

Camp Trousdale,  
Sumner Co.  
Sunday Morning  
June 2, 1861.

Dear Mollie;-

I have written this makes the fourth letter to you and have not received a line from you since I have been here. I hope to hear from you within a few days at least. This is Sunday morning and our second in camp. It is a beautiful morning for you people out of camp to go to church, but we have no church to which we might go nor angelic beings to look at if we were permitted to go.

That seems hard, doesn't it? I expect we will have preaching in camp today as we have several preachers in our regiment. Several of our men have been sent out to work today as though it were not the Sabbath, but this is the soldier's life. Officers have no respect for the day so the sin lies at their door for making us soldiers break the Sabbath unwillingly.

I have been sick the last week, but am now well and fit for duty. I am the worst sun-burned man you ever saw and don't look very pretty. Brother Joe has gone home but apt as not he will go somewhere Lebanon, ( by permission from the Colonel). He wanted to take me home when I was sick, but I was not willing to go. I do not expect to go home until my term of service is out unless I am carried.

The officers have said since Joe left that they would not permit anyone else to go home, so I will content myself as well as I can. If I can secure a furlough, I will come to see you in preference to anyone else, for you are the dearest one on earth to me, my mother not excepted. This declaration may seem strange and un-natural to you, but it is according to Scripture, which says a man shall forsake his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. I have not quoted it verbatim but in substance.

Oh, joy! what a treat. Here is a letter from you, my dear Mollie. Oh! you can't imagine how glad I am and what feelings thrilled my bosom while reading it. Oh! I am so glad that you are not one of those timid creatures, who can't endure for their husbands and sweethearts to leave them to fight for their country.

Billy Winford was over Friday to see us. He brought us a box of cakes and wine sent by Miss Ruth and Mrs. Winford. It was a treat sure. Most of the ladies about Lebanon are sending the boys good things. We are expecting something that week from Mrs. Hamilton, Mrs. Payne, and others. May Heaven bless the women and permit us to return to them again for they are angels to man.

I would like it very much to get a box from Williamson, if it would not be too much trouble. I think that I would appreciate it very much higher than from any other source. I saw Mr. John Cator the other day. He is well. I think a great deal and respect him for your sake. I shall, whenever I can, go to see him. He is not in our regiment and we have guards between the regiments now and cannot get through unless an officer lets us through. Sometimes we boys get the password and go where we please. Some of them guess at the word until they guess right and then we get it. The boys are right cunning.

We are on duty nearly all of the time and have not much time to write. I will write to you as often as I can. I also am to write today to Missie Payne.

Note: The balance of this letter is missing.

Knoxville, Tenn.  
Sunday Morning  
July 21st, 1861.

Dear Mollie;-

I have nothing to do this morning and will try and send you a few lines. I am sitting in my tent, a knapsack for my writing desk. I have a box in which are packed our cooking utensils from Camp Trousdale, which place we left one week ago. We are well situated now. We are three hundred miles from that place. We expect to leave for Washington Co., Court House, Va.

As to me, I am not anxious to leave Tennessee, but will go with my regiment wherever it goes, and when it goes into action I expect to be there and bear my part. If I get killed, I fall in a glorious cause. Life is sweet and I would like to live to get back which is only natural. Oh! "the tie that binds"; that bind back there are numerous and strong, None can fill nor ever fill the place in my heart that Mollie does.

Were I as reckless and destitute of those finer feelings which characterize gentlemen in private life, and had I no dear one to think of by day and dream of by night, I would not care a great deal about getting back, but that is not the case. The further I get from you, the more binding is the cord that unites us. Though I may go to Virginia yet, I do not wish you to think me lost to you.

I would this morning like very much to see you and tell you the story of my life in camp since I became a soldier. I have been out only two months and though surrounded by wicked men of almost every die, yet I can conscientiously say that so far I have held faithful and still hold fast my integrity and, by the assistance of kind Heaven, I will continue so, even to the end. I don't say this because I am writing to you, but I would be willing to let anyone of my acquaintances here either deny or confirm.

