William Wallace's Civil War Letters: The Virginia Campaign

Edited by John O. Holzhuetter

At the age of twenty, in 1851, a young Irishman named William Wallace arrived in the port of New York with $5.52 in his pocket and an abundant supply of thrift and energy. Within ten years he had acquired numerous skills from working on an Eastern dairy farm and in Eastern factories, a wife, two infant sons, his own small farm in the Town of LeRoy, Dodge County, Wisconsin, and a patriotic spirit which compelled him to enlist in the neighborhood militia after the outbreak of the Civil War.

William Wallace took to armed service as he had taken to work in his adopted country. It was a job that needed doing and, despite the constraints imposed by a private's pay, it was a way to make a living for himself, for his pregnant wife, and for his small boys. He approached soldiering with confidence and enthusiasm, tempered by regret for having to leave home and abetted by devout Presbyterianism, which helped him to justify his mission and to withstand its hardships. Before he left for the front, like all soldiers, Wallace promised that he would write every week. But unlike most soldiers he kept that promise, and his richly detailed letters describing army life in two campaigns—the Virginia campaign of 1861–1862 and the Atlanta campaign of 1864—testify to his fidelity to duty and family.

The letters, an abridgment of which will be published in two installments, differ markedly from the usual private's letters, which rehash the weather and little else, and the usual officers' letters, which celebrate tactics and ignore the commonplace. Wallace's mingle the commonplace with rudimentary tactical information and are enhanced by his natural gift for expression and his Irish wit and humor. Typewritten copies of the letters came to the Society in 1973 as the gift of Mrs. Ruth H. Roberts of Milwaukee, Wallace's granddaughter, and Philip Wallace Roberts, her son. The gift culminated a sixteen-year quest by the Society's Field Services Division. The letters themselves received an effusive endorsement by Janice O'Connell, a staff field worker responsible for obtaining them. She writes, "They are, without qualification, the best Civil War letters I have ever seen."
The author of these remarkable documents was born near Culdaff in County Donegal on December 17, 1830. Probably encouraged by other family members who had emigrated earlier, he sailed for America from Londonderry, arrived in New York on May 27, 1851, and managed to find a job loading paving stones into a boat moored at a Brooklyn wharf at 12½ cents an hour. From the waterfront he moved to a canal where he earned $10.00 a month, then in his twenty-first year, to a dairy farm near Philadelphia where he worked for six months for $6.00 a month. Ultimately he turned to a railroad for employment, then to a number of factories and mills in Philadelphia, where he was married on June 13, 1857, to Sarah Jane Canning. Mrs. Wallace, too, was from County Donegal, born in Maliné on June 3, 1835.

In 1860, when their son Robert was two years old and Charles was only months old, the couple moved to a forty-acre farm in Wisconsin, in section 34 of the Town of LeRoy, not more than two miles north of the village of Kckoskee and four or five miles north of Mayville. They numbered among their neighbors Mathew and David Clarke, father and son, fellow Irish immigrants who figure prominently in the letters Wallace wrote home. The neighborhood was not notably Irish, having many more German- and American-born residents than Irish.¹

Wallace waited to join the Williamstown Union Rifles, Mayville’s militia unit named for the township south of LeRoy, until after the war began. He affiliated on May 24, 1861, at the height of war fever in Wisconsin. The pre-war Williamstown militiamen were among the first to answer Governor Alexander W. Randall’s proclamation of April 16 calling for existing military companies to enroll for membership in the First Wisconsin Regiment and for the formation of additional companies. On May 7 the adjutant general directed the unit to go into active training at Mayville.

While the company drilled, its members were boarded at state expense at village hotels. Drill occupied two hours every morning and afternoon, and the restless soldiers threatened to disband if they were not soon called to more active duty. On June 10 the company was mustered into state service with the Third Wisconsin, the men all kneeling with their heads uncovered as the oath was administered. On June 13 orders were received to proceed to Fond du Lac, where Colonel Charles Hamilton had arranged the regimental training camp at the western edge of the city. Wallace’s company left Mayville on June 15 in rented wagons as a heavy dust storm swirled through the community, and later the same day caught the train at Horicon for Fond du Lac.²

Besides the Mayville unit the regiment included companies from Watertown, Oshkosh, and Milwaukee. Wallace’s company participated in the Battle of Fort Henry on March 9, 1862, and the Battle of Shiloh on April 6, 1862, where they saw some of their first action. They then marched to Tennessee, where they were attached to the Department of Tennessee, and later to the Army of the Tennessee. On May 24, 1862, they were mustered into federal service with the Fifty-Fourth Wisconsin, a unit that had previously fought at First Bull Run and Churubusco. They served in a number of engagements, including the Seven Days Battles, the Second Battle of Bull Run, and the Battle of Fredricksburg. The Fifty-Fourth Wisconsin was later attached to the Army of the Potomac and saw action at Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, and the Battle of the Wilderness. They were mustered out of federal service on July 15, 1865, and were mustered back into state service on July 16, 1865.


²Charles C. Chubb, sergeant, Co. E, Third Wisconsin Regiment, diary, entries for May, June, July, 1861, microfilmed transcript, Archives-Manuscripts Division, SHSW.
Inasmuch as sundry persons are uttering sentiments treasonable and dangerous, at this time, to the Government, we deem it proper that it be noticed, and although deprecating a mob spirit, we take this method of giving them due notice that if they persist in their pernicious course, and in any manner interfere to prevent or discourage the loyal men of Wisconsin from volunteering in the service of their country in this hour of great need, they will be summarily dealt with—nor can the public expression of traitorous sentiments be longer brooked in this community. If, after this notice, those in sympathy with the rebels do meet with trouble, they must hold only their own rashness and pusillanimity.

VIGILANCE COMMITTEE

April 21, 1861.

In Waupun a Vigilance Committee issued this stern warning to citizens suspected of being sympathetic to the South.

Monroe, Waupun, Boscobel, Neenah, Darlington, Shullsburg, and Madison. Wallace was a bit older than most of his comrades, who generally were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. His maturity and familiarity with factory labor probably enabled him better than his companions to endure the camp mess hall in Fond du Lac, which one critic commented smelled like "a compound effluvia composed of mud, lumber, sour bread, dishwater and general putrefaction" and to stomach its bill of fare, which included "bread so stale and tasteless that it seemed to vie with chips of dry rotted bass-wood in furnishing nutritive properties; apple-sauce that disgraced the name of apple...; and meat of foot-tap texture." "Dish meet," one German recruit is quoted as saying, "ish tam tough, but it don't schmell!"

Complaints about the food had some effect, and the menu became more tasty if not more elaborate.

On June 29 the U.S. mustering officer appeared and prepared the rolls. Four or five men in the regiment refused to muster into U.S. service, and on orders of Colonel Hamilton their heads were shaved and they were drummed out of camp to the tune of the "Rogue's March." Uniforms soon arrived, made of light woolen materials that rapidly lost their shape and usefulness, but which were "excellent for ventilation" in the July heat. They consisted of a gray hat, a blue flannel shirt, light gray trousers, and a loose wamus or blouse.

The same evening the men became U.S. soldiers, the Oshkosh company, Scott's Volunteers, was called to Milwaukee to aid in suppressing a bank riot, caused by leading banks' refusal to accept other banks' notes that were supported by Southern securities. The refusal, however, had not prevented the banks and other Milwaukee firms from stuffing the deflated currency into pay envelopes at its face value. Angered workers took to the streets, gutted some banking offices, and forced officials to call up troops to prevent more violence. Tensions remained high for several days. The Oshkosh company arrived too late to witness action, but its members had a good time in Milwaukee and returned to Fond du Lac "in fine spirits."

On July 5 the regiment received orders from the Secretary of War to report at Hagerstown, Maryland. Relatives hastened to Fond du Lac to bid the men farewell, and on July 12 at about 2 P.M. the men simultaneously struck their tents on command and completed their packing. At five o'clock they set out for the depot, but had to wait in stuffy railroad cars until nearly sundown when the train finally chugged out of Oshkosh, heading towards Milwaukee. "The road for a long distance was crowded with people, and cheer after cheer arose as the cars moved slowly away," wrote a diarist from Wallace's company. The route took them through Chicago, Toledo, Cleveland, Erie, Buffalo, and Elmira, New York. Everywhere townspeople feted the troops and heaped encomiums upon them.

Women of the various communities served luncheons, usually after the men marched through the streets "for the gratification of the populace." Finally on July 16 the Third Wisconsin arrived at Hagerstown and occupied the campsite that the First Wisconsin had abandoned. At this point Wallace takes up the story.

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1 Monroe Sentinel, June 26, 1861.
2 Chubb diary, July 12, 14, 1861.
Aside from a necessary reduction of 308 typewritten pages to two lengthy episodes, the text appears much as it was transcribed by the Wallace family. Spelling and punctuation have been corrected only when required for ease of reading. Individuals mentioned without footnote references usually were members of Wallace's company, Company E, who lived near Kekoskee.

_Camp above Sandy Hook, Maryland_  
_July 21st, 1861_

Dear Sarah,

We left Hagerstown Friday, July 19th, at 6 A.M. for this place with an advanced guard of 80 men and a rear guard of the same. Our train of wagons consisted of 32 with 4 mules in each, loaded with rations and camp equipment generally. Marched with fixed bayonets all the way on the road that leads to Harpers Ferry. We occupied two days in marching 26 miles. Marched 15 miles the first day and 11 the second. Got our knapsacks carried all the way, and great need we had of it, for it was killing hot. We marched through pleasant valley with high mountains on each side—put me in mind of walking along the Little Schuylkill River. A mile before we come to the river we could not see anything save a few trees. All at once we came in sight of the Potomac river with the Baltimore and Ohio canal railroad along side. Marched up a steep road to the side of a mountain where once the rebels occupied.

During our march the farmers seemed to be very loyal. They had their slaves tending to us with water, and in some instances giving [us] bread and meat and fruit. The first night we camped it rained all night. The water ran in floods under our India rubber blankets. Got up as fresh as a daisy, got plenty of good water all the way. The people sat on the fences like as many pea fowl, some remarking, "Ain't them rough-looking fellows." They gave us the praise of being the best fellows passed this way. The citizens say that if all the soldiers is like the Wisconsin First, that the rebellion will soon be at an end.5

We got to this place the second day at between 2 and 3 o'clock in the afternoon. After we pitched tents, which only occupied a few minutes, I took a stroll down through the village of Sandy Hook, took my supper in the same hotell and off the same table that John Brown took his off the time he advanced on Harpers Ferry. After supper I walked up to the village of Harpers, but did not go across, all the bridges being burned—locomotives and railroad cars in the river. The river is full of big rock, the burned timbers blocking up the river in every direction. The government buildings is all burned but the walls of the others being yet standing.

I am cook for a mess of 11 men. I have to fly around at a queer grist sometimes, between getting water and wood and attending to the other military duties. Since I commenced to write, they caught a spy in the camp and made him take the oath of allegiance at once.

The Watertown company left the camp this morning to guard the canal. We expect to follow every hour. The boys is in good spirits, very anxious for a fight. We have been drilling every leisure hour.

