

7-8-1863

## Letter from Marshall Blair Clason to his father

Marshall Blair Clason

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Shelbyville, Tenn., July 8<sup>th</sup> 1863.

Dear Father: -

I received a letter from you several days since, but as I destroyed the letter, in accordance with your orders, I do not remember its date. I must acknowledge, in the beginning, that I received the box containing the coat, as also the box containing fruit &c. The full loaf of cakes was in the box, I made a mistake in saying that this was missing. It was all right. The coat pleased me very much. It fits me exactly. The only objection that I have to it, is that the pockets are outside of the coat, which is somewhat inconvenient for one to practice the manual of arms. I am much obliged to you for the coat. It comes very welcome this hot weather. However, I cannot see that it is any warmer here now at Cincinnati. - You see we have changed our location. On the 23<sup>d</sup> June, when Rosecrans commenced his forward movement against Bragg, our regiment moved from Smith's and after seven days marching and countermarching, through the rain and mud (it rained 5 out of these 7 days) we arrived at this place, which had been Gen. Bragg's H<sup>q</sup>. During the 8 months preceding our occupation of the place. We had a very severe march of it. Our Brigade was not brought in contact with the enemy, although daily we heard cannonading in front. The cavalry connected with our detachment had a fight at this place, at which 400 prisoners were taken. The prisoners were marched by our camp next morning. There were no incidents worthy of much note on our march. The country between here and Thompson'sboro, has been much desolated. Many of the houses of the poorer class have been abandoned. - A great deal of property has been burnt. While we were lying



within 8 miles of McMansboro, some \$10,000 worth of cotton was fired  
by some reckless man. The pile was burning as we moved away. A <sup>boat</sup>  
toniqui belonging to the only rebel between here and Gen. Grant's camp was fired by some  
East Tennessee Cavalry. I have seen the desolating footsteps of war, and  
God forbid it should ever come into our homes. This town and county are  
decidedly Union. I might say, intensely so. They have adhered to their  
principles amid all persecutions, and now they rejoice at our coming  
for which they have prayed so long. Many men rejoined their families  
after 8 months' absence, where we unfurled our flag here. Some have  
been hid in the woods for months, fleeing from conscription and perse-  
cution. They have lived like the saints of old, in the "caves and dens of the  
earth." They have been fed and protected by negroes, who have been  
most faithful allies of our cause. These negroes are worthy of praise.  
They have served us faithfully as far as their limited capacity  
would allow. They have a wonderful faculty of keeping a secret. These  
conscripts who have been hid in the woods, say they belonged to the  
Brigade of Gen. Forest, the regiment of Col. Woods, and the Com-  
pany of Capt. Bush. From appearances I should judge this Com-  
mand has full ranks. A great many deserters from the enemy are  
coming in, who desire to take the oath of allegiance. The people here  
are friendly, and come in with produce, which they sell at very  
reasonable prices. This is the place where Vallandigham stopped on  
his Southern tour. x x x I have not told you how our regiment is or-  
ganized. We belong to the 2<sup>d</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Division, Reserve Army Corps.  
Gen. Gordon Granger commands the corps. His present H<sup>q</sup> is at McMans-  
boro, 2 1/2 miles north of here. Gen. Baird commands the Division. His  
H<sup>q</sup> is at Wartrace, 8 miles east of here. Col. Reid commands the Brig-  
ade. His H<sup>q</sup> is here. He commands the post. The business of this Corps at  
present is to hold important posts in the rear of the army, and keep commu-  
nication open. We will not probably participate in any general engage-

ment between Rosecrans and Bragg, but we will be required to keep on the look-out  
for attacks from the enemy's cavalry. The town is being fortified and from  
present appearances we will remain here through the summer. The town is  
healthy, and the surroundings very pleasant. We believe here, that Middle  
Tennessee is about evacuated by the rebels, with the exception of scatter-  
ed bands of cavalry here and there. We are of the opinion, also, that this  
evacuation will be a permanent one. Now when Chattanooga is  
taken, as it surely will be, and perhaps without firing a gun, the  
work of clearing out East Tennessee will be soon ended. When it is  
ended, the people ~~in~~ there, armed by the Government will protect them-  
selves. I think the work of reclaiming Tennessee to the old Union is  
about done. We will ~~now~~ <sup>now</sup> set ourselves to the work of doing the  
same thing for Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. If it is true, as  
is currently believed here, that Vicksburg has fallen, the cause of the  
Union will make mighty strides in the next three months. I am  
not so hopeful as to expect a termination of the war in that  
period, but I expect to see the beginning of the end. I expect to see  
some hard fought battles, and I hope to participate in them, I do  
not love this glorious kind of warfare. But we must patiently  
wait for our time. We are gladdened by news from the East,  
that Meade has conquered Lee, and that he is rapidly pursuing the  
Confederate Army to an impassable river. I hope he may gain a  
victory that will utterly annihilate their army. I think all men in  
the North have now come to the conclusion that no state of things at all  
desirable can be had until the Southern armies are vanquished. No  
sane or patriotic man can look for any other solution of the ques-  
tion than the sword gives. I am glad I am contributing to hasten  
that solution. I am glad I am in the army. I think it will be an  
honor to me and my children and if I ~~don't~~ <sup>must</sup> not, to my parents also.  
I concur in your opinion as to the propriety of my investing <sup>money</sup>



