

David V. Smith to Elizabeth Smith

Camp Near Bristol Station, Near the Orange & Alexandria Rail Road, Va., 8 August 1863.

Autograph letter signed, 4 pages.

[Written upside down at top of sheet]

When you send me another envelope please
Direct it as it is almost an impossibility
to find ink I have Directed several with the pencil
& that is the reason you may not get any more letter
from me I think

Camp Near Bristo Station Near the Orrange & Alexandria Rail Road Va Aug 8th 1863

Dear Elizabeth

I sit down to write you a few lines to let you all know how I am getting along our Division is now doing pickett duty one half of the Regiment goes out one day & Comes into camp the next & the other half lays on Reserve which makes us on duty all the time which we should have considered very hard duty but after we have had such a hard march as we have had we take it as a great favour to have the privilege of Picketing as we are now doing. it is Reported here that our Division is detached from the Corps & if that is so we shall not be likely to have any fighting to do in the Regular army we shall have provost & pickett duty to do & the guileras to contend with which is very thick around here & they are the worst kind of enemies to contend with for we cannot tell where to find them [2] I Received a letter from you on the 6th inst Dated the 2nd & was much pleased with it & I was also glad to hear that you was all well & the children growing so finely I am ~~going~~ getting Better By Resting as we are now although we are on duty all the time but it is the marching that effects us all. I attend the doctors nearly every day So far but I hope I shall soon be so I can get along without medicine but if we go on another march down [*illegible*] my waggon for I cannot stand it. This morning it fell to my lot to draw fresh Bread which we now have every day & I drew for 25 men & 6 of them is unfit for duty that leaves us 19 men & we left wood Bury NJ not yet a year ago with 84 men & Several other Companys of our Regiment that numbered 100 men each at woodbury NJ is not larger than our

Company at the present time so you can see we are falling off very fast - & them that is now left must be the lucky ones. Our Captain James [3] James M^cComb of Camden NJ is as fine man & the best officer is the Regiment I think & knows as much he says he dont think we will ever have another fight without we have to go to Richmond after the fall of Charleston SC & if we do we will have another battle something like the Battle of Waterloo & that will end the war but I hope we shall never get into another fight like that at Gettysburg PA for it was awful beyond Discription. I cannot discribe it with my pencil but if dont get to come home myself this fall I will try to give you or Charley a slight sketch of it but I think you would not care to Read the details of the fight as it was. I will just say I sit on my knees by the side of Stone fence & loaded & fired my gun until I had blisters on my fingers as big as 10 cent peaces from Ramming down the loads & my gun was so hot I could not touch the Barrel with my hands & so was most the others I never wanted to load [4] & shoot so fast in all my life before. I see by the papers I got from some of you 3 in number on the 5th inst that we captured 2 stand of Rebel [*illegible*] that is a mistake our Regiment got 7 colors from the Rebs & our Division got 17 in all to my own personall knowledge. We had been short of [grul] for a day or 2 as our waggons could not come up to us so after the battle was over some of our fellows went in among the dead to get their Haversacks they came back with short or longcakes whichever you may call them & some good buiscuits. I tried to beg some but that was of no use so the Captain told me I was about as stout hearted as any of them I had better go and get some as there was plenty on the feild so I took my gun in one hand & my knife in the other & I started on the hardest mission I had ever been on, the ground being nearly covered with dead & wounded the wounded crying for help & water & to be killed & so on that I could not stand it so I cut 2 Haversacks off of 2 dead men picked up as many guns on the field as I could carry & went back to our stone fence again I got cakes & good fresh mutton well cooked enough for 6 or 8 of us the Rebel sharp shooters was popping away at us all the time but they did not hit me & when we buryed the dead there was loads of cakes laying about the battle field. I must now close as my paper is getting full. I sent a letter to Charley the other day I suppose you have got it as the mail now goes very Regular write soon & often & will write to you as often as I can So I bid you all good bye hoping this may find you all well From Your Affectionate Husband & Father D V M Smith