LETTERS OF A DRUMMER-BOY
Edited by DON RUSSELL

Introduction

Letters and diaries are often of more interest for the light they throw upon a way of life or a point of view than for their descriptions of great events. Such, to a degree, is the case with the letters of a drummer-boy that follow. His regiment, although almost constantly in active service, aside from the Vicksburg campaign, took part in few of the important battles of the Civil War. There are casual accounts here of a number of forgotten skirmishes and expeditions, and something about the assault on Fort Blakely during the siege of Mobile, but some readers will perhaps get more of an idea of a Civil War soldier's life from incidental things: from the chicken that spoiled in the haversack, so that "I did not get to eat a bit of it;" from the green corn that was "coming out in tasselling in some places and looks very nice," but was used to make beds; from the picture cases that had "nearly all come to pieces," and that he wanted to exchange for photographs; from the pay delayed for a year; and from Mr. Cope who "comes to me everytime the mail comes and asks me if I got a letter from home and how his folks is."

Then, from this lad, who, in his later years, was one of the kindliest of men, comes the pious hope that "Andrew Johnson will kill every leader of the Confederacy which ought to be done," and the expression, "I don't know what they done with the butternuts but I hope they hung them for I know they need it." No seeker after glory in those days of 1864-1865, he cheered the fact that "Our regiment was so lucky as to not get into the charge," and longed for the day when "we will once more have peace and happiness restored to our once happy [sic] country." Of such homely materials are most of the letters made, and so they are presented, with no omissions except of some extraneous and unimportant messages to the folk at home.

Henry Lawson Bert, author of the letters, was born at Jimstown, Ohio, on August 15, 1845, the son of Peter Bert and of Mary Frazier Bert.1 The father of Peter Bert was born in Hesse Darmstadt of French parentage on January 24, 1817. He came to America at the age of twelve and was married on December 24, 1841. His wife died on February 29, 1851, at about which time he came to Indiana. On October 5 of the same year, he married Elizabeth McKee at Strawtown. Soon after this he established himself at Tipton as a merchant tailor and is said to have organized the first Methodist Sunday School in that city.

Henry was little more than sixteen years of age when he left his home at Tipton to enlist for the Civil War. He was not at once accepted—he was small for his age—but followed the Forty-Seventh Regiment of Indiana Volunteers from Indianapolis to Louisville, before he was finally enrolled as a drummer in Captain William M. Henley's Company I on December 21, 1861. He is described as four feet, ten inches in height, of dark complexion, with black eyes, whose occupation at the time of enrollment was that of a printer—printer's devil would probably be more accurate. It was a trade he did not afterwards follow.

The first unit of the Forty-seventh Indiana to be raised was a company from Bluffton, enrolled by John A. McLaughlin, a veteran of the Mexican War, who hoped to join the Thirty-fourth Indiana, then being organized at Anderson.2 Arriving there on September 25, 1861, with eighty-three men, McLaughlin found that regiment already full. His company was ordered to Camp Sullivan, Indianapolis, where it was recruited to the required number (101) and mustered into the United States service for three years or during the war;" as Company A of the Forty-seventh. Other companies were raised, principally from the eleventh congressional district—from Decatur, Huntington, Wabash, Tipton, Knightstown, Jay Court House and Kokomo. James R. Slack was appointed Colonel. The regiment was accepted for federal service on December 13 and left for Louisville two days later.

The Forty-seventh remained at Camp Wickliffe, Kentucky, assigned to the Army of the Ohio, until February, 1862, when it marched by way of Elizabethtown to West Point, took transports to Commerce, Missouri, and Col. Slack

1 Entry in the Bert family Bible.
2 From data in discharge papers.
commanding, was assigned to the First Brigade of the Third
Division, led by Brig. Gen. John M. Palmer, of the Army of

In this command the Forty-seventh Indiana
marched to a point below Island No. 10 on the Mississippi River, and
operated along the river between that point and New Madrid and was
one of the first regiments to enter Fort Thompson, March 14th.

