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### A Letter to A. C. Van Raalte from His Son, Ben

Ben Van Raalte

Clarence Jalving

Nella Kennedy

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Camp 25th Michigan in the field, June 20, 1864

A letter to A. C. Van Raalte from his son, Ben, reporting on the activities of his regiment. "The Rebs are getting discouraged....One day sixty deserters came over and now there are more every day so that nearly a whole company has been taken as prisoners."

Original in the Archives of the Netherlands Museum.

Translated by Clarence Jalving.

Camp 25<sup>th</sup> Mich. In the field, June 20, 1864

Beloved Father,

In haste but yet with much pleasure I can write you a few lines. The Rebs have been flanked again and fall back slowly. The fighting began in the afternoon on the 15<sup>th</sup>. We were positioned opposite Lost Mountain, a little more to the left. Schofield forced his way there in a horseshoe formation, leaving the mountain to his left. We pressed them so hard that they no longer felt safe on the mountain, and on the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> they had to fall back. Since that time we drove at them from all points. It is hard going now because of the heavy rains. It rains night and day here. Old Hooker did not stay idle either, and cannonading was very heavy. The people at home may think: "how slowly they move, and still they have not reached Atlanta." But they would not say so if they were here and taking part in the fighting. You must realize that all the roads are strongly fortified and if we would enter these with great force, there would not be many left

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to take Atlanta. But that has to be done very carefully; the positions have to be checked first, for it would not be pleasant to run into masked batteries. We have had very small losses so far, especially in our regiment. The fighting was very heavy on the 15<sup>th</sup> and we came close to a Reb battery, but they didn't do much harm. It was getting late and they couldn't see well enough to get a good aim at us. The entire woods were filled with ammunition smoke. The soldiers were dissatisfied that they were not permitted to go on, but they were ordered back. We were so close that they could not do much damage to us anymore. The Rebs are getting discouraged. They reserve their best troops for the skirmish line to prevent desertions. They had the 1<sup>st</sup> Georgia Regiment in front of our brigade at the skirmish line, and they are about played out. One day sixty deserters came over and now there are still some every day. An entire company was taken prisoner, and we buried a hundred or more of those left lying on the field. If this is one of their best, how will the others do? And now they have to retreat in the mud which isn't so pleasant. The Yanks are so keen and just push through everything, saying: "The Rebellion must and shall be put down, mud or not mud." Yesterday we waded through such deep creeks that we had to hold our ammunition bags above our heads.

[on left margin of page 1:] I don't know when this will go, but I am keeping it ready for the first opportunity.

[on left margin of page 2:] My bad script reflects the circumstances in which I have to write, so please accept my excuses. I hardly get any letters. Your loving,  
B. Van Raalte

[Revision of Clarence Jalving's translation: Nella Kennedy,  
February 2008]

Camp 25<sup>th</sup> Mich. In the field June 20<sup>th</sup> 64

Liefhebbende Vader,

Met veel genogen is dat ik uw in haast nog een leter of wat mag schrijven. de Rebs zijn weer geflanked en nu vallen zij slom te rug. de vijftiende is het vechten begonnen smiddags. Wij laagen teegen over lost mountain its meer naar de left daar is Schofeild in gedrongen in de vorm van een hoseshoe. en liet de Mountain aan de left en wij presten ze zo hard dat zij niet gerust op de mountain waaren dus de nacht van de zeeventiende moesten zij weer te rug vallen en sin dien tijd hebben wij ze nog op alle punten gedreeven. nu is het hard van de zwaare reegens het reegend hier nacht en dag Old Hooker heeft ook niet stil geleegeen kannonneeren heeft hier ook zwaar geweest. de menschen te huis zullen wel denken wat gaat dat slow Atlata nog niet. maar dat zouden zij niet zeggen als zij hier waaren om hier te helpen. Men moet is denken dat de geheele weg sterk gefortified is en als wij daar maar met geweld op aan gingen dat er dan niet veel over schieten zouw om

[2]

Atlanta te neemen. maar dat moet heel versigtig gaan de posietse moet eerst aan gevoeld worden: en als je in mask batteries loopt dat is ook niet moij wij hebben tot hier toe wij nig verlies gehad, en ons regt: voor al. de avond van de vijftieden toen was er zwaar gevecht. wij liepen kort op een Reb: Battirey maar zij beschaadigden ons niet het begon al laat te worden en konden geen schot op ons krijgen de heele bos was een kruit damp. de soldaaten waaren ontevreden dat zij niet door gingen en het naamen maar wierden te rug georderd wij waaren er zoo kort op dat zij ons niet veel meer konden doen. de Rebs: worden wel wat moedeloos de beste tropen houden zij aan de skirmish line om diserten te vermijden het eerst Georgia regt: hadden zij voor onze bigade aan de skirmish line en die zijn zo wat played out eene dag kwaamen er zestig diserters van in en nu alle daagen nog wat. een geheele Comp: gevangen genoomen en honderd of meer er van begraaven die op de feild blijven liggen waren dus did is een van de besten wat zullen dan de anderen wel doen. en nu in de modder retreden dat zal wel moij gaan. de Yanks zijn zoo fel die vliegen overal maar door en zeggen de Rebellion must and shall be put doun mud or no mud gisteren gingen wij door zulke diepe beeken dat wij moesten onze patroon tassen op onze schouders liggen.

