This day is rendered generous by the achievement of a memorable victory over the entire forces of Gen. Hood which are now scattered in tumultuous flight, our army in pursuit. I must describe what I witnessed and to do this must go back to the beginning of the day. Last night I stayed in the tent under the mistletoe, and as I had foreseen for the last time, for the army that bivouacked there the night of the 14th returns no more. At daybreak I left the tent and returned to our lines, where I found the men of our brigade and division, standing in battle line, or in a long double row awaiting orders to move forward. The regimental postmaster had arrived and was distributing the eagerly expected mail to the men in the ranks. Happy those who had received letters from home, even though they might have scant time to read before the bugles should sound the onward movement. I received a letter, read it, and answered it while sitting on my horse and even as the Regimental P. M. galloped back to camp, rang forth the clear notes of the bugles and the troops were in motion. A vigorous storm of shot and shell from the enemy's works gave us and (sic) earnest [announcement] of the reception that awaited us. Crushing my newly received letter deep into my pocket, I followed the rapidly moving columns. Our progress
was, however, not so triumphant as on yesterday. The Confederates made a most determined stand, refusing to recede an inch farther. They, having much the advantage, being well intrenched behind a stone wall, which was strengthened by earth thrown against it and barricaded by rails laid against the wall and sloping from the top to the ground. (I doubt the wisdom of this) The enemy had guns on the inside looking grimly toward us through enclozures (sic) in the walls. There were also barricades of rails in front of the walls, clearly visible from our lines. The 3rd Brigade were ranged behind a fence, the 12th being on the right on the Granny White Pike, and to the left, the 7th Minnesota and with the 12th directly opposite a strongly fortified part of the enemy's works. There we were ordered to halt, and to escape the galling fire from the enemy's lines to lie prone upon our faces with our heads to the enemy. Skirmishers, meanwhile, were sent forward to the most available positions and peppered the enemy's lines with well directed rifle shots. The cannon from the enemy's lines blazed away furiously and incessantly at our men, their shots generally passing over our heads, their shells exploding sometimes a mile to our rear.

Our batteries were situated a quarter of a mile to our rear, and threw their shots and shells over our heads, as according to some reports doing more damage to our own lines than to those of the rebels. Certainly some of our men were killed or wounded by them. It is a distressingly delicate position to occupy, batteries in front and rear and an artillery duel raging in mid-air over our heads. The wonder is that our men endured it so long and well. I did not covet a position in the line, but stationed myself with an ambulance corps in the rear, and on the left of the battery before mentioned. Occasionally we visited lines to remove a wounded soldier to the field hospital.
Edwards: Diary of Chaplain Elijah E. Edwards (Part I)