_Wm. Wallace_

*6The residents referred to the bravery of the First Wisconsin Infantry at the battle of Falling Waters, West Virginia, on July 2, 1861. The site was twenty or thirty miles from Wallace's location.
Camp Pinkney near Sandy Hook  
August 8th, 1861

Dear Sarah,

Captain Hammer has went home to Mayville yesterday for 20 days. I sent with him five dollars in gold and some of our rations, one biscuit and dried potatoes and a little piece of vegetables of various kinds, seasoned so that [they] will keep for a long time. You can keep them so that the neighbors can see them, and after that you can make a big pot of soup of them.

Yesterday was a busy day in camp, staking tents and cleaning under and about them, and washing our shirts, coat and pants. I got a tub and a wash board from a negro wench and soon got through with my washing. We get plenty of soap and candles of the best kind. All our rations is first rate. We get fresh beef once a week. The camp is very clean. The boys is able to attend to their drills with the exception of John Canning [Cannan] and John Roads [Rhodes], the former being able to come to camp and the latter has the measles but is getting better. I never was sick a minute since I came to camp, I being as fat as ever. Have not felt pain or ache since I left home. This is a healthy location. You would be surprised to see us all sitting all around the pot like so many tailors without knife or fork. And laying on the earth all the time. We spread the india rubber blanket on the ground and lays right down without paying any regard to the weather. The water runs under us when it rains, but not a drop touches us. I think when I get home that I will have to lie on the floor.

There comes a slave to camp the other day from Johnston, the rebel commander at Winchester. He fled from him 4 days after the battle of Manassas Junction [Virginia]. He was taken before General Banks, and that son of freedom told him that he was now a free man. He is cooking for Co. D. Captain Clark of Waupun pays him 49 dollars per month and [he] is dressed in full uniform. Him and ten Union men escaped at the same time. He had his gun loaded up to the muzzle. He did not fire a shot during the engagement at Manassas. He is 18 years old and very smart. He waited on the table for Johnston. Two more of his brothers escaped some time ago.

Wm. Wallace  
Sandy Hook, Maryland

Camp Carroll  
August 21st, 1861

Dear Sarah,

We left Sandy Hook on Saturday. Marched all day through mud and slush, it having rained the night previous. It is a difficult thing to get along when we got to carry a 46 lb. weight. The weak ones gets theirs carried in the wagon. Our knapsack weighs 20, gun 10, canteen 4, haversack 5 with two days rations in it, cartridge box with 40 round of cartridge weighs 8. We got to carry 40 round all the time. If we shoot one off, we are supplied with another.

The general health of the troops is good. I am kept very busy cooking and doing pioneer duty. I was doing my washing and David’s [David Clarke] this morning when we were called out on pioneer duty, but I got excused for this time on account of washing. We have to keep very clean.

The Pennsylvania 29th is along side of us. One of their sentinels shot a farmer dead yesterday for attempting to poison the spring. He lived about 20 rods from the camp. His body was carried to the house, his pocket was full of arsenic. The ball entered his right ear and came out of the other. We have two men under guard that we caught this morning. They was selling butter and vegetables and whiskey full of poison.

The slaves are leaving their masters in great numbers. There were 4 men in camp today looking for them, but did not get them as the Colonel would not allow them to search the tents.

Wm. Wallace

*Gen. Joseph Eggleston Johnston (1807–1891) was outmaneuvered and outnumbered at Harpers Ferry. He organized a counterattack at Bull Run (Manassas) on July 21 and routed Union forces.
Buckeystown, Maryland
August 24, 1861

Dear Sarah,

This is a great place for grasshoppers and black crickets. They are hopping through the tents in large numbers. When I leave down the pot with hot coffee, it makes them hop at a furious rate, jumping into the coffee like flies in molasses. We get so used to them that we don’t mind them. We use only one pot for cooking meat, coffee and all. We burn our coffee on the frying pan. I bought a coffee mill for my own use. Before I got it I had to bruise it with a stone.

I am the busiest man in camp, having to cook for 11 men, do the shoe mending and all the tailoring. On Friday I mended 4 pair of pants and one pair of boots. Every day I have something to do of that sort. Anything that is wrong in camp, no matter what—Billy Wallace can fix it. The Adjutant wanted a martingale, [and] the hostler did not know where to get one made. He [the breaker] then caught them by the hind feet and stretched them to their full length. Finally a small boy was put on and rode quietly through the camp. They were then fit for the wagon, 4 [to] each wagon, with the hind wheels chained, and [driven] through a 40 acre field, 2 abreast with one line, and woe be to him or her that did not draw. With a black snake whip and a good driver, they were soon fit for to be handed over to the regular teamsters.

Yesterday was an exciting day in this place. It is well understood that the legislature was to meet in this city. It was thought to pass an ordinance of secession. So we were on the look out for them. Our designs was not made known to anyone for fear they would not come. The hour of meeting was 12 o’clock and every man was ordered to load his gun in the tent. Then orders came for 5 men out of each company to go to the city to spy out the place of meeting. David and Charles Hoskins [Haskins] was 2 of the 5 of our company. The guns was sent in the ambulance (or sick

Holzhueter: Civil War Letters

Camp Bank, Frederick, Maryland
September 18th, 1861

Dear Sarah,

Got in here at 8 at night [September 13] and halted on a dung hill. I cannot call it anything else, for there were 7,000 mules broke in this summer, so you may think it was a place of manure. But we did not know where to go and was glad to get any place to lie down and rest our weary limbs. Next morning we laid out a new camp on the other side of the road, a beautiful place, good water and a fine view of the city. Can hear the city clock strike every hour.

I witnessed 3 Mexicans breaking the mules, and I think they are second only to the celebrated Rarey. The first thing they done was to ride up to the drove in the field and throw a noose on one, tie him to a stone post, cut his mouth, put bridle on and the saddle, then talk 2 or 3 minutes and get on to ride with a pair of spurs the teeth of which was half an inch long and [with] a whip. The first time they stuck the spurs in them, it made them fairly roar, and if them fellows cant ride I would not say so. The rears and tears of the mule is a caution to white folks. In ten minutes after the saddle was put on, they tied the bridle to the saddle and stood perfectly still, coming to him when he [the breaker] spoke to him [the mule]. He [the breaker] then catched them by the hind feet and stretched them to their full length. Finally a small boy was put on and rode quietly through the camp. They were then fit for the wagon, 4 [to] each wagon, with the hind wheels chained, and [driven] through a 40 acre field, 2 abreast with one line, and woe be to him or her that did not draw. With a black snake whip and a good driver, they were soon fit for to be handed over to the regular teamsters.

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John Solomon Rarey (1827-1866) was an Ohioan who developed what were considered humane methods of breaking and training horses, although some of his techniques would be considered cruel by contemporary standards. He used hobbles and straps and rendered recalcitrant horses immobile for hours at a time. An exhibition in 1857 before Queen Victoria and her family at Windsor Castle brought him fame and wealth.

The Maryland legislature had convened in Frederick the preceding April and voted not to secede. But secessionist members of the body called an irregular special session for Frederick in hopes of reconsidering the vote. Governor Thomas Holliday Hicks of Maryland supported the Union, but opposition plans went ahead anyway, and the Third Wisconsin was detailed to Frederick to curb them. Pinkerton detectives had arrested some secessionist legislators in Baltimore before the Frederick episode. These maneuvers helped to keep divided Maryland in the Union.
Map by Vickie Rettenmund, showing major encampments and engagements of the Third Wisconsin Infantry.
wagon) and the men strolled along quietly on the streets, ready at any moment to seize their guns and capture the whole kit, but the members got wind of it some way or other and did not meet.

Then the work of picking up the members separately, catching them in hotels and taverns, while others tried to make their escape home again. But they were foiled again, for while the boys was looking round the streets the Colonel was wide awake to dispatch pickets out round the city on every road and field and lane. In fact there was a row of men round the city, some 300 in all, so that there was no possibility of escape. As the Adjutant remarked, "A cat cannot escape before dark." They had 15 or 30 of them in camp, scared half to death. As I write this, the pickets fetch in an odd one. Some they get in cellars and some in stables, etc. They have not got the speaker yet, but expects to find him soon, if he is in the city.

Last night we made a decent upon 2 secession papers that is published here. The names of them is the "Herald" and the "Republican," both notorious for their enmity to the federal government. The Union papers is the "Examiner" and "Maryland Union"—2 on each side. The Colonel read one of the seshers and accordingly two wagons went to the office at 8 o'clock and brought into camp 25,000 secession documents together with the proprietor, Mr. Riley. B. H. Richardson is the editor of the other. They are all under a strong guard and will be sent to Baltimore, from thence to New York. The taking of so many of the ringleaders just saves the government 10,000 men, for if they had passed an ordinance of secession it would be a strong invitation for Jeff to come to help them. Then it would take some thousands to repel them. If every regiment had took as many of the Virginia legislators the war would soon be over.

I am just informed that they got the whole of the legislators, 21 in all.

Wm. Wallace

Shortly after the successful suppression of the Frederick legislature, three companies of the Third Wisconsin, not including Company E, were detailed to Bolivar, a small town near Harpers Ferry. They were instructed to remove some wheat for use by Union troops. The transfer had been accomplished when Confederate forces belatedly resisted the intrusion. The skirmish of Bolivar Heights on October 16, 1861, resulted. Four men of the Third Wisconsin were killed in the battle, seven wounded, and two were taken prisoner. Confederate casualties numbered thirteen, and four prisoners were taken.

On October 21 the regiment left the Frederick area and marched to Darnestown, where it remained until December 2. Then, in a two-day march, it returned to Frederick and established itself in Camp Ruger, named for regimental Colonel Thomas Howard Ruger, the new provost marshal of Frederick. "Between bad whisky and bad women and the bad boys in a dozen or more regiments," wrote regimental historian Edwin E. Bryant, "our patrol duty for the winter was a kind to which field service is far preferable."

Dear Sarah,

I made 45 dollars during the last two months cobling, but as I owed 10 dollars to the tanner and 5 for a pair of boots and will have to keep some money on hand to buy more leather, in case we have to march from here [I am not enclosing the whole sum]. In Frederick I can get as much as I want to.

Wm. Wallace

Camp Ruger, Frederick
February 2nd, 1862

Dear Sarah,

I got a letter from you this morning dated the 29 January and had just got through reading it when William Thorp opened his and handed me another from Mrs. Thorp with the gratifying news of the birth of a daughter. It was good news to me and I am thankful to Almighty God for his mercies to you. I hope you are all doing well.

I wrote to you the 2nd inst. and sent you my likeness, 2 newspapers, a mouth organ, a little watch and a cake of soap and a picture book for Robert. I think I will not send you as much money as I said I would. I have spent 15 dollars for boots and leather. I loaned 20 and gets 25 cents on the dollar till pay day and has fifty dollars yet. I will send you 20.
I must keep 20 or 30 for buying leather, etc. If I live till next pay day I will send one hundred dollars. I think with what you get from the state that that will be enough.  

You want to know what General McClellan's wife's name is. I don't know, nor have I any means of knowing. At any rate I or you have mothers just as well entitled to a name as any other man's wife. You can either name her after your mother or mine which is Margaret. I am in a hurry with this as it is getting to be near dinner time and [I] has 3 pair of boots to sole and heel before bunk time.  

