

THE DIARY AND LETTERS OF DR. JAMES M. DeWOLF,
ACTING ASSISTANT SURGEON, U. S. ARMY; HIS RECORD
OF THE SIOUX EXPEDITION OF 1876 AS KEPT UNTIL
HIS DEATH

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In the early stages of the Battle of the Little Bighorn River on the afternoon of June 25, 1876, Dr. James M. DeWolf retreated with Major Reno and his battalion. He had successfully forded the river, but in his haste to reach safety he evidently moved a little too far to the north of the other troopers and was soon cut off from them. Lieutenant Wallace and several others saw Indians overtake the doctor and fired in an attempt to protect him, but the distance was too great to render effective assistance.

After the Indians moved farther down stream to engage Custer, Dr. H. R. Porter, the surviving surgeon, went down to see Dr. DeWolf and found he had been killed. Dr. Porter removed "his pocket-book and some things he had on his person." The diary which DeWolf had faithfully kept during the campaign was recovered at that time.

In a letter to Mrs. DeWolf dated "Camp on the Mouth of the Big Horn River, Montana Territory, July 28th, 1876" Dr. Porter wrote, ". . . I was just behind him as we crossed the river. I saw him safe across and then he turned up a ravine a little to my left which was the last I saw of my friend and companion — alive. As soon as we reached the bluff, I found he was missing and soon found his body which I had buried the next day. I know it will be a great relief to you when I say that his body was not mutilated in the least — that he was not scalped or his clothes even taken. The Indians had stolen his revolver but not troubled him otherwise. . . ."

No mention was made of recovery of the physician's medicine case or instruments, but it is quite possible that they were carried away. In a letter dated August 1, 1876, Fort Peck, M. T., Indian Agent Mitchell stated that an Indian there had brought in an army pistol and a surgeon's pocket case, but nearly all the instruments belonging to it were missing. This case could have been either from Dr. DeWolf or Dr. Lord, who was killed that same day with General Custer.

Dr. DeWolf's remains, along with the officers who were killed in the battle, were disinterred and shipped to Fort A. Lincoln, Dakota Territory, in June of 1877. At Fort Lincoln the body was placed in a metallic case for shipment to Norwalk, Ohio, where final interment was made. Capt. M. V. Sheridan, who was in charge of the party to recover

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the bodies, sent Mrs. DeWolf a lock of her husband's hair and a button from his vest as mementos.

At the age of 17, DeWolf had joined the Pennsylvania Light Artillery and was wounded on August 30, 1862. As a result of these wounds, he was discharged and pensioned as of October that year. In September 1864, he resigned his pension and reenlisted again in the same organization where he continued to serve until discharged June 14, 1865.

In October 1865, he enlisted in the Regular United States Army at which time he gave his occupation as laborer and his place of birth as Wyoming County, Pennsylvania. In less than a year he was promoted from private, 14th U. S. Infantry, to Hospital Steward, U. S. Army. His first assignment was to take charge of the Hospital Department at Camp Lyon, Idaho Territory. Three years later he was transferred to Camp Warner, Oregon.

By May 1872, he had fully decided upon his future career and wrote the Surgeon General, "I have prepared myself for the study of Medicine as far as practicable without the benefit of Medical Lectures and I desire, if possible to be stationed so that I may attend these lectures without interfering with my duties as Hospital Steward. I am willing to refund to the United States the cost of my transportation, should that be a barrier to the change of station."

In forwarding DeWolf's request, the Asst. Surgeon at Camp Warner recommended it with the following indorsement: "I have known Hosp. Steward James M. DeWolf since October 1868, and his character has been most excellent both officially and morally. He has ever been diligent and attentive, is *very* accurate in his accounts, and a thoroughly temperate man. One of his objects in making the request is to enable him to attend Medical lectures after office hours, for which I consider him thoroughly prepared."

It is interesting to note that DeWolf's term of service from October 5, 1868 to October 5, 1871 was under the name of DeWall. We find no reason for use of an alias and assume it could have been through error that the name was so entered on the army records.

As a result of this request and "in view of his long service in the army", in April 1873, Hospital Steward James M. DeWolf was ordered to the Department of the East, New York City, at his own expense. From there he was sent to Watertown Arsenal, Massachusetts for duty, from which point he entered Harvard Medical School, in addition to his duties as Hospital Steward. He was awarded the M. D. Degree from Harvard on June 26, 1875.

By the time he was prepared for examination by the Army Medical Board, he was over-age, but as a special concession and "in view of his long service in the army", on August 28, 1875, he was invited to appear

for examination. He appeared but failed to pass the Board. Evidently at his request, by Special Order, he was discharged from the army on October 5, 1875.

That same year on the 23rd day of October, as a Private Physician, he signed a one year contract with the Army to serve in the Department of Dakota at \$100 per month, except that while serving west of the Mississippi or with troops on marches, his pay would be advanced to \$125 per month.

On November 18, 1875, he entered on duty at Fort Totten, D. T., as Acting Assistant Surgeon, U. S. Army. By Special Order, dated March 2, 1876, he was ordered to proceed with two companies "E" and "L" of the 7th Cavalry to Ft. A. Lincoln and report to Lt. Col. George A. Custer for duty with troops in the field. By the 10th of that month they were on their way and that evening he made an entry in a paper bound pocket sized notebook recording the first day of the ill-fated expedition.

It is interesting to compare the diary with letters sent to his wife during the period covered. Fannie J. Downing had married DeWolf the latter part of 1871, but after four years she had not become completely aware of the many pitfalls of an isolated army post, and in addition, she was sick with loneliness for home and civilization. The doctor being considerably older and having practically grown up in the army, never ceased to caution her and guard her from the Fort gossips. We believe these letters reveal the personal anxieties and financial frugality typical of most military families. They should give an insight into the personal sacrifices made by those who manned our army.

The diary, contained in two pocket sized notebooks, is displayed in the museum at Custer Battlefield National Monument. With the letters and other personal papers, it was donated to the National Park Service by Dr. Verne A. Dodd, son of Mrs. DeWolf by her second marriage.

In transcribing the diary and letters, considerable difficulty was encountered in deciphering some of the words. The doctor was schooled in grammar and could write a beautiful hand, as shown in certain parts of some letters and in the addresses on the envelopes. However, as he mentions several times in his letters, the facilities for writing were quite inadequate in the field and haste in writing resulted many times in the elimination of most punctuation, capitals, etc. In some cases, his spelling of words was not consistent. We must remember that the letters especially were written for his wife. However, they add considerably to the study of this particular phase of our history, and it is as history that they are presented, but with all personal deference for the doctor and his wife.

The Diary begins with an entry shortly after leaving Fort Totten: Two miles from Totten my horse fell crushing my right foot.

March 10th 1876 in camp left Totten at 9 AM 10° below zero arrive at the Sheyenne (Davise's) at 2 P.M. one man a teamster frosted the tips of his fingers Commenced snowing at ½ past two P.M. one team broke down all chilled when we arrived but no one of the Command suffered severely Three had their feet frozen one had finger frozen & several others had hands & feet chilled it continued snowing & blowing till after night fall

March 11th in camp 7 AM Broke camp the wind blowing furiously the guide after going about one mile could not find the road went on 3 miles and the wind increased & continued snowing so that objects were invisible at very short distance. turned back and with great difficulty followed our trail back to old camp numerous were the frosted noses & faces but none very severely frosted my face slightly my foot is painful but not disabled.

12th Left Davises at 8 arrive at Belend 1 P.M. fair day little wind but very cold no mishap

13th Left Beland at 6:25 AM. arrive at Seward' at 8 P.M. halted 10 minutes at the springs many were frozen their noses faces fingers &c. were well received & provided for.

14th Remaining at Seward at Mr DuBrays quarters.

15th Remaining at Seward, D T.

Remained at Seward until April 14

April 14th 76 left Seward & arrived at Bismarck at 4 P.M. Camped just below Camp Hancock until the 17th was very kindly rec'd & entertained to Dinner at Capt Howes on the 16th. board at the Capitol met Dr Porter & Col Lounsberry,² Col Brown, Wilson & Thompson the latter returned from the 7th

April 17th Crossed over to Lincoln Capt Smith³ took me to dinner and was very kind was called on by Lt Porter⁴ & Smith, Dr Redd Dr R. asked me to Breakfast once while there Capt Smith asked me to come at will & Mr. S. was tolerable kind Middleton offered very kindly to provide for me. Went into Camp No 1. 2½ miles below Lincoln April of 76.

¹Fort Seward was located near Jamestown, Dakota Territory, which is about 80 miles directly south of Fort Totten and slightly more than 100 miles east of Bismarck. A company of the 20th Infantry was stationed at Fort Seward.

²Col. Clement A. Lounsberry was a Lt. Col. 20th Michigan Infantry during the Civil War. He came to Bismarck, May 11, 1873; established *The Bismarck Tribune* July 6, 1873; was Postmaster at Bismarck, 1876-1885; and was designated by the Associated Press and *N. Y. Herald* to accompany the Yellowstone Expedition in 1876, but due to illness in his family he chose Mark H. Kellogg to represent him.

³First Lt. Algernon E. Smith commanded Co. E, 7th Cavalry, at the Battle of the Little Bighorn and was killed with Custer's battalion in that action on June 25, 1876.

⁴First Lt. James E. Porter, a West Point graduate, was also killed with Custer on June 25. His remains were never positively identified.

Genl Terry⁵ Staff Custer & Williams⁶ arrived May 10th and came to camp the 11th & ordered a move on the 15th but it rained & delayed until the 17th

May 17th Moved at 5 A.M. get in camp Camp No 2 at 2 P.M. 12 miles on the little [Big] Heart River Marched Genl Custer went ahead & Scouts & Yates⁷ Comp 7 Cav Genl Terry Reno Band⁸ 3 Co Cav & Batty in front train in centre 3 Co Cav on each wing with flankers Infantry behind train & 1 Co Cavalry rear guard & 1 Co — as flankers quite a grand march the teams stuck in the mud frequently some did not get in til 5 P.M. A nice camp on the south of the Heart river the troops are paid at evening Mrs Custer came this far

May 18th 76 took 3 hours to cross the Heart R. marched 10 or 12 miles Camped on Sweet Briar Riv or Creek a broken country no timber no wood at Camp No 3. Antelope for supper 5 A.M. to 3 P.M. making the march showers in afternoon & evening

May 19th Went with Custers advance found an impassable stream flanked it found the ground very soft for the train Marched about 12 miles went in to camp about 12 6 P.M. train not all in yet sent back 20; 6 mule to help in wagons rec'd letter from Frank [Charley] Reynolds⁹ killed an antelope had a dreadful shower while putting up tents — with some hail tent full of mud tonight bedding moist

May 20th Moved at 8 AM Marched about 7 miles Camped at 2 P.M. train delayed with stream beds soft & soft ground bridged one stream camped on high ground saw mounted men in evening supposed to be Indians showers at evening very cool during the day No wood

May 21st 6 A.M. moved across a small coolie very drizzly and rainy cold & uncomfortable Marched 14 miles reached camp 4 P.M. no wood

May 22nd 5 A.M. lovely morning Marched 15 miles reached camp 1 P.M. fair marching one creek to cross wood & nice camp

May 23rd Marched 8 miles 5½ to 9½ passed Young Mens buttes the grave of a Sargeant Camped on high ground near a butte timber & water in a ravine north of camp passed a place in the distance re-

⁵Gen. Alfred H. Terry, Department Commander, Department of Dakota, with headquarters in Fort Snelling, St. Paul, Minnesota, came to take personal charge of the expedition. On May 17th, he left Fort A. Lincoln with the entire regiment of the 7th Cavalry, Companies C and G of the 17th Infantry, Co. B of the 6th Infantry, a battery of Gatling guns manned by detachments from the 20th Infantry, and about 40 Indian Scouts. See his Report at The National Archives, Records of the War Department, Office of the Adjutant General.

⁶Asst. Surgeon John W. Williams was Chief Medical Officer on General Terry's Staff during the Sioux Expedition in 1876.

⁷Capt. George W. Yates, in command of Co. F, was killed with Custer on June 25.

⁸The 7th Cavalry Band accompanied the march as far as the base of supply established near the mouth of the Powder River on the Yellowstone River. All wagons were also left at the base and only pack transportation taken beyond that point.

⁹Charley Reynolds, a civilian guide acting in the capacity of Chief of Scouts, was killed with Major Reno's battalion during the retreat on the afternoon of June 25.

sembling an abandoned post put on summer coat lovely weather good grass water good but hard

May 24th Left Young Mens Buttes at 5 AM went 8 miles & crossed stream nearly dry 8 miles or 9 miles camped in a valley on Heart River passed a butte 3 miles from camp. no unusual incident see the usual amount of chase of Antelope by the Hounds band plays at every fish in the stream camped at 3 P.M. had to bridge the coolie 8 miles back Marched 18 miles

May 25 moved at 5 got in camp at 2½ about 20 miles camped on a Branch of Heart River nice country one bridge to lay stream to cross on starting one mule nearly drowned Dr A. [Ashton] in ambulance Porter sick no unusual Incident

May 26th Marched at 5 A.M. 10 miles Camped at 2½ P.M. Crossed a branch of the Heart starting & the Heart 4 miles further had two bridges to make a very nice country rolling nice valley. very hot mosquitos troublesome have my first swim of the season in a pond hole rec'd letter from Frank at mornings Camp

May 27th Marched 15 miles 5 AM to 3 PM got into the edge of the Missouri Badlands got an opinion of red Lava from a high mound back of tent in evening no streams but some coulees to cross fair day Rain last evening on Davids [Davis] Creek at night the badlands consist in Pyramids of Clay & red lava stair mail ltr to F

May 28th 76 7 miles 4½ to 12 M Made Seven Crossings. 4 Companies went on below in afternoon to build crossings. Johnson Co I 7 Cav bitten by a Rattlesnake Cauterized wound & ligatured finger & gave Stimulant Whiskey. bit at 11 evening hand some swollen had vomited from Whiskey perhaps Rain at evening camp on a Peninsula

May 29th 5 miles 5 A.M. to 10 A.M. 4 Bridges Camp on the little Missouri. preparing for scout tomorrow. rough lands pass down Canon of Davids [Davis] Creek

May 30th 76 Left camp with General G A Custer & 4 Companies of 7th Cav and followed up the Little Missouri 23 miles or thereabouts Crossed the river 13 times went out on a Plateau & returned by way of going out Crossing the River in all 26 times Smelled gas at 22 miles down R left at 5 AM & returned at 6 PM. halted one hour for lunch & two short halts animals tired the crossings very quaky &c mud terrible & soft sand. Mail letter to Mrs D Rained 7 P.M. to 9 P.M.

