Documents

THE FOURTEENTH INDIANA REGIMENT ON CHEAT MOUNTAIN

LETTERS TO THE VINCENNES SUN

The Fourteenth Indiana left Camp Vigo for the front, by way of Indianapolis, on June 24, 1861. The Seventh Corporal of Company B, J. W. McHenry, wrote to the editor of the Vincennes Sun, George E. Greene, under date of June 23, giving a list of the names in this Company which was known as the "Old Post Guards." The company was recruited at Vincennes and had been sworn in for three years service, at Camp Vigo, before Corporal McHenry wrote his letter. At the moment before Corporal McHenry wrote his letter, Company E included eighty-two privates, the Captain, First Lieutenant, Second Lieutenant, five Sergeants, eight Corporals, a drummer, a fifer, and a wagoner. The roll would be slightly altered, wrote McHenry, since Henry Joseph would doubtless go with the hospital department, and J. M. Denny probably be appointed a field sergeant. The letter closed with the statement that a former correspondent of the Sun, "K. M. D.," who was at Camp Vigo would be "enrolled to go as one of us and in the capacity of secretary," and "K. M. D." would keep the Sun regularly informed on subjects of interest and as often as possible send "news from the seat of war."

On July 27 there appeared in the Vincennes Sun the first of a series of letters from a correspondent who used the name "Prock." This writer was not a member of Company B (Old Post Guards), but of Company G, another of the companies of the fourteenth Indiana. "Prock" was from Vincennes and had evidently made arrangements with Editor Greene before his departure to write for the Sun. A natural inference would be that "Prock" was the "whom correspondent, 'K. M. D.,'" that Corporal McHenry mentioned in his letter. This seems not to be true, however, unless "Prock" tried to hide his identity further. As the reader will notice, near the end of the letter of July 25, printed below, "Prock" says: "Nothing from home yet for 'A.B.'; beats h—l. Excuse the hard word friend G., as even the patience of our Jobs has been exhausted, and I do not claim to be one. My address is Beverly, Va., Company 'G', 14th Regiment Indiana Volunteers, care of Col. Kimball." It would seem from this complaint that the initials of "Prock" were "A.B.", though possibly, as already hinted, the letters "A.B." were used to cover up the real initials of the correspondent.

The letters of "Prock" to the Sun ran on to a time far beyond that of the last here printed. It is probable that the remainder of this correspondence will be published in a future issue. The letters were brought to the attention of the Editor by Mr. Howard R. Burnett of Vincennes, who prepared the first eight in the series for the printer.

PROCK'S LETTERS FROM CHEAT MOUNTAIN

Cheat Mountain Pass, Va., Wednesday, July 17th, 1861.

Friend Greene: For the first time in five days old Sol shines brightly down upon us. We began to give up all hope of ever seeing his face...
again. Here we are cooped up in a narrow gorge, three companies of the 14th Indiana, the whole of the 15th Indiana, and 3d Ohio, a battery of six pounders from Cold Water, Mich., and a company of German cavalry from Cincinnati.

The Pass is about 250 yards wide. Our encampment is situated in the midst of a strip of pasture land or meadow. A noisy mountain stream of clear, cold water sparkling in the sunlight, as it rushes over its bed, supplies us with an abundance of the purest water—the mountains on either side are full half a mile high, and covered from foot to crest with the most luxuriant growth of trees, shrubs, vines and flowers imaginable. The tall, majestic pine towering far above the more modest, but note the less beautiful hemlock and juniper, chinquapin shrubs, huckleberry bushes, and every variety of the wild mountain laurel fill up the picture.

The nights are very cold and the dews equal to a heavy shower of rain. Speaking of rain, it falls here every day. The angels in Heaven seem to be weeping constantly over the unhappy condition of this once most peaceful and prosperous Republic.

Your readers would not doubt be gratified with a description of the battle of Rich Mountain. 5 As our regiment took no part in it, 'tis impossible for me to afford them anything like a full account of it. 'Twas fought about 4 P.M., and from appearances, I should judge pretty hotly contested. Seven pieces of artillery, one flag, and about $60,000 worth of property, consisting principally of horses, mules, wagons, provisions and clothing fell into the hands of the United States forces. One 12 pounder was not discovered till the day after the fight. The gun carriage having broken, it had been rolled to the bottom of a deep ravine. Major Ringgold's name was on it, and the "Regulars" with us say 'twas one of the pieces used by the gallant Major at Palo Alto and Rosea De La Palma [Resaca de la Palma]. The small arms taken were of an inferior order. Two hundred men laid down their arms on the spot and 890 more were overthrown, cut off, and captured next day.

Owing to every regiment of volunteers being dressed differently, the Ohio boys fired a volley into the 13th Indiana regiment, which was coming down on the opposite side of the hill at a charge bayonet, killing and wounding several. Most unfortunate is this variety of uniforms; 'tis hard to distinguish friend from foe at 150 yards.

As our regiment marched past the battleground next day, no unexpected sight greased my eyes. Piles of dead men, and the ground strewn with the implements of war, pools of blood, trees stained with it and scarred with bullets.

Our troops had no artillery engaged in the fight, it being impossible to bring the guns to bear on the rebel camp, so the victory was achieved with small arms alone.

One company of the 14th is encamped at Wuttonville, 3 miles below [north of] us, and the other six or 8 miles in advance, fortifying Cheat

Mountain. In all probability we shall remain in this mountain gorge for a couple of weeks—perhaps longer. About 6,000 Union troops are encamped at Beverly, some 16 or 18 miles below [north of] us, where Major-General McClellan has his headquarters. We fare much better now than when marching, and the boys are all getting jovial and round-faced once more.

Not a word of news from home since we left Indianapolis—nor indeed from any other place—not even a paper. Madame Rumor is the "news boy" of this camp. Of course her "extras" are not credited by your correspondent "or any other man." 6 Health of the camp good. A few cases of "sage" brought all the way from the Wabash. The complaint is one entirely new to the people in this section.

Truly yours, PROCK.