This morning I dreamed that a little girl was standing at a tree and jumped into my arms—good for the dream. This is a beautiful day, snow 2 inches deep and the sun shines beautiful. We don't get our coffee burned. The bread we get baked. David is well. Yesterday was wash day. I washed one and a half dozen of shirts and drawers, soled and heeled 4 pair of boots and done my cooking besides. I think that will beat you women all to pieces. God bless you all. Yours in haste  

Wm. Wallace  

Camp Ruger  
February 16, 1862  

Dear Sarah,  
I am glad that the neighbors turned out so well to chop your wood. You said that the children were glad to get the presents. I said in my last letter that I would send some things by express to you. I am sending them today to Linn Martin and you can send down to Kekoskee and get them. I sent you a striped bag containing one blue coat, 1 blue pants, three pair of drawers, 5 shirts, 2 pair of stockings, 3 towels, a pill box with some pills and a little thing resembling a watch, but don't open the clasp of the old pocket book you gave me before I left home. The two pair of drawers in the mouth of the bag is Davids. Then there is a bundle directed to Mathew [David's father] with Davids coat and 2 shirts for him. The 2 blue drilling blouses is mine and the two leather straps, the blue and the red, white and blue hat bands is mine also. David sent his likeness in his coat pocket, and, I had almost to forget, in the mouth of the bag is a baby doll for the baby. If I had money to spare I would buy something for you and the children and send it along but I loaned all I could spare until pay day.  

Your own Wm.  

Camp Ruger, Frederick  
February 23rd, 1862  

Dear Sarah,  
From all appearances the war will soon be over. The Union forces has won four success-
ful battles which discourages the rebels alarm­
ing.\(^{13}\)

If you can get along without me sending any [money] the next time I would like it, for I can make a third more of it here, by letting it out to the boys at good interest. I make money various ways. I bought a pair of boots from Captain Hammer at $4.25 and sold them the next day for $5.00. Then I bought a pair for $5.25 and sold them for $6.50 and another at $5.75 and sold them for $7.00. Then I sell some thread and shoe mending, tailoring, etc. . . .

David has got promoted to Corporal the other day [February 21] and I spent the afternoon putting on the necessary stripes and shiverings, as they are called, a stripe up the seam of each leg, and two on each sleeve of his coat. The pay is no more than a privet, only he gets 3 dollars a year more for clothing.

Yesterday was Washington’s birthday and great was the rejoicing about here. We raised a liberty pole in the square between the barracks and a flag 30 by 16 feet. The various artillery companies kept up an incessant cannonading that made the ground fairly shake. At night the city was beautifully illuminated. The day was pleasant throughout but terrible muddy.

I think you may call the Baby Mary Ann if you like. In this letter I send you a song composed by one of this regiment on the occasion of us coming to Frederick the first time and the camping on a dung hill and the next day moving to a better location and the arresting of the secession Legislature and the sending of them to New York.\(^{14}\) You will see it is well composed. My love to Robert, Charles, and little Mary Ann, from your own William

\(^{13}\)Wallace probably refers to the capture of Fort Henry, Tennessee, on February 6, 1862; the taking of Roanoke Island, North Carolina, February 8; the surrender of Fort Donelson, Tennessee, February 16; and the bloodless taking of Clarksville, Tennessee, February 19.

\(^{14}\)Literally hundreds of original songs were composed by soldiers during the Civil War, and group singing became a favored pastime for many infantrymen, both Union and Confederate. No copy of the song Wallace mentions has been located, but words to “Hamilton’s Badger Boys,” written in August, 1861, by Edwin E. Bryant appear in Third Wisconsin Infantry Association, Proceedings, 1895, p. 19.
of battle, leaving off our knapsack on the fence. Three companies sent out the turnpike towards Charlestown. In the course of an hour or two they brought back three horses, belonging to the rebel cavalry, but could not catch any of the rebels. In the mean time we were standing on the road, and it raining like fury. At dark we were ordered to take up our quarters for the night, 7 companies of us, and the other 3 was sent on picket.

We went into a splendid residence of brick with bureaus and some other articles of furniture with nobody to own them. We tore down the garden fence and made a good fire, pulled out the bureau drawers and made seats of them, and eat our supper of dry crackers and water, as we lost our coffee and coffee mill, some kettles and frying pans. But the good house and good fire compensated for the loss of the other things.

This morning we were routed out in short order at 4 o'clock to meet the rebels coming down from Charlestown. We started on a double quick and then there were some falling. The road was so rough and the night so dark, or rather the morning, but at 7 o'clock they did not make their appearance. Then our company was ordered out on picket and seven men ordered to go back to Sandy Hook to look after the baggage wagons and me amongst them. We traveled about 4 miles and turned back to Virginia again and the wind was blowing a perfect gale. Got back to quarters at one o'clock, then started away to the company with a bag of potatoes, kettle, gun, haversack, canteen, etc., so you may think I had as big a load as the day I carried the calf and the skunk to the steam mill. The distance was a mile and a half.

While there the boys got a fellow coming from the rebels to give himself up to the Union troops. He deserted the rebels last night after roll call and he said: “Out of our company of rebels only 40 answered to their names last night.” He was pressed into their service and when he heard of us coming over, he thought it was time for him to quit. This morning after we come in, a company of cavalry reconnoitered to Charlestown, a distance of 8 miles, and captured 3 rebel cavalry and brought them to the ferry. Their uniforms was all home made and gray. The last of the rebels had left a few minutes before our men went there or else they would have caught more of them. Generals McClellan and Banks was both there last night at dark.

Some of the inhabitants says they have not seen a newspaper for this last four months, nor any coffee. They make coffee of wheat and barley. Over one hundred and fifty families have left Bolivar since the rebellion broke out, leaving the most of their furniture in their houses. You could walk for a whole square and you could not see a house occupied. After I got back from cooking the potatoes I went about a mile for a bundle of straw to keep me off the wet ground. The boys seems to be at home here since they come. They help themselves to whatever the secessionists have. Today while on picket they took a pig that weighed over a 100 lbs., a fat goose and two or 3 big roosters and some guinea hens and milked two cows, etc. So Uncle Sam wont have to give them much rations for the future.

Wm. Wallace
Charlestown, Virginia
March 3rd, 1862

Dear Sarah,

After I finished my last to you, we got orders at 4 in the morning of the 28th to cook one days rations and be ready to march at daylight. It was a very cold night and was very disagreeable getting up at that time. We were ready at the given time but did not march till 8 o'clock. We were to reconnoiter the country to this town and so we did successfully. 600 of the Michigan cavalry, one battery of artillery, the Massachusetts 2nd and Wisconsin 3rd composed the expedition. Skirmishers was sent out on each side of the road for fear of the rebels getting in our rear.

At 6:30 we arrived safe in Charlestown where the rebels had been only a few hours before. Yes, minutes I may say, for when they heard of us coming they took to their heels and fled. Our horsemen followed after and in a short time brought back eleven horses and near a hundred barrels of flour together with 2 prisoners. We went to the railroad depot and got 200 barrels more, besides several tons of hay. We were drawn up in line in the main street. Then come General McClellan and General Banks and staff. He took off his
hat as he passed and highly complimented us on our successful expedition.

After that was over we got leave to rest awhile and eat dinner. So we visited several places and enquired after Jeff. D. [and] Co. But we could not gather anything from anyone as they are all secessionists here. As we passed along nothing could we see but old men and darkies, all the young men being in the rebel army, and the women was scared half to death at us. They thought from what they heard their fathers say that we would kill them all when the abolition army would come, but they found out different since. While we were resting, some of the boys tore up the printing office and threw the type in the street and got copies of the paper to read, one of which I will send you.

I went into several of the stores, most of which was shut up, but any that was open looked the picture of poverty. No coffee, sugar, calico, shoes, in fact there was nothing in them. Coffee is 10 shillings$15 a pound and salt 10 dollars a bushel. And boots 12 to 14 dollars a pair. No tea, spices of any kind. Could not buy a scane of thread or needles. I showed the storekeeper one of Uncle Sam's $5.00 notes with old Abe's head on it. He said it was the first he had ever seen. They have nothing but shin plasters. They have neither gold nor silver of any kind, nothing but plaster and made of the worst kind of paper. (In my last letter, I sent you a ten cent one of them. Take good care of it).

After all was settled the wagons was sent back to Boliver for our knap sacks and in the mean time we were quartered in the several churches through the town. It was blowing a perfect gale—cold and piercing. No person would open the church we were sent to. The Major ordered two men to break open the door if the old preacher would not open it. In a few minutes he gave up the key, and we were in the Episcopal Church. At 4 in the evening the wagons got back after night, and then we had to go out in the dark and search for our knap sacks which was not an easy matter to find, but we got them. Made our bed in the pews of the church. It was a curious sight to see so many warlike men in it, the house of the living God where His Word has often been preached. I felt myself that I was committing a sacralige, but it could not be avoided. The exigences of the time required it, for we could not lay out. The aisles and pews were well carpeted but they were not long that collor with the mud and tobacco spit. At this moment it is ridiculous to look at, but the boys says it is owned by rebels and it is no harm. They hardly ever stop playing the organ, while others is playing cards and playing the fiddle and dancing, swearing all round. This war will ruin many a soul. It is handing it over to satan each day.

Some of the companies has their tents in the cemetary with the head of the living against the headstone of the dead. The toomstones serves for tables to eat off, and at the same time blaspheming the name of the redeemer, not thinking how soon they may be in the land of forgetfulness. On the morning of March the first at 3:30 we were up and cooked breakfast and had it eat long before day. I had my fire beside the vault and it was very cold. We were kept under arms till noon, waiting for the rebs to come down from Winchester. But they did not come yet, nor will they. But in a few days we will go up and see them.

We are gathering a large force here first and repairing the railroad and bridges so that we can get war material more easy. The boys lives well since they come to Virginia. All the farmers is secessionists and they go and take sheep, pigs, flour, honey and everything they get their hands on, nobody forbidding them. We don't buy any cordwood, just take the fences no matter what kind it is or how fancy it is. Yesterday I visited the spot where John Brown was hung, the holes where the scaffold was sunk is still there.

Willie
Banks Division, Virginia

Camp Wisconsin
Near Smithfield, Virginia
March 9, 1862

Dear Wife and Children,

I got a pass from General Banks on Wednes-

\*A shilling was worth about 12½ cents, and was a Spanish coin still circulated in United States coastal areas in the 1850's and 1860's, despite its having been devalued, according to Bartlett's Dictionary of Americanisms (1860). The Wallaces would have been familiar with the coins because of their residence in Philadelphia.
day evening and started for Frederick on Thursday morning at 4 o'clock. Got to Harpers Ferry at 7 and crossed to Sandy Hook once more. Took the cars at 1 P.M. and got to Frederick at 3 P.M. distance 20 miles. Bought 3 sides of leather. Started next morning at 11 o'clock, got back to Harpers Ferry at 3 in the afternoon, and stayed with the New York 2nd regiment until I could get a conveyance the next morning, which I did at 10 o'clock and got to this place last evening.

