Daniel L. Chandler to John Stillman Brown

A letter written by Daniel L. Chandler from Fort Scott, Kansas, addressed to John Stillman Brown, a Unitarian minister who lived west of Lawrence. Chandler describes conditions at the fort, including supplies and food rations. He also discusses his role in caring for sick soldiers.

Creator: Chandler, Daniel L.

Date: September 11, 1861

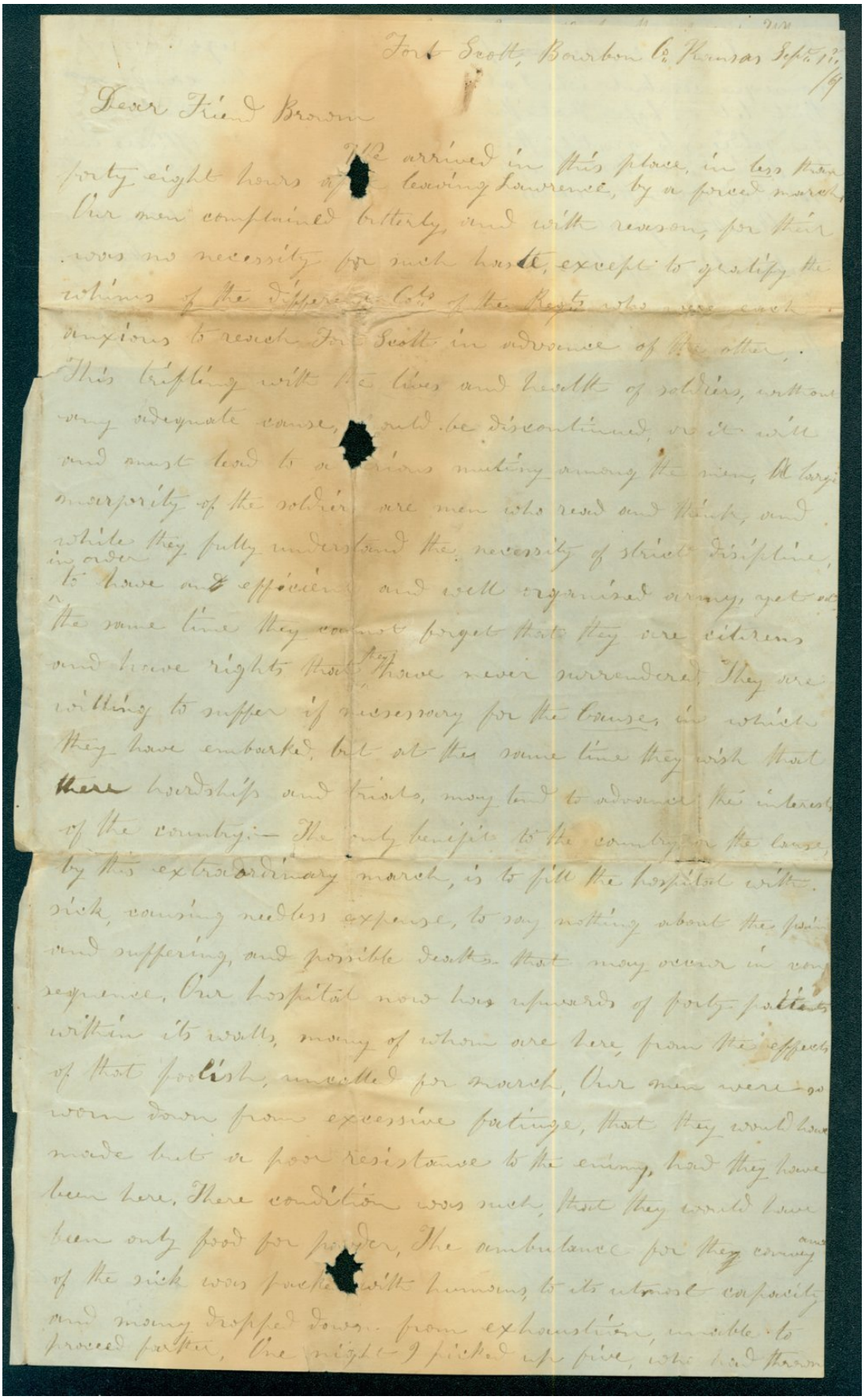
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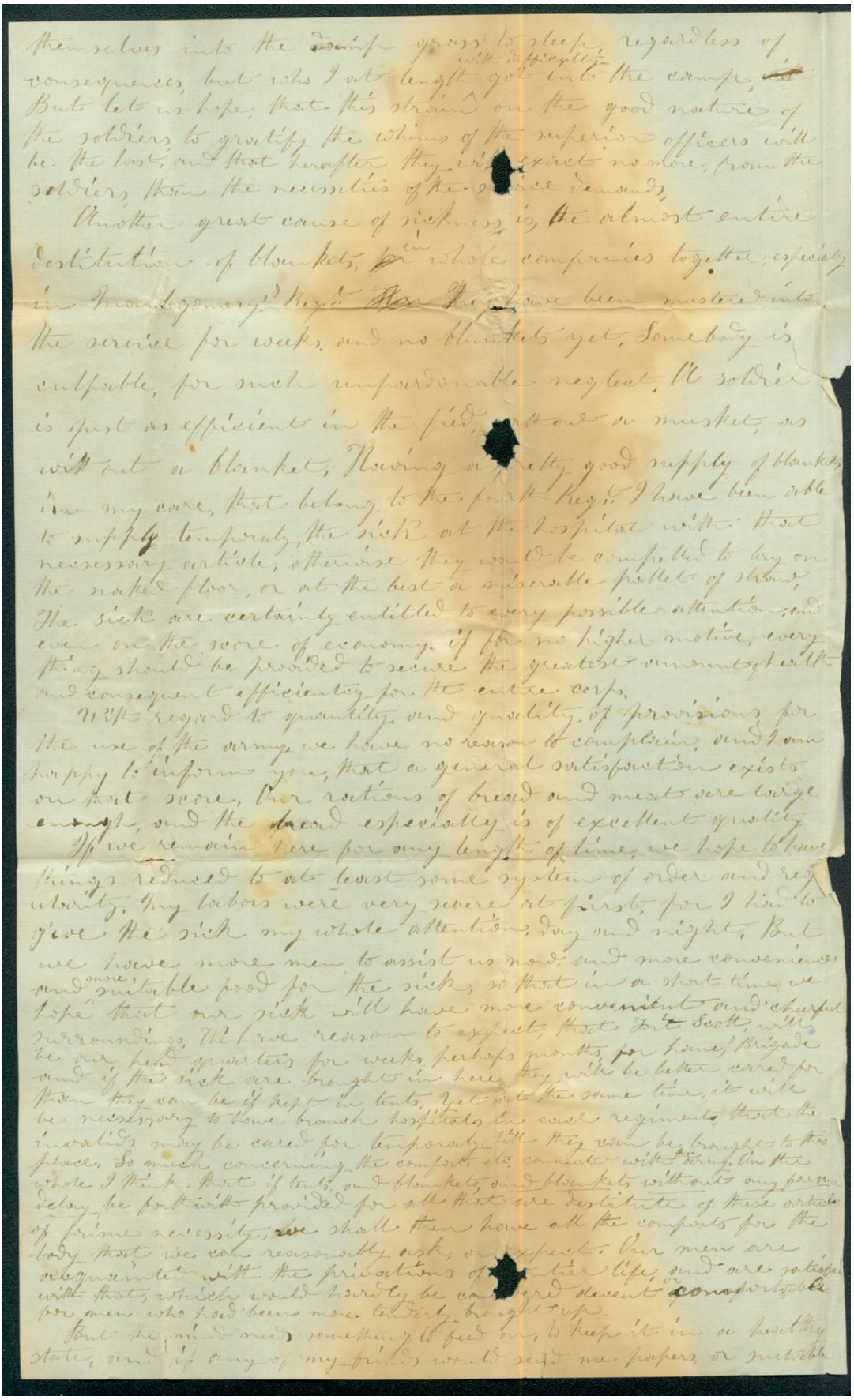