Cheat Mountain Pass, Va., Thursday, July 26th [1861], 7

Friend Greene: Far to the West, behind the distant mountain, the bright and fiery orb of day has long since sunk to rest; "Roll Call" sounded, "taps" beaten off, and all is quiet in camp. Watchful sentinels, fifty in number, pace their lonely "beats"—lights and fires extinguished, with the exception of the "guard fire, around which, wrapped in their blankets—muskets loaded and bayonets fixed, placed handy to their grasp, repose some hundred men—two reliefs" of the "camp guard," and your correspondent, to keep awake and while away a lonesome hour, pens this by the light of its glowing embers.

A man can indeed realize that this is a soldier's life. The long rows of white tents forming the encampment, with a chain of wagons behind them—the sight of six brass field-pieces glistening in the light of the silvery moon as she escapes for a moment behind a flying cloud—stacks of muskets, whose polished barrels flash as they reflect the guard fires' uncertain light—and above all, the solemn stillness that reigns around, where but a few short hours before all was life and excitement, proves to your humble servant that he is soldiering—"divil a less."

The sentries, as the "reliefs" go their rounds, no longer challenge in the careless, half-play style of Camp Vigo; but their voices ring out on the night air with a "Halt! who comes there?" that, added to the ominous click of the musket locks, brings a man up "all standing" with a full consciousness of his dangerous situation and the necessity of a prompt answer—"Sergeant of the Guard." "Advance, Sergeant of the Guard, and give the counter sign." The watchful "guardian of the night" receives it with his bayonet at your breast and bids you pass on. It required a full hour to relieve fifty sentries of the night guard,

5 Very frequently Prock uses the phrase "or any other man." At the end of one letter, he quotes from the old church Hymn which runs "I can not live alone, I ask not to stay", and therefore: "Chorus—Or any other man." There must have been a popular song of the time which made use of the refrain "Or any other man."

6 "Vincennes Sun," Aug. 3, 1861. The date of this letter, Thursday, July 26, as printed July 27 was Friday. The letter could not have been written on July 26, since the move to Cheat Mountain Pass on July 25, since the move to Cheat Mountain Pass on July 25, since the move would be July 26, since the move was July 25.

7 A fair guess is that the letter was written on Tuesday, July 21, since that would be two days before the move.
and this has to be repeated six times during the night. Away up in the mountain recesses the picquet guard in squad of half a dozen keep their "eyes skinned" the live long night—no "relief" for them, and a man had better take his chances in a "forlorn hope" than to pass these out-posts, as poor Rutherford found to his cost.

I understand we march Eastward in a day or two. The military telegraph is completed from this camp from Clarksburg, 80 miles.

A scout party of the Cincinnati Cavalry Company, composed of eight men, were fired upon while watering their horses at a creek, some 18 miles East—one man killed and four wounded, one mortally. Scouting parties have since then advanced 25 miles without meeting the enemy.

Cpl. Wm. Nelson, of Company E, 15th regiment, (son of Turner Nelson, of Mt. Vernon), last Sunday hoisted his Company's colors above the top of a tall tree on a mountain near camp, and the glorious "stars and stripes" wave proudly in the breeze, visible for miles around.

Our fat and jolly Commissary, C. Buntin, wears an extraordinarily fine hat, and over his shoulder is hung a splendid steel-clasped haversack, both captured from the "Seseshs" at Rich Mountain.

No letters or papers to hand yet. Well, I hope to get good news from home before an ounce of lead sends me kiting over Jordan. So your news-hungry correspondent will keep his temper, bide his time and wait as patiently as "any other man" for the glad tidings from Hoosierdom.

Yours truly,

PROCK.


[From Greene:] The four companies of the Fourteenth encamped in the "Pass" struck tents early this morning and marched up here to Col. Kimball's headquarters to join the balance of the regiment. The route most of the way lay through a dense forest of pine, "tamarack" or hemlock and cedar almost impenetrable—mountain springs of cool, clear-as-crystal water gushed forth every few yards. The ascent was about one foot in ten—so says my friend Sergeant Bailey.

Our camp here is situated on the Eastern slope of the mountain, 10 among piles of huge rocks and innumerable logs and stumps. The "boys" that had the honor of preceding us have thrown up a sort of breast-work of logs and stones on the East of the encampment, felled the trees and cleared off the underbrush in front so as to obtain a fair "sight" at the enemy, should he approach by the road on the side.

Cheat river—a noisy, bright, clear stream—runs at the mountain's base, a mile from camp. Company A of our regiment, Capt. Foote, is stationed there to guard a bridge.

The Thirteenth Indiana arrived and encamped at the "Pass" yesterday evening, all in fine health and spirits. I understand they will move up here to-morrow.

Rigby (formerly a painter in Vincennes) is a Captain in the Seventeenth Indiana, now at Rich Mountain Battle Ground.

Lieut. Willard, of the Evansville Company (E) Fourteenth Regiment, while on a scout with fifty men, came upon about an equal number of the "Seseshs," and charged them, killing one or two, and capturing some half-dozen prisoners and all their camp equipage, including a large lot of maple sugar. Wish I had been along with the Lieutenant.

I have cut a lot of hemlock brush and intend to "kiver" the rocks up and recline on a somewhat softer couch than it has been my fortune to "turn in" to since my advent amongst ye crags and peaks of ye Old Dominion.

Old Post Guards all O.K.—Governor, Tom, and Sergeant Denny look as good humored as ever, and fat as "any other man" that enjoys plenty of exercise in the open air and soldier's grub every day in the week, including Sunday. Our quarters are next to the O. P. G., and a hearty exchange of friendly greetings took place immediately upon our arrival. The boys say "Young Winter" is at the door here every morning, and overcast and large fires are not by any means uncomfortable till Old Sol shows his familiar, and in these airy regions, most welcome countenance o'er the mountain tops.

Fancy that I failed to head or date my last letter—not to be wondered at when a man can't procure for love or money a "drap o' the crather" to cheer him up even during a night on duty.

Nothing from home yet for "A. B.;" beats h—I. Excuse the hard word, friend G., as even the patience of our Jobs has been exhausted, and I do not claim to be one. My address is Beverly, Va. Company "G", 14th Regiment Indiana Volunteers, care of Col. Kimball.

