Jim English

A Soldier's Story

Compiled by Don Roberts

When war between the northern and southern states became inevitable, eleven of Samuel Alexander English's grandsons happened to be at an age that made enrollment in Confederate regiments mandatory. James Samuel Crawford English and his cousins answered the call to serve the Confederacy. Before that day in May 1862 when Jim arrived at the training camp in Columbus, Mississippi, he had probably never traveled far from home nor penned a letter. Over the course of, by his account, "2½ years, not counting when on furlough," he would faithfully write to his mother and sisters. As the war years passed, his penmanship became more fluid and refined, despite the difficulty of writing in dim light using a pen repeatedly dipped into a bottle of ink, or sometimes just a pencil, writing on stationery, a page torn from his datebook or sometimes just a found scrap of paper. His spelling and grammar may have been wanting, but the family cherished each letter and never parted with them. They wrote their own share of letters with news of home—letters that were his lifeline, eagerly awaited, read and no doubt reread, but out of necessity left behind. To read through his letters is to follow a boy becoming a man.

♛1862

Four months shy of his eighteenth birthday, Jim traveled from Talladega County to Tallapoosa County (most likely Dadeville, the county seat) and was enlisted in the Army of the Confederacy on May 9, 1862, by Captain Alex B. Knox. In the first days of the war, when the Southerners expected a swift victory, volunteers had been mustered for one year's service. There had never been a military draft in the United States before April 16, 1862 when the Confederate Congress, faced with a serious manpower shortage, passed its first conscription act. (The Union would wait another year before drafting men to serve.) The Confederate Conscription Act applied to all able-bodied, unmarried white men, ages 18 to 35, and required a three-year term of service. Within only a few months, the pressing need for manpower resulted in raising the age limit to 45. Exceptions were made that favored those in certain professions (including government employees, telegraph operators, railroad and river workers, miners, clergymen, teachers and pharmacists) as well as the owners of twenty or more slaves. It also allowed a well-to-do draftee to hire a substitute to serve in his place, an arrangement that led some substitutes to repeatedly desert and sell their services again and again. (In January 1864, this practice would be curtailed, and any man who had previously hired a substitute became liable for service.) For most Southerners, the War Between the States would become a "rich man's war and a poor man's fight." Because conscripts were held in lower esteem than volunteers, young men tended to enlist before they

Jim English's Civil War

1862

Columbus, MS – May to September
Corinth, MS – October
Abbeville, MS – November
Grenada, MS – December

1863

Vicksburg, MS – January to March
Yazoo City, MS – March
Vicksburg, MS – April to July 4
Demopolis, AL – July to October
Chattanooga, TN – November.
Dalton, GA – December

1864

Dalton, GA – January to May
Resaca, GA – May 13
New Hope Church, GA – May 25-27
Atlanta, GA – July
Utoy Creek, GA – August 5-7
Macon, GA (Hospital) – August 9-12
Munford, AL (Medical Leave) – August
Montgomery, AL (Hospital) – September
Spanish Fort, AL – September to December
Augusta, GA – February
Bentonville, NC – March 19-22
Durham, NC – April 26

could be drafted. Most of the military companies were formed locally with the enlistees serving alongside their neighbors and relatives; this helped to create an esprit de corps and also strengthened their ties to home. Jim English was one of 66 privates assigned to G Company of the newly-formed 42nd Alabama Regiment with orders to report to Camp Hardee in Columbus, Mississippi. Sixty miles west of Tuscaloosa, Columbus served as both a hospital town and arsenal throughout the Civil War. Jim arrived there by steamboat from Mobile, having left the family farm in the hands of his 49-year-old widowed mother; his sisters Harriet, 18, Sallie, 15, and Laura, 13; his brother Thomas, 11; and the family's nine adult slaves, ages 20 to 70, and their ten children.

As one of 702 volunteers, conscripts and substitutes, Jim was among the original 904 members of the 42nd Alabama Regiment assigned to the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana. Its core was 202 one-year veterans representing a mix of regiments, including entire companies from the Second Alabama Infantry. Like Jim, most of the new recruits were farm boys, while their officers were generally well-educated attorneys and planters. The youngest member of the regiment was sixteen years old;[1] the oldest, fifty. The average age was twenty-seven. During the course of the war, they would serve under the commands of Generals Braxton Bragg, Joseph E. Johnston and John Bell Hood.

The 42nd Alabama's ten companies, each numbered 63 to 99 privates led by four officers. For the most part, the men of the 42nd represented western counties—Conecuh, Fayette, Marion, Mobile, Monroe, Pickens and Wilcox—but G Company, under Captain Knox, was primarily drawn from Talladega and St. Clair counties. At Columbus, they found themselves with "no arms, no accoutrements" and "very little, inferior" clothing. By summer's end, each soldier had been armed with a muzzle-loading rifle, either a British-made Enfield rifle or an outdated Model 1841 "Mississippi rifle," and equipped with a cartridge box, cap box, waist belt, shoulder strap, bayonet and knapsack.

Jim English had pledged to write to his family once a week. Although that would eventually prove impossible, he did write regularly. More than sixty of his letters survive, providing a remarkable chronicle of an infantry soldier's experience—as well as a revealing portrait of this young man through a transformative period of his life. In his first letter from Columbus on May 22, 1862, he wrote:

Dear Mother,

I have come to the conclusion to write you a few lines to let you know our situation, which is good, and a healthy place. We are living in a very neat house with four or five rooms, good water. Columbus is a very neat village, and the country around is very flourishing. It appears like home is a long ways off when I begin to think about it. Corn in this country is fine. I have seen some corn in coming from Mobile is waist high. My trip was very unpleasant because we were crowded the whole way from the time we started until we landed. I have only a few lines to write. I am well at the present time. I do not know how long we may stay in the situation we are in. It may be a month.

Respectfully yours,
James English

Throughout his soldiering years, Jim would happen upon relatives, most of whom he only knew from the family

1. Only Confederate soldiers who had reached their eighteenth birthday were allowed to engage in battle.

lore. As recounted in his next letter, the first was Mary English Johnson, the 33-year-old daughter of his uncle John C. English, who had moved his family to Mississippi before Jim was born:

> *Cousin Mary, the way I found her out. One of our boys when he came down on the cars* [a train] *and lost his clothes and he bought some cloth in Columbus and happened that he could not get the tailors to make it up and went to her house and she asked him where he was from and he told her. She began to inquire about Uncle Tom's folks [Thomas Best] and then about the Englishes. He told her that there were one by that name in the same company. That was on Saturday, and Sunday, I went to preaching and came back by there and made it out that we were kin. She has five children living, one dead. Mr. Johnson is a very sturdy man. He follows the carpenter trade. He lives very well.*

It was a fortunate reunion, as recounted in his next letter (undated):

> *Dear Mother,*
>
> *I have seated myself in my tent to take pleasure of addressing a few lines in regard [to] let you know my situation now. We are moved from the place where we were at before. We are gone in the regular soldier life. I am very well satisfied at the present time. Our eatables [are] none of the best, but as far as meat and bread, rice and coffee, we are doing finely. I made a commencement of my letters in camps was taken the measles but good luck happened that I found my cousin Mary Johnson just three days before I was taken sick. I am doing well now. I have had them a week, getting so as to go about in the house some. Cousin Mary treats me very kindly. I reckon I would have fared very badly if I just had not found her out. I have been looking for a letter from home now for the last week or two. I ought to have written home long ago, but I did not do it. I did start to write just before I was taken sick and did not write until I got so I could go about. When Capt. Knox went home, I asked him to call and tell you how I were getting along. Cousin Mary says she reckons you and all the rest of the kin had forgotten her. She lives in the city of Columbus. She has the favor of Aunt Lizzy's family very much. She says she would like to see old Talladega and her relations once more. Mr. Johnson is a very sturdy man, attends to his business very closely and they are living well. Things are very high here. In this place, butter is selling at four bills a pound and hard to get at that. There are a great many soldiers in this place. They are well on to four thousand and sick, no end to them. I reckon there are as many sick ones as well ones. Cousin Mary sees a great deal of trouble with them. They are always coming there for the want of something to eat. She lives close to the depot, so when they get off the cars they come right to her house the first place.*
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> *When you direct your letter, direct it to me, Camp Hardee, 42nd Regt., Ala. Vols, care Capt. Knox, Columbus, Miss.*
>
> *I will write again soon and let you know how I am getting along. I don't expect to go in camps for three weeks, and I will write to you before that time. You must write, for I am getting anxious to hear from home. I haven't received a letter yet from you yet. I wish to know how the wheat crops have done and corn crops are doing. I don't know how long we will stay at this place. It may be until the war is over if it will ever will end, which I wish it would. I have done no duty, but stand guard around our camps and guard some prisoners. There are a great many of them here at this place and more soldiers coming on every day, and sick ones, too. It is the hardest matter to mail a letter I ever saw. It is not like home. You can't mail a letter unless you have got silver or stamps, and both are hard to get. I would give anything to get some silver on the account of mailing letters. I haven't any more to write this time, so give my love to all my friends and relations. I may see you all once more. I remain your affectionate son.*
>
> *J.S.C. English*

Jim had learned from Cousin Mary that all six of her brothers—cousins previously unknown to him— were soldiering with the Mississippi 43rd Infantry Regiment.

In the crowded Confederate camps, young men from remote farming communities were exposed to conditions they might never have encountered otherwise. From Camp Hardee on June 7, 37-year-old Private James A. of F Company wrote to his wife: "We are living very bad at this time … times is hard we don't git very plenty to eat." Poor sanitation, scarce rations and disease resulted in the hospitalization of at least 78 men from the 42nd, and 41 of them died there. Soon after recovering from measles, Jim contracted mumps. "I have had a very good time with the mumps," he wrote home, "I only had them in one side of my face." Continuing:

I have had a very jolly time [with] Cousin Mary. I have not been there since I taken the mumps, but will go tomorrow. When she sees me, she will scold me enough about it, for she rakes me every time I don't go there often. She says she would like to see that old place once more very bad. She can recollect all about the place and the people. She recollects old Mr. Mackey and all the oldest girls and tells a great many tales about all the old times.

On Aug. 3, he wrote to Will Best, his 19-year-old cousin, who was yet to enlist:

Dear Cousin William,

I received your letter yesterday evening. I know I have neglected writing but it is not because I have forgotten you, for there is not a day that passes but what I think of all that I have left behind. As far as interesting news, I will not have any to write, for the times are very dull at this place. It has been very dry all along until the last few days. Crops are very bad so far as I have seen.

You mention in your letter about drinking cider. I have thought about that a good many times. To think of them times now and being here, it don't do me any good. I can't get any here at this place, but can get a plenty of apples for a big price. When you go to buy anything at this place and let them see your pocketbook, they will guess at the amount and take it all. I can take a fifty cents and buy some peaches and set down and eat them all up and just be enough to make me want more. So at that rate it will not be long before they will clean a person's pocket.

Soldier's life is a very hard life. I would not mind the duties if it was not for being so far from home and the way we have to live, for we don't get but half enough of flour and bacon. As far as beef and cornbread, we get plenty of that which I never did like, but have to eat it or none. I never could eat any meat at all at home, but since I have got in camps, bacon eats as well as ham at home. I have kept very good health so far. I had the measles which is the only sickness I have had and now I have the mumps but am getting well. I would like to see home very bad, but I reckon there is no chance of seeing it unless the war would end, which I hope it will soon.

As far as Yankees are concerned, I have seen as much of them as I want to see.[2] *There were a great many of them at this place, but not many here now. They are as keen for the war to stop as we are. I like my officers very well. I think they are as good as any that ever went from Talladega, and the col. is very easy on us. We only drill three times a day, which is just enough to exercise us.*

I will come to a close. You must write and not mind me for I will neglect it sometimes.

Your affectionate cousin,
J. English

2. Union prisoners were held at Camp Hardee before being exchanged for Confederate prisoners.

In August, he posed for a photographer, wearing what passed for a uniform, and sent the ambrotype image to his mother. Confederate uniforms were, in fact, anything but uniform. Because no one expected the war to last long, the Confederacy was slow to determine that a regulation uniform was even needed. The classic Confederate uniform designed by Nicola Marschall was inspired by French and Austrian uniforms. More aesthetic than practical, it featured a gray, double-breasted tunic coat with gleaming brass buttons, sky-blue pants and several headgear options. (The flat-topped military cap with a forward slant and shallow visor that would become an enduring trademark of the Confederate uniform was modeled after the French *kepi*.) Confederate officers were required to purchase their uniforms, which could be hand tailored to conform to Marschall's design. However, maintaining those standards in uniforms issued to infantrymen was difficult, and a revised set of regulations allowed infantrymen to wear any short, collarless gray jacket, a pair of blue, gray or brown trousers, any cap or wide-brimmed slouch hat, and whatever footwear was available. The resulting combinations of military and civilian clothing gave soldiers like Jim English a rag-tag look.

It's clear from later letters that Jim English's mother and sisters were kept busy sewing much of the clothing he wore. In a Sept. 8 letter to Emma, his older sister, Jim wrote: "You wrote to know if I wanted my coat cut long or short. I don't know which is the best. There are some that have long coats and some short. There is some talk of us drawing [being issued] clothing. Captain made a requisition for clothing. I don't know whether we will get them or not." After receiving a parcel from home, he wrote to his mother: "My shirts, I have not put them on yet. My coat is a little too large in the sleeves, but does very well, and pants fit very well." It's doubtful that he was ever issued a complete regulation uniform.

