

Documents

Jacob W. Bartmess Civil War Letters

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(Continued from March issue)

New Years day. '64.

Well my little boy Elliott.

Pappy thought that he would write his little boy a little letter. I am in a little house made of little logs. this little house has a little fire place in it, and this cold day pappy keeps a big fire. I just got done browning some rye for to make coffee. the men does not give us quite coffee enough to do us here. Pappy gets his own dinner, and supper and breakfast. I cook meat make coffee and good gravy and sometimes bake corn cakes. we pound our coffee in a tin instead of grinding it on a coffee mill.

never mind wait till pappy gets home and we will show mother how to cook and make gravy.

Elliott dont you think the men wanted me to go away off with my mule team through the mud and rain and cold. and there was another man went in my place and let me stay in my little house by the fire. dont you think that he was a good man for going in my place.

there is a great big river here lots wider than clear across grandmothers orchard

pappy washed his shirt and drawers today.

Elliott you must be a good boy. pappy will come home after a while.

from your pappy

J. W Bartmess

to his Elliott.

Harrisons Landing Tenn.

Jan. 3d '64.

To my Wife.

'Tis sabbath, yes 'tis sabbath, But how little it is appreciated as sabbath here. Indeed few know that it is sabbath. The regular duties change but little for sabbath. No especial cleaning up for the Lords day No one says that we will go up to the sanctuary of the Lord today, to make prayer before the throne. No church bell ringing to invite us thither. The old clock does not stand on the mantle to tell us that the hour has come for worship. No little ones to

dress and put on their winter garb in order to show their little feet the way to the Lords house. None of Zions familiar songs are sung to put our minds in frame for the day, but filthy wicked songs are heard throughout the camp. profanity floats from nearly every breath. Nearly every one is doing something diverse from the honor of the Lord, or keeping his day holy. Alas! for the people of these united states! this war is raging with telling effect on their morals. I will now change the subject a little I am ceertain if I had to live here in the south, even if there was no war, and had my family with in the bargain. that I should pine away and die for want of a contented mind. The people here do not seam like people. they are shamefully ignorant. their children grow up a great deal like their horses. they are learned to help raise a little something to eat and to go to mill. and that is about all. One of their justices of the peace decided that it took 20 rods and three grains. (barly corn grains he called it) to make an acre of ground when it takes 160 rod to make an acre.

I have a very nice little shanty to stay in here. and am very comfortable now but it may not last long.

For three days we have had settled cold weather., much like winter in Indiana. Oh how I would like to know where my little family is today and what they are doing. but I expect they are in the old cabin around a warm stove. My health is good except I do not feel so stout on account of having the diarrhoea by spells.

I do not expect to get entirely shut of it while I am in the service. I have to be exposed too much, and eat too much fat bacon.

Well I had but little to write when I commenced and I guess I had better quit.

Your Husband
J. W. Bartmess.

to his Wife Amanda

Jan. 7th. '64.

Dear Amanda.

I have just come back from Chattanooga. I was there with the team for rations. I thought that I would write some more in this letter before I sent it, as I forgot to send it befor I left. which was four days ago. Daniel Walter was to Chattanooga with me. we had a very cold trip of it. but got back all safe.

My health is still good.

Driving team is very hard work a little harder than I like

to do for 13 dollars per. month. I received a letter from you yesterday and am sorry that you are sad on account of not getting any letters from me for so long a time I could not write while we were coming from Nashville was the trouble. Be assured that you have my prayres and warmest love.

J. W. Bartmess.

to his *kind Wife*.

Harrison's Landing. *Tenn*

Feb. 3'd. '64

Dear Wife—.

.
The talk is that we will leave here soon the company is to go on courier duty I think a few miles up the river.

It might not be out of place to tell you what a courier line is. Well ther is a courier line from Bridgeport, to Knoxville (and further for any thing that I know.) That is, there are cavalry or mounted infantry stationed at posts within, from four to six miles of eachother, and about six men at each post, for the purpose of carrying dispatches or letters from one place to another. For instance, suppose that a dispach is to go from Bridgport to Knoxville. the first courier post sends it to the next post. that post sends it to the next and so on untill it gets to Knoxville. You will excuse me for writing nothing very important, as there is nothing of that kind to write.

Let me know whether you find any thing in this letter.

Yours forever.

J W. Bartmess

to his Wife.

Tyner Station *Tenn*

March 9th. '64.

Dearest one—.

Yours of the 28th. *ult.* came yesterday, a most welcome visitor indeed. and, as does all of your letters, it rendered me no small amount of satisfaction.

You spoke of time passing unenjoyed. Now I cannot say that I enjoy the time as it passes, yet I am not down hearted. time passes swiftly here, a day seemingly, but appears untill it is gone. If no misfortune befalls us, and I get out of the service next fall, it will not be long until that time comes. Whether I will have to stay three years or not I can not tell. If I do have to stay we will have to take it as easy as possible. for it will be only a little over a year after the

ballance are out. my time counts from the 12th. of last Oct. one yeare ago. but I think that I will not have to stay three years. You speak of some getting scart about the draft. Well they need not be scart, for they are no better than the ballance of us. and are just as much bound to serve Uncle Sam. a while as we are.

You wished to know whether I get any papers. We can get the Cincinnati Commercial or Louisville Journal, or Nashville times or press, or Chattanooga Gazette, every day if we want them. but they cost from 5 to 10 cents a peice. besides there are a number of other papers come around, but not so regular. The boys that were out on the scout have had some pretty tight skirmishing a few have been taken prisoners. We have commenced moving camp to Ringold, a distance of about ten miles. only part of our wagons were here and they could not take all of the camp equipage. so some of us are here yet waiting for the waggon to come back to haul the ballance of the things.

The weather here is nice except it look some like rain just now. I am having a nice time now probably the main reason is that I am enjoying better health now than I have for more than six month past. I have just cooked a pot of beans for supper, which would not eat so bad even at home. This war is makeing a great many good cooks. quite a number of the boys can bake just as good biscuit as any one would wish to eat.

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J. W. Bartmess.

to his wife *Amanda*.

Headquarters,

Co. C, 39th Regt, Ind. Mounted Infantry.

