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Letter from William McKinney to His Cousin Martha McKinney, January 26, 1862

William M. McKinney

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Camp Wickliffe. Sunday Morning. Jan 26th 1862.

My dear cousin Mattie.

According to promise
I hereby write unto you, though I do not
feel in the best humor for it, since I have
just come off of duty, having been Officer
of the Guard for the last twenty four hours,
and during that time did not dare take off
my sword or close my eyes. Last night was
very cold, and to sit out at the Guard House
all night without and sleep, is calculated
to make a fellow feel somewhat stupid
in the morning afterward. I arrived in
Louisville safely Tuesday evening after leaving
you, and expected to have taken the cars
for camp on the next morning train,
at 7 o'clock, but the coach porter wiped
connexion at my room, consequently I
did not get awake in time, and was
compelled to remain in the city for
another day, much to my dissatisfaction.

I was somewhat fearful of being put in
arrest for being behind time, but nothing of
the kind, our Colonel knowing the severity of
our General did not report me absent with-
out leave, so I escaped at last. But I tell
you I thought wednesday a very long day,
to pass away the time, I imposed upon
myself the duty of visiting the Hospitals for
the sick soldiers, of which there are quite a
number in the city and containing some
two thousand sick. I must indeed
admit an agreeable surprise upon visiting
these receptacles for the afflicted. In almost
every instance, I found these places under
the best regulations, the sick all provided
with nice little beds or cots, good mattresses,
pillows, and plenty of bed clothes. But what
was best of all, every Hospital was under
the careful attention of the Union
Womens of the City, God bless them,
they are doing a noble work, in thus
ministering to the wants and alleviating
the sufferings, of our sick soldiers, our
patriotic young men who have been
so unfortunate as to fall under disease.

Some of these good Women are in
the Hospital all the Time, bringing and
preparing suitable food, giving medicine,
doing all that human power can do,
for the comfort of the suffering. I
could not see but that the patients
were doing as well in Louisville as
they would, were they at their homes,
many of them far better. I arrived
here Thursday evening, found affairs
about as when I left, except that the
health of the Regiment is fast improv-
ing. We have large numbers still sick,
and many dangerously sick, but the general
health is much better than two weeks
ago. There have been but two
cases of Small-Pox, and one of these
proved fatal last night, a very fine
and promising young man that died
with it, the other one, belonging to our
Company is about well, will soon
be able for duty. The Colonel says I
have now been lame and returned
well, so he intends keeping me
on duty all the Time, encouraging!

I found your letter here and all
right when I came, received one from
Abby last evening, says she has recovered
from the shock received at Dayton. Have
you heard from the Colonel yet, and
one thousand acres and house? Now my
dear cousin I will must say, I felt
just about as blue that morning after
I left Dayton, as a boy could well
feel, and on till I got into Camp
and on duty again. It gives me
great pleasure to review the pleasant
hours of the time I was in the civilized
world. This is certainly a changeful and
changing world. Last night while sitting
out under the star-lit heavens, and
suffering with cold, I could not but
contrast my position then, with what
it was just one week before, telling
my friends of some of our trials and
sufferings. When one contrasts
day with day, time with time and
place with place, he becomes astonished
at himself. But dear Cousin, I have but
little to write this time, it has been so
short a time since I saw you, I can set
before your merry laugh, as when we were
in the cars. I do not feel in a gapping
mood to day, so will have to suspend.
My love to all, write immediately and
tell me all the news of last and more.
I am your affectionate Cousin.
M. W. Rimmer

M. W. Rimmer
Major
West
Ohio
1862