

From Mattie Jane Tate to Cousin Mary

[page 1]

Jackson Co. MO  
December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1864

Dear Cousin Mary[,]

no doubt but what you will be surprised at the name at the bottom of this sheet[,] if it is ever so fortunate as to reach you which is uncertain those times and it is only by request that I attempt to reach you by letter now at this [time][.] your Pa and I have been corresponding for over [MS. torn] year and he has asked me frequently to write to you [MS. torn] tell you of some of my troubles that I have seen and undergone within the last year and, as I am not one who loves to tell my trials to one and everybody and to those I never saw[,] I have been delaying from time to time until the present.

In the first place I am the wife of Calvin Tate who was in Indiana Terr[.] years ago when you was quite small. I have often heard him speak of you and your Pa when he was there. But alas I never shall hear his lovely voice again on Earth for he is gone gone from me forever[,] and I am left with three small children to take care of[.] am not able a great part of my time to take care of myself[,] and what is to become of them I cannot tell. But the Lord has said I will be a Husband to the widow and a Father to the Fatherless and I hope he is such to me and mine for if ever a poor

[page 2]

family needed his help it surely is mine[,] and not mine alone for there are many these war times that need a great deal of help from above[.] such is and has been the case with me and six other familys all related to my Husband[,] now one and all living within one mile of each other[,] and although I say it myself a better set of men never lived or died than they were in September 1863. Ewing made the Order No. 11 to devastate the Countys of Jackson--Cass[,] Bates[,] and part of Vernon [MS. torn] people here but nine [MS. torn] to get out of those Countys [MS. torn] a Military Post [MS. torn] we were all trying to get out [illegible] County and the Men would have started in one hour on Sunday Morning. But before they got off some Soldiers from Kansas came and taken My Father[,] Brother[,] and my Husband[,] and five others[,] two Hunters[,] Brothers[,] and one by the name of Lowe[,] Brotherinlaw to the Hunters[,] and one Boy 17 years old named Owsley[,] Nephew to the Hunters and one old man 60 years old--by the name of Potter[,] Fatherinlaw to one of the Hunters[,] and taken them something over half mile from home and shot them all. But Father and Brother they were released and came home and had just got home when the guns were heard that made four widows and 26 Fatherless children[.] and Oh what a sight to Behold[.] they were shot all to pieces most and left on

[page 3]

the ground by them to stay there Forever for what they care[.] there was but three Men left to Bury them[,] my Father[,] Brother[,] and Uncle John Hunter[,] 70 years old[,] the Father of the two that was killed[.] everybody was gone but those familys and one other woman and we had to just dig a hole and put them all six in without any Coffins or Boxes[,] nothing But Blankets[,] and right where they were Massacred by a band of Murderers and a set of Blood thirsty----[.] None of those men have ever been in arms on either side except Davie Hunter who was in the Malisha [militia] at Kansas City about two weeks[.] they were all at home and have been[,] and was minding their own Business[.] they were killed in the Morning about 10 Oclock and we left home about 4 in the evening[,] that home that was to Be home no more for me[.]

we went to Ray Co on the North side of the River and staid all Winter and come back in the Spring[.] when we left home we all had to leave all our stock and left with one wagon apiece and what could Be put in them. Mr[.] Hunters familys and Lowes have not come home yet[.] they live near Dover Lafayette Co[.] there is four families of them and But one man among them and that is Uncle John Hunter[.] the women has all the work to do in and out of the house they have all got good

[page 4]

homes here and good houses and have had several Blacks but they have all gone to Hanson to get their Freedom (do you think they will get it)[.] for my part I wish they were all in Africa if it had not been for them and Negro loving white men I might have had my husband with me now[.] as it is I never can have any love for any of that side or stripe again[.] perhaps I am too hard but if I have not had enough to make me so[,] I do not know who has. I live with my Father but it is a pretty hard live[.] For he is on one side and me on the other and it is not a pleasant way of living. My husbands Mother lives in North Carolina[.] if times ever get so lean I expect to go to her. As I live Cousin I have written a very long letter[,] much longer than I expected to when I commenced[,] but I have not told you the half of what I could if my paper would hold out or I could see you and talk with you. But perhaps you are tired of reading my few remarks[.] if so excuse me and let me know and I will trouble you no more. But if that is not the case it is useless for me to attempt to give you the general news of the Country[.] suffice it to say that war[,] war[,] cruel war absorbs all things else.

Please write soon and let me hear from you and if there is any there that calls themselves my friend give them my love and except a due portion for yourself. May God be with us all[,] guide[,] protect[,] and strengthen us in every good word and work[,] in the unworthy prayer of your Devoted Cousin

Mattie Jane Tate

P.S. address me at Pleasant Hill Cass CO, MO, (my childrens names John Martin, Mary Matilda, Nancy Rosalie[])