Ever yours,

PROCK.

Army of Occupation Camp, On Cheat Mountain, August 2, 1861.

[From Greene:] On Tuesday evening at 5 o'clock, your correspondent, one of 80 men, 5 of whom were cavalry, all under command of Capt. John Coons, left camp for a scout. Descending Cheat Mountain, we crossed Cheat river, and passed the last of our outposts. An hour's walk brought the command to the summit of a mountain, four miles from and overlooking the camp. Here we commenced a descent of sixteen miles. The view to the Eastward in the direction we were marching was magnificent. Having "cut loose" from the protection of the gallant Fourteenth, we proceeded cautiously down the mountain and through the valley, altogether the most beautiful and fertile it has yet been my fortune to see in Western Virginia—meadows of luxuriant grass with herds of fat cattle, quietly grazing along the banks of a stream that runs the whole length of the valley—substantial farm houses surrounded by fine orchards, the yards
filled with poultry, flocks of sheep in the pastures, on the steep mountainsides, the tinkling of the bells being the only sound that disturbed the solemn stillness which prevailed—the farm houses are deserted—no sight or sound of human had we during the night march. Calculating the distance marched at twenty miles, and judging the enemy’s picquets to be not over half a mile in advance, our Captain at 11 o’clock halted the command, threw out an advance picquet, and we slept on our arms. At 4 A.M. we were aroused by the report of fire-arms, and we saw our guards running in and four horsemen galloping away towards the enemy’s camp. This, of course, gave the alarm; nevertheless, quickly forming, we advanced about 2½ miles, driving in their picquets, who fired upon us at every turn of the road, and then made tracks at “double quick.” Owing to their being stationed on the mountain top on either hand, their bullets failed to reach, or whistled harmlessly over us. Having advanced some 2½ miles inside their picquets and given the enemy a good scare, we retreated to the foot of the mountain where their first picquet guards discovered us, and being reinforced by 35 cavalry, we too threw out picquets, and prepared to partake of a most excellent dinner of veal, new potatoes and honey, at a vacant house on the bank of a small river.

Soon three of our men brought a couple of mounted “seeshehs” into camp as prisoners. At the same moment a light spring wagon, drawn by two horses, driven by a “seesheh” bearing a white flag, made its appearance from towards the rebel camp; it proved to be a Lieutenant (taken prisoner at the battle of Laurel Hill, just returning from Richmond, Va., where he had been to bury a comrade killed in the battle), on his way to our headquarters to again give himself up as a prisoner of war. He reported the rebels 1,000 strong and formed in line of battle inside of their entrenchments only three miles in advance up the mountain, and 4,000 encamped eight miles farther on.

Capt. Coons immediately sent the officer and two prisoners forward under a guard of cavalry, and having leisurely disposed of our “grub” we prepared to return, when the rebels made their appearance and commenced deploying their forces to surround us.

Three companies of infantry and one of cavalry were all that were actually seen; but in all probability their whole force was advancing on us through the thick woods on the mountainsides, spies having discovered our actual numbers. Just before the rebels made their appearance in force, our cavalry took a scout up the mountain road, met and fired upon about an equal number of the enemy’s horsemen, killing one. The fire was returned by part of a company of infantry stationed in the bushes near by, but none of our cavalry were hit. Being rejoined by them, we marched for camp—our movements not in the least accelerated by the presence of the enemy, now having come out in full force and occupying the house we had a quarter of an hour before evacuated. Their cavalry flourished their sabres and shook them at us, but “nary” track did ye “seeshehs” make over the river whilst we remained in sight—for we waited over an hour for ‘em.

After an excessively fatiguing march of 20 miles (up hill all the way remember) we reached camp at 7 P.M., “broke ranks,” “bolted” supper and “turned in”—your correspondent, for one, about as near “played out” as he ever was in his life.

Alarm at 12 o’clock! Turned out—formed in line—a squad of our cavalry sent out as a reconnoitering party was fired upon by some of our infantry picquet-guard—one horse killed and the rider slightly wounded in the ankle. D—n the greenhorn that did it! He broke my night’s rest in two.

Never saw it rain harder than it did this morning, from 1 till 8 o’clock.

I send this by one of Co. G’s boys—Tho. Bradley, who is going home to-morrow, having been honorably discharged on account of a diseased leg. We are all sorry to part with Tom, for he has proved himself one of the “right stripe.”

What next? Can’t tell—nor can “any other man.”

PROCK.

Army of Occupation Camp, On Cheat Mountain, August 13, 1861.13

Friend Greene: The long-looked-for good news from home has during the past week been pouring into camp. Every day a huge pile of letters and papers arrives from below. Verily there was great rejoicing in the day the first and most anxiously-expected batch came to hand, and there has been a small 4th of July excitement every evening since. Your correspondent returns thanks for the kindness of many well remembered friends.

“Got any tobacco?” “Yes.” “Give us a chaw.” “Been grinding this two days—will divide, though.” “No, thank you; never chew fine-cut.”

The 14th is short of the weed, consequently miserable “perishing”—nothing tastes good to them except at meal times, when huge piles of well greased slap-jacks are stowed away somewhere and troubles are for the time forgotten.

A scouting party, 150 strong, left camp on Thursday evening last—part, composed of cavalry and infantry, were sent back on Friday afternoon with two prisoners calling themselves Mountain Rangers, a number of rifles, and driving before them 25 head of fat cattle. When 9 miles from this camp the cavalry and one infantry soldier (who, some 300 yards in advance of the rest, were urging forward the bovines) were fired upon by a party of Mountain Rangers in ambush, and the footman (William Wilkinson, a private in the Old Posse Guards), and two horsemen brought down—the former mortally and the latter dangerously wounded. One of the cavalry was fired upon the second time as he lay in the road, the bull piercing his arm. The ambushed party must have beaten a hasty retreat after their cowardly and assassin-like deed, for on the news reaching camp three companies of infantry and the whole cavalry force turned out, and with our gallant Colonel and Major at their head, hastened forward to the spot, brought in the poor fellows,

13 Ibid., Aug. 24, 1861.
their arms, &c., and the entire lot of beef cattle, proving that the cowardly murderers immediately fled.

