

Sept. 19th, 1863
No – 153
Mrs. Andrew Upson
Plantsville, Conn.

*(Yellow envelope postmarked Washington, D.C., Sept 21, with a 3-cent stamp.
Letter is on three sheets of lined stationery folded in half and is written on twelve sides
in ink.)*

Camp of the 20th
Near Raccoon Ford, Va.
Sep. 19th, 1863

My Dear Wife –

We left Kelly's Ford on the Rappahannock Wednesday morning – It was nearly 9 before we were over – After that the march was moderate until 11 – By that time the road was less obstructed & we pushed on rapidly – Mostly the sun was partially obscured – Still the men felt the march very much – Six weeks of rest & comparative idleness had softened their muscles – The conscripts thought the beginning tough – We heard Kilpatrick's guns down on the Rapidan & for one while thought we might see work – But when we came to the angle in the road that led to Germania where we crossed the Rapidan last spring (**Pg. 2**) our column took the other road – We reached a little deserted village called Stevensburg & encamped – I guess we had traveled 8 or 9 miles – That seems small – But for the first day when men are always most heavily loaded it was a weary pull – I noticed that every one was glad to halt – Our company was sent on picket that night & I got little rest – Next morning we were called in after the regiment had moved - Overtook it about 10 o'clock but had a rapped walk to do it – By this time we were near the river & could see the rebs on the other side – We were kept in the woods so that no display of force was visible to them – Some considerable shifting of position took (**Pg. 3**) place in which we made quite a circuit in order to obtain a certain location without being seen – About 3 o'clock were posted all in the woods & I am now writing from the same spot – On Thursday just before we arrived here there came up a thunder shower – It cleared away after an hour – No orders except to keep in our equipment were given – Towards night the men set up their shelter tents – It rained during the night & until nearly noon yesterday – We thought the line storm had come – But clear sky began to show itself & we concluded the storm over – The ground where we are is level & after a little wet weather would become very unpleasant – In the afternoon we were called out to witness the execution of a deserter (**P. 4**) from the 3d Med. Regt. which belongs to our brigade – A hard shower began as we were moving through the woods – The place selected was an open field surrounded by woods – Gen. Williams Division was drawn up on three sides of a square – the other side was towards a creek & not far from it – I will give you a rough draft – The figure should be a parallelogram rather than a square

(Drawing)

(Pg. 5) The above cut will give you some idea of the affair – After we were all in position

(9-19-1863)

& the proceedings of the court martial had been read, the procession appeared coming through an opening in the 2d Brigade – First came the guard just behind them walking the culprit & chaplain – Next came four men bearing the coffin – Afterwards the executioners & then the reserve – The procession marched straight down the center towards the grave – The deserter appeared to walk with a steady tread – His arms were pinioned at the elbows – When directly in front of the grave they came to a halt – the guard took position on the right the coffin was next placed as you see & the deserter at once sat down on the head facing inwards – Two sentinels stepped to each end of the coffin & stood at shoulder arms until just before the last act when they rejoined the (Pg. 6) guard – His feet were tied together & bandage placed over his eyes – The order for execution was next read – We could not hear that – Next came a prayer by the chaplain but inaudible where we stood – It was short – The officer commanding the executioners stepped up & bid the poor wretch good bye – the chaplain spoke a private word & shook hands – Then came the command to the executioners to shoulder arms – Ready! Aim!! Fire! – The man instantly fell backwards & lay across the coffin – His hands were raised once for a second & there was no other sign of life apparent to us – Two surgeons instantly stepped forward unbuttoned his coat & shirt & examined his wounds – He was soon pronounced dead, laid in the coffin, his breast laid bare so that every bullet hole (Pg. 7) could be seen & there the whole division was marched directly past the spot – Five bullets passed through his body – I have described this scene so that you might have an understanding of the occurrence – It is not a sight to be enjoyed & I doubt not you would rather read of something else – We came back to our place in the woods – Had more rain last night & are surrounded by fog & cloud this morning – But we have so far kept dry & generally all are in good spirits – Of the operations before as I can give you no information – Gen. Mead Hd. Qrs. are said to be at Culpepper Co. H. The cars run to that point & thence we get our supplies – I do not believe there is a purpose to bring on an engagement – It looks to me like a front to cover some other movement, or else Meade wishes to threaten Lee just enough to keep him from helping Beauregard or Bragg (Pg. 8) The rebs are said to be pretty strong on the other side – Going out on to an open field near by we can see the smoke of their encampments two or three miles away in the woods – If they attempt to come this side I am inclined to think they will be gobbled up – This is a splendid country to conceal troops – We have 7 or 8000 in our corps & you might come very near & not suspect our presence – I hope however the sun will look in upon us if we are to keep hid –