A private's monthly pay was twenty-five dollars. The army provided raw food from time to time, but each enlisted man was responsible for the upkeep of his clothing and the purchase and preparation of whatever he ate. Small groups of soldiers formed what were called "messes" to share these responsibilities. In other letters to Emma, he wrote:

> *You wrote to know how I were getting along about my washing and cooking. I hire my washing and one of the boys are excused from duty and he cooks. Camp life has brought me out of all my ways in eating. Bacon and beef and cornbread go very well, which I would not eat at home. We get some fruit and watermelon, but they are very high. … We have right smart of fruit come in camp. Sometimes we buy it when they sell it at any reasonable price, and when too extravagant, we take them. We can have plenty of sweetening to put in our pies if we could get the peaches all the time. My washing, I got J. Richey to do it, for he had nothing else to do and he done it near about as well as anyone that I could get to do it. There are a good many negroes in the regiment that will do it anytime. I have been doing very well so far about cooking. I have not done any yet. We have one good cook in our mess. He says he cooked when he was not high enough to make up bread on the table, and he is a very respectfully fellow, uses no bad language no way. … I would like to be at home now to get some good pears and peaches and all other vegetables for we can't get any here. Times are very tight here. We can't go nowhere without getting a pass, but our officers are very good to give us all passes. Capt. is very good to the sick. When they get low down, he goes and gets the doctor and makes him tend to him and when meal time, he carries them something good to eat from his own table. We have not had any to die yet, but some of the companies have had sixteen to die.*

On Sept. 11, one day after Jim English's eighteenth birthday, the 42nd Alabama received orders to depart Camp Hardee "on the morning of the 13th instant." That day their baggage wagons moved forward, and a force reduced by then to about 700 battle-ready men boarded trains for Saltillo, just north of Tupelo. Their orders were to link up with Moore's Brigade at Corinth, 114 miles away in the northeast corner of the state.

The ambrotype that 18-year-old Jim English sent home to his family, along with a page from his letter of January 10, 1863.

The ambrotype photographic process was patented by James Ambrose Cutting in 1854. Primarily used for portraiture, each ambrotype is a unique camera-exposed image on a glass plate as large as 6.5 by 8.5 inches. Jim English's was the most common size: 2.75 by 3.25 inches. To provide an attractive, durable product, the fragile image plate was sealed with a clear glass cover, faced with a decorative brass mat and secured in a leather case. During the Civil War, Southern photographers, such as George S. Cook, charged as much as $20.00 for this size portrait. By the late 1860s, the more durable tintype, which yielded a similar image on a sturdy sheet of thin iron, had become more popular.

Following the Confederate defeat at Shiloh, Tennessee, in April, the Union army had taken Corinth and its critical railroad junction.

When General Ulysses S. Grant took command of the Union's western forces in July, his troops in the vicinity of Corinth numbered 37,000. Corinth was surrounded on three sides by low ground and waterways that became impenetrable swamps during the summer months. Its primary avenue of approach was from the northwest.

Near Belden, outside Tupelo, Jim encountered the enemy for the first time. In a letter to Emma on Sept. 18, he wrote:

Columbus was a home to us. We did not think about Yankees but now we are close to them. When we were coming up on the cars in about a half a mile of this place the news came that the Yanks were in half a mile of us. We all got out of the cars and marched to the place but there were no Yanks there. We stayed there the next day and then made preparation to move away. Just as we were fixing to go, the Yanks came down with a flag of truce—that is a white flag—with some field orders to Price. But they went back. … Capt. Knox and his company and another company guarded the bridge last night. Capt. is not afraid of nothing. He sent them men from the bridge to Boonville. That is not far from Corinth, only four miles from where the Yankee army is camped. The men that went saw where they burnt the cars and dead men and guns and houses, and I expect they burnt some live men that were sick. That is the place where the Yanks overtaken the cars at and burnt them. It is only eleven miles from our camps. … I am well and hearty. Can eat anything that they put before me. Broil a piece of bacon on coals and a piece of cornbread is good enough.

After passing through Saltillo, the regiment reached Baldwyn, twenty miles north of Tupelo. From there, Jim wrote to his Uncle Sam Lewis on Sept. 20:

I now take the pleasure of dropping you a few lines today, as it is Sunday and we have nothing to do. We started from Columbus this day a week ago. We are not faring as well here as well as we were at Columbus, though doing very well. The Yankees are close to us. We have some cavalry here. They bring them in some times. They have taken twelve since we came here. They came down with a flag of truce when we first came here. We have been drawn up in line of battle several times. When we came down on the cars, just as we got in a half a mile of this place we had to get out of the cars and march to the town. The news came the Yanks were there but it was our own cavalry. The first night we came here the sentinels were all afraid. Not being used to being so close to the Yankees, they would fire at everything they seen. One of them killed a cow which brought us in lines very quick, but it was for nothing. But they are getting better.

I am in very good health now at the present time. I heard from Jim Adams a while before we left Columbus. He is well though I reckon he is seeing very hard times. He has been in one fight. I reckon it will not be long before we will have a chance for General Price to march on them and they may attack us. Price whipped them at Iuka. He whipped them out of the place. I expect there will be a great battle near Corinth before long, for Price is on his way there. I think they will whip them. Only some thinks that the next place we will go will be Corinth, but we will have them to whip out first.

I received a letter from home since I came here. I am glad to hear that they are all keeping well and am anxious to hear from you and hear how the crops are doing. I hope you will make enough of corn to do you this time, for I know your crop was very sorry last year. There was some men came in our company the other day just from your settlement. They knew you well. I have not found out their names very well yet. I saw some of your relations yesterday. He belongs to a cavalry company here at this place. He married Aunt Eliza's sister. I did not

talk with him any, only a few minutes. He lives not far from this place. He did not long to stay. I will see him again. I knew his name but I have forgotten it. He looks mighty well. I cannot write any more.

Five days later, as they made ready to leave Baldwyn, Jim wrote:

Dear Mother,

I now take the pleasure of dropping you a few lines today as we are going away from this place. I don't know where we will go to. Gen. Price's army is here. It came in day before yesterday. He had a right smart fight at Iuka. He had to retreat. He was overpowered by their army. He only had one brigade engaged in the fight. He whipped them at first, but they reinforced with fifty thousand men. We are ordered to cook three days rations.

We will start on a march today or tomorrow. We are in Moore's Brigade. There is none that knows where we will go to but Price. We may go on toward Corinth. We don't know where we will go, for there is no knowing in the army about the marches. I am not as stout as I was when I was at home. Cousin Mary's brothers are along with this army somewhere but I never have found them yet. But I reckon I will some time or 'nother. I don't know how it will be about getting letters for I reckon we will keep moving all the time. If we get on a force march, I expect I will have some clothes to throw away but I will hold on to them as long as I can. What men I have seen of the army, they look very rough.

I cannot have much to write, for the times are very [illegible] today. I wrote to Uncle Sam the other day. I reckon [if] a letter was directed here it would come on to us some way or another. The last letter I got from Emma, it was directed to Columbus. It came here. The cars run up here every day. We will have a right hard time of it until we get used to it. Then it will not be so hard. All the rest of the soldiers have it to stand, so we will as well as the rest. Some Yankees that we have taken are glad of it, for they will get to go home. They are paroled as soon as they are taken. I will have to come to a close, for I have nothing more to write this time. Give my love and best respects to all. I will perhaps sometime or 'nother see them, I hope.

Your affectionate son,
James English

In the night of Oct. 2, after twenty days of journeying mostly on foot, the 42nd Alabama camped about five miles from the Union Army's outer defenses of Corinth. The weather was unseasonably dry with temperatures in the mid 90 degrees. Making matters worse, they were short of water. Jefferson R. Stockdale, the 25-year-old son of an Irish immigrant farmer in Talladega County and a lieutenant in G Company, wrote about the initial engagement the next day: "Our boys charged them over fallen timbers, and every conceivable obstruction that could be thrown in our way, but on we went under heavy fire of shell, grape, canister, and musketry."

Lieutenant Charles R. Labruzan of Mobile, the acting commander of F Company, described the same scene: "Oh God! I have never seen the like! The men fell like grass even here. Giving one tremendous cheer, we dashed to the brow of the hill on which the fortifications are situated … I saw men, running at full speed, stop suddenly and fall upon their faces, with their brains scattered all around; others, with legs and arms cut off, shrieking with agony. They fell behind, beside, and within a few feet of me … the ground literally strewn with mangled corpses."

Years later, Private Ignatius M. Sims of G Company wrote about Corinth: "I enlisted at Belden, Mississippi a few days before the Battle of Corinth. There we fought three days, driving them back about three miles. My captain in this battle was Alex Knox from Talladega. He was killed, then came Andy Ritch as captain. The first bombshell I

ever heard cut off a lieutenant's head. They shot chains with balls on each end; every man on each side of me for ten or 15 feet, we had to give back."

Confederate losses numbered 4,233 (473 killed, 1,997 wounded and 1,763 captured or missing) to the Union's losses of 2,520. A week later, Jim wrote to his mother:

October 11, 1862
Camp near Holly Springs

Dear Mother,

I will write you a few lines today while I have got a chance to send it. We are camp[ed] in ten miles of Holly Springs. I am sorry to say that we have had a hard time of it. I know that you are uneasy about me for it has been so long since I have wrote. I have seen fights for the last two weeks. I have been in two fights and have come out safe. Our loss was great. We lost thirty-six men out of our company, missing. We know what became of some but some we know not. Our captain was wounded and left on the battlefield so they got him prisoner.[3] *Mark Richey is missing we know not [what] became of him, whether he was killed or taken out of our regiment. Some say three hundred men. We don't know whether they were all taken or what become of them. I thought I had seen hard times but I had never seen nothing before. If it was not for the potatoes patches I don't know what we would do last night and today. I have seen a great time though it has been raining and cold. We had some fresh pork and just any amount of potatoes. I lost all my clothes except what I had on. I happened to have on three shirts and two pair of pants. I lost my coat but my blanket I kept. In the first fight I got a splendid hat and good over shirt and a good ingine [Indian] rubber cloth to keep the rain off. Andy and Lewis came out safe, and the rest of the officers.*

I said that I was in two fights, but it was three. The first was we charged the Yankee camps. That's where we got so much. They had everything you could call for. I eat some of the best bread there that I have eat since I left home, coffee I got a right smart of that and have got some hot and some meat too. They was any amount of clothing left there, some fine overcoats but we could not carry them.

The next fight was at Corinth. We lay three miles of the place the night before the fight. We could hear their drum and fife and hear the cars running all through the night. So the next morning we ———— ——— —— many ———— of was the place by daylight and the skirmishing fought until after sunup, then we were ordered to a h———— the battery but it was awful. We ———— ———— —— ——— ——— so they said back on they way to this place so they met us at a little place called Pocahontas where they whipped us. I got out safe, but struggling a long time. So thank my maker I have got through safe. I will close. Direct your letters to Holly Springs, Miss.

Your son,
J. English

Throughout the war, fathers of soldiers in G Company traveled from Talladega County to visit their sons as well as deliver provisions and letters to the other local men in the camp before returning home with letters and news. On Oct. 26, during one of these visits near Holly Springs, Jim wrote:

3. Months later, they would learn that Captain Knox had died in battle. Mark Richey survived and rejoined G Company.

Dear Mother,

I am required to write you a few lines today as Mr. Richey[4] *has come down to see us. We were all glad to see him because we were all pretty well out of clothes. I have got a very good supply now, I think. We are seeing some very cold weather now. We had a right smart snow yesterday. It was very cold, but we are wery* [?] *it very well. I hope we will go to some place so that we can get to go in winter quarters. If we don't, we will see a tight time this winter. I have stood it very well so far and hope I continue on. So you wrote about me coming home to tend to your business, but I reckon there is no chance at that. If I knew that I could get off, I would try it—but I would not know how to fix it up to get to come home. I don't know whether the law would let me come or would exempt me from the service. I would like to come very bad if I could. A good bed and good meals would do me good. I never wanted the war to end so bad before. They are all getting tired of it.*

I happened to find three of the English boys the other day. They [are] in the same brigade. I see them every day. They are very clever boys. I ate dinner with them the other day.

I would like to see you all very bad. I would like to see home very much. The boys are all well and doing well. I will have to come to a close for Mr. Richey starts directly. Give my love and respect to all my friends.

Your son,
J. English

He had met Frank, Lewis and Robert English, and learned that their brothers John had been killed at Corinth and Alexander, after being badly wounded, had returned home to Aberdeen. (Jim never met the sixth brother, also named Jim English,) After Corinth, Emma joined their mother in pleading for Jim to return home. On Nov. 14, he wrote to her, "You were speaking of me coming home to attend Ma's business. I don't know whether I could get off now or not. If I was there now, I could stay. But to get away from the army, it is impossible. Ma might some way or other get me out. If she could [talk] to some of the leading men, such as Mr. J.L.M. Curry or Mr. Huey, they could tell her how to fix the matter up and whether I could get away on that accord or not. I know Ma will need somebody to attend to it, and they can see what they say about it."[5]

On Nov. 26, he wrote to Emma from Abbeville, Mississippi: "I would like to be at home now very bad. Christmas is drawing nigh, so I would like to be home at that time to enjoy it with you all." A few days later, the regiment abandoned Abbeville without a fight in order to prevent the Yankees from outflanking them. Passing through Oxford, they arrived at Grenada, eighty miles to the south, on Dec. 6. Two weeks later, he wrote:

Dear Mother,

I seat myself today while at leisure to write a few lines. I am well now at the present time and doing well. We are stationed near Granada and are expecting to move every day. We cannot stay long at a place. They keep

4. William M. Richey (b. 1814) was a well-to-do millwright in northern Talladega County near Munford. His four sons were members of G Company: Andrew J. (Andy) (age 24), Marcus L. (Mark) (22), Lewis D. (19) and James T. (17). The three oldest served the company as officers, and their father regularly visited the company camp throughout the war.

5. Although desertion was not uncommon, the penalties were severe. The men Jim suggested that his mother contact were the lawyer J.L.M. Curry, who had served in the U.S. Congress, and James G.L. Huey, a well-to-do merchant and former state senator. (Huey's nephew John M. Huey was second lieutenant of G Company.)

moving us about from place to place. I reckon it is better for our health to change places. I don't know where we will go this time. Not far, I don't reckon. We are fortifying this place very strongly. There [are] about a thousand negroes at work here. It is reported that the Yankees are not far off. I don't know how true it is. We have had several skirmishes with them since we came here. It is though between our cavalry and their cavalry. We will stay at this place until they make some other movement. We had to leave a well fortified place at Abbeville. They never could have whipped us there. Sallie wrote to me to be vaccinated. I have been vaccinated twice. The first did not have any effect, but the other time did. My arm is sore now.

