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Camp 17<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry  
near Cattlets Station Mo.  
January 27<sup>th</sup> 1864

Dear Sarah

Feeling somewhat lonely this evening, I thought - I might try to drive away all such gloom thoughts by writing, therefore sat myself for that purpose, with pen in hand

First let me tell you what we are doing, which is little or no good, Guarding R.R. &c.

Yet it very necessary that it should be guarded, as we are entirely dependent upon it for subsistence, still it seem like doing the same thing over & over again

Our details are very heavy, and the men are in bed only ever other night, while the officers are off duty two thirds of the time, that is, they are never off duty, but their duty is very light except upon certain days,

I think we will remain here until the spring Campaign opens, which will not be very long if this pleasant weather continues for any time

We are having delightful weather, seems

like spring time in New Hampshire

I have been sitting in my tent nearly all day, without fire. I had neither coat nor bed on, and yet I was full warm enough for comfort

It is reported that the Guerrillas came and took a look at us, on the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup> but if it is true they did not come through our lines or in any way make themselves known

The report originates from a darky woman, who says she heard them tell Nipus the next day, that they came out to our camp but found the sentinels were walking their beats, and seeing lights in several tents, concluded they would not be able to take us by surprise and therefore dangerous, consequently they abandoned their undertaking

We have but a few men, yet "braver men never lived" and you can believe, if they are surrounded, some of these nights (which I very much doubt) they are not going to lay down their arms, until they have made at least one desperate struggle for to regain their freedom

However we are pretty strongly guarded and I have no apprehensions of a surprise.

Gen Ayres has just returned from a  
Leave of Absence, and brought his wife,  
This looks encouraging for the winter  
to be spent here, yet I would much  
rather spend it elsewhere, not however  
in Richmond, unless upon my own terms

Four of the Company I command, are  
stopping there for the present,

They were captured on the 13<sup>th</sup> of October  
by Guerrillas (the night we crossed Bull Run)

I received a letter from one of them  
but a few days since, He did not give  
any information regarding his treatment,  
probably if he had, I never would have  
received his letter

I still entertain a hope that I may  
be able to procure a Leave before Spring.  
Although the chances grow less every day,  
nevertheless you may rest assured my  
dear Sarah that if an opportunity  
is offered, I shall most heartily accept;

When you see my folks, please say to  
them that I am well, but shall adopt the  
same rule towards them, that they do  
towards me, write once a month,

Remember me to all & write often

Yours ever  
James