May 31st 8 AM to 2½ PM 8 miles through badlands after crossing the Little Missouri going west on Stanleys trail Rained some in morning & evening cloudy all day no dust but hills & bad traveling. Smelled Gas & smoke at summit beyond the Buttes to be examined on returning

June 1st the rain continued through the night Snowing in morning & continued all day. thawing remain in camp all day do not move it is hell & more. muddy.

June 2nd Snow squalls every few minutes all day mud & slush part of the train moved over the ravines beyond the Right Wing at 2 P.M.

June 3rd 76 Marched to Beaver Creek Started 5 A.M. got in at 4 P.M. snow in the hill tops in the morning quite cold hot as hell in the afternoon all headaches on our arriving in camp. Received news from Gibbon* who is short of rations & surrounded by Indians has lost 1 Soldier & one or two citizens nice country rolling Prairie today boil on my cheek give me a severe headache

June 4th 18 miles up Beaver Creek 5 to 3 P.M. rolling several coulees to cross go hunting find lots of Antelope, two young wildcats get nothing nice cool day some snow still remaining on the hills in patches from June 1st & 2nd Cross the creek at tonights camp

June 5th 1876 Marched South 8 miles passed over a divide between the Beaver C. & Cabin Creeks bad sands for a mile after crossing the divide went S.W. about 10 miles Crossed Cabin Creek & west 2 miles 5 to 3 P.M. 18 to 21 miles 1st Sergt of B Troop reported a indian 2 miles from last night camp see numerous signs of Buffalo strike Stanleys trail at 9 A.M.

June 6th leave Stanleys Crossing. Cross a branch of O'Fallons Creek 10 miles and cross O'Fallons Creek & cross it 10 miles from Stanleys crossing above 5 AM to 4 P.M. March 22½ miles hard days some Indian signs very high wind all day one Buffalo killed. Man accidentally shot through calf of leg coming out on back of right foot pistol accidentally went off while mounting

June 7th 5 AM to 8 P.M. 32 miles about go direct across to Powder River from O'Fallon Creek keep up on the divides a bad pass & several deep ravines about 4 miles from Powder river steep banks & liable to wash would be impassable in wet weather. Cloudy & cool all day some fine misty rain not enough to wet the ground found several remnants of Buffalo carcasses that Indians had killed game getting scarce no doubt due to the presence of Indians in the vicinity found some wild Heilatrope as found in Oregon some sage brush and some Rolling Prairie & Badlands.

June 8th Remain in camp on Powder River Genl Terry & 2 Co Cav start for Boat at mouth of river fair

*Gen. John Gibbon, also operating under the command of General Terry, had moved out of Fort Ellis, near Bozeman, Montana, about the first of April with four companies of the 2nd Cavalry and six companies of the 7th Infantry from Fort Shaw near the present site of Great Falls, Montana. They had been marking time along the Yellowstone awaiting the arrival of the troops from Fort A. Lincoln.

June 9th Remain in Powder River camp all day Rain afternoon Genl Terry returned at night late

June 10 Right wing Comd by Maj Reno ordered to scout the Powder River & cross to mouth of Tongue River March at 3½. 8 miles on East side take pack animals

June 11th 5 AM to 3 PM 26 miles March 6 miles & cross the River ten more miles & cross a large Creek on west side 5½ AM to 1½ March 26 miles see a smoke in the distance when we went into camp the flats are very soft & very hard marching cross the River without difficulty Showering in afternoon.

June 12th 5 AM to 2 P.M. 24 miles follow up west shore of River to the forks pass mouth of creek 12 miles from starting point today and another 4 miles below tonight's camp both crossing in on the eastern side find where a large body of Indians had moved from about one week ago perhaps 30 families find one Pony see him first 2 miles distant fair day walked on high Buttes where Indian was on Picket saw the two branches of the River I [Indian] tells me + E Fork & 50 or Sixty west of W Fork

June 13th 5 A.M. to 1 P.M. 24½ miles Cross from Powder River to Mizpah Creek or dry creek rough crossing very crooked trail & hard & hot marching saw one Buffalo one running across a divide & saw one in the distance the branches of creek nearly all dry & very little where we camped S of W

June 14th 76 5 AM to 1 P.M. 22½ miles Crossed from Mizpah Creek march up Pumpkin Creek from mile to about 1 mile above its forks on west fork about 12 miles from M Creek to divide fair road divide some pine & ravines but not so bad as to Powder River from O'Fallon Creek fair day trails S of W

June 15th 5 A.M. to 1 P.M. 25 miles Up a branch of the Pumpkin broad valley 10 miles to divide found & kill an Elk see one more up mountain pass down ravine Gatling gun upset march down a branch of Tongue River to Tongue River & camp on the Tongue swim afternoon broad valley down the stream to the Tongue timber plentiful on the divides fine cottonwood along the stream the Tongue is not so muddy as the Powder perhaps due to no late rains

8

June 16th 5 A.M. to 2 P.M. 27 miles marched 8 miles down the

35

Tongue T then direct across to Rosebud Creek west rough & sage brush but could be crossed by wagons by some work plenty of old Buffalo signs none new or of Indians now boil water for camp & poor grass 8½ to 11½ P.M. 8 miles marched at evening 8 miles 4½ to Rosebud and

about 3½ up the Rosebud Creek find a large trail week old trail lodge-pole &c

June 17th 76 8 A.M. to 10 A.M. 6½ miles 4 P.M. 8 P.M. 14 miles Marched up the Rosebud 7½ miles & camped till afternoon then marched down the valley about 15 miles the valley is broken by ravines but broad & not high bluffs the land slopes gently back Cotton wood & rose bushes no grass¹¹ Very large trail passing up the valley all of today's march

June 18th 76 5½ AM to 12 M 20 miles march down the Rosebud to the Yellowstone river 18¾ miles march down to near opposite Gibbons camp¹² communicated with them the valley of the Rosebud is quite broad & could be passed up by wagons some ravines &c to cross fair & quite hot day the Yellowstone seems navigable at this point the remains of an old trading fort are at the junction of the Rosebud & Yellowstone E. Ent of R & S of Yellowstone¹³

June 19th 4½ to 4 P.M. 33 miles marched 9¾ miles back from the river on the bluffs 8 miles along river bottom then the balance on Bluffs the last mile was dreadful badlands & almost impassable found lots of Agates some pretty

June 20th 4 P.M. to 8½ P.M. 14 miles marched back up the Yellowstone after the Boat came up to us from 4 miles below the Tongue R. we were 6 miles above the mouth of the Tongue R the left wing & Genl Custer Joined the latter & taken command Genl Terry Hd Qrs remaining on the Boat Far West Camped on the Y. R. Meet Genl Terry Custer & Williams and the Dept Staff on board have hair cut & shave

June 21st marched 6 A.M. to 12. 19 miles to ½ mile below the mouth of the Rosebud Creek. Camp & get ready to fit out for our Expedition. Genl Gibbon command moves up opposite

June 22. 12 M to 4. 12 miles marched up the Rosebud Creek on our trail of the 18th ult part of the way but keep on west side of creek

June 23. 5 A.M. to 3 P.M. 33 miles continued up the Rosebud C find large deserted camps the valley completely barren has been an enormous number of horses passed about 10 to 20 days ago 11 miles above where Reno was the 17th ult very hot

June 24 5 A.M. to 7 P.M. 3 hour halt. marched 10 miles & found a large branch nearly as large as main stream found another 7 miles beyond marched within a few miles of the forks found lots of new signs old camps in profusion they begin not to be so high

[End of entries]

¹¹It is not clear whether this word was intended to be "grass" or "game." The presence of large bodies of Indians with their pony herds could create a scarcity of either.

¹²General Gibbon's command had been camped on the north bank of the Yellowstone River opposite the mouth of the Rosebud Creek since the 14th of June and so remained until the 21st.

¹³Presumably he refers to Fort Van Buren built about 1835 for the American Fur Company by Samuel Tullock and named for President Van Buren. Lieutenant Bradley who was in charge of Gibbon's Crow Scouts also mentions the presence of the remains of this old post or fort. Burlingame *The Montana Frontier*, pp. 47, 76 or *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana*, Vol. 2, pp. 198, 199.

Davis Ranch
8 AM [March] 12th 76

Darling

on leaving camp every thing went all right to 2½ miles when my horse fell on my foot but is now all right again Arrive here at 2 P.M. you know how it snowed we did not learn from Maj. Smith what we might if we had stopped & had a talk so the Genls letter was the first intimation that we might have delayed. yesterday we started out four miles and could not follow the road turned back and & nearly all had face nose or ears touched by the Icy hand but none injuriously they are only slightly sore this morning, that is the ears & noses we shall start from here in a few minutes & go to Beland today Brown Carpiti Caldwell & Sergt Zimmerman are quite severely frostbitten (feet) all are in good spirits we can keep warm at night & day our clothing is ample as clothing can be so you need not fear for me I can stand it all right hoping you will have a happy time this summer & dont fret about me at Lincoln. Good bye darling love & kisses from your loving Husband

J. M. DeWolf

Fort Seward D.T.
March 14th 76

Darling wife

we arrive here last night on leaving Davises Sunday morning we had a nice day & as our supplies were running close and expecting storms we on monday marched through from Beland starting from Beland at 6.25 AM and arrive about 8 P.M. making a halt of about 10 minutes at Iron Springs it stormed & blew so we thought it better to march than camp we marched till dark. as the trail could not be seen during the day except on hills & places where the wind swept off the snow in most of the places the snow was near two feet & every valley was full of drifts my old horse kept at the head of the column & would plunge the drifts ahead of everything. (by the way I could not hold him & keep behind on the trail as I would have liked) well darling you can imagine how we feel with our noses frozen for Capt.'s & mine are in a very highly colored condition I have got Cleaned up shaved and hope to call on some tonight Capt. Patterson has very kindly provided for us all I have a bed in Mr. DuBrays quarters & mess with Mr. Maize we are having good time we are not sure of the road being open they expect the train from the East tomorrow it is a work train Genl Custer was snowed in between here & Bismarck but has now moved on in Sleighs this train he was on is expected to get to Bismarck tonight we may be here for a week but I think not longer the men are nearly all frozen to some extent many are just the tip of a finger nose or ear or face but scarcely one escaped entirely but there are none I think

that will be dis-abled by it. I will find out tonight just how many there are touched by the icy hand such a trip is like placing one on the brink of a precipice & giving him a push of course we met the telegrams they seemed like mockery though the men nearly perished to reach us but of course no one is to blame except the first telegram should have some discretionary power but now I think I can stand as much as any human being. tell Mrs Fletcher I was sorry I did not let you act upon her suggestion & make me a hood my foot is swollen yet but has ceased to be lame but you know how lame horseback riding makes me Capt & his frozen nose points from across the table to mine as we write his eyes are quite inflamed from the light my eyes are all right but nose is like a boiled lobster Mr DuBray says the mail has arrived from the East by stage I will stop my letter this mail Give my regards to Genl & Mrs Hunt Dr & Mrs Ferguson, and all tell Mrs. McD. that Capt's [McDougall] & my nose mates well hoping you are having a nice time do not worry about me in the least for I am in good company and am well provided but hope we shall not leave Lincoln till warm weather it seems I am omitting something but if I have perhaps Captain will inform you. You must write every mail of course you may not have much news but I want to know you are well & happy. do now try an cultivate the acquaintance of Mrs. Hunt, as I think you will find she will help you in your music and do try & enjoy yourself & be careful of your company (now dont pout because I tell you that)

I will write what there is to say every week from your loving Husband

J. M. DeWolf

Fort Seward D.T.

12 M March 16th 1876

Darling

I learned this morning that the mail had not left for Totten yet it stormed & blew so the 14,15, and still continues that it is almost impossible to go out doors it was lucky that we arrived the 13th the roads are & will be blockaded for a week or two I am going to wait here for directions & shall not make any only my regular reports there were 41 frozen coming here and no doubts others that were so sleight as not to report none I think will be permanently injured. *It is thought* that this expedition will fail to go out. that Genl. Custer will be promoted & taken from Command of the 7th Cav and from the command of this expedition and that there may be some small parties or one or two companies sent out but part of this are only surmises and not to be trusted explicitly Mr Craycroft & Dr Ruger have been & paid me a long visit this morning Capt McDougall's¹⁴ eye is much better this

¹⁴Capt. Thomas M. McDougall commanded Co. B of the 7th Cavalry in the expedition and was assigned to protect the pack train on June 25.

morning. he had been in & written to Mrs M. I hope you & Mrs McDougall are having nice times Captain some expects to be relieved here but has not heard as yet I attend my sick at call 7½ & visit those in the hospital at 10 and again at retreat I am living with the mess Capt. Maize, Mr. DuBray & Capt McD. we have a jolly time and are having as nice a time as we could any where except at home. The Teams from Totten started out yesterday broke down & came back & it was very lucky for them that they did for I never witnessed such a storm in my life they will start again as soon as the elements will permit my two shirts I think will do me by having them washed often though if I have two more good ones you may send them by the mail next. Major Smith left here by stage yesterday morning. I cannot see how he could possibly get through if not he must have a rough time of it yesterday a Mr Echerson or such a name was up & spent the day with us and a good time you bet. (*dont fear my drinking* for you have no reason) Cards are not played here they all of officers &c have been occupied the winter in the study of French Telegraphy &c and are I will say bye bye darling if I learn anything more before the mail leaves I will write it in

from your Husband

J. M. DeWolf

After dinner 5½ Captain McDougall has received a telegram stating that Genl Custer has been ordered to send an officer to relieve him here if one can be sent Mr Craycroft is also some expecting to be relieved here but no definite knowledge of such the wind & snow is blowing at a terrific rate I hope by next mail there may be some definite knowledge of what is to be done give Dr & Mrs Ferguson my regards hoping you are having a nice time

from your loving Husband J.M.D.