Time runs off very fast. Christmas will soon be here. Weeks do not appear longer than days. I hope this war comes to a close soon, for I think all the men are all tired of it. There have been a great many gone home from this army. There have been two went from this company. It will be very bad on them if they ever get them again. Give my
respect to all the enquiring friends. Tell them I am doing well. (My paper is give out so I will have to come to a close.)

Your affectionate son,
J. English

♛1863

Christmas came and went, and on Jan. 2, 1863, the 42nd Alabama Infantry arrived at Vicksburg as General Sherman's troops, having met greater resistance than expected, were falling back. The Vicksburg fortress on bluffs overlooking a sharp bend in the Mississippi River was known as "The Gibraltar of the Confederacy." The river had long been America's lifeblood, the single most important economic feature of the continent, and Confederate control of its navigation had a devastating impact on northern commercial interests. Lincoln had told his generals, "See what a lot of land these fellows hold, of which Vicksburg is the key. The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket. … We can take all the northern ports of the Confederacy, and they can defy us from Vicksburg."

The 42nd encamped at Camp Timmons on Haines Bluff, just north of Vicksburg, where Jim English wrote to Emma, on Jan. 10:

Dear Sister

I received your letter today. I was glad to hear from you and hear that you are all well. I am still in good health and hoping for the war to come to a close. It appears like that it will never come to an end.

Times are very rough. We live principally on beef and cornbread. We have seen quite a rough time since we came here. We had to lie out several nights in the rain without anything to shelter us when the Yanks were so close to us. We could see them every day. They were not more than a quarter of [a] mile from us. Some would come in gunshot of us. They slipped near enough to kill some of our men, but they all left and went back to their gunboats. Our men slaughtered them very bad. I reckon their loss[es] were over a thousand. There is no telling. The next morning after we got to the fortification I could see them thick all over the field, some places three in a pile. They tried mighty hard to take this place but it is naturally a fortified place with hills so that it is impossible for them to take our works. The town is well fortified all over. The gunboats are the only thing that can do anything here. Their gunboats are not far off. I heard their cannons this morning shelling our pickets. I was all over the battlefield yesterday and all over their camps. They must of had a great many men here from the looks of their camps.

If you were to go over the works and see where the balls torn the trees, you would never think any person could have a brave enough heart to approach the like. They do do it but many lost their lives at it. Some trees, there is fifty balls strikes it, and some torn all to pieces.

I have seen Jim Adams,[6] *but not lately. He look[ed] well at the time. We are camp[ed] on one side of the town and him on the other. It is too far for me to go to see him. I was glad to meet since, although we did not have much time to spend our time together, he looked very hearty, but rough like all soldiers. I would like the best to be at home with you all, but getting into the war is very easy, but getting out of it is hard. No man that ever get[s] out of this war will never get back again soon, if there is any chance of getting out of it.*

I have not received that box that Ma sent me. Andy Richey left them at Mobile, expecting the quartermaster to send them on, but they are all so careless that they don't care for nothing but to make money. He is talking about going after them. I don't know whether he will find them or not. He had a great many clothing for the company which I reckon is lost. If I were to get mine now it would not do me any good, for all [the food] would be spoilt. I would have not missed that box for nothing. I will send some money home the first chance I can get.[7] *We will draw again soon, I reckon, if we stay at this place.*

Billy is well and in better health than I ever saw him. And all the rest of the boys are well. The health of the army, I think, is good. I will have to come to a close. Give my love to all my friends and connections.

Your Brother,
J. English

Until the final months of the war, both armies relied upon the winter months for resting and reorganizing. The 42nd remained at Camp Timmons until March, using this fairly peaceful time to receive replacement troops and replenish supplies. Most of the letters Jim wrote were addressed to his mother or sister Emma, but on Jan. 28, he wrote to his youngest sister Laura, then 14, and included a message for Thomas, their 12-year-old brother.

Dear Sister Laura,

I now take pleasure of writing you a few lines today while at leisure, as I have written to all but you, though I will not have much news to write. One thing I can say, that I am well and doing well, although we have a bad situation which is enough to make any person sick. I wrote to Ma and sent her some money which was all I had except a little, though I have a right smart [amount] owing to me in the company which will do me along. Things is very dear. A person don't have to buy much before his money is all gone.

I sent Tommy some balls which I got out on the battlefield and some that had powder with them. The way, tell him, to get the powder is to tear the paper off where it is turn[ed] down. Then he can pour it out and make use of it and the lead too. I also sent him a screwdriver and a thumb vice. Tell him to keep them and take care of them. I also sent my little inkstand and three needles in a flannel rag which I got in the Yankee camps at Corinth. There was an old Yankee letter rolled around them balls which I sent Tom.

There is some prospects of a fight. It is reported that the Yanks are landing above us. We had to get up this

6. Twenty-year-old Jim Adams was Jim English's first cousin, the son of Margaret's sister Elizabeth Ada Lewis Adams. A year earlier, he had enlisted in the 30th Regiment, Alabama Infantry. The two Jims, both fatherless, had grown up as closely as brothers.
7. A Confederate private's monthly pay was $25.

morning at two o'clock and get breakfast and be ready against daylight, but it turned out to be nothing. I hope we have not left yet and no prospect of it. We can see the smoke of the gunboats by going on the high hills.

Mark Richey will come soon to tell Ma to send me some eatibles. So Mark can bring them. Send some potatoes and butter, if she has plenty, and fruit, if she has plenty of that, or eggs or anything that is plenty and good, for we cannot get nothing of that kind. Eggs is selling at one dollar and a half a dozen. Butter, the same. Mark will bring it by express, so we will get it that way. I will have to close.

Your Brother,
J.S.C. English

Send some onions too if she has plenty, for they are the healthiest thing in the army.

In early March, the regiment traveled by riverboat to Yazoo City, nearly 200 miles to the south. In departing Vicksburg, he encountered two of "Uncle John's boys," Lewis and Frank English, who happened to be on guard duty at the boat landing. He wrote to his mother:

They live in Aberdeen. They said that the Yanks are not far from their home. They don't seem to like it [living there] very much. They ask all about Uncle Tom [Best]'s folks every time they see me. Frank recollected all about old Uncle Josh's family and he knew all of them. He knew Linny and Frank and Sid and Ben and all the rest.[8]

I enjoyed a very good time eating on my box of provisions. I did not eat it all myself. I give the mess some. Lewis and Mark had some too. I am in the same mess, so we had a fine chance. We have not eaten all the fruitcake yet. The boys went out in the country and got eggs and butter and onions and greens. We cannot enjoy it much, for money is too scarce. Cousin Will[9] *I suppose is still at home yet. Tell him I say to live while he is there for when he gets in the army it will not be home. I don't wish no man in the army, for I know how it is. But I hope we will all get to go home before long so that we can enjoy it as we did before.*

On March 11, 1863, the *Democratic Watchtower* newspaper in Talladega announced the offer of a thirty-dollar reward for "the apprehension and delivery to any jail in the State of Alabama of the following named soldiers who deserted from Company "G," 42nd Regiment Alabama Volunteers, viz: Privates Levi Cameron, Marshal Savage and Robert Dunn," all of St. Clair County, signed by A.J. Richey, Lieut. Cm, Company "G," 42nd Ala. Rgt. The posting of rewards for deserters became a regular feature of the newspaper.

On March 24, Jim wrote of their impending move from Yazoo City to Greenwood, fifty miles to the north, and his recent promotion to corporal:

You spoke of me deserting. You need not look for me at home if I have to desert and go, for I saw one man shot not long ago for deserting, but he went to the Yanks and was taken again and hung. I'm to be corporal. Some of the corporals are gone to the hospital. Went when we were at Abbeville. We have not heard from them since, so I was appointed and been acting ever since. We will have to move tomorrow. I reckon we may not go if the Yanks pushes on us. We will have to reinforce. I hope we will not have to go, for this is the best place we have struck since we came from Columbus.

8. "Uncle Josh" and the others they remembered were most likely Negro slaves.
9. "Cousin Will" was William Benedict Best, the 19-year-old orphaned son of Isaac and Mary English Best.

Encamped near Greenwood on the Tallahatchie River, he wrote on April 7:

We will move from here, I guess, before long, for the Yankees are gone from this place. We know not where they have gone, nor where we will go. We were very close to them. We were on one side of the river and them, the other. Our men talked to them every day. They would want to trade coffee for sugar and tobacco, but the day they were leaving … they brought one or two cannons and fired at our men. That was to keep our men from following fortified for what time we had to do it in. They knew it. That was the reason they did not attack it. We shelled them. We will not have to call this a gun and cannon victory but [a] shovel and spade victory. This place is well them every day and night for two or three days, so they could not stay there. I think they had a great many men to die there. Some of our men which have been there says there are a great many graves over there. I hope they will be disappointed at every place like they were here and Vicksburg. They say they have left there. I don't know where they will go next. … I will not have any more to tell about the Yankees. Times are very still now. We do not hear of no battles nor any word of peace. At Vicksburg, there was nothing else.

There is a very bad chance to send our letters off, for we are on an island so we cannot have any chance to get it to any office. We will leave before long, for our wagons are all at Yazoo. Granada is only 28 miles from here. I will have to close. Give my love to all.

Your affectionate son,
J.S.C. English

Ten days later from a "camp near Vicksburg in the woods," he wrote to Emma:

We have been traveling around a great deal since we left Vicksburg, though we have been seeing a very good time. There is not much pleasure in soldiering, but riding over the world, looking at the different parts of the country, I have learned a great deal about it. I suppose now the talk is that we will go to Tennessee. … I would like to go there very much, for I have seen enough of this state, but I would not like to go so near home and not get to go there. But we all have to do what is right or suffer punishment.

I went down to see Jim Adams yesterday and stayed all night with him. He is in very bad health. He also looks bad. He has been to the hospital but returned to camps again. He will try to get home, which I think will help. I don't think he will be able to do any duty until he does go home. He will have to go before the board to be examined. I know they will not refuse any person that is in as bad health as he is. If he does get to go home, I don't know as I will have anything to send home, unless it is some money. I suppose we will draw before many days. If we draw we will draw twenty-five dollars for our compensation. If he leaves before we draw, I will send some home, for it will not do me any good here, for I will spend it foolishly.

I was very much surprised to see Dr. Echols[10] *yesterday. I did not know where he was. I thought he was practicing yet. It would do you good to see him. He has not shaved since he came in the army. His face is perfectly wooly, though he is perfectly fat and enjoying soldiering finely. He misses something good to eat. He says he sometimes spends four and five dollars a day for something good to eat. I will have to come to a close on all subjects. Give my compliments to all.*

10. In the 1860 census, 25-year-old E.D.J. (Edward Dandridge Jones) Echols had been listed as residing with the Englishes and as the family's "personal physician." He enlisted with the 30th Alabama Infantry in 1862, identifying himself as a teacher, and was wounded at Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1864. After the war, he practiced medicine in Cherokee County for a while before turning to farming.

After Sherman's failed attempt at taking Vicksburg in January, the Confederates let down their guard until Grant's troops began marching southward through Mississippi in early May. Their destination was Vicksburg, where the 42nd took up position in trenches and rifle pits. The fighting commenced on May 18. A Confederate soldier of Moore's Brigade recalled one remarkable incident in the days of battle that followed: "At two o'clock P.M. on the 25th, a flag of truce was sent in by the enemy, asking permission to bury their dead and remove their wounded, some of whom had lain on the field, where they had fallen, for several days. During the time they were engaged in this, the soldiers on the opposing sides met, talked kindly with each other, exchanging different articles and when the time was out retired to their respective lines, and again began the work of destruction."

Unable to penetrate the Confederate lines, Grant decided upon siege operations to slowly strangle the Confederates. By May 27, the effects of the siege became evident. One soldier in Moore's brigade wrote, "Rations began to fail. The corn was exhausted and peas were ground up for meal. The meat also was exhausted and mules were killed and eaten." On the Fourth of July, Confederate Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton surrendered. Grant had demanded unconditional surrender, but Pemberton refused until Grant accepted a surrender that allowed the Confederate soldiers to each sign a parole, promising not to take up arms until an equal number of Union prisoners of war were exchanged. The soldiers of the 42nd Alabama then filed from their trenches and stacked their arms in accordance with the terms of surrender. As Pvt. Joseph. T. Harris of K Company recalled it, "We fought like lions, but surrendered like lambs." Another wrote, "...we went to Vicksburg, and fought there 47 days. There they blew us up with dynamite, but we did not let them in. They tried to roll bales of cotton in front of them to get to us but could not come in. We ate cowpeas for bread, mule meat, rats, and some dog pups." Union troops numbered 77,000, while 32,000 Confederates had defended Vicksburg. Jim English was one of the 29,495 who surrendered that day. More than 7,000 men on both sides lost their lives; ten members of the 42nd were among them. That same day, General Lee's army retreated from the battlefield at Gettysburg, Virginia. Although the war would continue another twenty months, this Independence Day marked the beginning of its end.

The defeated Southerners, rather than being imprisoned, were transferred to Confederate-administered parole camps as part of a prisoner exchange program. By agreement, both the Confederacy and the Union had established these parole camps as a sort of time-out way station where captured soldiers were held until they could be exchanged for an equal number of captured soldiers on the other side. Because the parolees were held behind their own lines, there was no physical exchange of prisoners. Early in the war, this system allowed both sides to forego the expense of maintaining large prisons and, consequently, ensured that the captured were well treated by their own. Each of the captured Confederates signed a parole agreement stating that he would "not take up arms again against the United States, nor serve in any military, police or constabulary force in any fort, garrison or field work, held by the Confederate States of America, against the United States of America … until duly exchanged by the proper authorities." Once the exchange was official, the soldier was expected to rejoin his combat unit and return to the field of battle.

