

James B. Mitchell Letters: Lieutenant, Co. B, 34th Alabama Manigault's Brigade

Headquarters

Camp Beauregard [Tuscaloosa]

September 9, 1861

Dear Father

Camps are institutions of idleness. The only comfortable position in a tent is a recumbent one and in that to read is painful to the eyes, hence it comes very natural to sleep. We have our amusements. Music is here "Lest a youthful jollity Sport that wrinkled caro derides And laughter holding both his sides." Our company is fortunate in possessing all the musicians of the corps. We have two fine fiddlers and one guitarist. Our fare is poor it is true, butter, even is denied, yet I care not, nay rather sit quietly by and laugh at the fuss made by the more fastidious. Herndon (it being his first experience from home) received it more at heart. He had (to use a common expression) more of the wire edge on than I anticipated. It is becoming pretty well rubbed off though, now. Tip is the "old settled gentleman" of the crowd. He has a most imperturbable temper. Nothing seems to surprise or vex him. He takes everything as a matter of course. We stand guard in alphabetical order. Yesterday (Sunday) and night I was on that duty, not being allowed to go to church at all. If it be my regular day it is hard. Tip and Herndon went to the rotunda in the morning and visited the episcopal church at evening and both came back satisfied that they wished not the religion of the latter. We are marched to our meals in company, stand behind our respective chairs until the command is given "take seats" after which a certain time is allowed for eating, when we are commanded to "rise" and are marched back again in regular convict style. We are not allowed to speak to the waiter at all but must ask the orderly who sits at the head of the table for whatever we want. I have not yet been examined and don't know when I shall be. My interview with Dr. Garland and Professor Kenaugh I have also deferred. My uniform is not near ready and my other clothes were not intended for that occasion, and besides are soiled by much use in camp. Five in six boys in our company are sick with chill and fever. We are all well. Under the circumstances I like the place about as well as might be expected. I suppose you have sent me DeBow and The Avalanche or do you expect me to write for them. I have received a letter each from Jule [Mitchell] and Nasala. They are well. Excuse the bad penmanship for I am sitting on the floor writing on my trunk tray. Give my love to Ma, Grandma, and the boys. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

PS I have just returned from the dentist who has fixed me up very nicely.

Washington Barracks [Tuscaloosa]

January 5, 1862

Dear Father

In your last letter you asked me to write my true opinion of the college, faculty, and students. I suppose you perceived in my former letters that my attempt to praise lacked that energy and honesty which sincerity lends. Such was the case. To come here was my own choice and I came determined to be pleased but military drill and discipline with which mostly I expected to be interested and chiefly for the sake of which I decided upon this place has been and is shamefully neglected. No class in tactics has yet been formed and there seems to be no prospect of it. On account of the ravages made by the itch, measles, diphtheria, pneumonia, and other minor diseases (between 50 or 60 of the corps being on the sick list at the same time) we have had no exercise on the field in drill for a month. But even when we did drill the captain took very little interest in our progress, in fact told the corps one evening he did not care whether they learned anything or not. With such a man as commandant, of course, nothing much could be expected from the cadets. But in justice to him I will inform you that this one is not Capt. Lumsden, the man you saw assign us our companies and tents, but a lazy half-hearted Virginian, Capt. Otey. The former was a good officer and a clever gentleman but as soon as we finished our encampment he raised an artillery company and went to the defence [sic] of Mobile. Almost all that I learn of tactics is by private study, and I am glad to say that by this means I am steadily progressing. I am determined not to sit quietly by and suffer my brother and kinsmen to endure all the hardships for me. Such a state of things as I have described above has somewhat dampened my determination to be pleased.

If all was carried out which the catalogue promises I would be satisfied but such is not the case. So much for the military department, now for the classics. I have only 4 studies – latin, greek, mathematics, and logic. There is only one professor of both latin and greek, and I think a very poor one. In my opinion he is not equal to one of our Chapel Hill tutors. As I never studied logic before I am not able to form a judgement of our instructor's ability in that way, but being without books on account of the blockade we are reduced to the unfortunate necessity of being taught by means of lectures which are by no means as efficient and useful as books. Our professor of mathematics, though, redeems in some degree the incompetency of the others. He is a good man and worthy of his position, but the whole college considered as compared with Chapel Hill is but a preparatory school. I will continue my description in my next. We are all well except myself. I think I have some symptoms of measles but have not been really

sick yet. Give my love to all and my best respects to Miss Sarah and Cousin Martha.
Your.Son.

J. B. Mitchell

February 23, 1862

Dear Father

I was delayed answering your letter in order that I might reflect upon its contents. I have done so and come to the conclusion that if I do not participate in this war it will be a source of the deepest regret and disappointment through life, like a bird of evil omen it will follow me and mar all my undertakings. You said that you would not except in case of the direct necessity consent to have my course interrupted. I heartily agree with you in this. I believe I know the value of an education, how inestimable it is. Oftentimes I have heard you deplore the inadequacies of your own. But the time has now come when even this may be rejected. I ask you earnestly, what direct necessity can there be but the present, unless the very burning of our own homes. So am I young and tender. Thousands younger and tenderer than I have already gone and acted nobly their parts. It was a boy of seventeen who captured Col. Cororan. Is my constitution yet forming? This will form it and toughen the sinues, harden the muscles and make a man of me. It is true hundreds of my age have fallen victims to disease and death while yet upon the threshold of the service. But should not I die as well as they? Shall I sit ignobly here and suffer them to fight my battles and endure all for me? Never.