Battle of Nashville, afternoon of 2nd day (See page 8)
sometimes under a heavy fire of musketry. As our men were not in action, I passed the time by making hasty sketches of the battlefield. The sketch opposite represents the field as it appeared on the afternoon of the 16th inst. with the relative position of the 1st division and that part of the enemy's line, the left of which rests on or near the summit of Overton hill on the right of the picture. On the left is the Bradford mansion, afterward the field hospital, and in the right foreground the 2nd Iowa Battery which had been acting as a reserve. The Third Brigade rests on a line parallel with the enemy's line, extending from near the Bradford mansion to the pike. On the right lies the 2nd Brigade, [under] Col. Hubbard and beyond that the first Brigade [under] Col. McMillen. Our (Third) Brigade since the death of Col. Hill in the capture of the Fort on Hillsboro Pike has been under command of Col. Marshall, Lieut. Col. Bradley commanding the regiment. Between the Bradford mansion and foreground of the picture, meanders gracefully a small creek and under the shelter of its right bank soldiers are filling their canteens with water, or idly sitting and discussing the events of the day. Some with reckless bravado are playing cards. And yet the whole line is under a continual harassing fire from musketry and cannon. As before mentioned the missiles are aimed too high to do much damage. Nevertheless quite a number were wounded while lying prone upon their faces, whom I removed to the hospital and in so doing, passed over exposed portions of the field raked by the enemy's guns. The bodies of two of the men, whom I found dead on the banks of the creek, I did not remove since as yet no determination had been made as to place of burial, and it was proper that during the battle all our attention should be given to the living. After removing the wounded to the hospital, nearly a mile to the rear, I walked over to the Bradford mansion but
found it an unsafe place. It was already riddled by shot and shell, it being in easy range of the rebel lines. Sharpshooters fired whenever a blue coat appeared at the window or doors. Notwithstanding the peril a few lawless soldiers were already looting the building of its treasures and smashing its furniture. I make this mention to clear the hospital corps from the charge of this wreckage, as the vandalism displayed was prior to their occupation of the building as a Field Hospital. As it was dangerous to remain here, and my line of duty was outside, I returned or started to return to the Field Hospital. I had proceeded some distance when I was startled by a terrific cannonading from both sides. The earth shook with the roar of the artillery. I noticed here some of the phenomena accompanying a battle. Birds whirling in mid-air dropped suddenly to the earth as if killed by the concussion. Wild rabbits lost the fear of man in their terror, and rushed to his feet for shelter. Soldiers were seen in the background of this battle rushing aimlessly to and fro, some to find their places and others I fear to get out of danger. An officer and lady gaily mounted had ridden down from Nashville to be spectators of the battle. At the near bursting of a shell they suddenly turned their horses heads toward the city and galloped madly back. The lady at the bursting of another shell seemed to faint and was falling from her seat, when her cavalier road closely beside her, caught her waist in his arm and so supported her till they disappeared from sight. At this instant a closed carriage drove in from the city, and halted not far from the artillery. The door opened and a man with a large head, set on heavy, broad shoulders with a strangely marked face, smooth shaved, and flushed to a purplish redness, and eyes that glared like those of a lion, leaned out of the carriage for a moment, and then withdrew slamming the door and
shouting to the driver to return at once; and it was
time amidst those [minie] balls and bursting shells.
This was no place for his Excellency Gov. Andrew
Johnson of Tennessee.

Earlier in the day I had seen Gen. [George] Thomas
and his staff riding along in rear of our lines, indif-
ferent to the peril in the rear, really as great as that
in front. I had once also seen Gen. A. J. Smith and
staff riding but the countenance of Gen. Smith was
eager and intense.

Passing a small frame house, a short distance to
the rear of this battery, while the cannonading was
going on, I saw an old man sitting by his doorstep
calmly smoking a pipe and apparently unconscious of
the battle going [on]. In the front yard of his cottage
three or four children of from 4 to 10 years old were
playing the game of horse, one of them being hitched
to a small cart and the other driving. They had grown
tired of the battles din and had returned to their play.
On my return to the lines, I encountered an ammunition
wagon moving rather rapidly toward the lines, but
without a driver. I took possession of the train and
gave it into the hands of a soldier to take back to the
corral. Still nearer the line I encountered a most
impressive group, a cavalry soldier lying dead upon
the ground with upturned face, and his war horse
standing beside as if guarding his body or mourning
his fall. When I reached the field the Iowa Battery
was full of action and great clouds of smoke obscured
the view and the guns from the hills were still replying.
Suddenly the firing from the Iowa Battery ceased and
the smoke clearing away revealed our Division in full
motion toward the hills. The 1st Brigade on the right
was already scaling the hill. The 2nd Brigade was
following and at last, hurrah: The Third. It was an
echelon charge and the line of attack was a diagonal,
the right advancing first, and the left last. It was not
Battle of Nashville: Children playing during the echelon charge. This scene and the one below are within the battlefield though not between the lines.
a regular line such as I had expected to see. The men did not march as the artists represent them side by side, shoulder to shoulder in ranks, but scattered widely over the field, all hurrying to be foremost, firing irregularly as they advanced pressing forward, steadily as a whole over fields that were muddy from the recent rains, across hedges and other obstructions to their destination, the entrenchments of the enemy. Continuous puffs of white smoke proclaimed the enemy awaiting them and ready to fight hand to hand in the final struggle.

