

San Antonio Texas April 21st 1907.

The following are copies of letters wrütten by John H. Burke to his wife M. I. Burke during his service in the Confederate Army during the years 1861, 1862, and 1863 up to the time he was captured, after which nothing more was heard from him until after the surrender when he returned home.

Camp Barton, near Pittsburg, Upshur County Texas
December 26th 1861.

In this letter he speaks of a cold that had settled on his lungs and had given him a severe cough. He said a hundred and fifty or two hundred of the boys had run away to get home for Christmas.

Was bitterly complaining about not receiving more letters from the folks.

Several cases of pneumonia in camps and two in his Company. Nearly all had bad colds.

Camp Ransom, Red River County Texas, January 6th, 1862.

This letter has no news as he had written a day or two before.

Said the Regiment was going to Clarksville the next day to meet Col. Maxeys Regiment of Infantry and supposed there would be a great military display. Says he has a slight cough but not enough to grumble about.

In Postscript says Lewis had a chill that day and that Jim was not well.

In closing he says, "Give my respects to your honored father and mother."

John H. Burk, to his only dear
Mary Isabelle.

Little Rock Ark. March 13th 1862.

Dear and affectionate Belle:-

It is with a sad heart that I seat myself this evening to try to write you a few lines to let you know how we are getting along.

I know not how to commence writing to you. My dearest Belle I am in great trouble. I cannot nor will not try to express my feelings to you. I know you will sympathise with me. My dear you will know that my troubles are about my dear brother Jim. He is not dead but there is no earthly hope for his recovery.

I heard of his severe illness the 11th of this month. Our Regiment was encamped at Jackson port on White River about 300 miles from this place, that is by water and Rail Road. I took boat the next morning the 12th and arrived here the 13th in the evening.

I found him alive and that was all. He was suffering what no one can tell. After talking with him for some time I got him aroused and he knew me, but I dont think he has been in his right mind a half minute at a time since nor for several days before. He suffers a great deal. He is blistered all over nearly. He cannot move himself in any way. His eyes are set and his feet are cold and every thing and symptom goes to prove that he will not stay with me long. Oh, may God have mercy on me and sustain me in a trial that I had hoped to escape. Oh, may He be merciful and sustain my honored parents for I know he is dear to them as well as to myself, and it seems that it will break my heart to part with him. You can imagine my feelings, I cannot tell you.

But as long as there is life there is a little hope, but hope founded on nothing is worth nothing. I will hope to the last but reason teaches me that it is not long.

Oh, my dear if you were here to sympathise with me I

could bear it better.

I will say no more about him now. I have not the time. I am nearly sick and worn out. I have set up two nights with him. In fact I have not slept since I heard of his severe sickness, and I expect to stay by his side to the last if I am able.

I left most of the boys well when I left the Regiment. Four or five of the boys in the Jacksonport Hospital. Jim Monkress and Thomas Stafford were among the sick. All of the boys belonging to our Company have gone to the Regiment except Hugh Aston, George Bradford and Jim. George is up knocking about but is not stout yet. Hugh is tolerably low but I do not think he is dangerously sick.

I have received no letter from you since the one you wrote to Clarksville and am almost dieing to hear from you and our dear child.

I am bound to close my writing. I will direct this letter to you privately and my dearest if you can help it dont let my father know about Jim.

There is bound to be a change in a few hours one way or another and though the Doctor has no hopes for a change for the better yet he says there is a possibility of it.

I will write to you soon again.

March 17th 1862.

Dear Belle:-

I will try to conclude my letter this morning. I would have finished my letter day before yesterday but I was called to the sick room and had no more opportunity of writing that day.

Yesterday I had one of the hardest chills I ever had in my life and I feel very bad today.

Though I was sick and not able I was up most of the night last night and all night the night before. I have not slept more than six hours in four nights and it dont seem that I can stand it much longer but am bound to if possible.

It takes one person all the time by Jims side and if I dont stay by his side nobody does for there are ten in the room and all very low and only three nurses, and the nurses cant attend to him and do their duty ~~xxx~~ to all the rest.

In the first of this letter I wrote that there would be a change one way or another in Jim. I cannot see any change at all. The Doctor says he thinks he is a little better but I cant see what he judges by. He breathes and that is all. He cannot eat anything only what is poured down him and his eyes are vacant and set in his head. He has been kept alive on wine for several days. Poor Jim is nearly out of this troublesome world. I have no hopes for him this side of the grave.

He can talk so that you can understand him but he knows nothing of what he talks about. Sometimes he is at our house and talks to you and me and little Stephen. Some times he talks to Polina, sometimes to Hoot and all of them. The last one he talked to was Jasper. Oh how my heart is made to weep to hear him talk to you and all the rest.

My dearest Belle I will say no more about this now.

George Bradford is down again. He was taken yesterday sometime with a puking and has high fever this morning.

I must conclude my letter to you. I feel so bad I cannot sit up and write. You need not give yourself any uneasiness about my chills. I think I will stop them right away.

I do hope that this imperfect letter may come to your hands and find you in the enjoyment of good health. Oh, how happy I would be to see your loving face now in my time of trouble. It would be sunshine to my soul.

But if I should never more see you in this troublesome world I hope to meet you where trouble never comes and pleasures never end.

Write to me often I want to hear from you very bad. Direct you letters to Jacksonport, Jackson County Ark.

So I must come to a close. Give my respects to all inquiring friends. No more at this time. Fare you well for a while.

From your sincere and affectionate husband,

John H. Burk, to his

Mary Isabelle Burk.

P. S.

Dear Belle if you can manage to keep this from my fathers folks, do so. For ~~him~~ them to ~~hear~~ from Jim in his situation would be worse than if he were dead and they ~~know it~~ knew it. So farewell.

Hospital, Little Rock Ark., March 22nd 1862.

My dear and affectionate Belle:-

It is with a sad and mournful heart that I seat myself in order to write you a few lines.

Oh, my dear Belle, I can scarcely write. My heart is overflowing with tears. My dear brother Jim is bidding this troublesome world adieu. He has been dieing an hour or more and will soon be gone. Oh, how it grieves me to part with him you can only imagine. I can tell you nothing about it.

I have been by his side ten days and watched him closely. Sometimes I would have a lingering hope and then again I would lose all hopes. So at last the die was cast. I must part with him forever in this world, but I hope I will meet him where parting will be no more.

I know his departing spirit is going to heaven. He is perfectly reconciled and though he has not been in his right mind he has prayed three times every day. He sings and prays regularly.

The last song he sung was night before last, he sung "When I can read my titles clear,
"To mansions in the skies," &c.

He sung it to the tune "Ninety Fifth."

Yesterday I wrote a letter for George to Polina. I wrote that there were hopes for Jim yet. He appeared better and looked about like he was a great deal better but alas, it was all a mistake.

March 23rd 1862.

Dear Belle:-

Jim is still in the land of the living. He revived yesterday and is a little better today but there are no hopes that are reasonable, but as long as there is life there is a little hope.

I am sick this morning myself. I had a chill yesterday morning. I never suffered more with the head ache than I did last night. I am scarcely able to stand alone this morning.

There were fifty wounded men brought here yesterday from the battle field beond the Bosque Mountains. There will be four hundred more today and tomorrow. My dear you could look at these if you were here and see some of the horrors of the battle field. To hear the screams and piteous moans is enough to make a persons blood run cold in their veins. They are from ----- Macintosh was k -----
---- about their suffering I could ----- Price whole army is backing down to Little Rock. It is said they are falling back on the account of provisions, it is said that they ~~cant get provisions up there.~~
cant get provisions up there.

But I dont believe a word of it for they could ship provisions up the Arkansas River or White and Black Rivers. I dont believe any such tales. I think the truth is they are whipped and cant stay up there any longer.

In our last fight our side did as bad fighting as the Yankees did at Oak Hill. Our side considerably outnumbered the enemy with Price on one side and McCullough on the other. They had them completely surrounded and all the advantage in the world and yet our side got whipped. That is just a going it. If they keep on the Yankees will have Little Rock before May.

Our Regiment is at Pocahontas now. They left Jacksonport the 15th. I have not heard further from them. Vandorns whole command is at Pocahontas, or what are not there are on their way there.

Sunday Evening, 23rd.

Jim is apparently sinking though there is no telling anything about him. He tries to talk every

once in a while. Some things you can understand what he says. He just now called you, he said he was going home but I dont think that he knows anything that he talks about. He said this morning that he was bound to die, he siad when he was talking to you that he was going to die, that he was bound to go. This is all I ever heard him say about dieing.

My dear the sick are dieing very fast in this Hospital. Since yesterday morning there have been seven deaths and several more that are bound to die shortly. There has not been a bad case from our Regiment that has recovered. They will mend and maybe get up a little and the next thing you know they are dead.

But that is the way the world goes, we all have to die sooner or later. The main thing is to be prepared to meet death. Oh, how careless and unthoughted we are about this great and ----- -- thing. How little while in the prime of life and blessed ----- do we consider the thing pertaining to our ----- future happiness. May God in His mercies ----- we have lived may He guide and ----- and finally save us all in heaven ----- known no more.