Camp At Ringold Georgia. March 17th. 1864

My own kind Wife—.

I have just received two letters from you. The first dated March 2 which contained a needle and one of Elliott's teeth. Oh it done me good, simple as it was.

.

We are now at camp at Ringgold Georgia. which is situated in rather a nice valley on Chickamauga Creek. The veterans are to start home next Sunday, and it is said that then the ballance of us will move to some other place. The veterans

so that it will not run. If you wish, and have money enough
you may send it off and get it fixed. it will cost about \$2.50.
It has been quite cold here for a couple days.
We were on vidette when I received your letters.
I think of nothing more just now.

I remain your Husband evermore.
J. W. Bartmess,

to his wife *Amanda*.

Camp Carrington,

May. 10th. 64.

Dear Wife. Having just arrived here, that warm and un-
wavering love for you, which has been strengthened by be-
ing with you, prompts me first of all to write a few lines I
have nothing of Interest to write you except concerning my
trip down here.

I got to Winchester on monday by half after two o'clock.
without being very much tired I stopped at Forces and got
dinner and made arrangements for N Ross to take my over
coat out to Jacksons the next day.

We could not get to Start from Winchester that evening at
5. O'clock, so A. Mason, and me went to Union that night
on the cars and walked out to hill grove to W. Kramers and
had supper about one o'clock at night. had a fine talk with
Wesly and Hannah Started then about daylight for Indi-
anapolis, and arrived here about 1. o'clock today. We was
to leave here this evening for Chattanooga but we will not
get away before tomorrow.

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Truly your
Husband

J. W. Bartmess

to his dear Amanda

Direct to Company C, 8th. Ind. Cav.

Camp Carrington.

May 11th. 64.

Dear Wife—.

I thought it best to write you a few lines again today.
The Captain says that we will leave here this evening. We
are not drawing any thing here but canteens, havre sacks,
and shelter tents. I do not know where we will draw our
horses. We have the same guns that we had.

.

P. S. we will get no pay here.

You will hear from me again the first chance I have to write.

J.W.B.

Taylor Barracks
Louisville. Ky. May 15th. '64.

Dear Amanda—

This is Sabbath. and is very pleasant excepting there are some appearances of rain. We are not yet paid, but will be today or tomorrow I will tell you in this letter what I did not like to in my other ones When I got to Indianapolis I found that some one had taken all my blankets I had one gum, and two woolen blankets. So I had to sleep without any blankets untill last night. We drew new ones yesterday. I would have told you this in my first letter but I did not want you to know it untill I was better off. I am well and cheerful so far as the surrounding circumstances can make me But it would be the most extreme vainty for me to try to fill up that empty void in my heart, caused by the absence of my family, with earth's brightest pleasures, or her most lovely objects.

All those things which engage the attention of the mirthful around me, are to me but vain and empty things.

My comfort is derived from the religion which I enjoy, and the comfortable hope which I entertain of shortly realizing my hearts best wishes,—the enjoyments of my family and friends.

I must say for the credit of the reg't that it is much better behaved here and at Indianapolis where whiskey is to be had, than I had expected.

War news is still very good. Grant is working Lee up at a desperate rate. Thomas the commanding General at Chattanooga has taken 5000 prisoners, and is hotly pursuing the rebels.

We expect to leave here soon and at the next convenient opportunity you will hear from your unworthy

Husband

J. W. Bartmess.

Amanda.

Elliott.

Elista.

to his family

Camp near Nashville Tenn.
Sunday, May 22nd. 1864.

Dear Wife—

.

Well Amanda We are in camp abut two and a half miles south of Nashville. in a very nice open piece of woods. The weather is quite warm through the day, but cool at night. peaches are as large as a full grown plumb, every green and nice. I have washed up nice and blackened my boots, and now my heart's best joys would be complete, if I could by your side, and in company with our little girl and boy walk to the house of the Lord and spend a season in praising his great name. I expect we will stay here untill we get horses, but how that will be I cannot tell.

My health and the health of the reg't is very good. I am buncing with S. Hilton, D. Towle, and Henry Barbar.

I have not received a letter from you since I came back. but I am looking for one every day. for I know that you will not forget me. . . I will close expecting soon to hear from you

The blessing of God be upon Your

Husband

J. W. Bartmess.

Elliott.

Elista.

Amanda.

and his family

throug a mistake I wrote your name last.

Camp near Nashville *Tenn.*

May 26th. 1864.

Kind Companion—.

.
I have just been relieved from picket guard, after having been on for two nights and nearly two days.

The weather is very pleasant here now, it having rained a few small Showers and thereby made the weather a little cooler through the day

I forgot to say in the connection that our reg't has to furnish guards for picket all around the city of Nashville, besides two out of each company for to guard the trains of cars going to different points from here. neither one is very hard. at least on picket there is no danger of rebels and each one only has to stand two hours in twelve. The prospect seams good to stay here a while, but orders may come to leave any day.

.
J. W. Bartmess.

to his. Companion.

Camp Graham Tenn.

July 8th '64

Dear Companion—

I am seated this morning to write you a few lines. We are all tore up All the reg't has gone but the sick and the two new companies (L. & M.) Our Co is all gone but a few. I was on guard in town and they went off and left me. I am glad to tell you that I am well again.

It is very warm here yet.

It is supposed that the reg't has gone to Decature Alabama. They went on the cars without horses. no one knows what the object is. It seams awful lonesome since the boys are gone Serg't Bosworth is with us. D Towle is still getting better but he is not able to be out of the Hospittle yet.

. . . . I have to start to go where the reg't has gone in a few minutes

From your Husband

J. W. Bartmess.

Camp Graham Tenn

July. 9th '64.

Dear Amanda—.

I am seated this morning again to give you a little different information from what I gave you yesterday. I started yesterday morning as I told you I would after some bundleing and fixing up I had a pretty good load to carry I assure you. I got pretty neart to the depot when I met H. Blowers, and he told me that they were all gone, and that I need go no further so I came back to camp. but the joke is as I came back I got into an orchard and got three apples, in which I thought there was no harm, and which I had done more than once before. There was a camp of hundred days men about 200 yards from there and as I started on to camp here came one of them with his gun and bayonet hollowing halt to me I was surprised, I halted and went to him he said he had orders to take me to his Colonel. Well I went with him to the Colonel and the Colonel set me at liberty. and I came on to camp.