With the 34th, 48th, and 46th [Indiana] regiments under General
Palmer it participated in the action which cut off communications with
Island No. 10, and joined in the surrender of that point. This was
the first action that tested the mettle of the men. The guns were
pulled in place on the river bank by hand, with ropes, and in the dark-
ess of the night, and the men, with no other protection than the rifle
pits scooped out in the sand, held their ground against the fire of the
rebel gunboats, disabling one and driving off the others.4

After this action at Riddle’s Point, and the surrender of
Island No. 10 by the Confederates, the Forty-seventh coop-
erated with the navy in its operations on the inland waters,
in the expedition to Fort Pillow, garrisoning Tiptonville, Ten-
nessee, from April 15 to June 15 and Memphis from June 30 to
July 25. Col. Slack was for a time in command at Mem-
phis. The regiment was then moved by river to Helena, Ar-
kinsas, where it remained until the following March, with
the exception of several expeditions: a fight at Brown’s
Plantation, Mississippi (August 11, 1862), where eleven were
killed and wounded; an expedition to Arkansas Post (Novem-
ber, 6-21); and the Yazoo Pass expedition of Brig. Gen. L.
F. Quinby by way of Moon Lake, the Coldwater and Talla-
hatchie rivers to the attack on Fort Pemberton at Greenwood,
Mississippi, under the divisional command of Brig. Gen. L.
F. Ross.

By this time, Grant was ready for his final successful
campaign in the rear of Vicksburg. The Forty-seventh was
ordered to Miliken’s Bend, Louisiana on April 12. It then
marched by way of the Perkins and James plantations to New
Carthage, where it was transported across the river to Bruins-
burg. During these operations the regiment was commanded
by its Lieutenant Colonel, John A. McLaughlin, who had been
Captain of its first company. Its Colonel, Slack, commanded
the brigade, which included the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-
eighth Iowa and the Fifty-sixth Ohio, and later the Eighty-
seventh Illinois. This was the Second Brigade of the Twelfth

Division, commanded by Brig. Gen. Alvin P. Hovey, who had
been originally Colonel of the Twenty-fourth Indiana, but
was now assigned to the First Brigade of the same division.
General Hovey later became governor of Indiana. The Divi-
sion was assigned to the Thirteenth Army Corps of Maj. Gen.
John A. McClernand, one of the three army corps of Maj.
Gen. U. S. Grant’s Army of the Mississippi.

Immediately on landing, the Forty-seventh began the
movement into the interior, marching all night, and confront-
ing the enemy under Maj. Gen. J. S. Bowen near Port Gibson
on May 1. “Hovey’s Division had the brunt of this battle,
and the 47th, assisted by a battery of field guns, repulsed
charges made by one of Bowen’s brigades.” Grant’s army
now turned toward Jackson, to deal with the forces of Gen.
Joseph E. Johnston, before turning back against Lt. Gen. J.
C. Pemberton at Vicksburg. Pemberton, however, moved out
from Vicksburg; sharp skirmishing at Fourteen Mile Creek
on May 12-13 showed that he was concentrating at Edward’s
Station. McClernand’s and McPherson’s corps were turned
in that direction. This resulted in the Forty-seventh’s heavi-
est battle of the war, that of Champion’s Hill, or Baker’s
Creek, fought on May 16. That Hovey’s Division bore
the brunt of this battle is shown by the casualty lists. The seven
divisions on the field had 2,408 casualties, of which 1,202 were
in Hovey’s Division.

Company A of the Forty-seventh was on the skirmish
line, and a short retreat of the forces engaged brought the
Eleventh Indiana Regiment to the rear. The charge made
by this regiment swept the skirmishers with it. The guns
of a rebel battery were captured, but had to be abandoned,
because, just at that time, the Union force was outnumbered
and had to fall back for a space. It was soon reinforced
and the enemy was driven from the field.5 Casualties in the
Forty-seventh regiment numbered 143. Among them were
Lieut. James F. Perry and Lieut. George W. Cole of Company
B, killed, and Maj. Lewis H. Goodwin, Capt. E. Y. Sturgis
and Lieut. David Bender, wounded.

