

John P. McCown to his sister-in-law, Mrs. George McCown

Shelbyville, Tenn.

16 Jan., 1863.

My dear ~~ixx~~ sister,

George, Rufus and Smoote have returned--but too late for one of the greatest and bloodiest battles of the war. You have before this heard of it through the news papers.

My division played its part and fought as I never saw men fight before. My division is composed of Arkansas, Texas, Georgia, N. Carolina and Tennessee troops. I feel proud of their achievements. I will not attempt a description of the fight. Suffice it to say that on the 31st Dec. the battle raged from early dawn until night--and partial fighting on the 30th, 31st, 2nd and 3rd of Jan. We retreated on the 4th to this place. We had about 36000 men and the yankees about 80000. Their loss was great--so was ours.

Genl. E. Kirby Smith expects to start in a day or so for Arkansas. He has applied for me and my division to go with him. I am willing to go provided I can take my men with me. I do not desire to go there and command new troops, alone.

I know I have been well slandered in Arkansas as well as every where else. However, I am a philosopher and can take things quietly. Time and history will vindicate my--habits at least. I can wait and not fear the result. All I desire is to serve my country. I have no ambitious aims.

When this war is over I shall give up my military career and live a quiet and peaceful life "away from war and war's alarms" and public life of all kinds. You may laugh at this, but it is true. All I shall want to begin with is a wife which I fear will be hard for a man of my age to obtain--that is such a one as I want. I shall trust to luck and hair dye.

Newton is "sloshing" around as usual, tumbling into chairs and all sorts of scrapes.

He was very much in love with a Miss Mollie Tallie at Readysville-- I thought for good and all--but he is now flying around some girl as usual.

George Mathis has gone to Richmond.

Accept my thanks for the beautiful collar for my hunting shirt. It is much admired. Remember me to your father and mother and all friends. My love to Mary and yourself,

Your Brother,

John