

June 22nd, 1863
No – 106
Mrs. Andrew Upson
Plantsville, Conn.

(Yellow envelope is postmarked Alexandria June 23, with a three cent stamp. Letter is on two sheets of lined stationery folded in half and is written in ink on eight sides.)

Convalescent Camp,
June 22nd, 1863

My Dear Wife-

Yours of the 19th came today – That visit to father seems to have been attended with some characteristic traits – You see he has been all his life in debt & the constant self denial he has practiced in his own expenditures has finally produced a kind of penuriousness that to large minded folks looks quite unbecoming – Never mind such hints & flings – The money was well spent & you ought to have told him so – We must get our education either by close study or travel – That is the most complete which is the result of both research & observation abroad – Untraveled people always lack something which no acquaintance with books can supply – If you make the right use of the opportunity recently (Pg. 2) enjoyed it's worth will only be known years hence – You doubtless have frequently seen what an advantage in society easy address & a communicative faculty confers upon any one who possesses them – Especially with women does good conversation enhance influence – I don't mean those inveterate guinea fowl spouters who rattle off words by the hour, but such as have sensible ideas & can put them into intelligible language – Did you ever notice that short sentences have the most weight? – To be sure in descriptive & narrative talk we can not avoid occasional length between stops – But a little attention to this facture soon enables one to compress thoughts so that even weak minds can keep hold of the beginning & the end of sentences – We often spoil the effect of our ideas by varying the form of expression – It is far better to go (Pg. 3) straight through as first begun – Finish the thought that has half escaped your lips without wrenching the minds of auditors by a sudden stop & then giving them another jerk by switching on to some different language – Only two things are wanting to make ones society agreeable – Good language & good ideas – I don't use good in a moral sense here – By good language I understand first of all grammatical language – Let the English only be correct & I don't care if it is plain as a post-rail fence, it has force – Besides it is far easier to talk good than bad English – Moreover one can not stand reputably in these days who blunders in this respect – Neither can one be of much real influence over children who does not add to her other claims that of a competent instructor – But above all things now a person, man or woman, should (Pg. 4) dress their ideas with as much propriety as they do their bodies – No body is ashamed of a well clothed baby – I think many a parent has felt keen sensations when the offspring has been exposed in ill attire – It ought to be just so with what we say – Ungrammatical thoughts

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are just like ragged or dirty faced urchins – Now about ideas we do not expect any great deal of originality – Most conversation is descriptive or critical – That is, we talk of what we have seen or heard, or else we gauge the dress manners, thoughts, weather, events, xc. xc. of our immediate times – Just notice, in society how nearly all the talk you hear may be classified thus – Notice too how some make a 15 minutes call most delightful – Now, my dear wife I had no idea what I was about to write 20 minutes since or that I should write at all – As I opened the door on my return from supper the notion took me to pen you a note & here it is – I will stop & read it before writing more –

(Pg. 5) Well, after reading the preceding sheet it seemed best to continue on a little further – I was about to do so when Bunnell & H, Smith stepped in – Some of them pay me nightly visits – daily too - Now that they are gone & I do not feel sleepy my notion is strong to black four pages more & you can credit me accordingly – Perhaps you will wonder how my thoughts took the turn indicated in what has been written – This is about the way – When father, as you relate, alluded to the expense xc. it occurred to me what an opportunity was afforded you beyond what he or most of the people of that community have enjoyed – Not more than a dozen individuals, probably, in all Southington, have seen more of this war than you did – Of course then, wife, you can make yourself very entertaining in the circles & tete-a-tetes by answering questions & correcting erroneous impressions – You learned something (Pg. 6) of hospitals, forts, the country about here – the features of war, & will hereafter appreciate better the events that transpire – Of course I am ambitious enough to desire my wife should avail herself of these things to make her influence wider & more potent – Hence my mind was led along unexpectedly to such ideas as have been inked down thus far – So sail in, My love, make the most of your powers & privileges – I have learned how to correct my own faults of style & expression by watching how others both erred & succeeded in the use of language & the communication of thought – It is not proper to attempt imitations – that is very shallow – But we can improve ourselves very much by only a little care – I wish you to call Ida's attention to some things in her letters – By the way one of the best (Pg. 7) exercises for her would be to copy some short prose extract, putting in every thing as in the original, capitals, points xc. Suppose you give her an occasional task of this kind & Frank too – Will might have his slate & begin to point the letters – Furnish him if you think advisable – Don't be afraid to "Spend Money" –

The news of yesterdays fight is favorable – It was entirely between Cavalry – Every thing has been quiet today –

Gen. Heintzleman & staff inspected this camp today – He is a sprightly man about 50 – This afternoon walked out west of the camp beyond the line of fortifications – It is a fine country, the land lying beautifully & showing signs of fertility – The government has a big herd of beeves feeding over the hills & plains, attended by keepers – They drive back & forth, going (Pg. 8) just where it pleases them – It looks curious enough to see the houses scattered here & there over the landscape, but never a fence – All is open to the common in every direction for miles & miles – Suppose the same state of things in Conn.

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– Truly the people there know nothing of the desolation produced by war – I noticed a squad of contrabands at work – Men plowing, other men & women busily engaged planting – Beans probably – The people of Penn. have been enjoying a big scare – They ought before this to have bagged every man of those raiders – If they run away & allow depredations without resistance I feel not pity – Have you seen how the rebel Gen. Jenkins served the copper heads – That is sick – Should like to show the account to some of my admirers of that stump in Southington -

But here I am, at the bottom of the last page & at convalescent camp - June. will soon be gone & then – the paymaster - & very likely more tarrying at this interesting place – Guess you are abed – I sleep on straw without a blanket –

A. U.