

INDIANA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY

VOLUME LIX

SEPTEMBER 1963

NUMBER 3

An Indiana Soldier in Love and War: The Civil War Letters of John V. Hadley

*Edited by James I. Robertson, Jr.**

*Contributed by Mrs. Jane Hadley Comer***

Indiana's participation in the Civil War was varied and valuable. It was the birthplace of a host of Federal generals, including Ambrose Burnside, Lew Wallace, John T. Wilder, Jefferson C. Davis, and Robert Milroy. The state's wartime executive, Governor Oliver P. Morton, so dominated his region politically that Albert J. Beveridge once classified him as "Deputy President of the United States in active charge of the Ohio Valley."¹ In many respects, however, Indiana's greatest contributions to the preservation of the Union were the 185,803 men who served loyally in the Hoosier State's 32 batteries and 136 regiments.²

One of those men was Lieutenant John Vestal Hadley, Company B, Seventh Indiana Infantry. His name does not appear in the massive, 128-volume *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. In state publications relative to the Civil War Hadley is mentioned only in organizational tables of company officers. Yet this young officer saw action in some of the major battles of the Eastern theater. He received

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** Mrs. Jane Hadley Comer, of Iowa City, Iowa, is a granddaughter of Judge John V. Hadley. She first alerted the editor to the existence of these Civil War letters, gave full permission for their publication, and assisted valuably in amassing information on Judge Hadley's life. The original letters are in her possession.

¹ Quoted in Emma Lou Thornbrough, "Morton's One-Man Government," Indiana Civil War Centennial Commission, *Indiana and the Civil War* (Indianapolis, 1961), 22.

² John D. Barnhart, "The Impact of the Civil War on Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LVII (September, 1961), 221. The total figure was determined by subtracting re-enlistments and desertions from the 208,367 known enlistments from Indiana.

wounds in two different engagements. Captured in 1864, he was successful first in escaping from prison and then in stealing four hundred miles through Confederate territory to the Federal lines. His postwar career included long service as a justice of the Indiana Supreme Court. Moreover, Hadley wrote a narrative of his last year in the army—*Seven Months a Prisoner* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898)—which historians consider among the best of Civil War memoirs.³

Since Hadley's life in general, and his military career in particular, hold a place of importance in Indiana's rich heritage, the publication of a collection of his Civil War letters is indeed noteworthy. Yet of equal significance are the contents of the letters themselves. Hadley's letters are forthright, revealing, and perspicuous. On the one hand, they contain unusual revelations of such battles as Port Republic, Second Manassas, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville; on the other hand, they shed new light on such aspects of army life as morale, camp routines, religion, disease, mail delivery, equipment, and executions. They provide personal commentaries of such generals as George B. McClellan, James Shields, Joseph Hooker, J. E. B. Stuart, and Thomas J. ("Stonewall") Jackson. They also give vivid descriptions of such diverse topics as wartime Washington, army hospitals, Virginia landscapes, fraternization between opposing soldiers, and lady visitors in camp.

The paramount interest of these letters, however, is a love story so tender as to make the collection both unique and distinctly human. Before his enlistment Hadley was acquainted with Mary Jane Hill of Pittsboro, Indiana, but the exact nature of their relationship is unknown. He saw her on only three occasions during his military tenure. Nevertheless, through correspondence their love took root and bloomed. Whereas his first letter from the army was addressed to "My dearest friend" from "your truest friend," his last one before his capture opened with "Beloved Mary" and closed with "Your devoted Jno." That the couple married soon after Hadley's release from the army is adequate testimony of the meaning and value which the letters had for the two correspondents.

³ One bibliographer recently judged Hadley's book to be "an unusually well-written narrative" and one "not distorted by intentional bitterness." E. Merton Coulter, *Travels in the Confederate States: A Bibliography* (Norman, Okla., 1948), 118.

Born October 31, 1839, on a farm in Hendricks County, Indiana, John Vestal Hadley was one of seven children of Jonathan and Ara Carter Hadley.⁴ Although the sudden death of his father in 1842 proved a many-sided loss to the large family, John, it appears, was able to attend a Quaker academy in nearby Plainfield. In 1859 he entered North Western Christian (now Butler) University. To defray college expenses Hadley utilized school vacations to ride horseback through the country and sell books. He was a serious and capable student; yet he could not escape the initial fervor that greeted the outbreak of the Civil War. On August 30, 1861, he enlisted in a Hendricks County infantry unit then in the process of organization. At the time he was a sinewy youth—five feet, ten inches in height and about 150 pounds in weight.⁵

Hadley received an appointment as a corporal during the short training period at Camp Morton, which had been established recently on the state fairgrounds near Indianapolis. Nine other infantry companies soon joined the Hendricks County contingent and, on September 13, 1861, the units entered Federal service as the Seventh Indiana Volunteer Infantry Regiment. The colonel commanding the 1,046 men was Mexican War veteran Ebenezer Dumont.⁶ Hadley's unit was officially known as Company B.

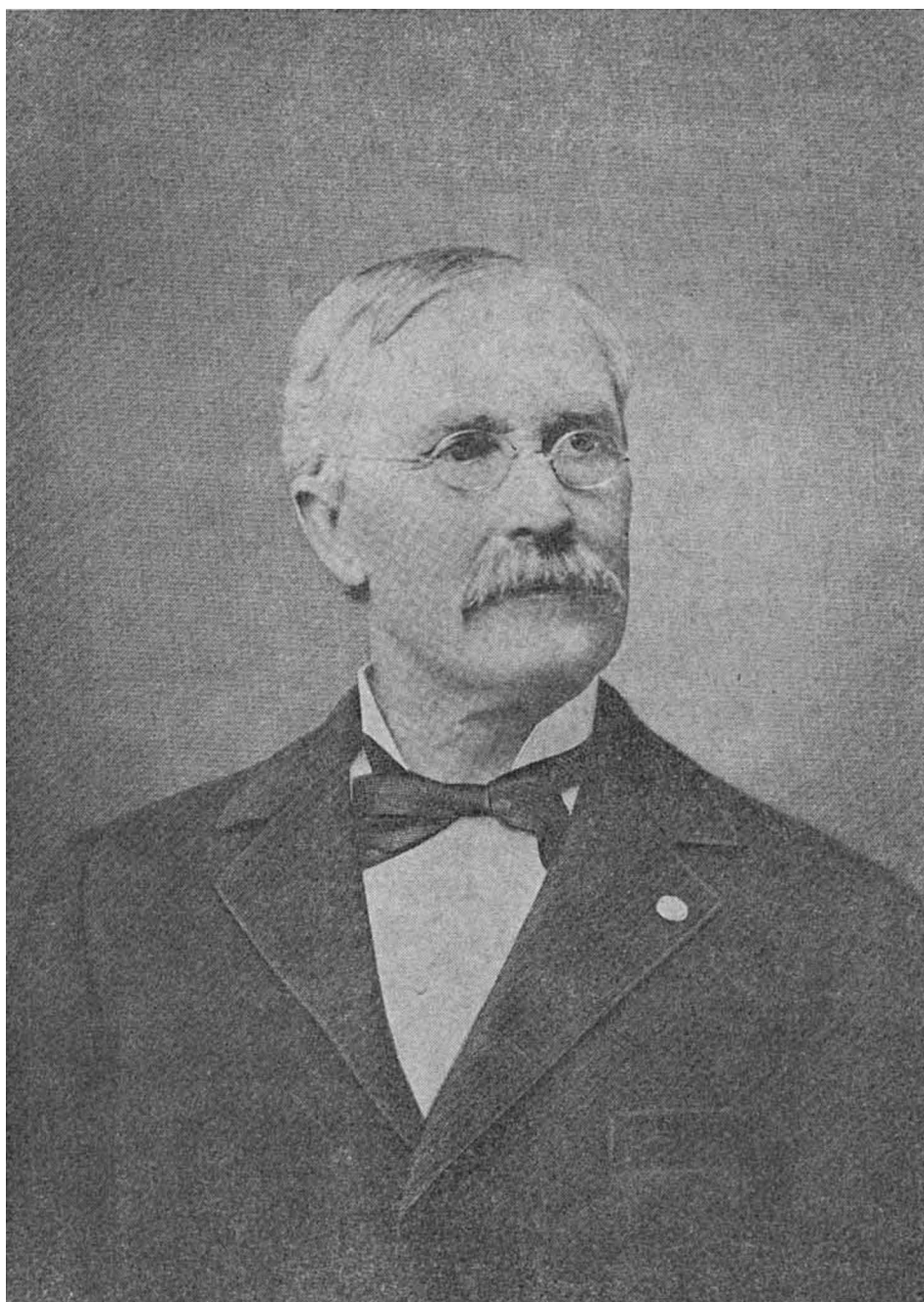
He passed his twenty-second birthday while the regiment campaigned in the mountains of western Virginia. On April

⁴ There is some disagreement about the year of Hadley's birth. The state muster rolls indicate that he was twenty-two years old or nearly twenty-two at the time of his enlistment and thus imply that he was born in 1839. But in the history edited by him October 31, 1840, is given as the date of his birth. John V. Hadley (ed.), *History of Hendricks County, Indiana: Her People, Industries and Institutions* (Indianapolis, 1914), 173. His family thinks that 1839 is the proper date.

⁵ Information on Hadley's wartime appearance was supplied by Mrs. Jane Hadley Comer.

⁶ Indiana provided five regiments for service in the Mexican War. For the sake of historical clarity, its Civil War infantry units began with the Sixth Regiment. Hence, the Seventh Indiana was the second state regiment mustered into service in 1861. It served a three-month tour of duty and then in September was reorganized as a three-year regiment. For a memoir by one of its first enlistees, see G. W. H. Kemper, "The Seventh Regiment," *War Papers Read before the Indiana Commandery, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States* (Indianapolis, 1898), 117-131. Hereafter, the volume in which Kemper's article is printed will be cited as *Indiana War Papers*.

In all, 1,299 men served in the Seventh Indiana. Of this total, 116 died in battle, 212 succumbed to disease, 368 received wounds, 26 deserted, and 27 were listed as "unaccounted for." [William H. H. Terrell], *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana* (8 vols., Indianapolis, 1865-1869), I, Document 1; *Indiana at Antietam: Report of the Indiana Antietam Commission . . .* (Indianapolis, 1911), 92.



Courtesy Mrs. Jane Hadley Comer, Iowa City, Iowa.
(Picture probably dates from the 1890's.)

10, 1862, he was promoted to sergeant. Following participation in the now-famous Valley campaign, Hadley was shot in the leg at the August 30-31 Battle of Second Manassas. He momentarily fell into the hands of the Confederates but managed to escape amid the confusion of battle. A lieutenant's commission came to him shortly after his release from the hospital. In the fall of 1863 he joined the staff of Brigadier General James C. Rice, a native of Massachusetts who had been practicing law in New York City when the Civil War began.⁷ Until Hadley was wounded and taken prisoner in the desperate fighting of the Wilderness campaign, he served as an aide to General Rice.

Transferred successively to four Confederate prisons, Hadley eventually was confined in notorious "Camp Sorghum" at Columbia, South Carolina. On the night of November 4, 1864, he escaped. Moving largely by night, and aided en route by sympathetic Negro and white citizens, he made his way across the Carolinas, over the Blue Ridge Mountains, and thence to Knoxville, Tennessee, and safety. He received his army discharge January 21, 1865, and returned to Hendricks County, Indiana. There, on March 15 of that year, he married Mary Jane Hill in the farm home of her father, Samuel Hill.⁸

Hadley took his bride to Indianapolis and began to study law. In June, 1866, he was admitted to the Indiana bar. He moved to Danville, Indiana, and opened a law firm that was successful from the start—he conceded in later years—because most of the two hundred Hadleys in Hendricks County quickly employed his legal services.⁹ From 1869 to 1873 he served as a state senator from Hendricks and Putnam counties, and in 1884 he received great pressure to run for Congress on the Republican ticket but declined. Two years later he was elected judge of Indiana's Nineteenth Judicial District and re-elected to a second term in 1894. It was during his second term that Hadley presided over the Hinshaw case, one of the most

⁷ Rice was killed in action only five days after Hadley's capture. See U.S., War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (128 vols., Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. I, Vol. XXXVI, pt. 1, pp. 191, 625.