Since I have been writing, we have received to march this evening at 5 o'clock, and we are to cook provisions for forty-eight hours. We are going to a place in Washington Co., Va. called Haynesville. We will remain there only for a few days, but I hope to hear from you.

I would write more but have to quit for this time.

Farewell, yours affectionately,  
J. H. Hamilton.

Lynchburg, Va.  
July 23rd, 1861

Dear Mollie;-

I wrote to you last Sunday while at Knoxville and thought then that we would not leave Tennessee, but a great battle was fought at Manassas, Va. Beauregard has driven the "Goth Vandals" and swarms of the North with great loss. He has taken one of their batteries. The killed and wounded on both sides is estimated at ten thousand. Some of the wounded have been brought here.

Three of our Company came here by express train from Bristol. We left there at six o'clock yesterday evening and arrived here at six this morning, distance 250 miles.

Men were boarding the train last night going on ahead to take care of the wounded friends.

Direct your letters to Colonel Hatton's Regiment, Captain Williamson's Company, Staunton, Va., and perhaps I will receive them.

This leaves me in fine health.

Farewell,  
J. H. Hamilton.

Staunton, Va.  
July 25th, 1861  
Thursday

Dear Mollie;-

We have just reached this place. We left Lynchburg Tuesday night. We traveled all night, arrived at Charlottesville for breakfast, were delayed there all day. There we met the wounded, the sick, and dead from the battlefield of Manassas. I saw one poor fellow who was shot through the head. He was lying in a box, all bloody, just as he came from the field of battle. I talked with eight or ten of the wounded, all said that it was a hard fought battle and lasted from 4 am until 7 pm. Our cavalry pursued them for eight or nine miles and were stopped only by nightfall. We gained a complete victory, captured nearly all of their artillery. It was said yesterday that the Yanks were still running and had evacuated Alexandria, but that is only rumor.

The Virginians are the cleverest folks in the world and give us plenty to eat. The ladies came out and talked with us as if we were well acquainted. Several of the boys said that if they live through the war, they are coming to Virginia to marry. From this, you can get some idea of how the ladies treat us.

We crossed the Blue Ridge on the way to Charlottesville and recrossed it again this morning before sunrise, a more lovely scene I never beheld. After passing through a tunnel, a beautiful valley surrounded by hills and mountains lay stretched out before us. The valley was decked here and there by groves of forest trees, meadows, and cornfields with white cottages scattered throughout. It was the most beautiful scenery that I ever saw.

We travel more by night than by day. We are placed in cars like stock and fastened up. The cars go so slowly that we lie down on the floor and sleep all night, the fact is that we can sleep anywhere. We are to leave within a few minutes upon a march of fifty miles on foot.

This leaves me well and in fine spirits. We are about 100 miles from the enemy. McClelland is in command of the Federals. Troops from the South are coming in here by the thousand and we will have a fight up here within a month unless the enemy retreats. I am going into the fight when it comes.

I had a very pleasant dream at Charlottesville. I dreamed of being at home or some such place and of seeing you. Oh, I was so disappointed when I awakened and found it all a dream. I really felt homesick and melancholy for awhile for the first time since I left home. I would be better satisfied here in Virginia than I am if I could hear from you as often as I did there in Tennessee.

Write to me as I directed in my former letters.

I remain yours as ever,  
J. H. Hamilton

Green Brier Bridge, Va.  
Wednesday  
September 25th, 1861

Dear Mollie;-

We reached this place yesterday evening. We are only five or six miles from Huntersville on Green Brier River. We are to await further orders. It is generally understood that we will go down this river into what is known as Ranam Valley, a distance of forty miles to Lewisburg.

