Samuel M. Irvin diary

Section 8, Pages 211 - 240

This diary was written by Samuel M. Irvin, and it contains a great number of details surrounding his activities during the period from January 1841 through June 1848. During the period covered in the diary, Irvin worked as the principal missionary at the Iowa Presbyterian Mission near Highland, Kansas. As a result, Irvin's diary discusses his duties in that capacity, as well as his day-to-day activities on the frontier.

Creator: Irvin, S. M. (Samuel Mcleary), b. 1812

Date: January 1, 1841-June 23, 1848

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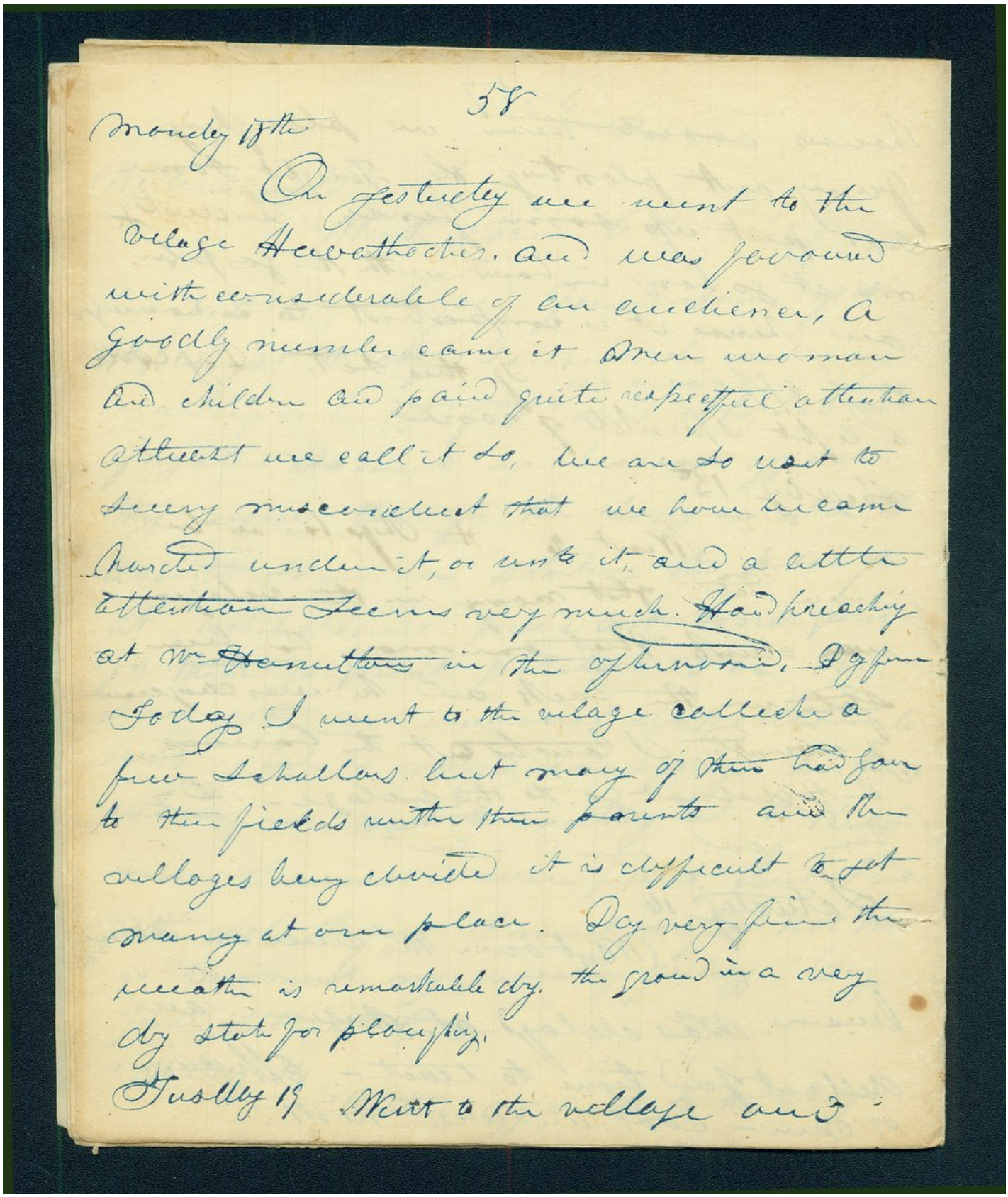
horses assisted them in ploughing
Jerry out planting Mc. Taught some
and put up some fence. Lucretia
must go home in haste with the gospels
and hence it is important to encourage
any appearance of this sort. Dy cool
a light sprinkle of rain

Friday 15th

Went to the Sepo towns but
men fail many in the village
was drunk one man had been
stabbed in the back and he was dangerous-
ly wounded. I taught at the Kansas
but did not go to the village. Dy
fine cool wind west

Saturday 16

Went over the river on some
business. Was delayed at the river and
did not find time to teach. Appearance
of rain — cool and wind north.



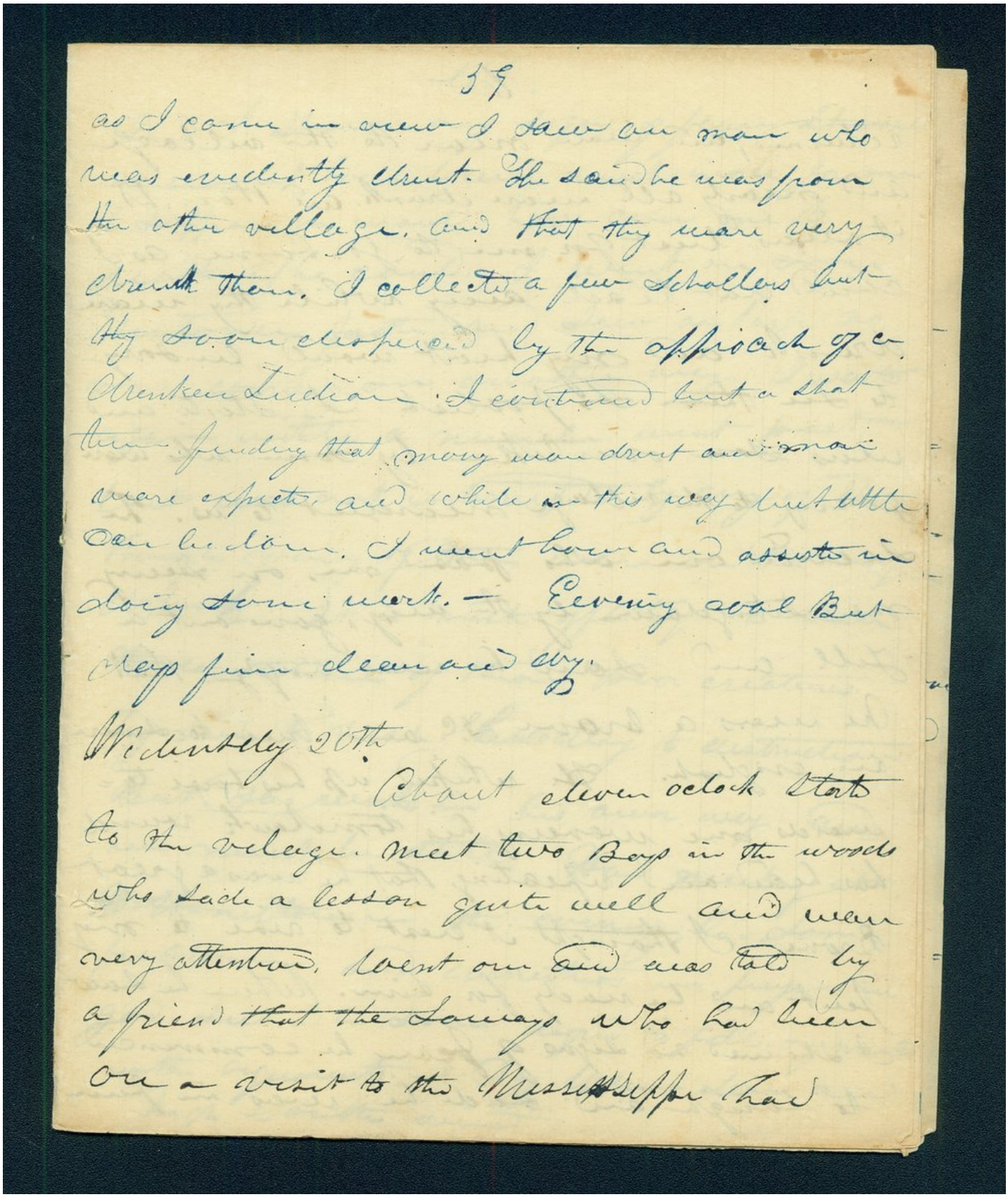
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Monday 18th

On yesterday we went to the village Kickapoo. and was favored with a considerable of an audience, a goodly number came it was men women and children and paid quite respectful attention almost as we all it do, but are so used to seeing such excitement that we have became hardened under it, or use to it, and a little attention seems very much. Had preaching at Mr Hamiltons in the afternoon. Dy fine

To day I went to the village collected a few shells but many of them had gone to their fields with their parents and the villages being divided it is difficult to get many at one place. Dy very fine the weather is remarkable dry. the ground in a very dry state for plowing.

Tuesday 19 Went to the village and

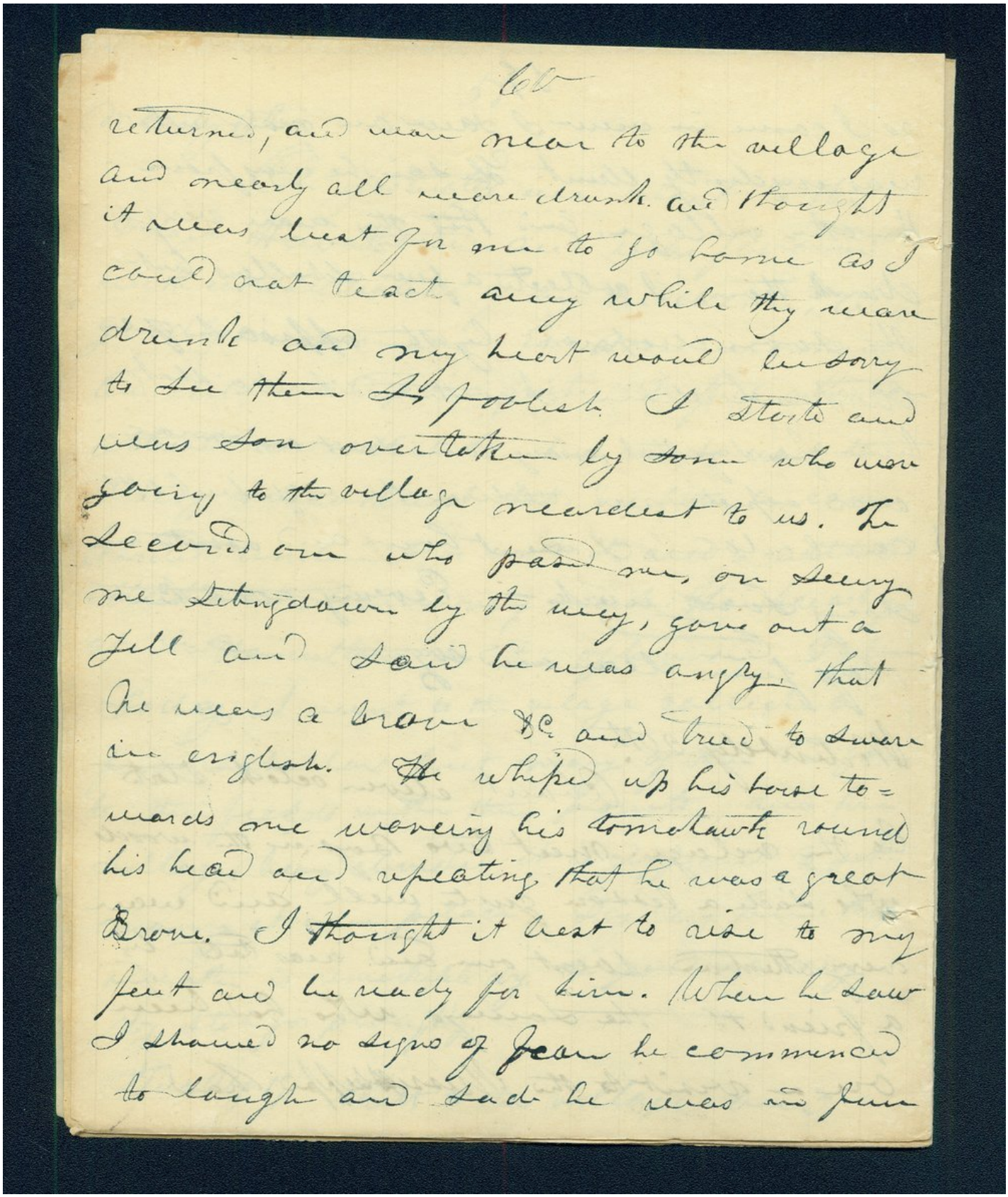


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as I came in view I saw an man who was evidently drunk. He said he was from the other village. and that they were very drunk there. I collected a few Scholars but they soon dispersed by the approach of a drunken Indian. I continued but a short time finding that many was drunk and more were expected. and while in this way but little can be done. I went home and assisted in doing some work. — Evening cool But days fine clear and dry.

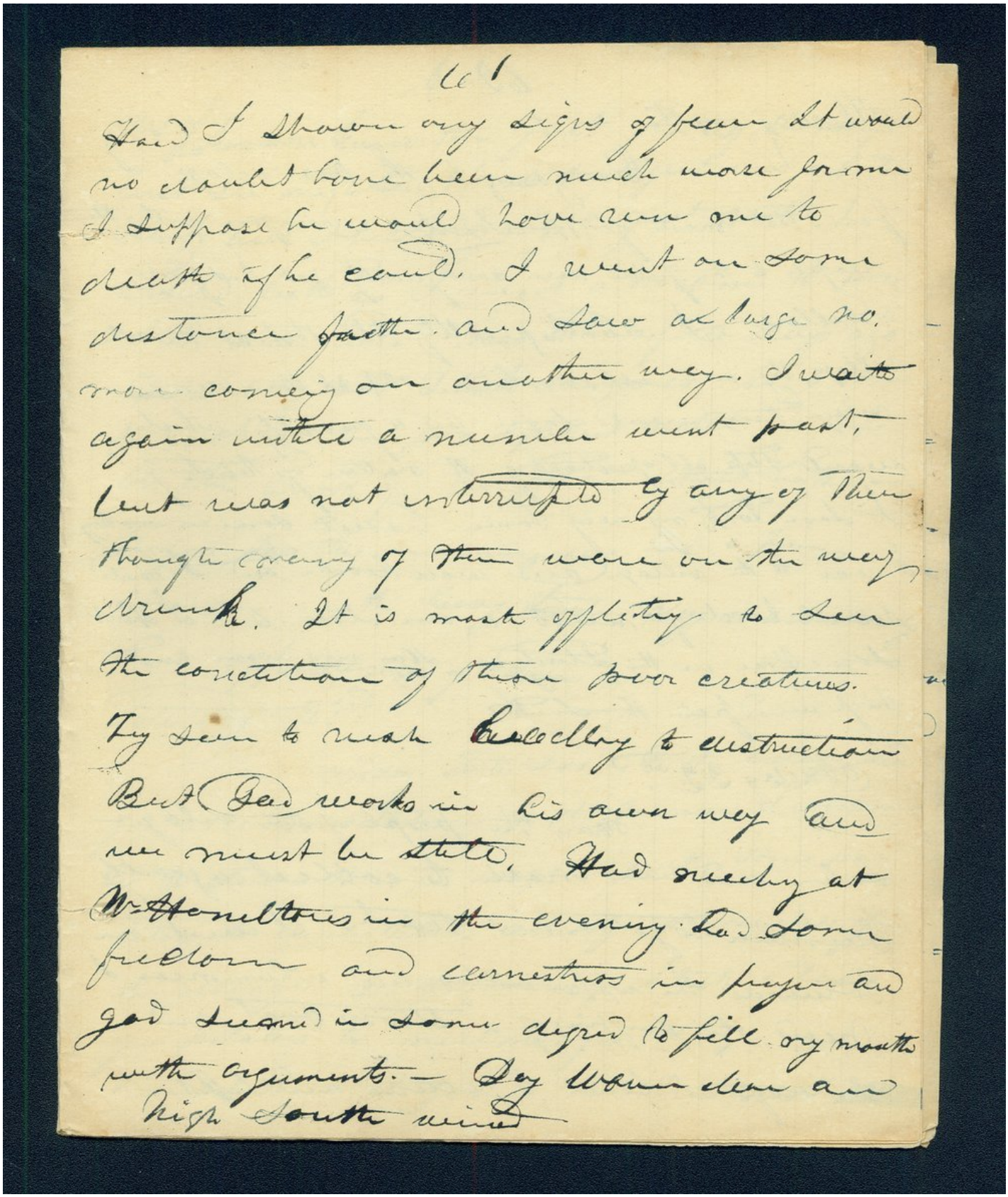
Wednesday 20th

About eleven oclock Started to the village. met two Boys in the woods who had a lesson quite well and were very attentive. went on and was told by a friend that the Sauways who had been on a visit to the Missisippi River had



