Wis

Pvt. J.S. 1/6 by
Co A 29th Wis.

Spring Green
July 24/62

Brother David (Cook)

Amandus strongly desires to go to the war, and he prefers going with the artillery. I know of no such company now forming in this state and if I did, I should not be willing to have him go unless the officers were the right kind of men. I notice by the papers that there is a company being formed in your city called the Board of Trade Artillery. Do you know the character of the officers and men that are to compose that company and will you please inform me by return mail if convenient about them.

It is hard for me to consent to let my boy go, but perhaps God requires the sacrifice. We are all well. Maria and mother visited us last saturday and remains yet. They are well.

Sarah unites in love to all.

Truly Yours

J. Silsby.

Mr. Whittle:

The Board of Trade Battery being full, would it not be the next best thing for him to join the Company with which you are connected, under the auspices of Y. M. Christian association, and Board of trade and please give your views below, such information as will be interesting to a father who is willing to sacrifice his first born son.

Yours respy

D. B. Cooke

Rev. J. Silsby:

Dear Sir:

Enclosed I send a circular issued by the "Young Mens Christian Association of Chicago" in regard to five companies to be furnished under their auspices.

One of these companies is now full---the other four are filling up---but will probably receive recruits for two weeks to come-----One of the four is to be composed of one hundred christian or moral men---each of whom when the company is filled shall have an equal chance for the Company offices.

Respectly yrs

D. W. Whittle

Milwaukee, Aug. 12, 1862

Dear father,

As I happen at present to have a little time, I thought I would take the chance to write. You may have seen in the Milwaukee Sentinel that we were to go into camp on Monday, but we however did not do it, as Capt Trowbridge was not here to muster us into the U. S. Service; but we are to do so, as soon as he returns. There are upwards of 200 or more persons, I understand, here in custody for running away from Chicago, in order to avoid being drafted. The police last week as I was going down street had arrested thirty at one time, whom they were taking to the custom house. They are at present in the jail, till we go to camp, when we are to guard them. We have got rid of the only rascal we have had in the company. Capt Hibbard turned him out yesterday noon for being a rowdy and a loafer, and hardly an hour had elapsed after, till the police arrested him for stealing a watch. I called at several photograph galleries, the price they charge is at the rate of three dollars a dozen. There are several thieves hanging around our headquarters. One of our boys lost six dollars himself, I have either lost half a dollar, or had it stolen. We have all learned to take better care of our money since then. Please send me a little more money, as I need a new pair of suspenders. I got those

handerchiefs hemmed x for 3 cts apiece. The price of those circulars was exactly $2.00. He did not print them till yesterday. But I must close.

Your affectionate Son

A. Silsby.

August 16, 1862

Milwaukee, Aug. 16, 1862

Dear father,

I received your kind letter two days ago. I thank you very much for it. Yesterday we were sworn into the U. S. service by Capt. Trowbridge, and received $25.00 in treasury notes, and two dollars in state money. We are going into camp to day for certain. I am going to sent most of my money home. You asked me how my health was? It is not as good as it should be, one day this week, I was so unwell, that I had to be excused from the forenoon drill. I am better now, although I am troubled with the bowel complaint. I have been careful of my diet too, having only once eaten any pork.

You aksed me if I read my Bible daily? Some days I have, and some I have not. There is not any chance to, at the tavern, and not always a chance at our head-quarters, but when there is I have. My especial companions are of good character That I can say, though when at the tavern I have to be constantly among those that are not of the best. I have bought me a Contrivance, that will save me much room. It is a knife, fork, spoon & corkscrew combined, although I do not expect to find any use for the latter. The whole contrivance is good and stout, and does not take up any more room than a good sized jackknife. I do not know why my pictorial does not come. I would be glad to have some papers. Please hereafter to direct my letters to the care of Capt. Hibbard, Co. A, 24 Reg. W. V.

Your affectionate son

A Silsby

Aug. 18, 1862

Milwaukee, Aug. 18, 1862

Dear father.

I received your kind letter this afternoon. I thank you for the advice contained in it and shall endeavor to follow it. I am now nearly well again. We have been delayed from going into camp, and are still in the city. While we are in the city I am not able to frequently bathe, for we are not allowed to go into the lake, within the city limits, or we will have the police after us. We have no time to outside the limits, for we are liable to be called to drill any moment, to go to any bath room in the city will cost us something and where I am boarding there is but one wash dish and one towel the whole week around, the fact is, the Baltic house is not noted for neatness, and there is danger of being robbed there, one of the boys lately had $17 and a silver watch stolen from under his pillow while sleeping. I have bathed once, since I have been here, and then I missed answereing my name at roll call. I was absent also at roll call on Sunday, as I was not aware that Uncle Sam did not treat Sunday the manner we do, I went to meeting at one church, and they after drilling went to another. As to the money I will tell you how much I spent to good purpose and what for recreation. Capt. Hibbard advised me and all to get bowie knives. I got one of those. I bought "that concern" which by the by I bought through the advice of one who had been in the war before. I got it at a hard ware store. I bought paper, envelopes, and thread, & etc. All of us got a soldier cap. I got mine ecause my hat did not look well enough after hard usage here to go to meeting in. Total $6.00 75 cents more to go a concert got up for the benefit of the soldiers, the moneygoes to the régiment, 25 cents in fruit, and 50 cents in postage stamps I have with me. The remaining $19.00 I will send to you as I do not need it. I do not know when we get our uniform, I hope soon, my shirts look the worse for the wear. I got a letter from Grandmother Whiteside, which I enclose. But I must close with much love to you, mother & the children.

