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Camp 17<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry  
near Cottontail, Mo.  
January 13<sup>th</sup> 1869

Dear Sarah

I almost  
see poverty looking on  
in the face, for I shall  
feel poor indeed when  
my nice paper is gone,  
and this is my last sheet,  
or really the last whole  
sheet I have in the world.

I am in hopes that Uncle  
Samuel will do a little  
something for us in that  
line pretty soon.

Have worked very hard  
both night and day for  
the past week, and have  
got every thing in way of

Reports & Returns for 1863  
off my hands, now I feel  
something like a free man,

They had been sadly  
neglected by previous Officers  
I have about given up  
the idea of getting a Course  
of Shaver, Col Green has  
gone, and Capt Pease who  
now Commands will leave  
in a few days, then the  
Command will be turned  
over to me, and it will  
be impossible for me to  
get away.

It will be a desperate  
position, but not burdensome  
with labor, & I think  
I will live through it  
at least there is nothing  
left me, but to try my  
hand & wait the result.

We have six small  
Companies here and are  
out on the rail-road about  
1 mile distant guarding  
a bridge that has been  
blown up by Guerrillas  
several times.

We are surrounded by  
the Guerrillas. One hour  
to keep a sharp lookout,  
Three of our Officers  
went out-side of our lines  
to Carter's house a few  
days ago and the advised  
them in a friendly way to  
return, saying he wished  
they might remain in safety,  
but thought it was dangerous.

We come to Camp every  
day or nearly every day.  
The house is about an  
half mile distant, in plain sight.

1  
before the War he was very  
rich and aristocratic.

Now poor as poverty.

You cannot possibly  
judge how some of those  
people have suffered and  
do suffer still.

The poorest person in  
Hillsborough is far better  
off than they

Cattell's people seem  
very strong Union, but it  
is quite hard to decide  
who is, and who is not  
Union, in these times.

It is very comfortable here  
now, but we have had some  
extremely cold days, yet  
I have not been uncomfortable.

Have you had opportunity  
to try those skates yet?

If so write what success.

1  
Wish I could come  
and give instruction, that  
is if I thought you needed.

Don't think I will have  
much good of mine this  
winter, but will keep them  
stored for future use,

Geo. Robbins came to see  
me yesterday but did not  
stop long enough for me  
to mention Miss Green

Dear Sarah, I was invited  
out this evening, and have just  
returned. Thought before retiring  
I would close my letter for  
tomorrow's mail,

We are having as good times  
as could be expected, although  
very much confined as we  
are not allowed to leave  
camp except upon special  
occasions

1  
We have good food and  
plenty of it, but it comes  
somewhat higher than it  
does at Hillsborough.

Since we have been  
here it has cost us about  
\$2.00 per day for Provisions  
Say nothing of what we drink.

I have nothing of interest  
to communicate and therefore  
think I will close wishing  
you good night, and pleasant  
dreams

Devotedly yours  
James

Jan 13/64 (17)