

February 24, 1864

Interesting letter from the 154th  
Battle of Lookout Mt.  
Hardships, &c.

The following letter, written by Milton J. Griswold, a member of the 154th, to his relatives in Arkwright, furnishes a description of the vicissitudes through which the regiment has passed since it joined the Army of the Cumberland, which, although written some time since, will still prove of interest to all the friends of our gallant boys in the field.

Camp in Lookout Valley, Tenn.,  
Dec. 24, 1863

. . . We have seen some tough times since I wrote to you last. We started four weeks ago last Sunday for Chattanooga, with three days rations. We marched to Chattanooga that day, and camped for the night, awaiting the fight which was to come off the next day. The next morning we were up and had our breakfast, before daylight, ready for anything that might happen. We lay there till 2 o'clock, when we fell in and marched out towards the Rebs. The troops that were at Chattanooga were already in line of battle, advancing on the Rebs. The 11th Corps lay behind them till they were skirmishing pretty sharp, when we fell in, and went down on the left wing, and formed in line of battle. The bullets then began to whistle round our

heads pretty lively. We sent out two companies as skirmishers; they drove the Rebs back to a creek, and together with the noise of the booming cannon and shrieking shells that were passing over our heads from the Fort at Chattanooga, you may well believe they made it thunder. Our regiment lay behind the Railroad, and the balls passed over us without touching any of us. We lay there till about dark; and then the firing had ceased; we moved out into the woods a piece, and our company and company A went out on the skirmish line and relieved the other companies. We lay there all night without relief, and it was a bitter cold night. I lay on the railroad, right in sight of the Rebs, and I dare not stir, for, if I did they would pop me over. We lay there till daylight, and as quick as it was light enough to see, the Rebs shot at me twice, and I lay behind a little bush about half large enough to hide me from them, and the balls passed on each side of me, and cut the leaves off the bush that was before me. I tell you, I dug out of that place, and got behind a stump. About this time the rest of our regiment came out to relieve us; they advanced the line 10 rods, which did not suit the Rebs very well, and firing commenced, and we skedaddled for the breast works, behind which the rest of our regiment lay. I tell you, the cold lead fell around us like hail, but none of us got a scratch. The Lord was on our side.

We lay behind the breast works all day, and it rained the whole time which made it rather sloppy. About 11 o'clock General Hooker

commenced fighting at Lookout Mountain, and I tell you he fairly made the earth tremble with his cannon. He had the 12th Corps and part of General Sherman's men, and about 1 o'clock he charged up the mountain, which is about 2,000 feet high. Then the fighting was desperate; the Rebs line and our line was about 10 rods apart, and they poured in musketry volley after volley until 11 o'clock that night, but he drove the Rebs all the time, and the next morning he planted the gay old Star Spangled Banner on the Crest of Lookout Mountain. Bully for old Joe! The Rebs lay on the mountain in front of us, called Missionary Ridge, and General Sherman had gone round on the extreme left to flank them, and he made it out to. He gained the gap at the end of the Ridge; and began to advance up; then he had the Rebs foul, for he could rake the length of their breast works. Then we were ordered round on the left of Sherman to keep Longstreet from flanking him. Longstreet came in sight, but dare not pitch in. We lay there all night, and about 10 o'clock that night news came that Sherman had driven the Rebs from Missionary Ridge. Then the cheers passed all around the lines. It was old Bragg's men that we fought.

The next morning we started to chase old Bragg up. We followed him two days, occasionally having a brush with his rear guard. We captured five miles of his wagon train. They burned their wagons and the caissons to their cannon, and threw their ammunition into mudholes to keep our men from capturing it from them. General



Hooker came on them at Ringold, had a fight, and drove them with great slaughter; they ran so fast that we could not catch them. We took 15,000 prisoners, and captured 114 pieces of their artillery. That's the way to do business; don't you think so? We came to a small place called Chickamauga Station, where the Rebs had set their stuff on fire. There were three piles of corn and meal, as large as common hay stacks, all on fire; they burned thousands of bushels of corn and meal.

Then we had our orders to go to Knoxville, a distance of 130 miles. The first day we marched to Cleveland, which was 20 miles, and camped for the night; started early the next morning and marched to Charleston, a distance of 13 miles. The Rebel cavalry was there; our men shelled them out; they were trying to run off a train of cars, but our men shelled them so they took the engine and left the cars. They cut away part of the bridge, and we crossed before daylight. The cars that we captured were loaded with flour, meal, lard and salt. We could not get hardtack there, and we lived about three weeks on one pint of meal or flour a day, and salt, and what fresh pork and beef we killed on the way. We went within 15 miles of Knoxville, and the Rebs heard we were coming and began to dig out of that. Then we turned round and started back for Chattanooga.

We saw some tough times on this march. We have marched about 250 miles, and the boys are hard up for shoes and boots. I

have seen the boys march, when the ground was frozen hard, with nothing on their feet but some old rags wrapped round, and I have seen them march through the mud with nothing on their feet all day, and that looks tough, especially in the month of December. I have marched when my boots were so poor and feet so sore you could track me for miles from the blood that ran from the sores on my feet, and when I pulled my boots and pieces of socks off, the skin came off my feet with the socks.

We got back in our old camp last Thursday; and stayed till Saturday, then we moved across the valley into the woods to put up winter quarters. We expect to draw clothing here in a day or so; my boots are all out and my feet on the ground, but I will have some new boots soon. You would laugh to see our camp; it is a regular village of log houses. The houses are all alike, 11 feet long, 8 feet wide and 6 feet high, all laid out in streets. We draw two-thirds rations--rather short for provisions. When we were on the march, we had to every time we stopped, take off our shirts and drawers and kill the lice, to keep them from carrying us off. We had no change of clothes for four weeks, and were lousy and dirty as hogs. Such is the beauty of soldiering. I tell you I thought of my parents and home when the cold lead was falling round me like hail, but God was with me, and saved me from the enemies missiles. There were 8 wounded in our regiment, but none killed. Our company never got a scratch. The 154th was lucky once.

M. J. G.