My dear I received your kind letter of Feb 23rd, March 3rd and 4th. yesterday morning. It gave me great satisfaction to hear from you and especially that you were well though sorry to hear that our dear child had the chills but glad to hear he was getting along well.

The pleasure it gives me to receive a letter from you is inexpressible but the distance between us forbids that I should get letters regularly.

But my dear you must write to me regular. I will get them some time or other. It is 5 oclock now, I will finish this in the morning. Jim I dont think will live to see the rising of another sun. Lord bless and have mercy on him, and may God give me strength to watch him through thas night for I feel unable of myself to watch by him.

March 24th.

Dear Belle:-

Jim is still alive though he is apparently nearly gone. I am surprised how he lingers and suffers. I think every hour will be the last. Oh, it grieves my heart to part with him but I would be proud to see him relieved from his suffering. I know he is bound to die and I have become reconciled to part with him. I think his mind is clear, more so than it has been for a long time but he cannot speak so that one can understand him. He tried to talk to me last night but I could not understand much that he said. He appeared to be happy. He was laughing all the time that he tried to talk. He said that he felt well and that Jesus was in his soul. Bless God, He is to be praised for His loving kindness.

Monday Evening March "4th.

Jim is about like he was this morning. He has not spoke but one word that I could understand and that was, "I am going home to my Father."

He tries to talk a great deal but poor fellow he cant.

I have missed my chills today and feel tolerably but I have the worst cough I ever have had. I cough all the time.

My dear you have never seen me worn out before. I am perfectly worn out and if I had to stand it much longer it would lower my head beneath the sod.

But I have stood it wonderfully well and I think that I will be able to stand it to the end. I have had to wait on him all the time. I cannot get an opportunity to leave the house.

George is up knocking around. Got the Hippo to death. My dear I will write more tomorrow as the mail dont leave till Wednesday.

Oh, is all my pleasure ended? What have I to live for? Shall I give myself up to solitude? Will my heart ever be light again? Oh, this troublesome world! Oh, I have seen more than I ever dreamed of before. I am alone with nothing before me but darkness and trouble, though I am cared for and sympathised with. I have received every mark of respect from some of the famous ladies of Little Rock, yet I am miserable. There is nothing here to heal my heart, no there is nothing this side of my dear Belle. She is the stay of my heart. Yes, Oh Yes! I have something to live for. I can see in the distance sunshins and happiness.

There is a band of music playing to the soldiers, a Regiment of them mustering fifty or a hundred yards from here. It has awakened the past and portraits to me the future. My heart is melted down. My God help me and bless us all. He is my helper. God is my stay.

My dear forgive my weakness and keep it all to yourself.
Tuesday Morning March 25th,

Dear Belle:-

I feel much better this morning. I feel better than I have since I have been here.

Jim is still living this morning but my dear he cant stand it much longer. He is perfectly at himself and appears easy. He cannot talk that one can understand. I will finish this letter this evening.

March 25th.

My dearest, my poor brother is gone. His spirit departed from his body at just half past three oclock this evening. Thank God he is out of his misery. He has left a troublesome world. He suffered a great deal. Oh, how it hurt me to part with him, though he died a happy death. He died as easy as one going to sleep. He appeared happy and laughed a great deal.

I will say no more at this time about him, only that I hope that we will all be prepared to meet him in heaven.

I will send you a lock of his hair. Keep it to his memory.

So my dear I must come to a close. I am going to the Regiment as soon as I can get off.

No more my dear for this time but I remain your affectionate husband until death,

John H. Burk to his dear
Mary Isabelle.

Camp near White River, Independence County Ark. April 7th, 1862.

Commenced letter to his father, saying he was not well and had not been since he went to Little Rock, and abruptly closes.

Then dated April 17th, ten days later, at Desark Ark. he finished the letter saying his health was not good and had not been since he went to Little Rock to wait on Jim.

In one part of the letter he says, "I came near killing myself there but am improving now and I think in a few days will be able to knock around a right smart."

His penmanship showed extreme nervousness and he was evidently quite weak and had doubtless been dangerously sick. Then he went on to speak of Jims burying expenses which was (\$31.~~50~~) Thirty One Dollars and fifty cents, and his obligations to George and James Lloyd, and about three dollars that Jim owed to Harve Stafford.

He was sending Jims horse saddle and clothes home by George. He kept Jims blanket himself.

At the end of the letter in brackets he says, "I was not able to finish this letter when I started it."

Camp Priceville, near Tupelo Miss. June 28th 1862.

He acknowledges letter of June 4th, and after speaking of other letters that had passed between them and of some that had gone astray, he continued, "The pleasure it affords me to receive a letter from you is beyond expression.

When I read your highly esteemed letter (the last) I could hardly help acting the child and shedding tears. But my dear Belle I hope things will not be this way always. If it was to last long and go on at the present rate there would not be men enough left to protect the women. Besides there would be even if the war was to close now thousands that would not be fit for anything during life.

There are more broken constitutions and men that never will be any more account than I ever dreamed of.

My dear Belle I can but highly approve the wise disposition you made of the \$30.00 I sent you. I do not want you to misput yourself in any way but keep money enough to do you.

I sent you \$80.00 by John Wiggins. I started to write you to have all paid out on our debts but an idea occurred to me that corn crops might be cut off or some misfortune happen that would make it essentially necessary for us or you to have money, consequently I rubbed out and told you to keep the money.

But I will say to you if the crops are good and you think you can get along without the money you can have our debts paid with it. I will leave that to your judgment which I know will be right.

I can say to you that this leaves me tolerably well which makes me feel thankful to God for His mercies towards unworthy me, and pray an ever merciful maker that when this comes to your hand that you may be in the enjoyment of good health, ablessing we ought to be very thankful to enjoy.

My dear I do not know what I would give to see you and our dear Stephen. It makes me heart sick to think about staying away from all that is dear to me. But it cannot be helped, it is just that way. I suppose that you are aware that the Conscript law keeps me two years longer in the service. My dear it is hard for you and for me but we must bear it with the best fortitude we can and look to our ever merciful God for protection. If it is his will I will return to a loving and thrice worthy companion. If not, we will have to submit to our lot let it be prosperity or adversity. But lets live in hopes if we die in despair."

Then he said they were preparing to leave this encampment but did not think that any one under Brigadier General knew where they were going. They had been busy that day preparing four days rations.

Then he went on to say, "There has been some rumor circulated through the camps about peace being made but I have never believed it. In fact I know there is no prospects of peace without it is through the interference of England and France which a great many contend will be the case. Would to God it was so for humanities sake but I awfully fear it will be a long time before peace is made.

There is a great deal of talk about a great and glorious victory in Virginia gained by the Southerners, but I have got so that I never want to hear about a Southern victory. It is of late generally achieved by a retreat conducted with so much skill that the Yankees do not know about it till the Rebels are entirely out of reach.

The first that put me out with Southern lieing was at the battle of Shiloh near Corinth which was reported and is believed today by most of the country people to have been one of the greatest victories ever won by the Confederate Army, when in fact there was nothing gained."

Then he speaks of Lewis, and says there were 34 of the Company in camps. He thought there were more till a day or two before and had written that there were 40 but was mistaken.

In a postscript says direct letters to Tupelo Miss.
Locks Regiment care Captain Murray, 1st Brig. 2nd Div. West.

My dear kiss our lovely Stephen for me and write to me if
if he improves in talking and if he ever says anything
about me, if you think he has forgotten me and how much he
weighs. Also what you weigh. Do write immediately. My
weight at this time is 149 pounds. I have been down as
low as 145 and perhaps lower.

My dear I must bid you farewell for a while. Excuse
my badly written and composed letter. I have to write on my
knees and there is such an uproar I can scarcely think what
I am writing.

Your affectionate husband until death,

John H. Burk to his
dear Mary Isabelle Burk.

Tunnell Hill, Catbora County Georgia, July 6th 1862.

Dear Belle:-

It is with the greatest pleasure of my life that I embrace the present opportunity of writing you a few lines to let you know where I am and what I am doing.

This leaves me in tolerably good health. I think that I am in better health than I have been in before in a long time, but I am very poor and yellow yet and also weak and fit for nothing, perfectly lifeless and no account.

I am not what you used to know me to be. But I have improved in spirits some since I got to my good uncles. I have felt like I was at home. I have every attention that could be offered to cheer my worn out physical frame which had ebbed out down to carelessness and indifference to myself and every body else.

But I think and hope to be restored to civilization once more. I did not know how far gone I was till I came here. When I come to look at myself I was ashamed.

I reckon I was the dirtiest and the worst looking case that ever ventured to visit connections. I thought, (if I thought at all), that I was all right, that I was in good condition and nice enough to go to the Governors house. But after I had come in the presence of decent ~~people~~ and respectable people I began to see myself.

