularly in need of officers about this time. I asked permission to be allowed to remain in a private house but he said he had orders that all should be kept in camp. I was then directed to report to Capt. Henderson who was in command of the whole of Wither's Division. Hence I have just come from an interview with that officer. He sais he will add 40 others to the 42 of the 34th and place me in command of them. So you see I will have plenty to do here at least. I am now in Mr. Glenn's room. Herndon is improving but slowly. He had a slight chill this evening, which set him back some. I do not suppose I shall be able to visit Aunt Betty's. We are not allowed to be absent from the camp more than six hours. The object of keeping us here is to await the rebuilding of the railroad bridge at Bridgeport. We can then perform the journey in twenty hours which by marching could only be performed in twenty days. I suppose we will remain here about 15 days. Our regiment I learn is about 45 miles from here, but their exact location I have not been able to learn. Col. Echols passed along here about 2 weeks ago. There are a good many of Jule's men here on their way to him. I conversed with them some time. All speak highly of their captain and one old fellow declared he was worth a thousand like the first they had [Jim Lewellen]. Now I believe I have given you in detail all the information of any importance. Write soon. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

PS Mr. Glenn requests to [be] allowed to congratulate you on the fine chance for distinction which the extension of the Conscript Bill presents to you.

Chattanooga, Tenn.
September 12, 1863

Dear Father

The authorities have decided not to wait for the railroad and tomorrow two or three hundred of Withers's Division start for the army. Major Davies thinks we will have to march at least 150 miles. I am very much troubled about the transportation of my baggage. Mr. Glenn is going down town and is waiting to carry this so I must conclude. He has been very kind to me indeed. Instead of sleeping in camp as I thought at first I would have to do I have been sleeping on a lounge in his room which is in about 150 yards of our camp. I suppose you must direct your letters to Chattanooga. They may reach me. Goodbye. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Camp near Chattanooga, Ga.
October 7, 1863

Dear Mother

Why don't someone from home write to me? I have not received a letter since I left Chattanooga. I am beginning to fear the Yankees have come up from Florida and there has been a battle at home as there seems to be a perfect cessation of all communication. You must not forget that I am always as anxious to hear from home as you to hear from me. It matters not where the army may be. If your letters are addressed and are hand directed and sent to any place near about, they will certainly reach me. I have written three times since I left Chattanooga, once at LaFayette and twice from Missionary Ridge. I was delighted to see Jule and hear directly from you all, but I was very sorry to learn that Pa was complaining. I hope he is well by this time. Tell him that with the exception of a cough and bad cold I am in good health and spirits.

The winter campaign I expect will be a severe one but I hope with the additional comforts which I have lately received from home to be able to meet it successfully. The oil cloth and blanket which you sent was just the very thing needed. It did noble service a few days after I received it in protecting the captain [Wood] and myself from a drenching shower of rain which continued all day. We put two forks in the ground, laid a rail across them, then leaned 3 rails on this one and covered the three with my blanket. We then got under there and built a fire in front. It formed an excellent shelter tent and was perfectly waterproof. I did not try on my pants, but like them very much. My boots also looked very substantial, but I have not tried them either yet. Jule has no doubt given you an account in what soldierly manner I disposed of the wine and delicasies in the way of old ham and home biscuits which he happened to have with him. He came at a very opportune moment I assure you.

No change of any importance has occured here since he left. There is a great deal of speculation now going on in the army with regard to the next movement of Gen. Bragg, and there seems to be much difference of opinion, but I myself have long since ceased to trouble my mind about it. But whatever he may do, I wish it done quickly for I am becoming weary of our uncomfortable quarters. We moved down from the hillside last night into the valley to the breastworks, and we are still in line of battle and our wagons are three miles from us. Our rations have to be cooked at the wagons and sent to us. Only two men are allowed to be detailed to cook for the whole company, and you know such being the case the cooking must be badly done. I would send Crawford out there to do our cooking, but I need him always with me to build fires, bring water, and in case of a march to carry my blanket. Crawford is well and fat as I ever saw him. Dr. Bill Graves came over today to see me. He looks very well and came through the battle safe. I would try to get a furlough to come home on the 23rd but in the present position of affairs I know it can but be useless. My love to Pa, Grandma, and the little boys. Some of you write. Goodbye. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Johnson's Island, Ohio
December 14, 1863

Dear Father

Capt. Woods and myself are here alive and well. I suppose you have already learned the particulars of my capture. I was hit by a minie ball in the left side. The wound, however, was not a severe one, and I have already quite recovered from it. The ball I extracted myself and I have it now in my pocket. We have been treated by our captors much more kindly than I anticipated. I am now, however, very much in need of clothing and money. If you can arrange it please send me a letter of credit on some northern bank here for 2 or 3 hundred dollars, like you used to do when I was at Chapel Hill. If you cannot effect this you might perhaps manage to get some United States notes and transmit them. Also, if you know any relation or friend up north here ot whom I might apply for these things send their addresses in full.

About family matters, we are allowed to write freely, but take care that you do not write anything contraband, if so, your letter will not come through. Do not be uneasy or distress your mind about me. By the mercy of an all wise Providence I hope to be able to live through this trouble and be returned home finally safe to my parents. Capt. Richardson and Judge Breen of Dale County are here and in good health. Write as soon as you receive this. I send you a US postage stamp. You will have to use two envelopes. In one of them place your letter and address it thus: Lieut. J. B. Mitchell (prisoner of war), 34th Ala. Regt, Johnson's Island, near Sandusky City, Ohio, and on this envelope place the US stamp. Enclose this then in another bearing the CS stamp and addressed to Gen. Winder, Richmond, Va. for flag of truce boat via Fortress Monroe. I believe this is the way. I expect, however, you can find out more about it from Eli Shorter's father in Columbus, Ga. Give my love to all the family. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell, First Lieut, Co. B, 34th Ala. Regt.