This is a beautiful morning but it is lonesome here. My health is very good now. Papere is scarce and I have to write half sheets.

Affectionatly your husband
J. W. Bartmess
to his Wife.

Camp Graham Tenn.
July 19th '64.

Dear Wife—.

.
I think it would be much better for you if you would get the
Idea of hospitle nurse out of your head While that preacher
and his wife was here that I have allready told you about,
she was around the chaplains tent a goodeal and, and the
boys would talk about her and the chaplain wheather there
was any cause or not, but the way the chaplain has conducted
himself heretofore, one can not tell what may have been
done.

.
It seams to be my luck to wait on the sick. I have been
waiting on J. Miller for a week now, he bunks with me, and
is a great deal better now.

Dear Amanda. I expect we will not be paid off now for two
months more but when we do get pay it will be a little more
than common we will get 16 dollars per month instead of 13.
If I am discharged with the reg't I do not expect any more
pay until I am discharged. I have just picked a fine lot of
blackberries. My health is excellent and I hope this will find
you all well. I am as ever your true Husband.

J. W. Bartmess.

to his kind Wife

Camp Graham, Tenn.
July 24th, '64.

Kind Companion—.

.
I scarcely know what to write, things are so nearly as they
were when I last wrote you.

The last two nights have been very cold here, I fear that
you have had frost. We are still in the same old camp, have
heard but little of the reg't since it left.

Our mail has changed, instead of coming in the morning it
comes in. in the evening. I am expecting a letter from you
today, and would wait to finish this letter till the mail
comes in, but then it would not start out till tomorrow. My
health was hardly ever better than it is now. My appetite is
too craving. I can eat untill I am in misery, and then my

appetite craves for more. This is the first morning for a week that I have not went to hunt blackberries. I am out of sugar, is the reason. but we will draw again tomorrow. It just take a whole cabbage head to make me a mess now let me know how your wheat is holding out, if it is likely to fail soon I must write to pap to let you have some wheat.

.

Your Husband.

J. W. Bartmess,

to his Wife

Camp Graham Tenn.

July 28th. '64.

Dear Wife—.

.
Things have not changed in camp since I last wrote to you; The last we heard of the reg't it was at Marietta Georgia. with Sherman. It is very dry here. Rosting ears are plenty but they do us but little good, for we have no money to buy, and we dare not take them without buying. some are got however by the process of stealing. The same may be said of apples and potatoes.

I think of nothing more to write.

I remain as ever Your,

Afectionate

Husband.

J. W. Bartmess.

to his loved family

Amanda.

Elliott.

Elista.

Camp Graham. Tenn.

July 31st '64.

Dearest One—.

I am in receipt, of a most welcome and interesting letter. from you. dated just one week ago. Such a letter amounts to an extreem satisfaction for me. I am sorry to hear of your garden being so missused, and torn up. I can call the leaving of the fence down, nothing but extreem carelessness. I wish I had got that middle fence built before I came away. Next are the letters from the hands of my little dear ones. though they do not speak a do other letters, yet they are more significant than words,

Tell my little ones that papy often thinks of them, and often dreams of them in his sleep. Tell them that I have a nice bed, it is boards with hay on them, instead of a straw-tic.

Amanda I am sorry that I cannot get you to understand by hints that the Hospital is no place for you, but I shall be still more sorry if I shall have to use harsh word to get you out of the notion of nursing in the hospital. I speak this way because I know of them, and you dont. If you knew as much of hospitals as I do, you would never once think of being a nurse. I hope you will be satisfied on that point when you read this.

You say the home guards are going to have a dinner in Westchester. What have they ever done that they deserve a public dinner. The home guards and their exploits are one of the things, that the soldiers in the field, make sport over, and laugh about. What! make dinners for home guards, when a soldier who has spent his time in front fighting the enemy face to face, comes home on furlough, has to trudge back and forth through the mud on foot, and no one offers him assistance. but it may be that folks at home, have fell in love with the home guards, being continually with! the PRECIOUS FELLOWS!

.
My health is excelent, no news of importance. All are well that you you are acquainted with. I have got my Jacob Miller about well. He says that he went to school to liber the same time you did.

Potatoes, Aples, Cabbage, corn, and Water melons are brought into use by the boys here, by the strategic move move of stealing. I close most earnestly praying for your good, and assuring you of the constant love of your. Husband.

J. W. Bartmess.

to his dear Wife

Camp Graham, Tenn.
August 3d. '64.

Dear Wife—.

I am seated to reply to yours of the 27 ult. While you are glad of my good health, it is also a matter of no little satisfaction to me. You ceertainly have a very correct idea of the hapy meeting of Montgomery and his wife after an absence of three days. Poor folks I expect that their hearts were allmost broken over the fearful length of their separation. Dear Amanda, it does hurt me to know that you have

to work so hard. It seems like an abuse of your good nature, and if I had any grounds to go on, I would scould you a little. You say that your health is tollerable. but I fear that your courage is all that keeps you going. Oh how much better I would feel if your circumstances were so that you need not work out of the house. . . .

We are in the same camp, without any changes particularly, the health of the boys that are here is pretty good. We have been having very heavy rains here. well the corporal says that it is time for me to go on guard, it is only to guard the well here in camp to keep the boys from making the water dirty

I am off guard again. and am seated to finish my letter.

Amanda it is hardly any use to send me thes little envelopes; it is very unhandy doing up a sheet of paper to go in them. I can get plenty of envelopes while I am here.

While I am writing, there is a young man scarcely 21, at the sutler shop so drunk as hardly to be able to stand on his feet: but this is only one instance of the many, which is almost a daily occurance here.

This leaves me in excelent health, I hope it may find you the same.

Your Husband

J. W. Bartmess,

to his Dear Amanda.

Camp Graham *Tenn*

August. 11th, '64.

Dear Companion—.