I had rather be a dog and bay the moon than such a Roman. "Besides, you say, Our country will in future need the services of her sons in other capacities of equal if not superior importance, to guide the helm of state and" I think so. But will she trust that helm to those who whilst she was struggling for her very existence [extend] no helping hand. History tells us that just after a great revolution like the present there is never felt a want of eminent statesmen. But when the nation becomes complacent and corrupt like the late United States then comes the dearth. I rejoice that there is scarcely one of our name in all the South but who are engaged in some capacity in the glorious cause. And moreover I hope and pray you will not allow it to be said that there was found even one of our name capable of bearing arms not on the list of his country's defenders. I have written the above without excitement and after reflecting. I believe it is my plain duty and I feel certain that you will entertain so now. Besides I do not consider it an impossible thing to obtain an education even after the war shall have ended. I have known men twenty-five and thirty years of age to enter at Chapel Hill. But if you wish to see me home before July, you must either send for me to drill a company or not send my next deposit which is due on the 1st of March and allow me to plead want of funds. These are the only practicable mean of getting away from here. We have no vacations, not even a day. Yesterday Dr. Garland had the long roll beat and the corps marched

into the rotunda where he delivered a speech on the crisis. He said this corps was just as much in the Confederate service as any volunteer in the state. This assertion you know is false. He said moreover that he intended to start that very day to Montgomery for the purpose of persuading the governor to publish in the papers as a deserter any cadet who should leave this corps without his consent for purposes of joining any volunteer organization whatever, and he will offer a reward for the return and deliverance of the same. He must indeed think Judge Shorter is a great fool if he expects to persuade him to such an unjust act as that. My money has held out tolerably well. Of that there is a hundred I deposited, and I still have sixty-five dollars left. I send you one of the catalogues from which you may ascertain the amount of the next deposit if you think it best that I should remain. Excuse this seemingly negligent penmanship for my mates are frolicking and shaking the table. Give my love to all the family and tell Willie to write oftener. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Headquarters

Tupelo, Mississippi

June 23, 1862

Dear Mother

A few days having rolled by according to promise I write although I have nothing of interest to communicate, but the diagram I have herein enclosed needs a little explanation. From Tupelo there is a road leading directly west. On this road about 600 yards on the left you will see our camp. The tents of the field officers are next to the road and we suffer very much from the dust. A great deal of sickness prevails in our camps. We are not able to turn out now more than five hundred effective men. The complaints are various. I have not been sick yet but Jule has been very low. He is now improving slowly. Tell Pa I wanted to wait till he got well before I returned thanks for the valuable present. Crawford is very kind in coming over to see Jule whenever he gets an opportunity.

You see the position of Clayton's camp [39th Ala.] It is only three hundred yards from ours. It may seem strange to you that we are so far separated from our brigade. We are only staying here for a short time until our sick can recuperate and the necessary reduction of baggage be effected. When I last wrote I believe I said we were in Gen Chalmer's Brigade. It is a mistake. We have no regular brigadier general yet, but are in the old brigade of Gen. Trapier, now commanded by Col. Manigault of the 10th SC. It is

composed of: the 10th SC, 19th SC, 28th Ala., Col. Frazer, and the 34th Ala., Col. J. C. B. Mitchell.

Tell Pa it is not practicable to give him a diagram of the railroad from Mobile to Corinth for he can ascertain more by observing his Colton's Atlas than I can tell him. But I send him one of our position which I have been enabled to make out on account of my being frequently sent out to the different camps with orders. Jule sometimes borrows Col. Llewellen's horse and we have a pleasant time riding about like field officers. We have very good water, but have to send about a mile for it, I mean the privates. The field officers send an order over to the general's wells which have a regular guard stationed round them and obtain very fine water. My love to Aunt Carrie and all the family. Tell the boys to write. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

PS My diagram has been soiled by some of the captains who borrowed it to copy from.

July 14, 1862

Dear Father

The question has been settled in the manner that you advised and I remain with Cousin Jule. I am well but very much inconvenienced for want of a boy to attend to my pony properly. Both the colonel's negroes and mine have gone home and Peter now is our sole dependence. Perhaps it is a good thing though. I have learned several useful acquirements thereby. Yesterday, I made a very good halter of bark, mended my bridle and built a rack for my saddle. But, notwithstanding all this, I believe I had rather Randall would come on as old Judge Williams would say, "right speedily." If you can find one of those glass flasks shaped like a round canteen, which are generally used to keep whiskey or brandy in (I expect you remember them by this description) cover it over and send it by Randall. In one hour after water is placed in the canteen I have it tastes so disagreeable of the tin that I think it is injurious to drink of it. You see, I am taking care of myself and looking to my health. Send also another bottle of that cholera medicine. Cousin Jule took some of it and was immediately cured, whereupon he commenced praising it to everybody and soon sent someone else to me after a dose and shortly after another. At this rate it will not be long before it is all gone. I have heard from Jack since you left. He is doing very well. Tell Cousin Georgia he has entirely forgotten the promise he made me just before I left. It is a disease I am doing my utmost to ward off, for I believe it is the entering wedge to every other. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Saltillo, Miss.

