

EDITED TRANSCRIPTION – Original file: “Letter Dec. 27th 1863.tif”  
Edited to enhance readability. Added notes are *{italicized-bracketed}*.

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Headquarters 23<sup>rd</sup> Michigan Volunteer Infantry  
Strawberry Plains, East Tennessee, Dec. 27<sup>th</sup> 1863

Dear Wife,

‘Tis evening and by the light of a ten cent tallow candle I now write you a few lines to let you know that I am yet well and comfortable. More so than we have been for some time before. Our regiment, or our whole brigade, are now at this place and ordered to fortify it. We expect to be here all winter at least. We were ordered here for that purpose. I hope we will stay here for a month or two for we have been on the move for a long time and need rest and new equipments and also clothing for the men. Our regiment is now quartered in a large four story brick building formally a female seminary. Every room has a fireplace in it and there is fourteen rooms, one for each company and the balance for officers. I have a good room together with the officers of Companies B & G. This morning I borrowed of a secech lady a stand and a chair, so now I am fixed for writing again as long as we stop here, which by the way I have lots of writing to do which has accumulated during the past month. I have got a good penman to help me that I detailed this morning. He acts as sergeant major in the place of the sergeant major who is now sick at Knoxville *{TN}*. I have not received any letters from you since last week and those I received were wrote before the siege of Knoxville. I hear that there was a great alarm about us while we were besieged. Well, there was reason to be alarmed for if we had had any fear we might have fared worse. As it was we were confident that we could hold out against all that could be brought against us and we felt that General *{Ambrose E.}* Burnside knew what he was about; consequently we felt safe. I will soon look for an answer from some of my letters that I have wrote since then. I hope you have got the money that I sent you by this time, for you must need it if you are keeping house. We expect a mail in the morning and as it returns immediately I write this before it arrives so as to have it ready when the mail goes. If I get a letter by it I will answer it immediately. We marched from Blaine’s Crossroads *{TN}* here in the night and crossed the river on an old scow, which is used as a ferry boat. It took all day to cross two regiments. Strawberry Plains is not much of a place. There is about a dozen houses here and as the railroad crosses the Holston River here it is necessary to fortify it to hold the ferry and prevent the destruction of the railroad bridge which is now being constructed. It was destroyed by the rebels when they left Knoxville & we will soon have another bridge up and in running order. The cars arrive here daily from Knoxville fourteen miles distant.

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The rebels have left and everything is quiet. The last heard from *{General James}* Longstreet he was on his way to Virginia. We have a large army here or in the vicinity and we can hold Tennessee and so that the rebs cannot get into it again. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Michigan Calvary is near here and I saw some of them that I knew, among them was Jack Oliver. I have not seen the regiment yet or I would have seen more of them. I paid Captain Bingham of the 27<sup>th</sup> a short visit the other day and he said he got a letter from his folks and they said it was reported in Saginaw *{M}* that I was killed. I do not know how such a report could have got there. I hope you did not credit it for I know you must have felt bad enough without hearing such news as that. You must not ~~ered~~ believe all you hear of such idle rumors for no one but some idle mischief maker would start such a report as that. I assure you that I now am in good health and sound as a brick. I did not even get a scratch. The most damage I got was a pair of wet feet, which I got wading a small creek that we had to cross in coming off the field after the fight on November 16<sup>th</sup>. I do not think we will have to do any more fighting this winter, so you must not worry about me but keep up your spirits and be patient for my time is nearly half out. As for reenlisting the 23<sup>rd</sup> cannot for we have not been in the service long enough that. I just now read from an order just received. I suppose you would like to have me come home this winter. Well, dear Susan, I cannot. I am sorry to say as soon as that, but you may be assured that as soon as I see a prospect of getting a leave of absence approved I will do so, for I would like to see you and Frankie as bad as you do me I will warrant you. So if I do not get a furlough right away you must not think it my fault. If we do not have to march very soon I will write very often and more regular than I have lately, which could not be helped as long as we were continually on the move. I hope you do not have any trouble keeping house and I hope you had a good Christmas dinner, which by the way I wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. We had a boiled turkey for Christmas supper and to settle it we marched to this place after dark and finished the turkey for breakfast warmed up. I do not know what we will dine on New Years, but will let you know when it comes. I expect it will be corn dodger and sorghum, molasses, or hard tack and coffee, etc., etc. You see by this that I have made a reuse of some paper a little better than old blanks. When I get out again I will use the blanks again. I suppose there is a good sleighing there and the mud covered up. We have not had a bit of snow here yet, nor is the ground froze at all. We have had frosty nights, but it would thaw daytimes all that it would freeze nights. Give my respects to all inquiring friends and write soon and direct to me as before at Knoxville and I will get your letters. So good night and pleasant dreams to you & believe me, ever

Your Affectionate Husband, D. D. Keeler, Lieutenant & Acting Adjutant

17th Dec 23rd Mich V Infantry

Strawberry Plains East Tenn Dec 27th/68

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G. W. Miller  
Lt & Act Adjt