Wilkinson was buried with the honors of war Saturday evening. I understand he is the only son of a widowed mother residing in Crawford county, Illinois. He formerly lived with William Hodgen, of Knox county.

Company "G" was ordered out on twenty-four hours picket-guard duty, four miles from camp Friday morning. Off they went, haversacks filled with crackers, one slap-jack and a cup of coffee constituting all the breakfast the boys could boast of to make a start on. About noon it began to rain (and has continued in "draps" without a moment's cessation up to the hour I am writing.) With our India-rubber blankets (so-called) wrapped around us, we kept a bright look-out, munch hard bread, and fought myriads of gnats till almost dark, when Gen. Gardner made his most welcome appearance on horseback with a fresh supply of crackers and some very fat pickled pork. Soon a fire was kindled and slices hung on ram rods were spitting in the blaze. Having a touch of the agile, your correspondent was excused by the Captain and returned to camp at tattoo. The company remained out till Saturday at 3 P.M. without capturing a "seesch" or getting sight at a "bar." The trip, however, gave them all appetites, such as only soldiers on extra duty experience.

The "great uncertainty" here is whether the Fourteenth Regiment will return to Indianapolis, be paid off and discharged by the 16th of September next, or remain in the service for three years. The question is undergoing discussion constantly all over camp, and in fact is the all-absorbing topic.

Our brave and patriotic German fellow-citizens have it seems received a back-handed blow from somewhere—a most outrageous and ungrateful act. Amongst the best soldiers in our regiment may be found the Germans, and one, the 9th Ohio, which we passed on our march here, (the finest body of men I have yet seen) was exclusively a German regiment.

Thermometer seldom above 75 degrees—blackberries just beginning to ripen—green corn, tomatoes, watermelons, &c., an unknown luxury here. Fine place for an observatory, this Cheat Mountain summit.

As I write a soldier, busily, engaged in frying the everlasting slap-jack over a smoky fire, sings—

"Cannot live always,
Wish not to stay."

Chorus—"Or any other man."

Yours truly,

PROCK.

Army of Occupation Camp, On Cheat Mountain, August 17, 1861.14

Friend Greent: Tuesday was the last day of our "spell" of wet weather. Snow fell, mixed with the rain, and the night following was most intensely cold, as Lieut. Denny and your correspondent can testify, being on guard together. We found it necessary to keep up a roaring fire at the guard-house. Even then the soldiers shivered and shook like aspens, as with blankets tightly wrapped, they rallied around the cheerful blaze. Old Boreas blows "great guns" at sea, so Jack tars say; and once in old Kaintuck his nephew Hurrie Cane frightened me terribly; but I fancy from the nature of the country around here and the fair sweep he has at this camp, that short of Greenland's icy mountains there is no spot in North America where the old chap blows with ruder breath or cuts with keener tooth than through the tall pine forests on Cheat Mountain during the winter months. The breeze he has sent us this week beats anything the Fourteenth's boys ever experienced in August.

Corporal Wm. H. Jackson's mess have taken timely warning and built a log shanty covered with bark, stone floor-place, and bark chimney. A great many huts principally of stone and on the Esquimaux style, have been erected in the encampment within a day or two, of some them exhibiting considerable skill and ingenuity, but none surpassing in comfort or convenience the log cabin of mess No. 6. There are plenty of rocks for building purposes, as one cannot see the soil till he has first turned over a stone.

The 24th Ohio U.S. regular infantry came up from the Pass yesterday, a fine looking body of men, in full rig, army style, substantially clothed and equipped. They went into camp immediately below us, their line of sentinels joining ours.

The Butler of the 14th has brought a supply of the necessities of life at last, and a "Wee drop" of the ardent. I was fortunate enough to obtain a little; tastes natural—don't think that with the thermometer at freezing almost, a few "fingers" of Bourbon injure a soldier or "any other man."

A scouting party composed of 24th Ohio and the 14th's boys knocked over a couple of the Mountain Rangers yesterday, receiving the fire of their party without injury. The detail from our regiment was from company E. and under command of Lieut. Willard.

We have received letters and papers from the Old Post15 of the 7th of August. A coffee sack fail of mail matter for our regiment came up from below yesterday. Bully! O, Uncle Samuel! cease not the flow whilst the 14th is absent from America, exposed to the fatigues, hardships and dangers of a soldier's life.

The article in the SUN of August 3d relating to the shooting of Nicholas Geise by our Captain is another of the many false rumors. Nick is fat and hearty—worth 50 dead men; no better soldier or more willing and trustworthy man in company G.

Is the "General" going to marry soon? Heard so. Look out for the quails, old boy.

PROCK.

14 Ibid., Aug. 31, 1861.

15 Vincennes.
Army of Occupation Camp, On Cheat Mountain, August 30, 1861.

Friend Greene: After enjoying four days of most delightful weather, another rainy season has set in, a dense fog obscures the sun, and the driving rain compelled such of us as are not on duty to seek the welcome shelter of our tents. We are getting used to it, however, as people do who have the "third day ager" on the River Duschea in Old Knox.

Yesterday was a lively day in camp. Early in the morning orders were issued for an immediate change of quarters. Formerly we were scattered without much regard to regularity, each company having on their arrival here pitched their tents wherever they chose, but now the 14th is encamped in regular order—every command in its proper place—all in line. Quite a job it was to accomplish this according to the Engineer's plan, but all the digging, drifting, pitching of tents, and paving of streets, (to say nothing of the hard swearing,) is finished, the transformation from irregularity to order is complete, and the boys are as proud of their new quarters as a Miss of 16 is of a new bonnet. The broad, well boulder'd avenue that runs north and south between the two rows of Co. G's "dens" has been dubbed Provision Street for the reason that it runs smack into the Commissary's Department. Denny, Patterson, and I have our bed fitted with a plentiful supply of fresh "feathers," (the tips of young pine and cedar tree branches) and sleep as warm and comfortable thereon as though ensconced (Dutch fashion) between two feather beds. Our good natured "Orderly" Van Dyke and Tom Bailey have captured or won a "sesech's" tent, and with their new house, hoop-pole bedstead, and coffee-sack mattress are "fixed." In some of the "dens" the boys sleep on bark, without barking—colds being unknown here.