⁸ Samuel Hill's obituary, including much information on his family, is in the *Danville Republican*, May 13, 1897.

⁹ *Plainfield Friday Caller*, July 1, 1910.

celebrated of nineteenth-century murder trials in Indiana.¹⁰ His judicious handling of this stormy and much-publicized trial played no small part in Hadley's election in 1898 to the Indiana Supreme Court, on which he served for twelve years. Throughout this period he maintained an active interest in the Civil War; in addition to writing *Seven Months a Prisoner*, he lectured to assemblies of Union veterans about his experiences as a prisoner and escapee.¹¹

The infirmities of old age ultimately forced Hadley to relinquish both his seat on the supreme court and the major part of his law practice. Descendants remember him as a very restless person in those last, empty years of retirement. He passed part of this period in completing what for him was a labor of love: the voluminous *History of Hendricks County, Indiana: Her People, Industries and Institutions* (Indianapolis, 1914). A common cold struck him in the late fall of 1915, and on November 17 Hadley died at his Danville home. His remains now lie beside those of his family in the Plainfield cemetery. Many eulogies attended his passing; but few matched in fullness and simplicity the statement of a newspaper editor two years before Hadley's death: "Of the many Hendricks County sons who have brought honors to its people, probably none have gained as firm and lasting hold upon the affections of all citizens as has Judge John V. Hadley."¹²

¹⁰ In 1895 Rev. William E. Hinshaw was accused of the murder of his wife, whose bullet-riddled body was found in the snow. A minister "loved and honored by a congregation composed of some of the best and most cultured citizens of Hendricks County," Hinshaw apparently had been involved in a love affair with another woman. He was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. *Hendricks County Gazette*, October 3, 1895.

¹¹ One example of his speeches is John V. Hadley, "A Day with Escaping Prisoners," *Indiana War Papers*, 278-294.

¹² *Danville Gazette*, June 5, 1913. See also *Danville Republican*, May 29, 1913.

Beverly Va Sep 21st 1861¹

Mollie J Hill

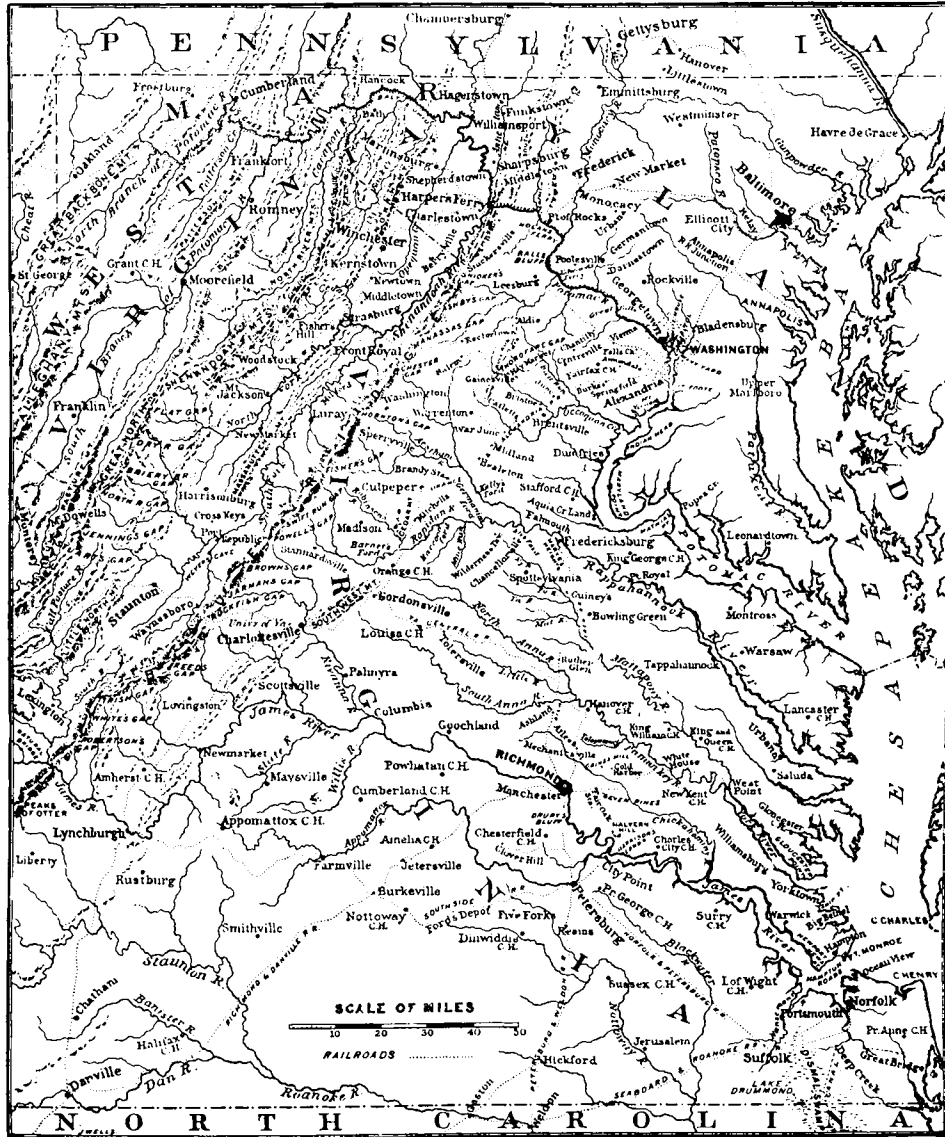
My dearest friend—under rather peculiar circumstances I am found in my tent this morning, writing to you my first letter as a Soldier. I say as a Soldier. Well I think I am this morning in a full appreciation of a Soldiers life—I look like a Soldier—I feel like a Soldier—& act like a Soldier.

One week ago to day we left our beloved State to encounter the stern realities of War in the Godforsaken State of Virginia. Tuesday noon following we arrived at Webster Va a distance of about five hundred miles. It would be too much for me to attempt to describe to you the character of the country through which we passed, the things I saw, what I experienced, &c, so I will defer this until I have an opportunity to do it verbally which I hope will be at no distant day; at present suffice it to say that We arrived at Webster—remained all night & until 5 o'clock Wednesday evening when we took up our knapsacks &c in all weighing about 50 lbs &

¹ With but few exceptions Hadley's original letters have been followed faithfully in this transcription. As a convenience to the reader, the editor has paragraphed the letters since many of them contained only one long paragraph. Because of limitations of space, brief direct quotations have not been placed in separate paragraphs. Some modifications have been made in Hadley's paragraphing. The editor has also made minor changes in the spacing of headings, salutations, and closings, but he has retained the punctuation originally used in these portions of the letters.

Superior letters have been brought down to the line. Incorrect spellings have been retained and have not been indicated by either a [sic] or a correction except for proper names and for words which might otherwise be misunderstood. Because it is often difficult to distinguish between the letter "o" and the letter "e" as written by Hadley, the editor has assumed that the words "for" and "Jackson" were both spelled with an "o." Where words have been marked over, that version has been selected which was apparently Hadley's later choice. Although the editor has omitted repetitions that are obviously unintentional, all other deletions have been indicated by ellipses. If a deleted portion would probably have comprised at least a paragraph in this transcription, a line of ellipsis marks has been given.

Commas have been supplied in series and periods at the end of what appear clearly to be sentences. Since Hadley usually placed periods after rather than before closing quotation marks, this practice has been followed where periods have been supplied at the end of quotations. If a complete sentence ended with a dash, a period has been either retained or supplied. Question marks have been inserted in appropriate places whether or not they appeared in the original. In doubtful or marginal situations, where the original is not clearly legible, modern practice has been followed in the choice between commas and periods and between capital and lower-case letters. Sometimes, especially after abbreviations, the editor has used periods even though commas appear in the original.



VIRGINIA DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Reproduced from *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, ed. by Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel (4 vols., New York, 1884-1888), I, 113.

started to the support of [Brigadier] Gen. [Joseph J.] Reynolds at Cheat Mount.² We have completed fifty miles & are stopping to day to recruit.

We were last eve. pretty badly fatigued. Many of the boys were obliged to take waggon as "give outs" & I must say that there was but two things that kept me from making the same resort; namely the frothy tongues & witty expressions of my comrades. One would say that a man must think a d—n sight of his country to suffer this way to defend it; another would d—n the Rebels for bringing all this upon us &c. We are now within 18 miles of Reynolds & will join him tomorrow.

Mollie I desired to see you again before I left the State—tis sadness for me I never. I had a kind word to whisper in your ear—a secret tale to tell you—a keepsake to deliver. But having formerly sacrificed all my liberty to the demands of my country, I was forced away before an opportunity afforded itself. Mollie I desired your miniture—not that I need any artificial means to keep you constantly before me, but it would be some gratification in the dull hours of camp to look upon the outlines of one whose merits I so greatly admire.

Mollie the greatest displeasure we have to encounter, is the ignorance in which we are enveloped. No news whatever have reached us since we left Indianapolis. If they are fighting in other parts like fury we know nothing about it, but what is worse—is that if the[y] should come to a reconcilliation of our present troubles I am affraid we should never hear it in this part of the world.

Mollie you will please excuse this unbroken letter³ as I have but one hour to write in & am obliged to write home. I have simply written this to give you my whereabouts. When you return to Richmond [Indiana] you will please remember me to your friend Mattie Jeffries.

Mollie as it seams almost beyond possibility for me to receive your miniture at a distance of 600 miles—you will please send me a braid of your hair at least if it should be consistent with your feelings to confer such a favor upon an humble Soldier. Mollie I must close although I have much

² Reynolds had been a West Point graduate in the same class as Grant and a businessman in Lafayette, Indiana, at the outbreak of the Civil War. [Orville Thomson], *From Philippi to Appomattox: Narrative of the Seventh Indiana Infantry in the War for the Union* (n.p., n.d.), 59. Hereafter this work will be cited as Thomson, *Seventh Indiana*.

³ As mentioned in footnote 1, many of Hadley's letters are unbroken. The editor has paragraphed them for the convenience of the reader.

more to write—many things to tell you—but my time is half up & I must remember anxious friends at home. For the present receive my kindest wishes, & believe me your t[r]uest friend.
J.V.H

Direct your letter to Webster Va In care of Capt W. C. Banta
7th Reg Ind Vol

Elkwater Va Oct 25/61

Miss Mollie Hill

My dear lady—four days have I tried unsuccessfully to write you & now the fifth attempt is upon me. Since the 1st day of this month, four long weeks have I been sick, & this day finds me almost wholly unfit for letter writing, but I feel that writing to you is a chief duty, & one which I am no longer willing to postpone.

Your letter was received last Sun. & let me assure you that no letter ever made a gladder heart. It was to me like a gentle noon-day shower is to [a] tender plant which grows pale for the want of some nourishment.

I have been sick ever since our fight at Green Briar [Brier].⁴ Was taken on the first night of our march to attack the enemy, was carried the 2d day in a waggon as far [as] Camp Kimbal[l] where we staid til 12 o'clock that night.⁵ Night came & we had no place to sleep. I could do no better than wrap my blanket around me & lay down by the side of an old pine log upon some well soaked moss, for it had been raining all day. At midnight we were up & on our march for Green Briar a distance of 15 mile[s]. We marched it through mud & rain, went double quick four miles, fought six hours & returned to Camp Kimbal all in one day, & what is more—all done without either breakfast & dinner. When we returned to Camp Kimbal I was as near dead from exhaustion as I [ever] was. Drank a cup of coffee—ate a cracker, again

⁴ Hadley's reference was to an October 3, 1861, battle near Greenbrier River, Virginia. Total Federal casualties were 8 killed and 35 wounded; Confederate losses were 6 killed, 33 wounded, and 13 missing. The Seventh Indiana had 8 men, including an officer, wounded. The regiment's worst loss, however, was its flag, which the colorbearer negligently left on the field. U.S., War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (128 vols., Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. I, Vol. V, 223, 229; Boyd B. Stutler, "The Battle of Greenbrier River" (manuscript in the possession of the editor), 5. Hereafter *The War of the Rebellion* will be cited as *Official Records*.