After a rear-guard action at Big Black River Bridge on
May 18, Pemberton retreated within the defenses of Vicks-
burg. On May 26 the Forty-seventh was assigned to its place
in the siege lines, south of the A. & V. Railroad, and in the

4 Indiana at Vicksburg, 290.
5 Ibid. 291.
present National Military Park. The position is now marked by a monument near the junction of Union and Kentucky avenues. Captain S. J. Kellar of Company H kept a diary from which the following passages are taken:

May 26th—Ordered out as sharpshooters and are in trenches within 200 yards of the enemy’s forts. No enemy dare show his head. We shoot so close, or pick them off, as to warn them to keep hid. Had heavy artillery firing on both sides. A flag of truce sent out to bury the dead and bring in the wounded. The men from both sides came together and talked friendly. Our boys jollied them and advised them to give up and save their city and many lives. They replied that they still had hopes General Johnson would come to their relief.

May 28th—We are back in camp. Had only one man wounded in our regiment the two days we were out, but some of the men had very narrow escapes.

June 11th—Last night dark and gloomy. Was on duty the fore-part. Thundered and lighted and poured as if the earth and sky were coming together. Went into camp, muddy and half dead.

June 25th—Blew up one of the enemy’s forts. Heavy artillery duel which lasted two hours.

June 30th—Busy working on our payrolls. A cannon ball from the enemy’s guns struck my tent and threw dirt and dust all over us.

July 3rd—Have dug our trench almost into the enemy’s works and our men are lying flat on the ground.

July 4th—This is a glorious old Fourth of July. Vicksburg has surrendered.  

After the fall of Vicksburg, the Forty-seventh marched to Jackson and took part in the engagement there. It then returned to Vicksburg and was ordered to New Orleans on Aug. 10. It was stationed at Carrollton, Brairshear City and Berwick Bay until October, and then took part in Maj. Gen. N. P. Banks’ first Red River Campaign, usually known as the Teche Campaign. This extended from October 3 to November 30, and was marked by one engagement, at Bayou Grand Coteau. It then returned to New Iberia and while there, in December, 1863, the “three years of the war” having expired, the regiment re-enlisted and was sent home on veterans’ furlough, leaving Algiers, Louisiana, on Feb. 9, 1864, and arriving at Indianapolis on Feb. 18. The next day a public reception was given to the 146 veterans of the Forty-seventh, who had re-enlisted, and to the Twenty-first Indiana, also home on furlough. Addresses were made by Governor Oliver P. Morton and by Gen. Slack, who had received his commission as Brigadier General of volunteers on Nov. 11, a promotion well deserved as he had commanded a brigade during most of his service. Incidents of the return to the front are told in the letter of April 3, 1864. The Knights of the Golden Circle and other organizations of southern sympathizers were active in 1864 and it is presumed they are the “Butternuts” encountered at Mattoon, Illinois.

Near the end of the War, the Forty-seventh Indiana was moved to New Orleans. This was on May 26, 1865. It went from there to Shreveport, where it received the surrender of Gen. Sterling Price of the Confederate Trans-Mississippi department. It did not reach home by September, as the drummer-boy had hoped, but remained at Shreveport until October 23. Then it was sent to Indianapolis, ending its service with thirty-two officers and five hundred thirty men on its rolls. Its losses had been two officers and eighty enlisted men, killed or mortally wounded and four officers and two hundred fifty men, who died of disease, a total of three hundred thirty-six.

There was, of course, another reception at Indianapolis with addresses by Governor Morton, General Slack, and Colonels Milton S. Robinson and John A. McLaughlin. The Regiment was discharged the next day, November 2, 1865.

In 1883, the regiment held its first re-union at North Manchester, Indiana, and because of the fact that most of the men of the Forty-seventh had come from closely contiguous territory, these annual events were continued for many years. At the twenty-sixth annual re-union, held at Huntington in 1908, the roster was signed by 130 members.

General Slack was commissioned a Brevet Major General of volunteers on March 13, 1865, “for gallant and meritorious service in the field during the war”. He was mustered out January 15, 1866, and died at Huntington, Indiana, on June 28, 1881.

The drummer-boy, Henry Lawson Bert, became a merchant tailor, first in Indianapolis, and later in Edinburgh, Marion and Huntington. He died at Marion, Indiana, on December 8, 1910.