Your affectionate son

A. Silsby.

Mitchellville, Tennessee,
November 5, 1862

Dear father & mother,

I received your kind letters and thank you very much for them. Since I wrote that letter, I have ~~xxxxxxxx~~ written and sent another. I received your letters 2 days ago, at Bowling Green, Ky. We stayed there two days. It was once quite a business town, but there are a great many brick buildings in ashes now, so the town looks rather forsaken. They are busy rebuilding the machine works and engine houses on the railroad. The railroad bridge is completed, but the common road bridge lays in ashes yet, nothing to be seen but the stone piers. There was a pontoon bridge over Green River for us to cross on however. There we got our tents for the first time since we left Louisville. All this time we have slept in the open air. We left Bowling Green yesterday morning at six o'clock, after ~~xxxxxxx~~ drawing for one days rations a small piece of bacon & one cracker 6 inches square. We had to march 15 miles on the strenghth of that & and at a quick gait too. This is a fair specimen of the quantity of rations all of us have been frequently in the habit of getting, & often we have not got anything, so we used to take ears of corn from the first shock of fodder we came acrosss, punch holes in a tin plate to make a grater, & grate corn into meal for mush; we finally stole a coffe mill thinking it justifiable under the circumstances, & then ground it, ~~xxx~~ instead of grating it. But today we got full rations for the first time in a long ~~xxxx~~ while, and hope to continue so to do. We have left our brigade to night, together with the 21st Mich. just when we reached the state line, & are encamped here on the Louisville & Nashville R. R. right by the boundary line between Ky. & Tenn. From what I can learn I should judge that we are detailed to guard the R. R. from Morgan's Guerrillas & guard the workmen while they rebuild and clear out the tunnel from rubbish, &c, at least so say our officers. But I must close, I wrote a letter to Grandmother Whitesides when I was at Louisville. I stand this marching well, except that it blisters my feet, sometimes very bddly. The rest of my Brigade(we belong to the 37th Brigade, 11th Division) will march to Nadhville & from that to Alabama. We are all glad to get rid of "Old Buell" as the boys call him. We believe him to be a traitor: certain it is we should have captured Bragg's whole army, if he had not permitted them to slip by him. At the Battle of Perryville he ordered our brigade not to fight them unless they attacked us. When they attacked and charged on our battery which we supported, which was done more than once we might have cut off two or three Regts but he would not permit us. The rebel prisoners that we took, themselves boasted that as long as Buell commanded us they were safe, & that they did not want a better General than Buell. I have heard boys in the 1st 10th & 15th Wis. say that if they got a chance, they would shoot him. In a word, he is hated by the whole army. But I must close. I am at present enjoying good health. I do not feel much, the need of my blanket as I sleep by some fire always.

Your affectionate son,
Amandus Silsby

Nashville, Tenn. Nov. 15, 1862

Dear father & mother,

Since I wrote this last letter, we left Mitchellville & having changed our plans, at 2 o'clock P. M. the next day, and marched 16 miles before 7 o'clock P. M. where we caught up to the provision train of our division, which we were required to guard from the guerrillas. The next morning at 4 o'clock A. M. we resumed our march & the Regt continued to march 21 miles till it arrived at Nashville. But I did not march clear to Nashville that day, when 10 miles from there, my feet being sore, I thought I would rest so I slipped out of the ranks, and jumped over a stone wall that skirted the road and waited till the rear guard had passed, when I filled my canteen with water at the brook nearby, and walked on at my leisure & coming across one of the cavalry I got 4 crackers of him which I was glad of, as I had eaten my last cracker the morning of the day we left Mitchellville, having nothing to eat since then but a small piece of bacon. When I got the crackers, I stopped at the first fire on the roadside & made my supper. I boiled some coffee, and crumbled up my crackers in it, that constituted my supper. When I had finished that, 2 more of Co A's men who had straggled, caught up to me, also one of Co F's men. We walked on till within 8 miles of Nashville, when finding a nice large new house deserted we walked in & took possession for the night. Seeing 2 nice fat chickens in a tree roosting, I climbed up and grabbed them. One of the boys procured his havresack full of sweet potatoies and onions, one had some ham & another had crackers. Putting all together we had enough for our breakfast, the next morning. Kindling a blazing fire, we dressed the chickens, & then went to sleep, having taken the precaution to fasten the door to our room and close the window shutters so that if any guerillas scouting that way, would not see any light in the house. The next morning after breakfast, we started on to catch up to our regiment; on the road, I shot a good sized fat pig, skinned him, cleaned him, tood one hind quarter, his heart & liver, to myself & gave the remaining one, & the two forquaters to my 3 companions. We found our reg't encamped on the east side of the Cumberland River opposite Nashville. We have been encamped here 8 days, but I have had no chance to write sooner for this reason, viz it took us all the first day to wash our clothes, clean ourselves the next day in the forenoon we had to clean, oil & polish up our guns, polish the brass plates on our belst and cartrifge boxes, polish our buttons, black our shoes, & make everything shine in general, in the afternoon the whole brigade turned out. & were inspected by Brig. Gen. Greusel. Our Band has been increased in numbers & raised from a regimental to a brigade band; when they left Milwaukee they could not play very well, but now they make some splendid music. The next day the whole division was inspected by Major Hibbard who has been promoted to the rank of Inspector Gen'l of the division. The next day we were inspected (i e) the Division, by Major Gen. Rosencrans himself. He told us we were the best looking & neatest reg't in that division. The next day I had to stand guard. The next day clean up our camp. The next morning early start out on picket duty & remain till today noon, when we returned to camp. That surgeon to whom you wrote was left with the wounded, I believe, at Ferryville. Our chaplain is a German, a Catholic, I believe, though of that I do not know. His sermons are not doctrinal, in fact, nothing in them at all except the old story, (i e) the Star Spangled Banner, & our duty to our country as soldiers. As to our captain, I have little or nothing to do with him. I take care to be polite to him, however. He is hated by the whole company, & if he has any thing against any one in it, or if any one disobeys him he is sometimes tyrranical in his punishments. Our Colonel is sick & at the water cure here. Mr. Cooke is a very sick man, we left him in the hospital at Bowling Green. Mr. Horner tells me

