

Dec. 3rd, 1863  
Mrs. Andrew Upson  
Plantsville, Conn.

*(Yellow envelope postmarked Nashville with a 3-cent stamp. Letter is on four sheets of stationery folded in half and is written on 16 pages in ink and pencil.)*

Tennessee River  
Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1863

My Dear Wife –

I did not leave Stevenson until Monday Morning – The trains for which I waited until after dark Sunday evening did not get in & I requested Col. Ross to defer our departure until daylight which met his approval – About 9 ½ o'clock next day we got aboard cars already sufficiently loaded, having a brass 12 pr. Battery on & reached Bridgeport by 11 safely – I had about 150 men more or less – These convalescents are very apt to straggle – It is impossible for one man to take a party so large & keep them together – My orders required me to deliver them at seven different Hd. Qrs. We crossed the Tennessee immediately on the pontoon, on the other side of which from ..... Hd. Qrs. of one Div. & left a part of my squad – With the rest I started up the RR track to Chattanooga – Had proceeded about 5 miles when we met a detachment of rebel prisoners, 3500, under guard, bound down – Halted my men & gave the dirty grey backs the road – They were nearly an hour passing – (**Pg. 2**) You would pronounce them a hard looking set – Some had good new blankets – But the greater part, if wearing any extra clothing were variously covered, having bed quilts, pieces of carpet, sacks – clock xc. None of which were very neat or tastily arranged – All together they were of an unwashed, unkempt, vagabond appearance – Most of them seemed to be rather glad of their captivity & were anticipating their arrival at Bridgeport & indulging Visions of coffee & bacon – My boys joked with them a little but all felt in good spirits – The last of them having passed we moved on – This sight was to me another compensation for the mortification I experienced last May when as large a column of blue backs went under rebel guard to Richmond – Along towards night I passed Shellmound - There is a famous cave near this place called Nickojack which extends for miles into the mountain – The valley of the Tennessee begins to narrow just below & the mountains on either side attain a considerable height – At sundown I encamped in a piece of woods near a coal mine – Was just about to fix my quarters when a man dressed as all are here came up & inquired if I was not a Dr. – Said a prisoner had a few minutes before died at his house near by & he wanted some one to go with (**Pg. 3**) him & help lay the body out – It seems the prisoner belonged to the party I met & had been put in this house as they were passing because unable to march further – The man was afraid he should be troubled about the fact that the man died & to quiet him I went to his house – It was now dark – Found the family consisted of a mother sick abed – a daughter of about 17 - & 4 small children – A oldish lady, from a neighboring house had been nursing the dead rebel until he died – The body lay in a corner of the room near the great open fire place – covered by a comfortable, with stones at his feet & mustard plasters on his hands, showing what they had done to get him warm – He had the diarrhea & by their account was very chilly –

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They laid back the cover as I stepped up & there I saw the face of a beardless boy, perhaps 16 – Probably he was a conscript – The man said he could barely speak when left – He had learned his name & that he belonged in Cherokee Co. Ala. I assisted to straiten his limbs carried him to an adjoining room, open as a log barn, put him in as decent position as possible after which the man invited me to stay over night – I accepted his proposal as much (**Pg. 4**) from curiosity to learn the customs & ideas of common family life as from any expectations of greater conveniences that were to be enjoyed beneath an oak tree in the open air – The daughter soon set about supper, which consisted of corn cake – fresh pork, sorghum molasses & sassafras tea – All very good – The corn bread particularly so – By way of division & to see the effect I produced a specimen of Yankee butter – They tasted around & pronounced the thing splendid to which I of course added that “My wife made it” Did you not? The old lady, who remained during the evening, was enthusiastic in her commendation – After supper we chatted till late bed time – I was a little doubtful how I could be disposed of, for I could see only one other room & here were besides the family youngsters, the girl & the old lady – But the matter was easy – The man took one child told me to follow & went into the room where we laid the dead reb – He took a bed standing in one corner, I one opposite & when morning came I found the night had passed most comfortably – After breakfast, same as the supper, with the addition of coffee, I gave the girl a half dollar, though the man asked nothing & at sunrise started along the track – This man owned a large farm & was one of the better class of citizens – Though judged by outward appearances you would think him poor. I guess his property before the war must have been worth many thousands – The track turned to the left from the river at his house & we did not see it again until within 3 miles of Chattanooga – About 9 o’clock Tuesday we crossed the deep ravine at Whiteside – Here a bridge 20 rods long & 150 feet high was burned by Bragg – He also had a battery on a peak half a mile away that commanded it so that we could not attempt rebuilding – But Hooker cleaned them out of that nest & now (**Pg. 5**) the engineers are about to put up a bridge that has been framed in Chicago & will be brought forward as soon as the one at Bridgeport is complete – The RR for the remainder of the way winds along between ranges of valleys and bold peaks – The Lookout range is conspicuous & the famous point of that range soon after loomed up far above others – About noon we arrived in the vicinity where the 2d Div. of our corps & the 11<sup>th</sup> corps had been encamped until the fight of last week which gained Lookout & Mission ridge – Quite extensive breastworks had been thrown up, forest cut down & a complex system of defensive preparations carried out – They reminded me of what we did at Chancellorsville – The position held by the rebs was plainly visible – The top of Lookout is 2400 feet above the level of the river – The rebs had two guns upon the summit, but their camps & pits were on the west slope half way down from the top – Our men had to climb up a very steep acclivity – One would hardly think at first sight that an enemy, posted as ours was, could be dislodged – The feat is one of the most daring & successful of the war – Everybody pronounces it splendid, to which nobody who has seen the ground can (**Pg. 6**) fail to agree – As we