There we expect to meet Rosencrans with 15,000 men who are said to be pursuing Floyd who has only a small force. He is trying to draw the enemy out so that we can have a fair show at them. We have just received orders to be in readiness to march at a moment's notice. Our men are very much fatigued and very few are willing to go down the valley. They are tired of Western Virginia but we have to obey orders.

Oh, joy! I received a letter from you yesterday dated Sept. 14th. I was glad to learn that you had gone back to old Wilson to teach. I wrote a ten page letter to you and directed it to Lebanon. I gave in it a brief description of our expedition against the enemy. I have nothing of interest to relate now unless I tell you something of our retreat, if it may be called a retreat. The roads were so muddy that very little of our baggage could be hauled, so we, on the first day, picked up our tents and cooking utensils and carried them over the mountains three miles and from there we did the same thing again for three more miles. There we packed our tents away in a "morgue". We also left our cooking utensils to be brought on after us. We then set out on our march for this place.

I with four others got off and came on before in order to get something to eat which we did and that some fine honey. We camped at the foot of Elk Mountain. Next morning we were up and on the march by daylight. When we reached the top of the mountain, the sun was shining in all his splendor. I paused for some time to gaze at the scene. On this side of the mountain the valley below was veiled in fog upon which the sun was shining and a finer view I never saw. The fog rested or rather wound its way along the valleys and gorges and looked like a vast expanse of water. We were above the clouds and were looking down upon them. I cannot describe it and will leave it to your imagination, don't you think that would be best? For I have not the time nor the space here.

We are now without tents and do not know when we will secure them again, not before we go into winter quarters, I guess. Last night, little Jim Patton and myself slept side by side in the open air with no shelter but the broad expanse of Heaven's blue concave. We slept soundly though. Jim grumbles that he gets no sugar for his coffee. I laugh at him and tell him that he is not initiated into the service yet, I am glad to get coffee any way.

I suppose from what you say in your letters that you are amused at my cooking and are inclined to think that I am boastful, but it is conceded by my mess that I can make as good biscuits as are made in Tennessee. I would like to know who told you that I had lost your and Minnie Payne's pictures. Will you inform me in your next letter which one of the boys wrote back that kind of news? I have not lost yours. It is in my breast pocket now, but Minnie's I have lost. It was in my knapsack and I have never

found it. I am very sorry but cannot help it now. Some meddlesome boy wrote that word back there and, if you can find out who did it, please inform me as soon as you can. I have and will keep your picture as long as I live and, if I ever come back, I will bring it with me, rest assured. I had rather part with anything than lose that image of my best and dearest friend.

In regard to that secret you wished me to divulge concerning Ruth's (Winford) sweetheart, I am not afraid to trust you for I believe you will keep it profoundly secret. I request it of you. Well, Jim Major is the man. I have talked with him about Ruth. He loves her surely and is not flirting with her but will court her if he ever gets back unless he has already addressed her. I have heard him say enough upon the subject to convince me that there is no flirting upon his part.

This leaves me well. Van Williamson will leave within a few days for Tennessee unless he gets better. He looks as though he were pining away. Some of the boys think that he is not very sick but how that is, I do not know, and will not say. You need not say anything about this to anyone as it might be thought I was meddling.

Yours affectionately,

J.H. Hamilton

Cross Roads, Va.  
Jany. 10th, 1862

My dear Mollie;-

We are between twenty and twenty-five miles northwest of Winchester. We have just returned from taking the city of Bath and the bombardment of Hancock (a Federal General). Perhaps you will have learned the particulars ere this reaches you, but I will give you a few items anyway. We left Winchester Jany. 1st, and, as we thought, were going against Romney. We were three days on the march and the weather was colder than we ever felt in Tennessee. Our advance guard drove in the pickets on Friday evening the third, had two of our men wounded and took 8 prisoners, camped within three miles of the town, slept without tents, nor had we anything to eat for supper. It began to snow at dark and snowed most of the night. The wagons came up with us at 3 A.M.. We then cooked supper and breakfast all together and at daylight were ready for the march to Bath. We went very slowly and at 1 o'clock we came within gunshot of the town. I could see the flash and smoke and hear the report of the enemy's cannon. It was situated upon a hill behind the town. They were firing at our men, but not at those with whom I was.