Wherever we find any of Uncle Sams boys we make ourselves at home, so it was the case with me. When I went to Frederick, I took supper with the Maryland 4th regiment who is now provost guard in our place. Next morning I got a good breakfast from one of the citizens who kindly invited me to breakfast with them. The woman filled my haversack with cakes and then I bid them good morning, and a fine morning it was.

They called the camp after our good State of Wisconsin. We are 16 miles from Harpers Ferry and about the same distance from Winchester, which place we intend to take soon. Some of our division is at Bunkers hill, 4 or 5 miles further on towards Winchester. Smithfield is a small town like Kekoskee but 20 times as old. Towns dont grow fast down here in Dixie. Charlestown is scarcely as big as Waupun. The turnpike runs through it and some small streets leading out at right angles, none of which is paved. The Court House is about the size of the school house in Nelson St. in Philadelphia, with two marble columns in front, one on each side of the door. There is no fence around it. They have no town clock at all.

The prison is on the opposite corner. It is a brick building, 2 story and a garret high. It was formerly used as a dwelling house. The walls is about 14 inches thick and painted brown. The partitions is of brick 18 inches thick and plastered over and a few iron bars across the windows. The door sides and sills is of wood, but they have strengthened it since John Brown was hung by placing an oak plank on each of the door jam outside and inside and bolted it together with three iron bolts ¾ of an inch thick. It strengthens it enough to keep a fellow from putting his shoulder against it and throwing it out, and altogether it would be a very unsafe place to put a Moyamensing killer in for safe keeping. The yard is about 40 feet square, the wall is 12 or 14 feet high limed all over but very easy to pick a hole in it and climb over. I visited all the cells in it. There is no prisoners in it except the contrabands that comes in every day from their masters. I was in the room where old John Brown was and there stands the old table where he eat off and the stove too. Most of the table the boys cut up and intends taking it home. I have a piece in my pocketbook for safe keeping.

They have one tannery in it [Smithfield] and leather is 70 cents a pound. It is only 28 in Frederick—a big difference. That is the fruits of secession. Every man or boy that is able to carry a gun is pressed into the rebel army. Nothing can be seen but nigers and old women. All the free nigers is making entrenchments with the rebels and take it all together it is a miserable place.

I got one of the slaves to cook for me and I have nothing to do but mend shoes. I pay him the same as the boys pays me. He is one of the contraband and is a fine inelegant smart fellow. His name is George.

The chaplain invited me into his tent today and had a long conversation on religious matters generally. He thinks a good
Dear Sarah,

I received yours of the 10th inst. in proper time and was truly glad to hear that you and the children was well, as this leaves me at this present time. I still enjoy good health generally except a few days ago. I was very sick.

We left Winchester on yesterday morning at 9 o'clock through mud and slush up to a short mans back side, it having rained 2 days previous and snowed one, so that the roads was almost impassable. We left General Shields at Winchester with 15,000 troops to protect that place. We had only left it a few hours when the rebels attacked him. So we marched along. We heard heavy firing and today we heard that the rebels was repulsed with heavy loss, a great many of their cavalry being killed. It is said that General Shields got his arm shot off.  

Our course was South East and [we] marched some 15 miles, where we encamped 3 miles from the Shenandoah river for the night, tired and worn out with the heavy march. A great many had blistered feet, their boots and shoes running over on every side—the wet roads making them like dishcloths. But as for myself I was as fresh as a daisy, I have the soles of my shoes almost an inch thick and David's the same, and that is the thing to carry a man along in the mud. We gathered a few leaves, got coffee and some of Uncle Sam's pies and went to sleep, but before lying down many was the curse and oaths powered down on Jef Davis and his rebel crew for fetching us down to this land of mud and rain.

We slept pretty comfortable on our pile of leaves and rose and shook ourselves this morning (for we always sleep with our clothes on) at break of day and eat breakfast and slung knapsacks and started for the road again on God's holy day. But the soldier knows no Sabbath, so we had to go it. At the distance of 3 miles from our camp we were at the Shanendoa and passed we on the pontoon bridge in safety. But as the teams was coming over and as one of them was entering on it, the two front mules jumped off and was drowned. At the same time 3 or 4 rods of it was carried away and delayed the passage of the rest of the train for 5 hours, and of course we had to wait till the bridge was repaired. We started at 3 o'clock and marched a few miles and halted for the night in a fine timber.

The Company is going out on picket just now but I dont have to go as Colonel Ruger has excused me from duty. I do nothing but mending shoes, so I can be in my tent every night if I like which is a good thing.

General James Shields, of Irish birth, had seen service as a brigadier general of Illinois Volunteers in the Mexican War. As an Illinois politician and lawyer, he nearly fought a duel with Lincoln, but on August 19, 1861, his former enemy commissioned him a brigadier general of U.S. Volunteers. His Civil War career was not as successful as his political, which put him in a U.S. Senate seat for three different states—Illinois, Minnesota, and Missouri. Against Stonewall Jackson in the first battle of Kernstown, Virginia, to which Wallace refers, Shields fared less well than he might have, given the numerical superiority of his troops (9,000) over Jackson's (5,500). He lost 118 men killed, compared to Jackson's 80. The battle touched off the Shenandoah Valley Campaign. Shields did not lose an arm at Kernstown, neither does he appear to have been wounded. A lack of official recognition for his military achievements has been credited for his resignation on March 28, 1863.
As we passed over the Shanendoa we had to encounter a steep rugged mountain called the Virginia Blue Ridge. It is a long crooked dreary road and when at the top of it we had a fine view of the surrounding country. While crossing it we thought of Bonaparte crossing the Alps but our fighting was little compared to his. At the foot of the hill is the village of Snigerville [Snickersville], a very small ragged looking place. Great groups of negroes gathered in front of log houses looking at the Yankees, as they called us. I asked one of them if the rebels called the Irish and Dutchmen Yankees too. A darkie replied: "Yes." Then you ought to hear the boys laugh. Most of the farmers has their threshing to do yet and they have no bridges over any river as big as Rock river. Any that they had the rebels has burned them. We have a sore time getting over. Sometimes two trees is felled and let fall across and throws some fence rails across them and then the bridge is finished. The teams has to ford it.

Willie

_Camp near Edenburg, Virginia_ 
_April 14th, 1862_

Dear Sarah,

On Saturday the 5th nothing of special intrest transpired except a few shots from the enemy, which was responded to by our artilleries in good style which had the effect of making the rebels quit. Our picket killed one of the rebel pickets. Sabbath 6th—all quiet. Spent the day reading Dr. Spurgons sermons of London. The chaplain loaned them to me and they are most excellent sermons.

Monday 7th forenoon. Mended 2 pair of boots and at 3 o'clock afternoon, we went on picket 2 miles or so from camp on Stony creek. The enemy on one side and we on the other. It was raining furiously but we had to go it. We threw our india rubber blankets over our knapsacks to keep it dry. No place to sit while off duty except placing a few rails on a stump and putting some straw over them and crawling in, but first making a good fire in front. The rain came down in torrents. At 12 o'clock we got up and went down to relieve a company of the Massachusetts 2nd, and O how disagreeable it was getting up half warm and going out in the cold rain. You can't imagine till you would try it once.

At 2 o'clock in the morning Tuesday 8th went on post on the outside picket. There I paced my lonely beat for 2 and one half hours, every once in a while stopping to see if I could catch the sound of a rebel approaching me but none made their appearance. All was quiet, only once in a while the pigs in the pen above me join to fight for a warm place, and the dogs howling, at my strange appearance I suppose. At 4:30 our squad was relieved by another squad from our company. At this time it was snowing fast, and we were wet to the skin. By and by day break came and we could see the rebels from our quarter (which was in a log barn) cross the creek once in a while. They would fire at the barn, but did not hit any of us.

At 8 o'clock we went back to the rail and stump shanty and got some hot coffee which relieved us considerable. The snow was melting down off our caps and running down our backs. Any man that thinks soldiering is a fine thing, he ought to try it once. But notwithstanding all this not one of us takes cold, nor has one been in the hospital since we left Frederick. They are all as hearty as so many Indians and in fact we live after the same style as the Indians.

We kindled a big rail fire in front of the tent and commenced to dry ourselves, taking good care to let the heat into the tent to dry up the wet and by 9 o'clock [that night] we had got squared up with the times, but still it kept snowing, it then being several inches deep.

Wednesday morning 9th. Got up and found it still snowing and it snowed all day. It was piled up around our tent but we rekindled our fire and sat baking ourselves before it, taking it as easily as possible. Afternoon, the Colonel anounced to us the surrender of Island No. 10 and the defeat of the rebels at Pittsburg landing. You may depend on what

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18 Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a nonconformist English minister whose popularity in the 1850's and 1860's was so great that his Sunday sermons "sold by the ton." His collected sermons total fifty volumes.
I say that we gave three cheers, that the rebels might hear 2 or 3 miles off. In the evening we signed the payrole.

Thursday, 10th. Morning cloudy, at 8 o’clock cleared up and continued fine all day. Got paid our two months dues the first of March and at dark I had $100.00 collected from my customers which I sent to you by the pay master.

The drum is beating for us to go to hear the chaplain preach for the first time in six months so I must quit for a little while. A little while indeed, for he did not preach at all. He read the 15th chapter of Exodus and offered up a prayer to the God of battle for his goodness in subduing our enemies.

Wm. Wallace

In camp near New Market
Stanton County
April 19th, 1862

Dear Sarah,

On Monday 14th sharp cannonading between our men and the rebels. We were all called out. I was busy mending shoes and had to leave everything scattered around getting my gun and accoutrements in short order. Some of the men was out playing ball when the long roll was beat. Then the scampering for the camp. We were drawn up in line and stood there for an hour or so, when the firing ceased and that relieved us for that time. In the evening the chaplain made me a present of Spurgons Sermons and a good present it was.

Tuesday 15th. In the afternoon I went back to Woodstock, along with 3 others and a sargent. We had 2 prisoners to leave in the prison there for disobedience.

Wednesday 16th. Morning foggy, gathered

Nathaniel Prentiss Banks’ humanity was one of his greatest assets. As a boy he worked in a cotton mill that his father superintended and earned the sobriquet “the Bobbin Boy.” He became a lawyer and tried repeatedly for Massachusetts legislative office, succeeding on his eighth attempt. He later served ten terms in the House of Representatives under five party labels. His presence and popularity contributed to the Union cause, but as a general he was less successful. He lost 30 per cent of his force during Stonewall Jackson’s Valley campaign, about which Wallace writes.
Our course [from there] was west of south and the roads was so bad that we had great difficulty in getting the artillery along. Sometimes they would stall, when a dozen of men would get at the wheels and would almost lift the guns and all, so eager were they to surround Jackson. We were stumbling and falling down about a third of the time. Well things went on about as I am telling you till 9:30 when we halted for the night, Jackson laying then far ahead of the point we were steering for. We had then to lay down on the leaves and went to sleep having eat our one days rations.

