

Camp Big Chestnut
October 12. 1861

Dear Brother

Your favor of the 9th inst. was duly received this morning and it was truly welcome. The election news I was very anxious to see and it pleased me immensely. I thought I had my company all right, but five men deceived me. However I have an idea that I know who they are. They dare not acknowledge it before the balance of the men as they would be ridiculed to death. One satisfactory however, not one man from Smilbury voted the "Sevish" ticket. They were all fooled by residents of other parts of the county. But I think I did pretty well, anyhow, considering. I came out last night to this encampment with the tents and blankets of the men. They have been on a steady line of duty ever since Wednesday morning, with nothing to protect them from the weather but their overcoats. On Wednesday our Brigade marched out about six miles to Langley beyond Newineville, took possession of an eminence that commanded the country all around, and our Regiment went to work and threw up an earth-work about five feet high, and dug a six foot trench behind it, just driving about six hundred Cavalry from the position. We got it done about 9 o'clock in the evening when we marched over to an adjoining field

and laid on our arms. I had hardly got my
first nap when the order was whispered along the
line to fall in. We immediately formed and marched
about a mile north of Temple, when we took a South East
direction towards Falls Church. It was as dark
as Erebus and an awful road for about two miles
but I had had 210 men under my command on
picket there and knew every foot of the ground. So
we got along very well. The left wing of our Regt-
ment got lost however and we had to stop for them.
About one o'clock we halted at the outside pickets
and were told to rest our men. A corn field in which
the stalks were still standing, was on my right, so I just
filed my Company into it. And we soon had a
rousing fire made of the best chestnut rails. I soon
cut down a dozen stalks and with a fine sweet
pumpkin for a pillow wrapped my firm blanket
around me and slept soundly, only once in a while
some of the boys who had found a potato field and
some roasting ears would come in with a haversack full
and having roasted them would go stumbling about among
the men to get their mess mates to help them eat some.
Some even indulged in stewed pumpkin. In the morning
having cooked a cup of coffee we moved into a wood
near by and built some bivouacs for the day in.
But Thursday evening we again started and marched
nearly two miles further south, the enemy moving
before us. I however was sent to the Post after
the the Regimental equipage. The men remained in

a woods near by while they got their tents and blankets. but they did not get time put them up while this morning. Last night My Company, and in fact the whole right wing of the regiment were on picket about 2 mile out and within 1000 yards of their outposts. We could see their Mombia pickets riding around, and last night they advanced to within about 200 yards of our line, to a house and barn belonging to one of their numbers. We could hear the jingle of their sabres. and once in a while even the sound of their voices. But it was one of the darkest nights I ever saw, and raining just as tight as ever it did in the world. Besides we dare not fire first on pickets, but I venture to say that if they had not left when they did they would have caught it, as the whole reserve on duty would have been brought to the post in a short time. This morning the sound of their drums reached us quite plainly. This morning we were believed and the men pitched their tents slept. but were roused up once and formed to receive the enemy. This afternoon 25 out of each Company are at work cutting a road. So you see we have plenty to do, but notwithstanding the exposure yet the men are in good health and spirits. Sam Oyster and Al Hunter have the diarrhea but not serious. Neither are confined to bed. I think in about 3 days we will have about 10,000 of the enemy in as neat and close a trap as ever you heard of. I cannot see how they can escape us. for we have men enough to eat all

Virginia. We are 12 miles from Washington but
still direct your letters there and they will come
all right to us. Now Mother do not be alarmed
I will take the best care of myself possible and so will my
men. But they would follow me to Richmond if I had
so. I love them as I do my life, and I feel satisfied
it is not wasted. I do not think any man in the Regiment
can boast of more confidence being placed in him by his men.
The other day we were encamped near a house where we camped
I blamed good looking girls making signals to the enemy. We
had to threaten to hang them to make them stop. I had a
notion to take and send the younger one home for Ed to take
care of. She was pretty.

This morning I received a letter from Kate. She says all the family is well and that is all she says about them. Write often and tell all friends I would be glad to hear from them. I get no Gazettes at all and will write no more letters for it. Tell Wilson I will write him a long "tale" the first time I am off duty long enough. Tell Skinner Beck that I am under the impression he owes me a bottle of wine or is it a jug. I forget which - one or the other. Mr Rizer would be a good chance to send it down. Rather if Ed Eisel touches you, walk away and let him alone until I get home. I want to attend to that man, not you. Bill and Sam are well. Bill just came into my market. He has written to his "gal" and wants an envelope. All my "boys" have been vaccinated. I have no word from Boulet's "mice" so I cannot see him. God bless you all yours
Shindel