


5-3-1862

Letter from Thomas S. Armstrong to Editor

Thomas S. Armstrong

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From the 78th Regiment.

CAMP SHILOH, TENNESSEE RIVER, TENN. }

May 3rd, 1862. }

Mr. Editor :—Let me give you a few more incidents of Camp life on the Tennessee River. We still occupy the same Camp that we did when last I wrote to you. As I lay in my tent last night, looking out at the clear starry Heavens, I thought of home, of the kind friends we have left behind. Then I thought of the huge host around me. How different our modes of life. You enjoy many blessings we are strangers to. But, we see much to interest, and *hear* more; in fact we *live* on excitement. "Reveille" brings us from our dreams of home, in the morning. Then we "roll out," then the Orderly calls over the list that we have heard till several can call it by memory. The drums, files and bugles make these plains resound again, and then the "music of our mules" sounds far and near. Well, I've got off the question. As I was musing last night, I came to the conclusion that I must take a tramp on the morrow.

Started after dinner. Let me describe "dinner." Crackers made wet, salt put on, then put on the live coals and toasted till black. Boiled beans, good pork and coffee and sugar. We *don't* use cream. Left the 78th, passed through the Camp of the 56th O. V. and at the southern wing stood an orchard. Here we plucked some flowers from

the beds of what had been a garden. Here once stood a fine mansion, now gone. A great pile of cotton lay strewn around burning. Here lived a young man and family who when our forces encamped here "claimed protection," but on the morning of the battle, April 6, he told our guards, who were guarding his property, "You Blue bellied Yankees will catch Hell now." The guard immediately shot him and his fresh made grave is to be seen close by.

One half mile southeast from our Regiment brought us to the westward Corinth road.— Then we passed along it for half a mile which brought us to a fork in the road, the left hand leading to Purdy and the right to Pittsburgh Landing. This fork is at the foot of the northern slope of the hill upon which the rebels made their onslaught Sunday, April 6th, upon the 53rd, 70th, 48th and 72nd Ohio Regiments; the ground is all tramped, no green grass growing. Soon we came to a stream, along the banks was thick underbrush and as I looked through the deep tangled underbrush I felt as if secesh still lingered and lurked about these historic grounds.

"Fent" helped me over the stream, as my pins are so weak I could not make a long leap, nor a strong leap, but with his help I did make a leap all together. Then we passed along a nice level piece or strip of land. Here we found evidences of the struggle; battered canteens, caps, coats &c. were strewn around. "Fent" picked up a clock-weight which no doubt had been fired by the secesh, for I don't believe that our men would fire such missiles. They must be "hard up for timber." Then we walked up the slope of the next hill upon which the Camps of Sherman's Brigade stood. On the top of the hill we find ourselves in the presence of Shiloh church. It is still surrounded with tents. It is only a little log church in the forest, and looks as if it was, or had been, used by the pioneers of the country. The door is to the west and in front is the main road and mule wagons &c. passing along with the drivers cracking their whips and swearing worse than the "army in Flanders." Then leaving the log church, we took southwest $\frac{1}{2}$ of a mile. Then we turned to the right and went to the place where the 78th performed her duty on the ever memorable 7th. We came to a ravine running north and south. On the west

side of this, in line of battle, east and west, lying among trees, the noble boys stood the fire of a secesh battery in front of the ridge at the head of the ravine, with the balls of the infantry supporting the battery, also the dangerous balls of their sharp shooters flying in close proximity to their heads; without going back or flinching from their posts.—

And here the 78th did some firing that told upon the ranks of the enemy. Our battery took a position, and soon the rebels were on the retreat. Right above the position our men marched from the timber into an open field, across it through woods, down across a ravine, then through the Camp of the 46th O. V. and encamped near the 6th Iowa of Sherman's Brigade, that night. His Tender their fighting. Their other movements and positions have been described. Let me return to the field. It is level; on the east side is a log farm house with stick chimnies and daubed with mud. This field I think contains 30 acres. On the south side is a grave, the ground is raised about one foot above the surface and the sides sodded. On it lies a cannon ball and a neat wooden head-board with this inscription, "Captain Behr" 4th Battery Ind. Vol. Morton's Battery, killed in the battle of Pittsburgh 6th, April, 1862. "Requiescat in pace."

The mail is going, I will close, more anon.
Serg't. THOS. ARMSTRONG,
Company B, 78th Regt. O. V.

May 3, 1862

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¹ Daily Zanesville Courier, May 14, 1862, p. 3

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