Friday 18th morning. A march of a mile or two brought us to the Shanendoah river. Then the work of fording it commenced. We took off our pants and got haversacks and cartridge boxes on our shoulders, shirt tails in our mouth and stepped in. The current was running strong and the water was up to our crotch. We caught each other by the hands to keep us from being swept away but we got over safe, dressed ourselves again, marched up to the hill and rested in a wheat field for a while, started again when the brigade was all over and made our way down to this place.

We filled our haversacks with crackers and some raw pork and started through the fields to the turnpike when we filed right back to New Market, then took to the East and crossed the Mountains and was on the other side at break of day having marched all night and raining all the time. At daylight we halted and cooked some coffee, the rain coming down in torrents almost drowning out the fires. Coffee drunk, we resumed our march to this place, which is the direct road to Gordonsville. Our company and Co's I & C accompanying us, leaving the rest of the regiment at the place.

We got our coffee in the morning with 4 pieces of artillery. We had two with us and came some six miles south towards Gordonsville. We are the advance. We got to this place at noon on the Sabbath day raining all the time, mud up to the knees and making locomotion rather hard but we went it like a brick, although we had traveled all night and had no sleep of course. Some of the main cavalry come along, 43 in number, and got there in time to prevent the rebels from burn-
Monday 21st, morning. Still raining, got breakfast, no appearing of the enemy all night. At 9 o'clock our company and Co. I went out on the south side of the Shanendoah on a forraging expedition and to see if we could see anything of the rebels. Got a sight of five cavalry but a shell from the big cannon on the hill made them skedaddle as the boys calls running. We stopped at the Columbia Mills and close by the village of Honeyville, sent out pickets to be on the watch. Myself and 3 more was sent up to a farmhouse. I went to the smoke house and got 800 pounds of smoked ham and a big tain with the twa ends as we used to call it at home. I kept it for my own individual use and had a good meal of it along with Captain Hammer and Lieutenant Dick. I tell you it was good. The hams was sent to headquarters along with 12 barrels of flour. David got a barrel of whiskey in the garret of the mill. Every man filled his canteen and made to drink on the spot and did not do us a bit of harm, for it was still raining like fury.

Having got all things on the wagons we returned back to camp wet or wringing. We are as fat and rough a looking set as you would see, mud up to our seats—nothing is too hard for us now. David and Bill Thorp went out to milk the cows, so we had milk in our coffee and got well dried. We felt happy. We think no more of going out to fight now than if we were going down to shoot ducks in the old [Horicon] marsh.

On picket
At Columbia Bridge, Va.
April 24th, 1862

Dear Sarah,

Just as we got breakfast ate, the whole company was ordered out to guard this bridge. We will be on here for 24 hours more. It is rather hard, but go it we must. It is not hard work but still fatiguing, for we have to have our accoutrements on all the time, night and day, and our guns so that we can lay our hands on them at any moment. We had not our pants off since we left Frederick 9 weeks ago last Tuesday.

We have adopted a new plan of getting along in the world. In addition to carrying plate, cup, fork, spoon, knife, etc., we now carry a candle, soap, coffee, sugar, salt and meat. We cut the meat and puts it on the end of a stick and cooks it in that manner and makes our coffee in our tincup, so we dont care where we go. Then when we get chickens, pigs or sheep we have our salt and pepper. We roast them after the same way as we do the bacon.

Our officers does all for the best and we have all confidence in them, especially Colonel Ruger. He is a thorough Military man al-

killed at the battle of Cedar Mountain, Virginia, on August 9, 1862, while astride his horse. He had tried vainly to rally his retreating men, finally joining them. He was shot as he guided his horse through a gap in a fence. Crane was a New Yorker, a graduate of Hamilton College, a member of the New York bar, and a teacher. He came to Wisconsin in 1853, teaching for a while in Beloit, then moving to Dodgeville, where he was active in politics. He served as chief clerk of the Wisconsin Assembly in 1858, 1859, 1860, and 1861. He moved to Ripon in 1859. His diary, "The Beginning of the Regiment," was published in Third Wisconsin Infantry Association, Proceedings, 1896, pp. 20-28; 1900, pp. 53-69, and 1901; pp. 15-23. The last entry is dated October 28, 1861.

22 An obvious Gaelic idiom. The word tain means bull, and is associated secondarily with cattle generally and cattle theft or raids. Twa means two. Given the context, the idiom may refer to a specific cut of purloined beef.

23 Thomas Howard Ruger was born in New York on April 2, 1833, and came to Wisconsin in 1844, settling at Janesville with his parents. In 1850 he was ap-
ways cool and as composed as if he was at home.

William

Camp near Harrisonburg, Virginia
Tuesday, April 29, 1862

My dear Wife,

Saturday afternoon 25th at 2 o’clock we packed up and joined the rest of the regiment at 3. We started at 4 back over the mountains again leaving the 39th Illinois in our place. We got to the top of the mountain at dark at 8 o’clock, halted and got into our tents for the first ten days. The ground was wet and cold so we did not sleep half comfortably, having no straw. We built a good rail fire in front of the tent and when we got too cold we came out and warmed ourselves. Sabbath morning 26th. We resumed our march down the mountain. At 10 we come to New Market and steered our way south to this place 16½ miles from New Market and one and a half from Harrisonburg. All was quiet along the route as the rest of the divisions had passed over before we left behind the mountains. We joined the rest of the brigade. The rest of the troops is several miles ahead of us.

Nothing to do and plenty of diversion as Mickey Free said, playing ball, wrestling, jumping and cutting around in general, but pointed as a cadet to the U. S. Military Academy at West Point and was graduated third in his class in 1854. After serving as an army engineer until April, 1855, he resigned and studied law in Janesville. He was admitted to the bar in 1856. Governor Randall commissioned him engineer-in-chief with a rank of brigadier general soon after the war began. But he desired practical military experience, and so was assigned as lieutenant colonel of the Third Wisconsin, in which capacity he was largely responsible for training new officers. He had a distinguished war record, and afterwards held military reconstruction offices in Georgia and Alabama, and commanded a regiment in the South until 1871. He was superintendent of the West Point academy from 1871 to 1876, then resumed command of the Department of the South of the army until 1878. Later he served in the Indian wars in Montana and the Dakotas. He retired in 1897 from the army as a major general, and died on June 3, 1907, at Stamford, Connecticut.

poor Billy has to keep ingling away at something or other.

William Wallace

On picket near
New Market, Virginia
May 10th, 1862

Dear Sarah,

[May] 3rd morning we were ordered out at dawn of day fully equipped for we were expecting to hear of the rebels coming on us every hour. Stacked the guns in the company street and ready to lay hands on them at a moments warning. Night came and nothing worthy of note occurred. Sabbath 4th morning beautiful. Preaching in the afternoon by the chaplain. At five o’clock in the evening a messenger came from head quarters pell-mell just as supper was ready. In two or three minutes the line of battle was formed, stood there a little while, next order came was to strike tents; sling knapsacks and the several regiments marched on towards Harrisonburg. I was left to load the Companies wagon, many of the teams was out at pasture. The beef cattle was out too. Then you ought to see the catching of horses and the driving off of cattle back to this place, horses kicking up their heels and sporting about. Then maybe there were no swearing. The dust on the road was so great that a person could scarce see anything.

In the mean time the troops was all up at Harrisonburg. They had no supper nor anything in their haversack. At dark some of the men from each company was sent back for 24 hours ration. I sent a barrel of crackers, some bacon and sugar and coffee. About seven o’clock the road was lined with teams going back to New Market, a guard of 25 men from each regiment was sent to guard them, myself included. We marched all night, till break of day 18 miles. So we were pretty tired and sleepy.

Monday 5th morning. Sleepy and tired waiting all the time to see the troops coming back but they did not come till 5 o’clock in the evening, just as the last of the wagon train got in. Our regiment was the second in at New Market. They halted for one hour. I had supper ready for them, but you ought to see the color of them with dust. They looked as though they had stood beside a dust sack.
in the mill in the old country. Every man almost failed to recognize his comrade, for the day was warm making the sweat come freely. After supper resumed the march and marched north of New Market about a mile and a half where we encamped with three brigades. Just at dark had to get them another supper at 8 o’clock and at nine we went to sleep on the hard ground. At eleven at night I was ordered to cook two days rations and be ready to march at midnight. Well I got up out of my sleep, tired and sleepy, being up all the previous night and had only been to sleep scarce two hours. The night was quite cold, making a fellow shake as if he had the ague. Between 12 and 1 the brigade marched south to New Market, when they turned east on the New Market and Gordonsville turnpike over the Massanutten [Mountain] at 5 o’clock in the morning.

Wednesday 7th. Got up at sunrise and gave the boys the chickens, bread and coffee. After breakfast some of the boys smelled some whiskey in the sutlers tent belonging to the Indiana 27th, some got drunk. By and by Colonel Ruger heard it, when he sent a squad of men to the aforesaid tent and arrested the 3 sutlers and placed them under guard and immediately confiscated his whole property, 4 fine horses, and 4 mules and 2 wagons and all of his stock of goods, as he was violating the army regulations in selling liquors to the soldiers. So ended his career in the army. He lost several hundred dollars besides the fine.

We are going back to Strasburg, so it is reported, and there to entrench ourselves, for we dont expect that Jackson will attempt to follow us, so our fighting is about ended. In this valley at Strasburg the railroad leads to Manassas and thence to Richmond and we will be only 18 miles from Winchester, where the railroad runs to Harpers Ferry where we can get rations and forage plenty and can move on to Richmond by railroad in short notice if we are called on. All the forrage for horses is nearly ate up in this valley, for what the rebels did not take, we did, so we cant gain anything by going further.

Sabbath 11th. The boys is busy playing cards, Sabbath day as it is. Soldiering is the worst place that any young person went to. They see all kinds of immorality and evil speaking and some of my neighbors is as bad
as any of them. He [David] can play cards with the pick of them and that on the Sabbath. I have done all I could to break him of it but my counsel won't be heard. I have often said I would write to his father and let him send him a letter of admonition but I must draw this to a close.

William

Strasburg, Virginia
May 17th, 1862

Dear Sarah,

The cars come to this place since I commenced this letter for the first time since Jackson left here in March. We all turned out to see and welcome their coming. A person would think to see us coming that we never saw a locomotive in our life times. The road is now clear and free for travel to Washington.

We left the regiment on the 15th and come to work on the fort above Strasburg. We expect to be detached for this purpose, but whether our request will be granted or not I can't say. The day is very warm. We work only 2 hours in the forenoon and 2 in the afternoon, so Uncle Sam is not hard on us. Some has blistered hands, but will soon get better. We expect to stay here for some time, as the rebels don't make their appearance scarce at all.

William Wallace

Strasburg, Virginia
May 18th, 1862

Dear Sarah,

We have pursued the rebels as far as was necessary, so General Shields' division went to reinforce General McDowell [Irvin McDowell] at Fredericksburg and then go to Richmond, so we have but a small force here. Several companies guarding, Brigadier Provost guard, etc. Jackson don't attempt to follow our retreat. So you need not worry or be uneasy about me, for I think we will have no more fighting in this place.