Fort Scott, Bourbon Co. Kansas Sept. 17, /59

Dear Friend Brown

We arrived in this place, in less than forty eight hours after leaving Lawrence, by a forced march. Our men complained bitterly, and with reason, for there was no necessity for such haste, except to gratify the whims of the different Cols of the Regts who were each anxious to reach Fort Scott in advance of the other. This trifling with the lives and health of soldiers, without any adequate cause, ought be discontinued, or it will and must lead to serious mutiny among the men. The large majority of the soldiers are men who read and think, and while they fully understand the necessity of strict discipline, in order to have an efficient and well organised army, yet at the same time they cannot forget that they are citizens and have rights that have never surrendered. They are willing to suffer if necessary for the causes in which they have embarked, but at the same time they wish that there hardships and trials, may tend to advance the interests of the country. The only benefit to the country or the cause, by this extraordinary march, is to fill the hospital with sick, causing needless expense, to say nothing about the pain and suffering, and possible death that may occur in consequence. Our hospital now has upwards of forty patients within its walls, many of whom are here, from the effects of that foolish, unwilled for march. Our men were so worn down from excessive fatigue, that they would have made but a poor resistance to the enemy, had they been here. There condition was such, that they would have been only food for powder. The ambulance for the conveyance of the sick was packed with humans, to its utmost capacity and many dropped down from exhaustion, unable to proceed further. One night I picked up five, who had thrown

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themselves into the damp grass to sleep, regardless of consequences, but who I at length got into the camp, with difficulty. But let us hope, that this strain on the good nature of the soldiers to gratify the whims of the superior officers will be the last, and that hereafter they will expect no more, from the soldiers, than the necessities of the case demands.