July 23, 1862

Dear Mother

Dr. Lockhart brings this letter to Opelike where he will remain three days and then return to our regiment. If Randell is sent up to him he will take charge of him and deliver him safely to me. But according to the camp report which prevails at present, in two weeks I will reach that place myself. It seems to be generally believed that we are ordered to Chattanooga by the way of Atlanta. About four thousand troops of Hardee's division have already left Tupelo. There is a great variety of surmises and rumors confounding and conflicting each other. Notwithstanding the great number of sick in our regiment they seem to be generally cheerful and content. They amuse themselves by circulating all sorts of improbable stories and telegraphic dispatches. The latest news just detailed to me by one of Capt. Slaughter's men is that "Africa has recognized the southern Confederacy." I am well and in good spirits. I have not much to do except on extra occasions and I fear am becoming too indolent. In fact I believe I have about succeeded in reducing laziness to a system. Last Saturday however we had a grand review before Gens Bragg, Polk, Hardee and Withers. I acted as capt. [sic] of A Company and next to Col. Mitchell there was more responsibility resting on my shoulders than anyone else in the regt. Our regiment performed its part in a very satisfactory manner. It was complimented both by Col. Manigault and Gen. Withers and was remarked by Gen. Bragg in regard to its universal military deportment. Col. Mitchell is very proud of his regiment and takes good care of his men. At a review of the brigade to which Col. Goodwyn's regiment [45th Ala.] is attached, a few days ago, it numbered less than two hundred men and was the smallest regiment in the brigade. Col. Mitchell's on the contrary contains over double that number and is the largest regiment in our brigade. I have concluded that neither the hardships nor the glories of the service are quite so severe or brilliant as they have been represented to me. A well balanced medium is I think the true estimate. Cols. Mitchell and Echols have fattened on it and some of the captains have even accused them of trying to pass themselves off as young widowers before the dark eyed beauties of Mississippi. Col. Holtzclaw of the 18th Ala. is quartered very near us. He came over this morning and is looking very well. Jack is about a mile from us on the road to Tupelo. I went to see him yesterday. He was well but had not quite regained his strength yet. Excuse the mistakes in this hastily written letter for I only learned a short while ago that Dr. Lockhart was going. My love to all the family and Aunt Carrie for I understand she is with you now. Crawford also wishes to be remembered to you all. He is now with us. Cousin Jule and myself having no negro at all in our mess Jack was kind enough to loan us Crawford for a while. He makes an excellent boy and pleases the Col. Very well. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Co. B., 34th Regiment Ala. Vol.

To: Col. J.C.B. Mitchell

December 1, 1862

Sir

We the members of the above named company having had an election in our company to fill a vacancy in our company caused by the promotion of Capt. J. N. Slaughter to Major and having elected C. C. Tate to the vacancy of 2nd Lieut., and he being rejected by the Board of examiners do respectfully request you to appoint J. B. Mitchell 2nd Lieut. as he was a candidate and was defeated by only one vote. The company and the subscribers will be greatly obliged. Very respectfully.

[signed by all members of the company]

Headquarters 4th Brigade

Near Murfreesboro

December 27, 1862

Special Orders

J. B. Mitchell, having been duly elected and having passed a satisfactory examination is hereby announced as Junior 2nd Lieut, Co. B, 34th Ala. Regt. Lieut. J. B. Mitchell will be obeyed and respected accordingly.

By order

Col. A. M. Manigault

Commanding Brigade

C. I. Walker, Adj.

Lieut J. B. Mitchell through Col. J. C. B. Mitchell, Cmdg 34th Regt.

Camp near Shelbyville, Tenn

January 13, 1863

Dear Father

This is the first time I have had the opportunity and material to write to you since the battle. The last letter I wrote was to Grandma shortly before Christmas. I said then that

I would write to you in a few days and give you all the particulars of my position and future prospects. But we are marched in line of battle and I had no chance to do so. Now however I will commence at the beginning and write a long letter. Upon the 29th day of November I joined Capt. Slaughter's Co. [B] as a private. About the 1st of December upon the resignation of Maj. McCoy he was to the majorship. The officers of his company then went up in regular gradation and the 3rd lieutenancy was left vacant. On the ninth of the same month an election was held to fill this vacancy. I offered for it and was beaten by one vote. My opponent [C. C. Tate] receiving 35, myself 34. But as you know there is an order that all newly elected officers shall undergo an examination before they are allowed to take rank. On the next day after the election my opponent being examined was rejected by the board. Col. Manigault then requested Col. Mitchell to recommend some suitable person for the appointment. Upon learning this a majority of the company signed a petition requesting Col. to recommend myself. He did so and the recommendation was approved until it reached Gen Bragg who sent it back remarking that another election must be ordered. So you understand from the 9th of December until this paper came back, which was upon the day before Christmas, I was in suspense and did not wish to write you till the matter was decided. I had also determined if I had been defeated altogether in my plans not to inform you at all. But everything turned out well. The next day after my papers were returned being Christmas, of course, nothing was done. Next day an election was held and I received the unanimous vote of the company, there being no opposition. On the 27th I stood a satisfactory examination and received my commission, and on the next morning, the 1st day of my lieutenancy we were marched out in line of battle. I had set apart this day to write you all I have just related but was on this account unable to do so. I will now endeavor to give you a little history of my participation in the battle. I send you a diagram of the field, but it is not very correct or well drawn, that part in which I was placed being more enlarged than the other about which I do not know as much. I only drew it to give you a kind of idea of our position and the description I am about to give. I will now attempt a general description for with that you are already acquainted. I will only particularize a little the part our brigade and regt. were allotted to perform.

