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Camp of the 15th Reg't 15th Brigade near Bowling Green

March 2^d, 1862

My dear cousin

Since last I wrote you, we have made quite a march, left Camp Wood near Mumfordsville the 24th nlt & arrived here the 27th, Marched but 8 miles first day, being compelled to leave the Pike and go through the woods, the Rebels having blockaded the main road by falling timber across it. The second day, My company with one other, Myself in command of both, was detailed as Rear Guard, to march entirely in the rear of all the Regiments and all the wagon trains, to catch up all stragglers and help the wagons along. At one place the Rebels had ploughed up the Pike and otherwise blockaded it for about four miles, so one had to go around about 8 miles through the wood and no road. Our wagons being very heavy loaded, had a most terrible time getting along. We were obliged to double teams, having sometimes 16 & 20 mules to one wagon and then men all round lifting & pushing. We worked until 10 o'clock at night with the trains, but did not get out of the woods by 3 miles. Our Regiment had gone on 8 miles and encamped. We lay down, supperless, by the wagons for the night, about Midnight the rain commenced pouring down in torrents and continued till morning and we without any shelter. At daylight we commenced operations again, having had no supper an now without any breakfast, by 10 A.M., we got the trains clear of the woods and on the Pike, we had than 8 miles yet to travel before we could get anything to eat, arrived where the Regiments had camped the proceeding night, at 2 PM, but found they had gone on to this place. Went to work cooking something to

(to inside back page)

Eat, not having eaten anything 24 hours, and having marched about 23 miles, besides lying out in the rain all night and working hard at the trains. It was four o'clock by the time we had eaten our dinners. I intended to have marched about 3 miles further and encamped for the night. But just as we were starting, a messenger from the General arrived, informing me, we had to reach our Regiments that night, then encamped here, 15 miles from where we were then, at 4 P.M., so we pushed out and arrived here at 10 o'clock at night having marching about 24 miles that day after 10 o'clock, so you see we have some hardships here as well as we had in W. Va. and seems I always have a hand to play in all of them. We are now about 4 miles from Bowling Green, and expected to have crossed Barren River yesterday, but for some deficiency in the crossing. The Rebels burnt R. R. bridge and Pike bride so we have to cross on Boats, and they sure were out of order some way. The Cars are now running through from Louisville and Bowling Green. The rain pour down in torrents all day yesterday, last night and now at 10 A.M. is still raining. This

is finest country I have seen since I have been in the State, level, large plantations and splendid houses. We passed within about 8 miles of the (Mammot) Cave, would like to visit it, but no time for such things now. I do not know whether we will cross the River to day or not, but unless do, it will be onward tow Nashville, 70 miles from here, A long march but we have made longer.

(next page)

Bowling Green March 4th

Dear Cousin

Since writing the proceeding, we have had some what of soldier life in its roughest form, the details of which I now propose giving. At 4 P.M., of the 2^d, the day I commenced writing this, we received orders to march across the River to this place, distant 5 miles. It was 5 P.M. before we were on the way. We had not gone more than one mile before the rain commenced pouring down in torrents, and which continued all night. We arrived at the crossing at 7 P.M., found the way blockaded with (leaves/trees?), had to stand there in the pouring rain and the deep mud two hours, before we could cross, The crossing of the River was, on plank, laid over boats, could not get our wagons over by night, when we had crossed, then 10 P.M., we were ordered to break out quarters for our companies in the heated homes, with my company, I pushed out into the rain, mud and darkness, and after about an hours search, found a large to story frame house, with four large fireplaces in it for my company. That night, our bridge washed away, so we did not get our trains over until late yesterday evening. One man in our Regiment was drowned in crossing the River at night, slipped off the bridge. We are now here encamped at the edge of the city awaiting provisions, on which to March to Nashville. I do not know whether we will move tomorrow or not. I spent yesterday viewing the City and surroundings; some of my observations, I will attempt to sketch to you, though you know I am not very expert of the descriptive, though quite considerable on the comic, must be related to you some way or other, well I reckon we are akin

(next page)

Bowling Green, previous to the war, contained about 3000 inhabitants, it is one of the most beautiful locations I ever saw. The country around, though somewhat rolling, is beautiful and very fertile. The place shows that there has been much wealth here, and a great deal of taste. The dwelling houses are mostly ~~ne~~ very neat, many large and splendid. The business houses have been large and commodious. In time, it has been one of the garden spots of the West. But now, ruined and destruction marks almost evry spot. The large R.R. and Pike bridges across Barren River have been burnt. A large R. R. Depot and Engine House, with 13 Engines and 60 or 70 cars burnt, only the broken (wells?), and skeleton Engines and Car wheels note their places. Many of the largest business houses and dwellings are but heaps of ruins. The City is almost deserted, many of the finest dwellings were pillaged and are now used as Hospitals and

quarters for troops. It is indeed a sad picture, to look over the City and see what ruin has been wrought by those villainous men, claiming to be civilized, and protectors of their country. Then fortifications are strong, and would have (be hard?) to have taken. Much labor, hard labor was done, to build them, over 600 rebel graves are here, the results, citizens say, of the immense labor performed by the rebel soldiery, they literally worked their men to death. But it would be impossible for me to fully describe all to be seen here, so I will attempt no more. We have had no mail, since we left Mumfordsville. I must have quite a number of letters somewhere. I will write again to you, as soon as we arrive in Nashville, and I have seen the sights there, though I hope to have received some of your letters before that time, since I know they are on the way.

(signed vertically)

WM McKinney