The time has again come, to write you a letter. I aim to write every sunday, and once through the week. This is thursday. I spoke in my last of the reported capture of the reg't. It turnes out however not a capture but a severe raid. had it not been for the Spencer rifles I suppose they would have been captured. They were entirely surrounded by a heavy force, and had to cut their way out. There were some other regiments that threw away their guns, and were so confused that they scarcely knew what they were doing, and when they found that our reg't were going out, they fell in behind, and come out with them. There were about 1500 came out at that time, none had guns but our *reg't.* and there were only about four or five hundred of them.

Col. Harrison, was captured, but he is reported upon good authority in our lines again we have have not learnt how he got back.

An order has come to the reg't settling the matter that the recruits will have to stay three years, It is possible that Congress will do something for us hereafter, but not *probable*. Well if the Lord spares me to get out of the service which will only be a little over a year more any how. they will never get me into it again. Gov Morton is trying to get as many of the soldiers home to vote as he can, but if he should get me home I would not vote for him, for he is the man that got me into this, and now him and the men that are running the government are practicing this fraud on us, It is nothing less than defrauding the recruits out of, some one, and some two years time. It would be no worse to defraud a man out of so much money. which would be a crime in civil law, yet the government calling itself the best the sun ever shone on is practicing just such a crime on thousands of Soldiers, and they cannot help them selves. It is enough to tempt one to be a butternut. but Dear wife we will have to bear it, but I will never go in the service again if I have to leave home till the war is over to keep rid of the draft.

And I am going to play out of duty whenever I can if I have to go in the guard house for it.

It makes me mad to think of it. I was drafted only for nine months, but thought that I would do even more for the government than it asked of me, and therefore enlisted for nearly two years. and they fraudulently put it down on the muster rolls 3 years, as they did all other recruits. and now they say they cannot discharge us because the muster rolls are for three years. We have to grin and bear it just because the fraud was practiced by the leading men of the nation and we underlings are to be the tools with which they are to work out for them selves a great name in the world, do you not think I am out of humor? Amanda do not read what I said about it to any one.

I forgot to say that my health is very good.

From your Husband
J. W. Bartmess

to his wife Amanda

Camp Smith *Tenn.*

Saturday—. Augst. 20th. '64.

Dear Companion—.

I thought I would commence a letter today and finish it tomorrow. You will notice by the heading of this letter that we have moved since I last wrote. The above named camp which we are now in is situated on the Cumberland river, two

or three miles from Nashville. It is on a hill, and a nice place to camp, only it is a little hard carrying water up the hill.

It is now sunday morning, but what is best yesterday's mail brought me a letter from you, dated the 15th inst. You speak of its being very dry there we have had rain nearly every day this month here. There are some things about Harrison's enlisting that look queer. He will enlist for one year if they can raise a company, that is if he can be captain of that company, I suppose. You say that none of his company enlisted, that seems to speak against him. Him being a soldier once for a year, and half of that time at home, has sort of played out. It is generally thought here that he played off to get a discharge, and you know whether he did or not, and so do I.

.
You next speak of the nights of the golden circle resisting the draft. so far as contentions are concerned, I expect one is better off down here than at home, for here every thing goes one way, but don't understand that I had rather be here than at home with you.

Sunday as it is, we are ordered to cut down the weeds and sprouts and to make a general cleaning up about our quarters. Well this is only a little thing and only one of the many little things done in the army, which certainly is wicked, now is it any wonder that this dreadful war is allowed to be prolonged as it is. Amanda I always was in favor of the administration and the war, and am yet, but there is a great evil right at the heart of the whole thing, that evil is, the war is carried on and led, principally by wicked and God-daring men. Indeed when we consider that war within itself is wicked, and the awful heinous wickedness, of the army, we must conclude that it is only the amazing and unlimited mercy of God, in favor of right, that will give us victory over our enemies.

.
Towle and Barber is still puny. Barber has gone to the hospital at town, The boys say when Jackson took Barber as a recruit that he robbed the grave yard. sometimes they call him a living grave yard. Towle looks like a walking skeleton. They eat a great deal of green corn and apples and any thing else they can get.

My own health is good.

Yours in love

J. W. Bartmess.

to his kind Wife.

Camp Smith *Tenn.*

August 28th. '64.

Dear Wife—

.
I was down to the city today to negro Sunday school. There were nearly 400 darkies there. All seeme to be interested in the school. I next went to one of the fashionable churches of the city, and heard portion of a lifeless sermon. it was a magnificent house, with a grand pulpit, splendid walls and cushioned seats.

This is the 29th. I felt so little like writing yesterday that I put off writing till today. I am on guard at the head quarters of this camp. with 17 others of our reg't. We are likely to stay here on guard as long as the reg't stays about Nashville. We are quartered in the guard house, and have a very nice place to stay, much better than in a tent. We are on guard every-other day, and do not have to stand at night at all. some of our squad goes out into the country every day to pick up soldiers who are in mischief, and while we are out, we get all the apples and peaches that we can eat.

I was out this forenoon and brought in a few very nice apples and cooked them for dinner.

This is the 30th and it is a shame that I should be so long writing this letter. so I will try to close it now.

This is a beautiful morning. I have just had my breakfast. and am well and hearty. If I just knew that your health was good I would be much happier.

It may be that we will remain a permanent detail here, if the ballance of the reg't does leave. I will stay if I can. But this is only a supposition of my own.

I remain as ever your Husband

Affectionately,

J. W. Bartmess

to his kind Wife.

Camp Smith *Tenn.*

Sep't. 1st. '64.

Dear companion—

.
I am sorry that your condition is such, that you have to be both man and wife, to dig and toil, untill I fear you will be broke down, and bear marks of age, though young. Dear Amanda I wish it could be otherwise. but the dark threatening future seems to forbid a hope for better things, for a

time. Who can know what those dark freaks, in the political heavens in the north, portend.

.
Your request to send you some old cloths, is beyond my power at present to perform. You ought to make up my infantry overcoat, into cloths for Elliott. The rebel *Gen.* Wheeler is making some show between here and Murfreesboro, with a few thousand cavalry. They have been fighting with him last night and this morning. no telling what it will amount to yet.

I told you in my last that I was on guard at the headquarters of this camp. How long I will stay here I cannot tell but I will stay here just as long as they will let me.

We have our victuals cooked for us now, we have a very good cook. We have a very nice thing of it here.