⁵ Camp Kimball was named in honor of Colonel (later Brigadier General) Nathan Kimball, who at that time commanded the Fourteenth Indiana.

to my mossy bed, & enjoyed such a nights' sleep as is known to none but the exhausted Soldier. Returned next day to our quarters sick, & have remained so to this day but think I will be able for duty next week.

I have learned as also you have learned, through a correspondent of the Cincinnati Times, that at the fight aluded to above the 7th Reg. ran & would not be rallied.⁶ Mollie I hope you did not believe, I hope the country did not believe it. I have but a few words to [say] in regard to it. But I want you to understand that I emphatically deny the charge. I say that any man who will so shamefully misrepresent Soldiers fellow soldiers—raw recruits without any experience either in drill or marching—I say that any Northern man who will treat men fighting for his own interests in this manner; is too mean to command the sympathies of Angels, or the admiration of Devils, & there is none other than an envious Buckeye that could have been found to do it.—May the judge of man's misgivings deal gently with him.

Well you ask what did the 7th do—well something as follows[:] coming upon the field it was the rear Reg. with one or two exceptions. Before the first charge of the musketry was over, which did not last more than a half an hour, the 7th was in front & took the last fire—the column retiring into ambush—the 7th was the last to enter the bushes.—When the General [Reynolds] commanded the bayonette it was as follows—“7th take the lead”. The 7th received the comand with a tremendous yell & started off on a double quick. It is needless for me to tell you that we being the advanced Reg. that the enemy directed his batteries at us & let me assure you, that grape shot, Canon-balls, & canister shot fell among us thick as hail for about one hour—many were hit but none seriously injured in our company. All the running that was done by the 7th was most truly toward the enemy. The correspondent modestly neglected the fact that the 24[th] Ohio Reg. possitively refused to go on the charge.⁷

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Mollie I send you a ring which idle hours have manufactured from the root of a Laurel growing in our camp. I send it to you as a trifling relic of our encampment in the

⁶ Several Confederate reports of the Greenbrier fight refer to Federals retreating “rapidly and in disorder” or “in the wildest confusion” from the field. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. V, 224, 232-233, 235. Federal reports do not mention such a stampede.

⁷ See Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War: Her Statesmen, Generals and Soldiers* (2 vols., Cincinnati, 1868), II, 171.

miserable Pass of Cheat Mountain. Mollie a thousand times have I thought of those nice cakes & pies you brough[t] us at Camp Morton. Oh if I had but a pice of them now I think it would cure me in 15 minutes.

Bob sends his love to you & your friend Mattie Jeffries also give her mine. Hoping to enjoy with you long friendship & that too of the truest nature, I subscribe myself for the present your truest friend J.V.H

Elkwater Valley Va. Nov 5/61

My dear friend Mary—the other mail my heart was made glad by the reception of another letter from you. Although it was brief I could fully recognize in it the writer. It seems, however, that you were a little reluctant in writing to me the second time without an answer, something which I think you should not have been. I have writen you two letters without an answer, even in a country where mail matter was seldom misplaced; nor did I think the act any thing criminal. & it is really a matter of chance that I did receive your letter directed to Webster.

Mary you stated in your last that your friend Mattie had failed to return to college this year, & that you were there almost alone. How I would like to drop into the parlor some evening & call for my Hendricks Co cousin.⁸ How I would like to sit beside her upon the sopha & tell her of my experience & observations, while trying to serve my country. How I would lik[e] to talk to her of the sublime scenery, the lofty mountains, the dashing streams, & of the benighted inhabitants of Western Virginia. How I would like to tell her of what I saw, & felt, & know of the Green Briar fight. The booming of the cannon, the roaring of musketry, the hissing of balls, the dying words of soldiers, the shouts of the combatants, I think would not fail to command her attention.

But at present such happiness is denied. How long it shall be the case is beyond my conceptions. But if our rulers should forget their madness, if the common people should lay aside their excitement & learn to look reason in the face, if the Constitution & Union should again be declared, then I would hope to enjoy what I have enjoyed with her, at least once more ere I die. Such a change in our beloved country

⁸ The Hadleys and Hills were distantly related by marriage.

may be soon & it may be late. It may be that the light of another moon will never behold us in this unhappy confusion, & again, the roses may drop from your cheeks & gray hairs be given you for auburn—it may be that my musket will become heavy with old age, & my sword wasted from much grinding—before that peace is again found by a maddened people.

Mary when I last wrote you I believe I stated that I had been sick, & I am happy to inform you now that I have again gained my strength & am now eating double rations in order to get my share from Uncle Sams' bounty.

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Hoping to hear from you soon I subscribe myself as ever
Your most obliging friend
J.V.H

On board the Steamer Cricket
Dec 10th/61^o

Miss Mary J Hill—Mollie: I am now nearing Cincinnati bound for home. I am on furlow & accompanying home A. J. Adams & R. P. Parker.¹⁰ Adams has been very sick but is getting better. Bob is now very low & his recovery is very doubtful. He has the Typhoid fever. Our Army Surgeon told me he could never get well but I hope he did not know.

I expect to reach home in the morning where I hope to remain 30 or 60 days. Then I shall rejoin my regiment which is now at Romney. I would be much pleased to see you while at home. If you should spend your Christmas & New Years at your fathers', I shall try & avail myself of the pleasure. . . . Address your next to Plainfield. I can write no more at present; we approach our landing.—Excuse this note—write soon & believe [me] Yours

&c J.V.H.

⁹ Since it is so badly faded as to be nearly illegible, Hadley's letter to Mollie, from Elkwater Valley, Virginia, dated November 24, 1861, has been omitted.

¹⁰ Private Andrew J. Adams, of Brownsburg, Indiana, was discharged from the army in June, 1862. Robert P. Parker, of Pittsboro, Indiana, eventually became a lieutenant in the Fourth U.S. Colored Infantry; he is the "Bob" to whom Hadley refers in these letters. Thomson, *Seventh Indiana*, v, vi. The state muster rolls confirm Hadley's spelling of Parker's name although Thomson gives it as "Parkes." Hereafter, *unless otherwise indicated*, all the towns mentioned in footnote explanations are in Indiana.

Pattisons Creek Va. Feb 4/62

Amiable friend

Slowly & sadly has the time dragged by since I left you at Richmond [Indiana]. Being alone in the cars from Belair to this place I had an excellent opportunity to meditate. I thought of home & those I left. Of those I saw on the road & of those whom I expected to see in camp. Believe me, dear friend, I am truly sensible of the honor of the warm reception you [cave?] me & feel myself deeply penetrated with love & gratitude for the kindness you manifested for me.

I reached my destination the day after I left you. Just before We reached New Creat [Newcreek] the camp there was thrown into the greatest consternation. The pickets came running in & reported a large rebel force in the immediate neighborhood & as the train passed through the entire camp stood in line of battle waiting for an engagement. But the report afterwards proved to be entirely false.

We arrived at Cumberland 11 o'clock P.M. & I found that place as all others along the line literally besieged with opulett [opulent?] aristocracy. Evry Hotel, & private house seemed to be filled to overflowing with the presence of these dignitaries, & it was after renewed efforts that I succeeded in getting even a lounge to pass the night upon. Next morning it was very appalling to look upon the frown[s] & sullen countenances of Red tape. It was very terifying. I thought [Major General Thomas J. ("Stonewall")] Jackson the Rebel Gen. who has been driving them about some since I left had had a powerful effect on the good nature of our Generals.¹¹ But after considerable inquiry I divined the true cause of their dejection. [Brigadier] Gen. [Frederick W.] Lander the commander of the division here, had the day previous issued an order closing evry saloon in town.¹² And it was truly amusing to observe how these thirsty Nabobs would gather about the bars just like so many famishing brutes about an enclosed pool.

¹¹ Jackson had just waged a successful campaign against nearby Romney and Bath in western Virginia.

¹² For other stringent measures by Lander, see *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. V, 1044. Personal comments on Lander himself are in G. W. H. Kemper, "The Seventh Regiment," *War Papers Read before the Indiana Commandery, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States* (Indianapolis, 1898), 123-124; Thomson, *Seventh Indiana*, 75, 78-79. Hereafter, the volume in which Kemper's article is printed will be cited as *Indiana War Papers*.

When I reached Camp Kell[e]y¹³ the name of ours, I was met by Mess No 1. & after a hearty shake hands we fell into line & I was escorted to my new quarters. I expected to find a Paradise of a camp, but I was very disagreeably surprised. Mud! Mud! Mud! This is no name for it. Elk Water is effecually eclipsed in this respect. Otherwise than this it is a beautiful place & was thickly settled before the approach of our army. . . .

Mollie I never had a better time on a spree than I have had since I reached camp. You would have thought me happy if you had seen me strolling up the Rail-Road with half of Comp[any] B. listening to my fairy tales. I told them of their sweethearts at home & delivered them many minatures which had been given me to carry. The night following my advent to camp[,] Mess No 1 sang many songs for my benefit & we closed the entertainment with a soldiers dance—a jolly time it was. My health since I arrived has been exceeding good I & [sic] hope it will remain so. It snows very hard to day. The snow is now 4 inches deep & a fair prospect to be four inches deeper. You will write soon & believe me as Your dear friend

Mollie J Hill

John

Camp Lander Va Feb 18/62

Mary—since I last wrote you I have seen considerable soldiering. On the fourt[h] inst we received marching orders with three days rations & to leave evry thing behind but our gun, knapsacks, canteens, forty rounds of amunition, & one blanket which was to weigh no more [than] three lbs. When we left the ground was four inches deep in snow nor was it reduced while we were out.

Our destination was undoubtedly to attact Romney & our brigade was sent fifteen miles to the rear to cut off their retreat. It was our intention to bag Jackson & his forces 15000 strong but before we reached the nest the bird as usual had flown. It was the severest march that we have ever made. The weather was desperately cold & the snow made the walking very slavish. Our plans against Romney

¹³ This bivouac was named for Brigadier General Benjamin F. Kelley, who commanded what was known as the "Railroad District" of western Virginia. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. V, 691.

having failed others were at once instigated & we were withheld from camp.

At the close of the second day our rations gave out & a supply was impossible to obtain. For 24 long hours we were without a single bite to eat, when our Col [James Gavin]¹⁴ came riding among us & informed [the] Reg. that they were permitted to scour the country over & whatever they could find fit to eat to bring in to camp. There was at once a general stampede. In less than 15 minutes boys were seen with guns in their hands scaling the mountains in every direction in quest of prey. An hour had elapsed when they came flocking in with a perfect cargo of meat such as beef, pork, & mutton. But alas there was not a grain of salt in [the] Reg. Yet the demands of nature were not to be satisfied with the idea of no salt. We tore the meat into pieces, laid it in the fire, covered it up with ashes, & when it was but partly cooked, we took it out & devoured it as greedily as starving Wolves.

I cannot give you the particulars of our march, it would be too tedious. Suffice it to say that we were roaming through the mountains for eleven long & desperately cold days & slept when we did sleep, in nature's bed-rooms on her softest cots of snow & pine brush, wrapped in a single blanket. Our "grub" too was such as every one can eat but such as no one likes to eat. We were hunting the enemy but they being so well acquainted with every mountain defile, that they escaped us in every instance but one. Our cavalry overtook a force of 600 one day—attacked them—took 90 prisoners—guns &c & among them was one Col, three or four Capts, half dozen Lieuts, 6 Ordely sergts.¹⁵

We are now encamped about 3 miles to the right of Pawpaw Tunnel a point on the B. & O. R.R. 30 miles S.E. of Cumberland. The probabilities are that we may remain here some time unless Gen. Jackson should make other moves. We were moving on to Winchester, but [Major] Gen. [George B.] McClellan [McClellan] telegraphed to Gen Lander, our commander, to expose his division no farther, but take them

¹⁴ Gavin, a native of Greensburg, had assumed command of the regiment on November 3, 1861. For praise of this competent officer, see *ibid.*, Vol. XII, pt. 1, pp. 697, 700, Vol. XXI, 464.

