

6-15-1864

Letter from Marshall Blair Clason to his father

Marshall Blair Clason

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Near Kennesaw Mountain, Geo.,
27 Miles from Atlanta
June 15th 1864.

Dear Father: -

I received a letter from you a day or so since, dated June 3^d. I believe I was very much pleased to hear from you. I wrote you last at Rome, Geo., since that time we have marched a considerable distance, and have been under a great deal of firing. Our regiment has suffered but few casualties, no one having been killed or seriously wounded, a result, considering our great and long ^{continued} exposure, I deem to be both Providential and miraculous. God has preserved my life mercifully, while others, more deserving of his mercy than myself have been cut down, as it were, by my side. But 2 or 3 hours since, a young friend of mine, a Lieutenant of the 113th Ohio Infantry, was mortally wounded, and is now dying, if not dead. He received his wound not many yards from where I was lying on the ground asleep. The same ball ^{which} wounded him killed a Sergeant. I saw him a short time since, as he lay dying. The ball entered his head. He was unconscious, and he was a most excellent young man.

There has been brisk skirmishing and heavy artillery firing most of to day. I saw our skirmishers charge and drive back the enemy, who ran in the most approved style. Another charge near our line resulted in driving the rebels, and gathering in quite a number of prisoners and deserters. A large proportion of these are ^{a number of} deserters.

who availed themselves of this opportunity to deliver themselves up. As their lines fell back, they ran towards our men, waving their hats, and made big times in getting into our lines to a place of safety. When the troops who witnessed this movement, saw the rebels thus giving themselves up, they filled the air with their cheers. ^{We have} been very successful in our movements against Atlanta, ^{although} our progress has not been as rapid as I expected. Yet I certainly think Atlanta will fall. Our army is certainly larger than theirs, and besides is full of spirit. There is demoralized, as the frequent desertions unmistakably exhibit. I hope we will succeed in the object of ~~that~~ ^{the} campaign, and that, speedily, and that the rebellion may receive a crushing, overwhelming blow. With Atlanta in our possession, the conquest of Georgia follows as a necessary consequence. We will be in the heart of the State, the great railroad centre of the Cotton States. With that city in our possession, I think there will be a large number of desertions from ~~that portion~~ ^{that portion} of the army whose families reside within our lines, and this will be increased, should Grant capture Richmond, which I deem it certain he will do, before the 1st September, seeing that he has laid siege to that place. I think the rebels are fast. They cannot raise the siege ^{more} than they could at Vicksburg.

You asked me in your last and the previous letter whether I could not obtain the same situation for George ^{that} I had sought for B. R. Norton, and asked my advice concerning the matter. I think I could, but I would not advise George to take the position. The Commissary Department is an excellent place for acquiring bad habits, especially drinking whisky, in which habit there are few officers or Government employees in the army who do not indulge. But

perhaps, there is no serious danger of such a result in his case. In the next place he would not probably receive over \$900 and his board, possibly more. Well, his expenses are not heavy to be sure, but he has his risks, both of person and property. Then, after deducting expenses in traveling here, loss of time, &c., this salary would not put him on a better financial footing at the end of one year than he would be, if he remained in his present position. And I do not think this situation would last him much longer than a year, for I think the war can not last much longer. Even if George would be willing to remain away from his family that long, which I very much doubt. Then, I think, it is an advantage to adhere to a position which has some appearance of permanency, and from which he has some chance of promotion. Let George stay where he is, until he can enter business for himself. This, shifting from one employment and trade to another is demoralizing and pecuniarily unprofitable. I hardly think the position of a freight conductor on one of the Government railways in this Department offers any special inducements in the way of salary to a man to leave a similar position at home. I have heard that many railroad men who came South have returned. The men employed are not first class. So a dishonest man there and inducements, but I do not look upon George as one of that kind. Then I do not think that George would be willing to remain away from his wife, in the Commissary Department, and if he were employed on the R. R. and desired to have her with him, the expenses would equal his income, if not exceed it. As to the draft, if there is to be commutation, the necessary funds can be raised. If the draft requires personal service, as I see recommended by the President, the case will be different, but I recommend ^I George to remain where he is and

the risks. A man is not legally exempted from draft, by being employed on a Government R.R. or as a clerk in the Commissary Department. This may be the result, practically. In fine, I would advise George to stay where he is. Let him come into the army for employment, only as a ^{desire} resort. This is my advice to him. Stay at Milwaukee, and try his chances there.

I see by your letter that you have brought matters to a focus with Mr. King, and given him an initiation into the mysteries of law- I guess he must be satisfied, and I hope you may adjust your partnership affairs with him without further expenses on your part. I hardly think he will be able to find any one to purchase your interest, at the price and on terms satisfactory to you.

Annie will be ready to take up the \$900 mortgage at any time, and if I should have to draw the pay due me, I will be able to furnish most of the funds. On the 30th of this month, I will have 6 months pay due I think I will get what is due from Mr. Van, when the army arrives at Atlanta.

I am well, and in excellent health. My spirits are good. I am cheerful and hopeful. I believe our army will triumph, and will capture Atlanta. My faith is ~~as~~ strong, and I think I have a reason to ~~trust~~ for the hope that is in me. We must succeed. I regret to know that it must be purchased at the price of much valuable blood. This war is now a death struggle. The United States will become just as desperate as the rebels, and will make as many sacrifices to accomplish the object sought. The war has lasted too long to be abandoned. It must be fought out, and we can fight a good while longer.

I must end my letter. It is now the morning of June 17, 1864. Our regiment has just received orders to be ready to move at a moment's notice. Give my love to mother, George and Elzetta.

I do not think I will soon resign if I live. I expect to serve through my term of enlistment, on which there remains about 15 months.

Write to me often -

Your son
W. B. Benson

Near Kenesaw [sic] Mountain, Geo.,
27 Miles from Atlanta
June 15th 1864

Dear Father: —

I received a letter from you a day or so since, dated June 3^d I believe. I was very much pleased to hear from you. xx I wrote you last at Rome, Geo. Since that time we have marched a considerable distance, and have been under a great deal of firing. Our regiment has suffered but few casualties, no one having been killed or seriously wounded, a result, considering our great and long continued exposure, I deem to be both Providential and miraculous.— God has preserved my life mercifully, while others, more deserving of his mercy than myself have been cut down, as it were, by my side. But 2 or 3 hours since, a young friend of mine, a Lieutenant of the 113th Ohio Infantry was mortally wounded, and is now dying, if not dead. He received his wound not many yards from where I was lying on the ground asleep. The same ball which wounded him killed a Sergeant. I saw him a short time since, as he lay dying. The ball entered his head. He was unconscious. He was a most excellent young man.

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