This document consists of excerpts from the diary of a physician, Lewis Beebe, who was traveling with the Continental army in New England in an expedition against the British in Canada. Little is known about Beebe. He received a degree from Yale in 1771 and settled in a small Massachusetts town to practice medicine. His wife died in 1775, one year after their marriage. He makes reference to her as his "Consort" in the excerpts below. After the war Beebe was ordained as a Congregational minister and served from 1787 to 1791. His religious beliefs may explain his comments below about the troops' lack of religion and their salty language. From 1791 to his death in 1816 Beebe was a shopkeeper in a small New York town. As you read the passage, note the miserable conditions endured by the troops and the limited ability of the physician to fight the various camp illnesses. Note also his references to the strong patriotism of the troops. (The spelling of words is as in the original.)

[May 1776] Sunday 26...Yesterday & today I have been much unwell, trouble with the quick step, attended with Severe gripings. If ever I had a compassionate feeling for my fellow creatures who were objects in distress, I think it was this day, to see Large barns filled with men in the very heighth of the small pox and not the least thing, to make them Comfortable, was almost Sufficient to excite the pity of Brutes.

[June 1776] Tuesday 4th: one of our Reg't. Died this morning very suddenly, and was intered in the afternoon, without so much as a Coffin, and with little or no ceremony. Among hundreds of men it was difficult to procure 8 or 10 to bear the corps about 15 rods. Death is a Subject not to be attended to by Soldiers; Hell & Damnation is in allmost every ones mouth from the time they awake till they fall asleep again, the Stupidity of mankind in this situation is beyond all Description...

Wednesday 5th: For 10 days past I have been greatly troubled with the dysentery, and for three days it has been very severe, took Physic in the morning. Hope for some relief. In the afternoon went across the river to visit Col. Reed who I found to have the disorder very light, the number of sick with the Pekot on this side is about 300, the greater part of which have it by inoculation, and like to do well.

Friday 7. Last evening one died of the small pox, & early this morning one of the Colic, at 10 A.M. one of the Nervous fever, here in the hospital, is to be seen at the same time some dead, some Dying, others at the point of death, some Whistling, some singing & many Cursing & swearing, this is a strange Composition and its chief intention has not as yet been discovered . . . . Visited many of the sick in the hospital—was moved with a Compassionate feeling for poor Distressed Soldiers, when they are taken sick, are thrown into this dirty, stinking place, and left to take care of themselves. No attendance, no provision made, but what must be Loathed and abhorred by all both well & sick.
Monday 10th. June this day compleats a year Since the departure of my dear Consort, the memory of whom will ever be sweet to me; O! fleeting time, who dost make no delay, but with rapid force sweeps, all without distinction to one common grave; therefore Let me remember, that the same thing must take place with respect to me, as it did to her—O! that the noise and tumult of war, might not engage my mind so as to forget my own mortality; may the great things of futurity, the infinite concerns of eternity, have their due weight upon my mind that they might have a place still in my breast. This day died two in Col. Pattersons Reg. with the small pox; No intelligence of importance comes to hand this day; except orders, from the great M'. Brigadier Gen. Arnold, for Col. Poor with his Reg. to proceed to Sorrell immediately: Is not this a politick plan, especially since there is not Ten men in the Reg. but what has either now got the small pox; or taken the infection. Some men love to command, however ridiculous their orders may appear. But I am apt to think, we shall remain in this Garrison for the present. it is enough to confuse & distract a rational man to be Surg. to a Reg. nothing to be heard from morning to night, but Doct. Doct. Doct. from every side 'till one is deaf, dumb & blind, and almost dead; add to all this that we have nothing to eat; thus poor Soldiers live sometimes better, but never worse.