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moved on up the Div. of Gearey & others were met on the track returning from the pursuit of Bragg – They had been to Ringgold in Geo. which place was burnt – I presume our outermost line will not be advanced much beyond Mission Ridge which runs along three or four miles east of Chattanooga – It is impossible as yet to get supplies beyond Chattanooga even to that point transportation is still slow – The base of Lookout comes clear to the Tennessee & the RR winds along beneath a precipitous bluff just at the rivers edge but far above the water – The region is romantic – There are many Indian legends & historic events connected with their possession of these localities – But I cannot spend much time now upon any such view – As we were going along at the base of a towering wall of rock which faces to the north & the weather being cold, - at frequent intervals was curtained with a sheet of ice where dripping water afforded the means of such adornment I saw a cave opening towards the river – Three large kettles were set near its mouth & the smoked walls as well as rude apparatus lying about showed that at no recent (*Pg. 7*) day saltpeter operations had been carried on – I suppose this was one of the places where the rebs obtained some of the needful ingredient for supplying themselves with gunpowder – I went into the cave five or six rods to where it made an angle & continued to murky depths beyond my knowledge – But just as I turned to come back a light appeared far within & the muffled sound of voices traveling outward from the interior caverns showed that somebody was exploring the bowels of the mountain – Probably a party of soldiers were gratifying their curiosity by a journey to such Plutonian regions – My curiosity is big enough to do a little similar perambulating & if a good opportunity occurs I mean to visit the weird chambers where nature has hung stalactites & strange crystal forms to beautify the fabled homes of goblins & rogues or imaginary spirits with which fancy is apt to people these unlearned recesses – The cave is said to extend for miles, coming out in Georgia – Capt. Burbank told me of a late excursion he & others made to Nickojack, near Shellmound – They penetrated three miles & were amply rewarded for their trouble by the vision of halls & parlors – avenues hung with glittering icicles that turned & twisted the light until they (*Pg. 8*) presented inimitable shapes – Arches & columns with varying figures that seemed the work of whole armies sculpturing out the vagaries & whims of a monarch whose means & material were alike unlimited – All these mountains are limestone & caverns, sometimes sending out a copious stream – at others winding hither & thither interspersed with paved walks or lakelets or flowing brooks abound – You have read of the great mammoth in Ky. – One description, I suppose, will answer for all – Just as we got around the north face of Lookout the Tennessee bent to the left & Chattanooga was visible two miles beyond, set on a large rolling flat between the surrounding ranges – Lookout towers up like a sleepless giant, with a bold rocky brow over topping every other elevation – Six states are visible from his crown & it has been a summer resort for the rebels of the south who got doubtless pure air & fine views from the summit – Two thirds of the way up, on the northeast side there is a white house – the lofty retreat of some one who got as much climbing as may have sufficed for the health