¹⁵ At Bloomery Gap, Virginia, on February 14, 1862, a body of 400 Federal cavalry (estimated by the enemy at "10,000 strong") scattered a Confederate force. In the process it "ran down and caught 17 commissioned officers." Confederate losses were 13 killed and 65 captured; Federal casualties were 11 killed and several wounded. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, 405-407.

to camp.¹⁶ This is a pretty good evidence that we will remain here at least for the winter. & I should not be at all surprised if we left this camp for Indiana.

I hope [in] the next letter I write you I may be able to tell you that this unnatural warfare is closing. I think I can discern in the dim distanc[e] the dawn of that happy morning when we may return home & make glad the hearts of anxious friends. I look forward with a burning anxiety to the day we may be able to grasp our friends warmly by the hand & tell them that our country is still saved, that the old stars & stripes again float in evry breese between the two great waters, that the Eagle the proud bird of our nationality sits perched on evry mountain between the St Larence & Gulf of Mexico—I salute you.

J.V.H.

Army of the Potomac
March 8th/62

Miss Mary Hill

My dear girl—it is again Sunday and I have again the high pleasure of writing you another letter. While this is the only means I have of communicating with you, my dear girl, I thank God and the man that invented the art of telling the heart's story upon paper for if it were not for this happy method of speaking with you, this absent army life of mine would be miserable indeed. How kind, and welcome was your last and what a generous spirit it breathed. Many times when duty seems hard and prospects discouraging I am almost ready to accede to anything to end the war, but one kind word from you is sufficient to renerve my arm and establish me firm in my purpose to see it through. And many times my heart yearns fervently for its mate yet leaning upon the staff of hope it strides onward to its destiny.

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I have just returned to camp from a three days Picket Duty. I was this time four miles from Camp on the Out Post and had the honor of commanding one mile of our front. It was a relief to me to get so far away from Camp—from the din and poisen of a massed Army and as I stood upon a high hill, filled again with rapture my lungs, with pure, unadulterated country air. And as I gazed before me and saw the wandering pig and grazing cow and heard the crowing

¹⁶ McClellan's order to Lander is in *ibid.*, 722.

fowl and barking dog my rustic nature returned in all its wildness. Although war was at evry door and evry fireside crowded with curious soldiers still there was among the citizens a rustic innocence and independence which seemed to breath forth happiness.

We have had very bad weather here for a month and there is now much mud and water on the ground. It would be impossible for us to move from here at present. The roads are so bad. The Rebs are s[t]ill across the river in some force but I know not how strong. But if they were not a thousand there we could not move them at present.

Capt [William C.] Banta left here yesterday to join his better half at Clayton Indiana for 20 days.¹⁷ Jim Adams will probably turn up in Pittsboro some of these times.¹⁸ I think he will get a Furlough soon. I hope he may. He wants to see mother badly. I dont blame him. . . . Mrs. Col [James] Gavin, Mrs Dr [George W.] New, and other ladies are visiting our Reg. I am your devoted J. Vestal Hadley

Strausburg [Strasburg] Mar 31/62

Miss Mollie J. Hill

Dear friend—Your letter was received last night & it was a long expected one too. Two weeks, perhaps, before you left Richmond [Indiana] I received a letter from you requesting that I should write again before you left there. Without an hour's delay I answer[ed] it but perhaps it did not get to Richmond until after you had left if it ever did. I would have written you long since if I had had an opportunity, but I have had none, in consequence of constant marching. I have written but one letter in three weeks & that one home.

Last Sunday the 23 inst, as you shall have heard ere this reaches you, we had a severe fight. We met Gen. Jackson with 11 Reg's fought him two hours & forty minutes hand to hand, whiped him—ran him [and] took some cannon—250 prisoners, killed 500, wounded 1000 but suffered considerable ourselves.¹⁹ Among the first that fell on the field while

¹⁷ Banta, a native of Danville, became a major of the Seventh Indiana on March 12, 1863, and a lieutenant colonel the next month. [William H. H. Terrell], *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana* (8 vols., Indianapolis, 1865-1869), II, 40.

¹⁸ Adams, another native of Danville, was promoted to second lieutenant at the same time that Banta became a major. Apparently Andrew Luke replaced Banta as captain, Hadley replaced Luke as first lieutenant, and Adams replaced Hadley as second lieutenant. *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁹ Hadley here refers to the bitterly contested fight at Kernstown, Virginia, between the troops of Major General "Stonewall" Jackson

bravely acting his part was cousin E. B. Hamlet. Without a groan he requested his friends to bear him off the field which they did. He is still living but with little or no hopes of recovery.²⁰

For eight long days we have been skirmishing with the enemy & it is now expected that tomorrow's sun will bring about some final result. We have in our haversacks three days rations, a full supply of amunition, & [are] prepared to start at any moment for the field. Before this letter reaches you I have no doubt but that you shall have seen our fortune & I hope it may be a good one. You ask me Mary if we cannot whip the our [*sic*] enemies against May or June. Well, Mary, I hope & believe we can & earnestly pray God to aid us in its accomplishment. There is much to do yet but if all troops keep stiring as we have stired for the last three weeks I think there is no doubt but what it can be done.

Mary you will not expect me to write long or frequent letters while duties are so heavy & I believe that the goodness of your heart will not suffer you to think me unfaithful should there be a time when I was long in writing for rest assured that I will write at evry opportunity whether I have answers from you or not (provided you do no[t] request otherwise) & I hope you will do the same.

There is nothing that so nerves my arm & strengthens my will as kind words from your sex. Your excellent letter of the 16th was to me like an Angel breat[h]ing a new life into desponding humanity. How my heart burned with rapture when I broke the seal & beheld at the bottom the signature "Mollie." For in that name I believe that I could recognize a friend who is true, & one that feels a heart throb when she considers the situation of a soldier. There is no one that can appreciate friendship like a soldier. When marched 30 & 40 miles a day through mud & rain, sleep out of nights without blankets, & on half rations, it makes him sometimes think that there is no friendship for him or a single sympathy to lighten his burden.

and Brigadier General James Shields. The Seventh Indiana, with 716 men reported present for duty, lost 7 killed, 33 wounded, and 9 missing. Total Federal casualties were 118 killed, 450 wounded, and 22 missing as opposed to Confederate losses of 80 killed, 375 wounded, and 263 missing. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XII, pt. 1, pp. 346-347, 376, 384, pt. 3, p. 5.

²⁰ Corporal Egbert B. Hamlet died April 1, 1862, of wounds received at Kernstown, Virginia. He was a native of Brownsburg. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, IV, 93.

Ordely [Luther E.] Davis & John Ridgeway [Ridgway]²¹ comes home immediately on account of their wounds. They will bear this letter perhaps as far as Indianapolis. Direct your next to Winchester Va. though we are 25 miles south of there. I remain as ever your affect. friend J V Hadley

Rockingham 4 miles South [of] NewMarket Va
May 1st/62

Well Mary why dont I get a letter? I cant accuse you of unfaithfulness yet I must own that I have become somewhat impatient about a letter. . . . We have had but one mail in two week[s]. Notwithstanding we are in the most beautiful Valley of Va. & in fact it cannot be surpassed by any in the world. Yet letters, the gladning visitors of a soldier, found us oftener in the dark dismal mountains of Western Va. than they do here. I say that there is not a more beautiful Valley in the world than the one we now occupy. Well there cannot be.

Had I not been taught that the Garden of Eden was somewhere in the old World I would have to affirm that it was here. My conceptions of Eden are almost realized here. The fruits, the flowers, the singing birds, & the sinful pair are here. When we came into this place the sitizens were eaqually as afraid of us as Adam & Eve were of the Angel of the Lord. The sword was also here, flaming with wrath yet it differed a little from the historic one, as its courage was not sufficient to keep the invader out.

The day following our arrival here I was called out on picket Duty. I found my post, per chance to be at the fork of two roads, near which was a large two story house which with its surroundings bore the marks of wealth. I pondered about the old shop which was our quarters fōr some time frequently observing the house to see if I could discover an occupant. One of the doors stood ajar yet I could see no one inside & all the evidence that I had that any one had lately lived there was the outpouring of some half dozzen little black urchins from some mean huts that stood hard by. I determined to visit the house & as I approached the blacks came running to meet me with great eagerness by dozzens (for by the way I find that they have no peculiar dislike for Yankees down here).

²¹ First Sergeant Davis died of illness October 6, 1862; Private Ridgway was mustered out with the regiment. Thomson, *Seventh Indiana*, v, viii.

I asked one sable miss where her Master & Mrs were. She answered me "Massa am gone down to Rockbridge 'wid de black boys." Why did he take them there says I. "Cause Gen Jackson tell him that you would kill him & de boys too". Well where is your Mrs? "Missa in de house dont hurt her" she pittifully requested. I approached the door which was now closed, stood upon the steps, & knocked without receiving any response. I knocked again & this time I heard within a tremulous voice say come in. I opened the door, walked in—spoke to the inmates as politely as possible, & took a seat. The family consisted of an old lady & her granddaughter of 16 summers.

The old woman was nearly frightened to death & it was a long time before I could convince her that we came to protect her & her property rather than destroy them. before I left we entered freely into conversation & I found that nearly all her relatives lived in Indiana & that I was as well acquainted with one of her nephews as I am with any body. He was a schoolmate—a gay boy & killed in the battle of Alegania. I stayd on that post 24 hours & spent much of my time with this family. The old lady had one of her black girl[s] to kill & bake us two fine hens, furnished us with bread & milk, & in evry way treated us with great hospitality.

The grand daughter was quite modest, yet seemed to behold nothing terrible in the appearance of a Yankee. She was quite free to talk & put herself to no extra trouble to shun my presence. If you know my nature, you know that, as the tender words flowed from her lips, I did not reply crabbidly. She & the old lady too complained much about the society here & when I told them that they should emigrate to Indiana where evry young man is a lord & evry young girl a lady her young eyes seemed to sparkle with the idea.

We are now 50 miles below Winchester & with some prospects of remaining here for a[t] least a week yet. We are waiting for supplies when it is said this it is said that this Division will move against Richmond. We are drawing 90 days clothing—none will accompany us futher into Dixie. Within the last two days I have drawn at least \$200 worth of clothing for our company & it is not yet supplied.

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I close—write soon & believe me as ever your best friend
& wisher

Miss Mollie J Hill

J. V. Hadley

4 miles South NewMarket Va. May 10th/62

Miss Mollie J Hill

My dear lady—your most excellent letter of the 1st is at hand & although it has not been in my possession more than an hour it has been read no less than a half dozen times & yet there are many charms undiscovered that will be brought out by other readings. Many sluggish weeks were worn away, in looking for a letter from you but my confidence was unwavering in its coming. More than a thousand times have I drawn from my *left* side pocket the little case that contains the expression of my l___e & so often could I behold in it nothing but goodness of heart & unwavering fidelity. I could not be cruel enough to believe that you had either forgotten & forsaken the one to whom you had promised long friendship.

Mary I might tell you a long war story but that subject has become old & so monotonous that I dont think it can interest you & the few moments that I have to write you this evening should be of some other character. I will just state however that for the last ten days we have been expecting a fight daily but as yet it has not been realized. Nor do I now ever expect to fire my musket again in Western Va.

In the last ten days refered to we advanced twelve miles south of this place. The rebel Jackson with 25000 men came against our front & simultaneous with him did Euvil [Brigadier General Richard S. Ewell] (rebel) advance on the other side of the Blue Ridge with 15,000 to get in our rear. This was a wise move in them & would have advanced their interests greatly in this Valley had they succeeded in their plans. But [Brigadier] Gen. [James] Shields with his Irish wit was sharp enough for them. He sent a force to the mountain gap—met the rebels—drove them back [and] took some prisoners—killed some—& wonderfully frightened others. We fell back twelve miles to our present position which is naturally strong & prepared to again receive Jackson & his stone Wall brigade.²² He followed us within five miles of our lines & then wisely concluded that it might be a little unsafe to come further—halted & semmes to be perfectly satisfied.

