

The Jackson American Citizen
28 November 1861

The Sick of the Michigan Ninth

Letters have recently been received from Capt. DeLand and W. H. Palmer, Hospital Steward, appealing to the ladies of Jackson for comfort for the sick of the Ninth Regiment. From a letter received by Mrs. J. E. Beebe, from Capt. DeLand, we learn how the men of that Regiment are suffering by disease. We print the letter:

Camp Geo. Duffield, Ninth Michigan Infantry,
West Point, Ky. Nov. 18th 1861
To my kind friend Mrs. Joseph E. Beebe:

I notice by the Jackson papers that the ladies of Jackson have formed a Society to aid the sick soldiers and could not resist the temptation to thank them for their kind remembrance of the suffering and offering a few suggestions, which I hope will be kindly received by my friends and towns women. Let me preface by telling you that our own Regiment is being most terribly scourged by sickness. On the 7th of November we had over 300 in the hospital--no not in the hospital, for we have only one tent to hold twelve, but in the camp today we have at least 200 men unfit for duty. This is truly awful. As to cause it is the sudden change of climate, the very bad, muddy, actually *putrid* water of the rivers which we were compelled to drink, the change of living, and the damp muddy clay of the river bottom flats where we camped. The days are very warm and the nights damp and cold. In the morning hours the thick fog rises from the river and is so dense as to nauseate the stomach and deprive us of our appetites. All this we were unused to and so soon engendered fevers and diarrheas in their worst forms. Add to this the measles all through our camp and you can imagine what we have suffered. In my own Company, and we have suffered less than any other in camp, the sick have numbered twenty men a day for two weeks. None have died as yet tho' ten are very low. Four deaths have taken place, and there will probably be more in a few days. We have secured three large house for hospitals and are doing all we can to save the brave boys. I attribute the good fortune of Company C to the self-sacrificing efforts of the well, and the generosity of our friends before we left the state.

But now a word to your business. Do not spend your time making woolen shirts or trousers--Government furnishes plenty of them. Good blankets and warm stockings are much more needed. Good pillows and bed ticks for the hospitals, and sheets and plain shirts loose and long are greatly needed; a few good night caps (make them to fit your own heads) would be of use anywhere. Towels and bandages are always useful, so are cheap handkerchiefs. Bed and pillow ticks should be made together at the end, gathered with a cord. All should be made for single cots. Drawers of Canton flannel or thick drilling are also sometimes needed. We have little or no use for fancy pin cushions, and "house wives" are plenty as blackberries. Give us

things substantial and we will accept the ornamentals when we return.

If our sickness decreases rapidly, as I hope it will, we will not need many gifts here, but if it continues they would be very acceptable. If our lady friends will send a small supply they shall be put to good use.

I do not write for publication--only for friends at home, so their efforts may be directed to the most possible good. I know the wants of our poor sick men, and my heart has bled and my eyes filled with tears today as I tried to comfort them. The ladies of Louisville and a few here have done much for us, but there is still room for more.

Dr. Smith is doing nobly all he can, and I only fear he may break down under his severe labors. He has three assistants and all are busy. Tomorrow we shall move the well men up on the mountains, and try to save them if we can. It would be a blessing if we could get back in the country, but we cannot while so many are sick. I am well myself and so are all my officers, with two exceptions. If you wish you may use this among our friends, and in the Society. I will write to report any inquiries, and will also inform you as to the health, donations, or other matters of interest, with pleasure. If you send anything direct to "Col. Duffield, 9th Michigan Infantry, care of the General Quartermaster, Louisville Ky.--Hospital stores."

Yours truly,
Chas. V. DeLand

P.S.--Three more men died last night.