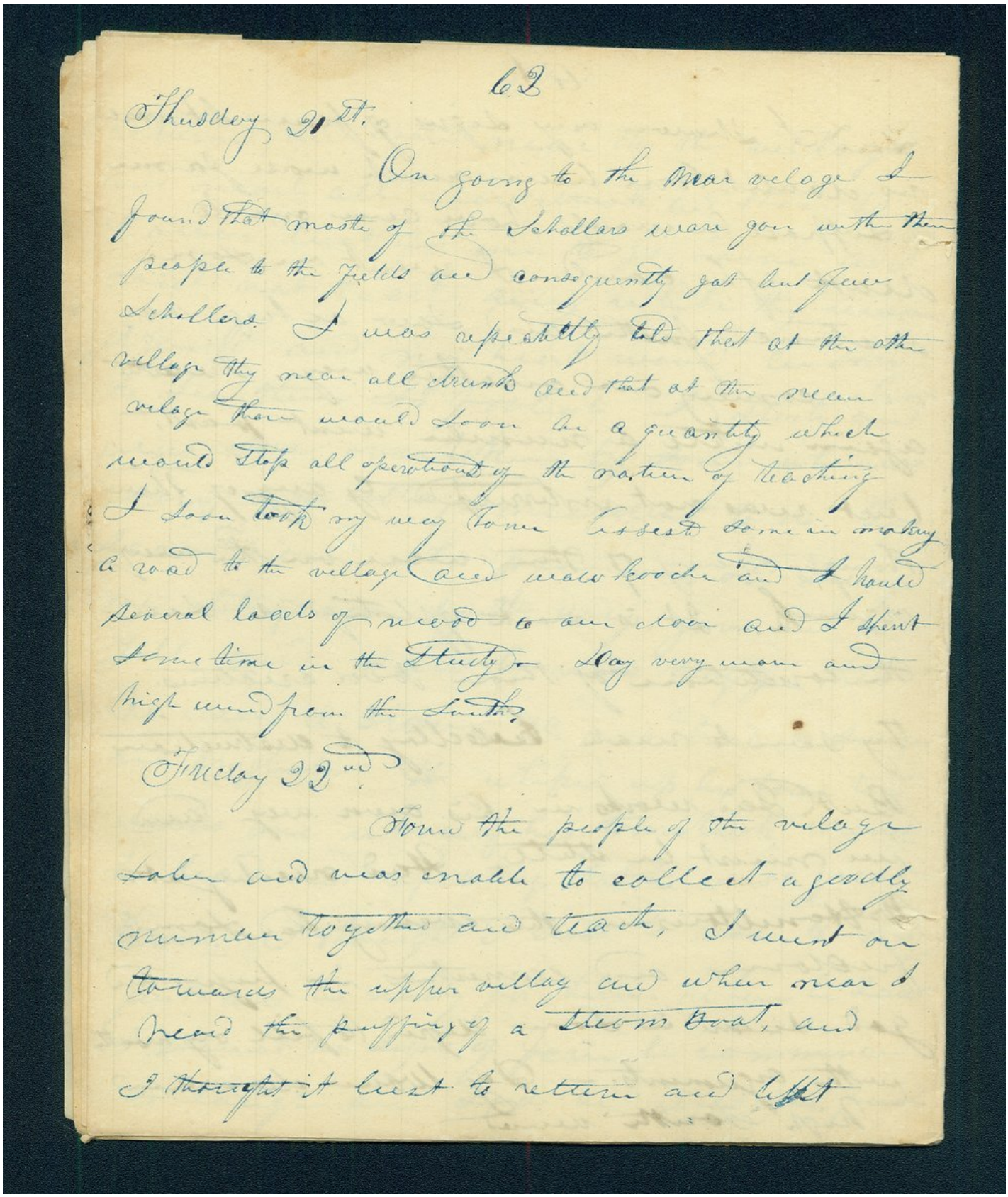
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returned, and near near to the village and nearly all were drunk. and thought it was best for me to go home as I could not teach any while they were drunk and my heart would be sorry to see them so foolish. I started and was soon overtaken by some who were going to the village nearest to us. The second one who passed me, on seeing me staying down by the way, gave out a yell and said he was angry that he was a brave &c. and tried to swear in english. He whipped up his horse towards one weaving his tomahawk round his head and repeating that he was a great Brave. I thought it best to rise to my feet and be ready for him. When he saw I showed no signs of fear he commenced to laugh and said he was no fear



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Had I shown any signs of fear it would no doubt have been much worse for me I suppose he would have run me to death if he could. I went on home & sustained no further damage. and saw at large no more coming on another way. I waited again while a number went past, but was not interrupted by any of them though many of them were on the way drunk. It is most appalling to see the condition of those poor creatures. They seem to rush headlong to destruction But God works in his own way and we must be still. Had meeting at Mr Hamiltons in the evening. Had some freedom and earnestness in prayer and God seemed in some degree to fill my mouth with arguments. — Day warm clear and high South wind



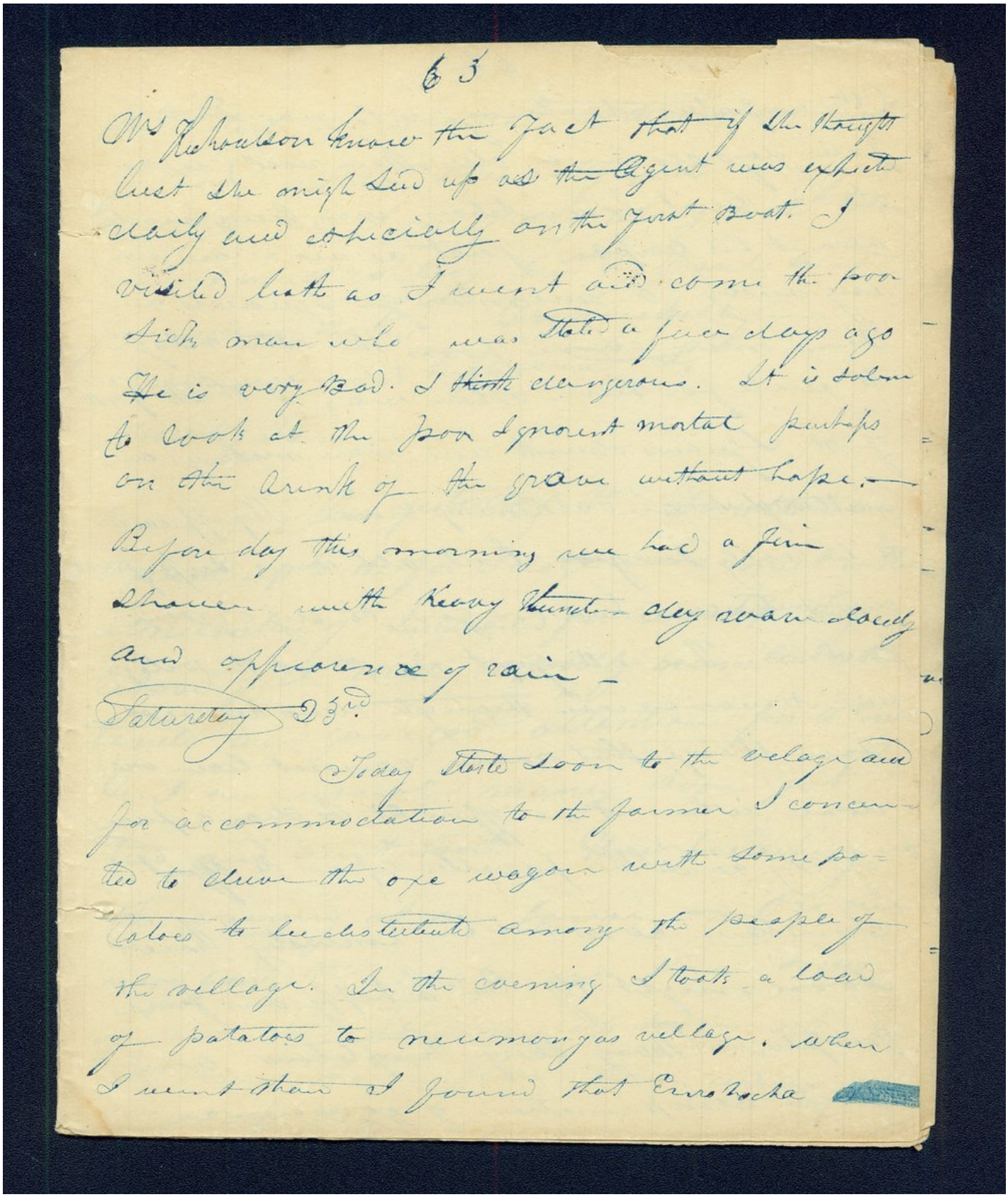
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Thursday 21st.

On going to the Mear village I found that moste of the Schollars wear gon with there people to the fields an consequently got but fiew Schollers. I was apeakelly told that at the other village they wear all drunk and that at the mear village there would soon be a quantity which would Stops all operations of the nature of teaching I soon took my way home Intended to make a road to the village and wash Kooche and I hauld Several loads of wood to our door and I Spent Some time in the Study. Day very warm and high wind from the South.

Friday 22nd.

Found the people of the village Sober and was enable to collect a goodly number together and teach, I went on towards the upper village and when near I heard the puffing of a Steam Boat, and I thought it best to return and visit

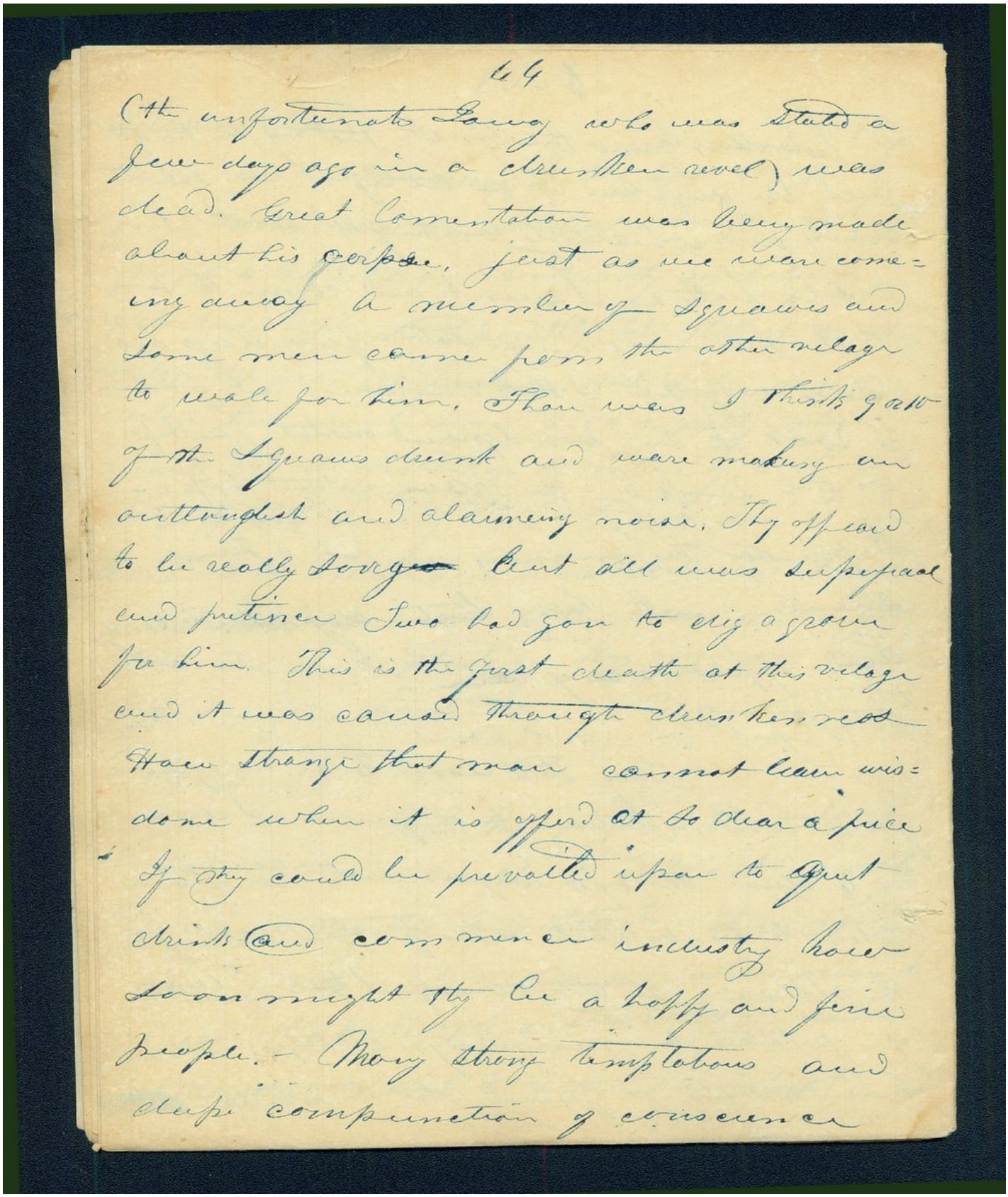


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Mr Richardson knew the fact ~~that~~ if the Kaws
knew the might find us as the Agent was expected
daily and officially on the first Boat. I
visited both as I went and comm the poor
sick man who was stated a few days ago
He is very Bad. I think dangerous. It is solem
to look at the poor ignorant mortal perhaps
on the brink of the grave without hope.—
Before day this morning we had a fine
shower with heavy thunder day was cloudy
and appearance of rain —