[THE LETTERS]

Fort Curtis, Helena, Ark.,
March the —, 1863

Sister Dear:

I sent myself this morning to try to write you a few lines to let you know that I received your letter and was glad to hear that you was well and hear that Benton got home safe. I have been well for a

long time and as long as I keep my health I am very well satisfied. I just come from meeting. I heard the General preach ⁹ he said he was in the hands of the rebels for six months he was taken at Pea Ridge, ⁹ he says the prisoners were almost naked when they were exchanged, that is those that were with him.

I have been some time writing this letter. I will try and end it up in a different style. ¹⁰ I will tell you something about a fight there was in town. There was a lot of soldiers down the river on some boats this morning and the officers would not let them get off the boats and they tried to Break guard and the officers ordered the guards to shoot and one of the guards shot a soldier in the leg and then one of the privates belonging to the boat run out and cocked the pistol under the lieutenant’s nose and dared him to speak and he stood there and never said a word. So then the 11th Ind. went down to settle the fuss and they soon had it stopped and there was three men shot in the operation but only one killed.¹¹

Paducah, Ky.,
April 3rd, 1864.

Dear Sister Ann:

It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to write you a letter. I am well at present and hoping that when this comes to hand may find you enjoying the same good health. I will tell you something about our travels from home.

We left Indianapolis on the 30th day of March, 1864, and got to Mattoon, Ill., on the 31st early in the morning and was called out in line of battle to fight the Butternuts but we only Captured two of them but the citizens of Mattoon was out at the same time and they caught 42 of them. So that morning we started out for Cairo [sic] about 10 o’clock but I don’t know what they did with the butternuts but I hope they hung them for I know they need it. So we went gliding along on the cars and the next morning about 1 o’clock found ourselves at Cairo so we stayed in the cars till day light for it was raining very hard and a little after day light it checked raining and we got off the cars and went on a boat named N. W. Thomas and we had just got cars thing on and loaded and we had to move off and go into the barracks and there we stayed till the next morning or till the afternoon rather at 1 o’clock and then we had orders to go on the boat Raymond to go to Paducah, Ky., and we started about 3 o’clock and the next morning found ourselves at this place. The reason we was ordered here was that the rebels had been here and destroyed a good part of town and tried to take the place but failed and they are looking for them in again and we come here to help them out or fight them if they come in.

The fight happened last Friday a week,¹² I guess we will start for New Orleans pretty soon. We are still on the boat and expect to be till we get to New Orleans, but we don’t know when we will get there. . . . I will tell you now about my Chicken. When I came from home it was in my Haverack [sic] spoiled and I did not get to eat a bit of it. My relents was good yet and so was the sugar and I could not eat it all in two or three trials. . . .

[The stay in Paducah was not long, and the Forty-seventh soon joined Gen. Bank’s second Red River expedition, which got under way in March, in cooperation with the navy. This is the expedition referred to in the next letter. The fifteen days of fighting included Monett’s Ferry, Cane River crossings, April 23, Alexandria, April 30 to May 10, with engagements at Mud Bayou on May 2 to 6, and at Graham’s Plantation on May 5. The “ten days’ hard marching” refers to the retreat to Morganza, which was reached on May 20 after an engagement at Mansura May 16. Apparently the drum major never did come back, as Henry L. Bert became drum major or “principal musician” of the regiment during his second enlistment and was discharged as of that grade.]

Morganza [sic] Bend, May 29th, 1864
Dear sister Ann,

I now sit down to try to write you a few lines as we have lately come off of a very hard expedition of marching and fighting. We were skirmishing about 15 days all together and then after that 19 days hard marching, day and night both and very scarce of rations but it all over now as we are in camp close to the Mississippi river. It has been just one week since we come here and we moved camp today. We was about a quarter of a mile from the river and today [Sunday] we moved down close to the river so we would be handy to water. I went out this afternoon to get a small brush to make a shade for my mess and it was about a mile to the woods where we went to get the brush and it was very tiring work and when we come back we got all dinner and then went out to get some green corn to make beds. I don’t mind that in this country. We just use it the same as we do anything else for anything that we want it for. The weather here is very hot and dry. We have not had any rain of any account since the third of April and the river has been very high but is falling now. We have fixed up Camp as if we was going to stay here some time but we don’t know anything about it.

