

11-8-1863

Letter from Marshall Blair Clason to his father

Marshall Blair Clason

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Chattanooga, Nov. 8th 1863.

Dear Father:-

Upon my return from Bridgeport, where I had been gathering up some men who had been left behind, I found your letter. I was very glad to receive it, but was sorry to learn that mother's health had not improved. I do really hope that she may soon recover that health, of which she has so long been deprived. I was glad to hear that your business affairs were in such good shape. They look very favorably to me, although you did not make any statement in detail. I have a proposition to make. Would you like to buy King out? If so, I have a chance of borrowing \$2,000 to \$2,500 at 6 percent on 2 yrs. time, and I could furnish you this. If you could buy him out I would like to invest that sum in your business, in my own name. What do you think of the scheme? I feel quite sure that I could procure the necessary funds. I wish you would write to me on this subject as soon as you can.

In the matter of my boots, you had better send them to my wife at Delaware, and she will find means of sending them from there to the regiment, by my orderly sergeant who at present is at home on recruiting service. My present boots are in good condition, and I think will do me good service until January at least. They have done me good service, although they are a heavy boot. I am comfortable with my present supply of clothing. I shall buy an army overcoat and leave the one you sent me at Delaware. My wife occasionally adds to my stock.

of clothing. I must tell you that the summer coat which you sent me was of very poor material. The least strain on it tears it, and in addition to that the blue turns red when exposed to the sun and moisture. I think you was deceived in the article, and it would be well enough to tell the tailor so. I must also mention that the box that contained this coat had 50¢ extra expense which I paid.

You ask me to resign, now that I have been in the great battle. Well, I did not come to this war simply to be in one great battle. My curiosity was gratified long before Chickamauga. I came because it was my duty to come, and because I could not bear the shame of remaining at home. Now I feel that it would be unmanly to resign when the work was half done. I sometimes think that timidity is at the bottom of most resignations now-a-days. I wish to see the thing through, now that I have commenced. I have put my hand to the plow and I do not wish to look back. I do not desire to go home permanently until the last vestige of armed opposition to the Government has disappeared. Then I could live at home contentedly but not at present. I know mother would like to see me, and I am sure I would like to see her but for this cause alone I could not consent to resign. There is no special reason for my ~~leaving~~ leaving the army. I am in good health. So is that of my family. My business affairs neither trouble me "by day or by night." Now, why should I resign if I could be of service to my country, where she needs the utmost exertions of every man? If I consulted my selfishness, I would be willing to purchase the boon of peace and Union, with other men's labor and blood. But while I believe the cause for which we are fighting to be just and patriotic, I cannot honorably decline giving my services

to it. Since the fate of this country has been handed over to the arbitrament of the sword, every interest is involved in the issue of this conflict. I would make war so terribly if I had the power that I would make these rebels feel that we were pouring out the vials of God's wrath on their accursed heads. I have never seen any evil befall them which I thought was too much and I would magnify their suffering ten fold if I had the power until they yielded. And I would then pursue their leaders until they were exterminated from the country or the earth. I have no sympathy for them at all. Their country is desolated awfully so. But I would run the plowshare through it if necessary. Suppose they do suffer. That don't alone for their sakes. Who suffers in the North? The blood of a regiment of rebels wouldn't atone for the blood of the two boys I lost at Chickamauga. I do hope that we will make them drink the bitter cup of subjugation, and I am in favor of making use of their slaves, mules, corn, cotton and everything else in accomplishing this object. When our victorious legions come home, I hope to be there to hear the people's welcome. If not, and I should be cut short, I will feel the assurance that the years I spent in the service of my country were the most useful and honorable of my life. And I really think that any life would not be altogether wasted, nor do I think I would have lived entirely in vain. + + + + In my previous letter I wrote you a brief account of the part we performed in the recent battle of Chickamauga. I could add nothing of interest to that which is contained in those accounts. I believe Anna also sent you some extracts from the full account I wrote her. You will also find that in the Chicago Tribune an account of the

part performed by the 2 Brigades of the Reserve Corps in the
Spartan's fight. I believe my name was mentioned in some
~~one~~ ^{one} of the letters written from the field. The N.Y.
 Tribune also contained some correspondence which referred to me.
~~For~~ These papers bear date in October. The N.Y. Tribune's cor-
respondent signs himself "Hides." I claim no special credit for any
thing I did that day. I simply did my duty.