I think of nothing more now I still remain, as ever your Husband,

Affectionately,
J. W. Bartmess.

to his dear *Wife*

Camp Smith, *Tenn.*
Sep't. 4th '64.

Dear Companion—.

.
I received yours of the 27th *ult.* yesterday. It is truly a great satisfaction to learn that you are well again. And now if I only had it in my power to send you what money you need how much happier I would be. I do not know when we will draw any money, for most of our boys that were here, have gone out after Wheeler. and the main part of them is in the front. I expect you had better get some money of Montgomery to do you till I can send you some.

.
I need not write you war news for you get that in a faster way. I will say however that Sherman has taken Atlanta. We have had desperate hot weather for the last few days. I am well and as hearty as I can well be.

Dear Amanda be reassured of the unyealding love of your Husband,

J. W. Bartmess.
Amanda.
Elliott.
Ellista.

to his family.

Camp Smith Tenn

Sept. 6th. '64.

Dear Wife—.

You speak of the reg't coming to Indianapolis to muster out the non-veterans. Now let me tell you that any persons, who may be feeding themselves on that notion, is sucking at a dry *tit*. Such a thing as the reg't coming home to vote may be, and only may be. Sirus Hanley need not hitch up to go yet for a few days.

Well J. Miller and I are now in the cook tent, that is we are cooking for our squad, 19 in number, that are doing provost duty here at head quarters, We have just had breakfast, and washed the dishes. and feel as comfortable as we can under the circumstances. We have good news again, John Morgan is killed his staff captured, with a number of his men.

The war seems to be progressing finely, and if it does not run in the ground too soon, it will find its point of destination in the gulf of Mexico, or the Atlantic Ocean,

If I can get to stay here I shall be pretty well satisfied, especially if I can heare once in a while that you are well at home, and have plenty to eat. Well dear Wife it does appear that the Lord intends to favor us I know that he has favored me since I have been in the service. When the reg't went to the front some time ago it hapened that I was at town on duty, is all that saved me from going with them, and it was the first that I had been from camp, for two weeks before that. It is very likely that I would have had to go with the boys after Wheeler if I had not have been here at head quarters.

I firmly believe that the Lord is laying out a work for me to do, and that it was necessary to give me a lesson of three years from my family, in the army, first probably to learn me to love my family, and second to learn me human nature, for no better chance is afforded one, than in the army to learn human nature It seams that I never felt such a fullness of soul to be about my masters business as I now do.

I have the best of health, and pray that the blessing may be yours also.

Affectionately,

from

Your

Husband

J. W. Bartmess,

to his kind, *Amanda*

Camp Smith Tenn.

Sep't 11th '64.

Dear Wife—

.
 I received a letter from Abe a few days ago. he wants to
 come home to vote for Lincoln and Morton. He says that pap
 wrote to him that he hoped that the people of the north
 would not resist the draft. Abe thinks that is a sign that
 pap is getting over his copperhead democracy

Affectionately

Your

Husband.

J. W. Bartmess.

to his wife.

Amanda.

Camp Webster.

Sept 16th '64.

Dear Wife—

You must not think that we have changed camps, some-
 body has only changed the name of our camp.

.
 I will write on the opposite page concerning Heviland renting
 the shop. so that you can let him read it him self if you wish.
 This leaves me well. may it find you well also.

Your Affectionat Husband

J. W. Bartmess.

to his wife Amanda.

Heveland can have the shop on the following conditions. He
 can have it one year by paying one dollar and fifty cents per
 month to be paid every two or three months as you think
 best. and before he commences on a new year, have an under-
 standing whethe he will pay you for the past use of the
 shop or whether he will credit it on what is comeing on the
 lot yet. only charge him a dollar a month for the past use.

J. W. Bartmess.

Camp Webster. Tenn

Sept. 21st. '64.

Dear Wife—

.
 We have been relieved from provost duty to be sent to the
 front, I do not know just when we will start. The order is
 to take 800 horses to our reg't. The old non veterans will be
 at home before long, I told E. Fetters to stop to see you, he

is the one that took dinner with us the sunday before I left home the last time. I wish I had something to send you.

My health is very good, and I do hope and pray that you may all be well again, for I am so much better satisfied when you are well. The health of the boys here are good; Barber is as sprightly as a cricket and about as useless, Towle's face is swelled up pretty smartly, he moves around as if he was slipping on to something. I will close by begging you to remember that you have the best wishes and earnest prayers of Your Affectionate. Husband

J. W. Bartmess

to his wife Amanda.

Oct. 15th. '64

Camp Webster Tenn.

Dear Wife—.

I have just returned from the raid, have only been here long enough to unsaddle my horse and wash myself. I find three letters here from you and cannot wait longer to answer them. We have been on the raid just 20 days, and in all that time had not a chance to write to you. I know that you will be very anxious about me until you get this letter. I stood the raid very well, was not sick at all. but several of the boys took sick and had to be sent back. We fought the reb's nearly one whole day. had several horses killed and about 30 men killed and wounded.

I heard the song of several bullets, and the ugly buzzing of of a few shells while I was on the raid.

Sunday morning 16th. I thought I would write a few more words this morning. I have just got done washing my cloths, you may think it strange that I should wash on Sunday. My cloth was so dirty and lousy that I could not wait till another day. I had to borrow cloths to put on, till mine gets dry. This is a beautiful Sabbath I am well and hearty, and would be tollerably contented, if I could only know that my little family was well and doing well I must close and mail my letter

As ever yours

J. W. B.

Camp Webster Tenn.

Oct. 18th. '64.

Dearest one.

I received yours of the 11th. inst. yesterday. I am sad, and how can I help it. To know your condition makes me sad.

While I write I can almost see you and the children suffering with aching heads and fevered forms, with scarcely any one to ask you how you feel. This is hard, these are some of life's heaviest sorrows, and darkest billows. Oh the wretched cruelties of this war! Who can estimate them. Look at the tears of the orphan! hear the deep lamentation and groans of the innumerable sufferers, Mark the depressed countenance of the widow, which speaks in sorrows language the deep, keen anguish of a broken heart; and then tell how cruel war is.

