

Headquarters – 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division  
Army Frontier  
Camp Prairie Grove, Ark  
Dec. 13 1862

My dear Judge –

I have just rec'd a telegram of the 9<sup>th</sup> announcing McCullough's death.

The news of his death and of our battle here must have reached home about the same time, and I know the effect on my wife must have been a severe shock.

I consulted General Herron last night about applying for leave of absence. I conceived that my duty at home just now under all the circumstances outweighed my duty to remain here. He reasoned thus: "We are here in an unsettled condition. The enemy is in front of us. You hold an important command in this army. Postpone your application for a week; let us see how we are then fixed, and if as I suppose we will be, I will cheerfully aid you in your application." To all of which I cordially assented. I could not ~~recognize~~ reconcile myself to making an application for leave of absence if there was a prospect for more work before us immediately. But I think the enemy so severely punished and crippled that he will scarcely give us battle again soon. But I am satisfied that I must return home. I have McCullough's will among my private papers at home and I am his Executor.

Now comes the further question: What is my duty in reference to my present position and shall I retain it, or shall I give it up and return home. Very fortunately for me I have thro' a battle and (pardon me for saying) with at least no discredit to myself. I am satisfied that promotion awaits me if I continue in the field. I feel able to manage a command now most as well as any one. I like the position I am in. But on the other hand there are two helpless families on my hands – now my own and McCullough's. Should I too fall I dread to picture the effect on my own family. Had McCullough lived, I could have died. He was a noble man and would have well protected and cared for his daughter and her children.

He is dead! Shall I continue to take the chances of death in battle?; or shall I now while my military prospects are the brightest and while I stand at least fair in the army, resign; and resume the duties I owe to my own family and assume the additional duties imposed upon me by McCullough's death? Judge, I would like very much to hear from you. Your advice always has been, and always will be, treasured by me.

And now in this particular emergency, while you are so far remote from the immediate effects of this new misfortune, you can advise me impartially.

I shall probably be in Bloomington in two or three weeks; will you please write me there addressed to my wife and that if I am not there and cannot get off on leave of absence she will forward it to me.

I have no news here - Do not even know what battle McC was killed in or any of the particulars. The weather here is warm. We have this morning thunder, lightning and a warm rain.

This county - Washington - is the largest county of free population in the State. There is some fine country around here. And if there was a railroad thro' here, I sh'd be tempted to move here to live; the climate is so pleasant.

My kindest regards to Mrs. Davis. Remember me to Hill Lamon and all enquiring friends.

As ever your friend,  
Wm. W. Orme