Fort Seward D. T.

March 19th 1876

Sunday 6 P.M.

Darling wife

I will try & tell you how I am spending my time. I go to Sick Call at 7½ breakfast 8½ to 9½ I went down to town returned about 11. gas & chat in my qrs or Capt. Maize's till dinner at 3½ to 4½ then chat until now Capt McD & Maize are going Sleighing. I have called at Capt. Pattersons twice Dr Rugers several times & last evening Capt. McDougall Maize, Mr. DuBray & myself went & serenaded Mrs Forbes or rather Capt M & M & DuBray with his Guitar done the serenading & I played dummy, went in & had a nice time staid till 10. No one plays cards here and no drinking. I wrote a letter for you last Thursday but the mail left before I knew & failed to take it so you will get it this mail. Capt. M & Mr Cray. I suppose will be along when you

receive this - - I admire Capt McDougall the more I know him but Cray. I cannot say I do. Patterson is splendid & Maize to but of different type. Mr DuBray is an Englishman and is like all of his countrymen English he reminds me of Smith. I was at the P.O. & find a letter from Mich. for. I did not open it as the mail comes in tuesday I will open any them are for us & send them in as I did last mail that Deed ought to be along this mail and the Books from Carleton & Co I will finish this up before tuesday night

March 20. a most lovely morning. my patients are all doing well. a Courts Martial convenes today am looking forward to tomorrow hoping to hear you are happy. I expect to learn something about the expedition when Calhoun¹⁵ (who is coming to relieve Craycroft) arrives suppose he will be here tomorrow I find that this Calhoun is a person that I have seen in *Old Camp Warner* ten years this next October I stopped at his quarters & had a good time he was then a first Sergeant of D-23rd Infty so you find I will have some one that I can talk to about Oregon. he was examined by a board of old C W & recommended & finally examined at San Francisco Cal. Capt Henton tried after his examination to prevent his Commission I think or at least they had a row I will after I know what is to be done try & find out what assignment will be made with me, after the expedition for now I am inclined to think it will go out they have fair collars at Kelly's in Jamestown for 12½cts I will send you sufficient to Liquidate Bremmers amount soon but do not mention this to others or about the price of C at this point as I do not want to hurt his trade I saw you got the samples [Letter torn and part is missing at this point] it seems to me my pay was never so small I want so many things I have not spent any only for papers & the march coming down, but my mess & wash here will be something & when I get to Lincoln I must have some collars now I have [Part of letter missing] that I did not bring more as I have not very plenty room for what I have. DuBray is going to try for a commission and think he may be able to get it he is very hopeful

21st 10 A.M. news came yesterday that Gen'l Custer has been promoted and left Bismarck going east & that officers are coming with him to relieve Capt M. & Cray. as the mail does not go down from here after the eastern mail comes in I will have to close this now Capt M. will no doubt be at hand by the time this reaches you to tell you the balance I cannot tell what effect the Promotion of Custer will have upon the expedition's going out it is thought by some that it will not start but it very likely will go. hoping you are having a nice time and are not discontented love & kisses from your Husband

J. M. DeWolf

¹⁵Lt. James Calhoun, brother-in-law of General Custer, was under Custer's immediate command on June 25 and commanding Co. L. He was killed with his company.

Seward D. T.
March 21st 1876

After dinner
Darling wife

I have just read your splendid letters they find me with a headache today but only from Seidletz Powders as I had to take one this morning. I have been eating to much I feel all square since dinner the eastern mail got in today at 12. the books from Carleton & Co have come I looked them over but do not admire them much except their covers which are very nice Gen'l Custer is looked for every moment I suppose I may hear something later from you when Lunis¹⁰ comes in but shall not be disappointed much if I do not you have written you two one I wrote that should have went last mail. every body are asleep now Capt M, Maize, & DuBray smoking the wind is commencing to blow I am sick of writing about the road being open the train from may arrive here tomorrow from the East but then the road will not be open only to the Cheyenne [Sheyenne] about half the distance. the west end the snow bound train the one that Custer left some two weeks ago or near that I believe got through to Bismarck yesterday and will turn & work back this way it is very uncertain when the road is clear if no more storms perhaps in from 5 to 7 days I suppose Capt & Cray will be there to tell you all the particulars I am so glad you are having such good times tell Mrs Hunt Mrs Fletcher & Mrs Ferguson & Dr that I am very grateful for their kindness to you and Mrs. McDougall that I admire her bravery I am very sorry to hear that General Hunt is sick and hope he is improving and well before this I have this mail received a notice of the death of a member, Edward Walker I sent the money to pay the assessment you will receive the card again in in due time stamped Received Payment but if you receive any that are not stamped so send the dollar as I directed you to I sent my application to the association of Greenfield Mass. today I am going down town by and bye to mail this hoping you are well and happy I once more assure you that my anxiety & troubles are all and solely for you my darling wife from your loving husband love & kisses

J. M. DeWolf

My letters I think contains all that would interest you. we have beer but I only drink one glass a day & no whisky since the first day

¹⁰There is some uncertainty regarding this name. Lunis is our best judgment but it could have been Lewis or some name similar to it. He was probably an enlisted man or a contract carrier of mail, etc. This name is mentioned a number of times in the letters.

Wednesday March 22nd Afternoon

Darling wife

I rec'd your letter of the 19th it finds us all well Genl Custer left this morning for the East. he has not been promoted that I know of but is going on unknown business to us, and is expected back in about two weeks the expedition seems to be going to go out sure, & will perhaps be out until sept and of that there is now no definite knowledge Capt & Cray. are turning over their companies. they have just gone down now. What do you mean about the P. and about Mrs Hunt isn't it killing and the idea of his going to the President! I do not know what you mean I have not heard anything about them. I hope you will have good times at the Doctors. Capt. Mc will deliver this. It seems to me a rather loose way of doing business issue an order to go on the 10th then send directions what supplies to take after one has been gone from the post a week Capt M & Cray leave tomorrow it will be lonely when Capt. M. leaves Cray will not be here to deliver his high flown phrases but I then am with careful cautious men who weigh well what they say. I have been giving DuBray a lecture on Harvard University. I have got him nearly sick telling him about the dissecting room. Give my kind regards to Dr & Mrs Ferguson tell Mrs Fletcher I am very sorry to hear she is so afflicted & the General I am sorry to hear is sick in case you get entirely sick of Totten you must not feel that you are compelled to remain there for I will let you go home if becomes unpleasant for you there but if we can stand it this summer I think it will be different next winter. my Package from Boston has not come yet you perhaps will get it when I am out on the Yellowstone I think you will get no less than three or four letters from me this mail & one I think I forgot to seal thinking I might want to put in a few more words the Telegraph operator is off drunk I suppose and so there is no news of the trains today no wonder he gets drunk I should think he would get crazy as all the officers go down & buzz him till he cannot attend to his business or anything else they play with his aparatis & really run him well darling I must close for this mail hoping you are happy & content as your happiness is my happiness love & kisses from your loving husband

James M. DeWolf

Fort Seward D. T.
March 25th 1876

Darling wife

I sent you several letters last mail & one by Capt McD. since then it seems rather dull but everything moves on "L" Co has about as many in the G.H as usual. my sick call is more interesting from day to day inebriation being the cause of most of the suffering since the frostbites

are nearly well. though the seven cases one whose time expired will loose part of two toes & one other will perhaps loose some of his first toe which at the time of my other letters were apparently going to live. It has been thawing very fast yesterday & day before. last evening the train from the east came in about 8 P.M. and this morning have started *East* to try and finish opening the road to Fargo if they succeed in getting through to Fargo they will get a new supply of men & material. Engines &c and will open the road west pretty rapidly but if it continues freezing it will make it difficult it is some talked of our marching to Lincoln. we shall have to next week if the road is not open as the Forage & hay &c will be out here & then the horses will have to leave or starve all the hay & grain at Jamestown has been bought & it will only last to the last of next week Maj Smith (who Relieved Cap M) talks of sending a team back if he does send me some shirts white & all the collars I have I think I told you to send some by Lunis but I am not sure however I am doing very well we all walk down town after dinner to go to the telegraph office get the news & return (no drink since the Mc & Cray left among the officers which suits me well do not mention this to any body) I have opened Elmira's letter and as the envelope will cost another stamp I will put it in with this without the envelope I will open your letters while I am here so I can get the news (of course you are willing) I wish months were shorter. Maj. Smith some recruits & officers was on the train that came in last night I am told expect they will be up to this Post today. My Pocket inkstand broke coming the ink froze & busted as I forgot to carry it in my pocket everything looks now as though I might be sent to Totten next winter I will try & send you some funds from Lincoln I think I ought to get the deed for the farm this mail. if it comes I will send it on to you you may send me my lodge notices as they come to hand and look through all of my Masonic Books Bylaws & notices and see if you can find the number of Pequosse the Lodge it begins to brighten up & think it may not freeze up yet hope to get a long letter from you next tuesday you cannot imagine how much I feel our separation this time and hope it will not be necessary again. everything is like a dream to me I do not like rooming with tobacco consumers such a room as we keep you ought to see three guns in one corner one in another two pistols hung on the wall our dressing table or Buro has everything you can think of on it in confusion the window is full of Cartridge shells powder Flask hammer gloves wristlets &c &c every corner is full of old Boots the walls are dorned with hats caps Bridles styrrups riding whips Guitar Boots smoking pouches pants overcoats &c &c in fact it is the place of a hunter. the quarters are some like the rooms at Totten we occupy the room as our dining room the front room has a table & stove & a lot of truck & is our passage way to our paradise though we are happy love & kisses darling from your loving Husb

J. M. DeWolf

Fort Seward D. T.
March 25th 1876

9 P.M.

Darling wife

I have written you a letter today enclosing Elmira's letter to you and also read the Reflector & put it back in the office and will try & have it got in the morning and taken up to you as I suppose you will get this about the time I get your letter tuesday night I also send here-with my express package if found it at the Post Office today it has been there in the safe for some time & I had been inquiring at the Rail Road office I have been playing Cassino Seven up & Euchre with Dr Ruger he beat me bad at Cas. & I him at Eu. hoping you are having good times love & kisses darling from your Husband J. M. DeWolf Sunday Morning. All right had a nice evening last the road is expected to be open to fargo by tomorrow then they will go to work on the Bismarck end - - Breakfast is nearly ready give my kindest regards to Mrs H. & the Genl Dr & Mrs F and all enquiring from your loving Husband

J. M. DeWolf

Fort Seward D. T.
March 27th 1876

Tuesday evening

Darling wife

I received your big letter and shirt & collar the first I have been looking for all this afternoon it finds me well &c. to pass time we all go down town to the telegraph office after breakfast 9 or 10 and stay till about noon then after dinner which is at 3½ we all go down again & go through the usual questions to the operator as to where the train is & when they will get through to Fargo. I think the train that left here sunday morning will reach Fargo tonight then they will have to come back & open this end again. we are not going to wait any longer but will march through saturday sunday & monday next if the weather permits and our team comes from Totten I have just received my orders from Dept. Headquarters directing me to report to Custer & Dr Kimball. but last night we read the what was said to be the press dispatches which said Genl Terry will take the field, and leave Lincoln the first of May; and that the Cavalry on the Rio Grande are to be increased & commanded by Custer. also that Lt. Col Grant & Babcock are to be investigated that Genl Crook¹⁷ has been compelled to retire these

¹⁷General George Crook, Commanding the Department of the Platte, was moving up through Wyoming with a military force and was supposed to cooperate with General Terry in his movements. By this time a portion of Crook's command under Colonel Reynolds had already been engaged with Indians on the upper Powder River.

dispatches I do not know whether they are genuine or not I have some reason to think they are, I at least hope so there are other rumors that will not interest & are no doubt untrue.

Darling. *Privately*

I am glad you are beginning to like Mrs H and hope you will try to yourself as happy as possible under the circumstances. I caution you to be careful what you say or think of others and no doubt what was told you of the St. Paul talk was true for I think Mrs H told me nearly the same but that Dr M. had only been expected previous to Mrs H's arrival which was only a short time before us but it dont matter. but I shall try & do my duty while I stay & not beg for favors but do beg to be left in peace do not dear be made a go between hear all but say nothing to cause ill feeling I have this day recd a letter from mother & the bond that I sent them has been kept & they want another I am a mind to tell them something. if I was sure of my money I would not sign it. darling I hope I do not annoy you by the advice above for mothers letter annoys me I will send it to you next mail as I want time to consider what to do. I will write you once more before I leave here it may storm so as to detain us but hope not I like the people here at Seward much though I have called but a few times and my associates are men. I have had one glass of beer this week and have gained two pounds 177. I shall send you some funds from Lincoln I have no Idea how much my mess will be here & washing &c good night darling. J.M.D. 8 A.M. Wednesday:

It is a lovely morning I have got shaved dressed & attended to my sick and will now finish my letter I am going to remove four toes from one of the men that froze coming down which I thought would not require removal I shall take this down to the office after breakfast then go to the hospital I like Smith who has taken command much he is married & says you had ought to come down to Lincoln & staid the summer I hope I shall return to T next fall give my regards to all Genl & Mrs H. Dr & Mrs F particularly you should fasten your doors at night if not for safety for fashion. love & kisses from your loving husband

J. M. DeWolf

Direct the next Fort A Lincoln D.T.

Fort Seward D. T.
March 30th 1876

Darling wife

I recd your letter from Capt Mc they arrived last night about 9. I will answer some of your questions I meant I would like part of my shirts to be made of Irish linnen in place of muslin but never mind the shirts now. I will write you more by and bye. I sent you a box of stationary 75¢ I have made one another bond to mother and will send

you a copy of it to keep I also send you the latest on signatures some come out very curiously I operated on those toes yesterday removed four.