to give his best respects to you. He is on the sick list & I would not be a bit surprised, if he got his discharge from the service. He is rather to old a man to stand the hardships of this life in the army. But I must close my letter Please give my respects to all my friends. I am at present enjoying good health thought the Reg't has a great many on the sick list.. Out of the 1011 that used to appear on dress parade, only 450 k or 500 make their appearance now. But I must stop.

Your affectionate son

Amandus Silsby.

November 29, '62

Camp 7 miles below Nashville Nov. 29, '62

Dear father & mother.

Since I last wrote to you, we have moved our camp across the Cumberland River, marched through Nashville, & on for 7 miles into the interior where we have encamped in the woods. But I anticipate, I should have related our doings near Nashville, before telling of our removal. It was thought at first that we should remain some time in camp, on the river so that the brigade was set to work felling ~~xx~~ trees for firewood, clearing away the brush & sweeping the streets between the tents so that our camp presented quite a neat appearance. Our reg every fourth day was sent out on picket duty, which was very light duty that side of the river, as we were in no imminent danger of being attacked by the rebels. Another day there were twelve detailed from every company for "fatigue duty", which consisted in going over to the city & spending the day in working on the entrenchments. I was one of the twelve detailed from our company. Our party was divided into two companies, who work every alternate hour & rest the rest of the time. Taking advantage of the time I was off duty, I went up town to "see what I could see". I visited the state house. It is now occupied by the Governors Guard. Soldiers in crowds were to be seen throughout the whole building. There is a flight of stone steps on each side & end of the building. The whole building is strongly fortified. It is placed on a high hill. The outworks were built partly of square ~~xxxxxx~~ blocks of stone & partly of earth; these are defended by 4 brass 6 pounders. Within these outworks were heavy palisades, with small port holes for musketry. Between the building & the palisades were mounted six heavy siege guns, while in the porches between the pillars were piled cotton bales for infantry to screen themselves behind; but to a description of the interior. The first story is divided into a number of rooms, viz., the Governors private room, the Archives, Treasury, Weights & Measures, Clerk of the Court of Appeals & ec. The bannisters of the stair cases leading to the second story are ~~xx~~ made of Tennessee marble, which has the color & appearance of polished Castile soap. The second story was divided into the Library rooms, Senate Chamber, & Hall of Representatives. I entered first the Hall of Representatives. The Hall now presents altogether a different aspect, from what it did when Congress made use of it, The aisles and seats are occupied by soldiers, smoking or playing cards. Back of the speakers chair is a wall of polished marble surmounted by an eagle holding in the talons the U. S. Shield. The Senate Chamber is not so much occupied by soldiers. The galleries are supported by pillars of polished marble, but the style of the Senate chamber, was a good deal simpler in construction that the Hall of Representatives. The cupola of the building commands an extensive view of the surrounding country. Nashville must once have been quite a usiness place, but at present most of the shops & ec are closed. The handsome suspension bridge, that once crossed the river is entirely destroyed by the rebels. Two days after our brigade marched to our present camp. We are now so near the rebel lines, that when we go out on Picket, no matter how cold the night is we are not allowed no fire. I received the portfolio & gloves & thank you very much for them. The gloves are just what I needed. I have received the papers also. I commenced this letter on the 29th of Nov, it is now the 2' of Dec & have not yet finished it. I received your last letter also Eddies & Johnnies; many thanks for them. (I was quite surprised to hear of the new little sister, I should like to see her very much). We were to be paid $13.00 at Milwaukee, but we were hurried off from there so that we did not get ~~but~~ part of the $13.00 there & the rest at Covington. We have not received a