I made out to get the dirt off of me by the help of one of the best cousins in the world. She scrubbed me with her own hands and after a very serious operation I was pronounced clean and allowed to pass.

But when I come to look into my wardrobe for clean clothes I was again disappointed. I had not taken with me any clothes except one shirt and an old pair of copperas breeches which I had kept out. I had not a sock, drawers, coat or anything else except my copperas breeches and blue shirt, an old pair of shoes without socks and an old wool hat and it flopped down all around completed my costume.

I have almost wished that I had never stopped. But I am to be excused. When I left Corinth or Tupelo I had no idea of being where I am now and consequently sent my best clothes with the baggage which has caused all my awkwardness.

But let me look as I may I was received with tears of gratitude. Never could father or mother, (let their affections be as tender as they may), have received a son with more affection than my dear uncle and aunt ----- when they found I was their unworthy nephew. I always was aunts favorite and she was mine. I can almost look upon her as my mother and my affection for her is the same. Her children seem to me like brothers and sisters instead of cousins.

My dear I can say that I feel like I am at home and am loath to leave here, as much so as I would to leave my own fathers. But I have to depart from here on the first train tomorrow after a short but happy stay of four days.

If I ever get sick or wounded while in reach of Tunnell Hill you need not fear but what I will do well for the old serpent could not keep me from making my way back here without he was to use a right smart force and then he would have to do some right responsible looking out about me or I would be gone.

Well I can tell you that I have seen most of my connection in this country and have not found any of them that I would ever have known if I had met them and they are all by me like I am by them, they do not know me.

I do not blame them for even my old neighbor boys in Tex. dont hardly know me, and I expect you wont know me nor acknowledge me either when I get there if I ever do. I will be so old and ugly in the course of two years that I will be thrown away as fit for nothing.

But lets see what they will think when I get well again and get these old wrinkles stretched out of my face and get fat again.

But laying all jokes aside and coming to the truth, I think there is a terribly hard row before me yet but I think I will be able to hoe it.

I expect I will almost have spasms before I hear from you again. I dread the suspense.

I wrote to father yesterday. I would have not written to you so soon but it is uncertain whether any of the letters I write you ever get there or not so I will write often and you will hear from me once in a while. And to hear from me is all the satisfaction any of you can get. We will have to submit ourselves to disappointment about getting letters for I know they are going to become scattering and far between.

So my dear wife I must come to a close. It is my sincere prayer that this may come to your hand and find you and our dear Stephen in the enjoyment of good health. So no more.

I am your sincere and affectionate husband until death,
John H. Burk, to his Mary
Isabelle.

P. S.

I wish you could see my kinfolks here. I know you would like them.

Camp near Chatanooga Tennessee, July 18th 1862.

My dear and affectionate Belle:-

It is with much pleasure I again seat myself this morning to write you a few lines to let you know that I am well, with the exception of the Mumps which I have had for several days and they are better.

I earnestly hope these few lines may come to your hand and find you and our dear Stephen and all the connection in the enjoyment of good health.

I wrote to you on the 14th and mailed the letter and I had the opportunity of sending this to Texas by hand, besides out of many letters maybe you will get a few, and I know it is a great satisfaction to you to get a letter from me once in a while.

I have nothing of much interest to write to you. We are encamped about three miles from Chatanooga and have a beautiful and healthy location and encampment and have as good water as ever run out of the earth.

We get tolerably plenty to eat by buying a good many little extras which we have to pay high prices for, but a great deal cheaper than we got them in Mississippi.

Chickens, full grown hens, 50 to 75c apiece. Turkeys, largest size, \$3.00 apiece. Geese, One Dollar &c. Apples, Onions, Irish Potatoes, vary from Two to Four Dollars a bushel. Butter 50c per pound, milk 10 to 25c per quart &c.

We draw a half pound of bacon per day and draw some little beef, we are allowed one pound of beef per day.

We live fat to what we did in Mississippi. We have some of the finest apple pies you ever saw, and chicken and dumpling, goose and dumpling &c till you cant rest.

Oh, if you were only here!

There are no Yankees in less than twenty or twenty five miles from here. I dont think there will be any fighting * at this place in a good while to come, though I dont know.

Crops are sorry in this country owing to backward spring and drouth. Wheat and Oats were cut off by rust. There will be no surplus breadstuff made in this country nor in

fact so far as I have seen there will not be more than bread made for the people at home let alone those that are out in the camps. I am looking forward to hard times coming if we only succeed in holding our position and dont get further up into a better grain country.

The health of the boys is tolerably good. Simpson Logan is in bad health and has been for several weeks past, I do not know what is the matter with him. Bill Glover is in very bad health and has not been able for duty since we crossed the Mississippi River. He will have to be discharged and I expect Simpson will have to be discharged also. All the remainder of the neighbor boys that are in camps are well.

I think I will get to be in good health once more if we stay in this part awhile. My cough is better than it has been since last March and I was gaining flesh fast till I took the Mumps which gave me a little backset, but if nothing happens in a few days I will be all right.

* Lewis is in very good health and gets along fine. Jim Lloyd is in fine health and is fleshier than I ever saw him, he is getting right pursley ~~gubbed~~ bellied.

Frank Faulkner is about as usual, he dont like the camp life and takes a great deal of pleasure in danging the officer that dont please him.

Judge Ball is in very good health, he is a great deal fleshier than I ever saw him before though he is like myself, he is homesick. Thom Demon is about as usual though he is not a little mad about not getting off home the 16th of this month, as you recollect the non-conscripts were to be discharged on the 16th.

Well dear Belle we are kept busy here. We have to drill 6 hours each day which consumes all the cool of the day and the balance of the day is so warm we cant rest much.

If you get the letters I wrote to you this makes the fourth one since I left Tupelo.

You will find that all our connections in Georgia are well, also you will find that I visited them. I stayed with them five days and I must tell you that I run a narrow risk of being Court Martialed in so doing for I did not have any permission to stay and if I had been reported they would have played the deuce with me. The consequences would have been only tolerable on my side. In all probability I would have had to wear ball and chain on my leg or had my head shaved and drummed through the camps or had to work or something else pretty bad. But I was favored by my Company.

Besides the car did not stop at Tunnell Hill and I jumped off and cought one of the beautifulest falls that ever any body got and knocked a piece of skin off of both of my knees about the size of a dollar.

You would have laughed to have seen me crawling up and looking around.

I wrote a letter to you and sent it by the hand of Sam Monkress, discharged. I hope you will get it. **XX** I stated in it to you about the \$80.00 I sent by Tom Wiggins. I told you to use your own discretion about the use of it. If there is prospects of plenty in that country pay our debts with it if you see proper. What I send you use as you think proper, it will be all right.

I must come to a close. Chatanooga is my posst office. Write.

I am yours affectionately,

John H. Burk, to his dear

Belle.

In part of a letter the beginning and the ending of which is evidently lost or misplaced he speaks of a battle which was doubtless that of Murfreesboro.

"----- As I said to you in my last I had my hat shot off of my head with a piece of bomb which tore my hat to pieces but did not hurt me. Otherwise I cannot see why we were not all killed. It was a higher power that brought us out than that of man. But I can assure you that our loss was very great in killed and wounded ---- very few prisoners.

But I can say with confidence that the enemys loss was a great deal heavier than ours, that is so far as I saw. Besides we drove them from most of the field and held ~~XXXX~~ it until the night of the 3rd when our forces fell back from Murfreesboro. I suppose our forces fell back some ~~XXXXXX~~ forty or fifty miles.

If our troops had been as successful in the centre and right as they were on the left we would have ruined the whole army but it was not so. The centre of our army was repulsed in every charge until we had whipped them on the left and was moved to the centre. We made one desperate charge on one of their strong positions and were repulsed but with very light loss considering the disadvantage we fought under.

But I have already said more about the fight than I expected to when I sat down knowing that I cannot afford you much satisfaction, as my chances of knowing the particulars are very limited and I have no doubt you already know through other sources more than I could write in a whole day.

As to the losses on both sides there are various rumors about that. The last I heard was that the Yankees acknowledged a loss of Twenty Five Thousand, while I understand it is our official report that we lost Nine Thousand. I think that either calculation is low enough.

George Bradford was not in the fight -----"

In this letter the beginning of which is destroyed he is evidently writing of some strenuous times and a retreat from Kentucky.

"----- us, he would not have felt like pressing our rear like he did.

But as I said we are out and I am satisfied never to put my foot on the soil of Old Kentucky any more during life, though Kentucky is the best country I ever saw, that is, the most of it.

Well my dear I will write you in a few days again. There are several of the boys that will leave here in a few days for Cherokee, all that are over forty and under eighteen will be discharged.

We are going to draw money in the course of a day or two and I want to send some home --- enough to pay what I owe back there. I do not know how much we will draw but we ought to draw Two Hundred Dollars or more.

I would like to come with the money but I dont suppose that I can get off yet a while. As soon as I can I will come.