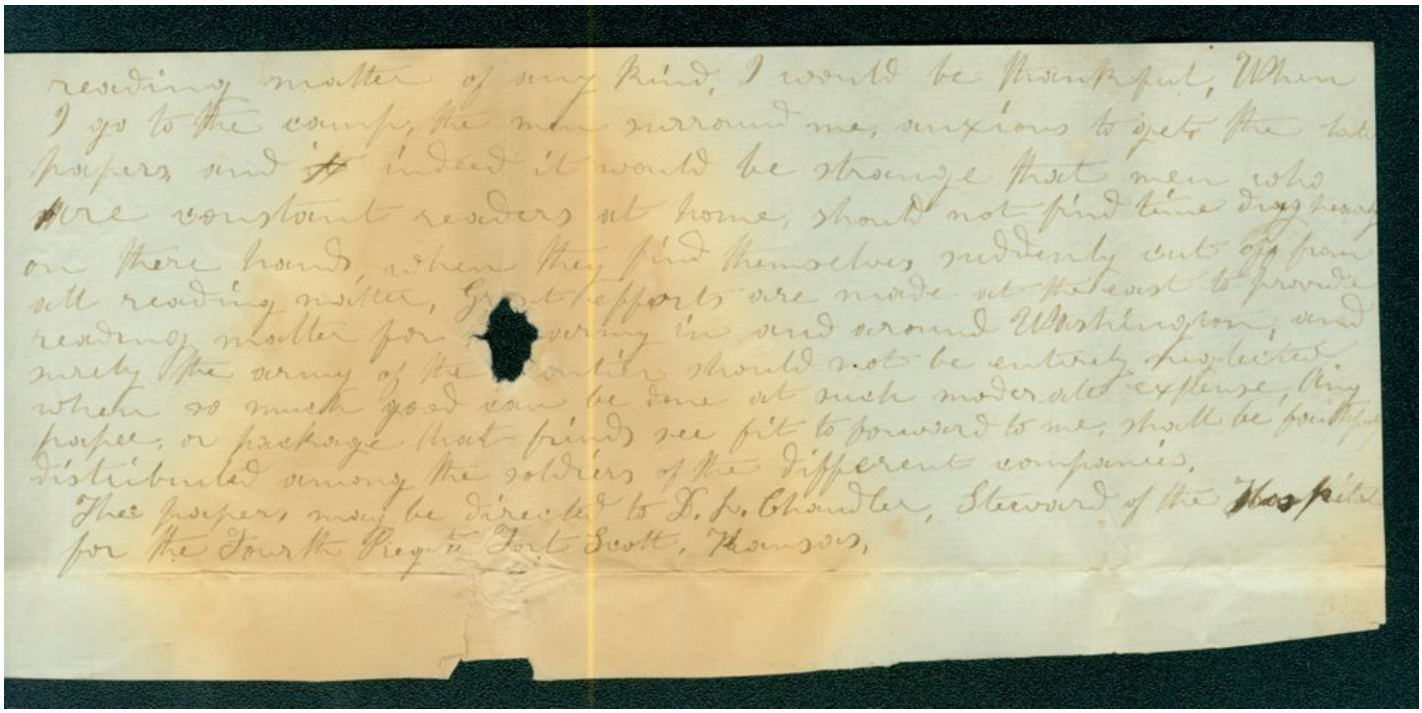
Another great cause of sickness, is the almost entire destitution of blankets, in whole companies together, especially in Montgomery's Regt. Many have been mustered into the service for weeks, and no blankets yet. Somebody is culpable, for such unpardonable neglect. A soldier is just as efficient in the field without a musket, as without a blanket. Having a pretty good supply of blankets in my care, that belong to the fourth Regt. I have been able to supply temporarily the sick at the hospital with that necessary article, otherwise they would be compelled to lay on the naked floor, or at the best a miserable pallet of straw. The sick are certainly entitled to every possible attention, and even on the score of economy, if for no higher motive, every thing should be provided to secure the greatest amount of health and consequent efficiency for the entire corps.

With regard to quantity and quality of provisions for the use of the army, we have no reason to complain, and I am happy to inform you, that a general satisfaction exists on that score. Our rations of bread and meat are large enough, and the bread especially is of excellent quality.