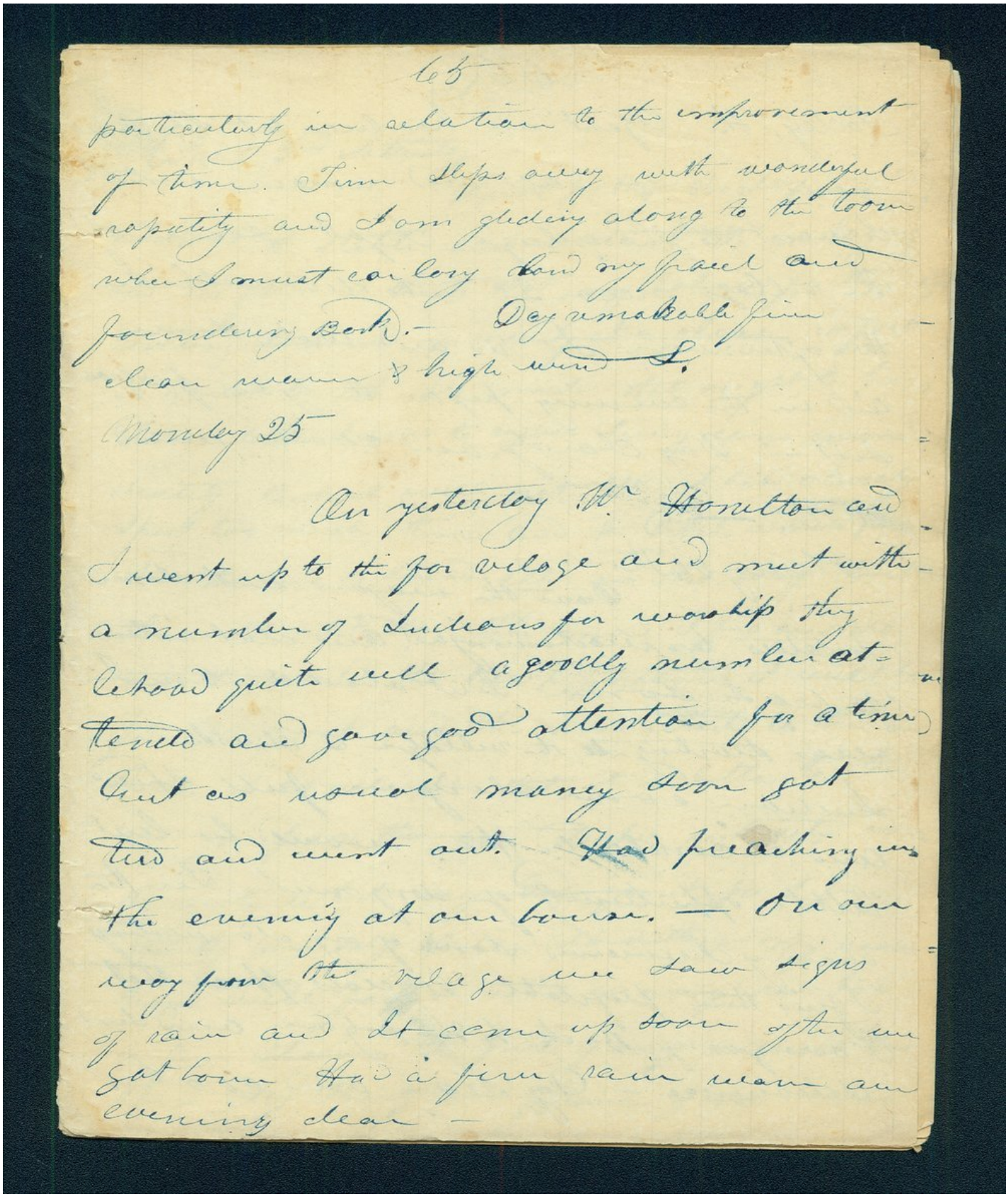
Saturday 23rd.

Today started soon to the village and
for accommodation to the farmer I concen-
ted to drive the ox wagon with some po-
tatoes to be distributed among the people of
the village. In the evening I took a load
of patatoes to neumonyas village. when
I went there I found that Enrocha



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(the unfortunate Lang who was stabed a few days ago in a drunken revel) was dead. Great lamentation was being made about his corpse, just as we were coming away a number of Squaws and some men came from the other village to wale for him. There was I think 9 or 10 of the Squaws drunk and were making an outrageous and alarming noise. They appeard to be really sorry. But all was superficial and pretence. Two had gone to dig a grave for him. This is the first death at this village and it was caused through drunkenness. How strange that man cannot learn wisdome when it is offerd at so dear a price. If they could be prevailed upon to quit drinks and commence industry how soon might they be a happy and free people. - Many strong temptations and deep compunction of conscience

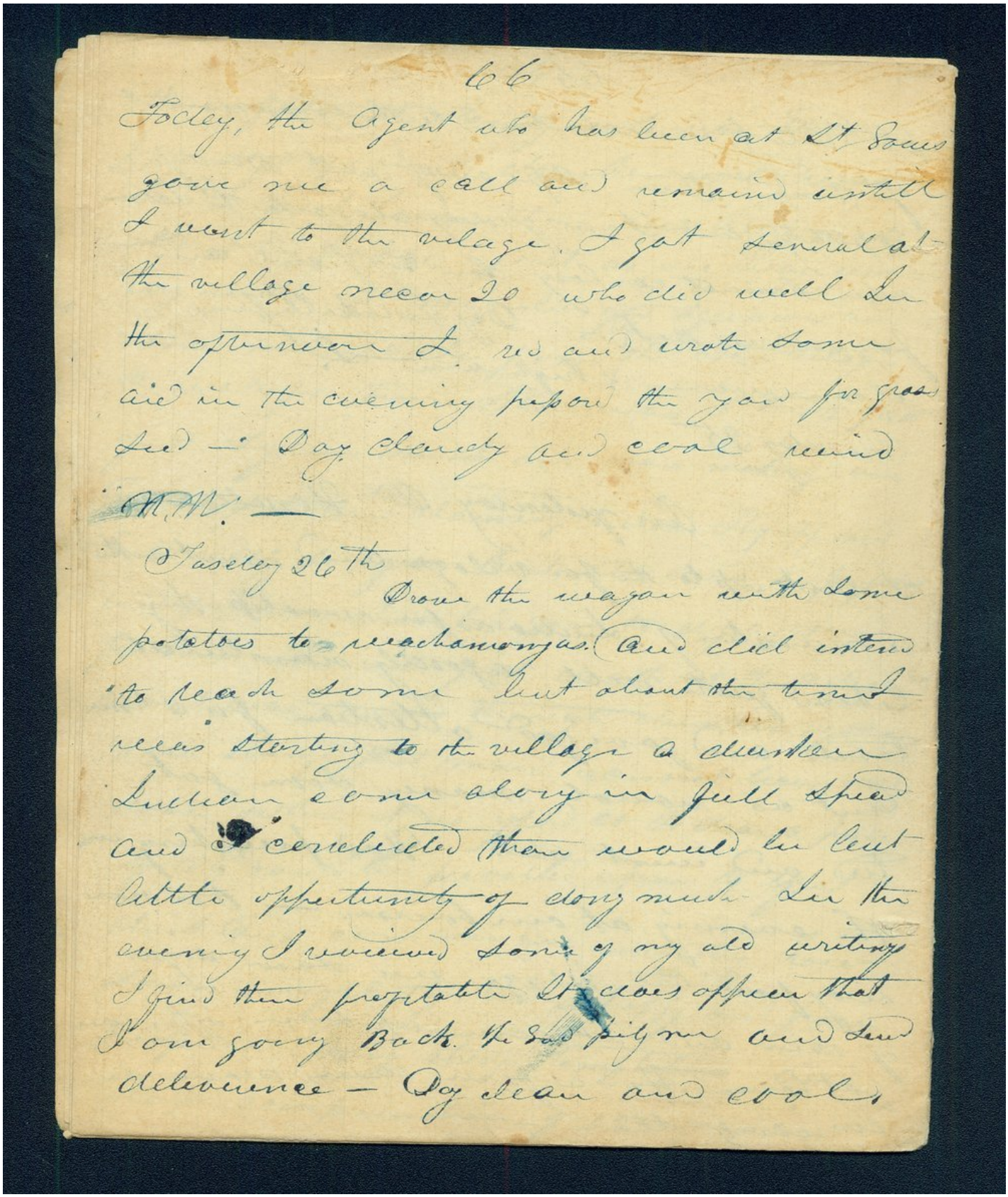


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particularly in relation to the improvement of time. Time slips away with wonderful rapidity and I am gliding along to the town when I must cash my pencil and journey back. — Day remarkable fine clear warm & high wind S.

Monday 25

Yesterday W. Hamilton and I went up to the Potawatomie village and met with a number of Indians for worship they behaved quite well a goodly number attended and gave good attention for a time but as usual many soon got tired and went out. Had preaching in the evening at our house. — On our way from the village we saw signs of rain and it came up soon after we got home. Had a fine rain warm and evening clear —

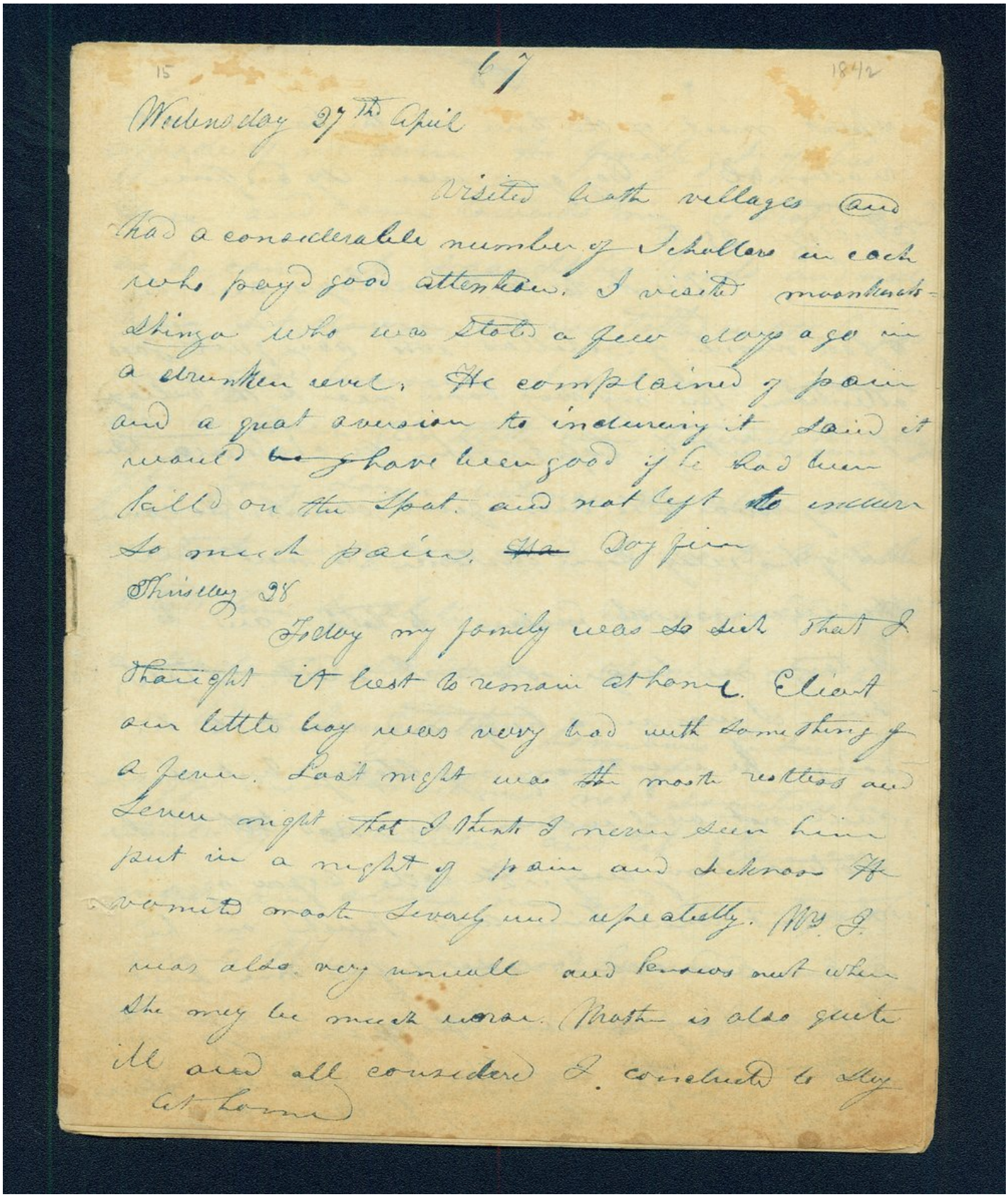


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Tooley, the Agent who has been at St Louis gave me a call and remained until I went to the village. I got dressed at the village mean 20 who did well In the afternoon I. rid and wrote some aid in the evening prepared the yard for grass seed — Day cloudy and cool wind N.W. —

Tuesday 26th

Drove the wagon with some potatoes to Peachamongas. And did intend to reach some but about the time I was starting to the village a number Indians came along in full speed and I concluded there would be but little opportunity of doing much In the evening I received some of my old writings I find them preptatete It does appear that I am going Back. He did pity me and send deliverance — Day clear and cool,



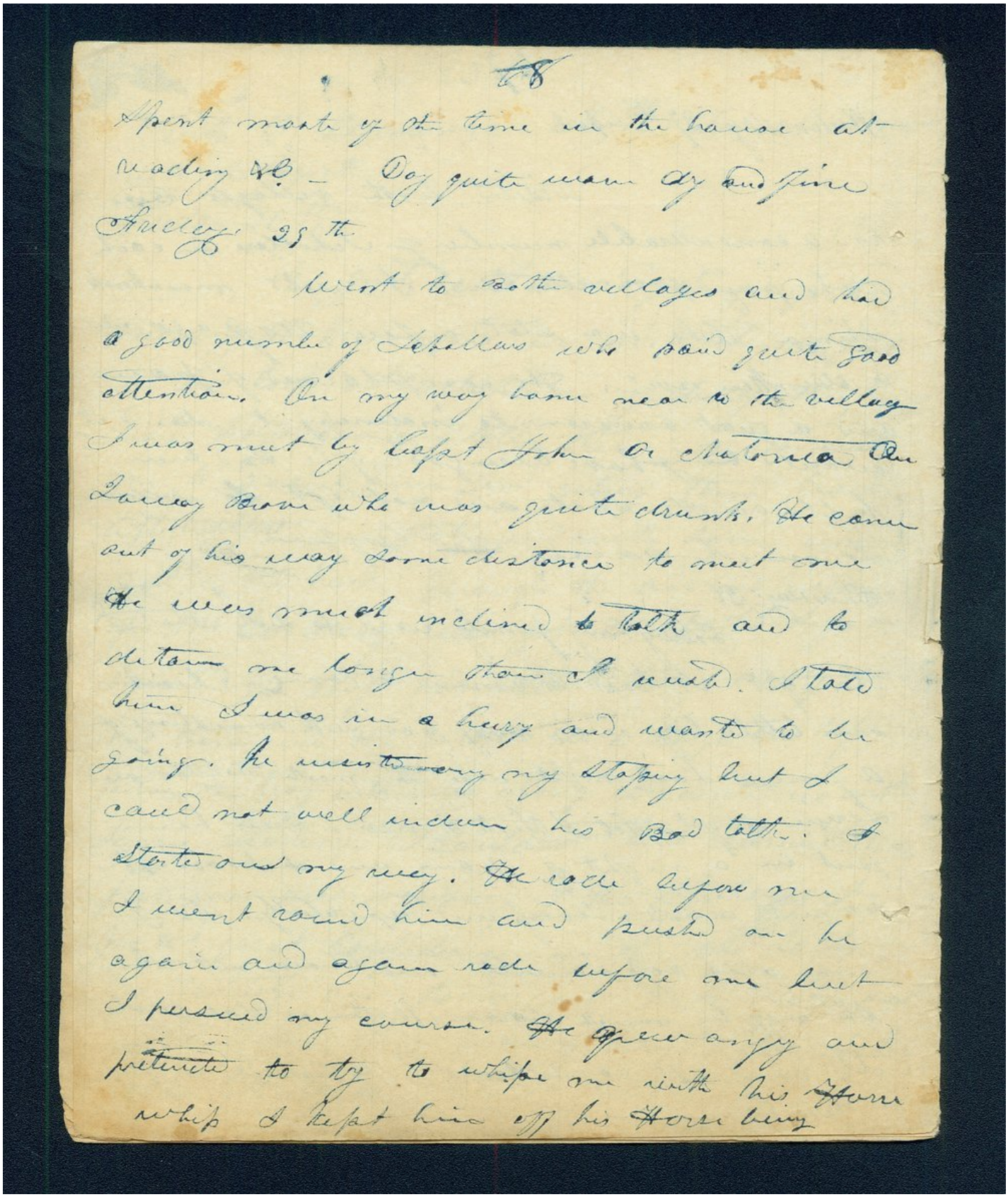
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Wednesday 27th April