About 11 o'clock last night the report of a musket was heard in the direction of our picket-guard and the news was speedily brought to camp that Paul Truckey, private in Co. G, had accidentally shot himself. It seems that in drawing his gun over a log, muzzle foremost, it went off, the ball tearing away the flesh and completely severing the large bone of his right leg just above the ankle joint. Poor fellow! he was taken to the hospital, and this morning had his limb amputated about half way between the knee and ankle—is doing very well and will speedily recover. He took the severe operation very coolly, cracking jokes at the Surgeon's expense all the time. It is not a week since one George Better's, of Newburg, Indiana, a private in Co. E, had the misfortune to have his right hand blown clean off at the wrist. He was fixing his bayonet on at the time, the musket slipped, and the lock striking a stone, caused the piece to discharge.

I have just learned that the rebels have burned the bridge over Green Brier river, some eight miles East of us. This does not look much like they meditated an attack upon us. During the past week we have frequently been told that 12,000 were encamped only fifteen miles distant, and contemplated an immediate attack upon this point. The forces here are anxious to pay their compliments to their enemies, and all hope at least, if they do not pray, that the aforesaid 12,000 will carry out their programme, so far at least as attacking us is concerned.

Several resignations have taken place amongst commissioned officers, and two members of Company G, Corporal Sam's Wallace, of Westland, and Thos. Hauck, (Tomahawk, the boys call him) of Terre-Haute, have received their discharge on account of ill health.

T. C. Bailey has been promoted to Sergeant Major, and is eminently qualified for the office.

Cap. Coons, with twenty-two men, myself among the number, were out on a scout one day last week. Our route lay over a high mountain, where I do not suppose of man ever trod before—we walked the whole day over fallen trees, moss-covered rocks and roots, creeping under them clambering over acres of timber lain prostrate by tornadoes—forced our way through tangled thickets of laurel briars and hazel—forded streams, and finally, about 2 P.M., discovered a narrow path that brought us to a clearing and house, where your humble servant bought some cheese, milk and bread, and butter, of a pretty, black-eyed mountain lassie, the sight of whom refreshed me quite as much as the (to a soldier) rich repast. Here the drizzle that had been lying down on us all day became a heavy rain, and we made tracks direct for camp (thirteen miles distant) and came devilish near being fired upon by our pickets just at dusk—arrived in safety at quarters as tattoo was being beat off—enary, hungry and wet through—no dry clothes to don: "dry" enough in all conscience inside.

Saturday night last, after disposing of supper, invested a "check" at the Settler's for a cigar, and took a stroll above our camp to the "peak," where seated on a huge pine stump, I thought of you, friend G, and other friends in the Old Post, and wished all here to enjoy with me the splendid sight—a full moon rise in the mountains—far surpassing in beauty anything of the kind I had ever witnessed before, and it has been my fortune from many a height to see fair Luna cast her silver light over hill and dale. Oh, that I could wield for five minutes only the poet's pen of Prentice, that I might describe the to my poor pen inscrutable scene—Those touchingly beautiful lines written by Longfellow, "or any other man," are forcibly from memory's profoundest depths—

"He seiz'd his grand-mother.
And threw her up into the sky at midnight;
Right against the moon he threw her,
'Tis her shadow you see there!"

Whereupon Grandjibbewarra Nesiocoka, the Deputy Sheriff of the tribe, (perfect grizzly no doubt) was on the track of the villain at last accounts. Selah!

Ever yours,

PROCK.


Friend Greene: By our Orderly's "time book," that never, failing Company regulator, 'tis Holy Sabbath day. Nothing else could convince

16 Vincennes Sun., Sept. 7, 1861.
17 Ibid., Sept. 14, 1861.
me of the fact—100 men are engaged in fortifying our position and at least 100 more in levelling the timber in all directions around camp—mingled with the constant strokes of the axe, comes the crash and roar, as some towering pine, mighty monarch of the forest, is laid low; shovels and picks clash in the trenches; the ring of our blacksmith's hammer (the only familiar, home-like sound) is incessant; loud are the cries of soldiers engaged in hauling timbers, and louder still their curses as some bawky steed, "dancing" in the harness, refuses to pull a pound. Even the camp hum, that almost ceaseless sound that "s pops" alone can silence, is louder than usual—everybody is wide awake. Indeed, the bustle and excitement is unusual, and it seems to your correspondent no more like the Lord's Day than the Fourth of July.

Our master rolls are being made out and the boys will in all probability handle some cash soon. I have quite forgotten how a gold dollar looks and feels; however, I do not remember of their sticking to my fingers. Come on, dollars! The Fourteenth is growing devilish tired of paper currency ( Slater's tickets) and long to hear the jingle of Uncle Sam's coin in their pockets.

Our uniforms are not received yet. Some of Company G's boys have manufactured coats and pants out of their India rubber and other blankets. As the nights are now exceedingly cold, I do not see how they manage to keep warm without "kiver"—find a blanket indispensable.

I trust we will receive "marching orders" soon, as I should not fancy spending the winter in this region, encamped on a mountain top at that; but if I am compelled to, why I presume I can endure it as well as any other soldier in the regiment, "or any other man," ("or man's man," wide Levi).

About 50 rebels on a scouting expedition were fired upon by a party of 25, consisting of a picket of the 15th Indiana Regiment, and 10 of the rebels and a captain killed. This occurred on Thursday, at 2 P.M. Our Col. received the news by telegraph, and Capt. Coons was immediately dispatched with his company to intercept the remainder of the "eseesh," who, after informing the Captain that he was a Union man (caught with out arms they are all Union men) said the party we were in search of were not on that side of the mountain—had probably "changed direction." Found such to be the case, as no sight could we get of 'em, or by sign perceive they they had been along the path. Returned to camp at sun-down, with mud beplastered pants and ravenous appetites.

Friday night was on camp guard, Lieut. C. C. Miller, Co. E, acting Officer of the Guard. Although it rained hard for a couple of hours, we fought shy of the guard tents, (on account of the "body guards" said to be quartered therein) preferring wet backs to "grey backs."