It is certain that we will not stay here but a short time but I cannot say where we will go to. None of us know. However it is thought we will go to Chatanooga or down in that section of country.

I can inform you that our connection in Georgia are well. I can also inform you that John Hollingsworth was in the service in Virginia and was discharged on account of his health. He is now at home. His brother Joshua has been under old E. Kirby Smith in the service in Old Kentucky but I have never seen him yet.

All the boys are well. Lewis, Jim Monkr ess, Frank Faulkner and all the rest of the neighbor boys are well and in good spirits.

I cannot tell where I will be by the time you receive this but I hope I will be on my way home. Direct your letters to Loudon Tenn. My dear you have my prayers always.

Bridgeport, Jackson County Alabama, Nov 25th 1862.

Dear and affectionate Belle:-

It is with great pleasure and a thankful heart that I am permitted to drop you a few lines in answer to your welcome letter of date Nov 9th.

It gave me great satisfaction to hear from you and our dear little Stephen and especially to hear that you were in good health though I was sorry to hear of Pas great affliction with the Rheumatism. I hope this may find him in better health than he has been.

The pleasure it afforded me to get a letter from you of so late a date you can imagine better than I can tell.

This leaves me in good health with the exception of a cold which has settled on my lungs and troubles me considerably, but I am some better than I was a week ago. I earnestly hope this may come to your hand and find you and dear Stephen in continued good health.

I can inform you that we left Loudon day before yesterday and came down to Chatanooga. We changed cars at Chatanooga yesterday morning and came down to this place and crossed the Tennessee River on a boat, the bridge having been burned last spring. We are now laying waiting for the cars or for our turn on the cars as they are transporting thousands of troops and there are a great many before us. X It is likely we will stay here a day or two before we get off.

We are going to Murfreesboro or in the neighborhood thereof.

It is pretty certain we will have hot times up in that part of the country as old Buell is knocking around up there and there is generally hot times where old Buell is.

I hope we will have better success than we did in Old Kentuck for I do not wantt to get into another such scrape as that was. I had as soon be killed fighting as to kill myself running.

There is no war news nor not much of anything of interest to write. The boys in our Company are all in fine

health and all full of life and spirits, moreso than I have ever seen them since we left Texas. There are only two sick, Clay Odom and Wiley Thompson and nothin much the matter with them. George Bradford, Hugh L. Aston, Lewis Jones, Frank Faulkner, Jim Monk ess, Joel Reynolds, Judge Ball and Neal and Arch Odom are all in better health than I ever saw them before.

I think that the Kentucky campaign was decidedly advantageous to our health but not much advantage any other way.

George and Hugh are about as bad or worse homesick than any of the rest of us and George thinks he has seen harder times than any body. He tinks that going home with the horses through the mud was the deuce but he dont know much. I think it will not be long before he will take his first lesson if nothing happens.

My dear I want to see you and our sweet Stephan worse than I ever have in life before. It looks hard to be kept from you but I will live in hopes if I die in despair. I dont think times will always be as they are now.

No more. I will write soon again.

I am your affectionate husband &c.

John H. Burk to his dear))))

Direct your letters to Murfreesboro Tenn. 10th Texas Cavalry, care Captain John Hall, Army of E. Tenn.

Tullahoma Tenn. Dec. 2nd 1862.

Dear Belle:-

Having nothing in particular to do I will give you a list of our marches &c while in the State Of Kentucky as I noted them down in my day book.

I dont expect that such a long list of nearly nothing will be of much interest to you but if you cannot afford to read it all at once you can lay it to one side for a rainy day os Sunday when you probably will have leasure time to spare.

There are a great deal of the notes that I have taken that you nor anybody else can understand without someone that knew about the incidents could be there to explain, consequently I will omit a great deal that I have noted down.

(In a maginal note on the next page he says, "Dear Belle when I commenced this I did not think that it would take the room and the paper it has, consequently I cannot say as much about things as I would like. But I willsay that the boys the last I saw of them were all well. It has been five or six days since I saw them. I was sent with the baggage, and the command on foot started to this place but the order was countermanded and they were sent to Manchester 12 miles distant from this place. It is thought we will have hot times down here, they are fighting every day down at Murfreesboro which is thirty miles from this place. The boys see pretty tight times now. It is cold rainy weather a and they have no tents. I reckon the baggage will start to them today. Farewell for this time.)

(In a marginal note on the next page he says, "Dear Belle I wish you would take care of this for if I ever come home it may be that I will like to see it myself as my old day book is worn out and I am certain never to copy it again. When you write direct your letter to Manchester Tenn. I never hardly know where to say to direct letters as we are always moving.")

I found a keg of brady which I got into pretty deep. It made me walk as well as if my feet had all the skin on them. I got pretty funny.

August 20th.

On Cumberland River seven miles from Barbersville. Live on green corn and beef. Hard times and in an enemys country. All the inhabitants are Unionist.

August 21st.

We see a great deal of fun splunging the river.

August 22nd.

We moved up to the Cumberland ford today which is at the mout of the Gap. I think that old Kirby is a little juberous about going further for fear of getting into a U. S. yellow jackets nest.

August 23rd.

At Cumberland foard yet. Nothing to eat but beef. I call that pretty tight living. It rained last night very hard. We all got wet. No tents.

August 24th.

Sunday, a dreary day it is. My thoughts are turned towards days that are past and forever gone. This day was four years ago, what then transpired memory will never fail to recollect as long as warm blood courses through my veins. Oh, when I think of those happy, happy hours that have past and then look around me and see myself and others in the same doleful condition it makes my heart sad.

August 25th.

At Cumberland foard. Beautiful morning. Passed a very unpleasant night last night owing to rain yesterday which wet our blankets &c, and it being unpleasantly cool we did not sleep much. We left the ford this

evening and marched back towards Barberville. Encamped six miles from Barberville. Nothing to eat yet but Roasting ears and only two per day at that.

August 26th.

We were joined by several of the boys from Loudon. Marched about 18 miles today. Have to cook two days rations or half rations tonight on the Lexington road. Have hard marching and probably hard fighting ahead.

August 27th.

Nothing strange but a little tired. My feet worn out. Marched 19 miles today and stopped for the night, or part of it as the case may be.

August 28th.

We left camp at two o'clock this morning. Have marched 23 miles. Very tired and hungry. Nothing to eat. We are encamped on Rock Castle River Ky. I started a letter home this evening. We drew one pound of flour for tomorrow and next day. Heavy Cavalry skirmishing ahead.

August 29th.

We have stopped to rest at Big Hill. Have marched 18 miles over a very rough and hilly road. The whole country seems to be covered with dead horses killed in the skirmishes. The whole country stinks. A heavy skirmish up towards Richmond this evening. We lost a piece of artillery.

August 30th.

(The following I wrote just before we went into the second engagement.) Pop! Pop! Pop!, Boom! Boom! Boom! goes the canon! We have been in one action and are laying in a ditch and the Yankees are firing on us like thunder with artillery and small arms. Be in another fight in a short time.

and killed several. We pursued them to within 8 miles of Lexington and took up for the day. Our Cavalry went into the city of Lexington this evening with very little opposition.

Sept 2nd.

We rested all day which was very desirable. We drew some Yankee blankets that we took yesterday.

Sept 3rd.

We left our resting place early this morning We marched into the city. We were received with marks of great gratitude by most of the inhabitants. A great many volunteered in the service of the C. S. The City of Lexington is a beautiful place and surrounded by the best country I ever saw in my life. I took a walk over the City Cemetery which excels any thing of the kind I have ever beheld. It is arranged with the nicest gravel walks and the finest shrubbery the world ever saw, and as fine monuments as there are in America. Among the finest of these is the monument of Henry Clay which is about a hundred feet high with his statue on top facing the city and in the attitude of a man speaking. The City of the Dead is truly a beautiful and solemn place. We are encamped in about one mile of the city.

Sept 4th.

We marched back to the city this morning. We left the city at 8 o'clock amidst the waving of Confederate flags, white handkerchiefs and bursts of music and cheering. All confusion and excitement. We took the Covington road. Covington is about 95 miles from Lexington. We arrived at Georgetown which is 12 miles from Lexington at three o'clock. Georgetown is a beautiful town.

Sept 5th.

We left Georgetown early this morning. Took the Cynthana road . Marched 18 miles. Encamped in four miles of Cynthana. The Feds evacuated their works at this place today. Gone to Covington. Today is my birth day, I am 26 years old. My God, time passes away let us be in prosperity ~~on~~adversity.

Sept 6th.

Marched through Cynthana this morning. Marched only six miles today. Encamped at Milford Mills on Licking River. I am sick today. If they had marched further I would have been missing tonight.

Sept 7th.

Marched 18 miles today. Very rough roads. Passed through Colemanville which is a perfect Lincoln hole. Get tolerably plenty to eat.

Sept 8th.

Marched 17 miles today. Went through Williamstown. We encamped 33 miles from Covington. Corn crops only tolerably good in this part of the country. No rain here since June. We all suffer a great deal for water.