[on left margin of page 1:] Wanneer of dit nog uit zal gaan weet ik niet maar houd het klaar voor de eerste geleegenhied.

[on left margin of page 2:] S[1]egte geleegenhied doet mij slegt schrijven daarom neem het niet kwaalijk. Ik krijg hast geen brieven Uw Lief: B. Van Raalte

[Transcription: Nella Kennedy  
February 2008]

Loving Father:

<sup>write you a few lines</sup>  
 In haste but with much pleasure I can announce that we are still well. The  
 Rebs have been flanked again and <sup>fall back</sup> are slowly retiring. The fighting began  
<sup>in the afternoon</sup> at noon on the 15th. We were <sup>stationed</sup> opposite Lost Mountain, a little to the left.  
 Schofield <sup>traced his way to the left</sup> went forward in the shape of a horseshoe, leaving the mountain  
 to his left. We pressed the <sup>Rebs</sup> so hard they no longer felt safe on the  
 mountain and on the night of the 17th they had to fall back. Since that time  
 we drove at them from all points. It is hard going <sup>now</sup> because of the <sup>heavy</sup> rains.  
 It rained night and day. <sup>note</sup> Old Hooker <sup>did lay idle</sup> was active too and cannonading was very  
 heavy. The people at home <sup>may</sup> think we are making slow progress, <sup>that</sup> as we are still  
<sup>far from Atlanta</sup> far from Atlanta but they wouldn't say so if they were here and taking part in:  
 the fighting. You must realize that all the roads are strongly fortified and if  
<sup>we didn't proceed slowly and cautiously</sup> we didn't proceed slowly and cautiously there would not be much left by way  
 of an Army to take Atlanta. We must first feel out the enemy positions -  
 should you run into a group of masked batteries it is far from pleasant.  
 We have had very small losses so far, especially <sup>out</sup> on the right. The fighting  
 was very heavy on the 15th and we came close to a Reb battery but they didn't  
 do much harm. It was getting late and they couldn't see us too well. The  
 entire woods was filled with <sup>ammunition</sup> smoke. The soldiers were dissatisfied that  
 they were not permitted to go on but they were ordered back. We were so  
 close that they could not do much damage to us. The Rebs are getting  
 discouraged, and they reserve their best troops for the skirmish line to  
 prevent desertions. The 1st Georgia Regiment is <sup>in front of</sup> opposite our brigade in  
 the skirmish line, and they are about played out. One day sixty deserters  
 came over and now there are <sup>still some</sup> more every day so that nearly <sup>an entire</sup> a whole company  
<sup>has been taken as prisoners</sup> has been taken as prisoners. A hundred or more were buried in the field.  
<sup>If</sup> This is one of their best units so you can imagine what will happen when we  
<sup>meet the others</sup> meet the others. <sup>did</sup> Now they have to retreat in the mud which isn't so pleasant.  
 The Yanks are full of pep and say 'The Rebellion must and shall be put down,  
 mud or no mud.' Yesterday we waded through such deep creeks that we had  
 to hold our <sup>ammunition</sup> ammunition above our heads.  
 I am writing <sup>under difficulties</sup> under difficulties so please forgive the writing in this letter.  
 I hardly get any letters and do not know when this letter will go but at least  
 it is ready.

*and push through everything*

Your loving,

B. Van Raalte

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Comp. de 2<sup>de</sup> Bred. Antwe. f. d. a. j. 180. # 64

Liefhebberende Vader,

Mit veel genoege is dat ik u in haast nog een letter of wat mag schrijven, die Rebs. zijn meer geflankeerd en nu vallen zij stam te rug. de vyftiende is het vechten begonnen smiddags. Wij laagen tegeer over last mountain its meer naar de left daar is Skopfelds in gedrongen in de vorm van een roeshoe. en liet de Mountain aan de left en wij prestende se so hard dat zij niet gerust op de mountain <sup>was</sup> dus de nachten van de seeventiende moesten zij meeste rug vallen en sin dien tijd hebben wij les nog op alle punten gedreeven. nu is het hard van de draare reegens het reegend hier nacht en dag. Old Looker heeft ook niet stek geleege Cannon neeren heeft hier ook draare geseert. de menschen te huis sullen sel denken wat gaat dat los. Athas mag niet. maar dat zouden zij niet leggen als zij hier waeren om hier te helpen. men moet is denken dat de gehele weg sterk gefortificeert is en als wij daar maar mes geweld opaan gien dat er dan niet veel over schieten souw om

Wanneer of air nog vil - de C. van het Alaan voor de eerste deel van de

meel - of met maan hand

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Holland Historical Trust Collection