Ours, which is you know the reserve division, contrary to all my preconceived notions of the meaning of the word, was placed in front and Cheatham's behind. Gens Withers and Cheatham divided divisions. The former commanding the right half of his own and Cheatham's. The latter the left half of his own and Withers's. The Nolansville Pike separated them. The right half of Wither's Division was composed of Chalmers's and Jackson's Brigades, the left of ours, commanded by Cols Manigault and Gardner. Our position was to the left of the road in a skirt of woods, which extended in width just the length of our brigade, the left of our regt. resting just in the edge of the woods. The 10th SC, the right of our brigade was placed next the road and just in front of it a little tongue of woods stood out from the main body into the open field beyond. The rest of our brigade was not more than 50 yds retired from the edge of the woods, which was bounded by a cotton patch about 400 yds wide on the opposite edge of which and just in front of our regt. was a little hill thinly covered with woods. When the battle

commenced the battery of our brigade commanded by Capt. Waters was on the extreme left in an open space to the left of the woods supported by our regt. on its right. On our right was the 28th and 24th Ala. and next to them the 19th and 10th SC. On the left of Waters' Battery in another skirt of woods Gardners' Brigade was stationed. We sent out our pickets and all day Monday lay in line of battle. Early Tuesday morning our pickets commenced firing and retreating. Col. Mitchell ordered me to deploy half of my company as skirmishers in front of the regt. to occupy the edge of the woods bordering on the cotton patch and bring on the engagement. When the firing became too hot for us we were to retreat behind the regt. All that morning we heard our pickets firing and it sounded like the stamping of horses upon the floor of a livery stable. About one o'clock they retreated across the hill in front of us and rejoined the regt. The Yankees then came up and planted a large battery on a tolerably high hill in a field a little to the right of our front. They then established a large battery a large number of infantry on a hill in the field directly in front of the 28th and 24th Ala. Next they stationed another battery on a line with the infantry directly in front of our regt. on that woody hill I have already mentioned. The Yankee papers say Gen. Rosecrans with his staff personally supervised these dispositions. I myself lying flat on the ground behind my tree in front of the regt. distinctly saw some gen. first place the infantry and order them to lie down and then move on to the woods to establish the battery. As soon however as the Yankees made their appearance Waters's [sic] Battery opened on them. It is believed that it was in this fire that the head of Rosecrans' chief of staff was shot off and the blood bespattered the Yankee gen. His fire however disclosed his position to the large Yankee battery on the hill in the field, which immediately opened on him in return and drove him from his place in the clearing on our left to a position on the right our regt. between it and the 28th. As soon as he was established here he commenced upon the Yankee battery on the woody hill opposite us and it returned his fire. The big old battery in the field also kept pouring in its shot and shell and we were thus subject to the cross fire of two batteries. This tremendous cannonading continued all the evening and my brave little band and myself lay out in front of our regt. flat on the ground behind our trees and took it all. The shells fell and bursted [sic] all around us, barked and cut off the tops of the trees behind which we were lying, and the grape shot tore up the ground and sprinkled me frequently with the dirt. But thanks to the Almighty no one of my company was hurt. Once the Yankees came down the hill and started across the cotton patch, but I saw it and immediately ordered my men to rise and fire. They did so and the Yankees went back in haste leaving one man dead on the field. They made no further attempt. At midnight my command was relieved by another company of our regt. and we were not allowed to have fires for it was desired that our position should be kept masked. With only one blanket then, the rest went with the wagons. Although it was freezing cold I lay down to sleep. In the meantime I am sorry to say Randall, my body servant Randall, although I had ordered him to remain in the rear of our regt. as you directed and come over the battlefield after the fight and search for my body, at the first bursting of the bombs which were fired at us lost all control of his legs and ran like a wild turkey to the rear past Cheatham's men who were behind us, past the river which

was behind them and did not stop till he was snugly ensconced behind a corner fence on the other side. It would amuse you exceedingly to hear his account. He says in excuse, that nobody would give him anything to fight with, and he thought the best he could do under those circumstances was to show them a good pair of heels, which he did. Tolerably fair reasoning, I think. But to return, next morning at 5 o'clock, we were all aroused and ready for the action. About good sunrise the order was passed down the line of our brigade to charge, the object being as I afterwards learned to take the battery on the hill. But unfortunately and very injudiciously on the part of our commander the object was not publically [sic] announced to the men. The majority of them thought it was simply to go up on the hill and fire upon the Yankees which they did. When the order was given we started with a yell and ran across the cotton patch at a double quick. Our company took the lead in the charge and was the first to reach the hill. We went a little over half way up and then unfortunately the men stopped, got behind trees and commenced firing. I came up to a big tree at the head of our company behind which our capt. [sic] was and looking on ahead saw the Yankee battery not more than 50 yds in front of us. The thought then flashed on me for the first time that the object of our charge was to take this battery. I immediately sprang forward and calling out to me men "Come boys lets charge that battery" I went about 15 or 20 steps in front of my men towards it. But then turning round to look for my men I found to my great surprise that not one had followed me. I thought it best therefore and most prudent to come back to where they were. I did so and came again to Capt. Wood's trees. There were eight of us behind this one tree. The capt. [sic] was closest and next to the bank. Behind him were 4 of our men, next to them myself, and behind me two more of our boys. We remained in this position some time, firing at the Yankees on the top of the hill in the woods and in the field. They had a cross fire on us. The 24th Ala and the 10th and 19th SC, who were opposite to those Yankees in the field, failed to come up to our support and engage them, but retreated back to their original position after having come only half way across the field. The 28th too which was on our right after a short stand retreated also and thus left those Yankees in the field free to help those in the woods who were engaged by us. Their crossfire was terrible, the balls flew around us like hail stones, but we stood our ground very obstinately for some time. Here our company suffered very severely. Six men were killed outright and 14 wounded. These six men of our company too were the only men in the whole regt. who were killed on the battlefield. Those two men I have before mentioned as next to me behind the tree were dead in their tracks, one receiving a ball in his breast and the other through his head and his brains came out. I saw it myself. Both fell directly by my side. At the same time a ball passed through both the coats I had on, my overcoat and blue frock coat, but thank God I was not hurt. Also one of the men who were before me and a little to my right was shot in the hand. He would not go to the rear, however, the order to retreat was given to Gardner's Brigade which was with us on the hill on our left. Then it would have been foolish to remain any longer. We retreated across the cotton patch to our original position and rallied again. Another charge was then made by Gardner's Brigade and ours and the enemy was driven off the woody hill and across the hill in the field to their

