

Feb. 5, 1863

Mrs. Andrew Upson
Plantsville, Conn.

(Envelope has no postmark or stamp. Letter is on one sheet of lined stationery folded in half and is written on four sides in ink.)

Stafford Co. House –
Feb. 5th, 1863 –

My Dear Wife –

We have a real northern day & nothing in the aspect of things about us is wanting to give us a realization of genuine winter – Since Monday the weather has been what would pass several degrees nearer the pole – I am quite lucky in having release from duty – Went out yesterday on picket, but the line had been changed & less men were required – We of the 20th, coming on the right after marching to the post were dismissed & immediately returned to camp – I expected to be called on again this morning but for some reason they passed my name – Guess the fact that I have always been on hand may have led them to exercise charity – However I care very little for it except that there is an opportunity to write – You probably have a severe storm today – It is snowing gaily with us, the ground is hard (**Pg. 2**) & the soldiers huddle around their camp fires with overcoats tight buttoned & hands gloved – Axes play briskly & the oaks yield to the keen edge & come crashing down – their limbs are quickly lopped off & soon body & branch contribute to alleviate the vigor's of so severe a day – Most of the men have some kind of shelter & on the whole are much better off then a week ago – I feel in the best condition physically & eat my rations with decided relish, particularly as we have potatoes, which with your butter & the Capt's. codfish, taste better than any meal can to surfeited livers sitting down at the Astor or St. Nicholas – Just now I drink coffee, which goes very well without milk, though those old Goshen milkers might make a very acceptable addition to the beverage – Whether our bill of fare is limited to pork & hard tack or reads also beef & occasionally other varieties my appetite is never wanting (**Pg. 3**) & what it lacks of kind to meets the notions of palate imagination supplies so that Pilot bread becomes the representative of skillful cookery exemplified elsewhere in a long string of names from goodies & doughnuts clear up to sponge cake & sugar-loaf – Once in a while we have a walnut crack & that knocks to nothingness all remembrance of picketing & marches, mud & snow – We kick care out of tent door quick and you may well question whether old Abrahams angel guests enjoyed so well his kid as do we the product of New England hickorys – Of course in this connection a drought of late made cider has no place for we find clay colored nectar flowing between these Va. hills more plenty than Caleb & Joshua reported honey & milk in the streams of the promised land. I seriously think of adopting this mode of life winters at the north – Somehow out of doors sleep does rest one & when he wakes up (**Pg. 4**) in the morning, provided always slumber has not been sooner broken, the eyes come open clear a the first snap – There is no stretching & yawning & lazy grunting & efforts at more dozing, but muscles play spontaneously & before you

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house inhabitants, sleeping in feathers, roll of the luxurious couch, we are up, dressed, & have the tea kettle boiling –

I sometimes think how blessed we are for materials to compose our bed – What is a hair or husk mattress compared to dry grass or oak leaves! You can have the choice of rye or oat straw, provided there are no geese to pluck, but we spread down pine boughs or laurel twigs – pop open a log & take the halves, make a row of hard tack boxes, or if we desire to beat the Sultan himself fix up a bunk of round poles & between three taps & the next call snooze on a lounge before which sleepy mortals bend in thankful gratitude & exclaim “Who wouldn’t be a soldier”!

You see my ink is poor & this sheet looks like a tyros copy book - Tell Julia Ann I shall reply to her note soon – My love to all with this hope that individually you may read as I have written in the best of spirits –

As Ever

A.U.