single cent since, though we expect to as soon as the old regiments have been paid. The soldiers here all voted. The majority of our Co. voted the Republican ticket, but the Reg. principally voted the Democratic. They are tired of this weary long marching and have mostly the idea that by voting democratic, something or other will be brought around to enable them to return home; This induced numbers of Republicans to vote Democratic ticket. Some of the Reg. like the late emancipation proclamation, but the majority are opposed to it. I have received no letters from Grandmother Whiteside . I wrote one during our march & commenced another lately. You ~~xxx~~ ask me how I like soldiering? I would ask for nothing better than to have the war ended and my self on the way home, free to go where I have a mind to, sleep all night, no picketing to do or guard duty & no more marching. I have found soldiering not such a " gay and easy life" as represented to be. I have however learned the drill thoroughly, so that I could easily drill a company. As to understanding the "art of war in its more comprehensive principles", I begin to do so, to some extent. We some times have political discussions amongst us, but our favorite theme is the length of time it will be, before we go home. Mr. Cook died on the 9th of Nov. at Bowling Green. He died of the typhoid fever. He was thought a good deal of, here in camp, as a kind hearted, generous minded man. But I must close my letter. Mr. Horner sends his best respects. Please tell Eddie I will answer his letter as soon as I can & I thank him very much for his little Advocate.

Your affectionate son

A. Silsby

Camp 7 miles south of Nashville, Tenn. Dec 10/62

Evan Williams:

Dear friend,

I received your letter during our weary march "to and fro" in Kentucky. Many thanks for it. I would have answered it before, but I have very little time I could call my own. I got your letter at eleven o'clock in the night time, after a long march of 24 miles with 40 lbs on my back (in the shape of a knapsack, & cartridge box) also a heavy gun besides. We were marched those times so fast, that many were taken sick, broken down by fatigue & exposure, they were nevertheless forced to march on, and several died in consequence of it. Add to our forced marching, the fact that we had little to eat & muddy water from ponds on the way to drink, no tents to shelter us in the night, be it rainy or dry weather, and you will have something of an idea of the "gay and easy life" of a soldier, that the poets tell about. It may be all very well, but I can't see it, at least in that light. I believe I had rather go a harvesting on a farm.

Since we have reached Nashville we have had a pretty easy time of it. We are called up in thr morning at six o'clock, to answer our names at "roll call", after that we can cook and eat our breakfast till eight o'clock. Then comes "dress parade", when every Regt has to fall into line and drill with their arms, then stand in order, while the bands play &c and a whole string of flummery characteristic to an army is gone over with. At nine o'clock comes drill time, which lasts till eleven O'clock; from that till one o'clock is dinner time; from two till four o'clock comes battallion drill. At sunset roll is called, also at noon, then again at nine o'clock at night. At present we anticipate having another battle, so that we are called up as early as half past four o'clock in the morning to stand awhile in the line of battle, in order to prevent being surprised by the rebels. Besides the officer's tent, each company in the Regt has four tents; one for corporals & serjeants, and three for privates. There are sixteen men in the tent I am in, cool nights we build a fire in the center of the tent, while the smoke can go out at the top. They are rather smoky, but we manage to make them serve our purpose. Every fourth day our Regt is sent out on picket duty. When standing our posts on the picket line, we are allowed no fire, so that on frosty nights, it is cold work picketting. We are so near the rebel lines that some of our sentinels, will frequently be able to see the rebels on picket duty. Our men exchanged a few shots with them the other day, by way of "how do you do", but no harm was done, excepting that we captured a saddle, with a horse under, & a man on top of it. Yesterday they threw some shells into the picket lines of the 73d Ill's, which was stationed next to us, but a slight conversation between them and some of our cannon caused them to stop such familiarity. Yesterday there were sent to us small tents made to hold two men: they consist of two small/pieces (square) of thin canvass, buttoned together, and thrown over a horizontal pole. They resemble a small roof, with both ends open; they are no higher than up to your waist, and when your head is under one, your feet stick out at the end, and "vice versa". When it rains they will leak badly. On the way marching, the two pieces of canvass are to be unbuttoned, and each one of us, is to carry a piece, so that we not only are to carry our beds and provisions on our backs, but also our houses. This seemed to our brigade, to be making too much of a set of pack mules of us, so that we have refused to take them, pr preferring to sleep in the open air. We have marched four hundred miles without tents, and we are able to do so again. We have been often short of rations, but we now have plenty to eat, viz, "hard bread" which is a sort of crackers, resembling somewhat, the sailor sea biscuit, also bacon, shoulders fresh beef, corn meal, flour, tea coffee & sugar, beans, dessicated vegetables & rice. Contrary to orders, we boys on fine nights make "gallant descents"