breastworks. Here they rallied, poured such a fire on us that we were obliged to retreat again. In the charge, however, our regt. suffered very little and after we retreated Cheatham's Division, which had been behind in a supporting position went in front and we took its place. A third charge was then made together and the Yankees driven back 3 miles and several batteries taken. We were in no more regular fights after that, but lay in line of battle all day Thursday and Friday ready for them. Friday night cold and rainy as it was we were next to the Yankees again on picket all night. Capt. Wood, Lieut. Masse [sic], and myself had only one blanket between us and we slept by turns, one going the rounds and watching while the other two rested. Wrapped in the wet blanket and sitting up by the side of a tree I was so tired that I slept my time out quite soundly. Next morning we were relieved and rejoined my regt.

J. B. Mitchell

January 13, 1863

Shelbyville, Tenn.

Dear Father

I send you just for curiosity some Yankee letters picked up by one of my men on the battlefield. There is nothing interesting or amusing in them. I only send them because the man gave them to me and I do not know what else to do with them except throw them away. There was a great deal of pilfering performed on the dead bodies of the Yankees by our men. Some of them were left naked as they were born, everything in the world they had being taken from them. I ordered my men to take their fine guns and canteens if they wished, but nothing else. These letters had fallen out of the poor fellow's pocket and were lying loose about on the ground. The only thing I took was a fine canteen which I cut off a dead Yankee who was lying on his face in our path as we marched along. Just the sight of the battlefield after the fight was in itself horrible. For 7 or 8 days after the battle every man I saw asleep appeared to me like a dead man. Write to me soon. My love to all the family. Remember me to my friends. Your son.

J.B. Mitchell

Camp near Shelbyville, Tenn.

January 18, 1863

Dear Father

Herein you will find the diagram which I forgot to enclose in my last letter. I am now I cannot exactly say well, but, not sick, the reaction of the exposure which I have suffered not yet having passed off. I am very anxious to obtain a furlough, but I fear will not be

able to do so, because there are so many others higher in position than I am who are not ashamed to say they are sick when they are not. One of the lieutenants of our company too, who has not been home since the regt. came in service is now applying for a furlough, and of course, his claim is superior to mine. The Yankee bullet just came near enough not to give me a furlough. I would rather have been slightly wounded. If I had, I would be at home now, but as it is I must wait and risk my fortune in the next battle which I understand will soon take place. Throwing all joking aside, however, to be in a battle is a serious thing. I am truly thankful that I escaped so well, and I attribute it solely to the prayers of the good folks at home. Now, since it is all over, I would take nothing for my participation in it. It awakened thoughts and feelings I never experienced before, and which I never shall forget. It made me feel more directly conscious of the existence of a Supreme Being and our own insignificance. I saw how utterly worthless was a life led with no other object save the plaudits of the world and self gratification. I wished I were a Christian. Now, doubly brave and fearless I will be. True, as it was I never felt that I would do otherwise than my duty on any occasion, yet if I were a Christian I could do more towards encouraging others to do theirs, and execute mine with a much better heart. All my ambitious aspirations for worldly advancement deserted me and I concluded that the only object in life worth aiming for was happiness everlasting hereafter, and the greatest possible amount of it while here, a very just conclusion too you will say, no doubt. I think so anyhow, and if I am spared to see the end of this trouble I will test its vindication. Now these were my honest thoughts on the battle field, and I have no doubt of many more beside myself. I wish I could come home and talk the whole affair over with you and all the family. I am more desirous [sic] of a furlough now that I have been.

Jule gives a glowing description of the good times he had at home Christmas. He is looking very well indeed. I am surprised at his resignation. I suppose, however, you know best. Herndon Glenn also seems to be in finer health than I ever saw him before. Turner Rivers and Ed. Barnett came through the fight unhurt and envious as ever. I forgot whether I have spoken of Col. Mitchell's action during the fight. I will mention it here. In the very first charge on the hill in front of us, being on foot and unaccustomed to the doublequick he became exhausted and when we started on the retreat being unable to run was helped across the field again to our woods by a lieutenant and private of the regiment. The second charge he did not attempt at all but was with us during all the rest of the engagement. He is entirely unfitted for active service and I think will soon resign. I would dislike however very much to remain in the regt. under such officers as will then succeed and must look about for some way to get out. Lewis Bond was in the thickest of the fight but escaped unhurt. My love to all the family. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

This letter is my very best, written on paper that is oily and will not take the ink. I am fearful that you will not be able to read it.