31st as I have a few minutes to breakfast I will improve it I commenced yesterday to mess with Dr. Ruger as they reassigned every body I like them very much I am just beginning to get acquainted with Dr R. there was no letter mail for us yesterday the train is through to Fargo. I spent the evening at Mrs Forbe's Mrs Patterson & Mrs Mc was there had a nice chat we are having nice weather hope we will have some sent next week. shall not leave here before monday Craycroft has recd some orders directing him to remain till after action is taken on his application for sick leave, which he has not yet applied for
Monday April 3 - 76

Craycroft goes to St. P and then will apply for the retired list the work train is expected from fargo tomorrow to open the west end of the road. we have orders to remain here until further orders so please have my zinc trunk put in repair and send my felt & straw hat my coat pants vests &c as you think I will need. (I have the dictionary.) send it the trunk by Lunis first mail

evening. well I have got all of my reports off and have written to Dr Ferguson have just been down town no news. I asked Dr to ask Lt Reynolds to let his carpenter fix my trunk you can have it fixed as you think best. I just learned that the mail or a team will leave here tomorrow for Tot so I will finish this & give you one more day to fit up my trunk Dr will not get his Receipts tell him until the mail as I have mailed them tonight I have also mailed the bond to mother and send you a copy to keep I hope you will have a nice time as soon as the mud dries up it is very muddy here now except some places where it is drying up. You ask about the folks here I like them very much. of course I don't call often but I guess sufficient for ordinary civility there is some slight talk about the expedition being abandoned. but nothing to indicate it except, Genl Crooks reports that the number of indians off the reservation has been greatly exaggerated Gen Sherman has gone to Washington & it is supposed Army H. qrs will be removed to Washington a Capt Harmon or Harman (once of the army) has been appointed post trader at Lincoln. this post has been repairing all of their transportation some is destined for the expedition the news I wrote about Custer & Promotion was all a hoax and I was only one of several of the victims it has become quite common to have bogus telegrams here and some one is hoaxed nearly every day but nobody was april fooled very seriously Craycraft would have made several victims but he told to much he said Custer was promoted to the 10th and then so much about officers retiring that is killed the first time & I now mess with Dr Ruger Mrs Ruger I like very much for a southern woman you will know that people

from the south are not much like those from the north saturday evening Mrs McD & myself Played a Miss Forbs & Calhoun Whist 8 games won two & one Whitewash making 3 games from 8 had a nice time but the folks dont begin with the Tottenites for entertainers but dont say this where it will come back to me dont say it any where! give my kindest wishes to Capt & Mrs Fletcher Dr & Mrs F. & the Genl & Mrs Hunt and Compliments to the Pedro Club through Cap Harbach I heard a lady remark that she liked Cap H very much this last is private well darling it is getting dark hoping you are well & happy darling love & kisses from your loving husband J. M. DeWolf

I think darling you had better if you can get some one to sleep in the house with you nights as you will not feel like being alone many nights. you may be able to get Stewarts daughter or some one else. From your loving husband J. M. D.

I am so sick of seeing dogs lying around & could see them all in - we *have* only sixteen, or so. JMD your husb.

Fort Seward D. T.
April 4th 76

Darling wife

I recd your letter am very sorry you have such a sick spell this time I have written you nearly all of the news in another letter that I expected to send by a team but it stormd & the team did not go well the train did not leave Fargo today and will not untill the storm ends it has stopped storming & perhaps the train will come out here in a few days but no doubt it shall be for 10 days or two weeks you may send my trunk as I have directed I will now tell you as near as I can what I have done with my money. My striker coming down here \$2. mess \$8. this mess was not charged but paid to the servant on intimation Ex package 85 cts wash \$2.50 paper \$1.50 Total \$14.85 Postage stamps about \$1.50 office & all matches 10 cts telegrams 25 cts. I have now

\$14.75	some postage stamps	\$4	due me	4.00	I had when I left some
				6.50	
				<u>35.25</u>	

30 odd dollars I have not wasted much so far I send you herewith Erastuses letter I shall send him my amount this or next mail I see Capt & Mrs M every day & Cray. Am having very nice time Mrs Forbes & some of the off go riding nearly every fair day Cray Capt Smith or Capt McD. I like Lt Calhoun & Capt Smith very much and no doubt will enjoy their company this summer but of course they are not like Capt McD & Cray I will tell you more when I see you I would come up but I could have but one weeks leave I would be near all of that time on the road going & returning and then the Ex may be abandoned

yet but do not hope so too much please put my amount of postage in my trunk the little book I kept this amount in. we did not get the press dispatches today I have tonight got my first shirt that has to be done up decent The French lessons are still going on occassionally Dr & Mrs R are quite proficient from all accounts: give my regards to all enquiring friends Cray & Cap McD wishes to be remembered

darling it seems hard that we must be separated but perhaps it will come all right in time I cannot very well try for the Arsonal, the pay of course would keep us but the position is not very apt to be permanent or of any long duration. but however I will write to Col Laidly in a week or two but shall not ask for the place before fall if I could get it. from your loving Husband JMDeWolf love & kisses to my darling wife I have just been able to get two elegant neck ties from Dr. DuBray. so I have two nice ties & will send for me some shirts before long

from your Hub
JMDeWolf

Fort Seward D. T.
April 5th 76

Wednesday Eve 10

Darling wife

I just learned that the wagons are going to Totten tomorrow morning. the train has arrive here. they came in about six this afternoon a scout also just arrive from Lincoln with some letters one for Custer I have been in Mrs Forbes a few minutes this evening. I am now in hopes we shall not get off to Lincoln until my trunk comes and think there is not much danger in case I should I will leave directions here what to do with it. Mrs McD Miss Forbes Capt McD Smith Patterson & Maize were down to see the train folks they brought through three passengers in a caboose car start west tomorrow morning. DuBray has come in & is going to bed so bye bye darling love & kisses (Give my regards to all) from your loving husband James M. DeWolf

Fort Seward D. T.
April 9th 1876

After dinner

Darling wife.

It is nearly one month since I have seen you and it has seemed an age. well since my last letter it has been nice weather and our daily visits to town have been the rule. I have since at Dr Rugers had breakfast at 9 and dinner at four one hour each meal is about all I am there I have been at Mrs Forbes once and had a nice visit once since Mr McLaughlin is in town and is up nearly every day he only

calls on Patterson & Mrs Forbes. the train is working its way to Bismarck. the three Companies of the 7th Cavalry in the South are ordered up to Lincoln immediately. McD & Crays Company is among them they expect orders to remain here until they come up well it thundered & rained last night and has been raining some here today the wind has blown very hard all day and some of the time it has snowed but the Thermometer has been about 40° all day so it is not cold. Mr DuBray has been been out today and killed six (6) ducks so we expect to have ducks for dinner tomorrow wont they be good I wish we could have dinner together Capt Maizes cook has been sick for two days Ella is now filling her place General Emory has retired so it gives one promotion I see in the Bismarck Tribune that Custer has been caning Genl Rice of Washington. I have received another card of a death in the South which I have sent you will receive the receipted card some time Please send me by the first mail three cakes of Boquet and three of the Elder flower turtle oil soaps direct it In care of A. W. DuBray and if I should have left he will send it to me

Now What I wish to say is Private I should like to stay at T the coming winter so you may not tell Mrs H. that I dont want to, but do not want you to say that I have spoken to you on that point of course I shall try and work things as well as I can for our mutual benefit

I have paid Erastus my 125 or sent him my pay for march and will get my pay as early for April as I can and will send you fifty dollars of it. I dont want you to pay B. anything yet so in case I am ordered away from there I may pay him in part with *stuff* you must keep your mess bill and I will try & have it there before the end of the month

 we expect now to get away from here some time this week but may not until the three Companies come up from the south or until the expedition was ready to start I will have a small operation on toes again tomorrow and am some in hopes of having some more important work to do this summer hope Dr Kimbal will be up soon Genl Custer out to be back next week¹⁸ I dont hear any more about Crooks report and guess it will have no effect on the expedition well I want to go but do not much like to leave you but know you will have a nice time with the people at Totten for I assure you that I look back with pleasure to the past winter. give my kindest regards to Mrs Hunt Mrs Fletcher Mrs Ferguson & the Baby. tell the Pedroists that I hear they have vipers, or Pokerites at Lincoln. Frank you asked me if I liked Calhoun. Yes

¹⁸General Custer was called to Washington to testify before the Clymer Senatorial Committee investigating corruption in management of post traderships. Due to the involvement of political appointees of the President in this testimony, President Grant, in retaliation at first refused Custer permission to participate in the expedition against the Sioux. General Terry interceded on behalf of Custer and he eventually was permitted to go as commanding officer of the 7th Cavalry provided General Terry take overall command of the expedition.

and you would for he is a Gentleman and a Ladies man and does not talk for effect. A E Smith is also an excellent man they compare well with any two officers you can mention DuBray is off again this evening after ducks I have been dreaming of you for several nights I hope you are well darling and am waiting very patiently for tuesday evening the mail comes in here from the East and West on Tuesday and Thursday nights our mail ought to leave here Friday morning then you would get all of the latest news &c I believe Capt Harbach gets the telegrams that we get here daily. well bye bye darling love and kisses from your loving Husband J M DeWolf

P.S. suppose my darling is now writing to me or packing my trunk I will finish this up Tuesday night

Tuesday noon Darling since Sunday well Monday I went & took a ride in the ambulance with Capt. Patterson & Maize who went hunting ducks got home for dinner 3 ducks the Eastern mail came in read Harpers & sent it to you Played whist last evening Mr (Lieut) Van Reily & myself against Maize and Lt Harrington¹⁹ we made 44 to their 7 points have been down town this morning. got my Courier Journal. it is getting monotonous I hope you have sent my trunk & that it will arrive this evening in case it comes the bridge is impassable so I will have to have it brought across the RR bridge as the other is several feet under water it is snowing very hard here since about 10 A.M. the mail this time came up on a Hand Car & expects to go back the same way. General Crooks has had a fight without doubt but no particulars or at least I have not heard them that I could rely on. Tuesday eve Just recd your letter & suppose there are some clothes down town for me send my trunk next mail if Tunis can bring it. darling I fear I have did wrong to give you any expectation of our returning but there has been quite serious talk but of a non official nature of the expedition failing, though it is very probably that we may go out. you cannot miss me more that I do you darling so do not get impatient I hope all will come around in course of time. I hope it will not be so dreary after spring comes and it will not be long before we have nice weather we expect now to get off to Lincoln the latter part of this week but the road may not be open & I am in no hurry & would rather remain so near than to go down to Lincoln for we are here very comfortable I like the Drs very much Cray & McDs are here still suppose they will get away the last of the week unless they get orders to remain for the arrival of their companies - it has been snowing all day I attend to my sick as usual I removed some bones of two toes yesterday which I think I mentioned are all doing nicely Dr Ruger has had one case of Pericarditis (look in

¹⁹Both 2nd Lt. William Van W. Reily and 2nd Lt. Henry Moore Harrington were killed with Custer on June 25. Lt. Harrington was graduated from West Point in 1872. His body was never identified.

Dictionary) we shall very probably remain here or at Lincoln for a month I have not talked to Mrs McD about you and do not talk to her or any of the ladies except as civility demands & suppose some think scarcely enough for that I stay at my quarters most of the time go down town to find out the news. A. T. Stewart is dead of New York. spend an hour at Rugers for Breakfast & an hour for dinner I have not had any striker here, but shall have one as soon as I move. I believe it would be nice to move down to L. soon if we must go for it is getting dull staying here. do you get on pleasantly I really hope you do and hope to send you some funds as soon as I can put in my pay acts for April If B. does not want me to pay up till I return it will accomodate me perhaps but I shall try & pay them up at the end of April and leave a little for you I suppose there is some goods at the office for you from Ingersols & will see before the mail leaves & if I can pay the charges but if I have not enough I will let it go through to you to pay there darling I think of you every hour in the day and do so hope you are comfortable and as near happy as you can be apart I have been in want of clothes & so have you. I do not care for myself but for you I will try & provide soon. I will try & have my coat braided over & then I am all right again my regards to all and darling I will never leave you again for a field expedition unless you think it best I should like very much to see the Tottenites give them all my regards & my love to my darling wife how is your bird you had in the Dining room love & kisses darling from your loving husband

James M DeWolf

I opened your letter & put in Postal Card
Tuesday evening

Dearest Darling I am so sorry you are so lonely up there I am as much mortified as you at this d- fool move this spring but cannot help it I believe you feel our separation much the most for I am constantly occupied with some strange person and do not have to be alone, though I stay some days nearly all day in my quarters or DuBrays he goes to the office at 9 & returns at 3. we get on nicely I find him a nice room mate he wishes to be remembered to you. well I have been down town & got my bundle find coat pants vest & shirt & Duster hat all right & Postage book saw Brenner. well darling I want to tell you something that I have learned of late that I did not know which I believe to be true Cushman I hear was warned in writing by B. before B. reported him if so I think B was right now darling I hope you have not made yourself obnoxious to BK. and I do not regret C.s not calling & hope he will not if all is true for it would only make talk about you and I dont want any of that for your sake I know you are in a delicate place between two fires Dr Fs are friends of M & necessarily enemies of B and the party here are bitter against B. I do not care to express my

opinion here except to neutrals. I will see Brenner before he leaves here about my paying him. and the soldiers wife you spoke of you may give her your wash & work after speaking to the Genl. & Mrs H. about it and perhaps you can get her if I return this fall which I hope I may of course we may possibly be ordered somewhere else the army bill I think will not interfere with us and I want to pay up this summer for the farm then we will be more independent I will finish this up tomorrow good night darling I should be most happy to chat with you if only for an hour but 80 miles of snow & slush divides us love & kisses dearest