I said a moment ago that I never expected to fire my musket again in Western Va. Well I dont. We have marching

²² The famous Stonewall Brigade was only one segment of Jackson's army. It took no active part in the Battle of McDowell in Virginia. For a history of this most noted of Confederate units, see James I. Robertson, Jr., *The Stonewall Brigade* (Baton Rouge, La., 1963).

orders for Richmond to take effect at 6 o'clock tomorrow morning. & should they not be countermanded my next letter will be dated before the fated metropolis of the struggling Confederacy. The march is one of more than a hundred miles— & it is to be made without any delay. We take with [us] ten days Rations—march 18 miles a day & carry our knapsacks. It is a severe undertaking, but such is war. The weather is very warm & roads very dusty & I expect I would find it as nice lounging about college as playing Soldier in Va.

The Authorities, too, have practised a great imposition upon us. They yesterday took our tents from us & the only shelter we now have to protect us from the pelting storm & the parching rays of the Sun, is the great tent sheet of Heaven. There was much disaffection among the boys on giving them up, but what could we effect when there is glittering steel & deathly bullets ready to force us to any measure. I understand that owing to the delicate characters of the Eastern troops that they will be permitted to keep their tents. If I find it so I shall console myself with the thought that there is a just God that weighs evrything in a ballance, & that this deed will receive from him its just retribution.

I must now close my last letter in Western Va. The night draws nigh & Dress Parade is at hand. Direct your letters as usual until you hear from me again—write soon & often. I salute you—Jno V Hadley

Lurea [Luray] Va. June 13th/62

Miss Mollie J Hill

My dear lady—it has been a long time since I wrote you & a longer time since I heard from you. . . .

Since I last wrote you I with the rest of Shields' Division have marched between 400 & 500 miles.—Have not been in camp two days at a time since the 10th of May. On the 10th of May we left Harrisonburg, went by way of Strausburg, Middl[e]town, Front Royal, Warrenton, to Fred[e]ricksburg. Then from Fredricksburg by way of Manassas, Haymarket, Rector town again to Front Royal. Arriving at the latter place Jackson was at Winchester.

Our brigade was sent out to feel of his strength. We skirmished with him for a half day. Drove him five miles & returned to Front Royal. The next day [Major General

John C.] Fremont began to drive him & we were ordered here to head him off. Marched 38 miles in 24 hours & failed in our plans. Jackson did not come this way. We were then ordered 25 miles down the river to save a bridge & failed. The citizens heard of our coming & burned it. We marched all night through the rain making but two fifteen minutes halts the whole night & at daylight met the floating wreck of the bridge we were trying to save.

We were ordered 17 [13?] miles further up the valley to burn a bridge the only escape for Jackson. It was at Port Republic near Staunton. We found Jackson & his hosts at Port Republic & our presence there was the cause of the fields around the town to almost flow with human blood. We reached the town at 2 o'clock on Sunday the 8th inst. . . . We had with us but four peices of artillery & about 200 cavelry. As we neared the place we could discover but little sighns of the enemy. The cavelry with two guns dashed through town to the bridge—saw no enemy in force until they found themselves almost surrounded with infantry from ambush. They were nearly all captured & both peices ceized.

Our Reg. was just entering town when Jacksons waggon train that stood on the opposite side of the river began to break right & left & "There revealed alas that ere they should" 3 batteries of 18 guns. They opened on us at once with a terrific fire from evry gun. We passed through their fire to town, saw our task hopeless, about faced—passed again through their fire on common time until we passed their range.²³ We lost 10 men killed & many wounded—had 5 in our company & among them our Capt.²⁴ He left here for home to day. Columbus Franklin was badly wounded in the side & left arm. R. H. Myrick his left arm shot off. Seargt H M Straugh[a]n slightly in both arms & on left knee. Wilson Job[e] slightly on the head.²⁵

²³ A more detailed description of this action is in *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XII, pt. 1, p. 696.

²⁴ Although Hadley's company commander was wounded, the only officer in the regiment killed in this engagement was Captain Solomon Waterman of Company C. He was the first commissioned officer of the Seventh Indiana to die in action. Thomson, *Seventh Indiana*, 102; Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 42.

²⁵ Private Columbus Franklin, of Brownsburg, was discharged for disability January 22, 1863; Private Robert H. Myrick, of Bellville, was discharged for disability January 29, 1863; Sergeant Henry M. Straughan, of Indianapolis, served with the Seventh Indiana until the end of its three-year tour of duty; Private Noah W. Jobe, of New Elizabeth, soon rejoined his comrades in the field and was captured in the Battle of the Wilderness. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, IV, 93, 94.

We withdrew a mile from the place & camped for the night. Next morning the 9th the 3d brigade having come to our assistance we renewed the attack at sunup. The two brigades perhaps numbered 3000 & 500 men. Our line was as follows[:] 7th Ind. on the right wing, 7 & 5th Ohio, 84th & 110 Pa. the center, & the 3d brigade the left wing, 6 pieces of cannon on the left, 4 in the center, & two on the right. We took our position at 8 A.M. & at 9 we heard a tremendous yell arise in our front. Following it [we] saw rise up over a hill a rebel brigade & with flying colors & prancing steeds they came steadily up. Within 200 yds of us they poured a volley into our ranks when we without delay returned the compliment which brought them to a halt.

Here was the place to try men's souls. We were in an open field without a stump or even a bush to shelter us from bullets. We stood & fired 80 rounds. When Col Gavin dashed in front & commanded us to charge bayonets. Off every man started with an unearthly yell on the double quick. It was too much for the guilty rebels. Their line began to stagger & when within about 40 yards of them they broke & ran with all speed. I was not sorry to see it for I must confess that I don't like to try the virtue of steel. Their officers with drawn swords tried in vain to rally them. They ran like cowards. We chased them for a half mile & left them running. Their center soon gave way & afterwards followed by their right. Thus two Yankee brigades drove four rebel brigades. Jackson seeing this disaster crossed his whole Division & they began to come against us by acres. We saw their numbers—thought it wise to retreat & beat off.

From our losses you may judge of the battle's fierceness. In two batteries there were 68 horses killed. Our Reg. lost 147 killed & wounded & the other Reg. in proportion.²⁶ In our company we had one killed & 13 wounded. Lieut [Andrew] Luke is also killed or captured.²⁷ Alvah Montgomery was the one killed in our Company.²⁸ Receiving the ball he turned round to me said "Here goes [""]—laid gently down—rested his head on his left arm—laid his gun by his right side & without

²⁶ The Seventh Indiana's losses at Port Republic were 9 killed, 107 wounded, and 29 missing. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XII, pt. 1, p. 690.

²⁷ Lieutenant (later Captain) Luke was wounded and captured in this engagement. Following his exchange, this native of Danville served with the Seventh Indiana until its muster from service. Thomson, *Seventh Indiana*, v.

²⁸ Private Montgomery was from Brownsburg. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, IV, 94.

speaking a word or moving a limb he shut his eyes & died. For the want of horses we were compelled to leave 8 peices of cannon behind us which with some stragling men was all the enemy got of us & we brought from them about 200 prisoners.

At the first onset they brought against us 4 brigades. Our two of no more than 3500 men whiped them in a fair fight. They then brought against us their whole Division which their own men say was 30,000 strong & we beat [it] off. The 7th Ind fought the 7th Ga, the 7 La., & the 5th Va. Where they first stood they left 27 killed on the field & were carrying off all the time. I should like to speak more generally of events for they are numerous but cannot this time.

I can't give our loos [loss] as a whole for I have no idea of its extent. It is severe.—Perhaps you will see a report. I shall expect a letter soon.

Your friend &c—J.V.H

Front Royal Va. June 20th/62

Mollie J. Hill

Dear lady—I have again had the honor & felt the preasure [*sic*] of receiving another letter written by your own fair hand. . . . Yours was handed me among many others, but was first to be read. From the signature I recognized the author & I felt a deeper interest in it then than any I had. It was from a friend that always seemed to receive me a little more kindly & with a more loving smile than any other & they are not forgotten in the army. Though we seem, here, to loose all the finer feelings of our nature—learn to look upon a man flouncing in his blood, with no more feelings of remorse than if he were a beheaded dog & hear the groans of suffering humanity with as much indifference as if it were the groans of a dying hyena.

But, dear friend I don't desire to impress you with the idea that this is common with us. It is only the result of battle. A man may & will become so infuriated by the din & dangers of a bloody fight, that if he ever had a tender heart it will [be] turned to stone & his evry de sire for blood. Though our minds are thus secured & our better natures thus distracted yet we are not forgetful of those who watch & pity us at home. It is a source of unexpressable relief to a weary

& worn Soldier to believe that he has behind him friends who are anxiously waiting his return that they may place upon his head evry laurel he has won & give him the praise deserving of a soldier. Had he no such reflections his lot would be truly miserable & worthlessness & infamy his destiny.

You spoke of your brother's discharge. I was sorry to hear of his bad health but happy to learn that he had got home. For I know too much of sickness in the army. I have seen it with all its attendant horrors. I have seen the strong fall & the brave sicken & die for the want of attention. At Elk Water—Oh miserable place—Hell itself dose not stare at me with half the horrors—I have seen 300 from our Reg. prostrate with disease laying about on the cold ground—in little mean tents & not a particle of Medical aid & since we left there I have had not half the dread for bullets that I have for disease.²⁹ But we have been very fortunate for five months—no sickness of consequence.

One of our sable cooks—who ran off from his master near Staunton, joined us at Harris[on]burg in May, & was captured at the battle of Port Republic on Monday the 9 inst—returned to our camp the other evening. He tells many thrilling stories—was with them a week. He says they talked much of the fight & of the desperation of the 7th Ind. They fought our Reg. of 900 with the 7th La., 7th Ga., & 5th Va.—was badly cut to peices & ran—says they'll have revenge. He escaped in the night—saw Lieut. A. J. Luke of our Co. & many others of the brigade safely Guarded in their ranks—says they were well fed & kindly treated. He returned back over the battle field—reports our dead all buried & wounded all kindly cared for. . . .

We have marching orders again—I dont know where to—perhaps to Manassas or Fredricksburg. Direct yours to Washington D.C. Shields' Division.

We were offered transportation on the cars. Gen Shields refused it—said it was a Governmental swindle—Shields grows unpopular. I could tell you more of his deeds.

We march tomorrow—getting tired laying round—been here three days in one place. I close—your friend as I have ever professed J V Hadley

²⁹ No less than two-thirds of the 618,000 deaths in the Civil War resulted from sickness and disease. Alan C. Davis, "Diseases, Wounds, and Medical Treatment [in the Civil War]," *Medical Affairs*, II (Spring, 1961), 7.

Alexandria Va. July 7th/62

Miss Mollie J Hill

Dear friend—I write you to day under different circumstances from what I have ever written you before. Bright prospects were always looming up before me & I believe I wrote you once that I would be with you on the Fourth that has just passed—indeed when I enlisted I put that as a boundary of my stay in the Army. But things are more ominous now. I believe as do many others here that we have been most shamefully beaten at Richmond—that we have lost a good portion of our army—many of our guns & if so the results of this battle will strike a most tremendous blow for the Southern Confederacy.

It is enough for us to know that McClellen instead of being three miles from Richmond his Right wing is now thirty miles from the city.³⁰ He tells us that it was a pre-meditated plan—arranged [ten?] day[s] before it took place—If this is so the advantage gained must soon be shown or McClellen politically dies. He has lounged long in the lap of luxury & ease. Has long carried a big name & done nothing. He has promised to drive the rebels to the last ditch. He has slaughtered & disorganized a big & powerful army. He claims to have fallen back 30 miles from Richmong [sic] for a stratigetical purpose & he must now *show* to the world some of his powerful wit or they will demand, & justly too, his dethronement. Have I said too much?

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We are now encamped three miles from Alexandria on the Manassas R.R. Have a beautiful camp—good shades, fine water, & plenty of soft bread. Two of our brigades have already gone to Richmond. We may go but I don't believe we will. We are too few. No more than 1,500. We are worn out & ought to rest. Judge [William S.] Holman³¹ said we should. I can't say that I am mad, like some, because they w'on't take us to Richmond. In the entire seige I would not expect to suffer as much as we did at Port Republic. But out of so many, many must suffer & many a brave man will die for want of attention.