Was there any just cause for war, there might be an excuse for its cruelties, But when we remember that it is all to satisfy the wicked and fiendish ambition of man, it then assumes the horrible nature, next to the dreadful realities of eternal despair. Great God when will this dreadful calamity end. When will the sacrifice of blood and tears, and groans, atone for the sin of the nation, and restore thy smiles. . . . I would liked very much to have went home to vote, but that has played out. so that we may rest easy on that score.

The order is now that we start to the reg't tomorrow morning, I will write again the next opportunity. I am well and hearty. I am as ever your Husband

Affectionately

J. W. Bartmess,

to his dear *Family*.

Camp at Chattanooga Tenn
Oct, 30th. '64.

Dear Companion.

After 11 days unavoidable delay I seat myself to write you a few lines. We left Nashville the 20 inst, and arrived here yesterday Although we traveled ten days we only made 150 miles.

We are now awaiting orders, we may leave tomorrow morning, and we may not leave for a week. We have just drawn five days rations, my breakfast consisted, this morning of coffee sugar and parched corn.

I expect that we will go to the reg't. from here. We do not know just where the regt. is now.

There are a great many rumors about the rebel army. It is said that the rebel army is divided, and one part is coming in northwest of here on the Tenn. river. again report says that our forces down there have whipped him, or the rebs and are driving them a northwest direction. I suppose that there is something of it, for the fourth army corpse that just

passed through here on their way down that direction. The weather is very nice here now, it is warm today and has the appearance of rain. My health is excellent at this time, and has been all summer and fall. and what is some comfort, is that every day that passes now is wearing away the last year in the service for me, and the next time they get me to enlist in an old reg't for the unexpired time, will be the second time, which will never be untill this government comes up to its promises. Whether that time will ever come or not is only known by the *All Wise*.

I tell you Amanda whenever I get to thinking how they lied to me to get me in the service for three years, I feel vexed, yes I get mad. I love the government but such a gulling operation makes one nearly hate it. Dear Wife pardon me for writing nomore.

You and you alone have my earnest love as a wife.

Affectionatly your husband

J. W. Bartmess.

to his wife.

Amanda.

Camp in the Woods Georgia

Dec. 18th. 1864.

Dear Wife—.

.
We are now in Bryant county *Geo.* about ten miles from the Atlantic Ocean. and ten or fifteen miles from Savannah. Savannah is on the savannah river, 10 or 12 miles from the Ocean; the river being the line between Georgia and South Carolina. The rebels still hold Savannah but we have them surrounded so they cannot get out, nor get supplies.

We have communications with our fleet and get provision in that way.

We had a long trip down here, and a very pleasant one except that we had to shoot a few times at the rebs. We always had plenty of fresh meet and ham, and honey and butter when we could get it, and sweet potatoes without end. and chickens much the same. It have been the richest time in the service for me. We burned cotton enough, to nearly buy the state of Indiana.

It was rich to se the negros flock to the road to see us pass. and still richer to see the boys make them pull off their hats and coats and dance while we were passing.

If you want an Idea of the face of this country just think of the swampiest country you ever seen, and then imagine one a hundred times swampier, and you have it. the timber is

Ciprus and pine. and the ground a littoral bed of sand and in many places miery. The weather has been dry so far, and as warm as june weather in Indiana, except a few days that it froze some It is quite pleasant to go in our shirt sleeves and bare foot if we wish.

I never had better health than I have now.

It will take letters a little longer now to go and come than it did while I was at Nashville, for they will have to go around by new york now I suppose, for there is no communication back by land now.

Sherman has about 90,000 men here altogether besides several thousand that are on their way here.

.
J. W. Bartmess

to his ever faithful Wife.

.

Camp in the Woods Ga

Christmas Sunday Dec. 25th. '64.

Dear Wife—.

.

Well we have moved camp again about ten miles nearer Savannah. I was in Savannah yesterday. It is quite a large place but awkwardly built. I took a look over into South Carolina but have not been there yet. Savannah is a strongly fortified place, but a few nights ago the rebels left about ninety siege guns and a great many small canon in their works, and crossed the river into South Carolina, bound, it is supposed, for Charleston in all possible haste: but Sherman was awake and at their heels, and has taken a number of prisoners.

We have had a few days of right cool weather, cold enough to freeze ice, but it is now right pleasant again.

My health is good, it ceertainly never was better.

You have the best wishes and ardent love of your unworthy Husband.

J. W. Bartmess.

to his *Wife*

Camp in Georgia.

New Years. day Sunday Jan. 1st. '65.

Dear Wife—.

.

The weather here as a general is very nice. it is by spells. a few days very warm, and then a few days tollerable cool.

Cold enough to freeze the top of the ground a little. A rebel boat from England came into savannah, not knowing but that the rebs were still there It was loaded with tea sugar coffee and peper for General Hardee. but the Captain of the boat soon found out his mistake, and could do no better than to turn over his load to the *Yankeys*.

My health is still of the best quality.

Hoping that you may be well. I close.

Affectionately Yours

J. W. Bartmess

to his Wife

P.S. If you need any money, borrow some of Montgomery for I am so far away that It will be unsafe to send money. I suppose we will have the chance to be paid of before long, but I think I shall not draw mine this pay day, there is too much danger of loosing it here. and it is safe in uncle Sam's hands.

J. W. B.

General Sherman's Army,
8th Ind. Regt. 3 Div. Cavalry Army Corps
Jan. 13th 1865.

Dear Companion—

It has been over one week since I wrote you last. I generally made it a rule to write to you twice a week, but there is nothing here now to write about, and paper costs three cents a sheet and envelopes about the same; and scarce at that. therefore I do not write so often.

We get but very little mail here the last letter I got from you was written on the 20th day of last November. It is a sad thing to be so long without hearing from you. but I am in hopes that all things are going well with you

.
Would you think that a soldier in the army loved his wife at home, if he had undue communication with negro wenches down here? Such is positively the case in this Company. . . .

I was at Savannah yesterday yesterday on General review; The military meaning of review is for the commanding General to see wheather his troupes are in good fighting trim. It may be useful to an army but I *can't see it*.