No Lieutenant more efficient as officer of the guard, and certainly none more polite to the non-commissioned officers and soldiers composing the guard, than Miller.

With the exception of two copies of date 2d and 13th, have received no SUN's for August. Vat is de matter?

ROCK.
chance” of ’em besides; but I must return to camp and begin at ’tother end of the fight.

About 7 o’clock Thursday morning news was brought to Col. Kimball that the rebels had captured and overhauled a couple of our wagons between the picket and camp guard, and within a quarter of a mile from camp. Company after company flew to arms and were off at double quick down the pike, the Old Post Guards in advance under command of Lieutenant Mathew Green. Pretty soon the mountains echoed and re-echoed with volley upon volley of musketry, and just then the rebels made their appearance in force on the hill east of us, threatening an attack from that quarter. The remaining companies were stationed in all direction around camp, and all of us anticipated a general fight. There was not a man I know of on the mountain but wished for ’em to come on. We were resolved on defending our positions to the very last.

About this time news was brought in by some of Capt. Coons’ skirmishers, who had made their way to camp, that the Captain with about two-thirds of his command had been surrounded and compelled to surrender. Major Harrow, on receiving it, procured our company flag and nailed it to the top of a house in the very centre of camp, and in full view of the rebels on the hill.

The Old Post Guards met the rebels in the road and drove them back, killing two and wounding others. The “governor” was in skirmish and says he knows of two bullets that perforated rebel hide. Two of the Old Post Guards were wounded—Leonard Daum (slightly in the arm) and John Killigannon (in the knee). Seecah rejoicing is abundant on Cheat Mountain now.

The remainder of Company G, under command of Lieut. Wm. N. Denny, stood 48 hours picket on the outskirts of camp, and on Saturday at noon started on a long and fatiguing scout of 30 miles over one of the tallest of the tall mountains in this region, reached Huttonville at 11 P.M., and next morning returned, escorting the wagons containing the mail and grub for the 14th regiment.

No SUN for me in the bag. Received a letter from General—is very indignant; has no thought of marrying in the “day time!” does up just courting enough to keep his “hand in;” says twas a Cincinnati fabrication, and if he knew the author, would make him guall.

The Evansville Company (E) was surrounded and fired into early on Thursday morning, while on picket on the hill spoken of, and two of them killed—1st Lieut. June and Private Henry Wilder. The rest were scattered, and one poor devil was out 5 days, laying hid close to the rebels most of the time: says they were Arkansas troops. Ten men with a flag of truce went out and brought in two bodies. The infernal scoundrels, not content with shooting the poor fellows dead, had mutilated their bodies by thrusting bayonets into them.

No rebels made their appearance when the flag reached the hill.

One of our picket-guard, Templeton, Co. D, was wounded and taken prisoner by the rebels. The wound was a slight one, but his captors bayonetted him through the head and left him laying in the road.

Documents: Letters from Cheat Mountain (1861)

We are all excitement in camp still, and guard duty is heavy. Our Company was sent out for 24 hours picket yesterday noon. Your correspondent being on guard duty, missed a “heavy” night.

Our boys came in but a few moments ago wet through, chilled, weary, and hungry.

Lieu. Denny came near having his right hand blown off by the accidental discharge of his Enfield rifle. As it is, he escaped with a slight bruise and bad powder burns of second and third finger.

Our clothes are said to be at General Reynolds’ camp, and coming up soon. We need them very much—numbers are suffering for the want of sufficient covering to hide their nakedness.

Dr. Clippenger has arrived—is our Regimental Surgeon.

Sergeant Thomas Hall, Old Post Guards, chopped off about one-half of the first fingers of his right hand only a few moments ago.

Twelve of Company G on the sick list this morning—some of the companies double this number.

Am writing in our Lieutenant’s tent wrapped in a blanket, fingers so numb can hardly hold the pencil.

Sergeant-Major T. C. Bailey just popped in “done up” in a secessch overcoat.

We are trying to make the arrangements for obtaining a very little whisky to “take the oath” in. Cold as the devil.

I bid you a Jew,

PROCK.

Army of Occupation Camp, on Cheat Mountain, Sept. 27, 1861.  

Friend Greene: Yesterday noon we were ordered to prepare one days’ rations. Cartridge boxes were replenished, “man killers” put in extra order, and all the necessary preparations completed for an advance on the enemy (now encamped on Greenbrier) at midnight.

Company G, the advance picket, was called in, two companies of the Thirty-second Ohio occupying the position. The order to march was countermanded at 6 o’clock P.M., and immediately there-after a severe storm of wind and rain came down upon us from the East, which has continued with unabated fury up to the present moment.

I understand we are to advance as soon as the weather clears up.

The Fourteenth cannot turn out over 600 fighting men.

The rules and regulations are so strict that I do not feel at liberty to state the number of regiments, &c., accompanying us.

Overcoats for the Thirty-second Ohio came up on Tuesday and were distributed to the “ragged Fourteenth”—a good joke on the Thirty-second, which marched up next day and were welcomed by our boys with their new coats on.

Cincinnati papers of the 20th received by our correspondent last night; thanks to the “General,” we have something to while away the

19 Ibid., Oct. 12, 1861.

20 Greenbrier River, the source of which is southeast of Cheat Mountain, flows southwest along the west side of the Alleghany Front. It is a tributary of the New.
long, dreary hours. To-day are seated in our tents wrapped in "army blue" without fire.

Excuse brevity; will, if not "rubbed out" in the coming fight, furnish your with full particulars.

Arrived, PROCK.

Saturday Morning—Storm still raging. Eleven horses died on this hill last night.

Joseph Howell, one of the firm of Kester & Rowell, Sutlers [of] Fourteenth regiment, was drowned last evening in crossing a mountain stream on horse-back. Mr. Sparks, their clerk, had a narrow escape.

PROCK.