I have a great deal of work to do now for I have to attend to all the calls. We have ten drummers and ten fifers and I put at the head of them all and have to boss them all and that is what makes the work. Our drum major has never come back yet since

⁹ Not identified. Possibly the besieging commander, Brig. Gen. Frederick Schovias.

¹⁰ The battle of Pea Ridge, Ark., was fought March 6-8, 1862, between a force commanded by Brig. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis and the Confederate force of Gen. Earl Van Dorn.

¹¹ The letter is in printer’s characters to the end of the first line of the paragraph. The remainder is in longhand, on the opposite side of the sheet.

¹² I find no further reference to this incident, illustrative of the lax discipline of the Union army as late as March, 1862.
we have been back and dont know wheather he will or not . . .

Henry L. Bert,
Co. I, 47th Regt. Ind. V. V. Inft. 13

[On the back of the same sheet on which the preceeding letter was written, was a short letter to the drummer's brother John.]

I now sit down to write you a few lines to let you know that I am well as ever. I would like to see you now and be with you this summer and help you and pap tend corn but it is so that I cant but I think next summer the war will be over. I hope so anyhow.

We have a table fixed up to eat off of and to write on. There is three other boys writing letters on the same table. We have a nice camp now to what we have had in the last month. Mr. Paul and Benton and Mr. Cope's all well now, I believe.

[Some of the modifications of the tintype, oftentimes delicately tinted, were fragile, and while the cases were usually small, a number of them must have been quite a burden during a campaign, as the following letter indicates.]

The next fight of the regiment was that at Atchafalaya Bayou, on July 28, which probably is the "scout" referred to in the letter of Aug. 3 written from Morganza's Bend.]

Camp 47th Regt. Ind. V. V.
Algiers, La., July 21st 1864
Dear Sister Ann,

I now set myself to answer your interesting letter which I received a few days ago at the same time I received one from Mother and Mary and John. They were not all of one date but come the same time and I tell you I was glad to hear from home for I had not heard from there for a long time before. You wanted to know whether I had your pictures yet or not. Of course I would keep them till the last but the cases are nearly all come to pieces and if you will all get photographs for me instead of them it would be a great deal handler for me and as soon as you send me the photographs I will send the pictures and the money to pay for them, all except Eliza's and hers you cannot get it very handy for she is too small.

Now I will tell you that we are going to leave here before long. We had orders today but did not go. We had everything packed up and ready to leave at a moment's warning but after a few hours was ordered to put up our tents and we would stay a day or two longer and if we do I will write to mother and John tomorrow. There is two regiments going away today. One is the 8th Ind. and the other the 24th Iowa, which will both go on one boat, a Gulf steamer which will take them on the gulf where we will go.

Letters of a Drummer-Boy

The 11th has been gone for ever since day before yesterday and when we go will not have much chance to get mail. I don't expect to get any more mail for a month after we leave here...  

Morganzas Bend,
August 3rd 1864.

We are now back to this miserable hole of Morganza. I would rather stay anyplace else for we cannot get anything at All. I hope we will leave before long for I want to get away from here. The very first day we got here we got orders to go the next day on a scout and that I did not like at all but had to go. We got up at 1 o'clock and started. Marched on till after daylight and then got our breakfast and then went till 10 o'clock and then had a fight which lasted till after 12. o'clock and then we retreated back with the loss of 7 men wounded out of the regiment. Eat our dinners between two and three o'clock and then went to camp. Got in about dark. Our whole march was about 32 miles. It was an awful hard day's marching very muddy coming in for it rained all afternoon...  

Morganzas Bend,
August 16th, '64
Dear Sister Ann;

I now set myself to write you a few lines this morning as it is a nice cool pleasant morning and I have not much to write but I will try to give you some of the news of camp. I guess that we will go to Mobile before long. 14 We have the promise of the first troops that leaves here. We got on a boat one night to leave and got everything loaded on and stayed on the boat till morning and then had to get off and go into camp in the same place.

We are living fine now. We get light bread every day and plenty of other rations.

We have a great deal of rain here. It has been raining now for the last three days but has cleared off now and has got to be very hot again. These coats we have got is very near wore out and the Regt. is going to send for a new suit soon again.