We are having very pleasant weather down here

I think of nothing more at present

Affectionately your Husband

J. W. Bartmess,

to his kind *Wife*

8th Ind Regt. 3 Div. Cav. Army Corps
Jan. 22 1865.

Dear Wife—

.
Amanda my heart aches when I look over the dreadful picture which the army presents. I am most heartily sick of this kind of life. Oh what a pleasant retreat from the repulsive scenes of this man slaughtering life, would be the society of my family in some secluded spot, shut out from the calamities of war.

It seems to me that I am in the midst of a great Ocean, whose mad billows roll around and beneath. while the heavens are hid by dark and frightful clouds, which hurl their black massive forms in confusion through the air; and forked lightnings flash, streaming through and lighting up the convulsed mass of nature. only to make it look more horifying. In this state of terrific horror I look out beyond the fierce commotion of the elements, and my eye catches a sight, that for the time being, causes me to forget all that is around me. It is three bright loving forms in their little quiet home, longing for the storm to subside and the return of a husband and father. Will they hear me if I hollow to them that I am coming. Dear wife I am coming, nine months from today will release me from the army, and then I am coming to stay with you.

The weather has turned out very wet for two or three days past. and it is quite muddy and nasty getting about.

We are to leave here in a short time but I know not just how soon. and I do not know where we are going some think that we are going further north.

It is strange that I get not letters from you; I cannot make myself believe that you have not written, and if you have why do they not come. Is my wife lying sick unable to write or is she gone to the better land, or has she forgotten me. such reflections harrass my mind. I will wait patiently to know the truth of it all. let you be where you may, my heart still lingers there. I cannot forget you. Oh may God pity and preserve us and grant us, a happy meeting soon. is the prayre of your Husband.

J. W. Bartmess.

to his kind Wife.

P. S. I wold send you a couple dollars that I made washing if it was not several vessels have been wrecked on the account of storms lately makeing it unsafe sending letters from here with money in them.

J W Bartmess

Fayetteville North Carolina.

March 14, 1865.

Kind Wife—

Two days ago I wrote you a hasty letter, today I have the privilege of writing another. We have been marching since the 25th. of Jan. and are not through yet. I do not know where we will go to from here. We have had but little fighting on this trip. The rebel cavalry have been watching us very close, we have marched side by side with them nearly all the time, but they have not seemed anxious to fight, neither have we. We have nice weather now, but we have had very disagreeable weather. Our march over the country has been like the blighting pestilence, for we have taken or turned upsidedown every thing before us. I have a great many things in store to tell you. . . .

.

J. W. Bartmess.

to his dear *Wife*

Mt. Olive N. C. [?]

Apr. 2nd. 1865.

Dear Wife—

Another Sabbath has come I look just without the tent and see a half dozen or more, running, bending, and jabbering over a game of marble. And just a little further over four more are in a sitting posture, breathing out threats, and heinous oaths over a game of cards. While in different parts of camp may be found those, who after a night of drunken revelry, at houses of ill fame, feel much like the domestic *curr* which has been whiped and beaten home and is lying in some corner, to allow nature to repare the bruises received in some infamous haunt. . . .

This is a beautiful day. we are having very nice weather for corn planting. The wounded of our company are doing very well. I saw Basset [?] yesterday his arm will get well as soon as such a wound can.

Andrew Jackson is commanding our company. he is a splendid officer Such men as him will be loved when we all get home. he is going to see Harrison some of these days and he says that I may go with him.

We have plenty to eat here. We have considerable duty to do but not hard duty. We have nice plank houses and nice weather. so that if soldiering is pleasant at all, it is pleasant here. But then I never saw any thing nice about soldiering.

.
J. W. Bartmess.
to his Wife

Greensboro. N. C.
May 16th. 1865

Dearest One—.

.
We are at present at Greensboro N. C. how long we will stay here is unknown. Our company is on detail as scouts, and one squad of it is in Virginia by this time I expect, after some horse thieves. Another squad is on a scout after five bushwhackers, and will not be in for two or three days. another squad is gone out 6 or 8 miles, but I cannot tell what for. F. Stanley, Wm. Clauson and myself are on detail at the telegraph office in town, as orderlies.

Stanley is corporal now.

I expect that you are looking for me home soon, Well I do not know when we will come, there seems to be good prospect for staying untill my time is out.

Somebody has to stay untill the people get law and order restored. But there is not as much danger as if we were fighting every day, so that you will not be so uneasy about me as you was.

Well I must close and go to the telegraph office.

With the deepest love, and earnest prayers, I am

Affectionately
Your Husband
J. W. Bartmess.
Wife.

to his kind

Durham Station, N. C.
May 30 1865.

Dear One—

I am seated with yours of the 16th. ult. [?] before me, attempting to answer it.

You state that your health is not so good I am thankful however that it is nothing worse than a cold. I deeply regret that you have to expose yourself as you do. but it seems that there is no help at present. I expect to return this fall. and I hope to be able to help you soon. save your self all you can. As you say, the death of Mr. Lincoln is a sad affair to the nation, but it is still worse for the rebels and the infamous wretches who plotted his death; for it leaves in his stead a man who will deal out to them the stern realities of the law.

A man who will punish treason, and not pardon it, who will hang traitors by the neck, and not nurse them in his lap, *Andy Johnson*.

You say you were weaving. Now I do not want you to do much of that for it is a woman killing business.

You speak of Heviland wanting to take things out of the shop. I will mash his head for him when I come home if he goes to figuring so fresh [?] around there while I am gone. Tell him or read this to him, that if he takes a single brick out of that chimney, that it will be a dear brick to him.

I wonder if he thinks that I am going to serve in the army for three years, as much for his good as mine, while he is at home to make a living for his family, while mine has to rake and scrape for themselves, and then allow him to take my wifes property, and run over her because she is a woman, and cant help it, *never!* while I have the muscular strength that I have now, let him or any other man try it, and I will prepare him for a place where they wont need blacksmiths, or brick either. I want it understood that the man is not well off, who insults you while I am gone.

If he wants the work bench or tool rack and will make a fuss if he does not get them, let him take them, but them brick in that chimney must be left there. why he had as well want the shingles off the roof, or the weatherboarding, as the chimney. You bought every thing but his tools, and his tools is all that he has a right to. I wish I was there I would settle it with him.