in your business with the present surroundings. I think it is wise for me to keep out of it. But should the time come, when you could buy out your present partner, I might be able to furnish some funds to go in with you alone. In two months from now, my wife and myself will have \$1,800 available funds. I can save money here in the army at the rate of \$100 per month. Annie has now over \$2000 in U.S. securities, drawing interest. I could readily borrow money ~~if~~ if it were needed. Col. Reid said the other day, he would endorse my note for any sum I might wish. He said this very fairly. I did not ask him. I did not ever think I would need his assistance. Financially speaking, I am very well situated. My wife has told you how her business affairs stand. She is independent, and so is all her family. I may tell you more some future time. If peace were restored, and I were established in business, I think I might congratulate myself on my favorable surroundings. XXX I think you sold your ~~farm~~ <sup>farm</sup> down well. My old barn at rather cheap, only \$3,750. I should have considered it worth fully \$5,000 or \$6,000. The change of location of the P. O. materially damaged the value of your property. But perhaps it is best to keep out of debt. I think so. I think you should ~~not~~ <sup>at a sacrifice</sup> convert your farm mortgages into cash, unless to pay your debts. I think ~~as independent~~ these men will get tried out pretty soon. You know best, however. These men are dishonored all their lives for their repudiating principles. But that don't help you. That Vorhees claim I would not settle except for principal and interest to the very last cent. I mean to me I would litigate a whole year before I would deduct 50% from my claim. XXX I have a chance to sell my land in Illinois to a Capt. in one of the Illinois regiments. I wish you would send me a description of the land. Your opinion of its value and character, its situation, &c. I am going to offer it for \$175,000. It may come down. I will do the best I can. I can make a better trade now than I used to. I sold my horse for \$15 more than I gave for her. You may think I did not do so well with my pistol. Everybody here thinks I sold it well.

I believe I told you I was in the skirmish at Snice, June 11<sup>th</sup>. I escaped unhurt, although I heard shells closer to my ears than ever before. Unless attacked here, I do not expect to smell gunpowder for the next 8 months.

I am in excellent health. I weigh 149 lbs in my summer clothes. I like the butter which you sent me yet. It is still fresh. I admire the box in which you sent it. I shall always keep it for carrying butter.

I hope mother is getting better. I would like to see you all. But that can not occur very soon. I love my duty too well. I hope George is doing well in his new position. My love to all. Hope peace will bring us all together again.

Address me as before.

Yours ever

W. B. Blanton



Shelbyville, Tenn., July 8<sup>th</sup> 1863

Dear Father: —

I received a letter from you several days since, but as I destroyed the letter, in accordance with your orders, I do not remember its date. I must acknowledge, in the beginning, that I received the box containing the coat, as also the box containing fruit, &c. The full loaf of cake was in the box. I made a mistake in saying that this was missing. It was all right. The coat pleased me very much. It fits me exactly. The only objection that I have to it is that the pockets are outside of the coat, which is somewhat inconvenient for one to practice the manual of arms. I am much obliged to you for the coat. It comes very welcome [in] this hot weather. However, I cannot see that it is any warmer here than at Cincinnati.— You see we have changed our location. On the 23<sup>d</sup> June when Rosecrans commenced his forward movement against Bragg, our regiment moved from Triune and after seven days marching and countermarching, through the rain and mud (It rained 5 out of these 7 days) we arrived at this place, which had been Gen. Bragg's headquarters during the 8 months preceding our occupation of the place. We had a very severe march of it. Our Brigade was not brought in contact with the enemy, although daily we heard cannonading in front. The cavalry connected with our detachment had a fight at this place, at which 450 prisoners were taken. The prisoners were marched by our camp next morning. There were no incidents worthy of much note on our march. The country between here and Murfreesboro has been much desolated. Many of the houses of the poorer class have been abandoned.— A great deal of property has been burnt. While we were lying within 8 miles of Murfreesboro, some \$10,000 worth of cotton was fired by some reckless man. The pile was burning as we moved away. A cotton gin belonging to the only rebel between here and Guy's Gap was fired by some East Tennessee cavalry. I have seen the desolating footsteps of war, and God forbid it should ever come into our homes. This town and county are decidedly Union. I might say, intensely so. They have adhered to their principles amid all persecutions, and now they rejoice at our coming for which they have prayed so long. Many men rejoined their families after 8 months absence, when we unfurled our flag here. Some have been hid in the woods for months, fleeing from conscription and persecution. They have lived like the saints of old, in the "caves and dens of the earth." They have been fed and protected by negroes, who have been most faithful allies of our cause. These negroes are worthy of praise. They have served us faithfully as far as their limited capacity would allow. They have a wonderful faculty of keeping a secret. These conscripts who have been hid in the woods, say they belonged to the Brigade of Gen. Forest, the regiment of Col. Woods and the company of Capt. Bush. From appearances I should judge this command