on- chicken houses, and this supply all deficiencies in rations. The other night on picket ~~xxxx~~ myself & two companions, having observed the day before that a cretain wealthy planter (a well known secessionist, who lived in a handsome brick residence around which were laid out nice gardens) had a chicken house. We made a descent on it, and relieved his mind of the care of fifteen chickens, and two turkeys, besides taking care to save him the trouble of milking four cows the next morning; borrowing a tin pail, without leave of him to carry it in. That's the way we soldiers use "lavandar" on those fellows. When the Reg is drawn up in line, at dress parade, the Adjutant reads to them "General Order No-"something or other, viz "All gobling or de depredations are hereby prohibited,-&c" which we well know, the officers mean to have us understand as "Now boys, Gobble all you can, but be careful and not let me catch you at it". But notwithstanding the gobbling, a soldier's life is a hard and dreary one; treated like a brute, exposed to all the inclemency of the weather. If he is taken sick, he is uncared for, perhaps dies, and is buried like a dog. The papers if they find room, notice his death in some obscure corner. That's the glory of a soldier's life. I have seen them on the battlefield, laying in the fence corners, horribly bloated and mangled, or in temporary hospitals, lingering betwixt life and death, their wounds so poorly cared for, that they mortified. I have gone to the spring for water and seen part of a man's body lying there and the hogs devouring it. Wonder not that such sights tend to blunt the finer sensibilities and to make a soldier feel almost forsaken by both God and man. Under such circumstances, do you feel surprised that we sometimes almost feel ~~different~~ indifferent as to how the war terminates, and wish ourselves safely home again? We are in expectation of another battle sonn, when I presume the same scenes will be reproduced. But I must close my letter; please write soon, and tell me how things are getting along, how you enjoy teaching school; all about every little piece of gossip you and I used to engage in. Anything will be received gladly. Do you have singing schools or spelling schools now? We have had but a slight snow storm since we have been here, and that is gone long ago. Please give my respects to your folks, and Mr Lewis'.

Write to-

A. Silsby
Co A 24th Reg. Wis. Vol.
Nashville
care of Tenn.- and oblige
Capt Austin

Your affectionate friend,
A. Silsby

Feb 8, 1863 Camp 2 miles South of Murfreesboro

My dear father,

Circumstances have been such that I have been unable to write to you before today. You have probably noticed my name among the "missing" in the papers since the --"six days fight near Murfreesboro". The way I came to be missing was this--During the march from our old encampment to Murfreesboro, it was nothing but a continual rain day & night, so that we were wet through. The roads were full of mud and slush, so the four days before the fight my feet were wet soaking all the time. The night before the battle all that was left of my shoes, gave way so that I had to go it barefooted. On Tuesday morning we started on to commence the battle. Co's A & F were deployed into line as skirmishers behind us some little distance was the regiment we marched through a cotton field & then through a strip of woods; in that manner. When we emerged from the woods, our whole army drew up into line of battle. While there, the captain told me to go and stay with the wagons, till I could get a pair of shoes, and a new gun, (for my gun had the misfortune of having the tube broken off, the day before.) But I, thinking I could get a gun better, by "hanging around" behind some of the regiments, stopped behind the "15th Mo" which was supporting our regiment. There was however but little done on Tuesday. I spent the night there. Next moring I was woke up by the firing of a cannon, & in ~~xxxxxxxx~~ a short time the engagement became general, securing a gun I started to find my regiment, when to my suprise I found a portion of the right wing at right angles to the position they occupied the night before, facing towards the rear, at the same moment firing was to be heard down the pike, in the direction from which we came. The firing ceased a moment & then opened with renewed vigor & from that time on it was nothing but the thunder of artillery, the crash of trees, as they were splintered, the broken limbs falling to the ground & the boom of the shells as they bursty overhead and all around. The whole air seemed to vibrate with the crying of the balls all about. Just then there came a rush of men from the corn fields, soldiers from all regiments slmost, some with guns and some without. I asked one of them what the matter was, "The matter is we are most completely whipped" says he. Just a moment after a solid shot struck mone of them carrying away his leg. Just then the cavalry rode by, and I ~~xk~~ asked one of them, what had become of Gen. Sills Brigade? (He was then the commander of our Brigade.) He replied that they had changed their position, and the direction that I was then going, would take me right amongst the rebels, but to prevent being taken prisoner, I had better follow them. So I did, but it was hard work to walk barefoot over the icy ground, (for it had turned cold during the night, after the rain ceased.) & ran great risk of being run over by wounded horses, that were dashing madly about with their harness dangling at their heels. Numbers of the men were struck down around me. The balls hissed around so that it was a wonder to me I was not hit Arriving at the wagons, the cavalry stopped and formed into line of battle. "My feet paining me, for they were numb with cold, one of the teamsters told me to get into his wagon, which I did, just then an officer rode ~~by~~ along and ordered the wagons to drive further down the line where they could be better protected but on starting they got into a panic, & if you ever saw a sight it was then. The ground was strewed with pots & kettles, pans, camp stoves, tents, & boxes. In their hurry they drove over guns, crushing them, every one of which cost Uncle Sam at least $20. Our cavalry fled , closely following the wagons galloped the Texan Rangers cheering & shouting to the teamsters to halt. Another moment & they were alongside the wagons shooting them down from the backs of their horses and mules. The driver of the wagon I was in fell dead from his horse. One of the butternuts seized hold of the horses heads & stopped them. I jumped out and was taken prisoner by them. We were coveyed to the rear, and the teams started towards Murfreesboro. One of them rode by with the Stars and Stripes