JMD

Wednesday after dinner darling I am going down town & will mail this you may send my trunk and I will have it sent up to Lincoln where I will leave my things in it when I go out & have it there when I come back do the key up in cloth & send it in a letter to me direct it as heretofore or Lincoln I recd your letter directed to Lincoln the P.M. look through all of the mails for me I have retained the Journal this week and you may send me the last number of the republic and the last one that I forgot to bring. Capt McD expects to get away tomorrow but no certainty. we expect to get to Lincoln the last of this week and no doubt we shall succeed in getting through I will make all arrangements about my trunk being forwarded from here. Just have my name on the card & cross of Fort Totten, D. T. on the card I am lonesome without you and it seems hard to be separated but darling I am doing as well as you could wish morrally. give my regards to all & love & kisses to my darling wife J.M.D.

send the soap in a separate bundle & not in the trunk for it is for D.B or do not send it and I will send him some from Lincoln well dear I will have to close I have torn half sheet to finish up on but have not been able to close but now I must so bye darling from your ever true & loving husband

James M DeWolf

April 13th 1876

Before Breakfast

Darling wife. last evening every body was invited to Capt. Pattersons. some of the Band played during the evening in the dining room Dr Ruger & myself Played Miss Forbes & Lt. Calhoun whist & Mrs. R. & Cray Mrs McD. & Maize I think had a nice time refreshments at 10. then dancing until after twelve. altogether we had a splendid time my coat & Pants came just in time there was 6 Cavalry 7th 2 Infy, the Drs 4 Ladies it seemed something like Totten. the train that left Fargo yesterday and was to have taken the McDs went Back last night cause

unknown suppose train will be through to Bismarck soon we may stay here another week now. there may be some news this morning our forage is exhausted and the horses will be entirely out of food in a day or two — I have read up the reports & conclude that the expedition is very likely to go out I have seen Brenner he will wait until I come in but dont ask him for much money I will send you half of my pay for April the last of the month I will try & have it reach you before the last. put my rubbers in the trunk the numbers of the Republic, my black covered book on Pathology, Bilroths Surgical Pathology English Grammer, Huxleys Psysiology & such others as you may think I will need I am not sure but I have Huxleys P. I see there is another Doctor ordered for the field from Dept Head Quarters I have a case of Pleurisy now under treatment which is a very serious affair my toe cases are doing well the first case operated on two weeks ago is nearly well Three of the four toes are healed McLaughlin is down town yet Brenner I expect will return today or tomorrow In case Lunis cannot bring the trunk this time and I am away from Seward so you cannot get a reply you need not send it except he can bring it this time but he has promised to bring it and suppose you will not have long to get it ready in as he will not leave here until tomorrow or was told so last night I guess you will find these letters repetition but hope you are well & happy we will soon have spring & nice out door sports &c &c I miss you very much you cannot miss me more but such is Army. it wont be forever. love & kisses from your loving husband

James M DeWolf

April 13th 6 P.M.

well dear the mail & trains are in from Bismarck & the road is open through I believe there is some trussle work down between here & Fargo but the train will be in tonight and I think your things from Ingersolls will be along I have told Lunis to enquire after the train comes in & take it to you five officers are expected on the train from the East well darling I suppose we shall leave here saturday possibly tomorrow & possibly not so soon give my regards to all enquiring and love & kisses to my darling wife from your loving husband James M DeWolf

Will you please send me some samples in gray goods plaid and plain in 2 or three shades darker than the sample I send and like of the same material

Bismark D. T.
April 16th 76

Sunday morning
Darling wife

I will give you an account of affairs since Friday morning well we all got off with the train at 9½ A.M. arrived here at 3½ P.M. without any

accident. went into camp about ¼ mile from Bismarck and along side of Camp Hancock. Bismark is a squalid dunghill sort of a place all wooden buildings Broken board walks on the front street it is on Prairie ground on the margin of a Bluff. the flats of the Missouri extend back about one mile to this bluff Hancock is on this bluff and we are camped immediately under this bluff on the Missouri flats it is all dry & nice the first night the Prairie was on fire and presented a nice sight in the distance we sleep in the tent and Board up town at the Capitol and about such board as at Fargo nothing nice but just tolerable but we are having on the whole very nice times. Mr Harrington & Van Reiley Lieuts 7 Cav are invited to dinner by Capt. Howe and Comander of Camp Hancock at 3 today. the night after our arrival I got my sick admitted to Hospital had our tent pitched went & had dinner took a walk up main street (there is only one side to it) Called on Capt. Howe & Lt. Chubb 17th Infty called on Dr Porter who attends Camp Hancock as Broman did the Arsenal only the govt furnish medicine they have a steward, Paymaster William Smith, Capt or Lt Burns from Abercrombie Dr E. J. Clark, who is also a candidate for the field (he also has failed before the Army Board) Dr Kimbal will not go out he has been relieved the Department. a steward also came up Lincoln is down the River about five miles we shall march down & be crossed over on the Boat. the Boat also leaves from the terminus of the R R about two miles from here and runs down to opposite Lincoln & lands goods &c the Boat has been broken and has not commenced to run yet but expects to start every moment since we have been here, but no more prospect of starting than when we arrived here it is somewhat doubtful about our getting over today Smith & Calhoun are just going down to the landing to see about our prospect but we will have to go into camp when we get across it now all the difference is that we will not have to board at the Hotel but may perhaps start a mess.

evening. well darling we have had a nice time at Captain Howes. he went down to our quarters after dinner and paid us a long visit. we expect to get over to Lincoln tomorrow. well I am at Lt Chubbs qrs and as all the space around was occupied I wrote with a pencil until now one has finished Capt. White. I hope we shall get into our permanent camp tomorrow and mess where our meals are a little better or costs less. well darling I learn the mail closes tonight at nine & it is near nine give my kindest regards to all enquiring I hope darling you are well and having a nice time and hope the snow is all off and things looking lovely darling I think of you and my only anxiety is for you I think we are going to have a nice time this summer. well so much noise & chaffing I will have to say by bye darling love & kisses from your loving husband

James M. DeWolf

Fort A Lincoln D. T.
April 19th 1876

Afternoon

Darling wife

I have arrived here at last we came across the river on an old ferry boat on the 17th. I have got a wall tent up and am quite comfortable considering. I mess at Capt Smiths until I can find where I am assigned. I attend the sick of E. & L 7 Cav and the battery of artillery (that is going out) at the Dispensary at sick call, all that are seriously sick are sent to the Hospital Dr Middleton attends the Hospital and two companies of Infantry which are all up on the hill in a separate camp.²⁰ Dr Redd attends the 5 companies of 7 Cavalry stationed in Fort A Lincoln at the Dispensary and sends his sick up to Dr Middleton when he has any for hospital there is no Hospital down in the cavalry camp every body is very nice & kind in fact to kind. You I suppose what this post is noted for. well it is followed closely I have seen none of the ladies except Mrs Smith who I like and she is very pleasant and has made it very pleasant for Mr Reily & myself. the Infantry officers who commands the battlery are camped near me Lt Lowe & McKinnie [Kinzie] who are very kind gentlemen Capt Sanford & Lt Chance up on the hill I also like very much the Cavalrys reputations of course are already made. I think if I had a choice of stations I should take Totten. The wind has blown so for the last few days that *our* tent nearly blows down. not our now for Mr (Lt) Reily has left me this morning he was assigned to Co F 7 Cav and has gone on the sick report a scouting party went out last night to ascertain if there was Indians in the vicinity as there has been a report that Bloody Knife²¹ had come down to follow us out & pick up stragglers it is not expected that we shall be out more than 3 months Col Weir,²² I like very much. this will be my last expedition it is to much for the money not that I dont like it or cant stand it but this dirt & waiting is disgusting I hope darling you are having nice times now as spring has come give my regards to Mrs Ferguson & Dr. tell Dr I have had one interesting case (Pleuritic

²⁰In 1872 Ft. McKeen was established on the hill above the Missouri River to accommodate three companies of Infantry. Shortly thereafter, when the cavalry quarters were built between the hill and the river, the name of the post was officially changed to Ft. A. Lincoln. However, many continued to refer to the infantry quarters at Ft. McKeen.

²¹Bloody Knife was Custer's favorite and most trusted scout. He was photographed with Custer several times during the Black Hills Expedition in 1874. He was of mixed Sioux and Arikara blood, having been born in the Sioux camp but reared with his mother's people, the Arikara. He was one of the few scouts who remained with Reno during his first engagement in the valley, but was killed by the Indians' fire at Reno's feet just before the retreat of those troops out of the valley. Grinnell *The Fighting Cheyennes*, p. 343.

²²It was Capt. Thomas B. Weir who came up with Captain Benteen the afternoon of June 25 and, being annoyed with the inactivity of Reno and Benteen, was the first to start with his Company D in the direction of the Custer engagement. From the high point, now called Weir Point, Custer's battlefield could be seen less than three miles distant. It is unfortunate that he died in December of that same year and to date no written testimony from him has been found. He had been breveted a Colonel during the Civil War.

effusion) how is Metzdorf & OKeef remember me to Mrs Hunt & the General & Capt & Mrs Fletcher in particular & the Pedroists love & kisses darling from your loving Husband. J.M.D.

I expect you will get my deed for the place with this JMD

Ft. A. Lincoln D. T.
April 21st 76

Darling wife

I send you a check for \$50.00 you must endorse it. Pay to - - and sign your name and any one will take it Dr Ferguson will take it for you I will send you more as soon as I can. I called on Dr Middleton last evening & saw Mrs M who is very sociable I intend to call on Capt Smith & Moylan²³ tonight if I can get a clean shirt from the wash my trunk is at Jamestown yet but will be down the first train I have got a floor in my tent & am getting today a bedstead & mattress so I am very cosy I have a box of Pistols in my tent so I am armed well. I like Lincoln more as I become acquainted better but can see no comparison to Totten for Hospitality. Capt Smith & Dr Middleton are all that can claim to have extended ordinary hospitality. it is reported by the press dispatches this morning that the President had received authority to send troops to Texas. the 7th may possibly go. My love to my darling wife. I will write often & will mail this so you will be sure & get it in time I dont know how the mails leave here so I had better put this in the office so it will be sure & get to you in time bye bye darling
J. M. DeWolf

since finishing my pencil scriblings I have been down to the store & around the post generally. darling I some expect to get my pay for May & June before I leave here but in case I do not I will manage some way so you are provided for It will take me more than I expected I must have two flannel shirts a pair of boots or shoes a rubber coat a valise my basin was crushed coming to Seward & lookinglass I have now \$40. & credit at the store for \$25. and also credit for my rations for april I am messing here at \$5. per week which was the best I could do I hope we will be able to get up a mess of our own soon here. Dr Ashton who is going out with us has arrived he will mess with me and has gone into a tent they managed to give him one meal & a sleep one night you will not mention this to any one there but gambling is the mania here and there is no time for anything else.

A Band are stationed at this post and have dress parade every evening and last evening Batallion drill and today again Battalion Drill

²³Capt. Myles Moylan had been with the 7th Cavalry for over ten years. He had an outstanding record having been breveted a Major of Volunteers during the Civil War. In 1877, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for distinguished and gallant action during the Battle of Bear Paw Mountain. He was married to a sister of Lt. James Calhoun.

the band came out to guard mounting so there are some amusements. I had about 14 at sick call this morning. perhaps part of them on account of drill Col Reno is in command of the Post²⁴ and lives up to reputations at least in making the soldier drill & turn out to parades well darling it is very warm here today to warm for a coat. I am having new braid put on my coat today and am going to get me a pair of pants made of dark blue cloth while I remain here. now darling I hope you are well and you will have a nice time I have a letter from Dr Bryan & will send it to you next time love & kisses from your loving Husband

J M DeWolf

Ft A Lincoln D. T.

April 22 1876

Saturday

Dearest darling wife

It is now 7 P.M. raining dreadfully and I have just come up from Col Weirs & Dr Redds as they quarter together. have tied my tent up tight & turned into bed I am quite cosy for the field I have a floor in my tent an Iron bedstead mattress my blankets & Robe and darling what I appreciate more than all is the Pillow you insisted on my bringing darling I remember you every time my eyes rests on it. my boots were loaded when I came in but I have got them cleaned up and my pants. I got some blue cloth from the Q.M.D. today & am getting me a pair of blue shirts made so I will have a pair that I can wear under a coat. the worst here now will be getting to my meals it will be so dreadful muddy I have today sent you something which I think is nice & you ought to receive it at the same time as this letter do write to mother kindly and if you get tired staying to Totten you may go home but if you can possibly stand it till I return perhaps it would be as well Dr Clark who is going out says Dr Sloan the Med Dir at St Paul said he intended that we should all return to our posts on the return of the expedition Genl Custer is on his way back from Washington and ought to be here by the time this reaches you if he comes direct the Infantry Company from Wadsworth arrived today. 200 mules arrived yesterday. I have been about the store near all day seeing the usual game. Dr Ashton seems to be quite an expert, and is ahead of the dashing 7th Cavalry so far. he is quite young and thinks of entering the army. well I have just lit my candle, and have told you all except Dr Redd Ashton & myself were directed today to examine a wounded soldier for or with view to his being discharged the ball passed through the natis and much of the coxyecx now go to your dictionary before you tell any one of it *ha ha* every boddy has been buying rubber coats today but me

²⁴During Custer's absence, Maj. Marcus A. Reno was in command of the 7th Cavalry. He had served as a Colonel as well as being breveted a Brigadier-General of Volunteers for his service during the Civil War. However, his military career ended in 1880 with dismissal from the Army.

I had picked out one but told him to sell it I will take my chances of getting one by & bye. the trader here keeps a nice assortment or at least has a store that shows everything to advantage. Col Reno came in to sick call this morning. I suppose he wanted to see what was the matter with so many Dr Redd showed him some of his doubtful cases & asked him if he would excuse them he said yes & was quite satisfied. he did not trouble my desk as I have my desk at one side of the room & Dr Redd at the other & have sick call at the same time

8 P.M. raining hard & pelting the tent wind blows hard. happy dreams love & kisses to my darling wife J.M.D.

Sunday morning

Darling I have been down to sick call & will occupy my time till breakfast with my one pleasure writing to & reading your letters. it still rains hard I slept splendid last night & everything dry this morning but my overcoat which I had worn out in the rain. I have not met any of the ladies here except Mrs Smith & Mrs Middleton and civility seems to be the exception to a casual observer but I have no doubt it would be pleasant here after further acquaintance well I have one pleasant thought that I am giving no one any inconvenience. I am not complaining for all that have arrived here have felt the same want of direction. the rain is getting finer so I must go & get some Breakfast you should get this one short letter & one with a \$50. check and a pair of slippers all in this mail the mail leaves here tonight I get your tomorrows letter about Thursday we get mail three times a week love & kisses darling wife from your loving Husband

J M DeWolf

I will get Ink next letter [This letter was in pencil]

Fort A. Lincoln D. T.
April 25th 1876

Tuesday 7 PM.