Sept 9th.

We marched 15 miles today. Cooking up rations this evening, expecting a fight before we get to the City.

Sept 10th.

We marched to our present position today which is ~~five~~ **five** miles from Covington and two miles from the enemys entrenchments. Had ~~some~~ sharp skirmishing today. The pickets are fighting ~~now~~. We will probably remain where we are in line of battle tonight. Expect to fight tomorrow. The people generally appear to be Sesesh in this part. We passed through Florence today which is a beautiful town filled with Southern Rights people. Kentucky a beautiful country generally.

Sept 11th.

Our Brigade is on picket today. We are in a half mile of the enemys advance pickets. Our advanced are now fighting. Very little harm doing on either side. Looking for thunder every minute. A very unpleasant day. Raining and unpleasantly cool. Have to lay on wet blankets if we lay at all. There will not be much sleeping done.

Sept 12th.

We commenced falling back last night about 11 oclock. A retreat without a fight takes us all on surprise. Dont know the meani ng of our retreat. It is said the Feds are marching a large force belowus in order to cut us off . This probably accounts for our falling back. We are now 12 miles from our position last night. I suppose we will rest atthis place today. Everything is képt in readiness to march. The teams are kept harnessed, everything ready.

Cannot tell where we are going nor anything about it.

Sept 13th.

We are at our camps of yesterday 12 miles from the enemies entrenchment. We are kept in readiness for anything. We are encamped in an open field, no shades nor tents. It is very cool at night and warm at midday. Only one blanket apiece. It is said the Feds are advancing on us. I f they do we will give them the best we have got, and I think that will be a good whipping. The boys are all lively and in good spirits. We all talk about going home when our time is out. Some swear they will go home or have their horses. Some despond. I think that we will not go though there is none that it would please better than myself. (I guessed it.)

Sept 14th.

Still at our camps near Florence, Boone County Ky. Started two letters home today, one to my father and one to my wife.

Sept 15th.

Our Company was sent out on picket today. They

stood on the Pike Road near the village Walton which is about one mile from camps.

Sept 16th.

We all started South this morning about 2 oclock taking the back track. We were marched very fast today. A great many fell out of ranks from fatigue. We have stopped where water is very scarce. We are 34 miles from Covington. Today our first term of service is out.

Sept 17th.

We marched 25 miles today over a very dry road. All suffered severely for water. Besides we have had nothing to eat with the exception of two crackers per day since we left Covington. It is now getting dark and have had nothing to eat today. Pretty tight times. It is raining like the deuce. I wonder if we wont freeze or starve or something else.

Sept 18th.

We rested today all day. We drew some corn meal for the first we have drawn in a long time before. It was only tolerably good as we had no sifter and the bran scratched our throats. We are in a very unpleasant place, no wood nor water fit for use. Very cool at nights and warm at midday. All in fine health and spirits, better than we have been since we left Texas.

Sept 19th.

Still at our resting place. Drew some ground wheat without bolting or sifting. It is better than nothing and not good at that. There were a good many drunk men in camps today and some fighting. Whiskey plenty but very little comes to my share. I cannot put myself to the trouble of getting it like some can. No more today.

Sept 20th.

Still at camps on Eagle Creek 15 miles from Georgetown. Today is a proud day to me, Why should it not be? (I will omit a great deal that I wrote today.) You know why today is sacred to me moreso than my own troublesome birthday.

Sept 21st.

We left Eagle Creek this morning for Georgetown. There is some talk of our being transferred to Vandorn's command and Breckenridge taking our place. I hope it may be the case for I am tired of old Kentucky though it is a splendid country and we are encamped in a half mile of Georgetown. Georgetown is twelve miles from Lexington and eighteen miles from Frankfort.

Sept 22nd.

Camps at Georgetown. It is likely we will remain here for some time. A rumor came in camp today to the effect that our army had whipped the Feds in Maryland. Everything still so far as we know in this State.

Sept 23rd.

Still at Georgetown. We drilled today and eat grated bread. Had to smuggle the corn through the guard though as they have orders to let nothing of the kind pass through. If it was not for the pumpkins and one thing and another that we steal we would nearly starve for we eat our rations in half time. We do not get more than one whole ration but we play it very fine.

Sept 24th.

We caught the deuce today. Were ordered to Frankfort and marched 9 miles in that direction and the order was countermanded and we marched back to Georgetown making 18 miles and from Georgetown to Paris 17 miles further making 35 miles. A great many fell out from fatigue. It is said we were sent up here to cut off Morgan at the Gap.

Sept 25th.

We marched only about 8 miles owing to having to cook rations and waiting for those that had fallen out to overtake the command.

Sept 26th.

We marched about 16 miles today. Are near Mount Sterling. Gen. Humphrey Marshall's troops are at Mount Sterling. Old Morgan made his escape. A great many blame

Marshall for it, think he is a traitor. We passed through North Middleton today which is a beautiful town.

Sept 27th.

We rested at Mount Sterling today.

Sept 28th.

Still at Mount Sterling. Today is Sunday, we had preaching today. A great deal of talk about being mounted again.

Sept 29th.

We left camp Mount Sterling this morning back for Georgetown. Considerable excitement among the boys about going home and being mounted and recruited &c. About 30 or 40 of ~~the~~ boys of our Regiment threw down their arms and swore they would never take them up again until they got assurance of being mounted. That they had served as Infantry as long as they were going to. But they could not carry out their plans successfully and took up their guns again. We encamped near Paris tonight.

Sept 30th.

We left camps very early this morning. Passed through Paris and encamped at Newtown which is four miles from Georgetown. A good deal of Dexter in camps. Some fighting in camps.

Oct. 1st.

We marched to Georgetown and encamped at our old campground. A great many drunk men in camps. Several fisticuff fights.

Oct 2nd.

We left Georgetown ~~for~~ at two oclock this morning for some part unknown. We took the Frankfort road. We are stopped two mile from Frankfort. It rained this morning giving us a good soaking. Very disagreeable weather. It looks like winter is coming fast. The leaves are falling. Have had several killing frosts.

Oct 3rd.

We lay over at camps two miles from Frankfort.

Nothing strange has happened today. All night

Oct 4th.

We were in camps all day until about night when old Bragg sent orders for us to fall back to Versailles. We left camps about dark. Were marched very fast. Passed through Versailles about ten or eleven oclock. Stopped for the remainder of the night in one mile of Versailles. Marched about 14 miles.

Oct 5th.

We left our resting place at daylight this morning and marched to the Kentucky River which was about ten miles. We got to the river about 12 oclock and laid over there till about an hour in the night when we took up line of march for Salvisa which is on the Louisville and Harrodsburg road and five or six miles distant from the river. We stopped at Salvisa for the night. Do not know whether we are retreating. Various opinions about it.

Oct 6th.

We laid over today at Salvisa. We are kept in readiness to march at a moments warning.

Oct 7th.

We received marching orders this morning. We left camp about half an hour by sun and took the road towards Louisville. We took the Versailles road and come to the river and encamped for the rest of the night. It is thought we are going back to Frankfort. If we do we are certain to fight for the Feds are this side of Frankfort.

Oct 8th.

We left our camps on the Kentucky River this morning very early and marched to near Versailles and stopped until evening late. We were then marched back towards the river five or six miles where we took a right by-way in the direction of Lawrenceburg at which place they had a considerable fight today. We were marched to within three or four miles of Lawrenceburg and halted. We were halted about 11 oclock at night with orders to be ready to march at one oclock in the morning. Only two hours rest and nothing to eat. We

are on the Pike road leading from Harrodsburg to Louisville. The fight was between Gen Stephensons troops and part of Buells forces.

Oct 9th.

Up at one oclock and on the march. All sure of a fight. We were marched five or six miles very slow and cautiously when shortly after day light the canons turned loose on both sides making the earth tremble and filling the air with screaming shot and shell. A slight engagement took place between Stephenson and the Feds in which Stephenson took four or five hundred prisoners and killed several and lost a few. The Feds then took to their heels and fired on us with their batteries from every hill. We were kept in pursuit until late in the evening when all at once we were stopped and turned back towards Salvisa. We we re marched in that direction until about ten oclock at night when we stopped on Salt River with nothing to eat. Besides we had been kept on our feet 21 hours without any rest. Very tired and nearly starved to death. (I did not much like all this but I could not well help myself.)

Oct 10th.

We were aroused again at one oclock this morning and intersected the Harrodsburg road at Salvisa and went like old nick was after us in that direction. We got to Harrodsburg about two oclock in the evening. We drew and cooked rations enough to satisfy our present wants which was considerable quantity. We were then harched out in the directi-
tion of Perryville some three miles from Harrodsburg and formed a line of battle before the Yanks. It is raining and we are all worn out. See very hard times in the way of hard marching and starving. We do not get time to sleep. Are ~~in~~ in a perfect nest of Yanks. Think that nothing but a fight will do tomorrow.

OCT 11TH.