Headquarters 34th Ala.
Near Shelbyville, Tenn.
January 31, 1863

Dear Americus

This is the first time that I have been able to have the leisure to write to my friends since the Battle of Murfreesboro. Julius informs me that you were inclined to complain of Jimmie and myself for not posting you from the battlefield. I knew you would probably be unhappy unless you could be informed of our safety, and it was our aim to give information at the earliest moment. But think of our condition having to be at arms all the while for 3 days after the battle on Wednesday without ink or paper, no communications whith [sic] the telegraphic office, cold and wet and then taking up the line of march at midnight on Saturday for three days off the railroads and away from any office of any kind, then back again to Shelbyville without rest. So you see there was some excuse for not writing. If Jimmie had been wounded I would have had you informed at all hazards.

It is useless to write to you as to the battle for the press has presented it in all forms, but never will I be able to describe the battle for language will fall short of any attempt of that job. I can't come near to form an account (and you will see it), but it would have made you feel happy and proud of him to have seen them.

Repeated charges of our troops and skirmishers against the Yankees made them flee before our lines. Jimmie conducted himself gallantly at every point of the battlefield, filling [each post] promptly, exposing himself at hazard, and receiving a ball through his clothes for his noble bearing. I have recommended him to the President for promotion. You have no doubt heard that he has gone to the rear sick. Julius is with him. I should think that he is at Chattanooga and that you must have been informed before this. I was fearful that he would have a heavy spell from his illness since leaving here. As to myself I have not been well since the Battle of Murfreesboro. I have been with my command all the while though, but I think I shall not be able to continue much longer. I will be able to be relieved for a while by a replacement of our regiment as a relief from the climate and exposure of campaign life. I thank you for the fine presents you sent me. I will write to you soon. Give my best to the family. Your son.

J.B. Mitchell

Camp near Shelbyville, Tenn.
March 21, 1863

Dear Father

After a weary trip on the cars on which I was obliged to stand up the whole journey I arrived here safely last Tuesday evening. I find affairs in a very disordered condition. We were consolidated with the 28th Ala., Col. Reid commanding. Col. Mitchell is detached. [sic] He left here on the day before I came to report to Gen. Pillow, who assigns the detached officers to duty. I have not seen him. I was not detached [sic] and am now the only lieut [sic] of the consolidated companies B and C who remains with the regt. Our major is still with us. The men are very much dissatisfied with this arrangement. The letter of Nehemiah Sanders in the Montgomery Advertiser expresses the general opinion. It is true that a general order has been issued that no more furloughs would be granted before the 1st of June. It is universally believed in the army that either an advance or retreat will very soon be made, but they have not the least idea which it will be. Our pickets are reported to be occupying the old battle ground beyond Murfreesboro. We have very little else here to eat except cornbread and bacon. I sent Crawford out yesterday and obtained 2 or 3 canteens full of nice buttermilk. Chickens and butter, however, are very hard to get. I hope we will leave this place soon. Our regiment is now being very rapidly filled. Conscripts come in every day. Poor fellows they fare badly here. We have no tents for them and they are obliged to lie out and endure patiently in cold winds and rain. We have 40 men in our company now who are without any shelter whatever. Crawford is tolerably well. I am a little better. My love to all the family. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Camp near Shelbyville, Tenn.

April 7, 1863

Dear Father

My health is considerably improved as far as regards jaundice, for I am now entirely well of it, but otherwise I am not much better. Nevertheless, I perform my regular share of guard duty and drill. There is so much of what is called "playing off" here, even among the officers, that I have become disgusted and will not complain unless it is very plainly evident that I am really quite unwell and unable to perform duty. Above all things it would afford me the greatest pleasure to be at home now for about one month. But there is no chance for me to do so, unless I go to the hospital again, and this I would not like to do. Furloughs can now be obtained at the hospitals, but not in the army. As to resigning, I have already written you the regulations on that subject. Besides, while Col. Reid is in command I would not be able to put in a substitute for like Colonel Clayton at Opelike he has refused to receive any substitutes at all. Threat Mitchell tried to enter one but was on this account unable to do so. It made him very angry indeed. Bennet Griffin also tried to bring in one but failed. As regards resigning, however, I do not wish to do so, for at least some time yet I desire to take the Kentucky trip, which the army

generally seems to think is about to take place shortly. I firmly believe too, that when we again enter the blue grass country it will be following, not followed by, the foe. Horses sell here now at very high rates. Nothing like a good animal can be bought for less than 200 dollars. I sometimes tell Crawford to put him in better heart (for he is very low spirited now and homesick) that when we march into Kentucky again we intend to demolish the Yankees, then peace will be declared, and the army disbanded, then that we will return home triumphantly in a double buggy drawn by two of the best Kentucky blood and so. "Ah!, he says, with a laugh, Mas Jule talked that way too, and if it had not been for Old Nellie he would not have come back at all. I expect you are going to do that too." There is a great [deal] of truth in Crawford's remark. It may, perhaps, prove so, but I hope not. I am glad Jule was so well pleased with Gen. Cantey. I hope his impression may always be as favorable as now. Tell him I hope to see him up this way about the 14th of June. I do not think my health is sufficiently bad yet to require my resignation. When it arrives at that point I shall not hesitate to resign. My love to all the family. Remember me to Cousin Gerald. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Special Order No. 39
Headquarters, Manigault's Brigade
Near Shelbyville
April 9, 1863

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

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

By order Col. A. M. Manigault, Com. of Brigade

C. I. Walker, adjutant

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

Headq'rs [sic] 34th Alabama Regiment
Shelbyville, Tenn
April 12, 1863

I want, who does not want, a wife

Affexshonate [sic] and fair,
In all my waze [sic] to take part
And all my joys to share.