Darling wife

I have received my trunk today I found the little note in it telling me to make myself agreeable to the ladies. well I have not here nor do I intend to for the simple reason that no one has called on me, nor shall I call on them. I am not complaining for I have been invited by Moylan Porter & Yates who are married. I go in to see Col Weir & Redd frequently. I no doubt would [letter torn - several words missing] nice station. but now there [several words missing] that all cannot be entertained and I am treated as well and better than some captains two companies of Infantry arrived from Ft Ripley today a Steamer arrived yesterday from below and has a company of Infantry going to Fort Buford. I had the pleasure of seeing a nice game of seven up today for

\$20. per game the officers of this post are all fine Gamblers (dont mention this at Totten) well darling I have a place to keep my things at last my trunk is in very good condition If I only had a chair & table I would be happy, but I cushion my Pannier with a pillow which does very well. I expect Capt McDougall will be along from the south with his company soon, then it will seem something like home again we have had a big hailstorm this afternoon and a nice shower of rain the grass begins to start. they are plowing the gardins at this post Co L is going to make a garden here this summer that (Wednesday morning) looks some as though I would not return but it may Genl Custer I learned last evening that he had been ordered back to Washington and it is supposed here privately that he will get courtmartialed he & [two or three words missing] are the principals of course [one or two words missing] rumors are by telegraph and are not public yet there is also some rumors now of Genl Sykes or Genl Terry or Crittenden taking command I wish the d-m concern would bust up for I feel that it is a pure waste of money to send out such extravagant expeditions I called on Capt Smith last evening with Capt Maize & Lt Reily had a nice chat & looked through their album which was very nice. there is an artist here who takes excellent Photographs. I am reading your note in the trunk this evening I find the sentence "I think I can not survive until you return . I am hardly able to sit up." darling I hope you are well before this and hope your nerves are all sound again. It is now tattoo and I am in my little tent writing on my case of Instruments across my knees and dont you think me extravagant I have three candles lighted I have been down to the store seeing the usual game I have just got my coat with new Braid so it looks all right again and am having two shirts made. I will tell you all about the Lincolnites when I come home or the male portion. Co E & L have got their Campaign hats today they are heavy broad brim hats costing \$1.68. would cost here about 3 or four dollars I hope darling you are well tonight and happy. If you really want to go home you must let me know and I will make provisions I have \$25, & about \$25 credit my mess paid to next friday paid out for cloth for shirts \$5.40 Buttons 25 Board \$5. Ex coming here more than I had money \$3. loans \$2. trunk 75 cts collars 80 cts. striker \$3.00. Braid for coat \$1.25 the balance which would be about \$5 I have squandered or spent it at the store which I feel I should not have done but could not have been decently avoided except I stay away from there which is not fashionable will your \$50. pay up your expenses for April. my head aches tonight so good night darling wife. J.M.D.

Sunday morning Darling I am just through my sick call we are going to have muster and a grand review if it dont rain but is sprinkles & looks very much like it oh I will tell you that I tried to tell you that A. T. Stewart was dead not that he was at Rugers as you seem to have

read it. well I hope you will be able to make out this I should not send you this letter but it embraces the most of the current news here I called on Lt Porter & like him much & met Mr Edgerly for the first time yesterday. your letter was a balm to me you seem content & happy which I hope you are then my trip will be bearable we of course are not having nice times but I sleep warm & have enough to eat & that is about all I can say & keep clean. You I hope will be able to take more exercise as it gets warmer My Rubbers came just in time for the mud was awful for a few days. I suppose *all* will go into camp this week then I will have you some views taken if I can & send you it is not known who will command the ex. yet but rather expected Custer will be back & I hope he will. the mail closes tomorrow & will write some in the morning again love & kisses Darling from your H J.M.D.

May 8th Monday evening

Darling wife

I have sent you today a letter and the studs & sleeve buttons hoping you will receive them all right. I have been around camp calling first into one tent then another I get nearly all around every day the wind has been blowing this afternoon & the dust is all over everything but it (the wind) has gone down tonight & the band have just been playing some hymns which dear makes me feel so lonely. I hear tonight that Custer will Command his regiment but he has not come yet & I dont believe it though I would prefer it not on account of my desire for an easy trip but that I believe he is the man and he has been out & knows better than them that have not been over the ground. I am expressing the opinions of the cavalry of course & I am assigned to the Cav so I must be a Cavalier. now darling I will tell you about my horse. well we had to come down here in the Ambulance & two days after there was three - - what the Q.M. called horses came down for the Med Offs well Clark had first choice me second Ashton third Clark asked my advise which of course I freely gave and got him to omit my choice so I got my second choice as if it had been first. Ashtons horse can barely get up a gallop mine is tolerable but poor Clarks is a stumbler. but they got the best saddles but I think I will get Clark to trade our mess. It is a dutch mess or the caterer & cook are. three (3) of us are Yankees. I have not yet been able to find your letter of April 30 & you do not say whether you have recd the check or not or the slippers though the slippers I should not hear from till next mail as the Ambulance left them tuesday did you send a letter in mondays mail you speak of some ones coming in last night after you had finished your letter so I take it for sure you wrote it seems mean that the letter is here and I cannot find it. it makes me mad & I will make feel the miserable excuse we have for a post office. Cus damn them & every body else till I get my letter taps is going. I have just commenced to read the Republics and expect

to get settled in the field so I will feel at home as well as one can. darling I should so like to be there to go with you for walks this summer to go out to the old Abbis & Glen Alin & to Glencrofts slide wouldnt we have nice times but its no use talking darling I hope you are content & happy if you like you can send & have you a servant sent up & keep house as soon as you like I saw Ella at Seward and asked her if she would like to go back to Totten next winter she said she would to live with Mrs DeWolf I asked her to send you her address and that I thought you would send for her. There is a Nigger man here that wants to go there with me when I come back so if you dont want or cannot get Ella or some other good girl then let me know in time & when I come back I will bring one man or woman as you choose from Lincoln Mrs Hughes Sister may want to go up if L Co goes back there this fall now you must let me know all about it in time & if it would be more pleasant get one any time If Mrs Hunt goes east in the fall &c I expect about the time I close this letter I will be leaving the old Missouri behind and hope we shall be successful in finding some of the cussed Indians that have been the cause of the expedition I learn by the N. Y. Herald that there are to be a combined expedition Crooks from Ft Fetterman Gibbon from Buford & Terry or Custer from Ft Lincoln the Prairie are all on fire north of us & Lincoln today & suppose the Indians will have the grass all burned up ahead of us. two horses are reported stolen two days ago from near the post the man that owned them went out 15 miles & seen a party of fifteen mount at a distance & leave in haste they got a pipe & some other stuff I do not know just what The Black hillers stole two muskets from Capt. Howes Barrack room at Camp Hancock at Bismark a few nights ago and Capt Yates I believe had some revolvers stolen from his squad room a short time ago. supposed to be by men bound for the Black hills. well darling I have had a visit from the Vetinary Surgeon & Guide. the guide is a very nice fellow but the Vet. not so very nice but tolerable he imagines he knows something about medicine it seems so ridiculous to hear him talk mixed Latin German & English it would make you laugh. Charley Reynolds is the most modest man I have known for some time I hear Capt Weston is coming up to go out with us as Commissary officer. I wish McDougall would get along too. I was up to the Infantry tonight and had a nice time before I commenced this letter we had a long argument on the winds affecting a ball fired against, in the same direction and diametrically or across (I am not sure that diametrically is the right word). I hear the horses racing about some that have got loosed. darling I must retire to my robe & blankets it is near 11. I hope darling you are in happy dream land and may your dreams be sweet for you have all of my love & soul for darling its you that hope to spend many happy days and think this will make you doubly dear to me love & kisses darling wife from your ever loving husband

J M DeWolf

Tuesday evening. darling I have remained in camp all day today read most of the time was down to the lower end of the camp & called on Col. Benteen 7 Cav from Ft Rice he reminds me of Capt McDougall in his regular fun & style of wearing his hair he has silver gray hair & very easy spoken. I find the officers of the 7 Cav very good fellows except the spirit for gambling here at Lincoln it is looked upon as not the thing by the majority well we expect Terry & Custer tomorrow night. I have examined 22 Indian Scouts today not a very nice Job. we have a sentry in front of our tent night and day and let no one in except he be an officer or inmate or asking to see an inmate of one of the four tents. Col Reno Comdg. Col Cooke Adjutant, Lt Nolan A.A.Q.M. & myself are the respective occupants Mrs. Edgerly is still in camp it has been very warm today & yesterday the mosquitoes are getting quite plentiful it is talked of our leaving saturday or sunday but cannot tell yet I hope so that we may get back soon to my darling wife night love & happy dreams J M D.

Wednesday evening taps. Darling one more day has gone by this morning I got a box and made a wash stand &c and a table of the cover by driving some sticks in the ground which makes my tent much more habitable It has been dreadful hot today. this afternoon we had a hard blow & nearly upset the tent and tonight it blows very hard the Battery went up to the post this evening to fire a salute on Genl Terrys arrival at eight the salute was fired so I suppose Genl Terry & Custer has arrived and now expect we shall move soon Dr Clark has been in & spent the evening with me. I have this afternoon made a sketch to show you how we are camped & will send it with this one side shows you how we are located on the River and relative to Lincoln & Bismark. the Battlery have just returned & I hear the sentry challenge frequently so I suppose Reno & Col Cooke Adjutant & Nolan Q.M. who tent next to me are getting home. dearest darling I hope you are comfortable and happy tonight. I have got under my blankets & Robe and am quite comfortable I have two long pieces of wood placed on the ground hay filled in between my rubber over then 4 Blankets then two Blankets & Robe over me so I am quite comfortably fixed Dr. Ashton has come down to stay he has been quite successful at the 7th Game so far shant I try. no darling I am invited quite frequently, but have no desire to participate I sent you last mail the studs & sleeve buttons & hope I am not mentioning the same fact in this letter twice. I hear Reno just answer the challenge of the sentry the voice sounds queer—

well darling love & kisses happy dreams wont we be happy when I get back this for hoping it wont be long *good night*

Thursday morning S call & breakfast over. well Genl Terry & Custer arrived Dr Williams who is to be chief Med Officer & the Paymaster.

I have not got your letter of April 30. and fear you may have neither received the check or slippers why dont you them or dont they fit or what is the matter I will give you this week as I have c - - as it will no doubt be our last week in camp next week no doubt we will be on the road & you may not get letters regular it will be uncertain if I get any of yours again until we arrive at the stockade 20 or 30 days. I should thought you would have mentioned the check in connection with your mess bill I hope it has not been lost.

Thursday evening. Darling wife last night I had just gone to bed when a scratch came at my tent door & the steward brought your letter of the 7th. of course I should be happy to be woke up every night with a letter from my darling. In reply to Mrs Hunt query Mrs Custer is at Lincoln and has been here since the Genls first arrival in March. Capt McDougall has arrived Mrs. McD has gone south. Capt O. E. Mihaelis has also arrived Lt Gibbs Genl Crittenden Lt Crittenden who lost an eye at Ft Abercrombie last fall is also up at Lincoln. Capt Bradley tells me that they heard from Mrs Fletcher &c Capt McD is as jolly as ever. in case the check has not arrived write to R. C. Seip & Co Post Trader Fort A. Lincoln, D. T. and they will send you a duplicate of the draft which was for \$50. I expect to get my pay tomorrow for May & June write immediately as above if the draft has not arrived. you say you received my letter on Friday & one from Mother thats all the letter mail I recd got my papers you ought to have recd a pair of slippers and last friday you ought to recd studs &c. it is supposed we shall leave here Sunday or Monday so this may be the last letter for two or three weeks but I suppose we shall have a chance to send letters back once a week. Dr Williams has gone to Rice to leave his little son who came with him he did not know he was going on the Ex till he arrived at St Paul he I think I shall like is a little man middle aged & pleasant the Band mounted & went up to the post to serenade Terry tonight. I rode my steed to the store today & got me a gum coat for fear of a rain storm I have two dollars left of my April pay of course darling I waste some but can not well avoid it except I be sort of a miser but you need not caution me about cards for I am not so forgetful for really darling I dispise gambling. if it was not for you dearest it might be different. I am reading Physiology and am now getting so I can read in camp. I have a chair now & box so I have my tent furnished. well it is long after taps & I hear the I raise it two dollars in a tent close by. I will close for tonight happy dreams darling. good night

Friday evening well darling taps have gone I have been up to the post today & drew my pay for May & June I send Erastus \$125. which will leave only \$125. more to pay I have paid \$25. for my mess which it seems to me is pretty dear for the amount received but however time will tell when we see how long the things lasts well darling I was just

washing & was going up to Terrys qrs when a man came down from the store and brought you my letter from you dated April 30 or 29 acknowledging the receipt of check & slippers so all the fuss I have made about it is all for nothing but the letter has laid here some where 8 or 9 days is it not enough to make one swear. well darling the latest Dr Red sends me word tonight that he is ordered to Totten on temporary duty what does that mean has Dr Ferguson applied for leave or what is it all about I will try & find out tomorrow more about it he will no doubt arrive with this & perhaps bring it to you he is a fine fellow &c he made excuses the second morning I had been at the post while we were walking from sick call for not entertaining me &c as he was quartered with Col Weir of course it was all right. he asked me to breakfast once & called on me and I suppose he done what he thought sufficient. Dr Middleton and him do not hitch very well as Dr Red Dr M thinks is to easy with soldiers & Dr M I think is the opposite &c &c Dr R is well liked here by every body as far as I know. I will try what I can learn tomorrow Michalis [Michaelis] is going to let me have a revolver on the trip then I am fitted out good night darling—