William Wallace

Williamsport, Maryland
Tuesday, May 27th, 1862

Dear Sarah,

I got a little time to spare this morning and will begin to tell you our adventures for the past few days. Well, I told you in a former letter that we expected to stay at Strasburg all summer, but that is just as the rebels say. Friday 25th we worked on the fort as usual. After supper word came that the rebels had made an attack on our men that was guarding the railroad down at point [Front] Royal some 12 miles down on the Manassas gap road. So our regiment was called out as it was getting dark. So off we started with knapsacks and all, but by the time we got there the fight was over and [we] was out with lanterns looking for the dead and wounded. One of Co. G of our regiment was killed and 4 wounded and 4 taken prisoners including a lieutenant. We lay on our arms till daylight on a pile of brick bats, buried the dead men, got the sick in a farmers wagon and started back to Strasburg without any breakfast, for when we left the fort on Friday evening we took nothing with us, expecting that the teams would be after us in the morning.

We marched back to Strasburg at ten o'clock on Saturday morning the 24th where we learned that the rebels had crossed the Shandooh after making the attack on our railroad guard and that some of their cavalry was in our front destroying our supply train while others was in our rear. So the Pennsylvania 46 was sent ahead, leaving their knapsacks behind expecting that the rear wagons would bring them along. But all at once the rebel cavalry made a charge on the rear of the train where David Clark and some more of our regiment including Captain Hammer and 70 zouaves. But the rebels was in strong force and surrounded them, killing some and taking the rest prisoners including David and the Captain and Mr. [Karl J.] Damm. But Damm made his escape through Saturday night, but seen nothing of David or the Captain. The Captain had been sick for a few days previous to our evacuation of Strasburg. Our Sutler lost 2 wagons and about $2,000 worth of goods.44

44The sutler for the Third Wisconsin was Charles Johnson, the black proprietor of Monk's Hall, a Madison eatery noted as a center for political intrigue during Governor William Barstow's tainted administrations, 1854-1856. The regimental historian states that Johnson was a good businessman and a skillful caterer, who served mess for the officers of the Third and
We were in a tight place. They were behind us and before us, between Middletown and Winchester. The Massachusetts 2nd and Indiana 27th and a battery was sent back a piece and shelled them off 2 miles so that gave the wagons a chance to get ahead. Night was coming on and [we] was expecting every moment to be completely cut off. We got to Winchester after dark, marching 25 miles and had not a bite to eat from the night previous. We formed in line of battle and lay down on our guns as tired boys as could be had to lay down without having a bite to eat, for the rebels took all our rations and wagons and tents belonging to our regiment with the exception of 2 or 3 pickets [that] was sent out.

But the first thing that waked us up on Sabbath morning was a volley of musketry over us. You may be sure we were not long in getting on our feet. I spied a barrel of crackers and got 5 or 6 of them but had no time to eat any, for we had to sling knapsacks and move up the field to meet the enemy. We had scarce five thousand men all told while the rebels had 25 or 30 thousand. We had 3 batteries but had not a fourth enough men to support them so we were in a fix.

Wednesday May 28 at sunrise the fight had commenced in earnest. 18 pieces on our side was sending forth their deadly breath to the rebels while theirs was pouring in shot and shell at a furious rate, knocking down houses, chimneys and everything that came in their way. Darkies and some union folks was running off towards Martinsburg and as a shell would burst in front of them in the street they would made a dive into the house again. When all was over, out again and so on for 2 or 3 hours. At 2 o’clock or so about, the rebels was coming in great force. For three miles it was, in front of the town, was covered with rebels, some 20 regiments, while our force was about 4000, for when our regiment was counted before the fighting it had numbered 594 rank & file. So it was hard for us to stand so many.

As for myself I was so bad with a cold I could scarcely straight myself, on account of bathing in the creek on Friday. Had very sore throat having a stocking around my neck and my overcoat on all day Saturday. So when I got up on Sabbath morning I was in a bad way of marching, so I stayed with the New York battery in front of the street. 2 men at one gun got killed and 3 wounded, so I slung my knapsack on one of the caissons and went to work the best I know how, shot all the balls and shells away. At this time our regiment got behind a stone wall and the rebels fell thick and fast, while five regiments of them charged on two of ours cross the open field. But when they come near the wall, the rebels come to a dead halt. Our men would have killed hundreds of them but in a few moments three more regiments come down the hill, to outflank ours, so the orders come to retreat, for right in front of the gun that I was at the rebels come in full force up the street, when our men shot grape and canister till they were within 15 or 20 rods of the cannons mouth, when we had to about face. With 2 of our horses killed I got astraddle of the cannon and away we went at a full gallop up the street.

While the rebels threw shells far in front of us a great many of the houses was on fire, women and children were running screaming and hollering, women barefooted and bareheaded running with their babes in their arms barefooted and bareheaded—the soldiers running over every baby that came in their way. When we got to the street where our regiment was coming up at a double quick without knapsacks, for they had to throw them away, they were so tight put on. A woman shot one of them out of the window, another came out with a pan of hot water when one of the boys caught her by the throat and threw her back on the pavement spilling the whole panfull on her bust. That settled with her. 4 of the men carried John Canning to the town but was so tight pursued had to leave him on the sidewalk. One woman said she would take him in. That was the last seen of him. He was not dead but was badly wounded in the head.

Second Massachusetts regiments for a time. At the end of the war, he reportedly speculated in cotton, succeeded handsomely, and died soon after. Edwin E. Bryant, History of the Third Regiment (Marlison, 1891), 388-389.

James Parrot [Par-
Convalescent soldiers pass the still unfinished U.S. Capitol on their way to rejoin their regiments.

Harper’s Weekly, November 15, 1862

When the roll was called on Monday morning there was 27 of our Company missing, 11 of whom come in since. But up to this time no person has seen or heard of David Clark or Captain Hammer or any that was taken on Saturday, only Mr. Damm. But he did not see David after the rebel cavalry come up to him. He will spend his 4th of July in Richmond, I guess. Perhaps he will come in yet, but it is doubtful as three days has nearly passed since the retreat.

All along the way the road was covered with knapsacks, guns, blankets, wagons upset and in some instances there were some unfortunate lying under it. Women running with their babies in their arms crying and screaming as they went along. One poor woman laid down her baby along the fence being unable to carry it any further. Dr. [Horace O.] Crane of our regiment jumped off his horse and threw it into an ambulance. Another one

lay along the road. One of the men that was on one of the teams got it up before him on the horse bareheaded. It was not over one year old, and a man could not see a rod on each side of him with the dust. Sometimes 4 wagons would be abreast on the road at a time each man trying to outrun his neighbor. Fences was leveled to the ground and most of the infantry was on each side of the road, 4 or 5 miles on each side. All the niggers that run away was afraid if they would be caught by the rebels they would be sold, and they were running for their life and liberty. We got to the Potomac at 8 o’clock at night on Sabbath, having marched over 60 miles in two days 86 of which we went on Sabbath and did not eat one bite from [when] we left Strasburg on Friday evening down the railroad, so we had a good appetite.

When we come to the edge of the river I got on an old horse to swim across. When about half way over the horse stumbled over a rock and went down under water. I stuck fast to him till he came up again and got over to Williamsport one of the wettest and tiredest fellows could be. Some of the teams got drowned coming over the river. Ten of the wagons is still laying in the stream. We lost our tents, all the cooking utensils and all the groceries. We expect to recross the river in a few days again. When we go again we will take vengeance on all the rebel sympathies for the insult they gave us along the way from Winchester.

I feel lonely since I lost David, for him and me bunked together since we went to Fond du Lac. As he was not wounded his father need not be uneasy about him. When we come to find out, we have lost over a hundred wagons all of which was lost on Saturday, one Co. of the 29th Pennsylvania that was at Front Royal has only 14 men and the Captain of another of the same regiment has only seven left. All the rest has been either killed or taken prisoners. If we only get back to Winchester, nothing will stop the men from laying the remainder of the town in ashes for the way they slaughtered our sick and wounded on our retreat. John Roads [Rhodes] and Abner Wallace was the only ones that were sick in our company, but they both got to this place in safety. Some of the sick crawled out of their beds and took to

their heels to get out of the clutches of the infuriated rebels, with nothing but their shirts and pants on. They were even bareheaded. Some had no pants at all, and such sights I never want to see again.

Our regiment was the last to leave the field and Co. E the last of the regiment. That was the reason we lost so many more men than any other Co. in the regiment.27

William Wallace

Williamsport, Maryland
June 3, 1862

Dear Sarah,

We still miss 16 of our company including the captain. Eleven days have passed away, so I think all hopes of their return is at an end until an exchange of prisoners is effected. I feel lonely since I lost my bed fellow but I hope he will soon be exchanged.

William

Camp near Williamsport, Maryland
June 8th, 1862

Dear Wife,

William Heller of our Company has arrived this morning from Winchester, having been paroled by the rebels until exchanged. He was nursing the sick and wounded of our men and when the rebels retreated before Freemont [General John Charles Frémont] he started with his parol, him and John Canning and a few more that was sick. John Canning is getting better and we expect him to come to the company every hour. David and the rest of our men was taken away by the rebels on the 30th. He says that David was well as was the rest of them except Charles [Carl] Matte of Mayville who died. I suppose the rebels treated our men very well, except the rations and they were of a poor quality and very little at that. Some of the rebel regiments had no uniforms on nor bayonets on their guns, a very hard looking set but desperate as a bear.

I bought 20 dollars worth of leather in Hagerstown on the 4th. We can buy eggs butter etc. very reasonable here compared to Virginia. General Green28 gave orders yesterday not to let any more peddlars into camp so we are deprived of these little luxuries. To bad.

William

Camp near Newton, Virginia
June 13th, 1862

Dear Sarah,

Tuesday the 10th we recrossed the Potomac into Virginia once more. We commenced crossing at 10 A.M. one company at a time on a flat boat, and by 3 o'clock in the afternoon we were all over—4 regiments of us all safe, with our wagon train. . . . Next morning at 4:30 we were out, and on the road at 5:30. Roads very muddy and making locomotion rather difficult. We marched south of Martinsburg 3 miles where we encamped. I went along with a few more after some straw and when we got back, the brigade was away having got orders to push on as fast as possible. We made Bunker Hill that night. Thursday 12th. We left at 7 A.M. and marched through Winchester. The boys had threatened to burn the city and General Green overheard them and he would not let a man leave the ranks not even to get a drink of water for fear of doing mischief, and we were very thirsty at the time for we had marched 12 miles under a very hot sun. We halted at Milltown a mile out of the city for an hour where we washed and eat a few dry crackers when we resumed our march further south for six or seven miles

27 The company's position as the last to retreat is corroborated by Captain Hinkley, A Narrative of Service with the Third Wisconsin Infantry (Wisconsin History Commission: Original Papers, No. 7, 1912), 24-26.