The 42nd Alabama Infantry's destination was the parole camp at Demopolis in southwest Alabama. Jim English was among the parolees granted a thirty-day furlough, which permitted him to travel home before reporting to detention at Demopolis. Of the 566 men of the 42nd Alabama paroled at Vicksburg, he was one of only 374 who rejoined the regiment at Demopolis. By then, the Confederate Army had called older men into service, and Jim apparently returned with Samuel Lewis, his mother's 38-year-old brother. Uncle Sam had reluctantly left his wife and six young children to enlist in the 30th Alabama Infantry there.

Demopolis, population 1,200, stood atop white limestone bluffs at the confluence of the Tombigbee and Black Warrior rivers. The parole camp was set up in a pecan grove outside the town. Without tents, the paroled troops lived under the open sky. They apparently received no wages, but were nonetheless required to purchase food and prepare their meals. There, in September, Jim English turned nineteen. In his first letter from Demopolis, he wrote:

Dear Mother,

I now take the pleasure while at leisure to write you a few lines, though I [have] not much of interest to write. I am well and doing well. We have plenty to eat at the present time and will have plenty while our boxes of provisions last. All of my mess brought a box apiece, so we will enjoy it while it lasts. We have nothing to do but go to town whenever we want to. I don't reckon we will do anything until all of our men get here. They are returning every day. I have seen Uncle Sam nearly every day but today. He is well and doing well. I don't think he likes camp very much. He says if he knew what he sees now, he would not have come down here. News is such a little object that it is most impossible for a person to write. I have not seen nor heard nothing of the English boys. I suppose they are at Enterprise.[11] *You must write soon. I have been looking for a letter every day. So I will close. Give my respects to all.*

On Oct. 9, he wrote to Emma:

Dear Sister,

I received your letter yesterday and also the bundle you sent by mail. I was glad to hear from home. It is always [a] pleasure to hear that you are all well. If you have not any interesting news to write, I will not have any interesting news to write. We are still enjoying our old camp, yet we do not have much to do yet. We drill twice a day.

I have not seen Uncle Sam in two or three days. He is well when I seen him. I will go up there today and take his gloves to him. We are having a very good time here. We get plenty to eat. Potatoes in camp every day for sale and plenty of goobers [peanuts]. This is the greatest place for goobers I ever saw. Between this place and Selma, there are fields with forty acres in it.

Some of the boys catch fish every day, weighing from ten to twelve pounds. It is my week to cook, so it keeps me busy. I think I can make as good biscuits as anybody, although I may be mistaken.

Your brother,
J.S.C. English

In his final letter from Demopolis, he wrote to Emma on Oct. 20:

Dear Sister,

I seat myself to give you an answer to the letter I last received on the 10th. I am well and doing well. I will not have any interesting news to write. I am sorry to say that we will have to leave this place. We have not got any orders yet but some of the troops have. I think the 30th Ala. will leave in a few days. So we will go after them. Will go to Meridian, Miss., and from there I don't know where we will go. Some think we will go to Corinth. The Yankees, I suppose, are coming down to Canton, a place above Jackson. We will have to drive them back.

11. His Mississippi cousins, "the English boys," had also served at Vicksburg. In April, James, the cousin who shared his name, had died from illness in the hospital there. Lewis and Frank survived. A parole camp at Enterprise, Mississippi, served that state's regiments.

The boys will hate to leave here as bad as they did to leave home. I will, I know, for we are living so well here. But we will have to go somewhere, for we are no use here and have been in three reviews here. First Gen. Hardee & Johnson & President Davis.

You wrote if I wanted my shirt and cap. I will want it but will not have any chance to get it now. I will have to make out without it. I drew a shirt yesterday. I cannot wear it, only for a under shirt. No person could wear it. The sleeves are so short that they just would come to the elbow … and the drawers are the same way. I will write before we go. We will draw money tomorrow. I will have to come to a close. Give respect to all.

Your brother,
J.S.C. English

In late October, the men of the Alabama 42nd were declared as exchanged and released from parole. The reorganized regiment then received orders to join the Army of Tennessee under General Braxton Bragg. They were re-equipped with whatever the government could provide, which proved to be either of very poor quality or nothing at all. Their destination was Chattanooga. Bragg moved 25,000 troops and supplies mostly by railroad from Mississippi to the Chattanooga area (almost 300 miles) in less than a week. It was the first such large-scale troop movement in history. En route, at Atlanta on Nov. 3, Jim wrote to Emma of his disappointment in passing so close to home without being allowed to stop for a visit with them:

Dear Sister,

I take the pleasure of enclosing you a few lines this morning to let you know where I am and how I am getting along. I am well and doing well. We have had a very pleasant trip so far, but I guess it will not be pleasant after we leave here. We started on the 29th Oct. from Demopolis. We remained in Selma that evening and was on the boat the next, then in Montgomery all day and night, then on to this place. We landed here yesterday evening.

We are working four days ration to leave. I don't know when we will leave. We will leave tomorrow, I guess. I don't know where we will go from here. I guess it will be with Gen. Bragg.

I know you have received the letter that I sent by Mr. McCain. I did not write much. I was rather pestered because I did not get to go by home. It was Lt. Bell's fault. I asked him to let me go when Mark did, but he would not let me go. He let some go afterward. He let P. Dickinson go, who they were going to punish so bad. Then two went that did not go back to their company after they were exchanged until they were sent after. Our colonel said he did not object to some going but he did not know they were the last that came in.

I have not seen Uncle Sam since we left Demopolis. His regiment has gone on. The letter that you sent I cannot read. The wine had leaked a little and gotten on it and taken the ink off through the center of the letter. The wine was very good. I will have to close.

Your brother,
J.S.C. English

In September, Union forces had retreated to Chattanooga after their defeat at Chickamauga Creek in the southern foothills of Lookout Mountain. It was the first major battle fought in Georgia, registering the second-highest number of casualties of the war. The 42nd Alabama arrived at Chickamauga Station, on Nov. 4. It was a rainy day, unseasonably cold. Moore's reconstituted brigade, consisting of the 37th, 40th and 42nd Alabama regiments, was assigned to

the defenses on Lookout Mountain.

With its three sides reaching 1,200 feet, Lookout Mountain rises above the Tennessee Valley near the juncture of the states of Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee. The almost-vertical rock walls have a long history of affording protection to those on top, and the mountain is also known for a unique weather phenomenon: Sometimes, after a clear dawn, a layer of fog descends toward the valley below, shrouding the upper half of the peak.

On Nov. 7, Jim wrote to Emma from the company's camp site on Lookout Mountain:

Dear Sister,

I take the pleasure of writing you a few lines today to give you a statement of how I am getting along. I am enjoying very good health. We have had a very hard time for the past three or four days. We came to Chickamauga Station on the fourth, then started to the front yesterday. We got here this morning. We had a very hard time last night. It rained nearly all night, then coming here, it was the worst road I ever had to travel, though we have a very pretty day today. We are camped on the back of Lookout Mountain. The Yankees are not far from us now.

I have not seen Uncle Sam yet nor heard from him. They are camped not far from us, but I do not know where. I will not have any more to write. You must write as soon as you can.

Your Brother,
J.S.C. English

By mid November, 44,000 Confederate soldiers were positioned on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge, overlooking Union-controlled Chattanooga under Grant's command. It was the beginning of a long wait. By Nov. 16, Jim had located Uncle Sam and wrote to Emma:

Dear Sister,

I seat myself this morning to write you a few lines, though I will not have much to write. I am well and doing well. We are still camped on Lookout Mountain, doing picket duty every fourth day. It is not hard, though we have to stand close to the enemy. Some of the boys talk to them and trade with them, but I have not had anything to do with them. They are very friendly. They give coffee for tobacco or anything else for tobacco. Our picket lines and their picket are only about fifteen or twenty yards apart, but there is a little river between our men and theirs.

We are enjoying this weather very well. We have plenty of wood and water. Some of the boys grumble a little about something to eat, but I do on what I get very well. My mess is not as extravagant as some. Meat is very scarce. We draw one pound of beef to the man and a pound of meal and sometimes crackers. My mess has plenty of butter now and also bacon which Mr. Richey sends. I suppose you heard that Capt. Stockdale has left us. He resigned on the 6th. I reckon he will go to the cavalry. Huey will be our captain now. We are where we can see where the Yankees are camped and the whole of Chattanooga. Our batteries are constantly firing at their men and wagon trains. I don't think there will be much fight soon. The enemy drove our pickets in a few days ago, but then our men drove them back again.

There is one of our company will get a furlough very soon. He brought a recruit to the company when he went

by home. All soldiers can get a furlough if they can persuade any person to join the army. That is an order from Gen. Bragg. Uncle Sam says he thinks he can get one who will come. It will be Pace Towery. He said he expected he would have to come anyhow, so he would get him to come and join the company so he could claim him as a recruit and get a forty-day furlough. He can have him mustered in the service at Talladega, then they will send him to the company. There's also some talk of furloughing every tenth man, but I cannot tell who then if it is so or not. If it is, I think I will get one if anyone will. I have written as much as I can for this time. You must write soon. I have not received a letter from home since I came here. Only one directed to Demopolis. You must be sure to write to Cousin Mary L. Johnson.

Your brother,
James English

The Confederate strategy, like Grant's at Vicksburg, was to slowly starve the Union forces into surrender by raiding Chattanooga-bound supply wagons. As time passed, the weather turned cold, and for the Confederates, the wait would probably be more miserable than it was for the besieged Union forces. They were without tents on wintry heights where there was sometimes snow on the ground. First Lieutenant J. M. Huey of the 42nd Alabama's G Company wrote to the *Democratic Watchtower* newspaper in Talladega to request donated supplies for his company: "Many of the men are entirely without blankets or any covering at night, many of them have no overcoats." On Nov. 15, Corp. Robert J. Boyd Thigpin of Company C, described the conditions on Lookout Mountain: "It is one eternal up. … The prospects for rations are not flattering. … I hope we will be fed, for this is cold country and we will want all the flesh we can get on our bones to keep us warm." On Nov. 22, Pvt. Taylor of the 40th Alabama wrote to his wife: "There is considerable cannonading this morning. This evening … there was a detail of men from our Regt. and the 42nd Ala. sent on picket. When they got near enough, the Yanks threw a shell among them and wounded 11 from the effects of which one died that night and another had his leg cut off. They were all from the 42nd."

After Lincoln managed to send reinforcements by rail, bolstering his troops to 56,000, Moore's siege strategy began to fail. Grant's forces launched their offensive on Nov. 24, first on Lookout Mountain, where the inverted fog gave the battle the name "Battle Above the Clouds." Grant would later write: "The Battle of Lookout Mountain is one of the romances of the war. There was no such battle and no action even worthy to be called a battle on Lookout Mountain. It is all poetry." But battle or not, the Confederate losses were severe. As a cold drizzle fell at 2:00 A.M. the next morning, the 42nd Alabama, its men miserable and cold, climbed down from Lookout Mountain and crossed Chattanooga Valley to Missionary Ridge.

Major Joshua E. Preston described the 42nd Alabama's arrival at Rossville near Missionary Ridge: "At sunrise we reached the base of Missionary Ridge, and were halted to partake of an elaborate breakfast of corn bread and raw, fat bacon. The bread was three days old and the bacon of uncertain age." After an hour, the brigade moved into position on Missionary Ridge and in the light of day the previous day's battle continued. The action on Missionary Ridge proved disastrous. Late that night, those who weren't captured made their way back to Chickamauga Station. Moore summed up his men's performance: "My own command acted much better than might have been expected under the circumstances, as they fought during the engagements of the two days with arms that had been condemned as unfit for service, and which were received while at Demopolis, Ala., to be used only for drill and guard duty." The Confederates then retreated, following the railroad tracks to Dalton, Georgia, thirty miles southeast of Chattanooga.

Dalton held a strategic position between Chattanooga and Atlanta owing to the Western & Atlantic Railway's tunnel through nearby Chetoogeta Mountain. Holding Tunnel Hill and its 1,477-foot tunnel was critical to protecting Atlanta from the Union Army.

From Dalton on Nov. 29, Jim wrote:

Dear Mother,

I now take the opportunity to write you a few lines after getting through the struggles in which we have had. I am now well. We had two fights with the Yanks. The first was on Lookout Mountain. That was on the 24th. It was late in the evening. We remained on the mountain until two o'clock that night. We marched then to Missionary Ridge, and on the 25th we had the fight on Missionary Ridge. That was late in the evening. We had to retreat from the mountain on the account of the Yankees flanking us. They got through our lines on our left. Then we had to leave our breastworks[12] *so as to form a line. To meet them in form-ing the line we had it to do in a heavy fire from the enemy. It was impossible for us to do it. We were mixed up very much and had a good many men killed and wounded.*

I will not have time to give you any statement of the fight. Our company's loss was 13 missing and wounded together. Henry Weathers was killed or wounded. We have not heard from him. Chance is very bad to write, for I lost all of my paper and clothes except what I had on. I happened to have all of my new clothes on.

I am out of paper and also my blanket. Henry had it. I still hold on to my quilt. When you write, direct your letter to Dalton, Ga. The weather is very cold now. I will have to close on the account of paper. I am writing out of my daybook.

Your son,
J.S.C. English

I will write a few more lines to tell about the losses. Our regt. has not lost many men yet. We have had three capts. wounded and four lts. Lt. Richey was not in the last fight. He was sick, but returned since, just about as sick as he was when he went off. Jim and Lewis and Mark are with us yet and well. The army is in good spirits and getting plenty to eat. I guess the fight will be ended here. I cannot tell how it will come out. I will have to close.

