

December 25, 1863
Mrs. Andrew Upson
Plantsville, Conn.

(Envelope is postmarked Nashville, Ten. Dec. 29 with a 3-cent stamp. Letter is on one sheet of lined stationery folded in half and is written on four sides in ink.)

Stevenson, Ala.
Dec. 25th, 1863

My Dear Wife –

It is Christmas night & nearly nine o'clock – We have a good fire & it is a comfort to sit beside it – To be sure there are at our command none of the little good things that fill up all the chinks between greater blessings – We can crack no walnuts – eat no apples – drink no cider – Yet a respectable amount of happiness distinguishes our condition – I suppose you will not consider it egotistical if I enumerate more particularly the particulars of our life this day – Before getting up this morning I thought over the glorious time you would have if the weather shall prove favorable & those friends all come to your feast – Guess I might have excited some longings to be there myself if the consciousness that such exercises were perfectly vain did not abide with me – The forenoon & one or two hours of this P.M. were spent upon Clothing Returns – some of my Chain Bridge business – Have now finished that all up – Got everything as straight as I possibly can – Did it very nicely, sparing no pains or labor to be both correct & tasty – The formal work of the Army is precise & requires study & patience – But where an officer attends to his business matters go smoothly – While in the field these reports are very apt to get behind – In fact some degree of tardiness can not be avoided when we are on the move, shifting here & there – By the Regulations everything that passes through an officers hands must be accounted for – All clothing issued to his men – the guns (**Pg. 2**) & ammunition – camp & garrison equipage must be reported upon & satisfactorily or his pay is stopped – A great many officers conduct their business loosely & if they did not lie pretty extensively their accounts would never balance – Since taking command of K Co. I have held a taut rein & everything is ship shape so that I could make a complete settlement in a few hours – I don't believe another officer except Capt. Woodruff can say as much – In fact it is well known that several are in a bad snarl – Nor do I wonder – But this is wandering from my purpose – In the midst of my labors we received a good many calls – that is common at all times – interruptions we are so used to that they cause very little disturbance – though it is provoking when engaged on a job to be ordered away for three or four days – a week – a month or even longer – but today the officers & men not on duty have tried social customs & so we have performed no little talking – “George” concluded he must mark the occasion by some especial efforts in his line – the result of his cogitation as to what could be done revealed itself in the shape of a “chicken pie” – Two half grown fowls suffered decapitation this morning & by direct of trying some pork & a free use of saleratus he encased them in a crust – that would hardly pass muster on a Thanksgiving table in New England – but down here could safely be pronounced fair – The whole was baked in a skillet – one of the iron bake ovens so common in this region –

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He got his fire too hot & rather scorched the bottom still it had some of the qualities appertaining to chicken pie & Royce & myself did the darky's effort full honor if pretty much (**Pg. 3**) consuming the entire pie is an approval of his art – We lacked the butter with which grandmothers are wont to season this festive dish – Of course gravy was not abundant – I guess water as well as unguents or more properly oily additions were not freely used – Of other dishes save bread & stewed peaches & coffee we had none – Milk has failed us lately – but we made a good meal – a Christmas dinner! & certainly I partook with a grateful heart & many kind wishes in behalf of you all at home - It occurred to me that a much better table was spread before you, but I doubted whether under the circumstances it would produce more comfort – After supper, we have but two meals a day, Capt W. came in & wished me to go with him & pay our respects to Mrs. Ross – Accordingly I fixed up in my best & about 4 P.M. we wished the Col. Lady “Merry Christmas” – Spent an hour very pleasantly – They have good quarters in one of the vacated houses – She treated us to some very fine frosted cake & sugars & withal endeavored to be agreeable – She is an accomplished woman – looks young – has seen much of army life & knows how to get along with Sam. Ross – He is a trump in his way, & it amuses me exceedingly to observe his blunt ways – I half suspect the old fellow regards me a kind of enigma – He has a curious habit of silence when a gabbling fellow is around – There was an officer present when we entered who don't know enough to hold his tongue – He remained during all our stay, but I noticed the Col. was quite bored by his shallow verbage – As I went to see the lady most of my conversation was with her – (**Pg. 4**) Tonight it is sprinkling – The air has felt snow like all day & we have not seen the sun – Possibly you have had a snow storm north in which case I guess your entertainment has been deferred – Yesterday morning I recd. yours of the 8th – You write in a grieved strain – what my letter, which produced so sad a frame, was is gone from my remembrance – Really it could not have been intended for such results or to have arrived just as you were to fit out another box of good things – I trust it has left no wounds – or if that is past hoping for certainly I may take this consolation, that the same hand can cure which did the cutting – Let me put on a plaster – Now I did not mean offence or harshness – feel the very opposite of such motives – There is some rogue of a meddler who tries to get up a mess between us now & then – He does succeed in riling our spring – but we cook a decent cup of bliss even then & after the Water has time to settle is all the better – I don't believe any fountain suffers by occasional agitation – However I have no purpose of advocating frequent set tos between married people & do not wish you to imply such philosophy as a reason in advance for knocking away my equanimity – I shall look for the box about New Years, though it may be much later in arriving – Express freight does not get along as rapidly of late – Boxes are now due over three weeks to some men – perhaps my luck will save this one as heretofor – We are near to the end of another two months & next week I suppose muster & pay rolls will be in order – Hope we may see the pay master by middle of next month – Can you get along if he should not come before February or March? Elbert Frisbie is in the hospital, but able to walk out – he appears to me like one exhausted – Maybe is weak in the lungs. Still I think northern air & life would revive him & hope ere long he may be sent home – Elbert has always

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behaved well & done his duty like a man – I have often laughed over the fears of his mother that (*written sideways up right margin*) he would sleep on post & so be shot – No one has been more faithful or trusty – I feel very sorry to (*written sideways on first page left margin*) see so many of our best boys breaking down – But if he never does any more duty the past is enough to entitle him to grateful remembrance –

(Written sideways in upper margin on first page)

The same is true of Alonzo Hough – I wish you would ask his wife where he is – I want to write him a letter – he ought before this to have recd. a furlough – But that is very much as things go at the general hospitals – If he had not been so honest I doubt not a surgeon would have granted a request of this kind – C. Bishop recd. his box today & so “George” has a “Christmas present” – He expressed great satisfaction & since writing this I have heard him & another darky at work spelling out the words – A strange contrast in his condition as with last year. What changes we behold with each revolving twelve months! Have I said Love yet? Here it is at the beginning & the end Love for you & you only –

A. Upson

Regards to the babies & all -