It was a moment of terrible dread and anxiety. Naturally in the echelon charge the fiercest struggle and the greatest loss was with the end of the line that struck first, as it not only received the fire of the line opposite but also a heavy enfilading fire from the left. The loss was heavy all along the line. The 7th Minnesota having left seven dead upon the field and thirty six wounded.

The right of our line struck first the breastwork of the enemy. They sprang over the easy barrier, and fought hand to hand with the gunners. A tremendous shout from the hill announced its batteries captured. Those that defended them were either among the killed, the wounded or the fugitives or prisoners. There was no mistaking this. The flag of the Union floated from the highest of the right, and from one point after another until the entire army of Hood was routed and fleeing. Rapidly as possible were our wounded in this last battle carried from the field into the Bradford mansion, which was made into a hospital and the dead were brought there and placed reverently side by side to await burial. The battle was over and won. The army of Hood was in full flight, the army of the Union in untiring, relentless pursuit. They had entered the field on the morning of the 14th supplied with 3 days rations, and did not halt for a fresh supply, which was of
Fighting along the line of breastworks - Battle of Nashville
course sent after them. After 2 days in which cannonading and musketry firing was incessant, the silence that followed seemed something strange and awful. Even the cheering stopped as our pursuing army disappeared over the hills. But in the hospital and some places were heard the moans of the wounded and dying. After awhile the night came down upon us, and there was thick darkness and the rain was falling steadily, dismally. Before the darkness set in Col. Marshall returned from the front or from the place chosen for the bivouac and sending for me commissioned me to return to the city, and telegraph results of the contest, list of casualities, etc., to the city papers of St. Paul and afterward to write to Mrs. Marshall assuring her of his safety and giving such particulars as he did not care to have published. Following the course of the Granny White Pike, I had no difficulty in finding my way to the telegraph office, though it was dark before my arrival. Owing to the crowd at the office, I did not succeed in getting my messages sent off, and it was eight o'clock before my return. The ride back to the Hospital was of inconceivable loneliness and not without its perils. The darkness was intense, and I had to face a continuous pelting rain. Much of the time I had to feel my way and was guided rather by picket fires than by what I could see of the road. When away from the highway and no fires were visible I had to trust to the sagacity of my horse, who guided by a sense of direction unknown to myself, returned to the macadamized pike. Hopefully I approached a blazing fire in the distance, but to my dismay was halted by a sentinel who presenting arms demanded the countersign. I knew of none, but on giving my rank and mission he reluctantly agreed to pass me, but warned me that the next picket would arrest me or turn me back, and advised me to return to the city and find lodgement for the night.
I prefered taking my chances, and plodded on in the darkness and rain. A half mile brought me to the next post where I discerned a muffled sentinel standing by a discouraged looking fire. Trusting to the darkness I dismounted and led my horse in a circuitous path to the right of the sentinel, keeping myself well out of sight by walking on the opposite side of my horse. Once or twice he looked inquiringly toward the horse, but seeing no rider allowed it to pass without challenge. Soon after I found myself along on the battlefield. The road led me over a spectral landscape illumined and made visible here and there by moving lights of lanterns carried by men—probably searching parties looking for the dead or wounded. There were some fires over which stragglers were crouching or lurking behind hedges or stone walls. Were [they] there plun­dering the dead? or were they conjured by [their] own over wrought imagination. Only one man hailed me, and I stopped to talk with him. He was a civilian and as he said a member of the Christian Commission, there to rescue the wounded. I saw one man with a lantern bending over the body of a dead soldier. In addition to the light of a few lanterns and fires, there was an occasional illumination of the dreary scene by flashes of lightning.

