

Charlestown, Va.

Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> 1859.

Dear Mother

You must excuse me for not writing sooner—I would have written with a great deal of pleasure but it was almost impossible to find any thing to write with or place to write in; and even now as I write I am surrounded by a crowd of about ten men talking at once.

We were delayed in Staunton until three o'clock in the evening and reached Gordonsville at seven, where we got supper and had again to wait four hours for the train. Whilst we were waiting there, we met with a fellow who was crazy to go with us and nothing would do him but that he must see Maj Gilham and apply for a situation; we had a great deal of fun out of him but went without his company. I forgot to say that as we passed the University and Charlottesville, we were most enthusiastically cheered by the students and citizens who had assembled in great numbers to see us pass; some one told me that the ladies had assembled at the depot in the morning to see us pass but unfortunately they were disappointed. We arrived at Alexandria between three and four o'clock and marched on board the boat immediately, on

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our way to Washington which we reached at five o'clock. We then had to march two miles through the streets in order to reach the depot. When we reached the depot we found two companies of volunteers from Petersburg waiting for the train which together with another company under command of Ex-Professor Williams who joined us on the way, made about 230 men on their way to Charlestown.

We had again to wait two hours hours [*sic*] before we could get off which gave me an opportunity to see the outside of the Capital building. Having started we reached the Relay House in about an hour and half, where after waiting half an hour we took the Balt and Ohio railroad on our way to Harper's Ferry; this is one of the most magnificent roads I ever saw, it travels at the rate of 40 miles an hour. The country through which the road runs is very thickly inhabited, but I do not think I saw more than a dozen negroes the whole way. We reached Harper's Ferry at twelve o'clock, and the train stopping there a few minutes gave us an opportunity to see the scene of the fight. The train then switched off on the Winchester railroad, and having taken on two more companies from Wheeling – we started for Charlestown; this is most decidedly the meanest road in the state. It

is built of the old flat rail, and I was in constant fear of an accident, we had actually at one time to get out in order to get along, and some

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of the men put their shoulders to the cars and helped the engine one very much.

At last we have arrived at our destination and were received by an immense crowd of the military and citizens- after getting off the cars, we marched to our quarters which was simply a dwelling house containing five small rooms, on the outskirts of the town. After we arrived at our quarters we were supplied with bed-ticks – and a load of straw and there upon we amused ourselves by filling up the ticks and taking off our baggage. The churches being all occupied by the troops, there was no service on Sunday and indeed I could not realize that it was Sunday at-all. After six-o'clock you you [*sic*] could hear the challenge of the sentinels all around us – there were only six of us put on guard the first and second nights; but on Tuesday night I was put on a post about half a mile a mile from our quarters and had to walk from twelve until two o'clock in the morning. I felt a little queer at first but nothing happened during the night.

Charlestown is nearly as large as Lexington but a much harder looking place. I went down town on Monday morning to see the place; the streets were crowded with soldiers in every variety of uniform and among them I found a great many old acquaintances. I have met with Charlie Weisenbaker and his company from Charlottesville. I also met with Mr. Ranson who very kindly invited me to his house which is on the outskirts of the town. Among the volunteers here, of which there are about 2000,

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there are over a hundred old graduates of the institute nearly all the companies being officered by them. Col Smith was in a peck of trouble about us on Monday—the cause of it was that when we left the institute very few of us brought our cadet coats, and as all the companies here had dress parade and drill every evening, we could not appear to an advantage. In order to remedy this, some of the cadets got after the Col to allow us to get red flannel shirts, which after some hesitation he consented and so, a day or two afterward, as soon as we could get the shirts, we turned out in them and I assure you, we made a fine looking company. They are very strict indeed, there being upwards of 150 sentinels on post every night, yesterday sentinels were posted all day day [*sic*] at every street corner. No accidents have happened, though some of the sentinels occasionally shoot a pig or a post. A sentinel shot a party of scouts returning from the country, last night, an [*sic*] came very near killing one of them. Most of the

sentinels are armed with Colts repeating rifles, but every one concedes that the Cadets are much the best sentinels and know their duties best. Last night we were excused from picket duty in order to be ready at a moments warning. We were replaced by a detachment of the Richmond howitzer company among whom was old Hugh Pleasants. This morning we got ready to start for the gallows at eight o'clock, and had as one of the color guard Edmund Ruffin who volunteered for that duty. Col Smith had for one of his aids old Billy Gilmer of Albemarle. We marched out to the grounds at nine o'clock and we occupied a position under the scaffold, the Greys of Richmond being on our right and company F. of the same place on our left. We had to wait two hours before old Brown arrived. At last he came accompanied by an imposing procession of military. The old fellow mounted the gallows with a firm step and stood upon the platform without wavering. He shook hands with the sheriff as if he was going away for a day or two. After his head being covered he had to stand on the platform ten minutes and during the whole time did not say a word or show the slightest tremor. At last the rope was cut and only a spasmodic contraction of the arms took place and the [*sic*] he hung perfectly still for half an hour. There was no disturbance. I must stop. I am sitting on a bed and writing on a book with a dozen men talking and singing around me. Excuse this letter – I have no time (to) read it over – or to make any correction.

C. A. D.