
William Knight Civil War Letters, 1861-1863
MS/52, 1863 Letter 011

1863-06-03

**Knight, William W., Letter to
Mary Knight, June 3, 1863**

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UUID: D4DA219C-16F0-456D-AC0E-90933519B78D

Recommended Citation:

Knight, William W., Letter to Mary Knight, June 3, 1863. MS/52 William Knight Civil War Letters, Box 1, Folder 3. Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/10428/6876>

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Mississippi

Camp near Yazoo City June 5 1863

Dear Mary Again I put myself to write you a few lines. As I wish you could see the spot and place we are camped at we are in a narrow bottom with a creek running through it clear limestone water it is all the running water we have seen in any creek since we have been in this State we are below Yazoo City three miles or rather we are south of it; fifty miles from Vicksburg there are more men here than you ever saw in all your life the number I will not give not knowing but this might fall in the Federals hands we come here yesterday we lay up day before two miles from here we left our camp at Deasonville Saturday near twelve O'clock and marched till night Sunday was the hardest days march we ever taken not the farthest we have marched farther in the day but the country very broken the weather very hot and not water enough to barely sustain life many of the men gave out and could go no further some fainted in the road and had to be taken up and carried off but none of our brigade died from the march so far as I can ascertain this country is the barest of water if any I ever saw we are gradually closing up around Vicksburg the Abrahmites are around it our men inside under Gen. Pemberton our outside army under Gen. Johnson or he commands the whole army we are under Gen. Walker he is Major General now and in command

this squad here they are from different states, there
is some sickness among the men but none of them dangerous
I think in our company there the following men sick but
they can walk about and tend to their business John S Adams
William Cameron Henry A. Lustingier Matthew K. Lindsey Edmond
Matthias Aaron Mattox John A. Parrish Corp. John K. Patterson
Alfred B. Hindley Jacob J. Smith they are only too weak to hold
out to march they have fever or diarrhoea Jonathan had
the fever two days but he is better he did not have much
fever yesterday he got too hot Sunday of the march Parrish
is well again all the rest of the company are well Manning
Gander got a letter from James Gander last week he was getting
better we left him at Columbus Ga. Elbert S Chapman
or as the boys called old yellow is with us again William D
Warren of the sharpshooters from Thomas county found him
at Canton Warren did belong to our regiment before he was
put in the sharpshooters Battalion Chapman is heartier than
I ever saw him he was in the 25th Mississippi Regiment of
mounted infantry he had been there five months and
two days the regiment has been in several battles since he has
been in it he went by the name of Manning Colman he
says he does not know any thing of Benjamin Garrett that
he has not seen him since last December they got parted at
Barthaven in this state we have no tents in our regiment
we take the world and weather as we find it we have
four fry pans and one oven for our company the rest of

of the companies are no better off than our when we are stopped we get enough to eat but when we are marching we do not have any chance to cook enough to eat and water to cook with is often not to be had we marched seven miles from day after sun set we stopped to camp where it had been represented we could get water but it was not there to get and I've had to come seven miles further before we could get it and then there was not enough and what there was was very bad I will describe the kind of water we have been using until we come to this place that is if your imagination will help draw the picture it is in holes in the creeks the soil slick yellow mud void of sand the water yellow muddy stuff with a green scum on it but seldom over a foot deep some times half down holes and no more near enough to be got at and that the chance for several thousand men and a great many of them like hogs if they are not minded out they will be in it washing there hands face feet or old muddy clothes it is astonishing how many men there in this world that are only animals in human form form ask one and he will tell you it is wrong but he saw somebody else do so and he had so well do so as any body else that is always the answer you get they have a kind of elastic consciences that expand to fit any case this is a very rich farming country they make fine corn with the least work of any country I have ever been in they break up their land plant their corn side the corn turn the dirt from it hoe it out

let it stand about two week. side it again turning the dirt
to the corn. let stand about the same time and plough bet the
middles and they are done that crop they make from thirty to
fifty bushels to the acre their lands are nearly all bottoms
lands it averages fifty bushels to the acre. Marya I got two
letters Saturday from you dated the 9th & 17th of last month.
I was very glad to hear that you and the children had been
well since I left Savannah I say had been for the had
been written so long they were almost out of ^{date} but I recon
mine are quite as old before they get to you if they ever
get there well Mary I recon you need not be uneasy for fear
I will suffer for money because of what I sent you I
have quite as much as I will need I hope if I had not have
left Savannah I should have sent you as much more I
have sent you this year one hundred and ten dollars in money
and a little over thirty dollars worth of things I have about
fifty dollars with me now I recon it will last me till
we draw again I had much rather see you and the children
than any amount of money we will ever have at onetime
I am in hope I will keep well and able to do all the duty
that may be required of me I think all the men in our
company would get well in a week if they could have
that long to rest there is no chance for them to write when
we are on a march we have but one ambulance for the regiment
it will not carry more than eight men I will write when ever I have a
chance. Your affectional husband
William W. Knight

