

Letter from Annie Wittenmyer to Governor Samuel Kirkwood, 1863

The Gate City

Keokuk:

Tuesday, June 8 1863

Hon. Sam. J. Kirkwood, Governor of Iowa.

Dear Sir. — I have visited, during the last three months, most of the Iowa Regiments in the field, and it gives me great pleasure to report that with but few exceptions I have found their camps and hospitals in as good condition as circumstances would admit.

Some of our Regiments occupy positions of honor and great responsibility, and most of our officers and troops are spoken of in terms of praise and commendation by the Commanding Generals of the Western Department.

The health of our army is greatly improved, owing mainly to the distribution of large supplies of vegetables and antiscorbutics, but we have now about thirty thousand troops in a section of our country made desolate by the ravages of war-- sickly season of summer is approaching and unless a generous supply of vegetable food is contributed by the loyal people at home, scurvy, debility and great mortality must result. I therefore call your special attention to the sanitary organizations of the State, and urge upon you the importance of securing unanimous and concentrated efforts.

I am receiving large contributions from all parts of the State but, up to this time the supply has not been equal to the demand. This will be a matter of surprise to those who have carefully calculated the amount necessary to supply so large an army, but persons unacquainted with the Commissary Department are liable to reach false conclusions. It is found, upon calculation, to require 500 bushels of potatoes to supply one pound to each man in the field, from this State, and 312 bushels of dried apples to supply one fourth of a pound to each man, and other things in like proportion. But the character of the work now before us, which has assumed such immense magnitude, is one that ought to command the aid and sympathy of every generous loyal person in the State.

I have received, during the last three months, from the soldiers' aid society of the State 1153 packages (barrels and boxes,) of goods and vegetables, and \$425.58 in money. A full exhibit of the receipts and disbursements will appear in my annual report. I have during the time received from the U.S. Government ten bales of cotton for comfortable which has been manufactured by the aid societies in the West with great acceptability, and are now being distributed for use in the general and post hospitals. I have just received and caused to be sold another lot, (14 bales,) of cotton, given me by the U.S. Government for sanitary purposes, on which I have realized \$2,000- 18, which is now on deposit, and which, according to the instructions from the Government, I will apply to the purchase of such supplies as are most needed by the army.

The Government is offering me safe and prompt transportation for sanitary supplies, and every facility for carrying out the generous intentions of our people.

Owing to recent orders, no more goods can be sent at the cost of the Government to particular individuals or regiments, but all supplies must go into a common fund for general distribution.

The transactions briefly mentioned in this report, together with my hospital labors, an immense correspondence, and over three thousand miles travel, have so completely occupied my time, that I have not been able to devote as much attention to organizing societies in the State, as I had hoped, but I can safely report a large increase in the number of societies, and greater enthusiasm in regard to the sanitary affairs throughout the State, than ever has existed heretofore. Hoping that I have done some good, and that my labors may meet your approbation,

I am very respectfully
Your obedient servant

Annie Wittenmyer
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