on his shoulder, (a handsome silk flag, with gold fringe,) which he had just captured. Ten minutes more another shout & the 4th Regular Cavalry came ~~down~~ dashing down in hot pursuit of the Rebels, who seeing they about to lose their prisoners, commenced shooting them down. Thinks I, if thats your style you may count me out, so I started on the run towards our lines, & so did a number of others. One fellow fired his pistol at me twice but luckily missed me. Another moment & our cavalry were up with us. The rebels turned to Skedaddle but found the East Tennessee cavalry coming down on them from the other side, so that they were compelled to stand. "Draw sabres! Give them hell!" and for ~~some~~ once I had a chance to see a cavalry charge. I met a couple of men from the 24th Wis., I ~~asked~~ asked them were the Reg't was, they replied they did not know. I having found two shoes, (not mates) put them on, and proposed that we should go and find it. But they preferred staying where they were, so I started on alone. Shortly after I met a fellow from my own company, who told me that the Reg't was "all cut to pieces, and what were not taken prisoners were scattered." All I met sang the same tune, so I gave it up. Stopping at a spring near a hospital (every house for miles around was converted into one,) a cavalry man told me that the Medical Director wanted to see me, so I went up to the house, where he told me he had the authority to take any person he came across and employ him as nurse in the hospital. There I have been for more than a month. My first employment was helping dig graves and bury the dead. I helped bury eight. Afterward I was put into the rooms to take care of the wounded. Most all that had a limb amputated died. While I was there the doctors had no time to report the names of the nurses to their regiments, not even the whereabouts of all the wounded, neither had I a chance to write. Thus I came to be placed on the list of the missing. I have got my dismissal papers from the hospital and arrived in camp. We have lost in our company 2' Lieut ~~Geo~~ George Bleyer, who was mortally wounded, one private instantly killed, three wounded, one serjeant, & one private missing, and one private died from Typhoid fever, resulting from the exposure to the weather. But I must close. Please tell Edie ~~a~~ I will write an answer to his letter as soon as I can. Much love to all. from---

Your affectionate son,

Amandus Silsby.

Feby 22, 1863

Camp near Murfreesboro, Feb. 22, 1862

Dear father,

I learned from Lieut. Balding that you had not yet received my letter explaining my absence from the regiment and long silence in regard to writing letters. I have been detained in the hospital as a nurse where I had neither pen ink or paper to write with . As soon as I got back to the regiment, I immediatley wrote to you telling you of my safety. I was captured by the rebels, (ie) The Texas Rangers, managed to escape and from that time till the time I cam e back to the regiment, I was detained at work in the Union field hospitals. I am well and hearty, was not wounded, though I was between "two fires" some time. We are encamped on a low swampy ground, but are expecting to move camp soon to higher ground. We have been for a long time been expecting to be "paid off" but "hope deferred, maketh the heart sick". But I still "think we'll be paid for four months service at least in a few days". All the boys think of, or talk of , now is the cahnces of the wars closing, and our going home. The fact is the 24th Wis. is & has been an unlucky Reg. We have never received full rations since we left Louisville. While others have had enough and to spare we have been stinted. The commissary draws rations enough, but we have reasons to suspect "foul play" as they call it. At any rate we can't see any good reason that our Reg should live on half rations while others have plenty. " I from curiosity watched our commissary when he drew rations from the BrigadeHeadQuarters for the Reg. For instance, for 260 men he drew 1000 lbs of beef for a certain length of time. We never say more than one pound of it. If we compalin to the rascal that we dont get enough to eat, he swears that we are not to complain to him, but to compalin to the other officers, will see him about it", but we might as well compalin to the Captain of the Forty Thieves that one of his men had robbed you, as to complain to them. We complained once at Brigade Head Quarters. When the officers were all called before the Brig. Gen. What happened then I dont know, but the quantity of rations improved after that. But before that two companies when ordered to go and dig on the entrenchments refused to obey as they had nothing to eat. But I must close. Please tell Evan William to answer my letter I wrote him. Please send me some postage stamps. Much love to all. I was not wound as reported.

Your affectionate son

A. Silsby

Camp near Murfreesboro March 23, 1863

My dear father:

As it is XXXXXXX evening, & I have plenty of time to myself, I take the opportunity to write once more. I received the State Journal yesterday, containing the notice of Eugene C. Hungerfords death, of which I was pained to hear of, indeed, What a complete slaughter of the officers. If he had lived through that battle, he would have been Captain of his company. But to turn to affairs here, we have laid for the last two days under orders to be ready to march at a moments notice, with our knapsacks packed. All that I intend to carry in my Knapsack however is--one shirt, one pr of socks, one oil cloth, my Bible and portfolio, also a shelter tent, and a thin light woolen blanket Which I succeeded in obtaining two days ago. (This is the first woolen blanket I have had, since the day I threw my blanket away. That was the third day after we left Louisville. Since then, all through the winter, snow or no snow rain or frost, I have simply laid on my rubber cloth with my overcoat spread over me. As a general thing I have slept just as sound as the rest & what discomfort I suffered in the night was made up by the extra company I had during the daytime, on the march from having so much the less weight to toil & sweat under. I have been the healthiset and Most hardy fellow in the Reg't however, it is not only our boys but those of the other companies that know me acknowledge. The rest of the things in my knapsack besides what I have mentioned, have been picked up in boxes, to be stored in Nashville, viz, my overcoat, dress coat, a rubber blanket pair of woolen mittens, an extra pair of pants, & a pair of knit gloves which I had given to me. When they start on the march, they will carry my knapsack with what things I do not immediatley use, (when camping at night,) in it, so that all I shall have to carry on my back, will be my blanket, packed in my shelter tent,. The rebel army have some how or other made themselves scarce in these parts. Probably to attack Grant, who has been cutting off all their communications and supplies in Mississippi. I heard this morning that Gen'l Thomas occupied Shelbyville and Gen'l Rousseau was in Tullahoma. Day before yesterday there was a trial of sharp shooters here. Each company, in each regt. in the Brigade, was to send one man, & the regimental detail that made the best shots (ie those ten men) each presented with a splendid Colts Five Shots" revolving rifle. The ten men from the 21 Mich got them. The 24th Wis. however, for some ~~fd~~ reason or other never sent any men out, to make the trial. All the other Regts did. Did I ever tell you that we had got another Brigadier General? His name is Lytell. They are still continuing building fortifications here, & every day large siege guns & ~~xxxxx~~ mortars are arriving to be mounted on the works. Switches are being built on the railroad, to conduct the cars into the earthworks where large store houses and military depot are either erected or being erected, for storing provisions. I have seen a few forts that are completed. Even the big guns are so safely hidden that the enemy shartshooters cannot pick off the men working the guns. Sand bags are placed (two layers thick) on the top of the works with interstices between, for port holes for our rifles, so that if we were fighting in them even our heads would not be exposed above the works. Persons that have seen both say that there are not as many fortfications in washington, as there are here, when these have will have been finished. But I must close as it is getting late. Much love to all from---

Your affectionate son

Amandus Silsby

March 28, 1863

Camp near Murfreesboro, Mar. 20

My dear father and mother:

I received your kind letters dated Feb. 25th March 2' and 6th, also Mother's & Eddie's of Feb. 28th. I thank you very much for them. You write that you sent me a paper with my letter in it, but it did not arrive. I received a letter yesterday from Grandmother Whitside, which I immediately answered. You asked me if I know any thing of the Board of Trade Battery? I have seen it several times 1st at Jeffersonville, & several times on the march, but know nothing further of it. You ask if I felt much fear during the fight? During the skirmishing I felt quite at ease, as in that business we could protect our selves to some degree behind the trees, but when the battle fairly commenced, for 10 or 15 minutes, I dodged every time I heard the balls whistle by me, but after that I did not pay any particular attention to the bullets, but I am an enternal enemy to solid shot & shell, especially when fired from siege guns. The trouble with them is, you can hear them coming & such a dolefull sound as they make on the way makesyour blood boil. Capt Austin did well, he is a brave man. I will endeavor in a short time to write a full account of experience in the Hospital & I have received several papers from you since my return to the company. I thank you very much for them. We are still in Sheridans Div. which is regarded as the "Crack Div." of the army of the Cumberland. I thank you very much for the stamped envelopes. I still read my Bible. I found my portfolio safe when I returned to the Reg. Gen Rosecrans condition for admission of names on the roll of honor is that the private unless wounded should have been with his"Co." during the whole battle. Gen. "RosY" has not organized any negro regiments, I do not know whether the rebels killed all the negroes teamsters they were enabled to carry off with them. I saw them shoot two of them. I saw one of the poor fellows make his escape but Sambo thought a moment before his time was up. Seeing them coming, he tried to escape, but two of the rebels riding up, commanded him to halt! He stood trembling, while one of them asked him what he was doing there with the Federals, I-I-I- was only go'an 'long wid de a'mee." "well come along with us, we'll soon teach you what it is to be caught among the Yankees." Shortly after they were obliged to leave Sambo, and Skedaddle from our cavalry, much to the joy of the negro, who jumping up and down shouted "Go it! Bully! Give 'em H--ll." I was glad to get away too, for it went very much against the grain to hear their boasting talk, which riled my temper considerably. I have seen nothing of Fay Hubbard, George Jarvis, or Goble Jackson since I left camp near Nashville, John Chaffee is surgeon in a hospital two miles the other side of Murfreesboro. Capt. Austin is with the company now. Col. Larrabee has returned to command the Reg. We have exchanged our Austrian guns for Enfield Rifles which are a much more efficient arm. I would rather not be transferred to a battery, as there is none in our army except the 3' Wis. with which I am acquainted and they are not in our division.

March 24, 62

Yesterday we (ie) McCook's Corps, consisting Gen's T. Sheridan, Jeff. C. Davis, & Johnson's Divisions were relieved by Divisions. After waiting two hours Gen. Sheridan rode up with his staff, shortly after Major Gen Mc. Cook rode up and was met by Gen. Sheridan. The cavalry on the staff of Sheridan together with that on McCook's wheeled into line, in front. Just then a large flag appeared down the pike, & Gen. Rosecrans came into sight riding at the head of a large retinue. Gen's McCook & Sheridan, together with the officers on their