We have not drewed pay but once since we left home. We will have four months pay due us the last of this month and another $600.00 bounty. I dont know when we will get it but I expect not anyways soon.

Our drummers is all out driling except me and I am on camp duty. We only have one hours drill in a day and that is at half past seven. They are out now and will be in about half past 8 o'clock and then at 9 is guard mounting and then nothing more till Dinner call and then Dress parade at six o'clock....

Yesterday was my birthday and last night there was one of the

13 By its re-enlistment, old Forty-seventh became the Forty-seventh Regiment of Indiana Veteran Volunteer Infantry.
14 Mary and John were Henry's half-sister and half-brother. Miss Mary Bert, the only one of the family now living, resides in Indianapolis.

Admiral Farragut had defeated the Confederate fleet at Mobile on August 5, but this not until the following March that the Forty-seventh was ordered to that point.
Dear Sister Ann;

I now take this opportunity of trying to write you a few lines to inform you that I am still a little farther out in Arkansas near Little Rock where we have been for about three days and I expect we will stay here till winter. When we came here we were as wet as we could be for when we got off the cars it was about nine o'clock and it looked about as much like rain as I ever saw but it did not rain till about 1 o'clock and then it commenced raining and we were out doors [doors] had not a tent nor a house to crawl into but had to take it all about 10 o'clock the next day and then we got into some houses which some other soldiers had built and had left a few days ago and gone to Fort Smith but they had left some of their sick here and they are here in the camp with us but we don't know whether we will stay in these houses all winter or not or whether we will have to go out when the other soldiers come back. There is some talk of them going some other place when they come back and if they do we will have to quarters all to ourselves but if they dont we will have to build some of our own.

Well I was speaking of the rain when first came here and that rain is not over yet. It is still raining and has been ever since we came here. We have not seen the sun since we came here but for all the rain it does not get muddy here like it does in some places for it is very hilly and the hills are very gravelly.

This is a very nice place about as nice a place as Noblesville or

a great deal larger but nothing to compare with the capital of Indiana and it is very nice country around here too.

There is a great many soldiers here now and I think they will stay here all winter and then in the spring start out through the country after the rebels. I think that is the movements of this army but there is no telling what will be done for we have been knocked around all summer and done nothing and it may be done so this winter, but I hope we will all come home next summer and I think we will for we have won one of the grand victories already. The reason I say this is that we have got our Governor again and that is not the best yet for we hope soon to hear of the re-election of our Noble President that we have long wished to have four years longer and when we hear of that I think we will not have to stay in the field much longer, at least I hope not.

Camp Near Little Rock, Ark.,
November 19th, 1864

Dear Sister Annie;

Now I will tell you something about our camp. We are in a low place about four feet below the level of the river but there is a large levee [lev] that keeps the river in its place but the river is not always high. It is about as high as it ever gets and when it is at its lowest stage it is about forty feet lower than it is now and it is always very muddy water and that is all the kind of water we have to drink but it is the purest water we have had to drink in this country. Our camp is perfectly dry now for it has been clear for three or four days but we have a very muddy place when it rains for it gets very muddy when it rains rite away and it is about ankle deep all over the camp. You spoke about going to school and learning so fast but I tell you when I get my money I intend to go to the city and get some school books if I can and try to learn something too for there are a great many men in the camp that can give me lessons in all kind of school books and if I dont learn anything I will try and keep on forgetting everything I did know.

Well the weather. It is very pleasant now and has been for three or four days but Jack Frost showed himself a little this morning again it had all dried off now again and I declare I never saw pleasanter weather in my life for this time of year.

Your loving sister,

*The stationery provided by the U.S. Christian Commission will bring to the service of World War veterans that which was provided for them by the Y.M.C.A. of other agencies.*

New Orleans, Jan. 13th, 1865

Western Branches of the U.S. Christian Commission

The U.S. Christian Commission

Sends this as the soldier's messenger is to home. Let it hasten to those who wait for tidings.