Friend Greene: Thursday noon we were ordered to prepare two days' rations and hold ourselves in readiness to march at midnight. Up to 9 o'clock camp fires burned brightly; around them groups of soldiers gathered singing, laughing, "speculating" on the coming fight. There was a constant jingle, jingle of iron ram-rods, snapping of caps, and spattering of hot grease in sundry trying guns—notes of preparation for the morrow: "tattoo" rolled off at 10 o'clock, one hour later than usual, and "taps" at a quarter past, when camp fires were put out; all lights except in officers' tents extinguished, and the soldiers retiring to their quarters and blankets, sought two hours' repose. At 12 o'clock all were aroused, the companies forming into their respective quarters, were visited each in turn by our gallant Colonel, who spoke a few words of encouragement and bade them all stand by him, and remember they were from Indiana and belonged to the 14th regiment; then came the order to form in line, which movement was promptly executed. Right, face! Forward march! and the 14th taking the "route steps," moved quickly but silently down the mountain eastward, past several regiments in the dense fog, the boys shouting to each other as they filed rapidly by at Cheat River Bridge; overtook the artillery; passed it; were soon beyond our picket line, and hurrying up the opposite mountain, through the dark and silent night, without a moment's rest till the first faint streaks of light appeared in the East, when the regiment was halted, and muskets and rifles loaded; in motion again pretty soon; passed the ambulances belonging to the 9th Indiana and our own; then descending the mountain, approached the Greenbrier Bridge, when the sharp report of half-a-dozen muskets rang out on the still morning air, immediately followed by a crashing volley; then pop! pop! pop! and all was silent; on went the 14th, cheering as they rushed "double quick," over the bridge and down through the Greenbrier Valley; soon we came in sight of the 9th Indiana boys, drawn up in line of battle, across a meadow, their skirmishers hastening down from the surrounding mountains to join the regiment. The 14th closed in behind, when the two regiments moved steadily forward till we came in sight of the enemy's tents, when the advance halted and the artillery moved to the front, taking up a position on a slight elevation to the left of the pike. Other regiments now came up, and the 7th, 9th, and 17th Indiana boys filed across the valley, and as the right wing deploying their skirmishers advanced at "double quick" through the tall grass and bushes skirting the river and meadows. The 14th now marched forward along the pike for a few hundred yards, when the companies comprising our left wing, including Company G, were ordered to deploy and drive the rebels out of the woods to the left, while the remainder of the regiment marched along the pike to protect the batteries.

Soon we were climbing through the tanglewood and laurel up the steep mountain sides, when bang! goes a big gun from our battery of rifled cannon, and whiz! comes a shell over our heads, falling plump into the enemy's trenches, where it burst, killing three horses and doing other damage. A roar from the rebel camp answered, and a round shot whistled through the air in reply, tearing up the ground in rear of our artillery. The ball was now opened—roar after in quick succession from the big guns on both sides—the storm of shot and shell traversing mid air not more than fifty feet from our heads, was at once terribly grand and terrific. The fierce music of "grim war," such as had fallen upon the ears of but few of our brave fellows, who all unheeding, cheered lustily and pushed forward rapidly to the front.

The rebel skirmishers, 600 in number, were speedily routed from cover, and the musketry now opened along our entire line on the retreating foe. To your correspondent the rapid "file firing" of the companies and the rebel shots in reply, intermingled with the deafening roar of artillery sounded like 15,000 packs of fire-crackers set off at once.

Our batteries now took up a position in front, and for three hours poured shot and shell into the enemy's camp, doing great execution. He had eleven guns (one 18-pounder) and one mortar; seven of these were silenced, when he was reinforced with both men and guns, and reopened fire again. Our ammunition for the artillery running short, the guns were withdrawn, and at 4 o'clock we began our march back to camp. As we came out of the woods into the open space to form into line the round shot ploughed up the ground around us. Every moment bang would go a gun, whiz! boom! and a shell would make the earth fly, filling the boys' eyes with gravel; but the brave fellows stood their ground without flinching, as formed in four ranks without a murmur they coolly awaited the order to march.

The Hoosiers are too much for Seecox—fire too rapidly and with aim too accurate—nothing in rebel shape can resist their impetuosity. Silence their batteries, Mr. Big Guns, and the infantry will soon complete the job.

The loss on our side trifling—eleven killed and fifteen wounded—three of the killed and four of the wounded belonged to the 14th—none from either of the Vincennes companies. We captured 13 prisoners—our regiment, 7[,] the Invincibles 5 Bully.

A fine drove of hogs were driven off by our boys, and 15 head of horses.

Our brave Colonel Kimball asked permission to storm their works Gen. Reynolds would not grant the request, remarking that he merely

came out to reconnoitre the rebel position and draw him out, which having been accomplished to his entire satisfaction, he ordered a retreat.

Incidents in my next.

PROCK.

[On Cheat Mountain], Oct. 6, 1861. 22

Friend Greene—I promised to furnish you the incidents of our late "reconnoissance in force."

The 9th Indiana, whilst driving in the rebel pickets, shot and mortally wounded one of their own comrades. Such unfortunate accidents occur frequently out here. The boys become scattered—catch a glimpse of some unlucky chap creeping through the tangled undergrowth, crack! goes a musket or rifle with aim that seldom fails, and the unfortunate is stretched out, quivering in the agonies of death.

A cannonier belonging to Capt. Daum's Battery was struck by a round shot on the left arm, just below the shoulder, almost completely severing the member. The brave fellow took out his pocket knife, cut off his coat sleeve and the piece of flesh by which his arm still hung, letting it fall to the ground; then coolly picking it up, marched off to the rear.

Sergeant Price of Company A, 14th Indiana had his thigh shot off by a rifled cannon ball.

Just before we received the order to march, and whilst the 9th, 14th, and 17th Indiana were standing in "four ranks," a compact mass on the narrow pike observed one of the 9th, not 20 yards off, sitting down in the act of tying his shoe—when whiz! comes a six pound shot and striking the ground about 4 inches in his rear, turned the soldier, gun and all a complete summerset; up he jumped, rubbing the dirt out of his eyes, and snatching up his musket took his place in the ranks with the remark, "well aimed Mr. Seese, but not quite powder enough."

