

*Note: Original letter is in very poor condition-parts illegible. Question marks appear where words could not be deciphered.*

Camp Near Chancellorsville, May 4, 1863

Dear Sister,

The third day of battles has passed and I am still unharmed. Shortly after I last wrote you quite a heavy battle commenced about the center of our line, our forces making the attack and giving some ground but not accomplishing the object intended in the possession of a hill in our front through the inability of a detachment from our right wing to cooperate by making a flank attack. They were just fairly out of position to attack by flank and rear when the flank of our right was attacked furiously by a heavy column under Jackson & turned a little. Schurtz's Division of Howard's (Siegel's old) corps running like frightened sheep. Meanwhile sharp skirmishing along the line of pits & Abati's on our left flank made by our brigade during the night before was going on. Just at night the 64<sup>th</sup> was ordered out of our new works into the new works we first built. Everything was quiet during the night save a sharp engagement for a half hour to the right of our centre. In the morning the enemy advanced to the attack along our whole line on the right before sunrise. Howard held the extreme right & after a short fight was driven back with great loss & his troops in utter rout. The rebels gained the rear of the extreme end of his line throwing in a heavy fire from every direction breaking the Germans all up. The Yankee regiments held their own until entirely outflanked & gave way in great disorder. The enemy's skirmishes first felt the line on the left (where we were stationed.

The 64<sup>th</sup> was the left Regt that was seriously attacked) about half past five but were soon driven back. At 1 o'clock the enemy advanced in line of battle to carry the works. They came on in gallant style but were soon repulsed with heavy lofs. After falling back a short distance they were reformed and reinforced and again advanced - this time to within 5 rods of our works when they broke & run. The third attack in line was soon made with the same result - a short lull ensued when we again saw the enemy advancing this time in column by division, that is a regiment mafsed in line of two company fronts & 5 companies deep. Three regiments attacked simultaneously expecting that the first & 2nd lines would be nearly annihilated while the rest would push on & carry our works with the bayonet by brute force. They came on handsomely. We remained quiet until they were nearly at Abati's when we let loose. There was no such thing as distinct discharges, only a continuous waves for about five minutes when they broke and ran after having penetrated half through the Abati's. The slaughter was awful. Men in full rows acrofs the whole line- a part of the Regt was relieved now and retired under charge of the colonel and major the balance not getting notice. Shortly after another attack was made in the same manner as the last with the same result - by this time the 64<sup>th</sup> was nearly out of ammunition, having fired 70 rounds by a quarter past 9 A.M. A quarter before 10, the balance of the 64<sup>th</sup> consisting of 5 1/2 companies was relieved and passing under the worst shell fire I ever witnefsed, the rebels having an enfilading from three sides on account of the defeat of our right which was forced back a mile and a half. By this time the centre was forced to fallback to keep from turned from the right and soon after the movement included the whole line a part of the forces that had just relieved us getting cut off and taken prisoner - the whole army took up a new line one mile in rear of the first

front the right flank drawn back still more. A little skirmishing took place in the back with no particular result. By this morning a continuous line of rifle fire and Abati's from the river above the United States forced around the ? to the river below. The country along the upper side is impracticable to large bodies of troops and the lines are held with ? forces. The new main front is on what was our left flank extending to the river below. The enemy is mafsed heavily before us. Howard is in the centre in a very advantageous position with good works to protect his men. They claim to be anxious to wipe out the stain if yesterday. Near the centre of his line is a five battery of 12 lbs which at Howard's request the 64<sup>th</sup> was detached from the 2<sup>nd</sup> corps to support and that is our present position. Since morning we have built a second line of pits and Abati's covering the battery and a regiment that acted disgracefully yesterday and day before and took no part in the fight save to watch and arrest stragglers. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> John Watson was severely wounded with a piece of shell in the face -cut right under the left temple acrofs the cheek under the ? and ? through the nose. Yesterday Capt Darby was wounded just before the retreat very serverly in the left thigh by a piece of shell but was got off and is now across the river as is also Watson. Jas. Wilcox of Co. A was slightly wounded in the head by a piece of shell. Lt. Roller now of Co. F was shot at the pit yesterday in the right thigh and left arm, the first a severe but not a deep wound. He is now a Division Hospital near by. The Reg't lost in all 15 killed and 20 wounded - one of the wounded men getting his fill today while marching to our own present position. The killed were mostly in D. (Rushfords and shot through the head - I have been to the 154<sup>th</sup> today. Lt. Chapman was wounded in the right leg and is missing. John Hugoboom is ? and missing. Dufley Bitts killed, Wilkinson and Goodnick missing. Tom Aldnick is wounded in the left arm and

right thigh severely, R? Burn? is dying. No others from near Versailles were hurt. Army is in great haste. There is some firing today. Love to all. Do not worry about me I shall come out all right. I feel I shall be protected throughout. I read your last letter today. Good Bye remember me to all who are dear to me.

J.M. Pettit