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**Letter from William McKinney to His Cousin Martha McKinney,
February 1, 1862**

William M. McKinney

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Camp Wickliffe Feb 1st 1862

My dear cousin Mattie.

Here I am writing you another letter, and have not yet received answers to either of those I have already written since my return. The fact is, we have had so much rain during the past ten days, that nothing can be done in the way of drilling, and with but the exception of Guard duty, have only to sit in my tent and smoke my good old meerschaum pipe, of which you know I am very fond. You already know I am a very restless kind of a being, must be at something, all the time, and if I should cause my fair Cousin too much trouble by thus attending my miserable serowls, so often into her presence, thus spoiling her quiet nursing, she will excuse; remembering always that the mild, restive young man must have some one to trouble, to plague, or else he would not relish his meals. But really, should these letters offend you, please let me know, and I will try and find some one else to whom to direct. I shall not expect you to answer each one separately, but two or three at once, for I know it would be exacting rather much from your spare time, to expect answers to all. Besides, they are so miserably gotten up, are not worth the answering, especially, if one who has but little leisure for such things. The truth is, I write, partly because I have nothing else to do, and partly because I happen to think much of the Cousin to whom I direct. Now Cousin Mine, do not consider that what I am now writing is at all flattering, but all in solid earnest. I take you to be a true M^g, your style of saying and doing things suits me exactly. I believe you to be a true representative (myself included) of the old stock. Although, I personally have but little resemblance, yet I flatter myself, I am of the true grit, and ancient family spirit. To explain, to be a true M^g, is to be rather proud, sensitive, high spirited, full of novelty and fun, and to have a very high appreciation of the ridiculous.

And further, to believe in enjoying life to the fullest extent, believing the world was made to live in and enjoy, not to growl and pine at.

Now how do you like the type I have drawn of the true farming stock? are you excited, do you think all that bear the name, and some that do not, but the blood, would agree with my characteristics? I fancy I can almost hear your answer, and the names of those that would take exceptions to my sage remarks. However, I think my fair cousin will agree with me, taking this for granted, will proceed, though to what subject, I do not yet know, I really feel somewhat exhausted after my very learned caricature on the M—y blood &c, will probably have to take a little time for rest and refreshments.

To resume, it has been raining here, almost without intermission since my return to Camp, and now while I am writing a very gentle and refreshing shower is pattering on the impenetrable exterior of my good Pavilion, Ah! Our surroundings are rather moist, the rain has so moistened the surface of dear mother earth, that one cannot step out without being in the soil rather deep for convenience. By this time, I suppose you have received my last letter, written during an attack of the "blues". When I read what I had written, the next morning, I had half a mind not to send it, then concluded I would, that you might see what a man would write during such a state of mind. But I do not want you to believe anything there written, and if you have not already, do this much now, have the miserable thing, I am in really too good a humor to write a letter to night, but wanting to talk to you this evening, thought must write something. I would not mind being a soldier, if, when the day labors are over, I could sit down by some bonny fire, and have a social talk. The fact is, one can do well enough during the day, but when evening comes, no one to see, no one to chat with, nothing to read, entirely cut off from all society, from anything that would give one any pleasure, any real enjoyment. I could write a long letter every evening, if I did not suppose some people would get tired receiving and reading them.

I had made great calculations about receiving and answering a letter from you this evening, but when the mail was opened, alas! no letter, so thought would write anyhow, hoping to receive one by the next mail, will send this one on to meet the other and hasten it on to me.

I have written to Cousin Margaret, and directed to
Tippencanoe, do not know whether she will receive it or not
for it seems to me, that the Post Office goes by
another name, please inform me. I have not receiv-
ed a single letter since my return to Camp-
though I have written to almost everybody. What
can it mean, did my friends all become so
entirely disgusted with me, during my short visit
to them? I am certain if they do not want to
write to me, they need not put themselves to any
trouble, for I am one of those very independ-
ent boys, as you well know, but this is all common.
Enclosed you find a very fine and rich article
my pipes and tobacco, the writer takes the most
sensible view in the conclusion, that I have ever
seen. Some of the complets of poetry are very nice
indeed, at least they seem so to me. I also
send one of my Officers of the Guard details, that you
may see in what kind of a form they come to us.
Just at this time the boys are arguing in almost every
tent, many of looks, not caring a cent whether it
rains or shines. A soldier becomes a very queer kind
of an individual, if he has enough to eat and is
anything like comfortable, he is of many just seems
to enjoy himself as well as though he owned a
kingdom. I have written this so close, I am
afraid I am going to have some difficulty
in getting this page full, in fact I am about
as bare now, and do not know what to say
next. Oh, yes, I have not seen to Colored with
the red shoulder straps on yet, have you heard
from him and the aforesaid Lord and Laure?
What did your Father and Mother say to the
offer, did it meet with their approval? Yes, Yes,
I got a letter yesterday from Mary's Cousin,
I do not understand it, I have but a very slight
acquaintance with him, and have never
written him a word. I think him very kind
indeed, to thus remember and favor a soldier,
But I was very sorry, my time will not
permit an answer. I will inform Mary of
his writing to me, and not having time
to answer, turn him over to her tender
mercies. If I had to correspond with both the
girls besides, I think I would have to hire
a clerk, but I have got this filled out, so will
stop for this time, but wish for another in a day or two.
Your affectionate Cousin
Wm McKimney