Saturday morning. darling I had to attend the whole command this morning at Sick Call Clark & Ashton went to Bismark & could not get across the river. I have seen Dr Redd this morning & have sent the check by him for \$50.00 I kept 75 for use on the ex I will send a letter of Introduction by him to Dr F he is in a great stirr where to mess &c when he gets to Totten. I suppose he thinks folks at Totten are like the Folks at Lincoln about their treatment of arrivals I tell him he can no doubt mess with Renolds or perhaps with you & Mrs F while the Dr is away you will find him a good fellow though I am not much acquainted with him I will write you another letter before the mail leaves from your loving Husband

JMD

Camp near Lincoln D. T.
May 14th 1876

Dearest darling

I suppose this will be the last letter you will receive from this post I will send this by Dr Redd I also send you a check for \$50. fifty dollars by him I am assigned to the right wing of the 7 Cav under command of Major Reno we shall leave here tomorrow morning march 10 miles I believe is all that is intended the first day. Dr Williams has come he is splendid so far. well darling I suppose I could change off & not go but I want very much to go and expect we shall have a good time or as good as can be had in the field I think I am doing well under the dirt treatment I dont get fat but I feel well & strong & hope you will have a nice time I have told Dr R. he must make himself agreeable

to the ladies and hope you will enjoy the summer. I cant write now dear for there is so much to be done Dr Williams has gone to the post & left me to see to buis. love and kisses darling hoping to hear from you again soon I shall write to you every oportunity. from your loving husband

James M DeWolf

Camp near Ft A Lincoln D. T.
May 14th 1876

Evening

Darling wife

as this may be the last night in camp here I will write you again well since giving Dr Redd a letter for you, I have & so have all the cavalry moved camp or changed around to get into shape and will pull out in the morning at 4 unless it rains too much and it just pours now. and such lightning & thunder I have not seen & heard for a long time I only had my tent moved a few hundred yards and therefore have all my furniture along two boxes a little table a chair & tonight the steward has put a Pannier in here to have it ready for early morning dont it blow & rain my tent fly rattles so I cant think Dr Clarke has got a Dr Porter to go in his place. Dr Porter was attending the company at Camp Hancock at Bismark but now the company is over at Lincoln he wants to go out. he of course wants to keep up pay and he only gets \$60. for that & will not get \$125. now *I will tell you something privately.* I perhaps could have made a change with Redd, but he has been so easy, or had so large a sick report here the past winter that they would not perhaps let me changed if he was willing I never have spoken to him on the subject Dr Middleton has sent one or two letters on the subject he was of course under Dr Middleton & Col Reno came to sick call one morning to see why he excused so many men well Dr Williams wanted to have Dr Ashton assigned to the Cavalry but Genl Custer said no he did not want him he wanted some one of experience. Dr Sloan the Med Dir asked Dr Williams to help Dr Ashton &c as Dr A. was a Gentleman Dr W. says he told the M.D. I am the Gentlemen he wanted men that could do their work. I learned the above from Dr Williams our chief medical officer he has been very good to me has had me assigned to the right wing &c. Dr Middleton came down tonight to bid us good bye he corresponds with the Med. Dir. I asked him to mention me if convenient & ask to have me ordered to a post as soon as we return and that my family was at Totten &c he promised me he would. I have been & think not from any talk but other things that he would like me in place of R. & I should like it but I fear the quarters would be deficient here & I had rather come back to Totten

as I like Dr Ferguson and think we can have a nice time there it rains hard yet & I must go out & fix up my tent or it will be down. well darling I have been out & got things so I think my house will stand till morning I will finish this tomorrow before daylight if we move which I now think is doubtful night darling from your Hub J.M.D.

Morning darling the mail leaves in a few minutes so I will finish. it rained so much we shall not start this morning I dont know whether we shall get off today or not three mules were stolen last night & they are having a great time finding them this morning but found them tied to a tree some where. well darling I will have a chance to send you in one more letter next mail then you may miss getting one for two or three mails but I hope we will have a chance to send back letters all the time it is a nasty wet foggy day today love & kisses to my darling wife from your loving Hub. J.M.D.

Camp on Hart or Heart River D. T.
May 17th 1876

Darling wife

In my tent again and after the first days march we moved out 12 miles to this River had from 5 AM to 2 P.M. 9 hours waiting & laying in the sun for the wagons to pull out of the mud for the ground is soft for heavy teams yet. the Paymaster came out here to pay off here and is paying off this evening I expect we shall made a short march tomorrow cross the river & perhaps camp on the other shore (Just beyond this river) well darling the hardest of it is that the trains cannot get along fast & make the marching dreary to much laying in the sun waiting for the trains the trains consist of about 75 wagons. I have not went to much trouble to make the estimate so it may not be very near correct. my nose is pretty well sunburned. Dr. Red will arrive there tomorrow then you will get my last weeks letter hoping it will find you well (as we go marching on) I am glad to get out for now every day counts I am not sure that I can send you another letter I hope to get yours tomorrow of last Sunday. I am enjoying the march first rate & expect we shall have a nice time as can be had in the field I have my tent put up & taken down my bed made horse saddled &c and have a quart of nice whiskey in my valise in case of need the ground is getting warm & dry to lie on I have my coat & rubber leggins in case of rain a tolerable saddle & horse. Capt McDougall wishes to be remembered to you. Mrs H & the General & all specially to the Genl and Mrs Hunt he is the same Jolly & good as ever & Capt Banteen²⁵ is

²⁵Capt. Frederick W. Benteen was an accomplished Indian fighter who had been with the 7th Cavalry since its organization in 1866. He had attained the rank of Colonel of Volunteers during the Civil War but like many others was required to accept a reduced rank in the regular army after the war. At the Battle of the Little Bighorn, he commanded a battalion of three companies.

a perfect mate for him. & Capt or Lieut McGuire of the Engineers & Lt Thompson of the 6th Infty who is our Commissary I find different from the cavalry as a whole I think the Cav, are but there are many exceptions Col Keho²⁶ & Cap French are coming to Totten next winter. Reno who commands my wing I cannot like but suppose acquaintance will improve perhaps when we understand each other. the adjutant of our wing Lt Hodgson²⁷ is a nice fellow well darling my letters may be far between after this but I shall write every opportunity and will try & keep a memoranda of the incidents. love & kisses darling. from your loving Husband

J. M. DeWolf

Camp No 4. 3 days out
May 19th 76

Darling: I recd your of the 13th today it came in this morning but the mail was not distributed till evening as we have reveille at 3 & start at 4½ to 5 A.M. I will answer your questions first. I Recd the Blanks & have returned them. I wrote to Dr about Col Weir & Received the Republic so I have something to read many thanks. darling I think you had better make out a power of Attorney (I am sure if it has two to or one) and send to some lawyer to act for you or write to Mr Lovni & ask him if he will do so for Mr Lovni if he will (or Mr Pease) can act just as well as you could if you was there. Mr. Brenner can make the paper for you and you had better attend to it at once I think darling I will remain till next fall (1877) if U.S. is satisfied with me & then we will leave the army Co G.17th Infty. Co C. 17th & Cap Bakers Co of the 6th Infty I dont know the letter of Company. Lt Low & Kensie of the 20th Infty command the Battery Lt Crittenden of the 20 Infty goes along with Lt. Calhoun 7 Cav Capt Hughes Smith, Michailis & Gibbes are on Terrys staff. McGuire of the Engineers & Dr. Williams about letters darling it will be uncertain after this & this I suppose will lay at Seward near a week as the mail from here will not get to Lincoln in time to reach you with my others or with the one of day before yesterday yesterday we crossed Heart River & marched 10 miles had a hard shower while having our tents put up & tonight as today noon & just poured & hailed Just as they were commencing to put up my tent so they had to wait till the shower was over The Steward had his up so I stood in there but I have Rubbers so I can stand the storm & keep dry I am so glad I got them as it rained some today marching & I

²⁶Although Myles W. Keogh had attained only a rank of Major during the Civil War, he had been breveted a Lieutenant Colonel. He had been with the 7th Cavalry since 1866 and was a Captain commanding Co. I when he was killed on June 25. His horse Comanche was the only living part of the regiment found on the Custer Battlefield after the battle.

²⁷Second Lt. Benjamin H. Hodgson had been graduated from West Point in 1870. He was killed on June 25 in his attempt to cross the Little Bighorn River during the retreat of Reno's battalion that afternoon.

would have been soaked if I had not had them. if you see the Bushmark (Bismark) Tribune you can see what a bungle some reporter made. Who is Woolsey. of course it meant *myself* your Hub perhaps it was because I dont take his trash. I expect we shall be up & moving at 5. are only going about 5 miles tomorrow & am not sure if we can get that far the roads or hills & vallies for there are no road will be dreadful soft for teams well darling you must not worry for I am perfectly safe as we shall not see an Indian this summer and if they do I shall keep safe & s - - & I carry a carbine & revolver so I will be armed in case of need but I think it is nonsense to carry it but I do so want to be sure & get back that I take every precaution to be on the safe side. McDougall wishes to be remembered to all I had a nice march today & think I shall like Genl Custer. Genl Terry of course every body likes the Tribune describes Genl Custer very well he likes to go ahead & Buckskin suits are very Fashionable & Nobby in the 7th Cav I have not seen the mates for Mr Craycrofts ties yet in the 7 Cav. I am writing this on the Republic on my knee so you may have to study it some to read it. Dr Porter came in for thread & needles and had a talk on the days trip & tells me we are to start at 8. tomorrow so wont we have a nice sleep. it will be better than at 5. and it is pretty cool tonight I dont expect you will receive another letter until after we get up on the Yellowstone by boat I think we can stand the expedition as well as Genl Terry he don't enjoy it much I think I should like if you could see us all after we get in camp the tents & wagons & animals all lariatied out completely cover the ground for about ½ mile square the horses are all hobbled to prevent a stampede. the wagons in the center the horses & mules around then comes the mens tents then the company officers then the staff officers then the march change of Guard then the Pickets & outside on high hills the mounted pickets so we cannot be surprised very easily. the Indian Scouts are all camped tonight outside us well darling I will write you again as soon as I have a possible chance to send it to you. I have been thinking of collecting you some stones & c if I find anything worth while but I wont promice you much for I dont like much to dismount to pick up stones & c it is getting too dark to write so darling good bye for tonight love & kisses from your loving husband

J M DeWolf

Camp No 7 7¼ PM
May 22nd 76

Darling wife

I do not know when you will get this but I will write & mail it to you when opportunity presents itself we are now about 73 miles from Lincoln we have march very slow time for the ground has been soft & the trains cannot keep up with us so we wait & lay on the ground &

sleep while the orderlies graze our horses we have been in camp at four P.M. every day & not that late but once from one to two P.M. is about the average. well darling it would no doubt be a treat for you to see the command & train in motion from front to rear of the command proper it always about one mile formed as on next page this darling will give you some Idea of one form of marching I am with Reno nearly all the time as I belong on his staff he commands the right wing but Terry and Custer go about one mile or more in the advance he has command of all most of the time the right wing is supposed to be on the right of train & left on left they all march as shown as near as the country will admit in crossing bridge of course all come in to one column you can see the train is the largest part of the expedition on starting from camp when it is nice the band play & this evening they play are playing while I am in tent writing to you one man accidentally shot himself through the heel yesterday while mounting flesh wound not much sickness though it has been wet & dreary except the first & today my nose & ears are nearly burned off we live on Antelope meat it is nice out in fair weather there is some fun occasionally in seeing a team stick & the teamster swear or see a mans horse get away & buck his saddle off a wagon upset & in the creek &c the second day a horse had the saddle turn going up a bank out of Heart River the horse bucked &c jumped into the river went out of sight twice the man of course fell off when the saddle turned tonight a horse ran away through the camp the man fell off & nearly busted him but not seriously hurt I have not been tired yet the horses get loose at night some times & make fun. I had a nice sponge bath tonight and changed all my clothes & feel nice & took a nasty pill. well darling as I have to get up at 2½ or 3 AM tomorrow I must retire & it is getting chilly as I have taken off my flannel for the night remember me to all & love & kisses to my darling wife from your loving husband

J.M.D.

Camp No 8. 7 P.M.
May 23rd 76

Dearest darling wife

I have had since 9 A.M. in camp only marched 8 miles today nice ground no mud yesterday we had a nice road but had a stream to cross camped early today we just took things easy had roasted rib of Antelope for dinner & soup & meat for dinner dont we live though & dont my appetite surprise every body I ought to get fat have slept all the afternoon expect a mail tonight but of course will not get anything as it is now tuesday. the band has just struck up dont you wish you was along it is nice when the weather is fair and the marches short but my nose and ears are nearly burned off I am trying Glycerine &

alum I hope darling you are enjoying yourself as well as I am I only had two sick in quarters & one Hospital the Hospital is ambulance daytime & dog tents nights. when Drs dont care for the sick who will it has been lovely for two days and the marching good plenty of Antelope. I gave my wash out today. Genl Terry I learn wishes to try first to bring the Indians into the Reservations & if they wont come to fight them he I believe is not in favor of the treatment they have received for some time past. darling I will try & find if there is another mail back & then finish this in time for next mail no INdians yet or signs love & kisses from your loving Husband JMD

May 24 evening

Darling it is with the greatest pleasure that I kneel to my board to write we have had a march of about 17 miles splendid weather the band plays & expect to move out at 3 A.M. hope to have an oportunity to send you this ere long we are getting on near the little Missouri are camped on the head of Heart River tonight. expect to reach Little Missouri in two days have had a nice country today only one colie to cross or Bridge love & kisses darling from your Hub J.M.D.

Evening 25 Camp No 10 - 7 P.M.