28 George Sears Greene, one of the oldest field commanders in service, was born in Rhode Island in 1801. He had a distinguished career as soldier and civil engineer. On April 28, 1862, he was appointed brigadier general of volunteers; then from May 27 to June 18, 1862, was in charge of the third brigade, second division, of the Shenandoah Army, replacing General Hamilton of Wisconsin. A rapid succession of commanders cost the Third Wisconsin dearly in efficiency and effectiveness. From 1861 to 1862, according to one authority, "The division to which the Third Wisconsin belonged had been once under command of General Patterson, then under General Banks, alone, then under General Banks subordinate to General McClellan, then under Banks alone again, then under General Pope, and then under General Pope subordinate to General Halleck, at Washington. The brigade had Generals Abercrombie, Williams, Greene, and Gordon, respectively, and some of them so many times over, that it was difficult to keep the reckoning." William De Loss Love, Wisconsin in the War of Rebellion (Chicago, 1866), 252.
to this place where we pitched tents and got the mail, read our letters, answered to our names at roll call, eat supper, and lay down on a big side of leather for a matrass. This morning we were up bright and early, ate breakfast and having got no orders to start, all hands went to work to write as if with one consent. We are now about 42 miles from the Potomac.

William

Camp near Warrenton, Virginia
July 13th, 1862

Dear Sarah,

Today was a busy day with us. At noon we got orders to send home all our extra luggage or else send it to Alexandria but we sent ours home, the Government taking the boxes to the railroad depot for us. I had to send home some of my shoe tools. The rest I will carry myself. Each team has to take ten days rations along so we may expect to have a long march. We may be in Richmond before we halt. We expect to march tomorrow or next day and it is not likely that you will hear from me before we reach our destination. That old plane you see in the box is one I got in the cell where old John Brown was confined in his execution at Charlestown, so you must take particular care of it as I have lugged it round for 3 months.

I see by the papers that the prisoners is to be immediately exchanged so we may expect to see David soon again. I guess I will keep his letters for him till he comes.

William Wallace

Camp near Little Washington
July 22nd, 1862

Dear Wife and Children,

When I last wrote to you I expected to be at Richmond by this time by the preparations that was amaking, but the rebels has as much to say about that as we have and sometimes more.

Yesterday Father Abraham sent his financial agent around again and distributed amongst us some of his promise to pays of which I send you 50 dollars by express to James McFarland as usual. You will find it there. We have been paid up for one year and during that time have sent you at 6 different times $282.00. I would like to have yours and the baby’s picture; if you can get it, either with or without the case but a case if you can as I could keep it better without being broke.

William

Camp south of Little Washington
July 27th, 1862

Dear Wife and Children,

Now I will tell you what is going on in camp every day. At sunrise we have reveille, every man has to dress up and get into his proper place in the ranks of his respective company and answer to his name. After that, shake blankets and fold them up, then go to the creek and wash. At 6 o’clock, police call, then 5 or six men is detailed by the orderly sergant to clean up the company St. of all rubbish, (next day 5 or 6 more and so through the Co.). At 6:30 sick call, the orderly sergant puts down those names that wants to see the Dr. They proceed at once to the hospital and he prescribes to their various wants so they are excused from all duty whatever until well again. At 7 o’clock breakfast call, then you could see a turn out, every man with his haversack over his shoulder with plate, tin cup, knife, fork and spoon, seats himself down on the ground close to the coffee kettle. At 8 o’clock guard mounting, 5 men from each company to guard around the camp and the company that is going on picket duty moves at the same time to relieve the company that has been out 24 hours. At nine drill call and drills to eleven when recall is beat. At one P.M. dinner call and at 3:30 drill again by the Colonel. At 5:30 recall and then supper at 6. At 6:30 dress parade, but it will be half an hour before sunset from this forth. At 9 at night tattoo, every man answers to his name, if not he is put on extra duty next day. At 9:15 taps is beat, every man must go to sleep and in a short time we are all in the land of dreams; and after being at home, but at reveille we discover that we are still down in Dixie and not as much prospect of getting home soon as we had four months ago.

General Pope is taking just such steps as every soldier likes and what every man that wants to see the rebellion put down too. He has issued orders that no soldier shall guard any citizens property whatever. We are to take all male slaves & use them for whatever purpose they are wanted. All disloyal persons
is to be arrested and sent south of our picket lines, and if caught back again they are counted as spies and shot. We are to seize on all property that would benefit our army and give them a receipt to be paid when the rebellion is over. And if such persons taking such paper do sympathize with the rebels after they have got such paper they will forfeit all such claim. Well done John Pope! So says every federal soldier and if such steps had been taken at the outbreak the war would be over.

Corn looks miserable and very little of it at that. Blackberries and apples is abundant, but scarcely any peaches or pears.

William Wallace

_Camp near Little Washington, Virginia_ 
_August 4th, 1862_

My Dear Wife and Children,

Yesterday morning at seven o'clock the whole division was ordered out into the drill ground to be reviewed by General Pope. We were all drawn up in line, 20 regiments of us, and 48 cannon, 4 regiments having come two days previous. We presented a fine appearance in our blue uniform. The morning was killing hot but they only kept us 3 hours and we thought it was long enough. Pope and Banks made their appearance after we were all placed in our proper positions. Pope is a fine, clever looking man, with heavy black whiskers and mounted on a dark grey steed he viewed each regiment pretty sharply. When he came to ours and we had presented arms he turned to General Banks and asked what regiment this was, he was told it was the Wisconsin 3rd, Colonel Ruger's. It is a fine regiment, said he. When Banks replied in the affirmative he viewed us from right to left and said all the Wisconsin Regiments that he seen was very fine regiments. Us and the 2nd Massachusetts looked the best of any was there. The batteries fired a salute of 15 guns on Popes arrival in the field. It was the first time he showed himself to us. Everybody seems to be well pleased with him and his orders.

We had a sermon by the chaplain of the 2nd Massachusetts. He read the 24th Psalm. His pulpit was a casson with 150 round of shell. It was rather a curious pulpit with 6 horses attached to it but it elevated him enough so that a good many of the men could hear him. It was something curious to hear Banks giving the command, Attention! Battalion! before prayer. After prayer the brass bands played “Hail Columbia”, “Yankee Doodle,” etc. and so ended our Sabbath days review. We left camp near Little Washington this morning at 3 o'clock. Marched through Sperryville where we saw Brigadier General Carl Schurz and was right glad to see a Wis. reg't. 20 We halted a while so he had a talk with Colonel Ruger and some more of the officers.

William Wallace

_Culpepper, Virginia_ 
_August 10th, 1862_

Dear Sarah,

Before this reaches you, you will hear of our fight [at Cedar Mountain] on Saturday. 29 I got shot in my two little fingers of my right hand. The one next to the little one is badly hurt. The Doctor thinks it will not have to be taken off. It is badly shattered. It pains me badly. It was a bloody fight. We have about one hundred wounded here in the hospitals. I have to hold up my right hand with

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20 Schurz was fresh to the military when he encountered his Wisconsin colleagues. His efforts for Lincoln in 1860 had been rewarded with the office of Minister to Spain. He returned in 1862 to press for abolition and instead, despite his lack of military experience, was commissioned a brigadier general of volunteers on April 15. He commanded the nearly all-German third division of the first corps, Army of Virginia from June 6 to September 12, serving ably at the second battle of Manassas or Bull Run. His superior was General Franz Sigel of St. Louis, commander of the eleventh ("German") corps, Army of the Potomac, beginning in September, 1862. Later actions at Gettysburg and Chancellorsville brought obloquy to Schurz, and the responsibility for the failures has been debated ever since.

29 Wallace does not give the particulars of the battle of Cedar Mountain or Slaughter Mountain, Virginia. Very briefly, the circumstances were that General Pope advanced his Federal troops from near Culpepper, Virginia, south toward Orange Court House and Gordonsville. Stonewall Jackson had positioned his forces to attack Pope's. Instead, General Banks of Pope's staff took the offensive at Cedar Mountain and struck, successfully at first, against two of Jackson's divisions. Jackson moved in a third division and forced Banks' retreat. A total of 314 Union soldiers were killed, 1,445 wounded, and 622 missing—2,381 men out of the 8,000 engaged. Total Confederate casualties were 1,341 out of about 16,800 engaged.
Mathew Brady's photograph of the Cedar Mountain battlefield after the conflict.

My left and the pencil in my finger and thumb which will account for the bad writing. I had a musket ball through my hat, just clearing the crown. The regiment is still on the battlefield. Somebody else will write so you can hear more, but you will hear more through the papers. I will write as soon as I feel better able. I am well otherwise. My love to you all and pray to God for his merciful deliverance.

From your own dear
William

Grace Church Hospital
Alexandria, Virginia
August 15th, 1862

My dear Wife,
I am still alive and kicking, as old Billy used to say. I am well except my fingers but they are doing as well as can be expected, for a ball wound is worse than a cut with a knife or any other edged tool. I did not have to get it off so I will be all right in a few weeks again. All the wounded that could come from Cullpepper was sent here. All that got legs or arms amputated had to stay at Culpepper for the shaking of the cars would be bad on them. Anson Titus of Kekoskee and me is the only two out of our company in the hospital.

It was a hard fight and lasted a long time, at least we thought it was long lying on our belly for 2 or 3 hours and up and at it again. Cannonading stopped but the musket balls flew so fast that you would think ten million of firecrackers was cracking in as many places. But we were in for it and we all stood like good fellows, resigning ourselves to the keeping of our heavenly father and thanks be to his merciful deliverance. I arrived here on the cars on the morning of the 13th. We had 30 cars in the train all loaded with the wounded and several other trains arrived previous to ours and still more to come.

I had to have the ragged portions of my fingers burned off with costic. It was mortifying for want of proper care. The doctor had no time to see it, they were so busy amputating limbs. It is quite sore now when I am writing. I have to bear it up with the left one so you see I don't make good writing. I can walk through the city every day. Our doctor is very attentive to us all. We have everything that we can wish for, each man
has his own bed and plenty of attendance. The seats is all out of the church and the beds set in rows 2 feet apart. Every man has his bed numbered, the date of his division, company and reg’t, nature of disease etc. at the head of his bed. The number of mine is 1598. The bed steads is all iron. We have the gas burning all night and we can rise and lie down whenever we like.

The Wisconsin Soldiers Aid Society31 sent one of their agents to this place yesterday to look after the wants of the soldiers. If we want anything we can write to the society in Washington. Senator Doolittle is President of the society but I want for nothing. When I come to the hospital I was striped naked and put in to a cold bath and was then furnished with clean shirt and drawers etc. You need not trouble yourself about me for I am as well taken care of as I can be. Give my love to all the children and friends and Neighbors. Write soon and plenty of it. I dont hear anything about David. My hand is tired so I must quit.

From your own devoted husband,
William Wallace

Grace Church Hospital
Alexandria, Virginia
August 22nd, 1862

Dear Sarah,

My fingers are healing up fast. In the course of two weeks the Doctor says I will be able to do duty again. I have a good time of it here. They keep me running errands so I have a chance to see the patients and am not bound up to the hospital like those who got their limbs hurt. I am going to try and get a pass to visit Washington. It is only 6 or 8 miles from here and we can see it from here. We get plenty to eat of the good things of this life. I occupy my spare hours in reading Baxter's Saints Rest32 and it is a good book for any person to read. Religious books of various kinds is furnished the hospitals gratis. We had preaching last Sabbath evening from Hebrews 12th, 6 & 7.

I have seen in the paper today that Captain Hammer has been released and a great many more that was taken at Winchester, only the officers names are given. I hope David has been released too.