Visited both villages and had a considerable number of Scholars in each who payd good attention. I visited moonhaksh-shinga who was stabbed a few days ago in a drunken revel. He complained of pain and a great aversion to inducing it said it would have been good if he had been killed on the spot and not left to endure so much pain. Doctor Jim

Thursday 28

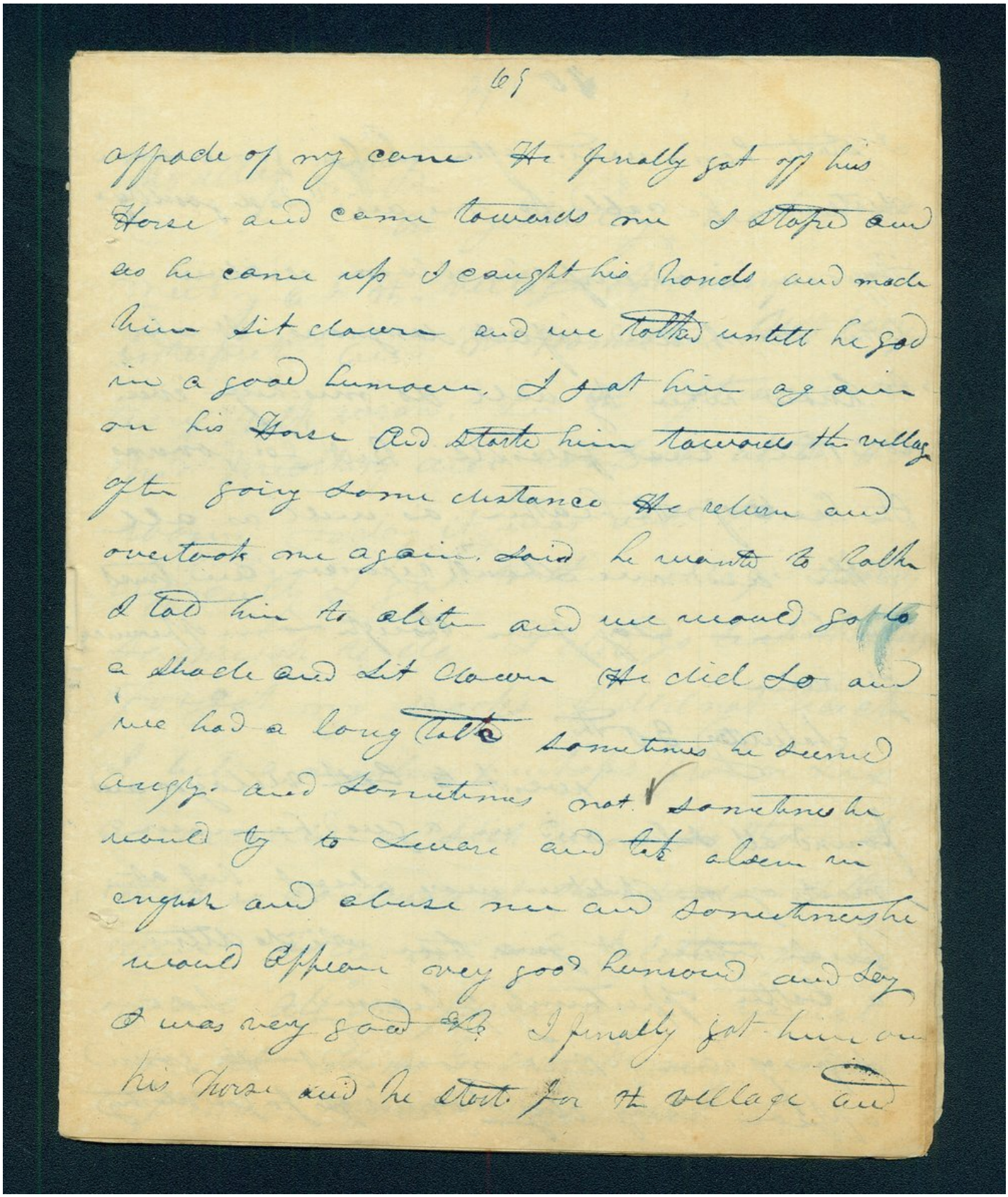
Today my family was so sick that I thought it best to remain at home. Eliza our little boy was very bad with something of a fever. Last night was the most restless and severe night that I think I never saw him put in a night of pain and sickness He vomited much severely and repeatedly. Mrs I. was also very unwell and seems not when she may be much worse. Martha is also quite ill and all considered I concluded to stay at home



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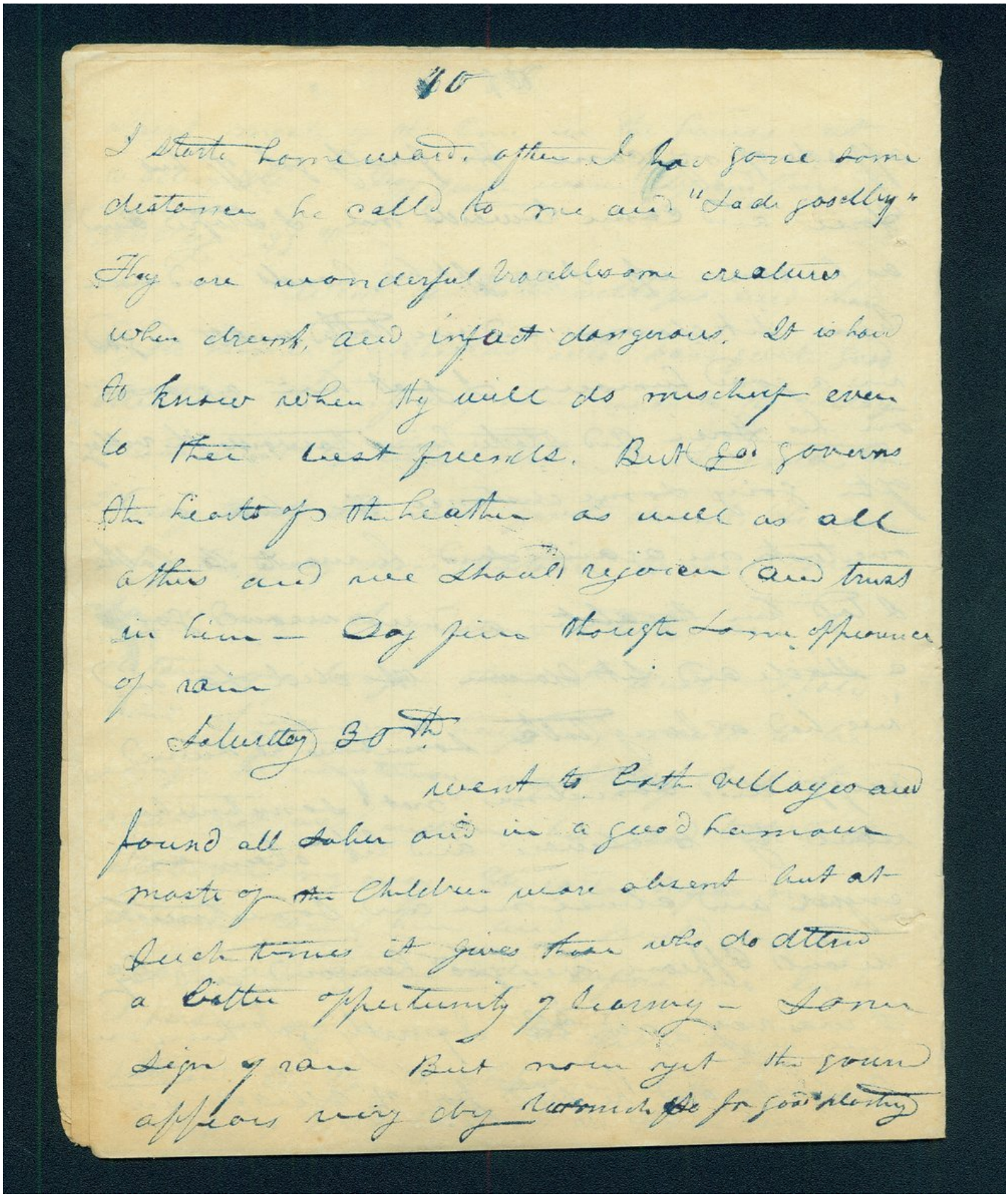
Spent most of the time in the house at reading &c. — Dog quite warm by and fine Friday 25 th

Went to both villages and had a good number of Scholars who paid quite good attention. On my way home near to the village I was met by Capt John A Autonia An Iowa Brave who was quite drunk. He came out of his way some distance to meet me He was much inclined to talk and to detain me longer than I wish. I told him I was in a hurry and wanted to be going. He minded my stoping but I could not well indure his Bad talk. I started on my way. He rode before me I went round him and pushed on he again and again rode before me but I persued my course. He grew angry and pretended to try to whipe me with his Horse whip I kept him off his Horse being



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appeade of my come He finally got off his Horse and came towards me I stoped and as he came up I caught his hands and made him sit down and we talked untill he got in a good humoure. I got him again on his Horse And started him towards the village after going some distance He return and overtook me again. said he wanted to talk I told him to alite and we would go to a shade and sit down He did so and we had a long talk sometimes he seemed angry and sometimes not sometimes he would try to swear and cut down in anger and abuse me and sometimes he would appear very good humoured and say I was very good &c. I finally got him on his horse and he start for the village and



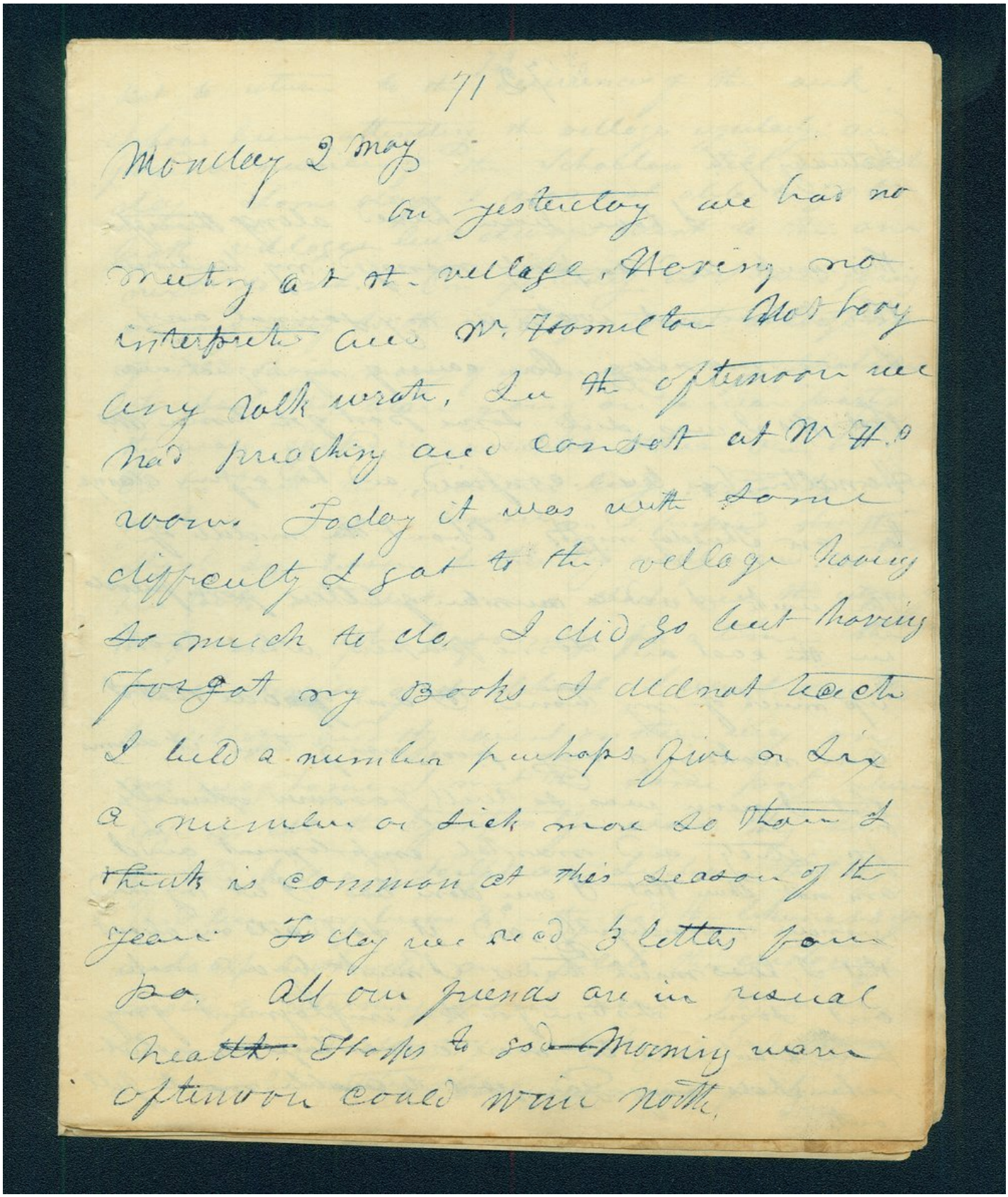
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I start homeward, after I had gone some distance he called to me and "Said goodby"

Hogs are wonderful bewildering creatures when drunk, and in fact dangerous. It is hard to know when they will do mischief even to their best friends. But God governs the hearts of the heathen as well as all others and we should rejoice and trust in him — Today fine thought I saw appearance of rain

Saturday 30th

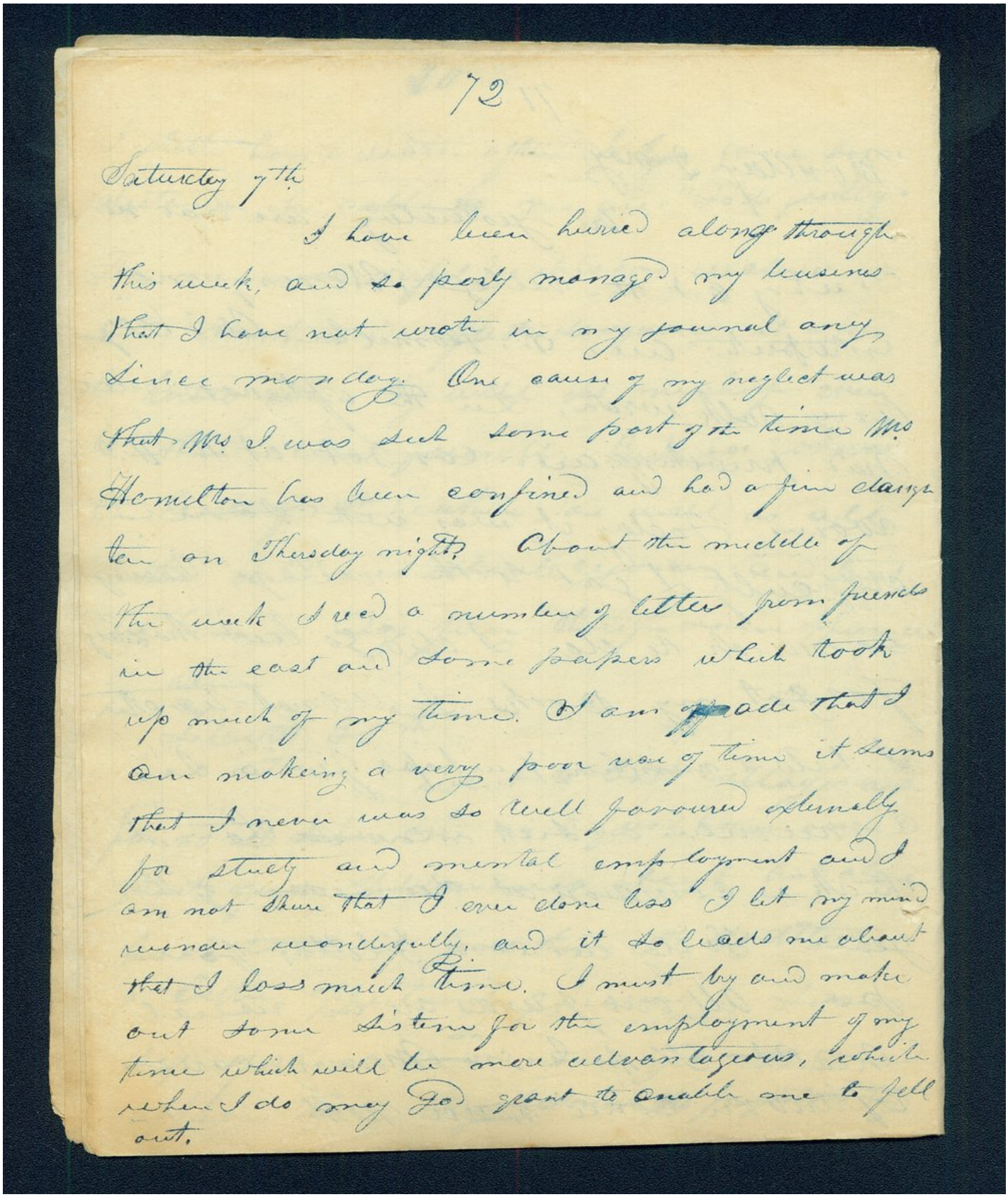
went to both villages and found all safe and in a good harmony master of the Children were absent but at such times it gives those who do attend a better opportunity of learning — Some sign of rain But none yet this forenoon afternoon may do much for good Hearty