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of a hundred – On the very peak I could see the gun with which the rebs tried vainly to disturb our possession of Chattanooga – I hope yet to feast my eyes from this famous height & should I be so highly privileged maybe a sheet or two will record the trip – Chattanooga is a place begun – It was destined to do some business – A few fair residences & stores attest its local importance – But its glory now consists in being the Hd. Qrs. of Gen. Grants Dept. & the scene of operations that must retain significance in the history of the war – Mission Ridge & Lookout will (*Pg. 9*) rank with Gettysburg & Vicksburg in the measure of the successes won upon them – Our men are justly elated over their achievements here & I suppose you all the country over are enjoying much satisfaction at these victories – I got into the city or village about sundown after a walk of 20 miles, all the way upon the track – My detachment was scattered, how far no man knoweth – Some would push ahead, others would go slow – many were unable to walk rapidly – Taking as many as came up after two hours waiting I handed them over to the Provost Marshall & looked for a stopping place – The “Central House” attracted my attention & not desiring to ly out, for the night was going to be Dec. like, I inquired the chances for lodging – Could stay – paid 75cts for a very poor supper – 50 for a bed & was thankful – Slept well on a narrow couch with a large pain of glass gone from the window just by my head – The morning was foggy – owing to the mist from the river & I was disappointed, for it was my intention to take a look from some of the fortified elevations within the limits of the village & perhaps go out to Mission Ridge – But it was my instructions too to return immediately & the remembrance of not exactly obeying orders rather cautioned me about much personal delay (*Pg. 10*) The boats which had been running from Bridgeport to Chattanooga were sent up to Knoxville with supplies for Burnside & Sherman who has gone to reinforce him – The quartermaster told me my best course was to go down to Kelly’s Ferry 8 miles below & there I could find a little steamer that plied between there & Bridgeport – It was now nearly 10 o’clock Wednesday – I soon packed up & started – The road to Kelly’s Ferry crossed the Tennessee on the Pontoon & runs down the opposite bank over the bend, again crossing pontoon & finally arriving on the same bank from which you started – This is owing to the meandering course of the river as it picks its way between these mountains – I was just stepping upon the bridge when a man accosted me & inquired my destination – Telling him Bridgeport he said “Here get aboard that craft – We are going to leave soon” – I did not wait for thought or much investigation – The fact is I had set my heart upon riding down the river & felt no little disappointment when learning the boats could not render me any service – I wanted to see the scenery & did not feel anxious for tramping across the hills – The craft to which he directed (*Pg. 11*) me appeared to be an unfinished boat – I soon ascertained its history – It was a new hull the rebs had commenced up the river at Kingston & when Burnside’s forces came into East Tennessee they captured it before the enemy could burn her up – It had been floated this far down & was bound for Bridgeport where Uncle Sam will finish & work her for his own – On board I found all sorts of freight – Two rusty boilers & parts of machinery lay upon her deck – Three or four families of refugees, with about 20 toe headed children in every stage of nudity & dress –

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carrying their outfit of apparel & utensils – one frightful faced old feminine contraband – several rebel deserters – a bale of cotton – boards, timber & tools employed in her building – Several coffins & burial cases taken on at Chattanooga which contained the bodies of men & officers killed in the late battles & being forwarded to the sad homes of their friends – also live officers & men with various wounds – hobbling on crutches or wearing arms slung & heads bandaged – a Lt. & his guard who had been on similar errand with myself – all these varieties were mingled on the deck of the nameless boat – I was not (*Pg. 12*) discouraged by the sight & at once made up my mind that luck was on my side – After waiting an hour for her to start & seeing little prospect of departure I went ashore & ran back to the village & over a hill to see some of the captured cannon – The sight was inspiring – 38 pieces, brass & steel, mostly the former, stood ranged in two rows – The caissons also were near by but not so nicely lined – I looked up & down & peeked into the rifled throats of these saucy engines that had vomited death often upon our boys – It rather detracted from the flush of joy to notice U.S. engraved upon at least half of them – for they at some time probably have been captured from us – Still a good proportion bore the initials of rebeldom & I observed that many a one carried the stains of gore, showing they were not won without cost – A smooth bore brass 10 or 12 pr attracts considerable attention from the fact that it is inscribed Lady Breckenridge – I know not the significance of the lettering or whether a compliment is intended to the brass gun or the brassy woman, who doubtless has lent stimulus to the perverted enthusiasm of those engaged in the destruction of the country to which her husband owes his highest – I may say – his only honor - Anyhow Lady Breckenridge – the genuine brass is in our possession - a representative of Lady Breckenridge, the brassy women – in the person of her son is said to be a captive – a guard walked up & down this thickly set battery of trophies – but he did not forbid spectators as is usual, to touch anything – almost every soldier scans the mouth of each piece & one in particular that showed more use than the others was the object (*Pg. 13*) of hatred & occasion of exultation – The furrows & scratches ploughed along its base by grape & canister hurled against us on many a bloody field seemed to say “you have done more wicked work than the rest” – But the emotions excited by the evidence of its repeated & murderous execution were quickly smothered by those of patriotic pride over a bravery that had wrested this dealer of fatal missiles from our mad enemies, & henceforth it shall be the agent of punishment to those whose infamous schemes have been only too well served through its efficient aid – I spent only a few moments among these tangible fruits of victory – In a building not far away were solid piles of muskets picked off the field where captive or slaughtered rebels had dropped them – Men were examining them one by one trying their locks – testing their soundness & stacking away the perfect & the imperfect for the hands of those who shall lift up their strength for future sacrifice & effort on other battlefields – After these hasty glances I ran back to the boat & half an hour later we swung loose & struck out to take the current & float down the Tennessee – it was a sunny afternoon – very pleasant for Dec. I gave myself entirely to the scenery & sights – noted every variation of (*Pg. 14*) mountain outline – the fortified hills within & around Chattanooga & whatever could