William Wallace

Grace Church Hospital
Alexandria, Virginia
September 1st, 1862

Dear Sarah,

My finger is nearly well. It takes a long time to heal up a gap that one of those balls makes. I have been sick for a few days but have been able to be up today.

A good many rebel prisoners is arriving here and the miserablest looking set you ever saw, but not-withstanding they fight desperate, though they get little for it in the way of pay. Some of them say they get no pay at all, that they are fighting for the fun of it. This is their last chance, for if they get beat (which I have no doubt of) before they can recover themselves or raise any more men our 600,000 will be ready for the field, then we will make a short work of it.33 All of the convalescent has been sent away to Rhode Island to make room for the wounded as they come in.

You want to know if I lost anything at the fight. Yes, I did, after I got back to Culpepper I had only one shirt and had been wearing it for nearly if not quite 2 weeks and left it off till a niger would wash it. I paid her 10 cents. During the washing process I was shirtless and I just got back to the hospital and left it

31Wallace refers to the Wisconsin association that co-operated with the U.S. Sanitary Commission in relief activities. Mrs. Joseph S. Colt of Milwaukee was the principal Wisconsin organizer and corresponding secretary. The Society collected and distributed supplies, held fund-raising drives and events, and sent field workers to assist Wisconsin soldiers.

32Richard Baxter (1615-1691), a leading English Puritan who espoused a moderate nonconformist point of view, wrote The Saints' Everlasting Rest, his most famous work, in 1647, with first publication in 1650. It was reprinted in 1830, along with others of Baxter's works, and even in more recent periods has attracted readers.

33On July 17 Lincoln signed a measure interpreted as a draft bill which authorized the calling up of men between eighteen and forty-five years old. On August 4 he ordered the draft of 300,000 existing militia to serve for nine months, but this draft was not put into effect. In fact, reaction to it included flights to Canada and self-mutilation by some eligible men. Finally in October the draft began in Pennsylvania, where resistance to it was controlled by Union troops.
Wm. Wallace
Post Hospital near Alexandria
September 18th, 1862

Dear Sarah,

All the sick and wounded that was able to walk at all was sent from Washington and Alexandria to this camp to make room for those that has been wounded in the late fights in Maryland [South Mountain, Crampton's Gap, Antietam]. I left along with the rest but is very sick yet, though I am able to walk round through camp, and as poor as a rake. I think there must be as many as 6000 convalescents in this camp. As they are able they are sent off daily to their regiments. I dont know when I will get to mine, if ever, for my complaint is such that I may be a long time before I get better. Our doctor in the regement said long ago that I was effected with disease of the heart [rheumatic fever]. Two Dr's in the hospitle in Grace Church said so too, but said I might get better by proper treatment. I would have told you before of it but I did not like to worry your mind about it, neither now need you trouble yourself for it will do no good. I left Grace

Wm. Wallace

down on the seat when some one smarter than me stole it. So I was in a fix. They also took my knapsack, coffee, sugar, knife, fork and spoon, canteen and tincup, so I had nothing. I put my oilcloth blanket on a wounded and naked man of our regement and that was the last I saw of it, but many a poor fellow lost his life which was far worse. I got shot in the fingers at dark, but I did not leave the field till about 9 or 10 at night when we got relieved by some of Siegles men. I did not get my fingers dressed till four days after. Then I had to have all the proud flesh burned off with costic, my hand and arm were swelled out of bounds. Doctors was so busy taking off legs and arms, they had no time to look at smaller wounds, however I dont complain.

As it is, just now a lot of 25 wounded has come from Manassas where they left yesterday. They report things pretty favorable on our side. They drove the rebels back during the fight and on Saturday the rebels fired large pieces of railroad iron and spikes in place of shell or balls which proved very destructive to our army.
Church Hospital on the 16th along with 33 more. We are about one mile out along side of Fort Elsworth. We are all in tents, but has nothing to lay on but dirty blue clay, but very little to eat, but it is the best Sam can afford just now after losing so much about Manassas at the late fights.

Several hundred deserters from our army was brought in last night. They were brought from various parts of the country. We get encouraging news from our army just now. I hope it will continue. James Wallace come to the hospital to see me last week, he got shot in the right arm above the elbow with buck shot. Let me know if David Clark has been released and if he joined the company.

Wm. Wallace

Post Hospital near Alexandria, Va.
October 15th, 1862

Dear Sarah,

I hope you will not be offended at me not writing to you oftener. The truth is I was not able to write I was so sick, but thank God I am able to walk around with the aid of a staff. I had a sore spell of rheumatic pains in my head for ten days but has got quite rid of them now. The Dr. says that my heart is only slightly effected and I may get rid of it altogether which is very encouraging to me. I have not felt it for some time. I will try and get to the regiment this week although I am not able to duty yet, nor will I for a month to come. I am so thin of flesh. We get very bad attendance here. I have not seen the Dr. in five days but I begin to think I get along better without him. We dont get any vegetables of any sort at all. From 3 to 4 dies here daily. We are in tents, five in each tent, no beds, has to lay on the hard ground, which is not a very comfortable bed for sick folks, but we must put up with it now.

David is come to see me this morning as usual. He is well.

William Wallace

Post Hospital near Alexandria October 22nd, 1862

My Dear Sarah,

In my last letter I told you I thought I would be with the regiment, but I guess I wont, but Alvin Reynolds will send [some money owed] to me here. You may send the answer to this one here. Don't think by that, that I am getting worse, for, on the contrary, I feel considerably better from what I have been when I was confined to my tent. Now I can walk about a little. The weather is very cold down here, especially at nights. I got two blankets over me, and I sleep warm.

I saw one of our Regt and he told me he saw David and the rest of our paroled boys going to the regiment. I have not saw David since I wrote to you last. The notice of their going was so short that he had no time to come and see me.

William

Post Hospital near Alexandria
October 27th, 1862

Dear Sarah,

I am on the mending scale all the time but not near well yet as our food is not the best to recruit sick folks. For dinner today I had one pint of bean soup with a little vinegar in it and some dry bread, but still after all I mend. It is a pitiful sight to see 62 men waiting at the kettles, waiting for their meals in single file, some on crutches, some on staves and mostly all looking like death wet and cold. It is enough to make a well man sick looking at them. But they cant keep us long here for it is too cold. Better quarters must soon be provided for us.

William

Post Hospital
October 31st, 1862

My Dear Sarah,

I am getting better from the effects of the fever. My hair is all coming out. Yesterday and all the night before I was awful sick. I eat nothing for this last 24 hours. Nothing stays on my stomach and whatever I get don't do me any good. Today I eat some breakfast and feels a good deal better. If the doctor would only discharge me out of the hospital I would be off to the company but he will not let me go till I am able for duty. I will go by hook or by crook pretty soon.

Clarke had been exchanged for a Confederate prisoner on September 14 but did not rejoin the regiment until October 24. In the interim he apparently was stationed near Alexandria.
I think a good deal of what's wrong here is no acquaintance at all.

William Wallace

Post Hospital near Alexandria, Va. November 24th, 1862

My Dear,

I have not been half well all last week. I was confined to my tent for a few days but yesterday and today I am able to be out and doing something. This is Monday and of course wash day. I got my washing done and dried. It consisted of two shirts, 2 handkerchiefs, one pillow case, one towel and one pair of socks. Let me be well or ill I have to keep clean. So long as a man is able to walk he has to do his own washing or else be eaten up with lice which is very plenty in camp, in fact it is the plenteist thing we have. We don't get our cooking done not half the time for want of wood but who is to blame I am unable to say. But one thing I do know it is one of the meanest places I have come across in my travels. They need not talk of the misery of the rebels, let them come down here and it will open their eyes.

We had a great deal of very heavy rain all last week and cold too which don't agree very well with sick folks. If we get wet it has to dry while the clothes is on us. Then at night it freezes. Great Guns! This morning our canteens was all froze tight so that we could not get a drop of water out. Had to wait till there was a fire kindled. We had coffee this morning at 8 and no dinner at all. We may get a little for supper if the wood comes. If not we will have to go to bed supperless as usual.

William
Dear Sarah,

I am getting better. Only a swelling I have in my stomach from the medicine I have taken, so I have to take turpentine which is not very pleasant, which you can testify to yourself—it has laid the swelling pretty well. I am able to run round every day through camp, so you need not be uneasy about me now. They talk of sending some of us off to Washington hospitals this ensuing week as this place is to cold in these old tents. When we got no stoves its terrible cold weather just now. It snowed all day on the 5th and it has froze all the time since. Last night was terrible, my coat and pillow was froze fast to the tent and my blanket had a white frost all over it. The river Potomac is ice half way across and I think after this night it will be complete. You need not talk about cold weather in Wisconsin for it is cold enough here for any person. My fingers is so cold writing this that I can scarce hold the pen. I got your picture a few days ago. It was a long time on the way, I have taken many a long look at it since. I think you were about commencing to cry at the time you got it took. Lillie looks as if she had her hands in her breeches pocket. The baby's is first rate, take them all through, they please me very well. I keep them under my head and of course I dream on them every night.

William Wallace

WHILE Wallace recuperated, his regiment underwent a grueling series of marches and fights. After Cedar Mountain the Third Wisconsin participated in “Pope’s Retreat,” taking refuge across the Rappahannock River. Jackson, however, sneaked his army to the rear of Pope, ravaged his supplies, and forced him to take the offensive. Thus ensued the Second Bull Run or Manassas campaign, a disaster for Pope that culminated on August 31. On September 2, Lincoln assigned McClellan to full command in Virginia and around Washington, leaving Pope without a command. Days later he was reassigned to the Upper Midwest where Sioux depredations had occupied federal forces.

Confederate troops meanwhile advanced through Maryland and Lee massed his men along Antietam Creek, where he was attacked by McClellan’s corps, including the Third Wisconsin, on September 17. Despite its heavy losses at Antietam the Union army made tactical gains and pursued Lee back into Virginia. The Third Wisconsin was ordered to Maryland Heights, overlooking Harpers Ferry and the tents of Lee’s army in the distance. Lincoln visited the regiment there in October, and the applause so frightened his horse that he was forced to abandon his dignity, grab his hat, and hunch over his steed’s neck in order to keep his seat. The men of the Third Wisconsin could not help themselves; in the midst of the solemn review by their commander-in-chief, they gave way to mirth over his equine predicament. In January of 1863, after a series of short moves from one camp to another, the Third Wisconsin engaged in the so-called “mud campaign,” an abortive attempt to advance into Virginia during foul weather. The regiment finally settled in at Stafford Court House until April.

Because Wallace’s letters cease abruptly in December, 1862, it can be assumed that he was furloughed somewhat in advance of his official medical discharge, dated February 4, 1863. By then his hand had healed, but he was suffering from the effects of rheumatic fever and intestinal complaints, the scourge of Civil War hospitals and prisons. He spent the spring, summer, and fall on his farm in Dodge County, but he did not linger long, for on January 5, 1864, he re-enlisted as a veteran and soon was with his companions in Company E as they prepared for the Georgia campaign.

(This is the first of a two-part series, the second of which deals with the Atlanta Campaign.)