Our army was at one time reduced to very short allowance. I
felt a continuance of the ~~present~~ ^{existing} state of affairs ^{would}
have compelled us to evacuate Chattanooga for want of supplies.
A movement from Bridgeport co-operating with one from
this place drove the rebels from Lookout Valley, and enabled
us to open water communication with Bridgeport. Supplies
are now coming forward in abundance. After the Battle of
Chickamauga, the rebels drove our forces off Lookout range, planted
batteries on the mountain, and thereby gained possession of the valley
between here and Bridgeport. They held the railroad, river and the
dirt road. Their sharpshooters made the main road north of the
river impassable, and this ~~useless~~ ^{useless} compelled to haul sup-
plies sixty miles over the mountains, and over roads which
having at times rendered impassable. I have seen empty wa-
gons hopelessly mired in the level, and teamsters abandon their
wagons. Dead animals lined the road every few rods and in-
famy down horses and mules seemed everywhere. I can show
you how difficult and tedious this was. A cavalry supply train
started from Stevenson, with 23 sacks of corn to a wagon.
16 of these were consumed in feeding the mules which hauled the
wagons and the horses of the escort of the train. Now, however,
the case is altered. The men receive full rations, except beans & rice.
The enemy still holds Lookout Mountain, and shelling is still
going on, but no harm is being done. Gen. Hooker has complete
possession of the Valley between here and Bridgeport. The river
is open to within 3 miles of this place. The occupancy of Lookout
by the rebels is more an annoyance than a serious inconvenience.
A steambot came up to night within a ~~few~~ ^{few} mile and a half from
Camp. The present status of affairs here is as follows. Our for-
ces hold the town of Chattanooga, and have fortified it so that it is
impregnable to an assault. Our forces hold the river and valley between here

and Bridgeport (33 miles) which is the base of our supplies. We have ^{from} 60,000 to 75,000 men on this line, and with the reinforcement of Sherman's corps from Grant's army, now near here, we will have 90,000 effective men. Our position is a strong one, but the men on our backs might make a retreat difficult, if such a movement were contemplated. In front of us, in plain view are the enemy. Their tents can be seen by day and their camp fires by night. Our pickets converse with theirs. In fact the camps are within ^{mutual} cannon range, although the distance prevents ^{any} serious damage being done to either party. For holding this place, we have every necessary essential, although the possession of Lookout Mountain is necessary for our ^{future} use of the R. R. and of perfecting our occupation. I think there is not the remotest possibility of our being driven from this stronghold. I am also inclined to think that strategy will also compel the enemy to fall back from our front. I do not think the enemy will make a fight here. We will accumulate supplies here this winter, and in the spring, April or May, will make a campaign against Atlanta. It is fall is certain I think our success is not ^{even} ~~so~~ questionable, although there is a great uncertainty in war. The success of such a move would give us full possession of of North Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama. If the people home will only all unite in favor of a vigorous war, ^{we} get or no nigger, the war will be satisfactorily closed before next summer. I cannot see how any man's mouth can be a peace ~~man~~. There is no safe or honorable alternative to fighting. We must fight. There can be peace in ^{no} other way. These things demand ^{every} time. We must reduce

them to complete and thorough submission: I am sure we are in the right. I am willing to go ahead: There should be no division of sentiment in the North. In matter how the Administration errs, we must still support the war. Should the North concentrate its power it could crush the South. Let us to it. Should slavery perish I have not sorrow. Free-negroism is better than slavery. The white population compelled to labor is degraded in the South. This is certainly true: I can see it everywhere. Slavery corrupts the morals of a people: I know this to be so. Women talk of breeding slaves more freely than a farmer's wife North would talk of breeding cattle. It's so, and I'm no especial Abolitionist. I hope God will find a way to exterminate the institution, root and branch. Its power is broken, any how. But to return. I hope the people of the North will unanimously resolve to push this war ahead with all their power, and never cease until our flag waves over every foot of the rightful territory of the United States. I hope your influence is exerted in that way. I feel well satisfied the South began the war without cause, and without honor, and I feel satisfied that every consideration of national dignity, honor, safety and interest required us to make war upon the most villainous and damnable combination of men this world has ever known. I have no sympathy with Northern peace men, and I do not desire their friendship. They are both cowardly, traitorous, and cruel. On this ground I voted against Vallandigham, and denounced him and his supporters. I voted for Brough, and the entire Union ticket, or as some would say I voted "the straight Abolition ticket." I will do so again, under similar circumstances. I never will

vote a Democratic ticket, when it represents the most odious reaction, and I am willing to make this record public. And I am still a Democrat. I always believed that it was an essential feature of Democracy, to maintain the supremacy of the Constitution and sustain the power of the Government, while it protected the rights of the people. How then can Democrats sustain a rebellion which destroys every vestige of our Constitution and Government as far as one half of our country is concerned. Father, if this rebellion succeeds, you will never sleep a peaceful night, until you sleep in the grave.

The removal of Gen. Rosecrans, was very distasteful to the army. He had the affections of all of us. His successor, however, is very popular. The Reserves fought under him at Chickamauga. I think the new arrangement by which the 3 Departments are consolidated will ^{be of advantage} ~~increase the efficiency of the~~

My own health is good. I do not expect promotion. I hardly deserve it. We shall be paid soon. I will receive about \$515.00. I have also about \$50.00 due me for services on a Court Martial where I was Judge Advocate. I shall probably send home \$450.00. I sold my other pistol for \$16.00. It is not the kind for service.