Your son,
J. English

Two days later, he wrote to Emma:

Dear Sister,

I take pleasure of informing you of how I am getting along. I am well and doing well. I wrote a few lines to Ma yesterday, but I did not have any paper to write on, and also I did not have time to write. We have had a very severe time for the last few days. We had the battle on the 24th and 25th. The first was not [a] very hard one. That was on Lookout Mountain. We did not have a fair chance both times. The first fight, the Yankees broke our lines on our left and then came in behind us. If they had of known it, they could of captured us then. It was raining. We formed a line about four hundred yards behind our ditches and remained there until two o'clock in the night, then marched to Missionary Ridge. That evening, our men fought them on the right and run them

12. A breastwork was a temporary fortification, usually made of soil, at breast height. Defenders fired over it from a standing position.

back. Then they tried us on the left. There they broke through our lines, then came down our line there. We did not have much chance to fight, though we done the best we could. Then we done the best running we could. I never have seen troops so mixed up. So we lost thirteen missing and wounded. We don't know of any killed. Henry Weathers is missing. We know not what became of him. He had my blanket, and I had his oilcloth. Tell Ma when she gets a chance, send me my pants and a shirt and a pair of socks and a blanket. My shoes are nearly worn out. Tell Ma to have my boots fixed; that is, new feet put to them. I seen Uncle Sam a few days ago. He looked well. All the rest of the boys are well. I will have to close.

Give my respects to all.

Your Brother,
J.S.C. English

Direct your letter via Rome, Ga., to Dalton, Ga., Co. G, 42nd Regt., Moore's Brgd.

And on Dec. 6:

Dear Sister,

I take the pleasure of dropping a few lines this morning, letting you know that I am well and doing well. I don't know as there is any news of importance to write. We have had some very cold weather for the last week. The boys that were missing have not come in yet. The rest are enjoying good health. I written to Ma to send me some clothes. Tell her that I have plenty now. I drew a pair of pants this morning and a shirt and a pair of drawers. If she sends anything, send some socks. Shoes, I can draw them here. We can draw very good clothes from the government.

Our situation in camps are very bad. We have no tents although we have plenty of wood to keep food fired. There is some talk of us remaining here all the winter. I do not know where we will stay. Some of the boys are making little huts.

I heard that Cousin Tom Best[13] *was not far from here. Some of his regiment was in our regiment yesterday but I did not know it until they had started away, else I would have written him a few lines.*

I have not drawn a blanket yet but I reckon I will soon. Ma can send me one. We get plenty to eat. We get flour and meal and beef and a little sugar and peas. Christmas will soon be here, which I would like to enjoy at home, but there is no prospect of it. Gen. Bragg has left this army and Gen. [William Joseph] Hardee is in command now, and also Gen. [John Creed] Moore has left our brigade and gone to Mobile. I hope we will get to go there too. We also drew new guns yesterday. The men cannot grumble now about having bad guns the next fight.[14] *If it had not been for our brigade, I think great many more men would have been captured than there*

13. Tom Best was the elder orphaned son of Isaac and Mary English Best and foster son of Thomas and Lizzie English Best. He was a member of the Alabama 8th Cavalry Regiment.

14. The men of the 42nd had suddenly found themselves better equipped by the Confederate government, perhaps owing to their being closer to the supply source than they'd been in Mississippi. But for the tens of thousands of men who comprised the Army of Tennessee, food would remain a day-to-day challenge.

were, for the troops run very badly on our left. We held them in check for a half an hour that give the right time to get away [from] the artillery and men. I will have to close. Give respect to all.

Your brother,
J.S.C. English

Samuel Lewis, Jim's uncle, had also retreated to Dalton from Chattanooga. Encamped west of the town, he wrote to his parents, Alexander and Amaritta Lewis on Dec. 9:

Dear Father & Mother,

A few lines to let you know I am well & in good health at this time, hoping these lines may reach you and all of the friends. Well, I have no news to write. We are in one mile & half of Dalton, though I expect you have heard of our retreat since the Battle of Chattanooga. We marched two days and a night. The Yanks was too hard for us there. Where I was, we whipped them badly. I was on the extreme right. We fought one day there, though I was not in the hardest of the fight. I have no anxiety of being in another. There is no fun in it. I think there was at least three to our one. We lost a great deal of government property in our retreat to this place. It is a big job to move an army. The Yankees followed us. Our rear had a hard fight with them.

How long we will stay here I cannot say. My own opinion is we will not stay here long. I think we will fall back to Rome or Atlanta before long. I think our little Confederacy is drawing fast to a close. The soldiers are very much out of heart. There is very little fight in them. I think they are tired of the war and anxious to get home. Home is all the talk with them. There was sixteen left our Regiment a few nights ago. They did not go far before they was taken up. They are now under guard at this time. Our loss in the fight I cannot tell anything about it, though I think [it] was heavy. We lost two men killed and several wounded in our Regiment. There was two men wounded close to where I was standing. The balls sung round me tolerable thick. We was in the woods. We got behind trees which sheltered us very much. Tennessee is entirely ruined. There is no fences nor no timber. The soldiers has burnt everything up in places. Anyone that has not. Seen the army or the destruction has no idea. I have not seen a dozen of houses since I have been up here.

I saw James English a few days ago. He was well. John King is missing. We don't know whether he was killed or taken prisoner. He was on picket the morning the fight commenced. I had just been relieved of picket when the fight commenced. John King was put on guard the same place where I was, and that is the last account we have had of him. The health of the army is tolerable good.

On Dec. 12, Jim wrote to his sister Sallie:

Dear Sister,

I received your letter yesterday. I now take the pleasure of seating myself to give you an answer to it. I will not have any news of importance to write. I am well and enjoying the times very well. We have commenced building winter quarters here. I don't know how long we will get to stay in them. My mess has a house of their own. We have not got it finished yet. We will have a nice house when we get it done, that is, if we remain here long enough to finish it. Our houses will come in a very good time, for the weather is very bad and rainy. I stay in the tent with the officers. I can do very well until I get my house made. Every man is very busy at work. We could build faster if we had axes, but we lost some of our axes. I have not seen Uncle Sam but once since I came

here.[15] *We have gotten so far from [each other] I cannot get to see him. Mr. Richey wrote that he was coming to see his boys. Ma can send me a blanket and one or two pair of socks. I have plenty of other clothes. Our company drew some shoes, but I did not get any. We may get some though.*

There will not be any chance for me to come home. A furlough is mighty hard to get. I would like to be at home Christmas very well. I will close. Give my respects to all. You must write soon.

I remain your brother,
JSC English

I, before closing my letter, received a letter from Cousin Mary Johnson. She is well and also her family. Her brothers are there in parole camps. They are well.

Thousands of Confederate soldiers were encamped across the countryside surrounding Dalton, the various regiments miles apart. One Georgia soldier later described the huts they constructed to see them through the winter months: "Our cabins were built of split logs, the cracks being chinked during the severest weather with red clay, thus making a very comfortable house indeed. An ample chimney was constructed of sticks chinked in the same manner as the house; and when the fireplace was piled up with wood and set going, we had as comfortable quarters as to warmth as one could wish. Our bedsteads were four posts with end and side pieces nailed to them, and boards were placed so as to give us room to fill in with straw, and over this our quilts and blankets were spread."

As another Christmas approached, Jim wrote:

Dear Sister,

After receiving your most kind and welcome letter on the 15th, I thought I would seat myself to give you an answer to it. I did not have time to write any sooner, for we had to finish our little cabin. We have it finished at last. We have quite a comfortable house. We enjoy ourselves much more, comfortably seated around the fire than to be out taking the weather, cold and rainy. It has taken a great deal of work to make, but such weather as this, it will pay us very well. We only have a small house, just large enough for four. The duty that we have to do is very light. We only have to guard the camps. When it is raining, we get to stay in our houses. To get a furlough is very hard to get. I would like to enjoy Christmas at home, but there is no chance to get to go. There have been a great many men deserted from this army since the last fight. Some of the men are mighty disheartened. There have been a good many shot, then some walking the streets with a board across their forehead with large letters on it, the word deserted on it, with a guard behind them to make them walk the streets.

We will be looking for Mr. Richey in a few days. He will, I suppose, bring something to his boys. I have not seen Uncle Sam in some time. I wrote a letter to cousin Mary.

I will have to come to a close. I am enjoying good health at the present time. Write soon.

Your Brother,
J.S.C. English

15. Although Jim and his Uncle Sam would spend six months in the camps at Dalton, this was apparently the only time they came in contact.

For both armies, desertion was a serious problem and especially in the latter years of the war. It occurred more frequently among Confederate soldiers, whose families urged them to return home to help protect them and their property from Union troops. Desertion was a capital offense punishable by death, but executing every deserter who was captured proved impractical. More often, a deserter would be publicly shamed instead.

On Dec. 27, Gen. Joseph E. Johnston assumed command of the Army of Tennessee. He was alarmed by the shortage and condition of his units' supplies: "Instead of a reserve of muskets there was a deficiency of six thousand and as great a one of blankets, while the number of bare feet was painful to see. The artillery horses were too feeble to draw the guns in fields."

♛1864

WHAT HAD BEEN A TUMULTUOUS YEAR ended quietly. Jim English had faced the enemy at Vicksburg and Chattanooga, and survived. As 1864 began, it became clear that the 42nd Alabama would remain at Dalton through the winter months. It would be a time of rest, morale building and furloughs. Dalton is about 135 miles northeast of Munford, and Jim had watched in dismay as others were granted furloughs. The issuance of a furlough was not merit based, but by random draw. Exception was made for married men and those who could promise to return with a new recruit or a deserter. On Feb. 15, what Jim described as "this lonely Sabbath morning," he wrote to Emma:

> *We had to leave our cabins but we are in some that are not as good as the ones that we made. The cause of our moving was that Gen. Cheatham wanted to command the troops from his own state. We had to change with some Tennesseans (Gen. Cheatham is a Tenn.) We are now camped three miles northwest from Dalton. We are not far from Tunnel Hill. Since we came here we have to do a little picket duty, not to prevent the Yankees from suppressing the army but to keep the men from straying about over the country. I will have to go on picket this evening at three o'clock. It is a very bad day to go on picket, for it is raining. But I can endure as much hardships as any soldier. The Yankees are, I suppose, coming down through that country, but I hope they will be checked before they get down in Talladega County.*
>
> *I cannot state the prospect of my getting to come home for I do not know whether Jim Richey will bring any person with him or not. If he does, I guess I can get to go. He was to come with one of our men which went home on a furlough, but did not come back. There is a great revival going on in this brigade now and has been going on about a week. We have preaching at the church every night and Sabbath days. I guess I will have a chance to send this letter by hand so that it will be mailed somewhere. It will go through quicker.*
>
> *The army is in good health and good spirits. They are all reenlisting for the war. This regiment have reenlisted.*

During the failed Chattanooga Campaign, 36-year-old Michael Garland Pearson of Monroe, Louisiana, had been promoted to captain in the 19th Louisiana Infantry Regiment. Coincidentally, his two-year commitment was about to end. He might have terminated his service and returned home, but at Dalton, he reenlisted for an additional year. In January, he was granted a furlough that would allow him to travel 600 miles to western Louisiana to visit his wife. They had been married five years and had three young children. Given the great distance, unreliable transportation and limited time, he chose instead to visit his wife's Best, Lewis and English relatives in Talladega, Alabama. His wife was Mary E. Best, the daughter of Mary Celine Lewis Best, who was the older sister of Margaret Rose English. Although he had never met his wife's elderly grandparents, Alexander and Amaritta Lewis, or numerous aunts, uncles and cousins, he would be welcomed with open arms, not only as kinfolk but also as a soldier in need of rest and comfort. During his visit, he became acquainted with Emma English, his wife's 21-year-old cousin, and consequently learned that both her brother Jim and his wife's Uncle Sam Lewis were also stationed in the camps at Dalton. When

he returned to camp, he carried food and clothing for them.

In Jim's Feb. 19 reply to a letter from Emma, he wrote: "The letter which I received was mailed on the fifteenth, stating about Captain Pearson bringing some clothing and provisions for me. I do not need the clothing, for if I had to march much, I would have them to throw away. I know where his regiment is. It is not far from where we are camped. His regiment belongs to the same division that this regt. does. I will go and see him on the 25th or 26th." Promotions among the enlisted men were determined by election, and he closed his letter with good news: "You wrote to know whether I ran for any office or not. I am now third sergeant."

The Union Army's Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman had orders to destroy Johnston's Army of Tennessee, with the capture of Atlanta as a secondary objective. On Feb. 24, three columns of Union troops attacked Tunnel Hill. After two days of intense skirmishing, they retreated. On Feb. 29, Jim wrote to Emma:

Dear Sister,

I once more seat myself to give you an answer to the letter I received yesterday, dated the 26th. I was very glad to hear from home and hear that all was well. I am well at the present time. I will have a little more news of importance to write this time, since the fight, although I was not in it but was near enough to hear the bumb shells whistle and the minnie balls. The enemy did not attempt to try to take the works where we were. We were where we could see some of the fighting going on. We had the best position on the line. Our breastworks were on a large hill with an old field in front of us, so that our cannons could play on them well. We could see everywhere the shells would strike and make the Yanks dusk out. Every time our cannons would fire and make Yanks run, our boys would give a loud yell. After the Yanks left, some of the boys went on the battlefield. Some of the Yanks torn to pieces rightly with the shells. Yesterday we had to follow them up to Tunnel Hill then come back to our old camps this morning.

I went to see Capt. Pearson the day before we moved. He just had arrived that morning. He gave me a ham and some pies and my pants. I did not want the shirt. I seen him yesterday evening. He looked well. He belongs to the Lance Division that I do. Cousin Tom Best passed close to our regiment yesterday going to the front. I did not get to see him. I wrote him a little note the evening before, for him to come and see me, but he did not have time to do it.

I do not know what Capt. Pearson will do for winter quarters, for they burnt theirs up. They were in front of our works. They will have to take the weather in the woods, I suppose. There was just one man killed in our regiment. I guess you have heard the loss of the whole army. It was 110 killed and wounded. I do not know how many Yanks were killed, a great many more than ours.[16] *I will have to close as I have just come to camp. You must excuse my writing for I am in a hurry and tired.*

No more but remain your brother,
J.S.C. English

A few days later, Emma received a letter from Captain Pearson with his version of the Battle of Tunnel Hill:

I arrived in camp just in time to get into hard work. I arrived on Sunday and on Tuesday we were ordered into line of battle to meet an advance of the enemy, and remained in line for about a week. But he, finding us so

16. Union losses numbered 300; Confederate losses, 140.

much stronger than he expected, returned to his fortifications beyond the Chickamauga. We had several pretty severe skirmishes, but no general engagement. We took quite a number of prisoners and killed and wounded many. From prisoners taken, we learn that they expected us to run at their appearance. The only damage done us is the burning of our winter qtrs. Our line of battle was formed behind our quarters and we had to fire them to get them out of the way, and are consequently in the woods. But I hope we will not have to remain long inactive. I am getting very anxious to see this dreadful affair ended. I hope you have all gotten over your affright about the Yankees visit-ing you. I have heard nothing from home since I returned and have had no opportunity of writing and fear it will be some time before I will hear. I saw James the day after my return and once since. He is quite well. He now belongs to a division camp not more than half a mile from us. I have not seen or heard from Uncle Sam Lewis. Excuse this hurried letter. I am very closely engaged. My love to all. Write soon.