Quite unexpectedly we got a mail on Thursday night & one last night – The first brought Ida's & Willies letter with your brief note – Yesterdays furnished one from yourself & also Capt. Woodruff – I am sorry enough that Grandmother is so unwell – Certainly your troubles are great & I have often felt that this true wives left at home (Pg. 9) are heroines & entitled to as much praise as is accorded to the soldiers – You are mistaken in supposing that I feel no sympathy for your burdensome situation – Your troubles have been mine & my comfort is always greatest when I know that your condition is one of peace & joy – Ida's letter was very well worded – Will's pleased me

(9-19-1863)

very much - I wish to know if it is his own in thought – There are some things that show his turn of mind exactly – If you write anything for him do it in his language exactly – I shall answer them soon – He asks for a wheelbarrow – Let him have one – I infer from what you say & also Capt. W. that the town intends to pay \$300 to the drafted men or their substitutes – That is outrageous – We don't want any more wordy resolutions sent down here if that is the policy advocated by all classes at the (**Pg. 10**) North – One year ago three years volunteers were grudgingly given \$100 – The old soldiers who came out without reluctance, putting the government to no cost for enrollment or draft view – This last act as a robbery of their hard earnings – Let the men who stay at home pay these taxes – They are the ones who escape the hardships & hazards of the war & it is only right for them & them alone to bear the burdens – To vote such impositions on the property of men away in the service is unjust – By what place of right or honor am I asked to help buy a substitute for Amon Bradley's son or any other body's son or self? If such proceedings are sanctioned you may sell my place forthwith - I don't want to live in a community of sneaks & robbers – Nor will I submit in silence to the treatment (**Pg. 11**) thus shown to conscripts in distinction to volunteers – It seems that the longer a man holds off the better he is treated – The more a subject tries to avoid his duty the more the town tries to make it easy – Perhaps there are some conditions about this matter we don't know – I wish you would inform me what the vote is – Any how the boys are all indignant & certainly I justify their feelings & participate in them too –

Hough Hammick & Dwight Lewis were sent to Alexandria the morning we marched from Kelly's Ford – Charley Hotchkiss & Hale Smith are with us but not able to do duty – I feel gay as a lark, excepting the wrath that I should like to uncork against those who voted to tax me & other soldiers to shield cowards – My health is entirely good & no fears about to surface now or next day spoil appetite or (**Pg. 12**) bring anxious thoughts – The stamps came all right & very timely – Hope those clothes won't come further than Alexandria until we are more settled – Don't want them now – Culpepper is a fine region – But we find no fruit – The country is mostly level – We see mountains far away to the west, the Blue Ridge – South of the Rapidan also there are hills – How often we can send letters will depend very much on the movements – This is the first opportunity since leaving Kelly's Ford – I have written sitting beside an old rotten log – Some are doing the same, some cleaning guns, some cooking & go about this or that all are busy – Hope you will all soon be quite well & enjoying the blessings that are spread around – My love to the children, grandma, Julia Anne & much, so much to yourself –

A. Upson