Mr. Edyter

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

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

A lass! How will an humbol [sic] individool [sic] okupying [sic] no hiet [sic] possihun [sic] than a “gun carraer.” [sic] “a hewer of wood an [sic] drawer of water” ever attane [sic] so desirabol [sic] an objec [sic] as a wife. Human natur [sic] tha [sic] sa [sic], is the same evera [sic] whar, [sic] but I have some leetel [sic] hope that it aint [sic] edzactly [sic] so with all ov [sic] ower [sic] blessed and deer Ala. galls. [sic] What duz [sic] sum [sic] uv [sic] my old lady friends sa [sic] to that? (I dont [sic] mean old ladies but old friends.) Even now my pen draps [sic], and the gentle zephir [sic] that fans my sad brown, cummin [sic] from my fur [sic] off summa [sic] home, whispers gentla [sic] and softly into my ear: “There is one who will never for sake you, nor love you less bekaze [sic] you don’t ware [sic] the sashes and sholderstraps[sic] and gold laces ov [sic] the upper 10.” Ah! Oh! hem! Wish I could see her now, this beautiful Sabbath mornin [sic], as my

imaginashun [sic] picters [sic] her out. After fixing up her own house hold affares [sic] with her own hans [sic], she is drest [sic] in a neat home spun dress, mail with the same hans [sic], and gon [sic] to church to hear the gospil [sic] preacht [sic].

My wants are many, and of told

Wood [sic] muster many a skore [sic],

And ware [sic] each want a mint of gold

I still should long for more.

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

Your old friend

Nehemiah Saunders Co. Q, 34th Ala. Rigt. [sic]

Camp near Shelbyville, Tenn.

May 10, 1863

Dear Father

"Recubans sub tegmine patulae fage," I meditate upon the beauty of the surrounding scenery, the quiet and peaceful appearance of the neighboring country, and the horrid wickedness of this war, which I fear will soon transform this fertility into a barren waste. But whenever this struggle does terminate, I believe it will be with our independence. If in the consummation of that I fall, I am willing. My brothers and yourself will remain to enjoy it. I have strong hope that by the 4th day of March next year peace will smile upon our land once more. I do not think our President would have ventured the opinion that this would be the last year of our war without a very good foundation. If our army here would give them as severe a thrashing now as that which they lately received in Virginia, I believe the North would not be disposed to continue the contest much longer. A great many think we will certainly be victorious in the next engagement. I cannot say how that will be, but there is one thing I feel certain of, that if our brigade enters into it under the leadership of Col. Manigault it will not come out with any honor to itself. The

troops have no confidence in him, the officers have none, he is altogether a weak man. All of our detached officers have returned except Col. Mitchell. We are expecting him every day. Our reqt. [sic] now numbers about 600 for duty. Its number have been very much decreased by sickness. Within the last 2 weeks 9 men of my company alone have died. Yesterday, one poor fellow, with nothing apparently affecting him lay down and went full asleep. In about an hour and a half afterwards someone going to wake him found that he was dead. He had died without a sign or struggle. He was in my company and when I say there was nothing apparently the matter with him, I mean that he was not excused from duty by the surgeon and placed on the sick list. Of course, the man was sick, really sick, and ought to have been excused. I believe now that the army surgeons have lost all sight of disease and examine simply to find out whether or not the patient is playing off.

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

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

J.B. Mitchell

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

Camp Near Fall Creek, Tenn.

May 20, 1863

Dear Mother

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

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

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

Your son

J. B. Mitchell

Camp north of Duck River

May 24, 1863

Dear Father

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

J.B. Mitchell

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

Pickett Station, Fall Creek

June 7, 1863

Dear Father

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

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

come to see me. My love to all the family. Remember me to Miss Sarah. Goodbye.
Your son.

James B. Mitchell

Picket Station, Fall Creek

June 9, 1863

Dear Mother

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

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

J. B. Mitchell

Picket Station near Shelbyville

June 10, 1863

Dear Father

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

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

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

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

J. B. Mitchell

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

In the Trenches
Tullahoma, Tenn.
June 30, 1863

Dear Father

I have no conveniences for writing. I have borrowed from the major [Slaughter] this paper and envelope. I would not write now were it not to relieve the uneasiness which I know you will feel at not hearing from me at this critical time. We left Shelbyville two

days ago and after one of the hardest marches that ever was made reached this place the same night. I was more completely exhausted than I ever have been before. We had to march in mud over our shoes and that night we slept in wet blankets with the rain pouring down on us. Crawford say his Mass Jule saw hard times but never any like these. When the regiment stopped to camp, Capt Wood had but four men with him of a company of sixty. All the rest had fallen out exhausted on the road. All day yesterday and today we were at work on the trenches, most of the time in the middle of the mud and rain. The ditches were nearly half full of water. They are now about complete and we are taking a little rest. We ae now upon the eve of a great battle and I think a victory. All our troops are confident and it seems to be the general opinion that if the enemy advances upon us in this position they will be beaten back with terrible slaughter. I hope and pray that it may be so and I may come out safely and I ask you to join your support to mine. I am tolerably well now and in good spirits. I will write the first chance get after the fuss is over. Address your next letter to Tullahoma, Tenn. My love to all the family. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

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

Camp near Corps Headquarters

Chattanooga, Tenn.