Chicago: J. V. Farwell, Chairman; B. F. Jacobs, Secretary Peoria; A. G. Tyng, Chairman; Wm. Reynolds, Secretary St. Louis; Isaac S. Smyth, Cr.; J. H. Parsons, Cor. Sec'y

U.S. Christian Commission Rooms,

186-

New Orleans, Jan. 13th, 1865

Letters of a Drummer-Boy
Well I guess I cannot think of much more to write this time but I will promise to write more the next time but I wish you would write oftener than you have been. Mary has been writing every week and I wish you would write between times if you please so that I can get a letter from home twice a week at least...

[The long-awaited pay day did not arrive while the regiment remained at New Orleans, so presumably the drummer-boy did not have the opportunity to resume his studies as he had planned. In later life, however, he did attempt to make up for the education missed during his service in the Civil War, particularly by applying himself to study of the Bible and of ancient history to such a degree that he was qualified as a local preacher in the Methodist Episcopal church. The Forty-seventh had been, since July, in the Nineteenth Army Corps, Department of the Gulf. It was now assigned to the Reserve Corps, soon to be again numbered the Thirteenth Army Corps in the new Military Division of West Mississippi, for the long-expected campaign against Mobile. The military division was commanded by Maj. Gen. E. R. S. Canby, the corps by Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger. Gen. Slack commanded the First Brigade to which the Forty-seventh was assigned. At times this brigade was commanded by Lt. Col. McCaughlin of the Forty-seventh, and its division was the First, commanded by Brig. Gen. J. C. Veatch. Spanish Port was invested on March 26. The assault on and capture of Fort Blakely on April 9 is described in the letter of April 10.]

Camp near Blakely, Ala.,
April 10th, 1865

Well Anna:
I received your letter yesterday evening which was Sunday and while I was reading it there was a tremendous artillery firing commenced which aroused my attention and I stopped reading and went up close to the skirmish line and in a few moments our men commenced yelling and I knew what was up. A charge was then going on and in about five or ten minutes more the firing ceased and another more strong and louder yell was uttered and was continually kept up for more than half an hour and I rushed over with a lot more of our regiment to see the result of the charge. There our men had them (the Rebs) perfectly demoralized and were all taken prisoners about 25 hundred of them. Several of our men killed and wounded but have not learned what the exact loss, of either side but I think that we took about 4,000 prisoners in both forts but supposed to be about 200 at fort Blakely. Fort Spanish was taken on the evening of the 9th.

I dont know what was going on there now after we left, not till after it was taken.

Two of the rebel gunboats surrendered to our infantry and the rest has skinned down to Mobile or some other place. I will give you a small sketch of our forts and our camps and line of march and the next time I will send home another one if we do any great movements. You spoke about having a nice Ex-e-bil-tion but I dont think you can compare it with our Ex-pe-di-tion.

Richmond and Petersburg are both Evacuated and Grant and Sherman are rite at their heels and if they are not very careful they will be taken in before the 4th of July and I am almost sure we will have this place and everything around here by this time and everybody where they are. The war is surely over then when both these armies are taken in. The so-called confederacy is played out and then we will once more have peace and happiness restored to our once happy country.

We are a great ways apart now but I hope and think before another year shall roll around we shall meet again if life is spared and that we will again have peace and a better Government than ever. For one reason slavery will be abolished forever and this war will learn Southern people some sense and that they will never think of making war again.

Our regiment was so lucky as to not get into the charge at blakely. We have lost no men out of our regiment since the 27 of March and very small then. I must close for the present. I am well as usual. Our men are now pretty close to Mobile, some of them. We are about 12 mile but some are within 3 miles and still marching on to victory. Write soon.

Your brother,
Henry

[The last two letters in the collection were written from Camp Spring Hill, Alabama, after the capture of Mobile. By this time the war was nearly over, with the surrender of "old Lee and his whole army" and of "old Rebel Dick Taylor," although they had not heard of Johnston's surrender in North Carolina. The pay, overdue for a year, at last arrived, as is told in the last letter.]

Camp Spring Hill, Ala.,
April 30th, 1865

Dear Sister Anna:
Once more I have the pleasure of writing you a few lines as it has been several weeks since I have written and I believe the first time since the capture of Mobile. I dont suppose that I can give you any news but will tell that I am still in the land of the living and one among the heartiest of them.

