

Narrows of New Rivers Giles Co. [County] Va  
Saturday December 5<sup>th</sup> 1863.

My Dearest Parents,

I have just had made a nice little writing table, on the strength of which I have determined to answer your letter of the 5<sup>th</sup> of last month. It was handed me about the 25<sup>th</sup> of Novr. [November] by young Davenport who found it lying in the P.O. no owner being found for it. I told our P.O. about it but I suppose he forgot it.

Our Regiment is now comfortably housed, we hope for the winter, although it would not surprise me in the least should we be ordered off at any moment. War don't mind the winter much. My cabin which we built with the assistance of several of the Company, is 12 feet square. We have a good fire place, a very comfortable bed, some shelves, and a glass window. The only thing lacking to make it entirely comfortable is a plant floor which I hope to have in a few days.

I had a very pleasant trip to Mr. Shanklin's some 12 miles down New River.

Lt. [Lieutenant] Shanklin insisted upon my going, and obtained a pass on Thursday morning. We walked to Shanklin's Ferry by 1 P.M. after satiating our appetites by a snack we went on the river to the Salt Mill (in Mercer Co. [County]) a mile distant. A quilting was going on at Mr. Clark's which however ceased upon our arrival. Lt. [Lieutenant] McClaugherty was there on a visit to his friends. He belongs to the 4<sup>th</sup> Texas Regt. [Regiment], Hood's Division, and was shot through the thigh at Chickamanga. We had a splendid supper (custard and cake for desert), and enjoyed ourselves until about 11 P.M. when we recd. [received] intelligence from Mr. Shanklin, that his son (who was an idiot) was lost in the woods. We went over, and Nils, and I searched the woods for some time when we heard the horn, by which we knew he had been found. Upon our return to the house, we learned that he had wandered off into the woods to cut switches, (as he was in the habit of doing) had got lost and at dark had arrived at a house in the neighborhood where he had (as he said) been fed on cabbage and put to bed. I was much amused with the boy or rather young man, who reminded me a good deal of that curious character, David Gelatley in "Waverly," although the latter had decidedly the most sense. In singing however the idiots corresponded in some degree.

On Friday the young ladies all came out to Mr. S's, and remained until Sunday. We sat up the whole of Friday night, which made us unfit for duty, the next morning, consequently we all went to bed and slept the greater part of Sat. I enjoyed myself exceedingly. We played some curious games which I never played before. The young ladies seemed to be most fond of those games which had kissing in them. There were two very sweet young ladies from Mercer – one of them a real beauty. I was not so fascinated however that I could not leave when my pass expired. On Sunday we went to church, where we heard a sermon from a Methodist Elder on the vices of speculation and extortion, after which he gave the congregation a severe rebuke, for not having their church, more comfortable, and in better condition (which was perfectly true, as their were hardly any panes in the windows, and my feet were near freezing). Sunday evening we reached the Grey Sulphurs, with the intention of spending the night. A little after dark our Brigade passed by under orders for Lewisburg – on which place the enemy were said to be advancing. I caught up with my Co. [Company] the next morning – found the Capt. [Captain] and only Lt. [Lieutenant] who was present both intoxicated. We went as far as Dropping Lick Church, 6 miles this side of Union, where we halted until further orders. After barracking there until Wednesday, we returned to this place. The 36<sup>th</sup> has been with us ever since Genl. [General] Echols' retreat from Lewisburg. Lieut. [Lieutenant] Larew is Judge Advocate to our Depmt. Ct. [Department Court] Martial. A great compliment to so young and inexperienced an officer, besides giving him about \$255 monthly pay. I recd. [received] a letter from Mr. Harding a few days ago. He expected to leave for Demopolis Ala. (where he will take charge of the Arsenal) about the 1<sup>st</sup> Decr. He promised to write and let me know

when he left Charleston. He says he had just returned from Milledgeville, where he left sister and the children "well and comfortable." I recd. [received] also yesterday a letter from George, who was with the Baylor Cavalry at Gurney's Station Carolina Co. [County]. I wrote immediately in reply. He stated that Bushrod Washington had been promoted to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. [Lieutenant] for gallantry at [illegible]. George told me to direct my letters to care of Prov. Marial at Staunton, which I have been doing. If the Valley continues as free of Yankees as it is now I will try and come home this winter. Mr. H. spoke of accompanying me-

Your devoted Son, Eugene.

[Continued on both sides of page 1] Give my best love to the girls at Cousin Richard B's, also to Cousin Lizzie. There is a Mr. Morris from Clarke Co. [County], a Sgt. [Sergeant] of the Signal Corps, with who I have become acquainted. He is a nephew of the blind gentleman, whom I used to meet at Cousin Sarah Jane's.

[Continued between pages 2 and 3] The news this morning is very encouraging. The enemy were driven back in their pursuit of Bragg. (who has been relieved, and Hardee placed in command. This was at his own request.) Meade has retreated back over the Rapidan. Genl. [General] Morgan has escaped into Canada. At Charleston the enemy are shelling the city, to little advantage.

[Continued on side of page 4] Norborne Starke is on A.P. Hill's staff.