The Fourth passed off here very quietly. We had to put on a little millitary stile. Ran around a little through fields,

³⁰ McClellan's grand dream of seizing Richmond had disappeared in the smoke of the Seven Days campaign (June 26-July 1, 1862).

³¹ Holman, a former judge, served as a U.S. representative from Indiana from March 4, 1859, to March 3, 1865, and from March 4, 1867, to March 3, 1877. *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961* (Washington, 1961), 1069.

over hills, &c—listened to a sermon—gave three cheers for the old flag—three for the speedy termination of the war (ten years)—three for our gray haired citizenship &c—then withdrew in good order to camp.

How passed the day with you Mary? Though it has been a long time since I sat in thy divine presence & a long time since I listened with loving rapture to the plaintive strains of thy subduing voice & it may be much longer yet I hope & believe that some fate will again lead us face to face, that I may assure you how much I value your regards & how much I am your friend—Jno

Alexandria Va July 22d/62

Miss Mollie J. Hill

Friend Mary—I write you to day under very embarrassing circumstances. For a long time I have been hearing that the channel of your affections was running in an opposite direction—that you were about to adopt another name &c and I never gave it the least attention until very recently. But the unaccountable delay of your letters has forced some suspicion at last. If you have found another more worthy or who has a greater claim upon your affections I am glad for I must say that I never felt myself worthy of that heart which knows no sentiment that is not pure & holy & which feels no motive but to make happy and blessed all associates.

Hearing what I have heard it is a natural and just desire of mine to be made acquainted with the fact, for if I am writing to a lady whose heart and hand belongs to another, the tenor of my letters is neither polite nor wise. You can, of course recognize their impropriety as well as I. If the report adjudges you rightly, Mary, you will do me at least one more kindness & write me at once, frankly about the matter, that I may not labor under misapprehensions. For if I have ever been confidential and faithful to you, I shall ever remain so to be and confide evrything that you may see proper to divulge. Let me know the worst and if the report be true let the cords of intimacy be a little relaxed but I hope those of friendship may never be broken.

I cannot write longer—politeness forbids—I could tell you many things but cannot now for this is the third letter at least since I had one from you. excuse my impertinence for you know my honesty.

I am as ever Jno

On the banks of the Rapidan
Va. Aug. 17th/62

My dear Mollie

Your letter of the 9th inst is received and already read a dozen times and at every reading my breast would heave and heart bounded as if leaping to the footsteps of a new born joy. There is no doubt Mollie but what I did you great injustice in accusing you of inconstancy. I now know I did, but I was driven to it by the wand of disappointed associates.

There is hardly a boy in my Company who did not leave behind in coming into the army, a lover and there [is] hardly one among them all who has not been deceived. They of course, too knew that I was receiving letters from some fair hand (and there are some of course in Camp who knew from where they came) and as they seemed to quit coming the boys of course let no opportunity pass to inquire into every delay and if they discovered anything would hasten to persecute me. It is an old proverb "that misery loves company" and I believe it for it has been beautifully exemplified in my case. But I shall no more be led astray. I shall no more feel disappointed. I shall no longer doubt.

But now, Mollie let us bury it *all*. Let us forget that there was *jealousy* existing and let nothing characterize our correspondence hereafter, but the strongest ties of *affection*. You spoke about keeping company with Ambrose—had I objections. I most absurdly have none. May my right arm drop from my body and heart turn to stone if I ever object to your keeping company with any one whom your good judgement teaches is honorable. It was never my disposition to complain for I always abhorred the principal [*sic*]. I hope to hear of your being in company often and of your enjoying yourself to the fullest extent.

Our Gen (Caroul) [Colonel Samuel S. Carroll] is just now brought in mortally wounded.³² He was out in front and was shot by a sharp shooter. In consequence of the above there is so much excitement in camp that I can't write longer. In our last engagement R. P. Parker was badly wounded in left arm. I said engagement but it was not. We were not in the fight of slaughter mountain but sent out on pickets the night following when the rebels stole upon us and fired among

³² Contrary to Hadley's statement, Colonel Carroll (who had a brigadier's responsibilities but only a colonel's rank) recovered from his wounds. Yet the injuries of this forty-year-old native of the District of Columbia were serious enough to keep him from the two ensuing campaigns. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XII, pt. 2, pp. 2, 28, 175, 345.

us wounding 46 but killing none.³³ I will tell you sometime about the battle. It was a sad affair.

We are now in [Brigadier General James B.] Ricketts Division instead of Shields'. I have the honor to be your best friend

J. V. Hadley

Armory Hospital

Whashington City D.C. Sept 16/62

Miss Mollie J Hill

My dearest friend—just one year from the day that I stood in the Statehouse yard at Indianapolis, and swore with uplifted hand, to sustain the Government, to fight traitors, to obey officers, &c, &c—I stood upon the battle field of Bull Run—and while the Earth was drinking in great draughts of blood and madly seemed to yawn for more, while countless shells were screaming vengeance on the foe and leaden aders hissing past our heads—while men were dying, heroes groaning, victors yelling, steel a clashing, death a dancing—too painfully . . . I was wounded in the thigh which since that date (30th of Aug.) has held me prostrate.

It was dark when it occurred. Fortune as you have learned was against us and we being on the extreeme right was swinging round to form a new line which had been broken on the left a center. We having been engaged all afternoon were tired and fell beack near a mile to a place we thought of perfect security, for we believed a Division at least to be in front of us. We had stacked arms and were sitting about on the ground talking about the fortunes of the day when suddenly, in front about 200 yards distant, emerging from a thicket of pine, we saw a column of infantry.

Col [Joseph] Thoburn³⁴ commanding the brigade at once called us to arms. He then sang out to the approaching column "What force comes there?" "Secesh" replied a voice. "Dont talk that way" says Thoburn "or we'll give you a volley". "Well who are you?" called out the voice. "We are Union troops" returned Thoburn. "Oh well then" echoed the voice "don't fire we're friends["].

³³ The casualties of the Seventh Indiana at the Battle of Slaughter Mountain (or Cedar Run) on August 9, 1862, numbered three less than Hadley's figure. *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁴ Following the Battle of Slaughter Mountain, Colonel Thoburn, of the First (West) Virginia had assumed command of the Fourth Brigade. *Indiana at Antietam: Report of the Indiana Antietam Commission* . . . (Indianapolis, 1911), 86.

Onward they came preserving an excellent front. And Thoburn still doubtful cried out again [""] if you are Union troops wave your colors[""] which was done. They marched up within at least 15 steps and halting dressed their line as if to stack arms. Thoburn now rode down towards them when bang! went a gun which barely saved his life. He wheeled about and shouted "the enemy—fire![""]

At this instant a perfect sheet of fire proceeded from our ranks and from their[s]. Simultaneous with the fire in front was another from our right flank, coming from a column that had slipped upon us unnoticed.³⁵ The column then on our right began to swing round in our rear to cut us off when we were ordered to get out of there as best we could. From the right hand volley I received my wound and when I had discharged my gun and faced about to follow my Reg. another ball passing through my hat near the temples laid me insensible on the ground. I know not how long I lay here but I guess not long. When sense returned I sprang to my feet in great confusion. I knew not where I was or who I was, what I had done, what I should do, or anything about it.

Secesh were about me thicker than Black birds in June. I felt the hot blood streaming from my wound and at once decided that death was my choise before Captivity in their hands at that time. They had thousands of their own which were before me and a death of starvation and suffering I was not seeking. I seized my faithful rifle, which had served me in many troubles, by the musle and gave her an unearthly hurl into the ranks of a column that was advancing about five or ten steps from me and I dont think that less than a score of bullets sighed me adieu as I bounded from them.

I had made about ten jumps when an impertinent gray back presented his beyonett to my breast and demanded a halt. I halted and then "What Reg. do you belong to?" I answered 7th Ind. But he misstook me I am sure for the 7th La for he took down his gun and joined his Reg which had passed in the foray. I followed him into their ranks. I went and continued with them about four hundred yds. We here struck a cornfield and I dont think but few of them entered the field but I did. And I took a seperate row and I know you would have laughted to see my passibles coming

³⁵ A stimulating account of the regiment's role in the Battle of Second Manassas is in Thomson, *Seventh Indiana*, 119-121. Incomplete casualty returns for the Seventh Indiana listed 3 killed, 16 wounded, and 4 missing. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XII, pt. 2, p. 255.

off. Haversack, canteen, cartridge box, and evrything loose went flying into the air and then to say I ran will hardly give you a mea[n]ing. I might have exclaimed with great propriety

"I am the rider of the wind the stirer of the storm
The Hericane I left behind to be with lightning warmed["]].

Fifteen minutes however brought me up with our rear where I found help. With the support of two friends I waded the river waist deep and walked 5 miles to Centerville that night. To give farther particulars is unnecessary. However two days later found me where I now am in a very comfortable Hospital. The bone of my leg I think is not injured and the wound doing well. I walked out to dinner yesterday and to day and think by the close of this week I can walk quite well.

I have had no letter from you for five weeks. When I left the Reg we had had no mail for three week[s]. I answered your last on the banks of the Rapidan. I must quit for I grow very tired. No support for my paper but a little book. Be of good cheer Mary for the war will end and friends will return to your greeting and I hope to be first. Hoping that you m[a]y live long and happy I remain as ever

Direct [letters] to Your loving friend John
Sergt. J. V. Hadley
Ward A, Armory Hospital
Washington City, D.C.

Washington City D.C. Oct 31st/62

Miss Mollie J Hill

Dear friend—I wrote you some time ago, with the expectation of soon following the letter. In this I was a little disappointed but my hopes are still sanguine of hailing my native state soon again. I have been from my bed now near two weeks and during this time I have let no opportunity or circumstance pass that would aid me in getting a furlough. I twice attempted and twice failed and now have the third one in progress. The old addage has it, that "the third time is the charm["] and I believe it will be in this case. I expect a furlough in a few days.

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My wound is almost quite well. I walk now without the aid of even a cane. Hoping to see you soon I shall not write longer, but remain yours with affection J. V. Hadley

Danville [Indiana] Dec. 1st/62

Mollie J Hill

Dear girl—another turn in the wheel of Fortune has made me 1st Lieut. of my Company—consequently I shall not be able to return to my Reg. for two weeks to come and I shall be most happy to see you again at your father's house on Saturday evening next (Dec. 6th). I am very

affectionately Yours

J. V. Had.

Pratts Landing 10 miles below Aquia Creek
Dec. 28th/62

My dear girl

After two days fearfully "riding on the Rail Road Keer"—steaming down the fabulous Potomac a hundred miles—walking 20 miles through a rough, thick, and desolated country I reached my Regiment, my Company, my home. I find them in much better condition than I expected. They suffered but little at Fredricksburg³⁶—look the best I ever saw them [and] have good clothes—comfortable huts and plenty of blankets.

I find my favorite Col [Corporal Henry Thomas] Ashby still up and doing—with plenty of dry fun and much applauded for his gallantry at the late battle.³⁷ James W. Adams is looking well and has not in looks, habits, or manners materially changed. I presume he will soon be 2d Lieut. as Lieut Luke is resigning. I am sorry that we are going to loose Luke for he is no bad man—but brave, manly, & honorable and is very indignant at me being promoted over him. He seemes to not blame me but my friends who procured it. Were it to be done over again I would not accept it over him. I dont blame him for it. I told him so—I would do just as he is doing—though I hate to see him leave us.

Mary this is Sunday night and what a change three weeks have wrought. I have not forgotten where I was then; and I feel and know where I am now. Then in the presence

³⁶ The regiment's losses at Fredericksburg, Virginia, were 1 killed and 5 wounded. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XXI, 138. A summary of its role in the battle is in *ibid.*, 471-472.

