

Dear Mrs. Garrison
Camp Pilot Knob Sept 9 1861
Beverly Mass. & Mass

My Dear Sister

I received your kind letter 3 days ago and it gave me great pleasure to hear from you it has been so long since I heard from you I have not had very good health since I wrote to you last, when we first came down here we had no tents and had to camp in the brush with nothing to shelter us but our blankets and the sky and the heavy dews and fogs of this country and standing guard in the rains several times gave me the ague. I had 4 pretty severe Chills before I got it broke, it weakened me down considerable I am not able for duty yet I have only been 3 or 4 days from the Hospital. The Hospital arrangements of our regiment is none of the best. The Hospital consists of 3 large tents in which is some 30 patients the steward is careless, the attendants are surly, there is no woman's kind hand to soothe the weary patient nor is there enough beds, for what time I was there I had to lay on the ground with nothing to lay on but my blanket now I did not get my medicine regular until I raised a fuss about it, so you see there is a vast difference between the one you describe and ours, but taken at an average there is better health in our regiment than

any other
We have received our uniforms and camp equipage
and we do first rate now, our uniform consists
of a blue frock coat & blue pants and a high black
hat looped up on one side with an eagle a bugle
in front & an ostrich plume on one side, we present
a gay appearance on parade, in addition we receive
2 shirts 2 pair drawers 2 pair woolen socks
Blouse overcoat blanket knapsack canteen & 85

We are encamped in a valley surrounded on all
sides by high hills, it puts me in mind of
home, on one side is a high hill like coal hill
only instead of being filled with coal it is
filled with iron ore nearly pure iron on which
is situated the famous "Patot-Knob" it rises
some height above the top of the hill
and a person can see all over Missouri nearly
it is used for a lookout for an enemy's approach
at the foot of the hill is a large furnace for
smelting ore

The Secessionists keep themselves pretty scarce
about here our company was out 2 or 3 days ago
after a band of them but they were about 3 hours
to late, they had mounted and were off south
they succeeded in capturing 3 men and one
wagon and ^{a span of} horses they let two men go and
the one they brought in was the greenest

specimen of humanity I saw he was about
40 civilized, he had never seen a cannon & could
neither read or write and he told us that he was
told that the union men were a thieving set
they hung all the men and murdered their
women and children and plundered their prop-
erty he was surprised at the treatment he
received at our hands, he said he expected to
be hung right off, we took him and showed him
a mounted 32 pounder cannon & he was struck
almost dumb with astonishment at the sight
of it. he is a sample of 'secesh' in this part of
the country

My dear sister I think events are drawing to a
crisis and this may be the last letter you will
ever receive from me for from recent events
which has taken place in the northern part
of this state ^{I have no doubt} which you have heard of or this
may place us in the field it fairly makes my
blood boil when I think of the feindish work
on the Hannibal & St. Lo railroad that they have
committed and the report in camp is that our
captain is a prisoner in their hands if so and
any harm befall's him there will be a reckoning
some day with them for there is not one of us
but would fight until death for him for he
is beloved like a father among us

We have all knelt with him ~~and~~ under the
stars and stripes" and sworn to defend it with
the last drop of blood in our hearts, where is
^{the} man that would stand back now and refuse
to fight until death to defend the best
country in the world. I for one am ready
at any moment to lay down my life on the
altar of my country if it is required, & if the
Almighty sees fit to pass me through this war
it is well & good if not I am ready to die a
soldiers death in defence of it any moment against
a mean & contemptible foe, they are worse than
Mexicans and Indians they sneak around and
shoot our prisoners, pickets, they won't meet
us face to face like men or on an honorable
foe

I wrote a letter home 2 days ago and promised to
send my likeness home in my uniform and
I will send ~~it~~ it to ~~you~~ you also when we receive
our pay and am at a place where I can get it
taken. We have not received any money from
government as yet your stamps came in good play and
I am a thousand times obliged to you for them well I have
nothing more to write I will close my letter and bid you an
affectionate and brotherly farewell & I remain your
loving brother J. E. Keene