We left our line of battle very early this morning and fell back through Harrodsburg and took the Richmond Pike. A great deal of conjecture about our move. Some think we are retreating, others think different. I think different. I think we are making some advantageous move that will be revealed shortly. I know we have too many men to fall back without first fighting a little. We continued falling back until we crossed Dix River a distance of twenty miles or more from Harrodsburg. We have had nothing to eat at all today. Very cold. Rained all night last night. We all like to have frozen. I never knew what a man could stand before.

Oct 12th.

We remained in camps near Dix River all day today and cooked three days rations preparatory to a good retreat or fight or something of the kind. The Feds pursued us to the river yesterday. They are booming away on us today but doing no harm. Buell is hard after us.

Oct 13th.

We left our camps before day this morning. We marched about a mile and were halted for trains and troops to pass us. We remained by the roadside all day until dark when we took up our line of march about dark and marched all night. We passed through camp Dick Robinson and Lancaster during the night. We are on the Richmond Pike road.

Oct 14th.

We continued our march towards Richmond today until about 12 o'clock when we took a rough right hand leading through a new way to Big Hill where it is said we will make a stand. We stopped about two o'clock for the day 12 miles from Richmond. All very tired.

Oct 15th. We left camps at two o'clock this morning.

Marched to Big Hill and took up for the night. At our old camps before the battle of Richmond. All or most of our baggage was thrown out of the wagons and all that was any account was taken by the Cavalry. I lost my clothes.

Oct 16th.

We continued falling back today. We fell back to Rock Castle River about twenty miles. The Yanks are giving our rear the deuce. We are out of anything to eat and have been for a day or two with the exception of parched corn. We cant get that now. The army before us has taken every thing that would do to eat that was near the road.

Oct 17th.

We found a beef this morning and killed it and eat it in a manner raw having no time to broil it. We have no salt. It looks strange to see men what they will come to to eat beef before the animal heat had left it, raw. No bread nor salt. We stopped near Louden for the night. Killed another beef. We have plenty of beef today. Think we will make good ournescape out of old Kentucky though we are miserably pressed by old Buell.

Oct 18th.

We remained in camps near Louden all day today. Beef is the toast, no bread no salt nor nothing to cook in. Sharp skirmishing in our rear.

Oct 19th.

We left camp at midnight last night. Marched 15 miles and halted for the day. We started again about dark marched ten miles and halted for the remainder of the night. The Yanks are pressing our rear. Beef! Beef! Beef! Hard times you may depend.

Oct 20th.

We marched about 20 miles today over very rough roads. All very tired and hungry. Encamped on Stinking Creek.

Oct 21st.

Marched about 12 miles today. Encamped on the Cumberland River at Cumberland foard. I am quite sick today.

Oct 22nd.

We marched through Cumberland Gap today which is one of the strongest fortifications in the world. Encamped one mile below the Gap in a beautiful grove. Got some flour this evening. Cook it on our gun sticks.

Oct 23rd, 24th, & 25th.

On detail after corn up in Virginia about thirty miles from camps.

Oct 26th.

Back to camps today. Snowed about fifteen inches deep today. No tents, no axes to cut wood, and only one blanket. Freezation!

I will have to stop. I have written today until I am tired. I believe I have given you a little of every days travel while in Kentucky but have not given them as full as I noted them down. I am here with the baggage and the Company is at Manchester about twelve miles distant from this place. I came through on the cars and the command come on foot. This place is 60 miles from Bridgeport and the same distance from Nashville.

Your affectionate husband &c.

John H. Burk.

To his dear.

Camp near Shelbyville Tenn, January 30th 1863.

This letter was written on "Yankee paper" as he expressed at the top. The top fourth of the first page which was note size folded on the side, has an elaborate picture of camps and U. S. flag floating above one of the tents. A snetry is marching in front of the tents. In the foreground is a soldier in full uniform and at the right is the seal of the State of Illinois.

There was nothing of particular interest in the letter. He speaks especially of Capt Halls return when he hopes to get some letters. Says some of the boys have diarrhoea from eating fresh meat without any salt as that article was scarce.

Mentions Lewis, Frank Falkner and George Brad as being well and that they had heard nothing from James Monkress and John Goodson and thought likely they were killed but hopes they were not. Weather furiously cold and wood scarce. "We are not looking for any fighting to be done here soon. I dont think that old Rosecranz will try us on again soon again. And if he does advance on us I think our army will fall back to Bridgeport which is 75 miles from this place and 28 miles from Chatanooga. This is my opinion though most all believe we will fight them here if they come on us. But I dont believe old Bragg will ever risk a battle this side of Bridgeport without reinforcements. There is some talk of our being transfered across the Mississippi River into Arkansas but I doubt that rumor. I know I would be that much nearer home and perhaps there might be a chance for me to gat to go home once in a while if I was in Ark. but for all that I would prefer staying on this side and having my health to going to that sickly Ark. and risk the chances of dieing. And I had as soon cross over as to go to Mississippi for odds is the difference between Mississippi and Arkansas."

Then he speaks of receiving a letter from Uncle Joshua Jones that morning and that they were all well. The balance of the letter lost or destroyed.

Camps near Shelbyville Tenn February 20th 1863.

Dear and affectionate Belle:-

It is with pleasure I seat myself to drop you a few lines to let you know how I am getting along.

This leaves me in fine health for which I am truly thankful to God for His goodness towards me and sincerely hope and trust this may come safe to hand and find you and our dear Stephen and all connections enjoying the same good blessing.

I started a letter dated I believe on the 13th inst in answer to yours of Dec 28th and 29th., by Capt Hall. I think it very uncertain about letters crossing the Mississippi River now. I know I ought to have had letters of later date than the one by Capt Hall. I fear I will not get letters regularly any more until the question is settled at Vicksburg, and then if the Feds should get Vicksburg and full possession of the river we will hear from each other no more without an accident until the war ends. That will be bad. I fear I will not rest well if things get so I cannot hear from you and I know if the Yankees get in Texas I shall be wretched. But I hope for better things.

I hope and believe this war is drawing to a close. If we can successfully resist them this spring I believe peace will smile on our wretched country.

But we have some hard fighting before us or at least I think so. I believe the wisest men here think that peace is rapidly drawing near and that there will be but very little more fighting done.

They predecate their hopes upon the fact that there is already a division in Northern sentiment between the Democrats and Abolitionists. It is said that the States of Indiana, Illinois, Missouri and Kentucky are all going to draw out from the Union. That the Legislatures of these States have already passed ordinances of secession and that the people will ratify it without a doubt.

But I do not know these things to be true. I hope it may be so but I cannot believe every thing I hear like some do. Some fools believe everything they hear and more too. Just let them see anything in a news paper it does not matter how unreasonable it is and they will believe it.

I reckon the papers tell some facts but they are generally few and far between and when they do hit upon the truth it is exaggerated out of all shape.

But there is one thing certain, things cannot last as they are long. Peace will come in some shape before the war continues much longer. God send it soon for if the war continues much longer I cannot see what will become of the country.

But no more about peace now. No one knows when that happy day will dawn on our distracted country. Let us look forward to better days and live in hopes if we die in despair.

My dear Belle you have no idea how bad I want to see you I want to see you and our dear Stephen worse than I ever did in life before. How long will it be? is a question I cannot answer though it continues to present itself to my mind. But let it be long or short it certainly will be far the happiest day of my life.

I have not failed to dream of you and our dear Stephen a night since I got your letter. You have no idea the pleasure it afforded me to hear of your being blessed with such good health. I cannot see you, naturally, but blessed land of dreams I can see you there. I can see you in all the beauty of youth. I can bask in bliss in your embrace. But when I awake from sweet sleep and find myself on my pallet in my tent, how sad I then feel, how badly disappointed. My thoughts then turn homeward and hours are spent in contemplated happiness of the future.

Then I again go to the land of dreams and dwell there until I am perhaps aroused by the song of a soldier or the buzz of hundreds making their fires &c and another day has come. Then up and another dull day passes by.

First we make a fire and get breakfast over. Second, guard mounting. Go and drill two hours or rather play for we do not drill much, we've hot tired of that. Then come in and get dinner &c. Then about sundown dress parade, then eat our snack and pass the time in various ways until bed time

Some will brace themselves on a rock or a chunk or some other substitute for a chair and will pass the time in amusing the crowd around them by telling big tales and lies. Others will be scuffling and romping, playing off tricks &c. Another crowd is singing some good old hymns. Another crowd with deck of cards gambling, with numerous spectators watching the game. Then you can see numerous others setting around to themselves with elbow on knee and hand pressed to temple apparently in deep meditation.

This ~~is about~~^{about} what you see from dark till bedtime, which is just when a person gets ready to go to bed.

We have been seeing a very good time ever since we have been here until lately. We have not had to drill any until lately, besides we got plenty to eat.

I have long since learned that to grumble in writing home is a very poor thing though there is no harm in telling how we get along.

I can say that we fare only tolerably of late. We have plenty of corn bread but our meat is rather short and rather bad, consisting principally of poor beef and not even plenty of that.