The 1st and 7th regiments were sent out on the mountain in order to get around behind and take that cannon. We marched on a mile on the side of the mountain over the snow through bushes and over rocks before we reached the point where the cannon was placed. The news came that the Yanks had left at double quick. Our whole army raised a yell from one end to the other. We were above the town and road and could see the whole lines. The cavalry were in front and charged upon the rear guard, killed several horses and wounded several of the enemy. The artillery was next and then the infantry all these joined in pursuit of the enemy at a double-quick. We pursued them to Hancock across the Potomac.

Our regiment did not get into the chase until nearly dark. We were then told that unless we pushed forward, we would not get there in time to see the fun so we put out in double-quick time and reached there in an hour's time, distance about six miles. Long ere we got there we could hear the roar of artillery. Our cannon fired at the enemy who had retired to the other side of the Potomac, there being no bridge we could go no further.

Jackson had us Tennesseans marched up and was about to send us over cold as it was. They said the water was not more than two feet deep. It was all our Colonel could do to keep him from sending us over anyway. At 11 P.M., we retired to the rear of our cannon. They then turned loose upon the town. The roar was terrific; the balls and shells whistled through the air in a furious manner. We built us fires out of fence rails and sat by them until daylight. It was so cold we could not sleep. Our wagons with our tents, blankets and cooking utensils were still in the rear. We had nothing to eat until late in the evening of the next day.

While we were engaged there, a detachment of our army was above, up the river, engaged in burning bridges, tearing up the railroad and cutting telegraph wires. This being completed, we have returned this far on our way back.

We lost only five or six men and captured forty or fifty prisoners, caught one under a bed hidden. We asked him where he

was from and he said from Chicago, Ill. We have suffered greatly from the cold and have been hungry several times. We will march upon another expedition ere we get back to Winchester, I think, for we are stopping here too long.

I received your letter of the 24th of December while on the banks of the Potomac. Oh, it was a treat for me, you may be sure. It was full of interest from beginning to the end. I will grant you that favor you asked of me as soon as I get back to Winchester, Won't that do? I have no chance here to comply with your wishes and am sorry for it. I would do more to please you than anyone on earth. If I have no chance of sending you a picture of myself, I will return home as I now am with beard and mustache and as ugly as, well, I can't say who.

Van Williamson came up last night. Said that he saw my sweetheart. He looks well. My paper is damp. I hope you can make out most of what is written. I was glad that your brother had not gone off to the war.

We, that is, the army at Winchester, are the only troops in active service and hard service it is but thank Heaven I am well. Oh, what a blessing it is to be well, especially in camp. Joe and Dick are both in good health. Write soon, give my regards to your brother and sister. I wish I knew something else to write about, but cannot say anything better than that I love and would like so much to be with you but cannot yet awhile. So farewell.

Yours forever,

J. H. Hamilton

Note: This winter campaign of Stonewall Jackson was very hard upon the men and a great deal has since been written about their suffering. The men under Jackson did not at this time love and admire him as they did a few months later after they had learned what a great leader he was. Within the next few months he startled the whole country by driving out of Virginia four Federal armies, some of them equal in numbers to his. He would attack them separately, whip them and run across the Potomac, and then within two or three days show up unexpectedly fifty or seventy miles away with his "foot cavalry" as it was called, attack another command of the enemy, usually in front and in the flank or rear at the same time, and, as a rule, he won. At one time that spring, he fought a battle almost every day for a week. He marched a great deal at night and fought next day. He never informed his own officers what he intended to do so he always mystified his opponents. It is said that one of his marching columns was asked where they were going. "We don't know, but old Jack does," they replied. He prayed before every battle especially.

J.P.H.