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Monday 2 May

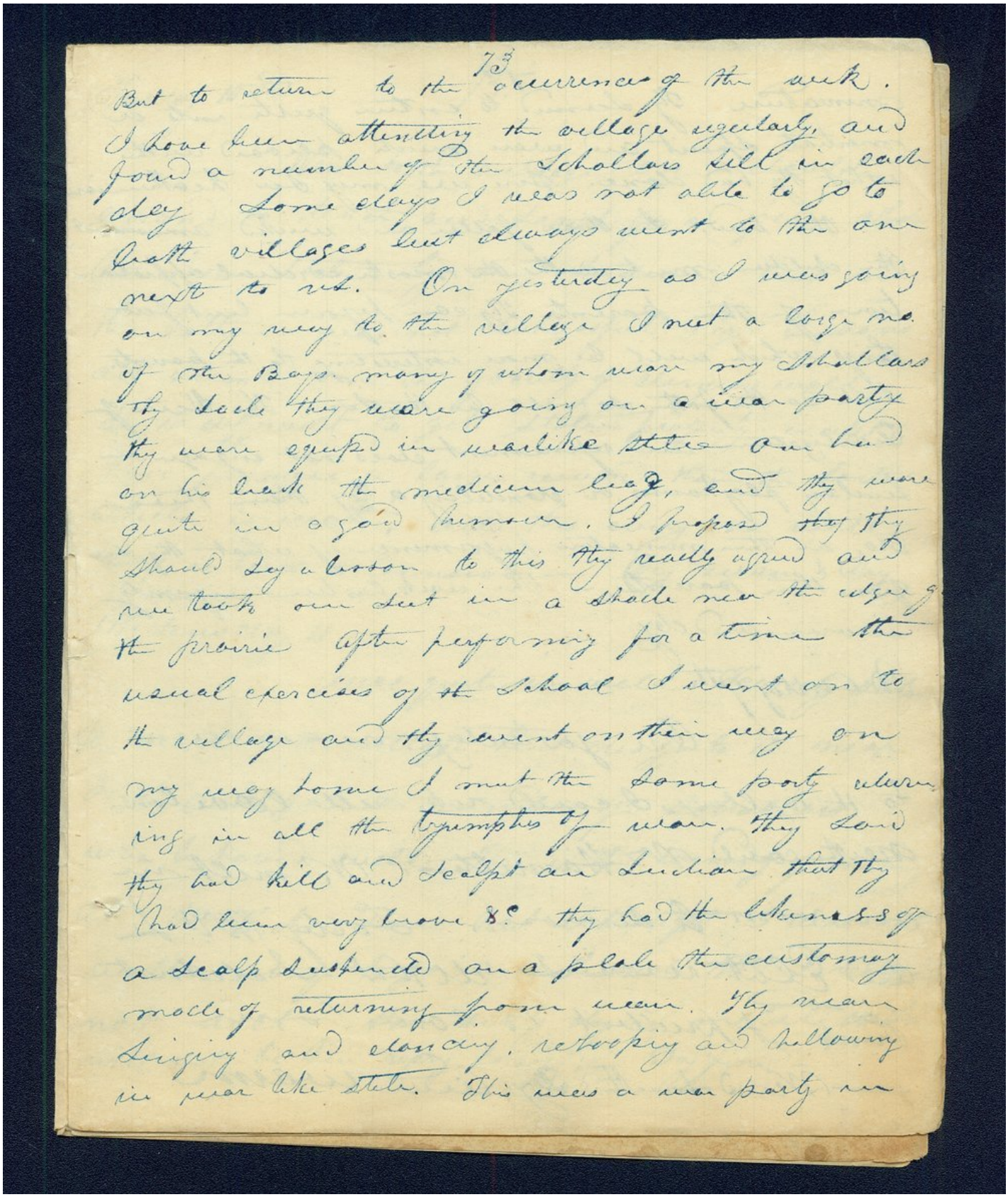
On yesterday we had no
meeting at the village. Having no
interpreter and Mr. Hamilton not being
any talk with, In the afternoon we
had preaching and comfort at Mr. H.'s
room. Today it was with some
difficulty I got to the village having
so much to do. I did go but having
forgot my Books I did not stay
I held a number perhaps five or six
a number or sick more so than I
think is common at this season of the
year. To day we received 3 letters from
Pa. All our friends are in usual
health. Hopes to go Morning warm
afternoon could write North.



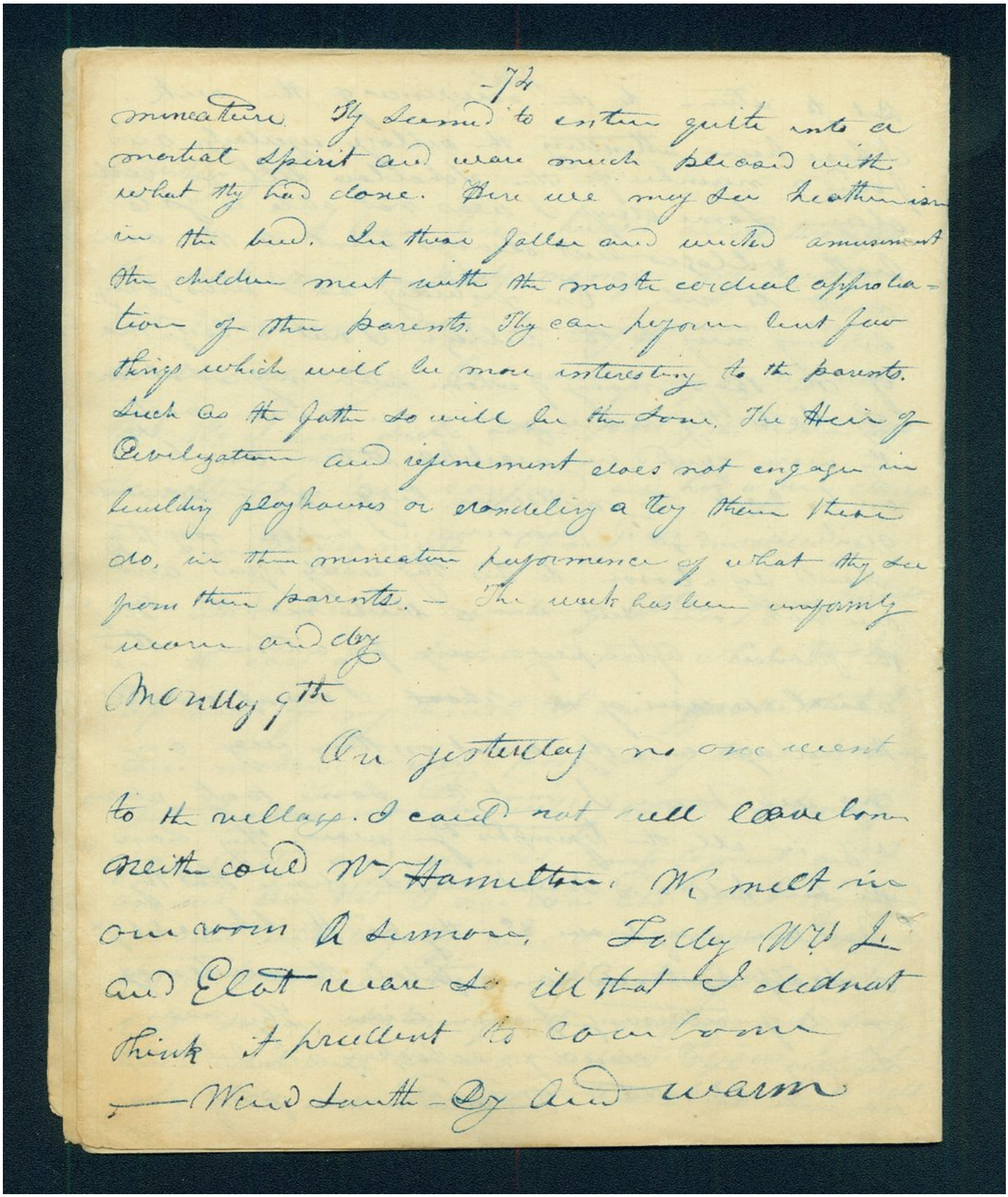
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Saturday 7th

I have been hurried along through this week, and so poorly managed my business that I have not wrote in my journal any since monday. One cause of my neglect was that Mrs I was sick some part of the time Mrs Hamilton has been confined and had a fine daughter on Thursday night. About the middle of the week I rec'd a number of letters from friends in the east and some papers which took up much of my time. I am made that I am making a very poor use of time it seems that I never was so well favoured externally for study and mental employment and I am not sure that I ever done less I let my mind ramble wonderfully, and it so leads me about that I loss much time. I must try and make out some system for the employment of my time which will be more advantageous, which when I do may God grant to enable me to fell out.



But to return to the occurrences of the week. 73
I have been attending the village regularly, and found a number of the Scholars till in each day. Some days I was not able to go to both villages but always went to the one next to us. On yesterday as I was going on my way to the village I met a large no. of the Boys. many of whom were my Scholars by sight they were going on a war party they were equiped in warlike attire one had on his back the medicine bag, and they were quite in a good humour. I proposed that they should sey a lesson to this they really agreed and we took our seat in a shade near the edge of the prairie after performing for a time the usual exercises of the School I went on to the village and they went on their way on my way home I met the same party returning in all the triumphs of war. They said they had kill and scalpt an Indian that they had been very brave &c they had the likeness of a scalp suspended on a pole the customary mode of returning from war. They were singing and dancing, whooping and hallowing in war like style. This was a war party of

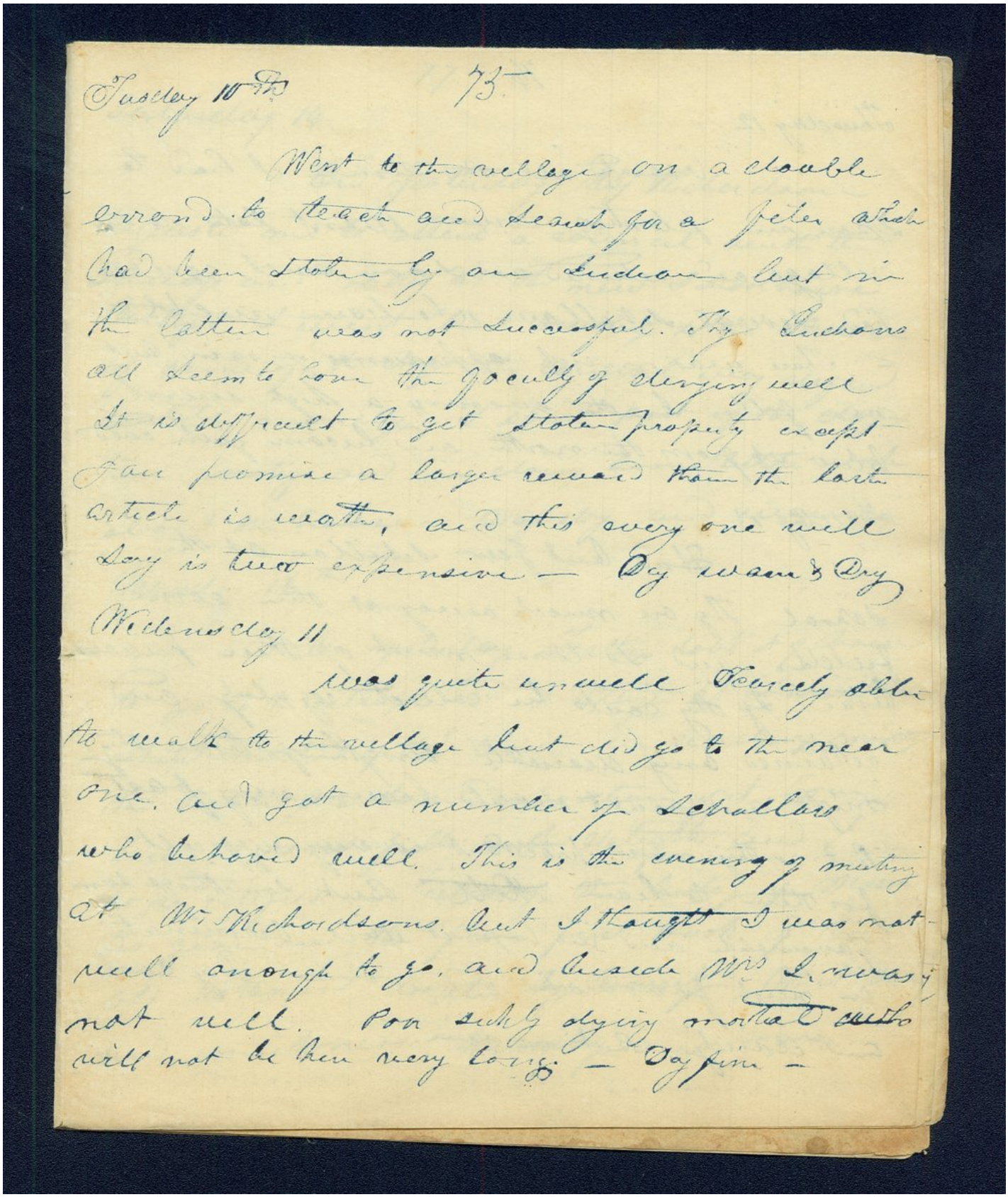


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munication. Ely seemed to enter quite into a spiritual spirit and was much pleased with what they had done. Here we may see heathenism in the bud. In their folly and wicked amusement the children met with the most cordial approbation of their parents. They can perform but few things which will be more interesting to the parents. Such as the father so will be the sons. The Heir of Civilization and refinement does not engage in building playhouses or dandling a toy them these do, in their imitative performance of what they see from their parents. — The week has been unpromising warm and dry

Monday 9th

On yesterday no one went to the village. I could not call Cameron neither could Mr Hamilton. We met in our room & sermons. Folly Wm L. and Eliot were so ill that I did not think it prudent to come home — Wind South — Dry and warm