If we remain here for any length of time, we hope to have things reduced to at least some system of order and regularity. My labors were very severe at first, for I had to give the sick my whole attention, day and night. But we have more men to assist us now, and more conveniences and more suitable food for the sick, so that in a short time we hope that our sick will have more convenient and cheerful surroundings. We have reason to expect, that Fort Scott, will be our head quarters for weeks, perhaps months, for Jones' Brigade and if the sick are brought in here, they will be better cared for than they can be if kept in tents. Yet at the same time, it will be necessary to have branch hospitals in each regiment, that the invalids may be cared for temporarily, till they can be brought to this place. So much concerning the comforts etc. connected with living, on the whole I think, that if tents, and blankets, and bed sacks, without any more delay, be forthwith provided for all that are destitute of these articles of prime necessity, we shall then have all the comforts for the body that we can reasonably ask, or expect. Our men are acquainted with the privations of camp life, and are satisfied with that, which would hardly be considered decent comfortable for men who had been more tenderly brought up.

But the mind needs something to feed on, to keep it in a healthy state, and if any of my friends would send me papers or suitable

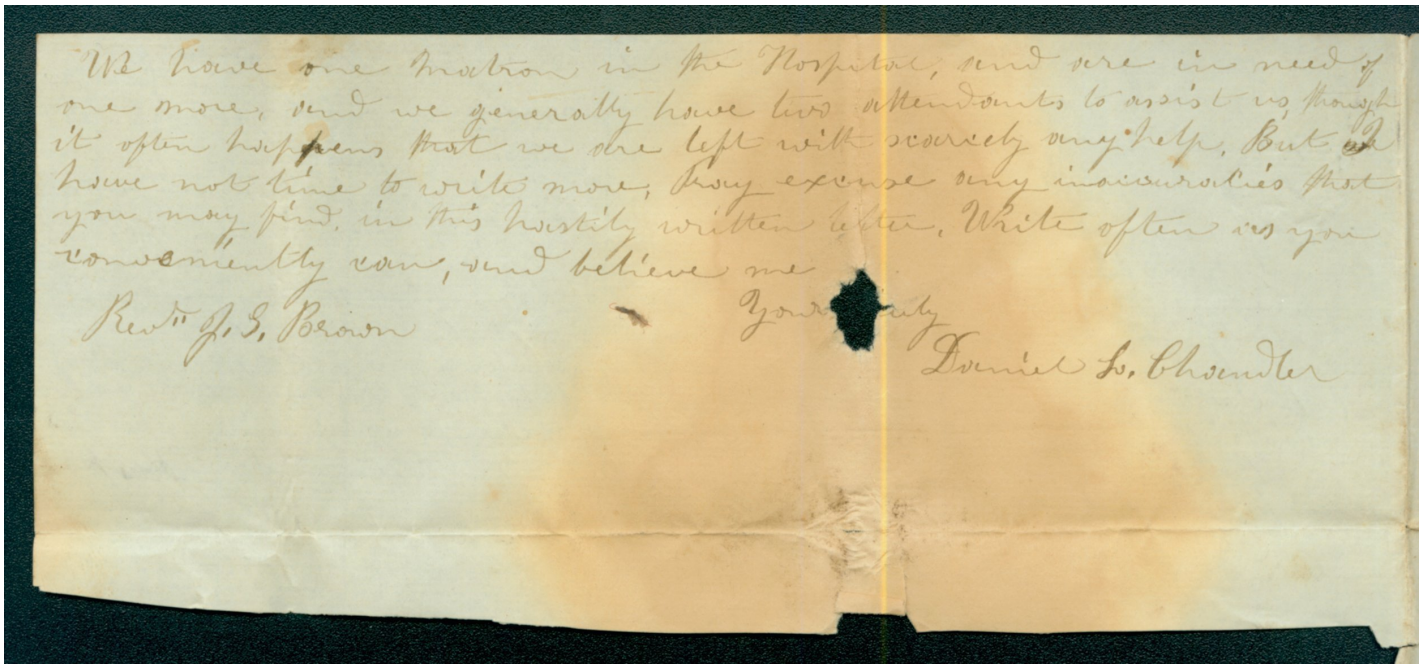
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reading matter of any kind, I would be thankful. When I go to the camp, the men surround me, anxious to get the late papers, and indeed it would be strange that men who were constant readers at home, should not find time drag heavy on there hands, when they find themselves suddenly cut off from all reading matter, Great efforts are made at present to provide reading matter for the army in and around Washington, and surely the army of the frontier should not be entirely neglected, when so much good can be done at such moderate expense, Any papers, or package that friends see fit to forward to me, shall be faithfully distributed among the soldiers of the different companies.

These papers may be directed to D. L. Chandler, Steward of the Hospital for the Fourth Regt. Fort Scott, Kansas.

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We have one Matron in the Hospital, and are in need of one more, and we generally have two attendants to assist us though it often happens that we are left with scarcely any help. But I have not time to write more, pray excuse any inaccuracies that you may find in this hastily written letter. Write often as you conveniently can, and believe me

Your truly

Rev'd J. S. Brown

Daniel L. Chandler