Camp Near Yazoo City, Mississippi. June 3rd 1863

Dear Mary,

Again I seat myself to write you a few lines [illegible]. I wish you could see the seat and place we are camped at, we are in a narrow bottom with a creek running through it. Clear limestone water, it is all the running water we have seen in any creek since we have been in this state. We are below Yazoo City, three miles, or rather we are south of it, fifty miles from Vicksburg. There are more men here than you ever saw in all your life, the number I will not give, not knowing, but this might fall in the Federals hands. We come here yesterday, we lay up day before two miles from here, we left our camp at Deasonville Saturday near twelve o'clock and marched till night. Sunday was the hardest days march we ever taken. Not the farthest, we have marched farther in the day, but the country very broken, the weather very hot, and not water enough to barely sustain life. Many of the men gave out and could go no further. Some fainted in the road and had to be taken up and carried off, but none of our brigade died from the march so far as I can ascertain. This country is the barest of water of any I ever saw. We are gradually closing up around Vicksburgh, the Abramites are around it, our men inside under Gen. Pemberton, our outside army under Gen. Johnson. He commands the whole army. We are under Gen. Walker. He is my General now, and in command [of]...

...this squad here. They are from different states, with some sickness among the men, but none of them dangerous. I think in our company there the following men [are] sick, but they can walk about and tend to their business: John S. Adamns, William [Camerson?], Henry A. Lastinger, Matthew K. Lindsey, Edmond Mathis, Aaron Mattox, John A. Parrish, Corp. John K. Patterson, Alfred B. [Finalley?], Jacob P. Truitt. They are only too weak to hold out to march, they have fever or diarrhea. Jonathan had the fever two days but he is better, he did not have much fever yesterday, he got too hot Sunday of the march. Lt. Parrish is well again, all the rest of the company are well. Manning Fender got a letter from James Fender last week, he was getting better. We left him at Columbus Ga. Talbert L. Chapman, or as the boys [him] "Old Yellow, is with us again. William D. Warren of the Sharpshooters from Thomas County found him at Canton. Warren did belong to our regiment before he was put in the Sharpshooter's Battalions. Chapman is heartier than I ever saw him. He was in the 20th Mississippi regiment of mounted infantry. He had been there five months and two days. The Regiment has been in several battles since he has been in it. He went by the name of Manning Coleman, he says he does not know any thing of Benjamin Garrith, that he has not seen him since last December. They got parted at Brookhaven in this state. We have no tents in our regiment, we take the world and weather as we find it. We have four fry pans and one oven for our company, the rest of...

...the companies are no better off than our[s]. When we are stoped[sic], we get enough to eat, but when we are marching we do not have any chance to cook enough to eat and water to cook with is often not to be had. We marched seven miles from day after sunset. We stopped to camp where it had been represented, we could get water, but it was not there to get and [five?] had to come seven miles further before we could get it and then there was not enough and what there was very bad. I will describe the kind of water we have been using until we come to this place. That is if your imagination will help draw the picture, it is in holes in the cracks [of] the soil, slick yellow mud void of sand. The water is yellow, muddy stuff with a green scum on it, but seldom over a foot deep. Some times half dozen holes and no more near enough to be got at and that the chance for several thousand men and a great many of them like hogs if they are not minded out, they will be in it washing there[sic] hands, face, feet or old, nasty

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clothes. It[sic] astonishing how many men there are in this world that are only animals in human form, ask one and he will tell you it is wrong but he can somebody else do so and he had as well to do so as any body else. That is always the answer you get. They have a kind of elastic consciousness that expand[sic] to fit any case. This is a very rich farming country, they make fine corn with the least work of any country I have ever been in. They break up their land, plant their corn, side the corn, turn the [dirt?] from it, hoe it out,...

...let it stand about two week[sic], side it again turning the dirt to the corn, let stand about the same time, and plough [sic] just the middles and they are done [with] that crop. They make from thirty to fifty bushels to the acre, their lands are nearly all bottoms lands, it averages fifty bushels to the acre. Mary, I got two letters Saturday from you, dated the 9th and 17th of last month. I was very glad to hear that you and the children had been well since I left Savannah. I say had been for the had been written so long they were almost out of [state?], but I reckon mine are quite as old before they get to you if they ever get there. Well Mary, I reckon you need not be uneasy for fear I will suffer for money because of what I sent you. I have quite as much as I will need. I hope if I had not have left Savannah, I should have sent you as much more. I have sent you this year one hundred and ten dollars as money, and a little over thirty dollars worth of things I have about sixty dollars with me now. I recon it will last me till we draw again, I had much rather see you and the children than any amount of money we will ever have at one time. I am in hopes I will keep well and able to do all the duty that may be required of me. I think all the men in our company would get well in a week if they could have that long to rest. There is no chance for them to write when we are on a march, we have but one ambulance for the regiment it will not carry more than eight men. I will write whenever I have a chance.

Your Faithful Husband,

William W. Night.