My wife's business affairs were very prosperous last year. She had a nice surplus over her expenses. ~~She~~ I am as economical as the circumstances will justify.

I saw Capt. Root, of 24th Wisconsin, in Stevenson. Also Dr. Perrine's son, and several Milwaukeeans. I had a pleasant time with them.

I wish you would write me frequently. Your letters are very welcome. I would like to come home. But I don't have the time to look for a leave of absence or a detail. I love to perform my duty too well.

I learned that lesson of you.

Write me fully about your business affairs. Tell me how your affairs stand. how much you own, whom you owe, how much who owes you and how much. These facts should be known to me for the sake of your estate. Tell me also what are business prospects special and general.

My love to mother. Tell her I think very often of her. I hope she may live to a good old age. She is now 30 nearly. My love to George and Thonetta. Respects to all my friends. Tell every young man I know that the army is now the only place where a young man should be seen. And the day is coming when they will call upon the rocks and hills to hide them from the derision and scorn of the people unless they vindicate their manhood and patriotism.

Yours -

H. Blodson

Send me some stencils. They cannot be procured here.

Chattanooga, Nov. 8th 1863

Dear Father: —

Upon my return from Bridgeport, where I had been gathering up some men who had been left behind I found your letter. I was very glad to receive it, but was sorry to learn that mother's health had not improved. I do really hope that she may soon recover that health, of which she has so long been deprived. I was glad to hear that your business affairs were in such good shape. They look very favorably to me, although you did not make any statement in detail. I have a proposition to make. Would you like to buy King out? If so I have the chance of borrowing \$2000 to \$2500 at 6 percent on 2 years time and I could furnish you this. If you could buy him out I would like to invest that sum in your business, in my own name. What do you think of the scheme? I feel quite sure that I could procure the necessary funds. I wish you would write to me on this subject as soon as you can.—

In the matter of my boots, you had better send them to my wife at Delaware, and she will find means of sending them from there to the regiment, by my orderly sergeant who at present is at home on recruiting service. My present boots are in good condition, and I think will do me good service until January at least. They have done me good service, although they are a heavy boot. I am comfortable with my present supply of clothing. I shall buy an army overcoat, and leave the one you sent me at Delaware. My wife occasionally adds to my stock of clothing. I must tell you that the summer coat which you sent me was one of poor material. The least strain on it tears it, and in addition to that the blue turns red when exposed to the sun and moisture. I think you was deceived in the article, and it would be well enough to tell the tailor so. I must also mention that the box that contained this coat had 80^c extra express chg's which I paid.

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Our army was at one time reduced to very short allowance.—

In fact a continuance of the then existing state of affairs would have compelled us to evacuate Chattanooga for wanting supplies. A movement from Bridgeport co-operating with one from this place drove the rebels from Lookout Valley, and enabled us to open water communication with Bridgeport. Supplies are now coming forward in abundance. After the Battle of Chickamauga, the rebels drove our forces off Lookout range, planted batteries on the mountains, and thereby gained possession of the valley between here and Bridgeport. They held the railroad, river, and the dirt road. Their sharp shooters even made the main road north of the river impassable, and thus we were compelled to haul our supplies sixty miles over the mountains, and over roads which rains at times rendered impassable. I have seen empty wagons hopelessly mired in the level, and teamsters abandon their wagons. Dead animals lined the road every few [[?]] and broken down horses and mules seemed everywhere. I can show you how difficult and tedious this was. A cavalry supply train started from Stevenson with 23 sacks of corn to a wagon.— 16 of these were consumed in feeding the mules which hauled the wagons, and the horses of the escort of the trains. Now, however the case is altered. The men receive full rations, except beans and rice. The enemy still holds Lookout Mountain and shelling is daily going on, but no harm is being done. Gen Hooker has complete possession of the Valley between here and Bridgeport. The river is open to within 3 miles of this place. The occupancy of Lookout by the rebels is more an annoyance than a serious inconvenience. A steamboat came up to-night within a mile and a half of our camp. The present status of affairs here is as follows. Our forces hold the town of Chattanooga and have fortified it so that it is impregnable to an assault. Our forces hold the river and valley between here and Bridgeport (33 miles) which is the base for our supplies. We have from 60,000 to 75,000 men on this line, and with the reinforcement of Sherman's corps from Grant's army, now near here, we will have 90,000 effective men. Our position is a strong one, but the river on our backs might make a retreat difficult, if such a movement were contemplated. In front of us, in plain view, are the enemy. Their tents can be seen by day and their camp fires by night. Our pickets converse with theirs. In fact the camps are within mutual cannon range, although the distance prevents any serious damage being done to either party. For holding this place we have every necessary essential, although the possession of Lookout Mountain is necessary for our having use of the R. R. and of perfecting our occupancy. I think there is not the remotest possibility of our being driven from this stronghold.— I am also inclined to think that strategy will also compel the enemy to fall back from our front.—

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Your son
M. B. Clason

Send me some stamps. They cannot be procured here.