This is another Sabbath morning, a beautiful day, and a day of Thanksgiving and Prayer which was set apart by Major General Canby.
in this department to be kept holy, no work of any kind to be done, but as our company is all out on picket but me and is a very lonesome time for me, I thought it my duty to write a few lines to my beloved sister and I thought it was as good a way as I could do to write a while away an hour or so of this weary camp life, but Sister I think this thing of “war” is about done in this once happy country.

Soon we shall have peace once more restored to our happy land, all will be united again, Slavery crushed from out the land and then “we” poor soldiers shall come home and enjoy the sweet comforts of home and friends. This I hope will come this summer, which every soldier expects.

We have been getting good news for some time about the capture of so many prisoners and old Lee and his whole army, Mobile and vicinity. Yesterday old Rebel Dick Taylor came into Mobile and surrendered up his army. Had about 5,000 men, they say. I have seen them. Yet everything has been cheering but among all the good news we received some bad news about the death of Abe Lincoln, but at least the Rebs has not gained anything by that. I think that Andrew Johnson will kill every leader of the confederacy which ought to be done. The rebs has no army on the East side of the Mississippi but the rebe General Johnson and he has but a small force, nothing to compare with his opposition, but there is a few rebs west of the river but they can do no harm where they are. A few days ago there was a rebe gunboat came out of the mouth of red river with our colors [colors] floating at half mast in honor of the president’s death and all her crew [crew] on deck dressed in blue. Playing the opera on us, run down the Miss. river almost like lightning. Went down just below the city of New Orleans and then hoisted their rebe colors. Thought she was away from all the Yankees but awfully mistaken. She was captured somewhere close to the mouth of the Miss. river. Didn’t get away at all.

Well for something else, this morning we mustered for one years’ pay. Just 12 months’ pay due us today but not getting it. The talk is now we are to get 10 months’ pay on Tuesday but I don’t know whether we will or not, but the paymaster is in the city sure now with plenty of money. We have almost forgotten what pay is for we have not got any for some time. Well I will close for the present. Well as usual. Write soon. Excuse this paper Anna for I have but little and must be saving till the pay comes. From your affectionate brother.

Henry L.

Camp Spring Hill, Ala., May 14th, 1865

Sister Anna:

Once more I have the pleasure of writing you a few lines in answer to yours I received yesterday evening and I now sit down to answer it. We have been payed off about a week ago yesterday and I have already told some of the folks that I have sent home 175 dollars and will probably send 20 dollars more in the course of two weeks. . .

We got orders a day or two ago to draw an extra pair of shoes to each man and one suit of other claths. Some of the boys think we are going to Texas but I don’t think we will now for I think the rebels will surrender before we get there and so ends the war. There is nothing for us to do on this side of the river now. I think we will be at home before the first of September at least I hope so—

Well, Anna: Something else. I cannot write much this time but will give you what I have to say.

We have a beautiful camp here on the top of a nice hill and the beautifulst springs here that I ever saw, more springs than can be counted and some of them the largest that I ever saw. They roll out as large as a quart cup in streams and we have got shades put up all over camp and the prettiest camp we ever had and if it would close the war by staying here I would love to stay here till the war is over.

Well, now I have given you a good description of our camp and I have nothing more of Importance to write this time. Mr. Paul and Benton is well and so is Mr. Cope and I would ask you and Mary to say more about Mr. Cope’s folks for he comes to me everytime the mail comes and ask me if I got a letter from home and how his folks is. I always tell him or let him read the letters when you say anything about them.

So no more at present. Excuse this short letter. I will try and do better next time. Write soon as possible. From your Brother Henry L.

---

20 Apparently the gunboat referred to was the Webb, of which Admiral Mahan wrote that “the ram Webb, which had her-boat escaped capture, ran out of the Red River in April with a load of cotton and made a bold dash for the sea. She succeeded in getting by several vessels before suspected, and even passed New Orleans, but the telegraph was faster than she, and before reaching the forts she was headed off by the Richmond, run aground, and burned.” Alfred T. Mahan, The Gulf and Inland Waters (New York., 1883.), 217.

21 Written in a very fine hand on a half-sheet, cut lengthwise, or ruled paper. The last six lines are crowded into about an inch of space.