Monday 17. This morning had Col. Poors orders to repair to Isle aux naux to take care of the sick there; accordingly sailed in a batteau, and arrived there about 3 P.M. was struck with amazement upon my arrival, to see the vast crowds of poor distressed Creatures. Language cannot describe nor imagination paint, the scenes of misery and distress the Soldiery endure. Scarcely a tent upon this Isle but what contains one or more in distress and continually groaning calling for relief, but in vain! Requests of this nature as as little regarded as the singing of Crickets in a Summers evening. The most shocking of all Spectacles was to see a large barn Crowded full of men with this disorder, many of which could not See, Speak or walk . . . . No mortal will ever beleive what these suffered unless they were eye witnesses.

Thursday 27. Buried two of our Reg. this day. The hot weather, proves very unfriendly to those who have the small pox. A large Schooner arrived from Isle aux naux, deeply Loaded with Stores. One thing by the way is somewhat remarkable, that a Reg. so distressed with sickness as ours should be so engaged in fatigue and doing duty, that they can by no means find time to attend prayers night & morning or even preaching upon the Sabbath; the Regts. are generally Supplied with Chaplains, who are as destitute of employ in their way: as parson who is dismissed from his people, for the most Scandalous of Crimes. At Sorrell I heard one morning & evening prayer, and one Sermon—at Chambly none—at St. Johns none at Isle aux naux, one evening prayer, & one with the sick. At this place none as yet. Indeed it is esteemed very unpopular, and unbecoming a Gentlemen, in the Camps to attened upon any religious exercises, and happy would it be, did not many officers endeavour to inculcate, & establish this principle in the minds of others.

[July 1776] Thursday 4th: The army have been here for Several days, and notwithstanding they are under great apprehensions of an attack from the enemy soon —yet they are as Secure & easy as if they were Wholly at peace, and in a Garrison, not to be stormed by any finite power; Not the least preparation for Fortifying the Garrison, which has tumbled to ruin & decay. The Gen's. have their hands full in riding about the camp—prancing their Gay horses the Field officers, set much of their time upon Court marshals. The Capt. & Subs may generally be found at the grog
shops. The Soldiers either sleeping, swimming, fishing, or Cursing and Swearing most generally the Latter . . . .

[August] Wednesday 28th: The wind being ahead we were not able to cross the lake, visited the hospital found the number of sick to be about 700, viewed the burying place counted upwards of 300 graves, which had been opened in about 5 weeks. The appearance of which was melancholy indeed, to see such desolation made in our army.

[September] Sunday 6th: My disorder caused me to rise several times Last night; again at the Revilee beat; at 8 a.m. took a puke of vinum antimoniale; which operated very kindly; was very weak the remainder of the day. I find my experience, and many other ways, that the general principle, upon which our army act, whether they are taken as a body or as individuals, is entirely self; yet doubtless their sinister views, run in very different channels. Some are in pursuit of money, some of promotion & honor. But was we free from all; except those who hav the cause of Liberty nearest their heart; and who engage principally with a view of defending, and transmitting, those inestimable privileges, to posterity; for which our Ancestors Left their native land, and fled to this a howling wilderness, encountering every danger. I say was we free from all, except those who act upon this principle; our army would be reduced to a small number.

Monday 7th: . . . Colpo. Poor has lately made his appearance in Scarlet; this, or something not much better, makes him feel his importance, in a very surprising manner. In general he is very sociable and popular; but of an absolute, Despotick turn of mind. As to his principles, respecting religion, it is very difficult to determine, what they are; But in my opinion he has none at all. Our Lieu't, Colpo. McDuffee, is a most excellent arminion &c. Majt. Sily who is rightly named is a very silly man; yet the fool, has learned to swear & damn by rule: to such a degree of perfection that his equal is scarcely to be found in the Camp. Surprising genius! Our officers & soldiers in general are remarkably expert in the swearing way, nothing comes more handy, or gives such power and force to their words, as a Blasphemous oath. In general the Reg't. is composed to Deists, Arminims, and a few who ridicule the Bible, and everthing of a sacred nature. In short, they Laugh at death, mock at Hell and damnation; & even challenge the Diety, to remove them out of this world by Thunder and Lightning.