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afford an interesting thought – Everyone aboard seemed to feel happy – one peevish little faulting excepted, who persisted in furnishing us undesirable infantile music & its mother constant trouble – The river bounds two sides of Chattanooga strikes against the northeast base of Lookout, turns to the right, as if to make a graceful bow to the Mountain King, creeks along humbly placed before his square peerless front until it reaches the northwest corner of his massive throne, then by another angle northwards retires from presence so regal – But it makes no hurried departure from royal sight – The relative department of either is according to the dignity of the characters they respectively support & you feel that whether Lookout stands to survey the Tennessee – or the Tennessee sublimely journeys along the valley to pay his respects to Lookout each displays qualities commensurate to their individual importance – It was nearly dark before the grand river & the great mountain took farewell glances – They had exchanged first salutations probably far before we floated out upon the current & when the noble river had made a stately entrance within Lookouts domain & sustained an interview that showed the carriage & resource of divinely (*Pg 15*) born rank his retirement serene of countenance & like a great one whose resources have only been indicated – not displayed – he measures a triumphal league between opposing ranges & at that interval quickens his flow to accomplish long circuits as he spans states in the onward march towards mightier floods.

A few miles below Lookout rocks & falls in the bed of the stream produce what is called the “suck” – At its commencement above the current tends from either side to the center; but having once entered the suck the force of the current is towards the left bank which is rocky & a boat dashed upon them would be an almost certain wreck - To one not accustomed to such scenes or to that one it appears certain that we shall strike – The helm is worked hard to keep the bow inwards & in this case a front oar also accompanies the strivings of the steersmen to go clear of danger – The pilot before reaching the “suck” tied up to the shore to stay until daylight – I & a good many others went ashore; for the craft so far as protection went, except from the water beneath her planks, was just as good as the frame of a barn without any covering – Fortunately we landed near a deserted house – it had been a good one (*Pg. 16*) with two or more large rooms & fire places – But like hundreds of others left by secessionists it had suffered by the companionship of soldiers & save the floor, with here & there a bit of siding – it was as well ventilated as a cornfield stripped of its blades – We picked up refuse boards & such remains as were handy & soon had both fire places roaring with a blaze that might have frightened the original house keepers had they than been where they could catch a distant view – Next we fixed up supper, which with me consisted of bread & butter (yours) tea & a piece of fried meat that started with me – I finished both meat & bread & run my chance for breakfast – Then we lay down before the fire – Feet were warm – but the wind blew fresh over me & I found the passing air got beneath the blanket – At last I lose up some boards from the floor, piled them one above the other & thus had some protection against the air current – But the conclusion most impressed upon me was that houses with the siding on are preferable on a Dec. night even though you enjoy the sunny days of

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Tennessee – At daylight we started upon the water – About an hours ride brought us to the suck – We dashed through in fine style – I thought it just enough exciting to keep ones thoughts lively & would not care if sucks occurred every half hour – Another place below is called the pot where the waters exhibit some commotion but the scene is nothing compared with the “suck” & that is nothing beside places I know on the Potomac – though these latter are not navigated – About noon we arrived at Kelly’s Ferry & found the steamboat gone – We were now 8 miles from Chattanooga by land – over 30 by river – Stopped here & bought some bread & again dropped into the current, no resource being left us but to foot it or ride patiently as here tofore..... (*No further copy*)