

Linda S. McCarldle, ed. A Just and Holy Cause? The Civil War Letters of Marcus Bethune Ely and Martha Frances Ely. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2016.

Letters found in a pillowcase in a pillowcase under a mattress in an elderly relative's home

A. Introduction

1. Marcus Ely not involved in significant combat until the Atlanta campaign;
2. Good family man and religious
3. Co. H. (Russell Guards), organized in Columbus, Ga. In May 1862, 54th Georgia
4. Born 1831
5. Introduction largely genealogical
6. Grew up in a prosperous slaveholding family, taught school, married in 1855 (Mattie Dumas)
7. No information on why Marcus enlisted in May 1862 perhaps spurred by first Confederate Conscription Act
8. Mainly served around Savannah until February 1864 [Camp Way]
9. P. xvii--tells all the places the unit served

Regiment organized, fine looking set of men [a typical comment], 1

Letters, directions, 2

Careful about his health, bathing keeping clothes clean, 2

Cooking on a stove, 2

Box with food and clothing, 3

Concerned about his healthy and dirty camp, 4--a bit obsessive on this?

Does not want her traveling by herself, 6

Prayer meetings, much profanity in regiment, but little in his company, 6-7

Duty, revolutionary fathers, beat back the foe, p. 9

News from Richmond about McClellan and Peninsula campaign, 10 [editor needs to deal with war context in these entries]

Officer election--he remained aloof, 12

Rumors of English and French intervention,--like many soldiers 14

Tired of camp life, 14

Sharpshooters, 17

Brandy price, 21

Wants his clothing measurements to have items made at home, 21

Wife wants to try coming to camp, 28

Furloughs, soldier get sick at home and not return, or perhaps feigning illness, 28-29

Many officers here have their wives with them in their tents, 29
 He hire a slave boy to mind the children if she comes to camp, 29
 Salt shortage, 31-32--much about the basics of soldier and civilian life in these letters
 Greatly misses her after her recent visit to camp, 32-33
 Misses husband for Christmas dinner, 35
 Possibility of selling an older female slave, 36, 40
 Northern morale and desperation, black troops, "must be infatuated by the devil and led captive at his will," 37
 Smallpox, 38
 Furlough, 37-38
 Confederate deserters, 38-39
 Question of wife being home by herself, 42
 Officer election, 42, 46
 *living in quite historic times, people deprived of luxuries fighting against giant power, 43
 Desire for peace, 43-44
 Efforts to get a furlough, 45ff
 Officer election, elected brevet 2nd Lieutenant, 48
 Steamer destroy to prevent Yankee capture, 50
 Some minor fighting, 52
 Earl Van Dorn, 53
 Threats to Charleston, Beauregard, 55
 Loves her husband but does not want to idolize him--because that is sinful, 56
 She would like him to resign his commission but does not want to complain, 56
 Furlough, food, 58
 Soldier pay, desperate need to raise officers' pay, 58
 North determined, other nations had forsaken Confederacy, intervention a "humbug." P 59
 Furlough, examining board, 62
 Charleston, 64
 Slave buying and selling, 66
 Problems with charges against various officers, 72
 Reckless, swearing doctor, 73
 Christmas, food, 73
 Sending oysters home, 74
 Box sent, home, contents, 77
 Sending money home, 78
 He badly wants syrup, 81
 Admits he does not have much interesting to write about, 82
 Thankful for his health when so many other soldier are ill, 83
 Describes cozy tent quarters, 91
 Teases her about a spring visit, 93
 Neighborhood people give them food, 94
 Fleas biting him at night and dreaming about his wife, 96
 Tried to shoot a deer and missed, 99
 He writes frequently, often every other day
 Ysnkee prisoners, 102
 Draws Confederate clothing but sends it home, 103

Will send home books for her, furlough, 104
At Savannah River Trestle, much wildlife, 10, 110
Food prices, 111
Secretary of War orders furloughs stopped, 112
Atlanta campaign, 113ff
Dalton described, 114
Like many soldiers, figures she can read war news in the newspapers, 117
Resaca, tells little of the battle and is tired of war, 118
Inflict heavy losses on the Federals, 120
Bathing felt great but no clean clothes, 122
Health and food, 123 [though less on health than in most soldier letters]
Bowel troubles, 126
Rumors that war may be over. 10 day truce between Hood and Sherman, 131-32
Enjoying quiet for a time like when they stationed near Savannah, 133
Food and bowel problems, 134
Notes execution of deserter at very time that Jefferson Davis was reviewing troops along
*Chattahoochie river, September 1864, he does not buy Davis's hopeful remarks, 135-36
Hood's Tennessee campaign, 137ff
Marching, rain, sleeping, 138
Sewing, threadbare clothing on march to Tennessee, 139
Uniontown, Alabama, hospital, food, 141
Fever and bowels, 142
No letters from home, sick furlough, 143
Useful biographical information on members of the Russell Guards