It was very late when I returned to the field hospital, somewhere between ten and eleven o'clock. Even in the rain and darkness I ought not to have been over an hour in making the journey, and I had been 2 hours and a half. I discovered what I might have before sus­pected that I was lost on the battle ground, and had wandered two or three miles out of my way. I had re­turned by the Franklin instead of the Granny White Pike. I must have made the mistake on leaving the city. This carried me a mile or two beyond Hood's battle line of the day before. How it was that I found my way back to the Hospital, I cannot conceive unless
it was by John Gilpen's excuse: "I came because my horse would come." Wet and weary, I had about enough strength and energy left to fasten my horse in a stall, and making my way through the hospital to the part used by the Bradfords as a kitchen, and which the surgeons had fitted up as a headquarters and general reception room, flung myself down upon a couch and almost instantaneously dropped into just such a deep and dreamless sleep as I did during the battle of Tupelo on the 2nd night.

EXPLANATIONS AND ADDENDUMS, Dec. 17, 1864

The report dated the 16th was written today as during all of yesterday I had not time for a line, and only for the most crude and rapid sketching. Some of the sketches were mental snapshots, taken on the spot and developed in the dark room of memory later. Some of the sketches were made in extreme danger or under fire, but these were hurried and were suggestions of pictures to be filled up later.

We have not yet the details in full of yesterday's great victory, but know it to have been complete, and that the armies of Hood are practically annihilated. What remains of them are fleeing towards Franklin and Columbia, the Union Army or a large part of it in full pursuit. The surgeons and the chaplains, or the greater part of them are left in charge of the hospitals. This is why I remain at the Bradford mansion while the 7th Minnesota are hurrying after Hood. During the night the wounded were brought in from the field and placed either in the Field Hospital or, if able to be moved, to the city Hospitals.

This building is well filled with wounded men. They are arranged in rows upon the floor on cots or stretchers. It is pitiful to see the questioning look in the eyes of some of these helpless and suffering ones,
The grounds at Nashville, from the Bradford mansion, Dec. 17, 1864.
especially of those not yet informed of the nature or extent of their wounds. Ebbing life-blood, faltering failing pulse, glazing eye made it evident to me who were the doomed; but how could anyone tell that life's battle was so nearly over.

I wrote letters for some. One I wrote for a member of the 5th Minn. Inf. who had received a mortal wound and knew that he was dying. He asked me to read and pray with him. His own chaplain was not present. He showed me a testament, well-worn, and carried constantly with him. He showed some lines written by his wife, on a fly leaf--that wife 1,000 miles away, and who could not know of his peril. He dictated to her a strong, manly letter, and yet a very touching one. He had fought bravely. He did not fear to die. He had loved her and would love her to the last. Would she meet him in heaven? This letter he committed to my charge to be forwarded after his death.

A man of our own regiment from Pine Island, had his thigh so badly shattered that his surgeons had given up all hope of saving his life. At his dictation I wrote a letter to his father in which he insisted that his wound was not serious and that he would recover. He did not wish, he said, that his aged parents should be alarmed about his condition. He wanted to spare them as much as possible and as long as possible. Before the letter was sealed I added a post-script calculated to prepare them for the stroke asking them to remember in any event, if he should not recover that he was not afraid to die. There were a great many rebel wounded brought into this hospital and they were treated with the same tender consideration given to our own and given to understand that they were enemies no longer. Among them were some religious men, and some of very considerable intelligence.

A Confederate Captain recognized in one of the Christain Commission men a former teacher and
friend, and greeted him most cordially.

The men of the Christain Commission have done noble service both in field and hospital. They seem to be untiring and hardly take time to eat or sleep. The most regal among them is a typical Yankee, a lank, tall, long haired man with sharp features and decided nasal twang. He seems to be everywhere at once, peering into ever nook and corner curiously and noticing every cot and its suffering occupant; and goes about so buoyantly, so cheerily that men forget their wounds, and listen with a smile to his quaint sayings, his "O Jerimias" and his "Je-ru-sa-lem's". He superintends the nursery and culinary departments, and is most unusual in supplying "creature comforts" and dispensing sunshine, generally.

The wounded are being removed rapidly as possible, and as their wounds will permit to the city hospital. Those remain whose wounds are too slight to detain them long in any hospital and those too seriously wounded to be removed.