Well darling I have marched 20 miles today had a good supper & feel splendid the sun has nearly burned my ears off but I guess they will get well soon. we crossed the heart river this morning or a branch of it had nice road & no dust much as yet we expect to reach the Little Missouri day after tomorrow Dr Porter has been out from the command today & killed an antelope. I should like to try but dear I am a little lazy & do not want to have my scalp lifted yet though I do not think there is any danger yet but I am going to be on the safe side and stay with the command I guess you will have some trouble reading this for I have wrote it in all shapes &c the Band plays now & every evening & marching out of camp every morning. so we have something to cheer the dashing Cavalier. retreat is just going & I must retire to my sleep & rest for the morrow darling I think of you often as I march along I do not get tired I can stand as much horseback riding as any of them I guess General Terry gets about the most tired of anyone except I.i. Gibbs who is a poor rider & does not enjoy it much. the trip is not pleasant to some high in rank for several reasons which I will tell you when I come home good night darling happy hours to my darling wife J.M.D.

May 26th 76

Darling I recd your letter with Mothers enclosed yours dated the 21st 76 it was delivered just as we were mounting this morning I heard that

the mail was in but supposed it was thursday & did not expect it yet but the Steward came & brought it to me I am very sorry darling that you are so sick but hope you will be well when this reaches you I fear you have worked yourself sick you told me in your last you were cleaning house I do so hope you are well now and am so sorry for you that I cannot be with you. darling you must try & have a good time & if you want to, go in the Lake, but do not go when there is a wind. well darling we have had a very easy march today or at least only marched about 10 miles had two bridges to lay & delayed about 2½ hours at each it takes a long time to get 100 wagons over a bridge when one or two runs off & has to be taken to pieces which nearly always occurs the mosquitos have bit my hands badly my face they cannot get at for hair & dirt & dear I had a compliment on my cleanly looks but I suspect the party was fishing for one himself (Dr Porter) the first Joke was tried on me yesterday but fell flat as I was not quite inquisitive enough. I suppose you have seen the Bismark tribune. well I will give you the duties of the Surgeons of the Command. Dr J. W. Williams Chief M.O. Dr Porter attends H Qrs & Battery & one co of Infantry. Dr Ashton attends two Cos of Infantry (Maj. Surgeon commanding) Dr Clark attends the Left Wing consisting of six companies of Cavalry, commanded by Capt. Benteen 7 Cav. I attend the Right Wing, Col. Reno Comd consisting of six Companies of Cavalry & the Scouts come to my wing for attendance of course darling there is not much to do I could attend the whole command. but in case of an engagement then it would be too much for one there has been a horse run just across the creek from my tent while I am writing this to you I had my first swim (in a pond hole about 20 feet square and up to my chin) this afternoon have been & had my supper & I think we are going to have a shower tonight shall I get a Pony for you when I come in it has been very hot today. I find I am skipping from one thing to another so rapidly I guess you will not call this a real good letter I dont know when I can send you this it is now expected that we shall reach the Little Missouri Monday night I dont see much of Terry. Custer they go in advance & of course I go with my wing commander. good night darling wife love & fond remembrance & hoping so much darling that you are well again

JMD.

Evening 27th Darling we have arrived at the Badlands of Little Missouri and expect to reach the L Missouri tomorrow I hear there will be an express back in a day or two so I will com this so it may be sure & go. darling we had a light shower & marched 10 miles this morning & had to turn back to find the trail to enter the bad lands. and came to the Davids [Davis] Creek about 3 P.M. the days are getting pretty hot & the

horses get stuck up with wild cactus & then dont they bound and make it merry for their riders it is sometimes fun to see a company march through a bed of it My horse has not had the luck to get caught yet well darling I do so hope you are well again I shall not be happy till I hear you are all right again I am having nice times my ears are nearly burned off bye darling love & kisses from your loving husband

James M DeWolf

Camp on the Little Missouri D.T.

May 29th 76

Darling wife

I learn there is a mail to leave tomorrow night and as we are going to make a little detour tomorrow and will perhaps not be back until late I will write some now we have been two days coming 13 miles and built 11 or 12 bridges the bridges are just logs & brush put in the bed of the stream (there is little or no water) and dirt & sods piled on and the banks graded so the teams can drive in & out yesterday we got in camp at 12 & today at 10 A.M. so you can imagine what hard times we are having we arrived at the River today and are going out to look around & see if there are any signs of Indians but the scouts have been out 10 miles & found no signs so it is not very probable we shall find any. I am going to have my washing done tomorrow & must be up early. I hope dearest darling you are well again & hope to be able to get you a letter nearly every week good night darling happy dreams oh one man was bitten by a R. Snake treated by Dr Williams & is now I think out of all danger my sick are nearly all from injuries only one sick from other causes. love & kisses J.M.D.

30th Evening 6 P.M. Darling have just got in have had nearly 50 miles ride today with Genl Custer & 4 Co Cav went up the Little Missouri 24 or 5 miles crossed it 13 times each way 26 in all had a great time lots of fun seeing the horses mire & throw their riders the Genls. nephew got thrown over his horses head into a mud hole My old steed made them all saw no signs of Indians except those 2 or 3 years old tomorrow we move forward towards the Yellowstone I expect it will take 5 or 6 days cannot send any more letters until I arrive there well darling I hope you are well again give my regards to all. I think of you every day & shall be careful of myself if need should be but do not expect there will be any occasion love & kisses darling from your loving Hub.

J M DeWolf

8 Miles from Little Missouri
Camp No 15 D.T.
June 1st 1876

Darling wife.

I got in camp yesterday at 2 P.M. it commenced raining at 6 and rained through the night arose at 3 this morning found it snowing & the ground covered. reveille went and I went over for Breakfast but found no one up came back & orders came that we would not break camp until further orders went to bed with overcoat & all. went & got my breakfast at 10. & have just now 4 P.M. Just came from dinner it has snowed hard all day & continues I have got me a stretcher for a bedstead & have a fire built in the front of my tent and am nicely except for the ashes blowing in & also smoke but will make up for that by taking a hot toddy after a while. the men in their dog tents have it the worst they have been standing around the fire most of the day. it is like a March or April day at home snow & mud the ground has been nearly covered all day now while I have it in mind the slippers cost \$3.00 & 18 cts postage good night darling

Camp 16. June 2nd 2 P.M. No move today snow squalls all day I laid in bed until 11½ went & got some coffee mountain sheep hard bread & butter for lunch we have had all the Deer Antelope Sheep &c we could eat since the first day out. It is snowing now and there are some of the wagons moving across on this side of a ravine to be ready for tomorrow and to get out of the mud so the animals can get better grass. I have a fire in front of my tent & it nearly smokes my eyes out. now darling I occasionally think how nice a home would be—"be it ever so humble." I think it hard & have a wall tent & all the conveniences possible. how do those take it that have perhaps been reared more tenderly and are now mule driving or are in the dog tents perhaps stationed on the highest hill in the vicinity and constantly to watch (or on Picket) there are only a few of the men that have rubber coats they get wet & dry themselves by standing around the fires. I have two quite interesting cases now on hand one Leeper the painter of E Troop an Abscess of the palm of the hand and one of solidified lung or portions of it. I often think why live is such a life as this. but perhaps "the sun may be shining tomorrow." hope of the future is what keeps many heavy hearts in this world of hardships. well darling I have until we get to the Yellowstone to finish this so I will wait until the sun shines in my soul as well as from the heavens I do so hope you are well again darling I can hardly wait till I get another letter
June 3rd 76 Camp No 16. Beaver Creek (Stanleys trail)

Darling wife we have march over 25 miles but took from 5 AM to 4 P.M. waiting for the wagons &c it was dreadful cold this morning but

hot enough this afternoon we met a messenger from the stockade which is about 30 miles stating that Genl Gibbin was up the Yellowstone opposite or on Rosebud Creek or river you can find it on the map and we talk and expect to go directly up there from this point & not go to the stockade but it seems to be a hasty conclusion & we may not go but I will finish this so to send if we do not go to the stockade If we do you will very probably get two when this is received Gibbin has had one or two killed but they went out from the command to hunt & of course should have known better. they have had no fight & will not soon well we see enough to fire at but of course straglers may get killed but I have not & do not intend to straggle so dear you can rest easy about me my duties will not call me in any danger but I dont expect we will any of the command be exposed except perhaps some of the flankers may when we get up in the Powder river country I hear Capt. Baker of B 6th Infy swing out 25 miles tomorrow so darling good night love & kisses & hoping you are well. I suppose when you get this we will be near ready to turn back hoping so darling I expect we shall be in by Aug 15 or 20 night darling from your loving husband

J.M.D.

Camp on Powder River Montana
June 8th 1876

Darling wife

I have an opportunity to send a letter down to our base of supplies at the mouth of this River. well darling since I sent my last, we have traveled along over hills around muddy creeks through badlands &c. Yesterday we started at 5 and marched & marched over hills crossed some of the worst possible coolies for wagons to cross got into Powder River where we remain today & tomorrow I suppose arriving at 8 P.M. did we not have a day of it part of the way we had a fine misty rain it was cool & high wind all day till 6 P.M. when we came down the divide into camp it was fine & every one so glad to get into camp. well darling we are to start out for a scout for 8 or 10 days up this river. (I cannot tell you much about it now as I have not been to it. it is over about 50 yards, the brush -) General Terry has not decided yet he has gone down to the Boats at the mouth of the River to hear from Gibbon, when he will decide on what to do first the wagons are going to be escorted down by the three companies of Infantry and the whole Regt of Cavalry & General Terry are to start from here after Wild Geese &c &c we are thirty miles from the mouth on the Eastern shore the River is muddy like the Missouri I am now somewhat inclined to think our stay up here will be short we have not seen an indian yet nor much signs & every one of the Command except a few think we will not find them on fighting terms. my nose & ears are nearly all off

& lips burned laughing is impossible. but dont we have delicious venison steaks & had Buffalo steaks two days past today for dinner we had Beans, Bacon, Biscuit & Butter, Hard tack Coffee & an apple Pudding & Peas and some of the most splendid venison steaks I ever eat. of course we had some ashes & dirt but things tasted good and my appetite has not failed me once and I have not been tired yet. my side has not pained me this summer the Steward gives me everything to stay at the base of supplies they cannot furnish him a horse he has given me his Cartridges & Rubber so I shall go out from here as well as the best no tents are to be taken wont that be Jolly. I suppose we shall have to ford this River as many times as the Little Missouri we have not heard from Crooks yet our sick are sent down from here Dr Ashton goes with them. I have had my washing done today & had your blue necktie washed it looks nice. I hope you are well and having a nice time suppose Dr F is back before this I will finish this before we leave here love & kisses darling from your loving Hu J.M.D.
June 10th darling we have remained in this camp to date we - our wing is going up Powder River on a scout the balance of Comd & wagons are going down to Boats then up the Yellowstone or that is the current report we are going to take Pack Mules and expect to be able to travel rapidly but it has rained since yesterday & not very rapidly will we go I guess for a day or two at least I am well and am glad to think we are about to turn the home corner for I expect after this scout we will know when to expect to return all is in hurry today so bye bye darling love & kisses from your ever loving Husband

J M D

Dr Porter goes with me.

Yellowstone, Mouth of Rosebud Creek
June 21st 76

Darling wife

Since my last from Powder River we went up to the forks of the powder river 58 miles Crossed the country to Tongue River 72 miles down Tongue River 8 miles Crossed to Rosebud Creek about 25 miles up Rosebud creek 12 miles then back and followed it to its mouth from there down the Yellowstone 33 miles to near the mouth of Tongue River where we met Custer & the other Six Companies of Cavalry, General Terry & Staff Genl Terry & are on the "Far West" Steamer. last night we marched 14 miles up the Yellowstone & today we came up here 19 miles to where we left three days ago the mouth of the Rosebud Creek and are fitting up for a scout under Genl Custer with 12 Companies of Cavalry up the Rosebud across to the Bighorn River & down that to the Yellowstone or that is where we expect to go on our scout we marched about 25 miles in all about 285 miles I and Dr Porter

messed together and had a nice time have just been getting a supply for the next scout the Commissary is a very good supply on the Boat. we found no Indians not one all old trails they seem to be moving west and are driving the Buffalo I think it is very clear that we shall not see an Indian this summer the Post Trader or John Smith has opened his Whisky &c & of course you all know what will follow for the time we remain here General Gibbons Command are encamped opposite us the Boat will take our Battery over to him this evening it has hurt three men already (the Battery) by upsetting. Dr. Lord has joined us and will take Dr Williams place as chief Medical Officer on this scout. there is lots of feeling among the Troops out this summer or the would be commanders a Genl snubs somebody somebody snubs one lower & so on down &c&c

Darling I did so hope I should hear from you on returning to the Boat and may before we start out though we shall start tomorrow or next day. we usually start at 5 AM and march until 1 or 2 P.M. which is not hard and is fun when there is any trail but I fear we shall not find even a sign that is new this time it is believed that the Indians have scattered & gone back to their Reservations. Yesterday I went out with Dr Porter Lt Harrington & Hodgson pistol shooting and came out second best Porter was best so you see some of the cavalry cannot shoot very well Hodgson & I are harassing (Joking &c &c) each other & have some nice times he is Adjutant of the Right Wing "6" Companies of Cavalry I do so hope you are well again I am very anxious to hear how you are getting along I hope when we return from this scout we shall be nearly ready to return then darling only think we will have 300 or 400 miles to march home again these horseback rides are nice but there is to much in this to suit me but it cheers me up to see the Cavalry wilt we had two cases of *slight* strokes (it was before the Whisky was opened) It has been trying hard to rain this afternoon but not succeeded so far & guess or hope it will be some cooler after it. Rosebud Creek takes its name by being profusely bordered by the wild Roses like those of Warner. I send you one in this letter. we found one Buffalo and some Elk the last scout have had Elk Buffalo Antelope Deer and nearly all games Bighorn sheep &c. My nose & Ears have are nearly well yesterday & today was very hot but now the air begins to feel quite comfortable. well darling I must close this as the Boat moves down the River some little distance & the mail closes tonight & I want to be sure this goes in this mail for it has been 11 days since I wrote or had a chance to write. you must remember darling that one feels pretty tired after getting into camp and then we have so much to do to fit up again for this every thing goes on pack mules & dirt is plentiful. love & kisses darling my regards to all. from your loving Hub

J M DeWolf