We hear nothing of old Rosecranz of late, but I guess it will be almost impossible for him to advance owing to the condition of the roads. There has been more rain here" (Balance of the letter lost or destroyed.)

This letter is only part of one with the first part lost or destroyed but he uses the same kind of paper as that in his letter from Shelbyville February 20th 1863.

"-----I am tired, tired of this cruel war. Would to God that it would end. Sometimes when I get to studying about things as they are I get perfectly reckless. I cannot enjoy myself in any way. If I was to give up to studying about home and the difficulties through which I and my dearest are likely to pass I would almost go crazy. But I do not suffer myself to give up to such as that. My motto is "Live in hopes if I die in despair." I hope it will not be long till I can return in peace to my loving wife and child."
"----- Let us pass these gloomy heavy days by as fast as we can and in the best way possible ever looking to a gracious God for support in our day of trouble, and if it is His holy will that we meet no more on this troublesome earth may we meet where parting will be no more."

Then he speaks of letters he had from John, Cousin and Aunt Rachel and a letter he had received from Georgis., and he and Lewis had received a letter from Uncle Joshua Jones, they were all well.

" I sent you some envelopes and paper some time ago thinking that perhaps paper &c was hard to get hold of.

I was proud that you had paid off our debts. I have about \$175.00 I want to send you the first ^{good} chance I have.

We have drawn \$100.00 lately and I have made some by trading; buying such things as pens, ink, paper, clothing and any other thing in demand and selling again. If I was turned loose I could soon make plenty of Confederate money. I have over two hundred dollars on hand now.

So my dear Belle I must come to a close. Write me as often as you can. I will do the same.

Your affectionate husband until death.

John H. Burk, to
his dear Mary Isabelle.

In a postscript says this letter is No.6. He encloses a one

Also in a postscript to the last letter he mentions his pleasure to hear that Pa was mending, sends his respects and also hopes that Father will invest what little money they had in something that would live longer than the money was likely to.

Camps near Shelbyville Tenn March 8th 1863.

Dear and affectionate Belle:-

In this letter he says he is in good health and that all the neighbor boys are in good health. They had not heard from Jimm Monkress and John Goodson and were afraid they had been killed.

"We are stuck up here in the mud doing a little of nothing. We have very little news of any kind. It is impossible for anything to be done by land forces. As soon as the roads dry and the rains cease we may look out for warm times in Tennessee.

It is believed by all that we will not fight in this vicinity. It is thought we will fall back to Tulahoma or Bridgeport. It is believed that Old Bragg will ~~fall~~ make a stand at Tulahoma. He is entrenching at that place and making every preparation for the conflict.

We will have to do hard fighting here if we stay in Tennessee. Old Rosecranz is strongly reinforced and says that he will clear Tennessee of the Rebels as soon as the roads get so he can move his troops. He will have a warm time before he gets through though he may drive the Rebels from the State. I had as soon believe that as anything else. Old Rosecranz has as good troops as there are in America, there is no doubt about that, and if we do hold Tennessee it will be through a higher power than that of man for we have to contend against our equals man to man and a superior army in numbers.

Besides I dont believe our men ever will fight again as they did at Murfreesboro. They all appear to be discouraged and dont want to fight nor will not if they cant help themselves.

But there is no telling anything about the future. That will have to reveal, itself, the things that are to come.

I hope we may succeed in whaling them every where and that peace will soon follow. I am tired, tired of war and I reckon every body else is like me about that with the exception of some of the high officials and speculators who want the war to continue until they get rich, and there are not a few of that class. There is more speculation and grand rascality carried on now than ever before. There is hardly an honest man in control in the Confederacy.

That is saying a good deal and I will take a little of it back and will say that honest men are scarce in the army.

We have skirmishing every day. The canon appear to be 12 or 15 miles off.

Old Gen VanDorn is up here commanding the Cavalry. He had a pretty considerable fight day before yesterday. I do not know his loss but the Feds lost over one hundred killed and twenty two hundred prisoners. Some of the prisoners were brought into town yesterday, about two hundred. If rumor is true old VanDorn gave them a pretty good raking.

The canon appear to be nearer this morning. Everything indicates the Yankees will advance soon. We are prepared for running or fighting or anything else. All our clothes are boxed up and sent off to Chatanooga except what we can conveniently carry with us. We have kept about two blankets and two suits of clothes. It is very uncertain whether we ever see our clothes again or not. But I have not sent off my clothes. I got Hugh Aston to haul my clothes as he is driving a wagon. -----.

I will write soon again. Farewell.

John H. Burk.

Camps near Shelbyville Tenn March 29th 1863.

Dear and affectionate Belle:-

In the first part of this letter he speaks of how unpleasantly cold it is and of the high wind that blew nearly all the tents down.

"I fear if the wind lies tonight that the peaches will all be killed. I would rather not if it could be helped for I did not get many peaches last year as I was in Kentucky in peach time and they dont go much on peaches there but make it up in apples. But by the time peaches come again I may be in a land where peaches are scarce, and you know where that is as well as I do. I'd rather be in Texas.

I am tired of living this kind of life and have been ever since I left home but am particularly so now. I want to feel like a free man for a while to see how it would feel, though it is likely that I would like it much better before I get to try it. But I am going to try to keep a stiff upper lip and maybe I will outlive this scrape. If I do I will stay at home, (If I can), and I will know how to appreciate home too.

We still occupy the same position we have ever since the Murfreesboro fight. It is reported the Yankees are falling back from West Tennessee. If it is the case(and I reckon there is something in it) we may look out for them somewhere else, they have not fallen back for nothing.

Gen Forest (Cavalry) had a little brush with the Feds day before yesterday in which he took 800 prisoners. Nothing was said about the loss on our side but of course it was small as usual.

The health of our Regiment is good. We have but one sick in our Company, that is James Henderson. I reckon you have seen him, it was his father that used to live on old Doc Raines Henderson place.

Lewis is in fine health. George Bradford is well and continues to speculate, prodigeously.

Jim Llloyd is well and right side up but he is not entirely reconciled to his fate yet. He delights in

cursing the officers and the Confederacy and especially the Conscript Law and Jeff Davis. Frank Faulkner is no fatter nor leaner but just Frank yet. Simpson-Lodon has got the 3rd day chills but keeps knocking around.

The Smallpox is confined to two companies and they are pretty well through with it. No danger to be apprehended of its spreading.

Gen Joseph E. Johnson has taken command of our ~~XXXXXX~~ Army here. All are proud to get shot of ^{old} ~~led~~ Tyrant Bragg.

My dearest excuse imperfect letter.

I am your husband affectionately,

John H. Burk.

Camps near Shelbyville Tenn. April 2nd 1863.

My dear Belle:-

It is with pleasure I seat myself to writ you a few lines to let you know how I am getting along.

I am happy to say that this leaves me in good health, earnestly hoping that these few lines may come to hand and find you and our dear Stephen and all the connection enjoying the same blessing.

I have nothing of interest to write, in the same fix I always am, but still I will trouble you once a week or oftener. But you must bear with me as you have always done. One thing I will promise to do and that is if I do not write anything interesting I will confine myself to the truth as much as possible, and it may be that is the reason I cannot write an interesting letter.

I have however some little news that perhaps will be worth your attention at least while you are reading it.

We had one of the most serious battles day before yesterday that I have ever witnessed and I have been in two battles before this that were considered big fights. It is true there were none engaged except our Regiment but it was as close a fight as the world ever saw.

The general fight lasted for at least half an hour and part of that time the assailants were in ten steps of each other and in fact they were often mixed through and through each other until it was hard to tell friend from foe amidst such confusion and excitement.

I cannot describe the conflict without writing more than you would be willing to read, but will say that charge after charge was made on both sides with varied success. First one side would give way and then the other and both sides had to fall back often for ammunition.

But there was heavy bombarding going on all the time. Their bombs fell and bursted all around us. I expect that it would have been interesting if a person could have been out of danger and looked on. There were none engaged but what we re hit in some way with balls.

But the fight did not prove as disastrous to human life as one might suppose for as close an engagement as this was. I saw several times during the engagement hand to hand fights and it most generally proved that the stoutest man despatched his adversary.

Both sides were about equal in number and I cannot say which whipped. I rather think that it was a drawn battle but both sides were badly worsted. The battle gradually diminished as the men became exhausted and wounded and fell out on both sides until it was nothing but slight skirmishing which continued pretty much all day or until late in the evening when the fight entirely subsided, and I dont believe they would have quit at all if ammunition had not entirely given out.

They would have been certain to have renewed the fight in the morning but the snow had entirely all melted and it was impossible to get balls to continue operations with.

So you see that terrible battle was nothing but a snow-balling among ourselves -----" (Balance of letter missing.)

Camps near Shelbyville Tenn. April 19th 1863.