³⁷ Hadley here refers to a messmate in Company B, Corporal Ashby. Apparently the men in the ranks gave this noncommissioned officer the sobriquet of "Colonel," possibly because they had fought several times against a Confederate cavalry officer with the same surname, Colonel (later Brigadier General) Turner Ashby. Thomson, *Seventh Indiana*, 136.

of a friend who had no intention but to make happy and no motive but to bless. But how changed now. The roar of hostile guns that I now hear in front tell me that I am in the presence of an armed foe and that death may be mine before this is yours. The world seemes to be mourning to night Mary. Evrything is hushed and not a noise to break the solitude but the sharp shrill notes of the trumpet which tells the troop[s] that it is time to go to rest and the reverberating echoes of the canonade in front. Evrything seemes to sigh. There is enough of solem pathos in one blast of winter wind around the corner of my tent to put all mankind in tears.

.

I have not forgotten, nor never will the time when we sat together as we were about to part for the evening and I heard those words "I ask you not to stay but go. Be patient, be enduring, be obedient, be kind, be gallant, but of all things be *moral*". Be moral. Whence the supernatural power of these two words? Be moral. They stand before me like a giant with eternal strength whose outstretched arm is ever ready to snatch me from the destroyer. Be moral. There is sweetness in the words. There [is] music in them to lull the fatal Siren and let me escape. Be moral. May these two words be engraven on the banner that shall lead me in battle, that shall wave over me in camp, and may they be a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to lead me, at last, safely back, to claim the hand of her that uttered them.

Mary my stile is pathetic to night. I know it and would have it so. There is a time to mourn and a time to dance. There are times when the heart should be unlocked and evry tender feelings indulged and let this be my lot to-night. Let the eyes that have be[en] dry for years be moistened with the tears of remembrance. I left a mother whose form was drooping with the heaviness of age and who lavished her love upon me not wisely but too well and a loving sister tottering on the grave who as she pressed my hand whispered in my ear Farewell forever. Mary these things come heavily on me to night.

Mary[,] Jim Adams has got a letter from home and he comes in to tell me of a great misfortune that has happened to your family.³⁸ I was much surprised. But such is the end

³⁸ This misfortune was the death of Mollie's mother, Mrs. Rebecca Hornaday Hill, who had died of typhoid fever. John V. Hadley (ed.), *History of Hendricks County, Indiana: Her People, Industries and Institutions* (Indianapolis, 1914), 176.

of our kind—the nature of our being. Accept dear friend my deepest sympathy in mourning for the dead and allow me to sorrow with you for the bereavement it has caused.

I have had no letter from you yet since I returned but hope for one soon. Direct your letters as before. I will write no more now.

Yours with great regard

Miss Mollie J. Hill

J. V. Hadley

Pratts Landing Va. Jan 7th/63

My dear friend Mary

Yours of the 22 ult. was received with usual joy and thankfulness. Although its principal contents were anticipated, it was read with grave interest and with a depth of feeling that is called forth by no other correspondent. As I read your affecting discription of your mother's death I thought I could see the upheavings of distress and hear the wailings of sorrow that followed this stroke of Providence. So sudden, so unexpected, so affecting that it would break the bars of the hardest heart and soften it to tears. Mary I some times believe that death is the portion of the fortunate. The longer I live the more I learn to distrust and despair of my fellows. So often have I trusted and been deceived. So often confided and been betrayed.

.

This world is not so bad but the people in it are a great cheat. Our best friends seemingly are laying in ambush to destroy us. While they would have us believe that they would do anything to make us happy and promote our honor they at the same time are trying to cut our heads off and I have frequently thought that they are fortunate who die good and honorable and that we should rejoice rather than mourn their loss, no matter how tender the cords which bound them to us.

Your mother and sister were noble as they were good—beloved as they were true and now while the world is in confusion and our country at war they remain undisturbed and untroubled. Now when a bloody conflict is announced and the death knell is sounded in a thousand homes while the groans of wounded and suffering humanity are caught up, carried, and [chanled?] in the circle of distressed friends—these peaceful sleepers rest in blissful ignorance of all.

So Mary be of good cheer, banish grief—it is the end of us all. Stand up bravely and face the adverses of the world. Put on a bold front and vindicate yourself. Strike for yourself first, for your friends afterwards. It is the moto of the age. First accomodate yourself then indulge your friends. This is the spirit that succeeds.

The mystery of my Promotion is now explained. It was the work of Capt Banta and Col Gavin. Luke sent a protest to Govoner [Morton] against the measure and in accordance with an order the Gov. issued last winter he could not Promote me over Luke. Consequently upon Lukes' protest the Gov. revoked my Commission making Luke first and me Second Lieut. This is a little embarrassing to me, but not so much to me as the other was to Luke. Luke is a meritorious man and I was surprised that he was not Recommended for 1st Lieut. Luke has done by me exactly what Major [Ira G.] Grover³⁹ of our Reg. did by Capt [Alexander B.] Pattison. Pattison was elected Major by the unanimous vote of the officers, but Grover was the ranking officer. And after Pattison had been playing Major for two months Grover came out with his commisson and sent Pattison back to his Company.

Write soon and believe me yours truly Jno V Hadley

Pratts Landing Va. Jan. 14th/63

Miss Mary J Hill

Dear friend. . . . Lieut Luke had just received the miniature of his affianced fair (Miss Cara Howard) and we were lying on the bed extolling the qualities of our *friends* when the Post boy handed me your letter and with an outburst of pleasure I broke its seal for I knew the writer.

In your letter you spoke of telling your dying mother our secret, at her request and you ask me if I blame you. Mary why do you ask me such a question? Do you think me so intolerent? I would indeed have thought you very ungrateful had you refused to tell her. I am very happy to know that she had such an exaulted opinion of me and feel that I am not worthy of such confidence. Should I live to prove that your mother was not entirely deceived I shall have accomplished one great object of my life. You also speak of

³⁹ Grover, a native of Greensburg, had left his seat in the state legislature to enter the army. Like Hadley, he was captured in the Wilderness fighting. See Thomson, *Seventh Indiana*, 10, 97-98, 183.

your arrangement for school being annulled. I am sorry of this but believe "that all things work together for good" and that this opportunity may sometime be restored.

.

I can't tell you any news for I have none. I can't tell you when we'll move for you know as well about this as I do. I can't give you any signs of peace for fortune seemes against us. I can't tell you that the army is enthusiastic for I fear that is not the case.

Jim Adams is well to do. Is liked as Ordely Sergt. by both men an[d] officers. He is professedly a bosome friend of mine and if he writes anything to the contrary to his friends at home in order to conciliate his illfortune in promotion—you will please keep me advised. I have no reason to be jealous of Jim but I know the misgivings of our nature. . . .

With my best wishes for your happiness and success with the responsibilities that are upon you I

remain as ever John

Pratts Landing Va. Jan. 26th/63

Miss Mollie J Hill

My dear friend—another one of your coveted letters is before me and for me to tell how thankful I am to you for it would be but an idle repetition of words. . . .

Since I last wrote you we have made another attempt to redeem the honor of the Army of the Potomac.⁴⁰ At noon on the 21st inst. we struck tents, strip[p]ed our shelter sheets from their wooden walls, and with buckled swords, shouldered guns, packed knap sacks, and three days cooked rations, fell in and marched out to our parade grounds. Here we were formed for the march in the following order[:] 7th Ind. Commanding by Capt Will C. Banta (Lieut Col. [John F.] Cheek⁴¹ and Maj. Grover being absent) in front of the brigade Commanded by Col Gavin.

⁴⁰ Here Hadley describes Major General Ambrose Burnside's inglorious "Mud March" of January, 1863. Overriding the protests of every one of his corps commanders, Burnside attempted to turn the Confederate left flank by a forced march. The elements, however, turned against him; his army floundered at an average pace of a mile per day. After three weeks of frustration, Burnside cancelled the move. Shortly thereafter, Major General Joseph Hooker succeeded him to the command of the Army of the Potomac. See Warren W. Hassler, Jr., *Commanders of the Army of the Potomac* (Baton Rouge, La., 1962), 119-124.

⁴¹ Lieutenant Colonel Cheek, a native of Lawrenceburg, often commanded the Seventh Indiana until March 15, 1863, when he resigned from service. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 40; *Indiana at Antietam*, 83-88.

We had a fine afternoon for marching. The air blew a cool refreshing gale and the roads were hard but entirely free from dust. There was no artillery stuck in our way and the men being fresh with plenty of nerve we made without much difficulty 12 miles before dark and that too with most prodigious loads. Darkness was now upon us and we were two miles above Falmo[u]th in the face of the enemy. The elements now became alarmingly infuriated. The wind blew almost a herricane while the rain began to desend in perfect torrents. To march was impossible and to hunt a camp seemed almost as difficult. We succeeded in groaping our way to a rough hill side which had been heavily wooded, but was now cut off and put in the cord. It was green pine but by putting a sufficient quantity of it together we finally got a fire.

We tried to patch our little canvass but it seemed all of no purpose. The wind blew so violently and the rain beat so furiously against our humble little huts, that they afforded us the least comfort. We had not been to bed more than an hour before evry blanket was drenched with rain. The fires were all blown and washed out and to rekindle them now was an impossibility. I once thought that I had suffered intensely while on Picket once at Elkwater. I thought too that I had discovered the extreemity of human endurance on Picket below Strausburg. And I now believe that it was all eclipsed by this night. It was one of these cold winter rains that we have in Indiana, but it seemed now that its fury was fabulous. Notwithstanding the weather the night was a busy one. Troops were passing all the night. The curses of men, the braying of mules, the notes of the bugle were heard at evry hour.

Morning came and with [it] the rain seemed [to] increase. At 8 we again moved and the roads were now very muddy. Several yes many of our boys now sank under their great loads and they were forced to leave them. We marched but five miles to-[that?] day and camped in some waste land now grown up thickly with pine bushes.—Here we spent the remainder of the day and the following night as we did also the next day and night, and not one hour during the whole time did it cease raining. It rained not hard but incessant. The Army passing and repassing had made the mud alarming. I can give you no idea of its extent. At one time I saw 12 heavy mules to one waggon with three boxes of crackers and it seemed that the weight of one man would have stuck them.

Our guns and trains became mired and mud so deep that horses were no more to them than flies to an ox waggon.

So we could move no farther. The army was stuck in the mud and the battle must be postponed. And with long ropes and a hundred men the artillery and waggons were dragged to high ground and left with strong guards while the infantry were sent back to their respective camps. With this rain, in my opinion, perished the brightest prospects of this war. I am sanguine in the belief that it would have fared ill with the rebels if we had got across the river. There was a solemn candor and sternness about every man which seemed to say "give us this time the issue". Whether we will repeat the effort remains for future events.

Mary this is Sunday night and as I look at your miniature which lies opened before me my heart is filled with the rapture of other days when the holy Sabath seemed to be made more sacred by the divine presence of her whom I address. With a heart yearning to return to assure you of its fidelity I remain faithfully
Yours Jno. V Had.

Pratts Landing Va. Feb. 7th/63

Endeared Mary—I have just read yours of the 23d ult. and was glad to hear that things are as well with you as they are. . . .

You ask me how I like the position I now occupy. Of course I like it better than playing, *Private, Corporal, Sergt.* or *Ordely*, yet among the advantages and pleasures there are many disadvantages and displeasures. There is a throb of pleasure felt in shoulder strapped authority, when away from home, when instead of having the Guards beyonett placed at your breast and halted, you are saluted as you pass along. Yet in this I never felt any glory for I feel that I was just as good a boy—just as meritorious and brave—when I stood shivering on my post as now when I review the Guard with a Red Sash. A thousand times have my feelings chafed like a fettered lion when I remember how often I have been so grossly insulted by intilecual blanks and now [am] received with courtesy on the same business.

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Our situation is now good. Our culinary condition has been much improved. Soft bread, Potatoes, onions, Molasses,

beans, beef, and butter are among the things we now eat. Like a herd of poor oxen they are fattening us for the slaughter. We eat and sleep and wait patiently for the time.

Our army here is being dispersed. The 5th Army Corps has embarked for Fortress Monroe, the 9th has similar orders, and from all indications we are to follow soon. I dont know whether it is for a Southern Campaign or for another trial for Richmond. I think the former the most probable as it would be the most wise. Richmond I think almost out of our power. So well fortified and defended with such desperate valor that it would be almost floated away in blood before it would yield.