Very truly your cousin,
M.G. Pearson

Several weeks later, Emma again heard from Captain Pearson—a letter that is endearingly personal and achingly self-conscious.

Cousin Emma,

Your letter of the 15th March came to hand several days ago, but I was at the time on duty in the town of Dalton and this is the first quiet time I have had to answer it. I am still without news from home. Now nearly four months since I had any direct news from my dear wife and little ones. This is hard to be borne, but my old philosophy comes to my relief, what cannot be cured must be endured. But you must not be surprised if my philosophy fails me and some of the melancholy produced by this long deprivation from my loved ones should creep into my letter, though I don't know but I am rather favorably situated in corresponding with my friends in Talladega. While with you, I think I must have made a character for a very poor talker and consequently you will not expect much in the way of a correspondent. But I hope you will be able to read more of my heart than I am capable of expressing either orally or on paper. I am accustomed to speak but seldom of myself when I have anything more important to speak or write about. Since I parted with you all, I have frequently thought of my almost stupid stillness while there, but I will venture this much in self defense and in defense of the taste and judgment of your Cousin Mary (for I have sometimes thought that probably you have wondered what she would have favored in a stupid old fellow like me.) You have not seen me as myself as when all was happiness in the society of friends and loved ones.…

I have not seen James since I last wrote you, though we are camped not a half a mile of each other. We are kept so closely employed that we have not time to seek the other. His regt. is on provost duty at Dalton this week and soon as they return to their camps, I shall try to see him. I have never seen Uncle Sam, yet I wrote to him soon after my return to camp, but have never heard from him. We are now employed fortifying our position and I think if the Yankees feel like giving us a trial here we will be able to give them all they deserve.

I was glad to hear that Cousin Lou paid you a visit. I am sure she made a better reputation as a talker than I did. Though it would seem she would have made the impression that I would not write to her, she probably found a letter on her return home. I received a letter from Cousin Sallie a day or two since, and will answer it today. Tell Laura that Willie has just returned from 20 days leave of absence. Socks fit. My kindest regards to all friends, and I would be remembered especially after your own family to Grandpa and Grandma, Aunt Ada Adams and family, and Cousin Hannah Lewis. Please excuse this scattered epistle. Write soon, and delight me.

He signed the letter, "Very truly your cousin."

Jim's hopes of winning a furlough continued. On March 4, he wrote to his mother: "I thought I would write as I have a good chance to send the letter by hand to Talladega by Asbury Stockdale, who is going home on a furlough of eighteen days. There is also three of this company going home. I reckon you think it strange that I do not get a furlough. I did not have luck enough to draw it. I cannot tell whether I will get one yet or not. I guess you have heard from Capt. Pearson. He said that he was going to write to you. He was well the last time I seen him."

On March 13, he wrote:

I seen Capt. Pearson about three days ago. He looked well then. I did not get to speak to him. I will go and see him next week.

There is a great revival going on yet. We have preaching nearly every night. I go nearly every night. We have a good old preacher Mr. McMullen. He is from Pickens County. Also, we have two chaplains which stay with this regiment. One is the chaplain of our regiment. The other, the chaplain of the brigade. I don't see as there is any chance for me to get a furlough. … Gen. Hood has passed an order for the men not to draw furloughs by lots. The officers have to give them to the ones that need them the most. I guess furloughing will play out before the next men come back. I cannot tell how long the furloughing business will continue.

Sergt. Porter brought a negro boy back with him, so I don't have to work any. He does all our washing. We don't have any trouble to get washing done. I will have to close, for this time. No more, but remain your brother, James English

Colonel has issued an order for we sergeants to wear our stripes.

In early spring, they began readying in earnest for the inevitable attack. Jim wrote on March 17:

Dear Sister,

I once more seat myself to give you an answer to the most welcome letter which came to hand on the 15th. I did not have time to write any sooner, for we have been on drills every day this week. On Monday we had brigade drill. On Tuesday we had division drill, and Wednesday we had corps drill and a sham fight. That was yesterday. We did not fight any but fired our guns off, acted like we would in battle. We first drilled around until 2 o'clock, then we form[ed] two lines of battle, then threw out skirmishes they commenced firing, then they run in the first line, fired, the next line advanced, fired, then we made a charge. From that we went to camps. We have done more drilling since General Hood [has] been in command of our corps. I think he is a good general. The boys are all in good spirits. I think when we meet the Yankees we will be sure to whip them.

I am now in better health than I have been since I last [illegible]. We have plenty to eat with the provisions I received from home. We have a very good cook for my mess. He can bake as good light corn bread as I ever ate at home.

I saw Capt. Pearson yesterday, but did not get to speak to him. You must write and let me know all the news, also give my best respects to all.

No more but remain your brother,
Sergt. J.S.C. English

On March 22, Dalton awoke to four inches of snow blanketing the north Georgia countryside, which led to hours of snowball battling that pitted one regiment against another. By then, the Confederate Army of Tennessee had gathered more than fifty thousand troops in north Georgia. On March 27, he wrote: "I cannot tell anything about Uncle Sam."

Jim finally received his long-sought parole in April and traveled home to Munford. While he was there, he probably learned of the death of his Cousin Will, who had died within the first year of his enlistment. In Munford, he received a letter from A.T. Porter, one of his fellow soldiers:

Friend English,

Having missed you more than any one that have left, I thought I would write you a line in order to let you know that we are all right side up yet and are in fine spirits as regards the war, and we are in good health at present. Nothing new has taken place since you left us.
Lt. Richey & Sgt. Richey both sailed into port this evening and Sgt. Richey forgot to look for the box that I wrote to Pa to send to the Talladega Depot for me. I want you, if you be so fortunate as to get this note before you start back, to be certain to inquire at the depot for a box for A.T. or A.W. at Talladega,[17] *and if there be any boxes or box for either of us be certain to bring them with you, or else express them and pay the express and we will replace the same as soon as you get here. James, be sure and make this inquiry at the Talladega Depot for the boxes and oblige your friend. This leaves us all well.*

I am your friend as ever.
Sgt. A.T. Porter

P.S. Please buy me something to put stripes on my coat, James. Be certain to get something, for you know that I am compelled to have them.

Upon his return to Dalton, Jim wrote to Emma on May 2:

After arriving at my old camps yesterday evening I thought I would let you know how I enjoyed myself coming back. I had a very nice time. I came with Mr. Richey to Montgy. There I met up with one of my acquaintances who belongs to the same regiment. It taken me four days to come but I arrived safely and found all in their little cabins. There have been some little skirmishing about four days ago. They don't believe there will be any fight as strong as they do below here. I cannot say whether there will be any fight here soon or not. We are going out to target shoot this morning. The boys are in as good spirits as ever and all look well.

The first thing I heard after getting here late yesterday evening was a court-martial read out on dress parade. It was for, I think, sixteen men to be shot. Four were to be shot next Wednesday in presence of this division. I expressed my box from Munford. It cost $27.00 dollars. I did not know John Weatherly[18] *was an express agent until I got to the depot that morning. I don't know whether it has come or not. I have not been to the express office yet. You must excuse my bad writing. I forgot to tell you that the English boys are at Montevallo with Gen.*

17. Jim had shared a tent with A.T. Porter, whose brother A.W. was also an original member of the company. In a letter, Jim wrote: "Sgt. Porter can drill a company as good as any officer in the company and is not afraid to talk to no persons. It makes no difference if he is a general or colonel." The Porter brothers survived the war.

18. John Weatherly, the express agent in Munford, would marry Jim's sister Sallie in 1880.

Loring. They belong to the 43 Miss. Regt., Co. A. You must write to Sergt. R.H. English, Co. A.

J. English

I seat myself this evening to add a few more lines after writing this morning, before sealing my letter. The first thing was heard was some small arms, then the long rolling war beat. We were ordered in line of battle for a fight. After taking our position, we remained there about one hour. As quick as we got there we commenced building our breastworks. We did not get to build the left. We were ordered off. Where we were going, we knew not, but after marching a while, we were on our way to Tunnel Hill. We went about two miles when we were ordered to halt. There we remained about an hour and taken a little shower of rain, not enough to wet march. I think before long the prospects are good for a little fight. The cavalry did have a little brush this morning. I do not know the result. All are peaceful this evening. It is a good thing I got my furlough when I did for all furloughs are stopped, even furloughs are stopped on [those who return with] recruits. There is one man in our camp who got a recruit just two days too late.

I have not seen Capt. Pearson yet. Thomas Best is camped about two miles above us. We move South.

Sherman's troops had begun battling their way southeastward along the 137 miles of rails between Chattanooga and Atlanta, as unstoppable as water flowing downhill. In the first engagement of the Atlanta Campaign, they captured Tunnel Hill on May 7. Just north of Dalton, the three-day Battle of Rocky Face Ridge followed. Jim hurriedly wrote to Emma about its outcome on an undated scrap of paper: His regiment had moved west of the railroad; he had finally met up with Cousin Tom Best, who was well; he had seen Captain Pearson, who "came through safe and is well"; and he supposed the "English boys" were nearby. As for his uncle, he wrote that "This is the place where Uncle Sam was. I don't know whether he is here or not and have not had time to find out." Sam had fought at Missionary Ridge before retreating to Dalton, where Jim had located him only once among the 40,000 troops during their five months there. Jim would later learn that Sam Lewis died in the Battle of Rocky Face Ridge on May 7. He was 37 years old.

To Johnston's surprise, Sherman's forces skirted Dalton, proceeding to Atlanta with the Army of Tennessee behind them. This marked the beginning of the Atlanta campaign. Before the war, Atlanta with its population of 9,554 was the twelfth largest city in what would become the Confederacy. But it was a vital hub for several railroads, with wagon roads radiating in every direction. Early in the war, the city was considered comparatively safe from Union forces, but now its warehouses were stocked with food, forage, supplies, ammunition, clothing and other war materiel critical to the Confederate armies of the Deep South.

General Johnston realized that the Yankees could only advance through Georgia by keeping close to their supply line, the Western & Atlantic Railroad from Chattanooga. On Sherman's heels, the Army of Tennessee followed the rails southward to Resaca, a village in a heavily wooded area where the railroad crossed a tributary of the Coosa River. From near there on May 12, Jim wrote:

Dear Sister,

Seated around the fireside, I seat myself to write you a few lines to let you know how I am getting along. You may not expect to read any news of importance. We are now in line of battle and have been for the last four days. We have not had any hard fights yet, but been in a little skirmish. The Yankees are in front of us here skirmishing all the time. There have been a fight on the right, also one on our left. Gen. Wheeler had the fight on the right and Gen. Loring had the fight on the left. Cousin Tom Best was in the one on the right. And the

English boys was in the one on the left. I cannot tell whether any of them were killed or not. I heard that John McElderry was killed. I cannot tell what the result will be hereafter. I think we will have a big fight before it is over with. I think we will whip them, too. They have been trying to take some of our position but were repelled very bad. I will write when the fight is over if I get through safe. We drew coffee today and also a little bacon. You must excuse my bad writing for I am just writing on my knapsack.

No more, but remain your brother,
J.S.C. English

On the evening of May 13, the 42nd Alabama arrived at Resaca and joined the attack on Sherman's troops the next day. The Battle of Resaca lasted two days. It was the first major battle of the Atlanta Campaign and its only engagement in which the combined forces of each army—about 164,000 men—met on the field of battle.

One of the soldiers later told the story of J.P. McMullen, the 53-year-old Presbyterian minister from Pickens County whom Jim had mentioned in his March 13 letter. At Resaca, Rev. McMullen had accompanied the Confederate brigade during the advance: "It was an inspiring sight. Rev. J.P. McMullen … was following the regiment riding a little mule. When the 42nd moved out, quite a number of the men threw their blankets in front of him on his mule so that he had quite a pile. When we were moving across the old field and were driving the enemy before us like a flock of sheep, the old gentleman became so excited that he rushed out in front on his little mule with his pile of blankets and taking off his hat led the charge. His long grey beard gave him a venerable appearance, and rushing out as he did, when the men were already full of excitement and enthusiasm, Gen. Johnston himself leading a charge would not have been more heartily cheered." The 42nd Alabama made it to within thirty yards of the defending Federals, but the charge was broken and they fell back. Reverend McMullen was killed in the charge he led; his son died on the same battlefield. There were an estimated 6,100 casualties at Resaca: 2,600 Confederate and 3,500 Union. Of the 42nd Alabama, 59 were dead or wounded.[19]

After Resaca, the 42nd continued to meet the enemy in almost daily skirmishes at Adairsville and Pumpkin Vine Creek, a region that was sparsely populated, hilly, heavily wooded and poorly mapped. The rough terrain and heavy rains favored Johnston's smaller force. Anticipating the next step of Sherman's southward progression, Johnston's forces formed a line forty miles west of Atlanta. The key to their position was the crossroads at a Methodist church named New Hope.

On May 25, in a late afternoon battle fought under dark skies and rolling bursts of thunder, the Federals met a withering hail of bullets and shells that quickly halted their advance. In this short engagement, they lost about 1,500 men while the Confederates suffered little. The 42nd Infantry's losses were comparatively light, and for them it was a rare victory.