My dear and affectionate Belle:-

This letter is without any particular news but he is evidently in excellent spirits and speaks of how well they all are. Thinks he weighs 200 pounds or more. Says he and Brad have a little Yankee tent and that Brad keeps a big Jug of whiskey in there and over which they hold close communion occasionally. From the way he speaks I think Brad sells it to the soldiers and is making money fast.

Also says he and Brad wash once a week which is better than a great many did and as a consequence of the cleanliness they were not troubled with lice.

"Every thing quiet along our lines. The Cavalry have some fun occasionally. It is stated that old Rosecranz is getting reenforcements from Mississippi and we are also getting reinforcements from the same quarter but I cannot say as to the truth. I know our head men are expecting a great fight here soon. It is strange that it has been delayed as long as it has. No doubt old Rosy dreads it and is waiting to get mighty well fixed before he advances.

But you may listen for stirring news from Tennessee before long, we have to face the music before long or I am fooled.

It is understood that the ball is about to open in Virginia. The Feds had crossed the Rappahannock with Forty Thousand troops at last accounts and were still crossing more. There will be another "On to Richmond " I reckon. Hope they will meet with their usual (?) success. We hear nothing of interest from Charleston and Vicksburg, only rumor that the Yankees were about to abandon trying to take Vicksburg but I doubt that.

The word peace is played out, we never hear anything said about it only what we hear from Texas. It seems that the people of Texas have taken a peace spasm from some cause or other. I would like to know what they see.

I reckon it is the same kind of spell the people had on them a month or two ago in this country. I hope they have and do see something more favorable than I ever have been able to see for I have never seen anything that indicated anything of the kind, but see a great deal to the contrary.

I hope peace may be made soon for I am tired, tired of this life and have not just now got so but have been for lo these many days. I want to see you and our dear Stephen worse than I ever did before, in fact I am nearly dead to see you, but what am I to do? I reckon I will have to stay here and endure it but I dont like a bit of it.

I ~~am~~ coming home the first chance I have to do so honorably but there is no chance until after the first of July as a law is passed in Congress to grant no furloughs ~~unt~~ until after the first of July, that is across the Mississippi River.

Dear Belle I must close. It is now getting dark . I will write again soon. You have my sincere prayers for your welfare in this world and in the world to come, so farewell dearest for this time.

I remain, Yours as ever,

John H. Burk to his dear
Mary Isabelle.

The weather is beautiful, had a considerable rain last night. We move camps tomorrow a short distance.

Camps on Big Black River near Vernon Mississippi June 22, 63.
He writes that they are all in fine health and spirits.

" We have nothing to do here but to cook what we've got and eat it. We have been in this State over a month and have not marched ove 75 miles during the whole time.

When we are in camps we have nothing to do but fish and bee hunt, that is if one is smart enough to get out of the guard lines and I believe the boys are all smart enough for

that. I for one have not been in caps a day since we have been in this place. I have been out fishing and bee hunting every day and we have been here over a week. I have as much honey and fish as the mess uses. Some of the bee trees we find here are very rich. I found one ~~that~~ a few days ago that had 75 pounds of nice honey besides what was eat at the tree. I have found eight bee trees since we have been in Mississippi.

George finds one occasionally. He cut one of his yesterday that he got three buckets of good honey out of but it did us no good as he sold the honey. Honey sells at from a dollar to a dollar and a half a pound so you can see that a good bee tree is worth something if a person will try to sell it.

But I have never made anything off of mine except what I eat and the fun I see in getting it. I am satisfied with that for it is fun to get a crowd of fellows in among ill bees and anything of the kind is good pastime with me.

I cannot tell when we will leave here or where we will go to nor anything about it. We are within 50 miles of Vicksburg. Can hear the canon there day and night nearly incessantly. They are doing a great deal of canonading there. We have a great many favorable reports from them but really know very little about how they are getting along. I dont suppose there is any danger of the Yankees getting Vicksburg if they have a sufficiency of provisions to do them. The Yankees have already lost a great many men and we will lose a great many more if they carry their siege on.

If they ever do get too hard for Vicksburg then our time has come.

Old Gen Johnson has about Thirty Thousand troops here in good fighting trim and will have some of it to do if the Feds ever get too hard for the City. If not we will not have to fight without we are attacked."

Then he speaks of Lewis being off on a thirty days furlough and was at his Aunt Rachel Hollingsworths. Cousin John Hollingsworth and all the rest of the family were well

The first part of this letter is missing but it was evidently written from some where in Tennessee and from the price of provisions and his general observations must have been written in 63.

"-----The health of our Company is good. In fact the health of the Regiment is very good though not so good as it was been, but there is no serious sickness in camps. The health of the army is very good and in good spirits, though the spirits come natural for the soldiers get very little of the "Crittter" and what they do they have to give from ten to twenty dollars a quart for it so you can see at once they could not keep money and use much of the "Crittter".

Brad keeps a stock on hand pretty generally but he does not make it pay like he did at first though he has made over a thousand dollars some way or other.

We draw money in a few days again. I will have three hundred dollars to send home the first chance that offers, that is if we draw two months wages.

I make my spending money clear which is not much with the exception of our mess arrangements which is from two to five dollars per week each.

We live tolerably well. We do not get any flour bread with the exception of what we buy and pay 40 to 60 cents a pound for. We get a little hog meat of late but I assure you we do not swim in grease. We get a little butter sometimes at from \$2.50 to \$3.00 per pound. We get butter milk at from \$2.00 to \$4.00 per gallon. Eggs \$3.00 per dozen is standing price. Molasses is unknown as well as sugar and coffee.

There is some talk of Grants Army of Mississippi cooperating with Rosecranz army against us here in Tennessee, but I think old Grant will peg away in Mississippi and I dont know what old Rosy is going to do.

I think they are all waiting for us to starve out. If so they are fools for there is no danger of that. If there had been we would have gone under long ago.

To starve a Southern Soldier is out of the question for they can live as well without anything to eat as they can with it. I have seen it tried and know it is so. But perhaps there is an end to endurance.

So my dear Belle I will have to close this time.

From your affectionate

John.

Tell Stephen Pa is coming soon as possible.

In part of a letter both the first and last of which has been lost or destroyed he says:-

Dearest Belle as I have said to you in my last letters since the Battle of Murfreesboro I never pay postage on letters and know there is a right smart expense attached to paying letters out and mailing them too, so I will send a one dollar bill every time I write. I will number them on the back so you can know whether you get them all or not. This is No. 9.

We drew money the other day and have drawn up to the 28th of February. I have \$275.00 on hand at this time and I would like to send \$250.00 home and intend to the first chance.

I am in hopes that father will invest all that you have no use for in some way but I want you to keep plenty to do you if that is all -----"

In another letter without date as the first part was destroyed he says:-

"----- Troops this side of Tullahoma except Polks Corps and as soon as the Feds come up in full force we will fall back to that place. Heavy canonading today in the direction of -----.

The health of our Company is good. George Brad, Lewis, Hugh Aston, Jem Lloyd, Semp Lodon and in short all the neighbor boys are well, there is not a man in the Company down sick.

Lewis got a letter from Minervia E. Witt your Uncle Joshua's daughter. They are all well and have moved to near Winchester Tennessee.

It is strange what made the boys write home that I was missing for they all knew that I was with them until the night before the retreat and that was four days after the battle and they all knew when I fell out that I was unwell and they all knew for certain that I was not killed and they ought to have said so. Though I stood a good chance to have been taken prisoner. Yet I was able to take care of myself and did so as I always expect to when I am able to do so.

I can inform you that Bill Glover has got in camps. He has been gone from the command ever since we were at Chatanoo-ga last summer (July). He got in about an hour ago. He looks better than I ever saw him, he has been at his fathers most of the time.

My dear Belle excuse my imperfect letter. I will do better next time and will write soon again. So no more this time, but I remain your affectionate husband until death,

John H. Burk to his Mary

Isabella.

Camps near Brandon Mississippi December 13th 1863.

This is a letter from L. P. Jones to Ma in reply to a letter from her inquiring as to any information he might have concerning our father.

He writes that all he knows was what he saw in a Yankee paper to the effect that Pa was hurt by the fall of a loft in Nashville.

This was of course after his capture sometime in 63. after which nothing was heard from him apparently until after the surrender when he found his way home again.

One envelope addressed to Mrs Mary I. Burk, Rusk, Cherokee County Texas. In the lower left hand corner was the return card, "From John H. Burk of Company I. 10th Texas Cavalry, Ectors Brigade, McCowans Division, Army of Tennessee.

No stamp on the envelope but written at the top near the middle "Due 10."

Other envelopes that are preserved have practically the same inscription and return cards. There are no stamps on any of the letters.

There are a few fragments of letters that I cant make anything out of.

In copying these letters I have corrected most of the spelling where I found mistakes and have capitalized and punctuated more freely than he did, but all the expressions are as he made them.

Indeed it would have been impossible in most instances for me to have improved on these letters if I had thought of attempting such a thing, as I must say there is a charm and clearness of expression in these letters that we find in very few letter writers. I value these letters very highly.