July 20, 1863

Dear Father

Your good letter of the 14th has been received and I am pleased to learn that you are in good health. It finds me well and in tolerable spirits. I am looking for someone from home by every return train, but so far have gone unrewarded. I can readily understand how the exigencies of your business necessitate your close personal superintendancy at home, but then when I hear all around me the boys welcoming some kind friend from home you know I cannot keep from feeling a little lonely and expectant. Our regt. has been detached as Provost Guard of Chattanooga. We are camped very close to the town and near Gen. Polk's headquarters. Anyone coming from home can very easily find out from the guard who are posted over the doors of the Crutchfield house, the place of our encampment. It would afford me the greatest pleasure to have Mother come up and see me, but I fear from the circumstances, which I have already mentioned, that she would be too greatly inconvenienced. If however, you can spare Willie for a short time I can make him very comfortable here with me in camp. I have a very good fly, fortunately saved out of the general wreck, to shelter me and a nice bunk

made of plank to sleep on. Let him bring with him a boy to cook for me while I send Crawford home with my horse. If you still think it best for me to keep my horse, send Alfred, Jenny's brother, Phil, or some other little negro who can attend to him. We saved all our clothing and camp equipage except tents of which we have not any in the company. We are faring now tolerably well as regards substantials, but have no vegetables at all. From eating salt bacon and beef, my mouth has become very sore indeed. I am glad to learn that Randolph is doing well and anxious to ear [sic] from Uncle and Bowie. My love to all the family and please remember me to Mrs. Price. Goodbye. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Camp near Chattanooga, Tenn

July 24, 1863

Dear Mother

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

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

I am exceedingly glad that you have decided to come. I was afraid you would not do so. Bring Pa with you if he can leave his business. Tell him not to be troubled about the

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

J. B. Mitchell

Encampment 34th Ala. Regt.

Manigault's Brigade

July 30, 1863

Col.

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

Very respectfully, your obedient servant.

J. B. Mitchell

Co. B, 34th Ala.

Col. George W. Brent

AAG

Headquarters 34th Ala. Regt

Chattanooga, Tenn,

July 30, 1863

Lieut. J. B. Mitchell

Co. B, 34th Ala. Regt.

Application for leave of absence of thirty (30) days.

Approved respectfully

E. B. Wood, Capt, commanding co.

Respectfully forwarded on disapproved

A. M. Manigault

Brig. Gen, commanding brigade

Respectfully not approved

Z. C. Deas, Brig Gen. comm. Div.

Forwarded, not approved

L Polk

Lt. Den. Commd [sic] Corps

Hd [sic] Qt Army of Tenn.

August 3, 1869

Disapproved by Command of General Bragg

Kinlock Falconer, AAG

Camp near Polk's HQ

Chattanooga, Tenn.

August 8, 1863

Dear Father

Mother's visit has been very agreeable to her and exceedingly pleasant to myself. I am only sorry that she leaves so soon. I wish you could have come up with her. I know you would have enjoyed yourself. I had sent up my application for furlough before Ma arrived. It came back disapproved. It seems to me very unlike equity to pardon a deserter and allow him twenty days to remain at home while every application of a good soldier who has always done his duty is refused. I send you enclosed the official

document. Gen. Manigault, you know, has a grudge against Col. Mitchell and I know it did him good to disapprove my furlough. I am afraid I will not see home any more till the war ends. I am in good health now and improving. A few more visits and boxes from home I think would about set me right. Mother will give you an account of her visit. I will write again soon. Crawford is well and wants his boy named Gen. Cantey. Write soon. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

Chattanooga, Tenn.

September 10, 1863

Dear Father

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

about 45 miles from here, but their exact location I have not been able to learn. Col. Echols passed along here about 2 weeks ago. There are a good many of Jule's men here on their way to him. I conversed with them some time. All speak highly of their captain and one old fellow declared he was worth a thousand like the first they had [Jim Lewellen]. Now I believe I have given you in detail all the information of any importance. Write soon. Your son.

J. B. Mitchell

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

Chattanooga, Tenn.

September 12, 1863

Dear Father

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

J. B. Mitchell

Camp near Chattanooga, Ga.

October 7, 1863

Dear Mother

Why don't someone from home write to me? I have not received a letter since I left Chattanooga. I am beginning to fear the Yankees have come up from Florida and there has been a battle at home as there seems to be a perfect cessation of all communication. You must not forget that I am always as anxious to hear from home as you to hear from me. It matters not where the army may be. If your letters are addressed and are hand directed and sent to any place near about, they will certainly reach me. I have written three times since I left Chattanooga, once at LaFayette and twice from Missionary Ridge. I was delighted to see Jule and hear directly from you all,

but I was very sorry to learn that Pa was complaining. I hope he is well by this time. Tell him that with the exception of a cough and bad cold I am in good health and spirits.

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

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

J. B. Mitchell

Johnson's Island, Ohio

December 14, 1863

Dear Father

Capt. Woods and myself are here alive and well. I suppose you have already learned the particulars of my capture. I was hit by a minie ball in the left side. The wound, however, was not a severe one, and I have already quite recovered from it. The ball I extracted myself and I have it now in my pocket. We have been treated by our captors

much more kindly than I anticipated. I am now, however, very much in need of clothing and money. If you can arrange it please send me a letter of credit on some northern bank here for 2 or 3 hundred dollars, like you used to do when I was at Chapel Hill. If you cannot effect this you might perhaps manage to get some United States notes and transmit them. Also, if you know any relation or friend up north here to whom I might apply for these things send their addresses in full.

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

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