has full ranks. A great many deserters from the enemy are coming in, who desire to take the oath of allegiance. The people here are friendly, and come in with produce, which they sell at very reasonable prices. This is the place where Vollandigham stopped at on his Southern tour. xxx I have not told you how our regiment is organized. We belong to the 2<sup>d</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Division, Reserve Army Corps. Gen. Gordon Granger commands the Corps. His present H<sup>d</sup> Q<sup>rs</sup> are at Murfreesboro, 25 miles north of here. Gen. Baird commands the Division. His H<sup>d</sup> Q<sup>rs</sup> are at Wartrace, 8 miles east of here. Col. Reid commands the Brigade. His H<sup>d</sup> Q<sup>rs</sup> are here. He commands the post. The business of this Corps at present is to hold important posts in the rear of the army, and keep communication open. We will not probably participate in any general engagement between Rosecrans and Bragg, but we will be required to keep on the look out for attacks from the enemy's cavalry. The town is being fortified and from present appearances we will remain through the summer. The town is healthy, and the surroundings very pleasant. We believe here, that Middle Tennessee is about evacuated by the rebels, with the exception of scattered bands of cavalry here and there. We are of the opinion, also, that this evacuation will be a permanent one. Now when Chattanooga is taken, as it surely will be, and perhaps without firing a gun, the work of clearing out East Tennessee will be soon ended. When it is ended, the people there, armed by the Government will protect themselves. I think the work of reclaiming Tennessee to the old Union is about done. We will now set ourselves to the work of doing the same thing for Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. If it is true, as is currently believed here, that Vicksburg has fallen, the cause of the Union will make mighty strides in the next three months. I am not so hopeful as to expect a termination of the war in that period, but I expect to see the beginning of the end. I expect to see some hard fought battles, and I hope to participate in them. I do not love this inglorious kind of warfare. But we must patiently wait for our time. We are gladdened by news from the East that Meade has conquered Lee, and that he is rapidly pursuing the Confederate Army to an impassable river. I hope he may gain a victory that will utterly annihilate their army. I think all men in the North have now come to the conclusion that no state of things at all desirable can be had until the Southern armies are vanquished. No sane or patriotic man can look for any other solution of the question than the sword gives. I am glad I am contributing to hasten that solution. I am glad I am in the army. I think it will be an honor to me and my children, and, if I mistake not, to my parents also.—

I concur in your opinion as to the ^[[im]]propriety of my investing money in your business with the present surroundings. I think it is wise for me to keep out of it. But should the time come, when you could buy out your present partner, I might be able to furnish some funds to go in with you alone. In two months from now, my wife and myself



will have \$1800 available funds. I can save money here in the army at the rate of \$100 per month. Annie has now over \$1000 in U.S. Securities drawing interest. I could readily borrow money if it were needed. Col. Reid said the other day, he would endorse my note for any sum I might wish. He said this voluntarily. I did not ask him. Nor did I ever think I would need his assistance. Financially speaking, I am very well situated. My wife has told you how her business affairs stand. She is independent and so is all her family. I may tell you more some future time. If peace were restored, and I were established in business, I think I might congratulate myself on my favorable surroundings. xxx I think you sold your building on Mason Street rather cheap, only \$3,750. I should have considered it worth fully \$5,000 or \$6,000. The change of location of the P.O. materially damaged the value of your property. But perhaps it is best to keep out of debt. I think so. I think you should not convert your farm mortgages ^[[at a sacrifice]] into cash unless to pay your debts. I think these men will get tired out pretty soon. You know best, however. These men are dishonored all their lives for their repudiating principles. But that don't [sic] help you. That Vorher claim I would not settle except for principal and interest to the very last cent. It seems to me. I would litigate a whole year before I would deduct 5cts from my claim. xxx I have a chance to sell my land in Illinois to a Capt. in one of the Illinois regiments. I wish you would send me a description of the land, your opinion of its value and character, its situation, &c. I am going to offer it for \$750.00. I may come down. I will do the best I can. I can make a better trade now than I used to. I sold my horse for \$15 more than I gave for her. You may think I did not do so well with my pistol. Everybody here thinks I sold it well.

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Address me as before.

Your son  
M. B. Clason