In my last note to mention that the 32nd Ohio held 3,000 rebels in check, who were attempting to gain our rear from another camp, and cut off our retreat by obtaining possession of a rock some 60 feet high, on top of which is a level space commanding the approach from the eastward to Green Briar Bridge and capable of holding a regiment, which deployed could successfully resist an army, for a considerable time at least. The rebels cannot withstand our infantry and the gallant 32nd first checked their advance and then dispersed them entirely, running the secesh through the the woods like frightened sheep.

Jack Frost has paid us several visits, and the delicate touches of his pencil are every where visible. Dame Nature has donned a robe of varied hue, the deep green of tall pine and cedar, intermingled with the brilliant yellow and crimson of maple and mountain ash, presents a scene at once pleasing and sublime. The surrounding mountains, always a grand and imposing sight, are now picturesque in the extreme.

No more paper to scribble on—must say good bye.

Yours truly,

PROCK.

Army Occupation, Camp at Huttonville, Randolph Co., Western Va., Oct. 10. 23

Friend Greene: On the 8th inst., at noon, the order came—"14th Regiment strike tents, and prepare to march immediately." Soon it was known all over camp that we were bound Westward. Most welcome order, and obeyed with alacrity, I assure you. By 1 o'clock we were on the march and at set of sun had left Cheat Mountain, its chilling winds and everlasting fogs far behind, and were encamped in a small meadow on the banks of Tygart river, within three miles of Huttonville. Our wagons failing to "come to time" we built fires supped on crackers and coffee, and passed the night in the open air, without other covering than our blankets.

At 8 A.M. we forded the river, went into camp on the west side and within a stone's throw of the so called town of Huttonville.

The 9th Indiana occupies our old Camp Ground on the Summit. 24

The 28th, 15th, and 17th Indiana boys moved down from "Wagoners Camp" this afternoon, and we Hoosiers are all together, forming an Indiana Brigade under command of General Reynolds.

Chestnuts and apples, (the latter of a very inferior quality) are abundant.

The weather for two days past has been most delightful—many degrees warmer here than on the breezy Summit.

Do we winter here, or move farther West? Can't answer that question, nor can "any other man" hereabouts.

We are all in the best of spirits. We would like very much to see some of our friends though, and much prefer wintering in Indiana or Kentucky to Western Virginia.

PROCK.

Army of Occupation Camp at Huttonville, Randolph Co., Western Va., Oct. 18. 25

"The Lord be praised,
The mountain's raised, The world moves round on wheels."

Emerson (of Knox).

22 Vincennes Sun, Oct. 26, 1861.
23 The march was down the west side of Cheat Mountain and then southwest (up the Tygart River) to Huttonville.
24 Vincennes Sun, Oct. 26, 1861. Other letters from Prock appeared in the Sun during the remainder of 1861 and through 1862. Following the date of Prock's letter of October 16, the list here reproduced, the fourteenth regiment remained for a few weeks at Huttonville. Then it was sent northward down the Tygart valley to Philippi located west of Laurel Hill. After a few weeks at this point the regiment was transferred to Romney, Virginia (now W.Va.), in the Alleghany Valley, east of the Alleghany. Romney is on the South Branch of Potomac a few miles south of Cumberland, Md. It during 1862, this regiment saw much service in the east. Sometimes during 1864, readers may look for another installment of Prock's letters.
25 Vincennes Sun, Oct. 26, 1861.
Friend Greene: Praises are sung nightly by the Christian soldiers of our regiment. Were the mountains razed, would be a blessed thing for us poor devils who have to climb their steep and rugged sides so often. The 14th boys do not exactly go around on wheels, but they do strut through camp in their new pants, and under clothes, long legged socks, and sewed (this time) shoes, pockets full of gold and silver wheels, fists tightly closed on sundry $10 bills, the "scrip" of our dear and much loved Uncle Samuel, their faces beaming with pleasure and delight; verily this mountain-locked valley of the Tygart seems a Paradise to us mountainers, (the 14th is so called by other Indiana regiments) the broad meadows, hills (that would be mountains to any other but a "Fourteenth") covered with green pastures, farm houses nestled in groves of oak and chestnut, orchards with their golden fruit, the bright and beautiful river dashing over its rocky bed with ripples flashing in the sunlight or glittering like burnished blades as the silvery moon peeps o'er the distant mountains, banks shaded here and there with clumps of the wild plum, willow, and quaking asp, its course marked by a hedge of whortle and spice wood bushes, their bright red berries resembling a doubled string of beads; and, above all, the warm and genial sunshine, the balmy days of Autumn, seem to make the soldier's heart glad, and, though some may long to see the Hoosier Land, the majority are for the time being content—indeed those who are not should be sent back to Cheat Mountain Summit, and compelled to stand picket-guard 48 hours without crackers! Here we have no pickets, and camp-guard is mere pasture while sun and moon so brightly shine. Discipline, however, is not forgotten by that kind-hearted but thorough-going soldier, our Colonel, and the following orders rule and regulate our camp:

- Reveille—5:30 A.M.
- Wood and water call—6 A.M.
- Sick call—6:30 A.M.
- Breakfast—7 A.M.
- First Sergeant's call—8 A.M.
- Guard-mounting—8:30 A.M.
- Company drill—9 A.M.
- Re-call—11 A.M.
- Wood and water call—11:30 A.M.
- Dinner—12 M.
- Battalion drill—2 P.M.
- Re-call—4 P.M.
- Dress parade (Inspection Arms)—5 P.M.
- Supper—6 P.M.
- Tattoo—8:30 P.M.
- Taps—9 P.M.

Your correspondent is in receipt of a box from the "Doctor" and "General," containing articles worth their weight in gold here. The "Old London Dock" from you, friend G., and other fluids disappeared in "double quick," and rest assured, kind friends at home, you were not forgotten as the grateful liquor cours ed down our thirsty throats and clouds of smoke were puffed from those "fragrant weeds," and swiftly but most pleasantly the hours were passed that evening in chatting over old times.

Kilgannon, of Co. B, wounded in the knee during our first skirmish on Cheat Mountain, died and was buried yesterday.

No mail since Sunday. The coach came up from Beverly today and brought all the other regiments' mail, but left ours at Beverly. May the devil fly away with all the contractors and P. M.'s! [Post Masters].