At sunrise the next day, both commanders worked to position their men in the woods east of Dallas. Except for skirmishing, there was little fighting. What began at New Hope Church ended farther east at Pickett's Mill. There, on May 27, Sherman made a desperate attempt to defeat the right side of the Southern line by a surprise attack. In the fight at Pickett's Mill, which lasted less than an hour, the Federals were hurled back with 1,400 casualties, half of

19. During the Chattanooga and Atlanta Campaigns, the 42nd Alabama lost 132 soldiers to capture, either during battle or through desertion. By then Grant had discontinued the policy of prisoner parole and exchange, and the Union prisons began to fill with Confederate soldiers. Grant knew the manpower of the South was limited, and abolishing paroles would bring the war to an end sooner.

whom were killed or wounded. Fighting continued over the next few days, both sides seeking to hold the enemy in position. Once it was clear that no decisive battle would be fought, Sherman moved eastward to regain the railroad. After doing battle in Mississippi and Tennessee, hundreds of miles from Munford, Jim English was then within 75 miles of his East Alabama home, which surely altered his perspective on the war and added a personal sense of urgency to halting the Union advance. From the "line of battle near New Hope Church, Georgia," Jim wrote his account of what Sherman's men would refer to as the "Battle of the Hell Hole":

Dear Mother,

Notwithstanding the opportunity to which I have to write, I seat myself this the first day of June to inform you of my whereabouts and am still among the living yet. My last letter I wrote home I had just crossed the river. We left the river on the 24th May in 12 miles of Marietta west of the railroad. About 12 o'clock on the 25th we heard small arms firing. We were ordered in line of battle. Our company was thrown out as skirmishers but did not remain long until we had to change our position. Then we were ordered back to our Regiment. Then the 54th Ala. was thrown out as skirmishers. We began to build our breastworks. When we finished them such as they were made out of logs and chunks, the skirmishers began to fight. It was not long until they began to come in. It was not long until the Yankees were close at hand. They came in about 50 yards of our works. Some of their sharpshooters came nearer. They charged on our left but would not come in sight of us. We could not see them until they came in thirty yards of us. Their main line came in 50 or 60 yards of us and fired at us but did not do any damage. We kept close to our works waiting for them. Dark closed the scene. I had to go on picket that night. It rained a portion of the night. I had a bad time that night. The next morning was quiet nearly all day, but they still kept sharpshooting. The next day in the afternoon they begun on the 37 Ala., which was out left of our regiment, with their artillery which they had brought up in front of them in about 300 yards of the breastworks. They began to shell them and shoot grapeshot at them. The breastworks were not sufficient to stand the works of artillery. They tore the works down in some places killing and wounding a good many men with the pieces of chunks. But the men stood brave to their post, still kept shooting at their cannons, but they still kept shooting. Gen. J. sent the 54 Ala. to reinforce Baker. Then it was not long until they begun to draw back until they entirely silenced the Yankee battery. Night soon came and closed the scene again. All day the next day 28th they kept up sharpshooting. The night of the 28th we were relieved from our breastworks. We marched to the right, then back in two miles of our old position, rested there that night. Next morning we marched to the right again and relieved some cavalry which were in some breastworks made out of rails. They give us shovels that night. We made a good earthworks. We remained in them, looking for them to charge until the night of the 30th. We were reinforced by Gen. Clayton's Brigade. Then we lay down and taken a little food and a little sleep for the first time since the 25th. About 10 o'clock the 1st we taken our positions on the right of Gen. Clayton's brigade, commenced building breastworks but were stopped. Taken our same position in rear of Clayton & taken a good nights rest. Nothing more this morning. I cannot tell anything about Capt. Pearson. I have not seen him since the 25th. Tom Best is well and at his command. I have never seen my box.

Your Son,
J. English

The battles at New Hope Church and Pickett's Mill slowed the Federal advance on Atlanta by one week. In addition to the normal dangers of combat and a serious shortage of food, the soldiers of both armies had faced rain, heat, continuous sharpshooting, the screams of the wounded and the stench of the dead. On June 5, he wrote to Emma with "sad news":

Dear Sister,

I received a few lines a few days ago dated 27th. I was exceedingly glad to hear from home and hear that all was well, but was sorry to hear the death of Uncle Sam. Letters come through very quick, only three days coming. I did not have time to write any sooner, and also, paper is about out with me and no prospect of getting any. I wrote to Ma on the first. I also received your letter on that day after writing.

We went in our breastworks on the night of the first, remained in them until last night about 11 o'clock, left our breastworks and marched in the direction of Marietta. I cannot tell our whereabouts now. We are about eight miles southeast of Marietta. We have formed a new line which will be to the right of where we was. We had a very bad time last night. It rained a great deal the first and 2nd, third and yesterday. I cannot tell anything about the fight, only what I see. We have whipped them every time they attacked us, but they won't fight us. They try to flank around. As paper is scarce, I will not have much to write, only that I am well. So is the boys of your acquaintance. Lt. Richey was sick and left us.

My object of writing to you is to let you know of the sad news. I heard last night Capt. Pearson was killed in the battle of New Hope Church. I guess it was on the 25th. He was struck with a Minnie ball in the back of the head, went through and came out above the left eye. He did not speak, only lived about five minutes. I was close. Give my love to all at home.

Your brother,
J.C.E.

From "in line of battle," he wrote ten days later:

Dear Sister,

After receiving a few lines today, I seat myself immediately to answer it. I will not have anything of importance to write at the present. We are still in front of the enemy, but no fighting going on, only light skirmishing. We are now where we can see the Yankees breast-works and wagons and tents. The weather has been very bad for the last week, very wet. Prospects for more rain. Since my writing last, we moved on the extreme right. We move nearly every time we build good works. We have not built good works this time. Our regiment was in picket three nights ago. It rained all the time we were on. I cannot tell what will be our next move. Troops are still going to the right.

Gen. Johnson I don't think will fight unless they fight him and when they fight him they will have to fight him in breastworks. Some little talk of him falling back across the Chattahoochee river. I cannot tell whether that is true or not. The troops have put their faith in Johnston. Some Virginians acted very bad last night. Four officers and about sixty privates went to the Yankees. That is reported this morning. I suppose it is so. Our cavalry goes around in rear of the Yankees once and a while and burns their trains. There is some prospect of us falling back. I have not seen Cousin Robert English since I wrote last. When you write, direct your letter to Army of Tenn., the brigade and regt. I will come to a close. You will have to excuse my bad writing as my pen is very bad. I am well and hearty, eat all the cornbread and bacon I can get.

No more but remain your brother,
J. English

On June 20, Robert English, one of the "English boys," wrote to Emma from Marietta:

Dear Cousin Emma,

I received your [letter] yesterday and with the greatest promptness this morning I take the pleasure to answer it. I was truly glad to hear from you and all of my cousins and aunts for I assure you it is a pleasure even here in the rifle pits where the Yankee shells are flying all most in ever direction to read a letter from my cousins and aunts and to hear you was well. We have been blessed so far with good health all tho we have had to undergo many hard-ships in the present campaign, mostly on the account of the rains.

I have had the pleasure of seeing Cousin Jim one time. He was well. I don't think there was ever cousins more anxious to see each other than we were. I got to see one more of our cousins the same day a few minutes after cousin Jim passed. I was very glad to see then Cousin Tom Best. I can say I have seen two of my cousins and that as all if I come out safe in the pending battle, I will make an effort to get a furlough and come to see you all. You and Cousin Sallie and Laura must pick me out a sweetheart by that time. I know if you was in Mississippi, I could suit you for there is some fine young men in my company that would not be a bad choice but they are like myself. They have as much as they can attend to in the army, hoping for the time to come when Peace will be made but it is well enough to look forward and write a few words to her occasionally, but she won't forget on that as battling for his coming. I received a letter from Ma yesterday. She was well altho her health is very timid. She is getting old and grieves herself a great deal about us ever since Brother John got killed. She fears that some of the rest of us will get killed. Whenever she hears of a fight here, she can't rest until she gets word that we are safe. A J received letter from Sister Sallie not long since that left her Mr. Flynn 2 sons well. Her husband has not had to go to the war yet on the account of his health. His health is very bad. Brother Lewis and Frank send their love to you and Aunt Margaret and cousin Sallie and Laura, and tell them to write. I will close. Give my love to all my relations.

I am your sincere cousin.
Robt. H. English.

Lt. R.H. English
Co. A, 43rd Mississippi Regt.
Adams Loring Div.
Atlanta, Georgia

From a "camp near Marietta" on June 28, Jim wrote to Emma of his new responsibilities:

After receiving a few lines from you yesterday, hearing that all are getting along so well and enjoying such good health, which is not generally the case everywhere, I am also glad to inform you that I am enjoying as fine health as ever I did in my past days. I cannot say that I am enjoying the pleasures of a soldier's life as well as I could at home. I am also glad to say that for the first time since the beginning of my soldier's life, I have had the opportunity of getting into an easy position. I am now acting ordnance sergeant for the regiment. I have been acting every since the 25th of this month. I am much more easily tired than if I was lying in the ditches. I get more to eat, more rest, not always plagued with moving about and going on picket. I am camped about two miles from our regiment, and what I get to eat is fresh cooked.

Continuing, he spoke of the Battle of New Hope Church a month earlier and its aftermath:

I saw it in the paper where a Yankee gave an account of the battle. He said that the dead were so thick that it was impossible for a horse to walk without picking his way to keep from walking on the dead and wounded. I heard a man say this morning that some other man who was at the breastworks since the last fight told him that the Yankee wounded and dead were lying on the battlefield yet. They could see some of the wounded setting under the shades, keeping the flies off some of the others. They are, I suppose, on half way ground. I don't know how many was killed and wounded.

Alabama had remained relatively immune from Union incursion until Sherman organized a cavalry expedition to ride through central Alabama and destroy the Montgomery & West Point Railroad, severing transportation between Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi—and "doing all the mischief possible" along the way. Rousseau's Raiders, as they were known, reached Talladega on July 15, where they destroyed the railroad depot, several cars full of provisions and two gun factories. The *Democratic Watchtower* reported on the Yankees plundering homes and making off with livestock, concluding: "Like a Celtic friend of ours expressed himself once 'He wished they were in Holland and that Holland was in Hell.' We hope, however, that the next time they come we will be better prepared for them." After hearing about the raid, Jim wrote from a mile and a half outside Atlanta that "by the kind hand of providence, I am now permitted to write you a few lines once more," continuing, "I have been very anxious to hear from home, to hear how the Yankees done the people through that country. I heard this morning that they did not interfere with anything. I was very glad to hear they did not go by your house. I heard they went down by Jemison's Mill. … I am still with the ordnance. I was not in the fight, am in good health."

By July 20, Johnston's Army of Tennessee had retired south of Peachtree Creek, a stream three miles north of Atlanta. With Sherman splitting his army into three columns for the assault on Atlanta and Johnston ready to attack them, Confederate President Jefferson Davis suddenly relieved Johnston of his command and appointed John B. Hood to take his place. The ever cautious Johnston had never lost a decisive battle, but had also never won one. Corporal Robert A. Lambert described the reaction of the 42nd Alabama soldiers to the news: "The effect of this change … can best be compared to a very warm man wearing a suit of thin underclothing and having a very cold, wet blanket thrown over him." Jim English wrote: "The change of command did not make any change on the troops. They all say they know Gen. Hood will fight and do all he can to whip. I have not been able to find out what Gen. Johnston was relieved for. Some say he was relieved because he would not let President Davis know his plans. Then others say because he wanted to evacuate Atlanta." Having observed that the Confederates fared best when defending their breastworks rather than attacking the Yankees, he continued: "We have lost many a good soldier by charging works. That is one thing that Gen. Johnston would not do. I suppose that is the reason that he was released. Gen. Hood don't care much for the loss of men so as to gain a great victory. The troops all like Johnston, also like Hood very well, not so well as Gen. Johnston." Under Hood, the July 20 attack failed, and the Confederates fell back. Their losses numbered 4,796 that one day. In the days that followed, the Union forces pushed into Atlanta and Confederate casualties multiplied.

From Atlanta on July 28, Jim wrote:

Dear Mother,

After marching part of last night and this morning we have halted to rest a little while. I thought I would write you a few lines to let you know how I am getting along. I have been well and in good health at the present time. I have returned to my company. I returned two days before yesterday. We were relieved from our ditches yesterday by Gen. Hardee's corps. From the ditches we marched to the center of our line then back to the rear of Gen. Stewart's corps, remained there all night, then we left there this morning, came through town to the left of our line of breastworks southwest of Atlanta. I cannot tell how long we will remain here, not long I don't suppose.

The Yankees I suppose are maneuvering to the left to surprise the city, but I guess they will meet with a warm reception before they do it. Gen. S.D. Lee is in command of this corps now. Gen. Cheatham was commanding it since Gen. Hood has been commanding the army. This corps & Gen. Stewart's is out of the ditches since Gen. Hardee's corps and the state troops are holding the breastworks now. The two corps will guard the flanks. The Yankees have all moved from the east of Atlanta, all going around to the west. I suppose they did not care to go any farther since Gen. Hardee gave them such a good whipping. I suppose they want to get to the West Point and Atlantic Railroad to cut us off, but I guess they will be mistaken. There is more railroads running to Atlanta than that one. The railroad from West Point to Montgomery is not repaired yet. They will be repaired in a few days. The cars go through by Columbus, Ga. out to the railroad between W. Point & Montgomery.

He then responded to the more recent accounts of Rousseau's Raid in Talladega, having learned how the town's home guard had retreated before the raiders arrived. Jim, who knew what bravery was, had witnessed it at close hand, mocked the home guard:

Mr. Sims came through to us yesterday from Talladega. I was glad to hear from Talladega, to hear how the Raiders done the country and how the people done. They were very "brave," all run to the hills instead of defending their homes. Then after the Yanks all left, all gathered at Talladega to organize in companys to do great works. When they come again, they will be ready for them. It will be about like it was. This time every man will let them do as they please to save his property. There could have been enough men through Alabama gathered up with the cavalry to whip them easy. If our regiment had happened to been in that country, we would have made them turn their courses. I was very much surprised to hear of the men through that country doing so bad. They all turned out when they heard they were coming. … When you write I wish to know where Mr. Curry went & Mr. Jemison. I would like to hear from them. I was glad to hear that [the raiders] did not go by your house.

