

12-23-1861

Arthur McKinstry to Mother

Arthur McKinstry

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Camp Wool Dec. 23^d 1861

Dear Mother,

As it is a rainy day I take the opportunity of writing once more to you. My watch having again got out of order I sent it this morning by Wesley French of Dunkirk to Uncle Willard of whom you can get it. I have got a hunter case lever with a compass upon its face which is better suited for a soldier (or a schoolmaster) than an open faced watch. I paid \$15.00 for it but took care to have it examined by a jeweler and a particular friend of mine who is a judge of such things, first. Both appraised it at the price I paid and it keeps exact time. I have just written a letter to Lacey which will go to Fortress Monroe and will there be examined and forwarded.

Many letters are sent in this manner under flags of truce and the manner prescribed is as follows. The letters must be sent open for examination and must be confined to one page only. The postage is ten cents. S. D. Caldwell of Dunkirk and Dr. Benedict of that place - both prominent citizens - are here and have been taking a good look at our quarters and have seen us drill. Major Stevens called me up and I received a special introduction as the nephew of the McKinsty's and the censor correspondent. I used to be very much embarrassed about writing but Dr. Irwin tendered me the use of his desk so that now I can write a long letter very conveniently. All this writing improves my position and I don't see how on earth a private soldier can enjoy himself better than I do, - nor a non-commissioned officer either. You see that I save a little for I have made a watch and revolver at least, and clothes enough to last a good while beside. My shirts are just about as good as when I left home and I wear no others. Give me the good home made yet.

Lencius Jones continues just about so - able to be
about but not fit for duty. Capt. Doyle, agreeably to
Mr Jones' request, applied for a furlough but Dr
Drwin replied that it was of little use for it takes
so long to do these things that the patient generally
dies or gets well before any action is taken. First you
see Dr Drwin recommends the furlough in writing -
then the Brigade Surgeon takes it up and sends the
recommendation (with his written approval) to the Division
Surgeon and this last sends it in the same ceremonious
manner to Washington. There it is deliberated upon and the
answer returned in the same manner. Now you know
what red tape is dont you? Lencius however is well cared for
and gets his food from the captain's mess tent - an unusual
favor. Furthermore Doyle says if he dont get better he will
get his discharge at any rate. I got that Republican with
your letter and I tell you I devoured it. We get the N.Y.
journal but the Republican is ahead of them all in
everything that makes a family paper acceptable.
I would not however advise your sending them, for
very many papers miscare. A little slut has fallen to-
day but melting as it fell. When you get that watch of
mine just take it to the village and get it fixed. It will
cost five shillings and then you will have a watch to
carry with you whenever away from home. I will see that
you get more spending money next pay day, and that
is not far off. And now tell me how Frank and Lente
get on. how is Father. Have you money to meet your taxes
If you have not let me know how much you are short,
and at once too. How does Newton progress with his school.
How do Peter folks sugarcate. How do Aunt Knapp and wife get
on. Lots of Love to Jennie & John. I wish I could see little Milly.
She was getting to like me a good deal when I came away.
We get a daily mail now and letters get here within two or three
hours of the Camp Caldwell time. They ^{perhaps one will come to me to} come by steamer and
from old Don Arthur.

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Mrs Austin Chapin
Forestville
N. Y.

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