

According to the 7 January 1863 edition of the Sandusky, Ohio Register, Sergeant George B. Ridenour, of the Sixth Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment, mailed the following letter from Nashville, Tennessee, on the 25th of ~~January~~ 1862:

December

"Sampled the Crop"

"G.B.R.," writing from near Nashville on the 23d ult., says: "I see by the papers that 'Uncle Jeff' has been sojourning with the citizens of Murfreesboro, and that he has taken up his quarters with our quondam host, Mr. Manny, upon whose plantation we were encamped for some days last August. I hope the aspiring fire-eater found his sweet potatoes palatable: we can recommend them with the greatest confidence, as we pretty effectually sampled the crop."

Camp near Nashville, Dec. 25.

Today all the "wandering and uncertain" world is at home or homesick. The calloused instinct may be well kept down 364 days, but today, every man who has been brought up within the pale of Christianity turns toward the natal spot with longing and blessing. In camp, deprived of the humanizing and social turkey, we nevertheless keep up a somewhat bleak form of "ye Merry Christmas," and everybody is garrulous with reminiscences and seasonable jokes. Many of the fellows have substantial remembrances from friends at home in the shape of Express packages, redolent of roast chicken and cake, and they spread their Christmas dinner with a gusto and enjoyment that would delight the eyes of the benevolent provider. The war is forgotten for one day; under the Proclamation of One out-ranking even Rosecrans, of "on earth peace, good will toward men," the soldier character" is laid aside, and we are all citizens of a country acknowledging the influence of the natal day of the great founder of the principle of free governments. What though, instead of the gathering of families around the hearth stone, or the home tables spread with the fragrant preparations of the past week, we group in tents around our monotonous beans and crackers, companions in the picket and scout, or comrades, when the air is pregnant with a leaden rain of danger, all the world has a holiday, and we are happy by sympathy.

No bacchanal swaggering through crowded streets or maudlin and discordant songs in the reeking air of taverns, but here the cool, heart-felt recognition of the Sabbath of the year, with the old home-music singing changes from the memory-haunted long ago. This is the day for reading old letters, when the poignant sorrows and thrilling joys that marked events in the calendar, are softened down, the silent influence of Christmas infusing the light of a calm peace, all-pervading, and clothing the tear-marked passages in the year's history with the tender page of resignation.

The weather is appropriate to the occasion. The little river that flows along the boundary of the camp is free from the barriers of the King Winter, and its darkened waters dance to the distant Cumberland with no impress upon them of the "Northers" that seal your "ice-bound coasts." Great coats are voted superfluous; the sentinel, watchful only of the Officer of the Guard, swings his piece in the air, or shouts his congratulations to a comrade on the distant hill, in his blouse.

But lo! "a change comes over the spirit of our dream." "Horsed on the sightless couriers of the air," the swinging boom of cannon and the low beat of musketry, proclaim that the fellows on the right are taking their Christmas in a different vein. It approaches nearer and in the divisions on the opposite hills of Mill Creek, the alarm drum "hurtles on the air" a pretty good indication that the rebs are not observing Christmas in the orthodox style. Boom, boom, boom; will the ragamuffins persist till they get the whole camp up? or for a night scamper over these "Eternal hills?" for if we do get out after them we will not "give o'er endeavor" until they are safe-housed in their fortified camp. All day yesterday we lay with knapsacks packed, rations in haversacks and teams hitched up awaiting the order to forward, and this maneuver is therefore by no means unexpected. Maybe the rebs are taking "time by the forelock," and availing themselves of the prestige of the attack—Again all is quiet; and in the annals of the campaign the affair will be probably set down as "harmless shelling of our pickets." So once again the quiet of the day asserts itself, and the thought-current drifts into the channel of the Christmas time—.

In the 6th Ohio, at least, the day passed off well, and may the organization never pass a less merry Christmas. In our own Company G, the present of a fine case of fresh oysters by Captain W. S. Getty enhanced the pleasures of the occasion, and the day will long be remembered among the pleasant reliefs to the monotony of the war. Our captain is one of the few officers that did not require a two-years apprenticeship, under pay, to be qualified to command a company. He knew his business before he accepted a commission. Our company has turned out some good officers for the service, but as they detach them as fast as promoted, we don't get much benefit therefrom. Two of them, Lieuts. Montagne and Irwin are on duty in the regiment, the former acting as Captain of Company F, and the latter as Quastermaster.

As the fast approaching night closes upon the quiet glories of the day, may we venture the hope that the "Merry Christmas" [is] brought to the REGISTER and its readers, their modicum of happiness, and that although the prospects are gloomy enough, the next return of the festival may smile upon our country in the full realization of its symbolic meaning—Peace.

G.B.R.

On the 9th of January 1863, the Sandusky Register editor announced that "G. B. R.," also known as First Sergeant George B. Ridenour, was among the killed at the Battle of Stones River. To a small newspaper like the Register, which had no civilian correspondents documenting the war, Ridenour's death was a major calamity. He was a skilled writer, a printer by trade, and a capable war correspondent. Before enlisting as a private with the 6th Ohio Infantry Regiment, he had worked four years on the staff of the Sandusky Register. Ridenour is buried in Stones River National Cemetery.