Rousseau's Raiders had also taken some of the slaves they encountered along the way:

I wish to hear how many negroes went with them and [if] any of yours went or whether they had any notion of going or not. I heard they did not take any but those that wanted to go. I also heard after they made it to the railroad before West Point, they [the Raiders] run off and left them [the freed slaves]. That is what Mr. Sims tells. He is just from below where the railroad were torn up. I am glad they treated the negroes that way. Cane them some sense the next time. Mr. Sims will go back in a day or two. I will send [this letter] by him which is the safest plan, for it is very uncertain about mail coming through until the railroad is finished. I wrote one a few days ago. I do not know if it will go through or not. I will come to a close until Mr. Sims starts, probably I will have something more important.

No more but forever Your Son,
James English

He continued writing the following day:

All came through safe. Our company has 17 members now. We started with 34 from Dalton. Since my writing of the 27th, I will have a little more news of importance to write. I was on the march when I wrote I would write whenever we halted. We did not halt before we went into one of the most horrible places any human being could. Not the [illegible] *to get killed. When I wrote yesterday, we were in the edge of Atlanta. At that time we thought nothing of getting into an engagement that evening, but we did not know what is to come to pass in the future. We went in 40 yards of their breastworks but could not go any farther. It was about as hot a place as I*

ever was in. Our regiment lost a great many men. I think the number was about forty in all. Co. B in our regt. lost 13 wounded, two officers. Their Capt. was commanding the regt. When we were at Dalton, our regt. numbered about 300. Now they will only number about 130. When I was acting ordinance sergeant, there was only 175. That was before yesterday's fight. We are now building breastworks southwest of Atlanta. They always whip us when we charge their works. We always whip them when they charge ours.

I heard from Cousin Robert English and his brother last night. I passed their regt. but did not have time to call and see them. They are still alive and never been hurt. I will send this by Mr. Sims tomorrow.

Forever your son,
J. Eng.

Mr. Sims remain[ed] with us until the fight was over, came to us when we just came out. He had the chance to see a fight and hear the balls whistle.

This was the Battle of Ezra Church, in which Sherman's troops began their thrust southwest to destroy the Macon & Western Railroad. It was the last remaining railroad in and out of Atlanta. Writing "in the fortification" near present-day East Point on July 31, Jim reported:

Dear Sister & Mother,

Having the opportunity to send a letter to some place to get it mailed which we do not get often, only when some person is going down to Montgomery. There is a very responsible negro who is going home. He will start tomorrow. I will not have any news of importance to write this time. I wrote all the important news and sent the letter by Mr. Sims. Our division has moved to the extreme left of the army and fortified. We are now about eight or ten miles from Atlanta, southwest of the city. We are having very good times to what some of our troops are having. There is no Yankees close in front of us. Some of the cavalry say that the enemy are this side of the river in front of us. Some say they are not. I don't know which to believe. The Yankees have made another raid on the Macon road up about one mile and a half, which is repaired again by this time. That is the only way that any person can get from Atlanta is to go by Macon and Columbus or from there. It intersects with the West Point and Montgomery R.R. at Opelika, Ala. I am longing to see this campaign over with soon. I am on picket today, came on yesterday evening and will be relieved this evening. The Yankees, I suppose, are trying to flank us and make us evacuate Atlanta. They are afraid to try to take it by fighting, for it is useless for them to undertake it.

[unsigned]

The Confederates were pushed back to Utoy Creek, a tributary of the Chattahoochee River in western Fulton County. What began as skirmishes turned into a battle on Aug. 5 and continued for three days. Neither side claimed victory. Although the number of casualties went unrecorded, Jim English was among them.

Records show that on Aug. 9, he was admitted to the 600-bed Ocmulgee Hospital in Macon, Georgia, 103 miles southeast of Atlanta. Two days earlier, he had been wounded while on sentry duty on the "picket line." Macon had become a mecca for wounded Confederate soldiers who made their way there in droves. Because the prosperous town was also the site of a prison for Union soldiers, the demand for physicians, nurses and medical supplies had proved overwhelming. Its Ladies' Soldiers' Relief Society sewed bandages and tended to the injured. His wound was described as a "Vulnus Contusus of left knee (shell)" from which he had been suffering for five days. Many of the patients admitted to the Ocmulgee hospital that summer were suffering from wounds caused by minié balls, the bul-

lets with conical heads used with muzzle-loaded firearms. It was common practice to amputate an arm or leg when a bone was shattered by the projectile because there was no other surgical treatment at that time. He was hospitalized until Aug. 12, when he was allowed to travel to Munford. He would mark his twentieth birthday there on Sept. 10.

The four-month siege of Atlanta ended on the first day of September when General Hood evacuated the city, ordering the destruction of all the public buildings and anything else that might be an asset to Sherman's forces. In the long Atlanta Campaign, each side had lost 13,000 men. By then, what remained of the 42nd Alabama had been ordered to Spanish Fort, Alabama, on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay. One soldier recalled the reaction of the brigade to news that their destination was Mobile: "There never was a happier, jollier lot of fellows. … The trials, hardships and dangers of the campaign through which they had just passed were all forgotten, and on all sides could be heard songs, laughter and cheers."

From Munford, Jim wrote to his cousin Robert English, the youngest of the "English boys" from Mississippi. Robert survived the defense of Atlanta, although Lewis would die in Georgia before the year ended. Robert responded from near Lovejoy Station, south of Atlanta, on Sept. 12:

Dear Cousin,

Mr. James S.C. English, I received your very welcome letter yesterday. I was glad to hear from you, for I had almost give you up as killed, for I had written several times in the ditches and could not hear from you at all. You stated in your letter that Cousin Emma had written to me and she had not received any answer. I am sorry to hear that, for it is the same way of myself. I have written several times but could not hear from her nor you. I could not assign any reason until yesterday evening, only that you all neglected to write. I am glad I was laboring under a mistake. The fault is in the postmaster.

Jim, to tell you all about our marches and fight since you left the front is more than I am able to do, for the first night and day of Sept. we marched without rest. Atlanta was lost, and it was all we could do to save ourselves. Our men acted shamefully in evacuating Atlanta. They went down to town and broke open the government whisky and drank and done everything that was bad.

Tell Cousin Emma she must write. I have not received a letter from her nor Aunt Lizzie in a long time. I have looked very anxiously.

We have a beautiful camping ground. Our ration is a little short. I will close. Give love to Aunt Margaret and Cousin Emma. Write soon and often.

Yours etc.,
Lt. R.H. English

Jim apparently required further care for his wound. Cutting short his furlough, he somehow managed to return to Macon. Then, on Sept. 10, he wrote to Emma from a Montgomery hospital:

When leaving home I did not think that I would be absent so long, but I was mistaken. I went to Macon, Ga. and tried to get a transfer to Talladega but they would not give it. I did not try for a furlough and they were giving no furloughs, only for sixty days. So, I applied for a transfer to Montgomery. I am now at the Ladies Hospital in Montgomery. It is a very nice hospital. Very few wounded. The sick nearly all able to set up and walk about. Different from the Macon hospital. There, all were badly wounded. The ward which I was in was

so bad when I first went there, I could not stay in it. The wounded men smelling so bad. I will try and go to Selma and from there to Talladega. That is the only way I can get there. I will try for a transfer first. If I don't get that, I will try for a furlough. I will work every way to get there. I did not have much paper to write on and only a few lines to write, so I will close. I will write if I get to Selma, and if I don't.

This is the last known letter that Jim English wrote as a Confederate soldier.[20] After recovering from his wound, reassured that his family had remained safe, he would have rejoined the 42nd Alabama Infantry at Spanish Fort on Mobile Bay, where they were reinforcing its garrison.

By the summer of 1864, Mobile was the South's single port. Protected by three forts—Fort Morgan, Fort Gaines and Fort Powell—and a small fleet of Confederate ships, it was attacked by four Union ironclads and 14 other ships on Aug. 5. Rear Admiral David Farragut led them into Mobile Bay, and when the first Union ironclad was struck by a Confederate torpedo and sunk, he famously shouted, "Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!" and went on to capture the Confederate fleet. Within three weeks, all three forts were captured and Mobile's harbor was effectively closed. The city of Mobile, however, was heavily fortified and would remain in Confederate hands until the last days of the war.

Spanish Fort on the eastern shore of the bay presented the 42nd Alabama with a welcome change from the constant threat of combat. They were assigned to guard Confederate gunboats in the bay. But Spanish Fort proved to be inhospitable. Marching was replaced by hard labor, and combat by fever, sickness and deadly disease. The food they were given was poor, although it's said they feasted on freshly caught fish. One soldier described his duty at Spanish Fort: "The monotony of picket duty was unbroken; day after day and week after week, the same round of duty." Another wrote home, "I am not well this morning. … There is no chance to get a furlough. … The government owes me over $300." Ninety-seven of the 42nd, approximately half of the regiment, were hospitalized during the months there, and at least seven died. But with all things considered, it proved to be a fortunate move for the 42nd Infantry; it kept them from joining Hood's ill-fated Nashville campaign after Atlanta. At Franklin, Tennessee, an estimated 6,000 of the 21,000 soldiers under Hood's command lost their lives within two hours.

In October, Alabama's governor addressed what was becoming become an urgent problem: desertion and the failure of furloughed soldiers to return to their units. As he put it: "Many of you have left your commands without leave, under the mistaken notion that the highest duty required you [is] to provide sustenance and protection to your families. … I am authorized to say that all who will, without delay, voluntarily return to their commands will receive a lenient and merciful consideration, and that none who return within forty days from this date will have the penalty of death inflicted on them."

♛1865

From Spanish Fort, one soldier wrote to his family on Jan. 24: "It is said we are ordered to Montgomery but all the men believe we are going to South Carolina. We are very low spirited and a great many say they are going home. … But I do not see any chance to avoid going. I feel like all hope of getting home till the end of the war is at an end." Defeat seemed inevitable. On Jan. 28, the 42nd Alabama boarded boats that took them up the Alabama River to Montgomery. By train, they proceeded to Augusta, Georgia. Because so many of the rails had been destroyed

20. It would seem likely that the family's correspondence continued, but it was also possible that the Confederate mail system had begun to fail in the final year of the war.

during Sherman's sweep through Georgia, they were forced to march long legs of the journey that took them into the Carolinas.

After taking Atlanta, Sherman's army of 60,000 began its offensive through the South. By March 1865, they were in the middle of North Carolina, heading north with the intention of joining forces with Grant, whose men held the Confederate capital at Richmond under siege. General Robert E. Lee had ordered the Army of Tennessee to halt Sherman's forces from entering Virginia.

Southerners had protested the dismissal of General Johnston after the fall of Atlanta and Hood's disastrous foray into Tennessee. President Davis reluctantly reappointed Johnston to the command of the Army of Tennessee, which was by then reduced to a ragtag remnant of the fighting force he remembered. Outnumbered 20,000 to 60,000, there was little the Confederates could do to slow Sherman's advance.

On Feb. 27, at Hamburg, South Carolina, across the Savannah River from Augusta, the 42nd Alabama began the long march through South Carolina to link up with what remained of the Army of Tennessee. One soldier described the march: "The character of the country over which we passed had changed from sand to red clay hills. The drenching rains of February falling upon us every day, and the roads terribly cut up by so much travel, made it anything but pleasant traveling." Weeks later, the 42nd Alabama marched into Smithfield, North Carolina, where General Johnston was assembling a force of approximately 30,000.

One soldier later described the experience of rejoining the Army of Tennessee: "Here we had the first glimpse of General Joe Johnston since he had been restored to command by General Lee. The men were wild with delight at seeing their beloved Commander again, and such love and devotion as they exhibited would have affected a much colder and less sympathetic man than General Johnston. He was visibly affected as he looked upon the remnants of worn and battle scarred veterans, all that remained of that magnificent body of men he had left, but a few months before. Divisions were reduced to brigades, brigades to regiments and regiments to companies, their torn and tattered flags told of the strife through which they had passed. Though few in number, they were prepared to give a good account of themselves. To many a poor fellow, this was the last night on earth; many an eye gazed at the stars overhead for the last time. Tomorrow was to witness the last struggle of any importance between the contending forces."

On March 18, the Army of Tennessee marched ten miles and encamped near the village of Bentonville. The next day, Johnston launched an attack that managed to take a portion of Sherman's army by surprise and briefly gain the upper hand. What followed encompassed nearly 6,000 acres, lasted three days and ended with Johnston's men in retreat to Smithfield. The Battle of Bentonville was the largest fought in North Carolina, the final Confederate offensive and the last full-scale battle of the war. Many of the wounded—both Union and Confederate—ended up in a Union field hospital set up in the modest two-story farm home of John and Amy Harper. There, Federal surgeons treated a total of 554 men. Without antibiotics to stop infection, they could only amputate shattered arms and legs to prevent gangrene. Despite the screams of the wounded, the piles of severed limbs and the stench of blood and chloroform anesthetic, the Harper family refused to leave their home. Confederate casualties numbered 2,606.

At Smithfield on April 9, Johnston consolidated his depleted forces. What remained of the 37th, 42nd and 44th Alabama Infantries merged to form the 37th Alabama Infantry Regiment Consolidated. This effectively ended the 42nd Alabama as an active regiment, and the remaining members cased their battle flag for the last time. Jim English was among them. Johnston had no inkling that Lee had surrendered the Army of Virginia to Grant at Appomattox Court House that same day.

What followed was the trek northward to join General Lee. Reaching Greensboro, North Carolina, on April 13,

Johnston wrote, “My small force is melting away like the snow before the sun.” Some of his men had apparently turned back. Later, upon learning of Lee’s surrender, Johnston turned his troops around and on April 26 surrendered the Army of Tennessee to Sherman at the Bennett Place near Durham—despite orders to the contrary from Jefferson Davis. It was the largest troop surrender of the war. Of the original 904 members of the 42nd Alabama Infantry from its muster nearly three years earlier in Columbus, Mississippi, Jim English was one of the 56 left to surrender that day.

The war was over, and he walked home.

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