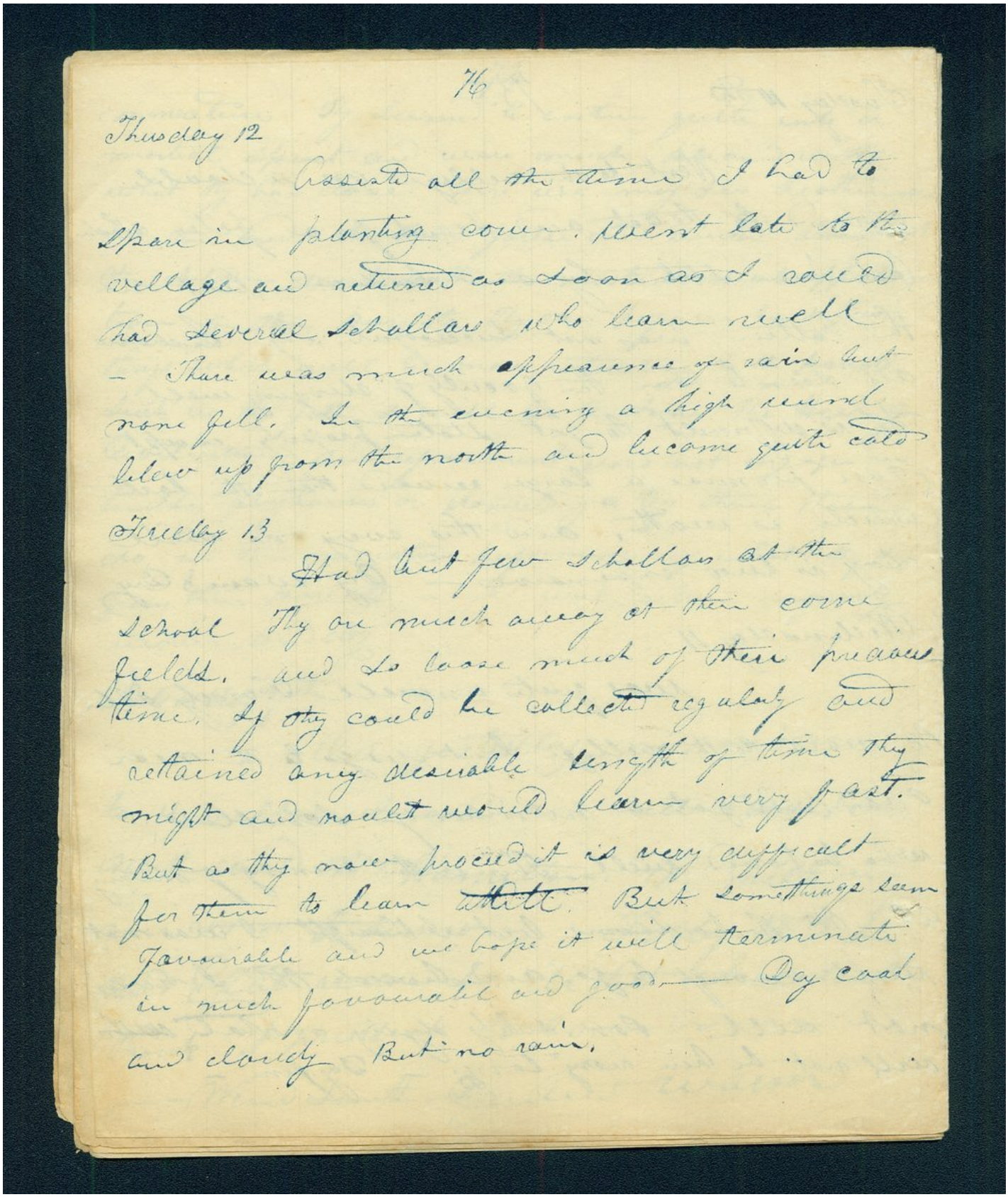


Tuesday 10th 75

Went to the village on a double errand to Reed's and Leach's for a jacket which had been stolen by an Indian but in the latter was not successful. The Indians all seem to know the locality of denying well it is difficult to get stolen property except I can promise a larger reward than the last article is worth, and this every one will say is too expensive — Dy warm & Dry

Wednesday 11

was quite unwell scarcely able to walk to the village but did go to the near one. and got a number of letters who beloved well. This is the evening of meeting at Mr Richardsons. But I thought I was not well enough to go. and beside Mrs L. was not well. Poor sickly dying mortal such will not be here very long — Dy fine —



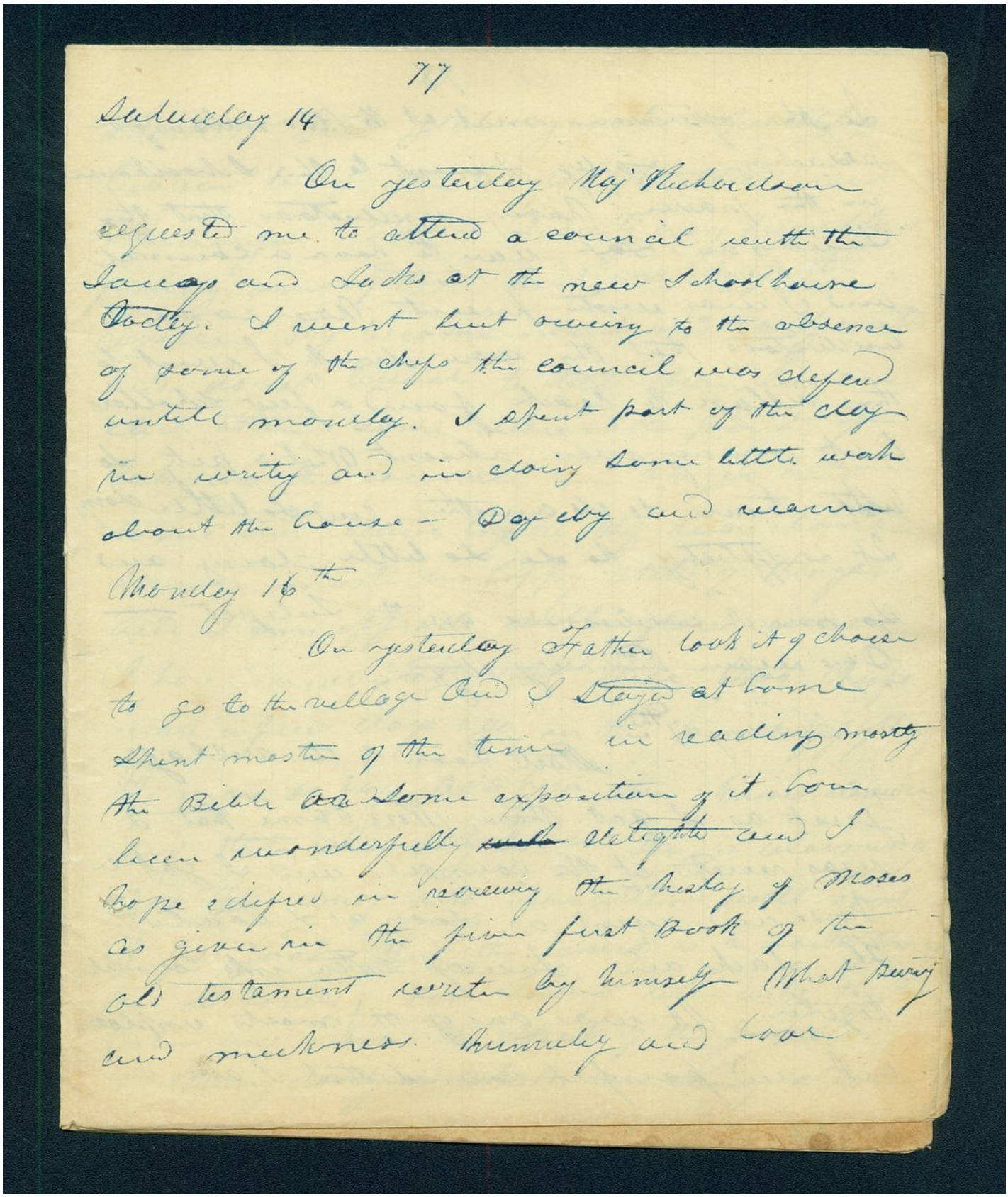
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Thursday 12

Assisted all the time I had to spare in planting corn. Went late to the village and returned as soon as I could had several scholars who learn well – There was much appearance of rain but none fell. In the evening a high wind blew up from the north and became quite cold

Friday 13

Had but few scholars at the school Hy are much away at their corn fields. and so loose much of their precious time. If they could be collected regularly and retained any desirable length of time they might and would learn very fast. But as they now proceed it is very difficult for them to learn much. But some things seem favourable and we hope it will terminate in much favourable and good — Day cool and cloudy But no rain.



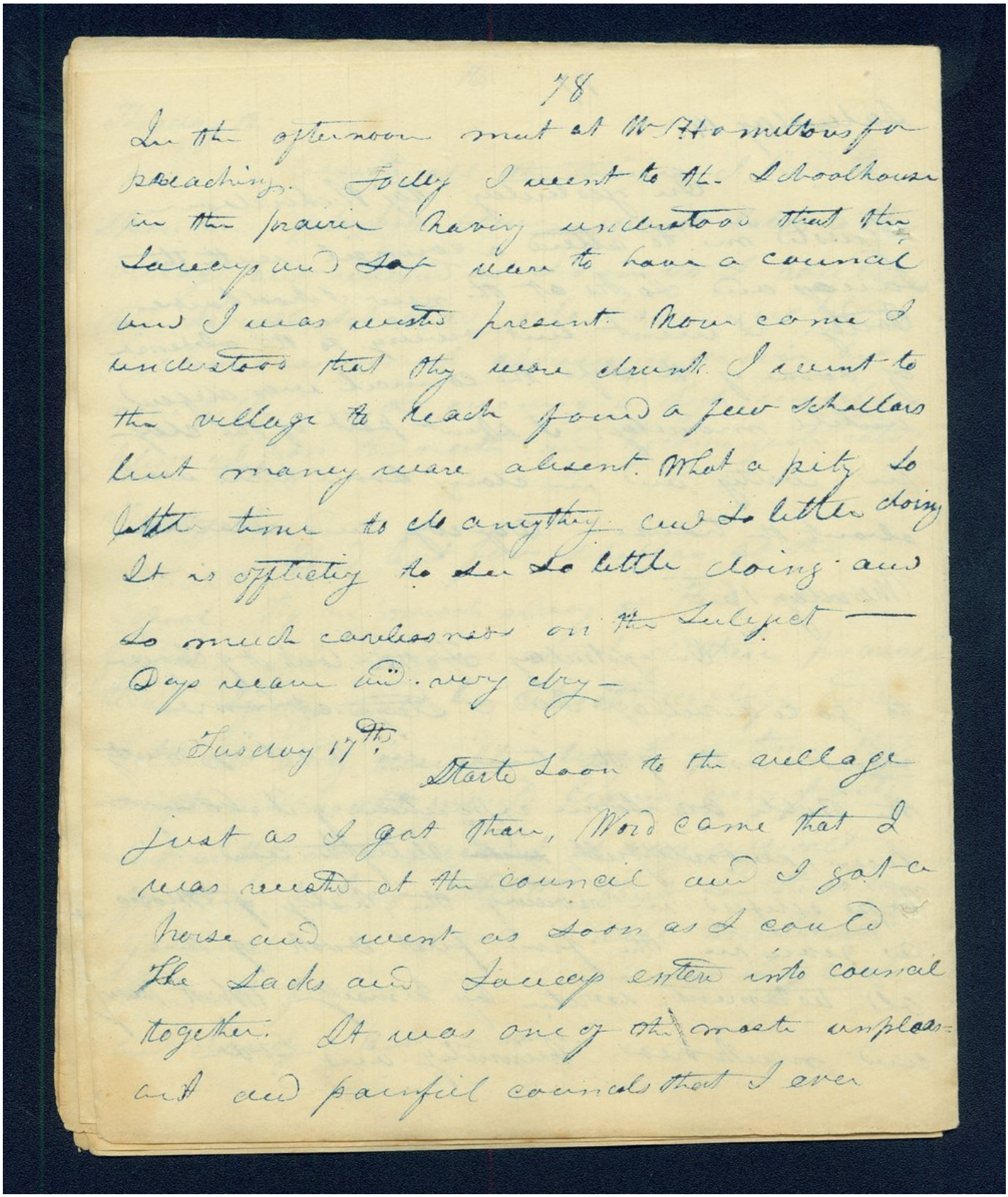
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Saturday 14

On yesterday Maj Richardson requested me to attend a council with the Sauks and Foxes at the new Schoolhouse today. I went but owing to the absence of some of the Reps the council was deferred until monday. I spent part of the day in writing and in doing some little work about the house – Doctor and mama

Monday 16th

On yesterday Father took A's choice to go to the village And I stayed at home Spent most of the time in reading mostly the Bible & some exposition of it. Have been wonderfully ~~aided~~ delighted and I hope edified in viewing the history of Moses as given in the first first Book of the old testament written by himself What purity and meekness. Humility and love

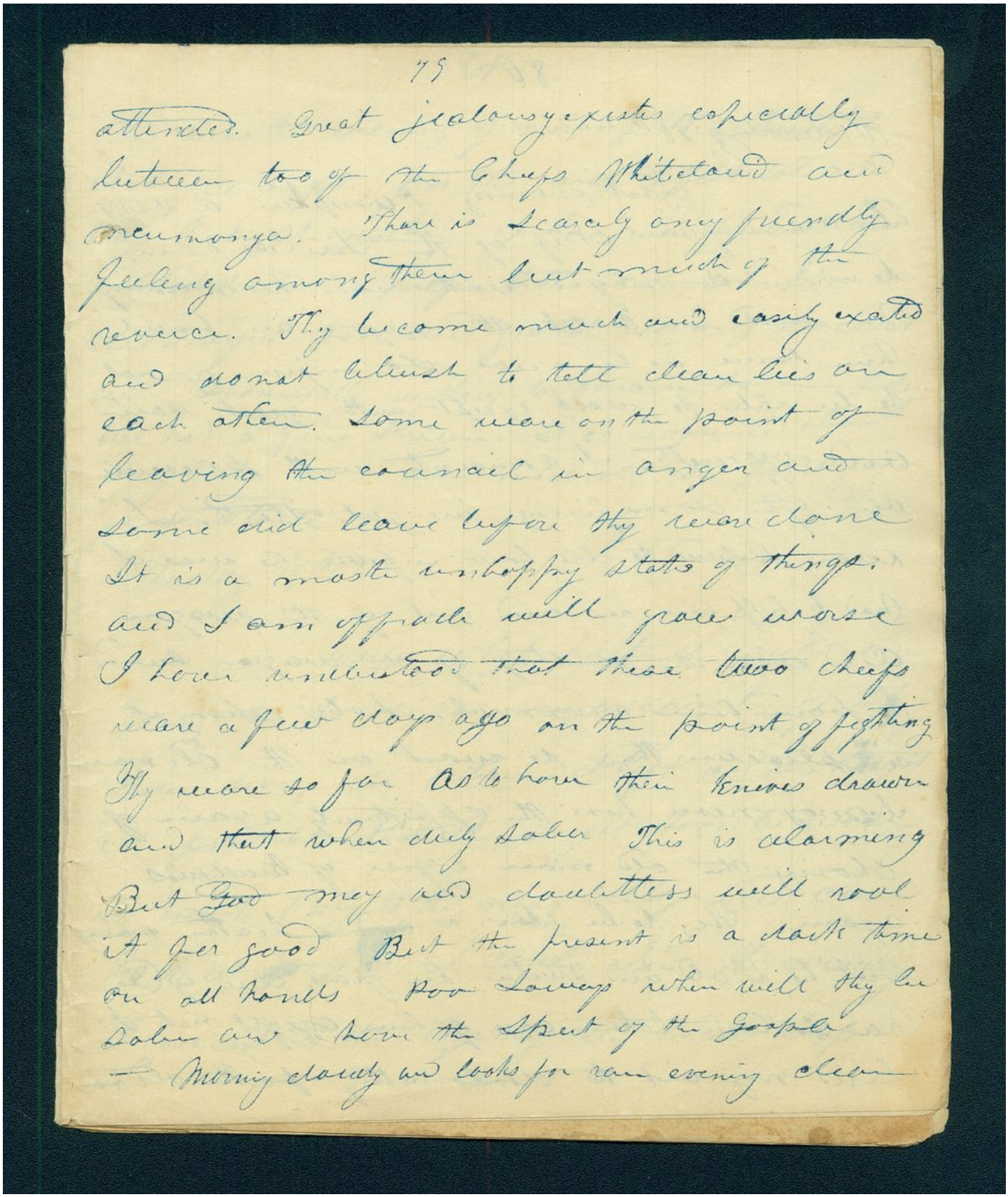


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In the afternoon met at W. Hamiltons for preaching. Sally I went to the Schoolhouse in the prairie having understood that the Lawyers and Gov were to have a council and I was invited present. How come I understood that they were drunk. I went to the village to teach found a few Scholars but many were absent. What a pity to [illegible] time to do anything and do little doing It is afflicting to see so little doing and so much carelessness on the Subject — Days seem end. very dry —