We have just got the order to move again. it is said to Knoxville *Tenn.* which is directly west of here. but I do not know how far. . . .

.

J. W. Bartmess

to his *Wife*.

Greensboro N. C.

June 2nd. '65.

Dear Wife,

I am seated to reply to yours of the 1st and 21st, which arrived yesterday. The first was written while you was at Hank Finkbones. I am glad that you enjoyed yourself so well at meeting. I am rejoiced at the glowing account you give of the neighborhood. It does me good to hear that the people are becoming religious. I suppose that Hank is sailing high, but I cannot suppress my doubts, for no one can trust a horse that has been in the habit of running away, But I am

surprised when you tell me that Jesse McCollum has come back to Jay. That beautiful Iowa is played out.

You state that Elista weighs 44 pounds. I guess that is heavy enough for a girl four years old. but her pappy weighs some more. I weigh 182. pounds, and certainly am as healthy as I ever was.

H. Finkbone says if I will write to him he will answer me. Well he will not have to write any answers. If I had no one to write to but him, I would not write any. You may think this is pretty rough to write about my cousin. but how did he talk to me when I was at home. I will not forget that soon. If he ever talks to me that way again I would rather mash his pretty face, than to write to him. A man cannot be a butternut and a christian too. The war is over now. and the rebels badly whipped, something that the butternuts said could not be done. and now I expect that the lying scoundrells will say that they were allways good union men. I know of several here who were hard rebels, who are now fixing to go north to live, and I will venture that they will deny ever being southern men *at all*.

Why one of these fellows have been to Richmond Va. and seen the stores that some northeren merchants have brought there since, its fall, and he was perfectly astonished! he had never seen such sights. he declared that there were so many nice things that he did not know what to buy first.

Amanda no mans heart ever loved a woman more than my heart loves now. but when I turn my thought to the Finkbones and some who call me *cousin*, I look on them as mean sneaking rebels, for while I have been in the army trying to build up the government, they have stayed at home, trying to tear it down. It makes me mad I do not want anything to do with them. I expect some of them are now secretly rejoicing that President Lincoln was killed. I thought that I would never fight a man under any circumstances, but I never want to be tempted by any one speaking disrespectful of Lincoln. A better man never lived on earth than Abraham Lincoln, and I will never hear him abused. And such is the resolution of the soldiers allmost to a man.

.
Money would be a poor remuneration for what I have endured here in the army, but having restored peace and set liberty for my children, liberty for all, on a firm foundation! the society of my Wife and children with their ardent love, will be full satisfaction. You say that the woods are so nice. well we will take many a ramble in the woods yet: be patient I am coming after a while.

You speak of the one years men Yes the ornery set never done the government any good but they are going to be mustered out right away. But we who have marched all over the southern confederacy, and have really ended the war, we must stay to the last. Shermans old army all went home but our division of cavalry. It makes me mad, but I had as well be pleased for it will do no good to get mad.

I am still in the Telegraph office. Frank and me often goes into the country to get good things to eat. we have a pass at will to go where we please when we are not on duty.

Yesterday was a day appointed by the President to hold meetings of condolence for President Lincoln I heard two very good sermons on that subject here in town yesterday We are having very nice weather except a little too warm.

.

J. W. Bartmess

to his endearing *Wife*

Telegraph Office.

Greensboro N. C. July 4th. '65.

Dear Wife—.

I was awakened this morning by the unwelcome peals of belching cannon, as they were devoting their coarse melody to the honor of the independance of this great nation. This day very naturally directs our minds back to the day when, the representatives in congress assembled, called into being that most noble document; *The declaration of Independance* Doubtless our revolutionary Fathers little thought that, that very same document would be to maintain by a most fearful and gigantic war, at no later day than this. Many hearts, this day, in the citties and towns of the north, will beat with heroic pride, while many more will swell with patriotic joy. But alas for poor me, the day has a vastly different meaning; and produces a vastly different effect upon my heart. While to some it will be all joy, and in recounting the blessings which attach to it, they will be jubilant and hapy; to me it is a sad memorial of wrongs, of privations, of afflictions of mind allmost unedurable.

Those who have stayed at home with their wives, and children and, friends, may well rejoice on independence day, because they have suffered no loss. But the very same service which I performed for their good, to secure their liberties, has resulted in my inestimable loss, the loss of my wifes health, if not her dear life. My very time and service for the last three years enabled those men to stay at home and take care

of their wives and children, and to make money while not only I myself have been enduring hardships, and exposing myself to dangers; and death: but my wife, the companion of my bosom, the one nearest of all to my heart; has had to battle alone with grim *toil* and waisting *care*. And now my return will be, not to a companion flushing in health and vigor, but to a faithful and true wife, who to show that faithfulness in my absence, has well nigh worn out her life. Dear Amanda, these reflections are as unendurable as they are true. My heart recedes from the scene, overwhelmed, and subdued with sorrow. I would yield to despair, if God had not said, that all things shall work together for good to them that love God. If a glory as bright, as overwhelming, shall be given us at the close of our disasters, as our disasters have been sad and fearful, to what a world of glory and grandure we must be tending. I say if, when this storm is over, our joys shall be as complete, as our sorrows have been depressive, what unfathomable delights, and immeasurable bliss must await us. Well God has said that eye hath not seen neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what is in reserve for the faithful.

This is the morning of the fifth.

The negroes for miles around were all in town yesterday. enjoying their jubilee of freedom.

This is Sunday the 9th. and I would have sent my letter sooner but I had no stamps, till today and the reg't went to Lexington about 30 miles from here, so that I could not send letters without paying postage.

Well I have good news for you this time, but I am almost afraid to tell you what it is, lest it might not be true; It is that the reg't has orders to be mustered out of the service, but do not look for us too soon, for it will be some time before we can get there. Captain Schmucks regt expects to start for home in two or three days.

Now do not stop writing on account of what I send you this time, for I am very anxious to hear from, especially because your health is so poor.

I will let you know when we go to start home. I have nothing more to write this time.

My health is exceedingly good

May God bless you and the Children, is the earnest prayer of your devoted Husband.

J. W. Bartmess

to his dear Wife