

Captain William A. Barnard, 20th Michigan Infantry, 1862-1865

Envelope: Miss Ellen A. Barnard, Willsboro, Essex County, New York

20th Mich. Infty.
Crab Orchard Ky. Sept 13 [1863]

Dear Sister

I have just recd. your letter of the 3d - and have got all of your letters from home I believe & all the stamps you have sent - but I get your letters all at one mail three or four at one time - once in about three weeks.

Living in Miss. was too hot for me and no one will ever know what we suffered there but my health is good with the exception of an ulcer on my heal [sic] resulting from a boil that I had just as we were leaving Jackson to come back to Vicksburg - the ulcer is nothing serious - getting better & I hope to get around soon.

I had command of my Co. all the time in Miss. and left Vicksburg for Jackson with about 40 men - but the terrible heat and poor water was too much for any one but a mule to survive - at one time in line of battle before Jackson I had but 15 men in my Company able to stand up - & do duty - the others were left behind from the effects of heat & sun stroke.

I kept my head wet constantly and made up my mind to stand it as long as I had a man left. My Capt. & 2d Lt. were melted with heat the first day & sick & unfit for duty during the siege & I was the only officer left in the Co. & with only about twenty men on an average. The men would drop down on the march as if they were shot - perfectly helpless - & crazy from the effects of heat - and one day our whole division had to give up marching & keep in the shade to save the lives of the men.

We actually used water to drink & cook with on the march from Vicksburg to Jackson & back that we would not think of washing our hands in here in Ky.

I have a Com'n. as 2d Lt. and one as 1st Lt. & have been mustered as 1st Lt. & shall get my pay in a few days as 1st Lt. from Apl. 25th 63 - but I have not been mustered as 2d Lt. and as the orders are now from the War Dept. can not be & shall probably lose my pay as 2d Lt. from the fault of our Col. in not giving me my Com'n. soon enough - an officer cannot be mustered back of the date of the reception of his Com'n. and I did not receive my 2d Lt's. Com'n. until after I got my 1st Lt. Com'n. so that the mustering officer would not muster me as 2d Lt.

I have been trying some time to get leave of absence but have not succeeded as there are so many applications - & now all furloughs & leaves of absence are stopped until after the move that we are making. Burnside is in East Tenn. with his main Army and the 9th Corps are moving that way through Cumberland Gap over a rough mountainous road as fast as we can - & can not get away until we get to Tenn. I want to get away but do not have much to say about it - an officer cannot get away when he wants to unless he is sick & then it is hard work - but we have been allowed a great many furloughs & leaves of absence since we got back from Miss. & my turn will come before long if they continue to grant them - but I cannot tell when that will be & if I get to Willsboro at all shall probably come when you least expect me.

I have just got news from Eaton after his term of service with the 50th Mass. He is at So. Reading & his Regt. is out of the service. They enlisted for nine months - he was at Port Hudson & saw Butler of our class who lives in Miss.

I do not know what kind of a place Mo. is for teaching. Teaching is bad enough anywhere. Who did Toot [?] Allen get for a husband? My sore heel resulted from a Miss. boil - worse than Job ever had or any chronicled in the Old Testament.

I can sympathize with Orville but reckon I can beat him on the patience. Remember me to everybody until I get home & write long letters.

Yours &c

Wm. A. Barnard