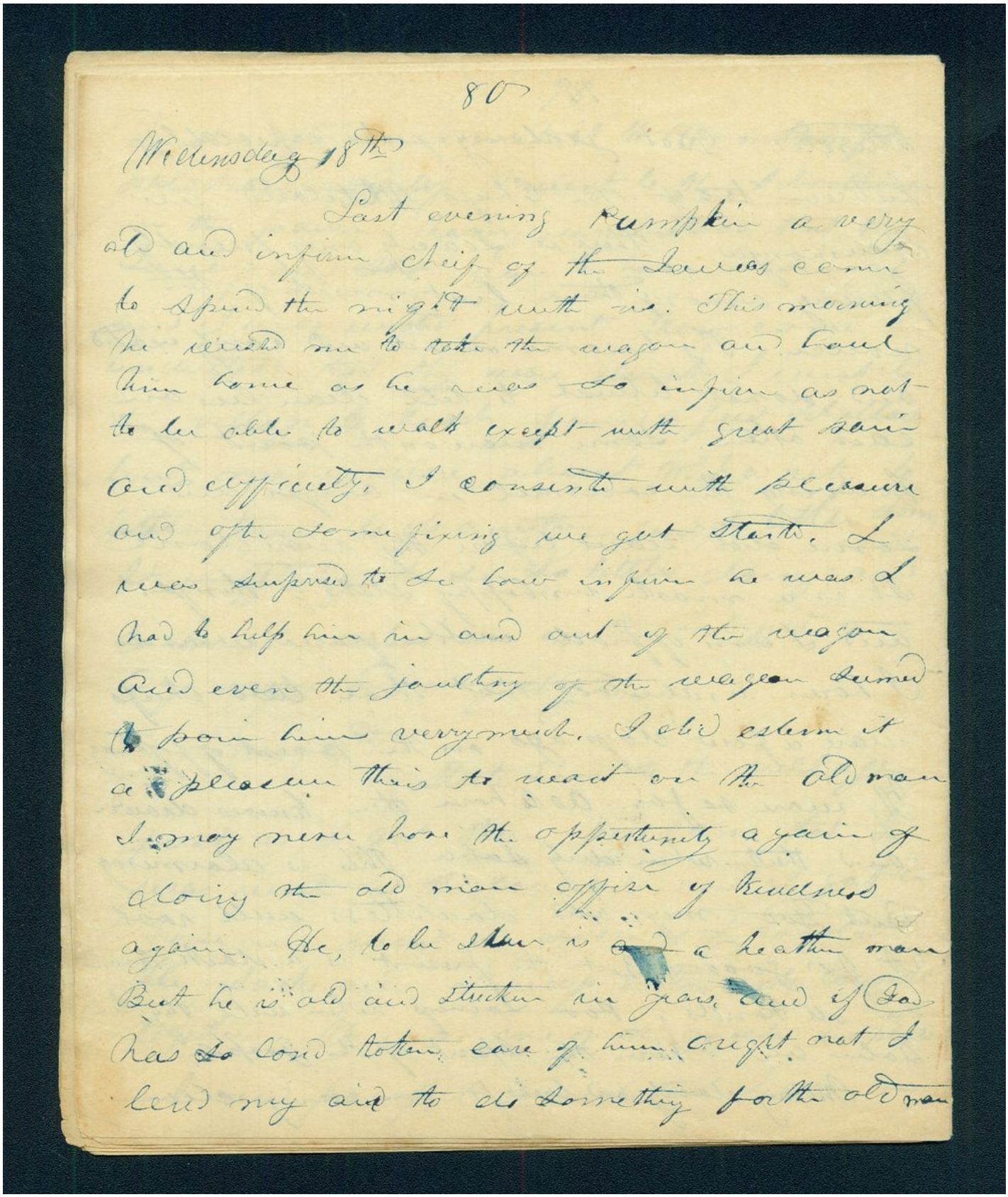
Tuesday 17th.

Started soon to the village just as I got there, Word came that I was wanted at the council and I got a horse and went as soon as I could The Lads and Lawyers enter into council together. It was one of the most unpleasant and painful councils that I ever



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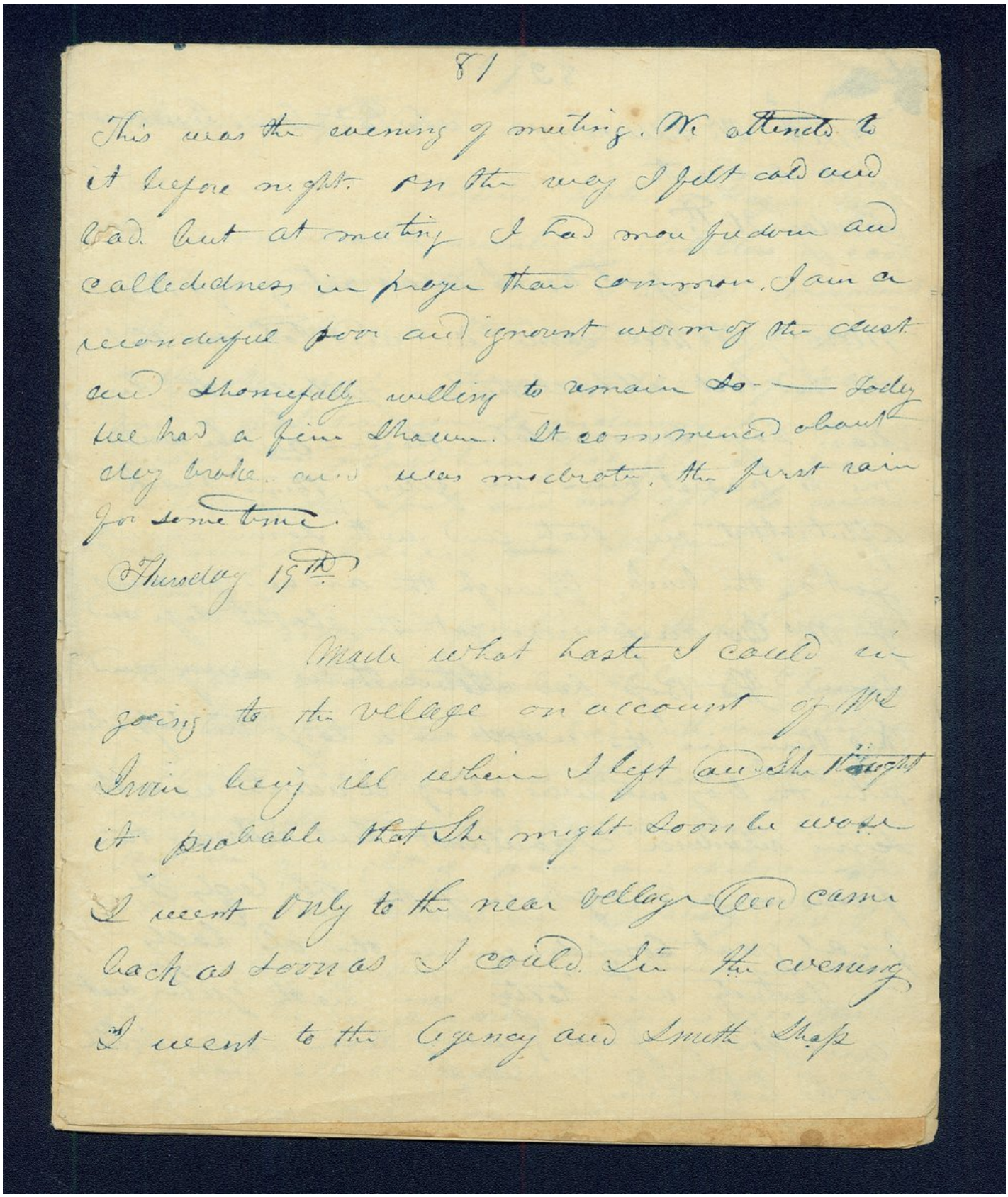
attended. Great jealousy exists especially between two of the Chiefs Whitehead and Pennonya. There is scarcely any friendly feeling among them but much of the reverse. They become much and easily excited and do not blush to tell downright lies on each other. Some were on the point of leaving the council in anger and some did leave before they were done. It is a most unhappy state of things. and I am afraid will grow worse I have understood that these two Chiefs were a few days ago on the point of fighting they were so far as to have their knives drawn and that when duly sober This is alarming But God may and doubtless will rule it for good But the present is a dark time on all hands Pray always when will they be sober and have the Spirit of the Gospel — Morning cloudy and looks for rain evening clear



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Wednesday 18th

Last evening Pumpkin a very old and infirm Chief of the Sauks came to spend the night with us. This morning he desired me to take the wagon and haul him home as he was so infirm as not to be able to walk except with great pain and difficulty. I consented with pleasure and after some fixing we got started. I was surprised to see how infirm he was. I had to help him in and out of the wagon and even the jolting of the wagon seemed to pain him very much. I did esteem it a pleasure this to wait on the old man I may never have the opportunity again of doing the old man office of kindness again. He, to be sure is a heathen man But he is old and stricken in years and if God has so kind taken care of him ought not I lend my aid to do something for the old man

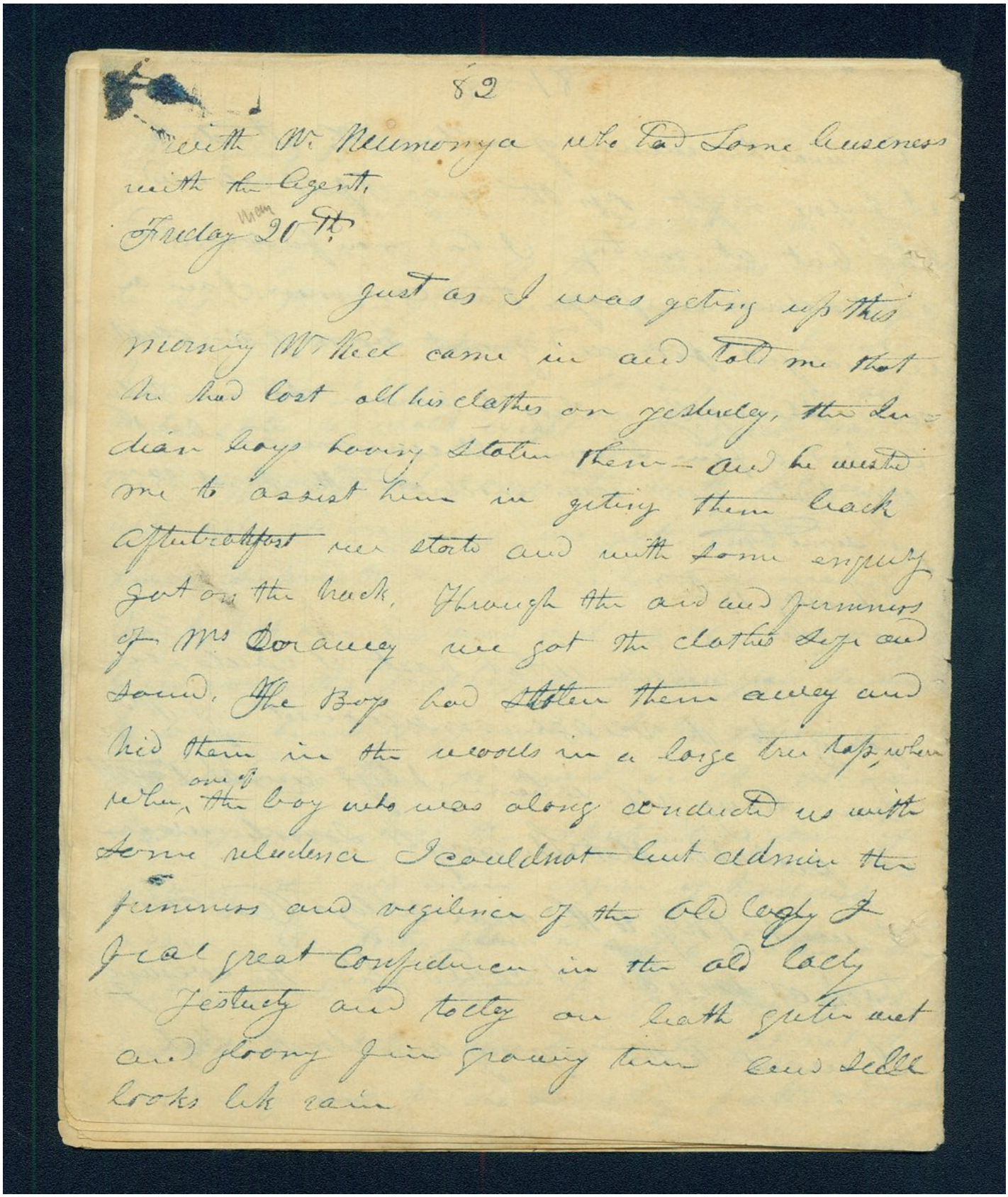


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This was the evening of meeting. No attends to it before night. On the way I felt cold and bad but at meeting I had more fredom and calledness in prayer than common. I am a reconciled poor and ignorant worm of the dust and thankfully willing to remain so — Today we had a fine shower. It commenced about day broke and was moderate. The first rain for some time.

Thursday 19th

Made what haste I could in going to the village on account of Mrs Irvin being ill when I left and she thought it probable that she might soon be worse. I went only to the near village and came back as soon as I could. In the evening I went to the Agency and South Shop



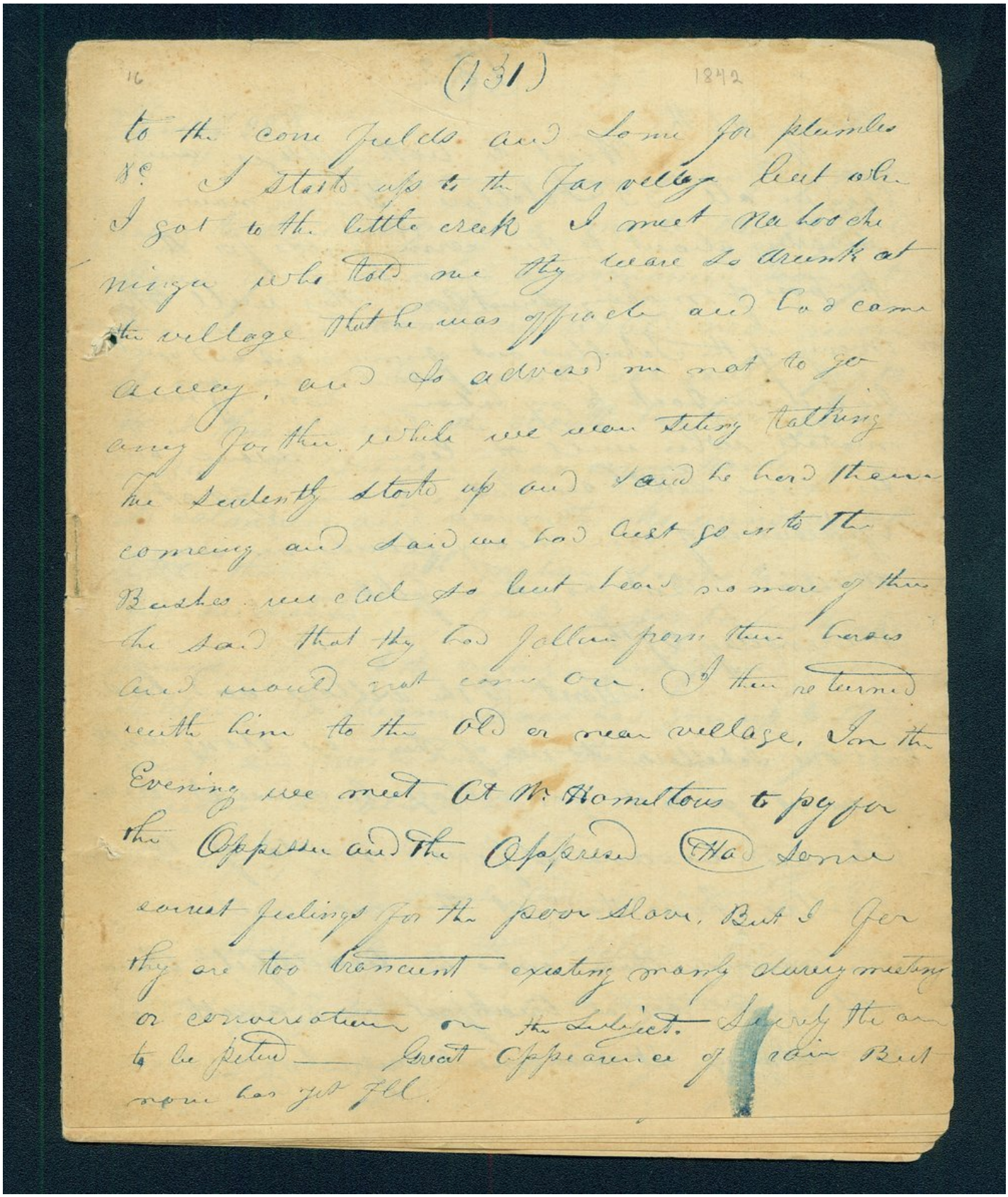
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with W. Pleasonton who had some business with the Agent.

