

Winchester Tenn. January 8th 1862

Dear Et,

I telegraphed you from Shelbyville two days ago that I was well. It was the first opportunity that I had after the battle of the 31st of Dec: Again, I have had much to be thankful for. While so many were killed & wounded, I escaped without a scratch. You will wonder why I am here after such a victory at Murfreesboro? Well, I do not know that I can give any satisfactory reply to the inquiry. On Sunday night (the 3rd) after lying in the trenches in rain & mud for nine days & fighting more or less all the time, with but little opportunity to cook & eat, the men were in such an exhausted condition that it was thought best by our Generals to fall back to where our baggage & provisions had been previously sent, to wit, to this place: We arrived here last night and will return to Shelbyville this evening or Tomorrow. The troops are now resting & cooking rations. I am commanding Walthall's brigade in Wither's division of [Gen. Leonidas] Polk's Corps. It is composed of the 24th, 27th, 29th, 30th & 37th Miss. and the 45th Alabama. All except the 29th you will observe are my old troops. When my Division was broken up – a portion assigned to Hardee & the rest to Polk, I fell to the latter. At the same time Col. Walthall of Miss. Was promoted to Brigadier & was given the Miss. Regiments to command. I was assigned to a Brigade composed of three Ala. and two So. Ca. Regiments. The day before the battle Genl. Walthall was taken quite sick. The Mississippians petitioned for me to command them in the fight. Their petition was granted. So I commanded them in the fight & will continue to do so, till Genl. Walthall's recovery. They behaved most gallantly as Mississippians have always done in this war. They took nine pieces of artillery but lost many of their best officers & men. One Regiment alone (the 30th) had 62 men killed & 132 wounded on one acre of ground, just in front of the enemy battery. This is, I believe, the heaviest loss of any one Regt in any one fight of the war. The others lost many but not so many as the 30th. The total loss of killed and wounded in the Brigade (none missing) was 732, about 216 more than any other Brigade in the fight. The victory was a great one, though I am afraid its whole moral effect will be lost by our falling back. We took altogether, about five thousand prisoners – 31 pieces of artillery & any number of colors, wagons, mules, houses, &c. &c. I see by the papers that the Tennesseans did all the fighting!! That they took the batteries & the very ones that the Mississippians charged. Well they may have taken them, but it was after my Brigade had driven the enemy from his guns & were pursuing him two hundred yards in advance of the Tennessee troops!! Who will ever be able to write a truthful history of this war?

The Floridians were not in the main fight of the 31st. They are in Genl. Wm. Preston's (of Ky.) Brigade. They were in the fight of the evening of the 2nd January when Breckenridge on the right attacked the enemy's left and was repulsed with heavy loss. My Brigade was ordered over to his support late in the evening, but not in time to prevent the route, which had begun before I got there. I formed a line between them & the enemy, which enabled our officers to rally their men while night put a stop to pursuit by the enemy. Of this however you need not speak. The Floridians lost but few. I cannot hear of any casualties among our acquaintances except Lt. John Bailey who was wounded; how severely I could not learn. My informant could only tell me it was not a dangerous wound.

I rec'd a letter from Aunt Ellen a day or two before the battle dated the 17th Dec. in which she said you were writing at that time. Yours has not yet been received. I wrote her a short note not to comply with Mr. Hogue's request, nor to make any acknowledgement of indebtedness to Cheever on account of the land, etc. I fear my letter to her & yours to me had a collision somewhere between Murfreesboro & this place while everything there was being sent back here so rapidly. Perhaps they will turn up after a while.

I don't know when I can get home. The campaign here proposes to be an active one. Genl. Bragg is more unpopular with the army than ever, since he fell back from a victory field. The victory was a much more decisive one than that at Perryville but I doubt if we reap any of its fruits beyond the artillery & other captured property which we brought away. But all of that & much more would not repay us for the loss of four or five thousand gallant men.

I do want to see you & the boys so badly. Kiss them all a thousand times for me. Willie & The & Pat, Bless their souls: & they must each kiss you for me also. Love to Aunt – I believe I wrote to you that Uncle Tom Monroe was dead. He died at Mr. Harding's about a month ago, so Genl. Breckenridge tells me. – Love to Mol & her Gals. Remember me to all the servants especially Charles & Aunt Ann, Rebecca & Alice. The boys are all well & send how-d-ye.

Tell Harry I saw Willie on the day of the fight. He had two horses killed under him but was not hurt himself. I never saw him looking so well.

Here's a thousand kisses from

Your Patton

Transcribed by Christopher A. Baker, University of Florida, 2008.