

Detroit Daily Tribune
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From the Ninth Regiment

*Sickness and Death – Bad Fare and Hard Usage – Medical Red tape – A Surgeon in
the Vocation – Camp Moved Again*

Correspondence of the Detroit Tribune

CAMP GEO. DUFFIELD, West Point, Ky.

November 26th, 1861

Without seeming _____, allow me to again occupy your columns as a chronicler of the history of our Ninth Regiment. Since I last wrote you, we have been in “troubled waters” and yet, unlike the ancient pool, they have yielded us anything but health and comfort. A dark cloud has settled upon us, for the flower of our regiment has been for days and weeks prostrated by sickness and disease, and the dread angel of death has flapped his wings in triumph over seven of our comrades since my last. At the present writes, nearly three hundred of our men are upon beds of languishing. The diseases are measles and typhoid fevers, diarrhea and dysentery. Perhaps it would be useless for me to attempt to point out all the cases, _____ most, _____ have been the want of pure water, “sweet cured bacon,” exposure and our work. The truth is we have been partly fed, illy supplied with the necessities of even camp life, and over work with hard labor. We have had no bread since we left Detroit except “hard crackers,” much of our meat has been poor, no straw except what we have bought, begged or stolen, to sleep on, and the daily cry is, “ You mustered every man you can to work on the hill.” At night the men lay upon the damp clay, with only their oil cloth and one blanket. Is it any wonder then that the men are broken down and sick? No blame can be attached to any of our officers; they have done everything in their power to remedy the evils and render us comfortable. The fault is beyond them. We are entirely dependent upon the Quartermaster’s Department at Louisville, and are reaping the bitter fruits of its parsimony and poor judgment. Ten dollars worth of straw would have saved us fully one hundred cases of sickness. But “red tape regulations” stand in the way, and men suffer and die.

Another great fault is in the medical department. A superannuated old physician is installed “Chief of the Medical Bureau,” Washington. He sits down in his easy chair and prescribes a list of medicines to be used in the army. This list is sent abroad, and our surgeons are not allowed to purchase any other at the Government expense. No matter what the character of local diseases, or what changes diseases may take, the Surgeon must stick to the same round of prescriptions or pay the bills himself. This is false economy, and under such a rule, it is a wonder more men do not die in the army. The aforesaid functionary at Washington may have been a very respectable M.D. and a successful practitioner in his native county or State, fifteen years ago, but he is evidently behind the present age, and totally incapable of knowing and appreciating all the diseases and wants of so extended a country as the United States, embracing as it does such a variety of climate, and filled with so many species of the ills which flesh is heir to. More

liberty and discretion should be allowed to army surgeons, and in no other department is a reform so much needed.

Speaking of surgeons reminds me that the man appointed to that the post in the 9th has not yet appeared. The Assistant, Dr. Cyrus Smith, has had the load on his shoulders, and has labored with untiring zeal. One Assistant was sent him from Louisville, and two local physicians are now assisting him.

The names of those of the regiment who have died here are Waits of Co. A, Winters and Sweet of Co. D, Kerr, of Co. H; Piersons, of Co. I; and Daily and Van Sile of Co. K. Several more are very low, but their recovery is hoped for. Good hospital buildings have been procured and many of the worst cases are in charge of private families.

On Monday we moved our quarters for the third time since we arrived here, and are now camped on Muldraugh's Hill, or mountain, about two hundred feet above the river, around our new fort. We are well supplied with pure spring water, and camp has a more cheerful look, and all hope for better times.

Great activity prevails at it is time this department, and Kentucky is swarming with Union troops. Within the last week several regiments have passed through here headed for the Secession really grounds on Green River. Two more are expected tomorrow. They are from Ohio and Indiana, except the 1st Wisconsin, which is now camped a mile below here. Our force in Kentucky must be at least fifty thousand men. A forward movement is expected soon, and an army will be tolled down through Tennessee which will probably not stop until it forms a junction with the army now in South Carolina. The way is becoming more open daily, and it only needs a vigor and boldness in our Generals to ensure success.

Hoping soon to be able to send you a better report of our condition and tidings of the success of our arms in clearing the last vestige of rebellion from Old Kentucky, I am

Yours truly

A.

C.