Friday May 20th

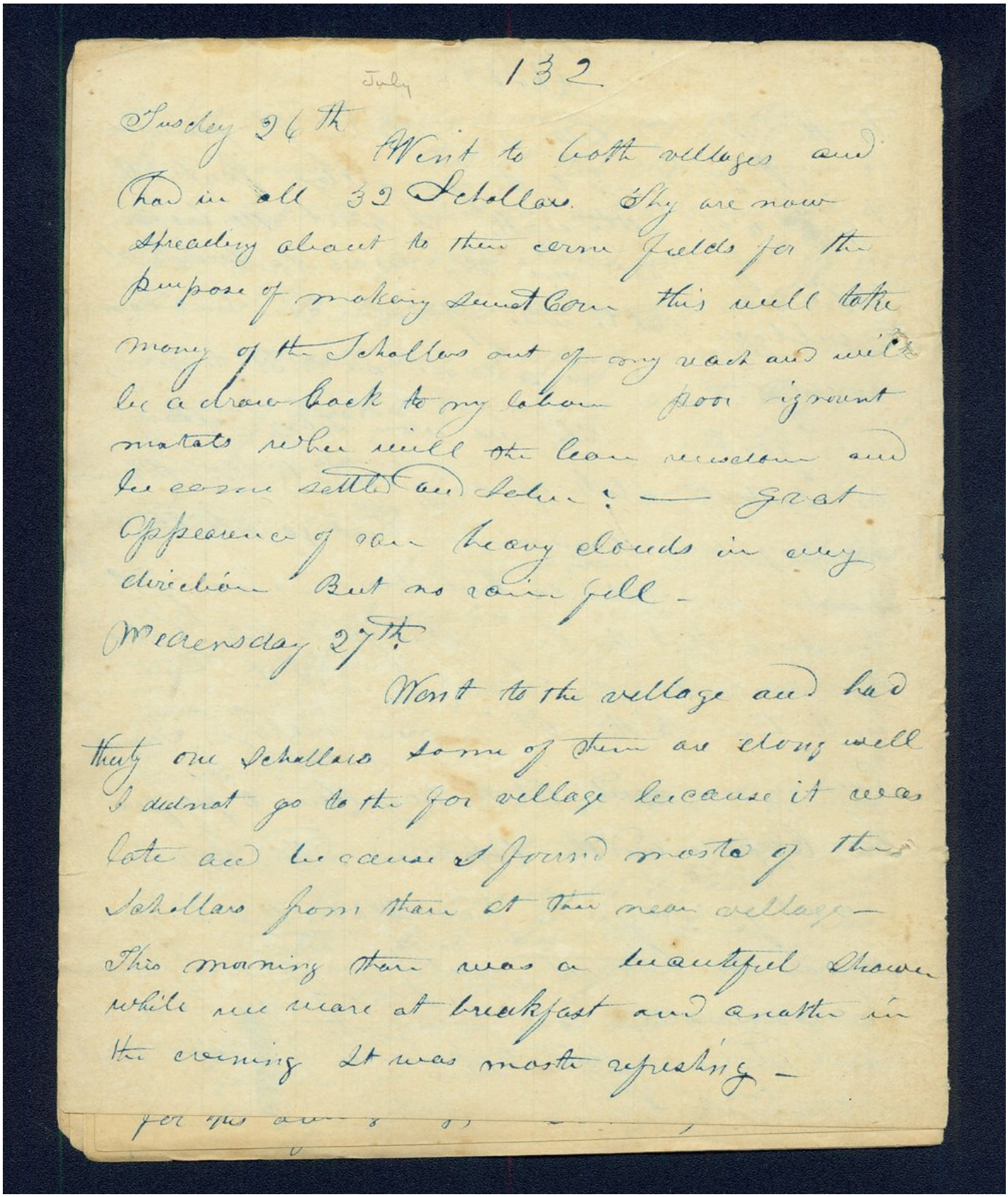
Just as I was getting up this morning W Reed came in and told me that he had lost all his clothes on yesterday, the Indian boys having stolen them — and he wanted me to assist him in getting them back After breakfast we started and with some enquiry got on the track. Through the aid and firmness of Mrs Donaney we got the clothes kept and found. The Boys had taken them away and hid them in the woods in a large tree top, when one of them, the boy who was along conducted us with some reluctance I could not but admire the firmness and vigilance of the old lady I feel great confidence in the old lady

Yesterday and today our path gets wet and gloomy Rain growing thin and still looks like rain



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to the corn fields and Some for plumbs &c. I Start up to the Jar valley but when I got to the little creek I met Na-koo-che ninga who told me they were So drunk at the village that he was afraid and had come away, and So advised me not to go any for then. while we were Setting talking he Suddenly Stood up and Said he heard them coming and Said we had best go in to the Bushes. we did So but hear no more of them he Said that they had fallen from their horses and would not come on. I then returned with him to the Old or near village. for the Evening we met At Mr Hamiltons to pray for the Oppressed and the Oppressed Had Some earnest feelings for the poor Slave. But I fear they are too transient existing mearly during meeting or conversation on the Subject. Surely the are to be pitied — Great Appearance of rain But none has yet fell.



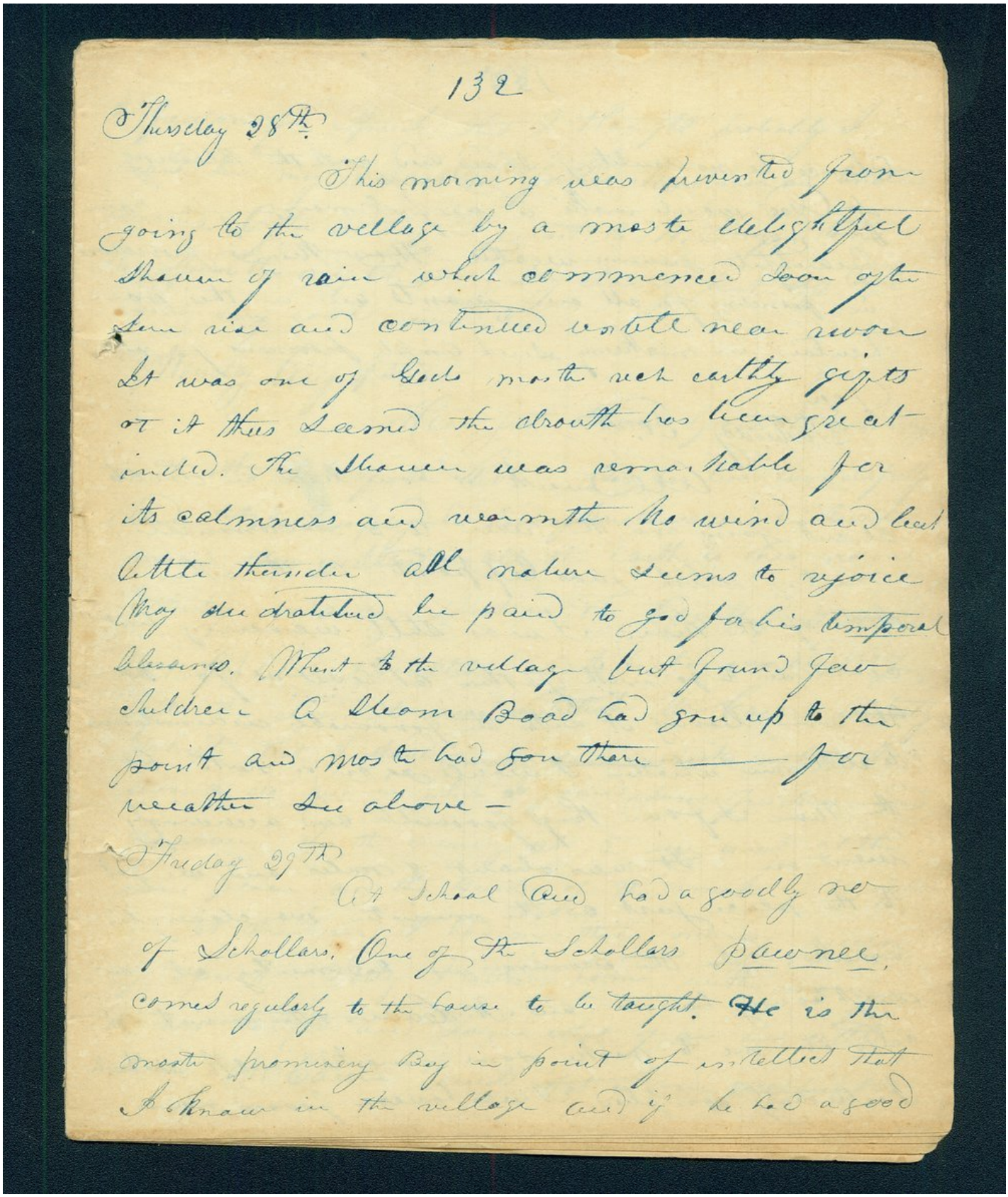
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Sunday 26th

Went to both villages and had in all 32 Scholars. They are now spreading about to their corn fields for the purpose of making sweet Corn this will take many of the Scholars out of my reach and will be a draw back to my labours poor ignorant natals when will the dear mission and be come settled and sober! — Great appearence of rain heavy clouds in every direction But no rain fell —

Wednesday 27th.

Went to the village and had thirty one Scholars some of them are doing well I did not go to the far village because it was late and because I found most of the Scholars from there at the near village — This morning there was a beautiful shower while we were at breakfast and another in the evening It was most refreshing —



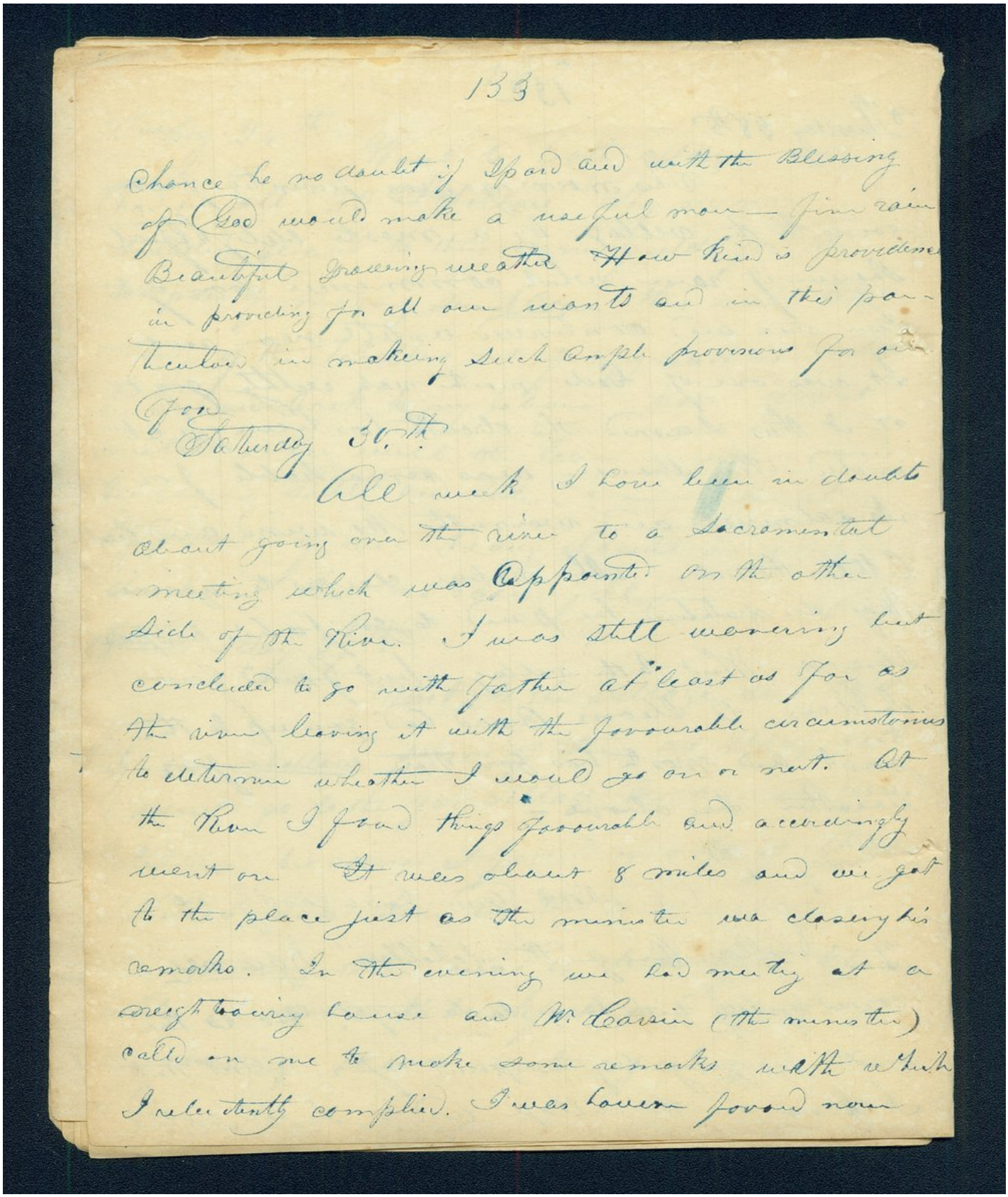
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Thursday 28th

This morning was prevented from going to the village by a most delightful Shower of rain which commenced soon after Sun rise and continued until near noon It was one of Gods most welcome gifts for it Has Seemed the drouth has been great indeed. The Shower was remarkable for its calmness and warmth No wind and but little thunder all nature Seems to rejoice May due gratitude be paid to god for his temporal blessings. Went to the village but found few children A Steam Boat had gone up to the point and most had gone there ——— for weather See above —

Friday 29th

At School Rec had a goodly no of Scholars. One of the Scholars Pawnee comes regularly to the house to be taught. He is the most promising Boy in point of intellect that I know in the village and if he had a good



Chance he no doubt if Spard and with the Blessing of God would make a useful man— Fine rain Beautiful growing weather How kind is providence in providing for all our wants and in this particular in making such ample provision for our

For Saturday 30th

All week I have been in doubt about going over the river to a Sacramental meeting which was appointed on the other side of the River. I was still wavering but concluded to go with Father at least as far as the river leaving it with the favourable circumstances to determine whether I would go on or not. At the River I found things favourable and accordingly went on. It was about 8 miles and we got to the place just as the minister was closing his remarks. In the evening we had meeting at a neighbouring house and Mr Carson (the minister) called on me to make some remarks which I reluctantly complied. I was blessed from now