~~with the officers of their~~ respective staffs, rode forward to meet him. The cavalry on Rosecrans staff have all them dark colored horses & looked splendid when drawn up in line with drawn swords. Gen. Rosecrans is a pleasant looking man always with a smile on his face. He looks to me somewhat like Mr. Morely our County Superintendent. He seems to agree with you that there is not much use in shaving as he evidently only trims his whiskers with the shears. His ensign ~~xxxx~~ bearer carries a handsome U: S. flag with a gold eagle emblazoned on the stripes under the blue ~~xxxx~~ field. The first regiment he rode by was the "24th Wis. of the 1st Brigade, 3' Division, of the 20th Army Corps." as we are called. We presented arms & our band struck up "Hail to the Chief." Gen: Rosecrans took off his hat and smiling told our Adjutant that he didn't think that he had a good eye, as our line was not very straight. The fact was that the boys had been lying down and resting themselves and had but just jumped up and fell into line, as Rosecrans made his appearence. As he rode along the lines, each regiment in turn presented arms, their field music playing until he had passed their respective Reg'ts. After which he placed himself

Camp near Murfreesboro, April 1

My dear father:

I received your kindletter dated March 21st. today & I thank you very much for it. You state that the last letter you received from me was that of the 22' of Feb. I have written since then, a letter to you and one to Eddie. I have received from you by one mail a Tribune & 1/2 a sheet of the Madison Patriot. By the next mail a Tribune, Principia, a tract Pamphlet & 2 Independents & the next day a Well Spring and Independent, also at last the Tribune & Madison Patriot I thank you very much for them. You ask me whether "I keep up good heart & courage as well as good health,". When I was at camp on Mill Creek near Nashville I felt very despondent, all I could hear was, that the condition of affairs was more against the North now, than it was this time last year, that the "so called Democrats" were coming into full power once more, and their first act will be to arrange atreaty of peace with the rebels, of a nature dishonorable to the North also that the free states were almost in a state of rebellion against the "Lincoln Government" such were the remarks that I would hear on all sides. All of which tended to discourage me, so that at that time I felt that we were but one step from defeat, that the time spent by us already down here, our marches & were so much time wasted, that we were throwing away our time & endangering our lives all to no purpose, that after all the South bid fair to have their own way, and I was almost ready to join in with others & "cry peace". I was evidently "deep in the blues". On New Years day "Wish you happy New Year!" seemed rather "behind the times" then. How different, one year before. Then I was at a party at Spring Green; now what a change! In the midst of a battle, wounded men lying in the fence corners or under the trees; every house full, & still the "thunder of cannon and rattle of musketry", promised more yet for the surgeons knife. Would the battle never end! I compared the two New Years & heartily wished myself at home. "But the darkest hour is just before daylight." So grandmother Whitside used to say. Now I think the prospect grows every day brighter . By the aspect of affairs in England I dont think the South need hope for interference very soon in that quarter. The Copperheads seem to be a fast "playing out" despised both by North & South. Things look altogether more business like. The soldiers feel more cheerfull as the war seems more likely to have an end gradually approaching. Capt. Austin is still commanding our company E. April 4th. You ought to see our Brigade. Great pains is taken to have things neat & tidy, the streets between the tents & parade grounds are swept clean. The tents are almost every day raised & aired thoroughly. The Brigade Headquarters, & numbers of the officers tents are surrounded with evergreens arranged in order. Little green flags hoisted over the Commissary Departments. The battle flag, (which for the right wing of the army is red with as many white stars on it, as the number of the Div.' Ours has three stars, being the 3' Div. Each Brigade carries one, & on the stars is printed the number of the Brigade. Ours is the 1st). This flag is fixed to a staff in front of the Brigadiers tent. Col. Larrabee has had erected a liberty pole, & every morning the band has to play when the flag is raised, & every night on taking it down. You ask me what kind of a man our chaplain is? I am sorry I cant say much for him. He is a Roman Catholic, plays poker, smokes his cigars, drinks his whiskey, looks out for the mail, and perhaps once a month makes a speech that dont amount to anything after all. If you remember anything about what those two young men from Jennisons Cavalry, last summer, said about their chaplain, you have a full description of a great many of the army chaplains. If a man has influential friends to manage for him, by placing a "Rev." before his name, he can get a commission as chaplain, lives well, does nothing, draws a captains pay, & thus is simply

aiding to increase the national debt, besides giving the soldiers a wrong opinion of Christianity. I doubt that you can find a christian man, in our whole regiment. Although this does not tell well for the Reg. it is nevertheless true. We have between 300 & 400 men in our Reg. I was over yesterday to see the 3' Wis. Battery & had a pleasant time. Saw Cobal & George, and stayed & took dinner with Fay Hubbard, who sends his best respects to you. Every thing looked so pleasant at the battery that I wished over again that I was with them instead of with our precise regiment. In the afternoon I called on John Chaffee who has got back from the hospital. The 15' Mo. is encamped just across the road from us. I had quite a pleasant visit. He ~~xxxx~~ sends his respects. I got a letter 2 days ago from George Spencer of the 6th Wis. Battery, & today, one from Henry Vail. I have still got my portfolio. I am writing on it now. But I must close. Much love to all.

Your affectionate son
Amandus Silsby.

P. S. Please direct to
Amandus Silsby
Co A. 24th Reg' Wis. Vol. Inf.
1st Brigade, Sher'd'ns Div.
Murfreesboro,
Tenn.

I am still enjoying good health
A. Silsby