. . . . When I again write you it will probably be from another Station. At present I am devotedly

Miss Mollie J Hill

Your friend John

Pratts Landing Va. Feb. 24th/63

Dear Mary

Your letter of the 15 inst was received last night. Although it had seemed like an age since I had received a letter from you, yet never once did I feel like you were neglecting your duty. But I feared you were sick, seized with the assassin Typhoid for I had heard of his ravages about Pittsboro. I was extremely happy to hear that you were recovering from the Dyphtheria a disease but little less frightful in its nature than the Typhoid.

.

Mary may I tell you my dream? Yes I will tell it, for you will not be offended. No, No, you cannot be. The Earth was covered with a deep and drifting garb of snow. The wind was cruelly cold as I lay in my tent and dreamed. I was at home again. War was no longer our watchword or death and destruction our calling. I was before my mothers hearth stone and the family was there. Brothers and one sister were all here and there was merry making. Though we had all grown into stern man and woman hood, yet we were all there who once formed a happy little houshold and hand in hand, led by a mother, we seemed to journey back through childhood and gathering, strewed flowers upon the grave of a sister we buried then. Our evening tales were told—our festivities were over and we retired.

The next morning looked happy with sunny smiles and we were up and the morning salutations passed. At 12 o'clock with a fluttering heart and decent attire I bent my way to your house. The *minister* was to be there. Well I arrived and met you at the door and there was grasping of hands and touching of lips. Leaning upon my arm we went into your chamber. The minister was ready and announced. We knelt before the altar, plighted our hearts, we uttered our vows, we loved, and we were married. Like two weary, wandering souls stepping into Heaven did we enter into the happiness of wedlock and as the evening wore away our cup of happiness seemed to grow fuller and fuller. You were leaning on my arm and we were strolling through the yard drinking each others' sighs and shaping our course for life when I awoke and found nothing but the rough touch of Captain Banta.

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What a deceit. For many long years yet I fear there will still be war. And while there is war among us there is no peace for me. As to this my fate is sealed. There is no turning back for me. The cause the same. My country as dear, my aid as needed. Why should I lay down my arms? I love peace but I love my country more. I am now wedded to war and while God gives me strength I mean to share her fortunes until the issue comes. I am as sanguine to day in the belief that the Union will be restored as I ever was. I fear no Revolution of the North West because they know too well the retribution that would follow them. I fear no Foreign power for they know too well our strength. But I believe there is a day coming when this Union will again be united, when its people will again be happy, when we will love where we now hate, and where we now have war we will have domestic happiness. At least like the sweet scent within a budded rose such a joy is folded in my heart. And when I view the end of this war—see men returning to their families with heads crowned with glory won and nestling in their bosoms the concieneness of having done their duty—"my heart is burning to be one of those".

If you read the Hendri[cks] County Ledger at your house and desire to know the sentiments of the boys from that County you can learn them by referring to a Document that will appear in about next weeks' number. At a meeting of the officers of the three Hendricks Co. Companies we

wrote and ratified those sentiment[s] and [if] there is any honor in them I claim my share for writing the Document.

Hoping that you are by this time well and able to write me a long letter I close with my best wishes for your health and happiness.

J. V. Hadley

Army of the Potomac

Pratts Landing Va. M[arch] 15/63

Miss Mollie Hill

Pittsbor[o] Indiana

My Dear Mary—We've got lots of company to day and they have got so many things to tell and so many come in to hear them tell—that it is impossible for me to write you but a short and worthless letter to day. Father Horniday from Plainfield, E. M. Straughan of Danville, and Asa Strong of Clermont are our guests and each has his story and opinion to give which keep a perfect clamor in our tent all the time.

You wonder if I were at church on the 1st. Dont believe I was, Mary. Was on Picket then. Wanted to go to "*me[e]ten*" but couldn't. Had to go to a house hard by where I saw a *bird* light. It looked like a *bird* of *Paradise*. Guess it wasn't though. Her *feathers* had the appearance of once being beautiful. But had been roughly used. When I approached she didn't fly. Dont know whether she was frightened or not. Guess she wasn't. She had *seen* men before. I think she (or it) was some ones pet. I couldn't see the attraction and pitied the one who could. Had business at the house. Was looking for a man. A shoulder strapd man. An Officer of the Day.

You ask me if I still play "Checkers". You mean "Cards". No, I have not had a game for a month. Chess has become the game. It is now the most popular thing in the Reg. except "Stealing". The times has come when we can not steal maiden hearts, for want of opportunities and our instincts teaches that we must steal something. But my hear[t] has long been stolen and I would not reclaim it and I also have some assurance that I have stolen one in return which makes me more content than most of my comrades. You say that you are opposed to me killing "Ducks" and that you will settle with me when I come home. I'm glad of this. How I long to make this settlemen[t]—what happiness will follow as an issue.

I can but call to memory these happy coming times when my heart with one endless leap bounds to Indiana and is there lost amid the mazes of waiting joys. But you laugh and say I'm *love sick*. Well if I am its no fault of mine. It [is] yours. It seemes cruel but I cannot call it mean. You say that "You were *over-come* with joy the other day on receiving a letter from *your gallant* Ambrose full of *love*, and lovely sayings," and from the honeyed style you expect a marriage proposial in his next. And what shall you do about it you ask. I will just say. Ask your heart and do its bidding—'tis all the honest way. For where the heart is not given it is wicked to give the hand—yea criminal.

We go on Dress Parade now in a few minutes. I wish you were here to see us. I have got to believe that we look pretty well with good clothing, shining steel, noisy Drums, and flying colors. I believe we look like respectable soldiers. At least we think we do. All quiet—weather bad—spirits good and Spring a going and danger coming. May Heaven shower its blessing on your head. Make you always happy and pure to bless.

Your loving John

Army of the Potomac

Pratts Point Va Ma[rch] 22 [?] 1863

Mollie J Hill
Pittsboro Ind.

Dear Mary—"remember the Sabath day to keep it holy" began your last letter & I can think of nothing more appropriate to begin this one of mine. If I have read my Bible right this is one of the Ten Commandments enjoined upon man & forms one tenth part of his Duty to observe and obey. I have no Minister to tell me of this to day but I remember it from my maternal teachings of many years ago & shall try as I have ever done in some degree to respect. Yet while I have said no prayer nor read a Chapter, I feel that I am discharging a Duty just as holy and just as worshipful as if I were at the Sanctuary or in my closet. And how I love this duty. How I love to keep the Sabath day holy in discharging it. In writing to the guiding star of my ambition—to the object for which I wish to live—to the Being who seemes to have my happiness and destiny in her hands

to bless or ruin. Mary I know you often laugh a[nd] say I talk silly. But Shakespear tells us to

“Learn to love the lesson is but plain
And once made perfect never lost again”.

And I believe it. I once learned the lesson two long years ago, & I have not yet forgotten it. Nor never will nor never wish to. A flame is burning in my breast and though it is painful, I cannot seek to quench it. Better men have loved and worse men have been enslaved. Kings have at all time been suitors & beggars worshipers of this mighty Goddess & why should I claim or wish to be beyond its power.

It was Sunday night when you wrote your last & you say that you wished me there. Thanks for the honor you do me. And Heavens how my heart fluttered in responding Amen to your wish. But my heart sank to remember that no such happiness was mine nor promised to be soon. Oh how I did wish it were mine to slip to your back and just as you recorded that sentence (“I wish you were here”) to have touched you gently on the shoulder & exclaimed “I am here”. The ecstasy of the moment I believe would have been fully felt with grasping hands and touching lips our meeting had been made and while our lips would have been sealed our hearts would have told the story of their suffering. But such a time is coming Dear Mary. And we’ll sit on the sofa. We’ll draw nigh unto each other, we’ll talk, we’ll love.

To day I have been Detailed by our commanding officer from the leisure and quiet of my official Duties in the Company to the more arduous & responsible Duties of Regimental Quartermaster. My career in this Department will be short, though. Probably not to exceed a month. It is occasioned by the Regular Quartermaster going home on a leave of absence.⁴² I shall try to improve my opportunities & get many good rides out of his excellent charger & if the roads were not so bad I might come up to see you to night. Would I surprise you or would you surprise me by finding “your company engaged”. With the exception of a raid occasionally things are still remarkably quiet. No signs of a move nor no signs

⁴² The regimental quartermaster was Lieutenant Benjamin F. Burlingame from Company A. At the Battle of Corrick’s Ford, Virginia, July 13, 1861, Burlingame, then a sergeant, allegedly fired the shot that killed Confederate Brigadier General Robert S. Garnett. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 41; Kemper, “The Seventh Regiment,” *Indiana War Papers*, 129.

of the mud drying up. Rain, Snow, and [shine?] mark the passing of evry day. But as the old song goes more rain more rest. I salute you Mary—John

Q.M. Dept. 7th Ind.

Pot. Army Pratts Point Va. M[arch] 29 [?]/63

Miss Mary Hill
Pittsboro Indiana

My Dear Mary

Sunday morning is again upon me & my happy task of writing you commenced. . . . Mary you tell me that you sit writing before the stone where we once sat together & with unlocked hearts told the secret of our inward passion. Oh those were days that were ripe with happiness—full of joys as the Rainbow is of brightness.

There was—& oh how many sorrows crowd within these two brief words—There was a time when it was mine to live & learn & linger in the haunts of love—to bask in the sunny smiles of Angilic purity—to lean gently upon the alabaster arm of her who makes me happy & who makes me want to live. But why should I recall what *was*. 'Tis *enough* & *all* to know they have *been*. They *may* return. We may hope—but not to[o] sanguine. The fiery ordeal is yet to be passed. The fair castle of our hopes may yet crumble. The present tells us to wait. The storm of war & battle is again lowering. Across the hills of Fredricksburg we can again hear the thunderings of its murderous moan. Balloons hang upon nearly evry breeze. Rockets are flying in evry hour of the night, all of which are forebodings of the coming conflict.

My Department has been very active for the last week. I have turned over to the Brigade Q.M. during the present week all extra horses, waggon, clothing, Supplies, &c. which we cannot transport on a forced march. I have also drawn pack mules & saddles which will carry all personal baggage & provision. We have also mule trains that will carry Ammunition. This is something new in our army & I have fears of its working well. The allotted load I think too great, 275 lbs to the mule. I believe this will kill the train in a weeks time. The Baggage allowed officers is growing "small by degrees & beautifully less". No Regimental officer is now permitted to take any thing with him which he cannot carry

himself. I consider this right but it is humiliating to some. Where shoulder straps have hitherto appeared in gaudy splendor will soon be seen the grim visage of a burdensome knapsack, & where the plated canteen has often swung full of sparkling spirits will soon be found a spacious Haversack carrying 10 *days rations*.

How smarting this will be to young officers who have never been knapsack victims. I shall laugh I know at some of my acquaintances. As for myself I have no feelings of horror at all on returning to this humble but honest way of soldiering. I have done it once & am no better now.

You ask me if I wont come home next summer. This is a very hard question for me to answer in fact I cannot answer it. If I have no mishap it is now my desire to come next Fall to visit my friends. We will talk about this however as the time comes nearer to hand. Im coming if I can. I am yours sincerely

J. Vestal H.

Army of the Potomac
Pratts Point Va. April 12/63

Miss Mary Hill
Pittsboro Ind.

Mary

Your last letter was an excellent one. Dont think I ever enjoyed as good a laugh all with myself as I did from this letter. . . . You say my last letter was so different from any you had ever received before that you could hardly comprehend it.⁴³ Thought I must have been possessed of a Devil or was tight. The former I never disavowed, but as to the latter I venture to say that I have seen nothing for the last three months to get *tight* on but pork and beans, vinegar, & coffee and though I have been *tight* on these frequently yet I dont believe that they have at any time robbed me of reason.

You say that it seemes strange that we should have company here. Not strange we have lots of it. You say that you would have liked to be one of my guests. Thanks for this kind wish. You ask if I would entertain you if you were here. Not in my rude tent, Mary—no but leaning upon my arm

⁴³ Here Hadley is probably referring to his letter of March 22, 1863.

we would stroll out of camp upon some neighboring hill, and sitting upon the Sacred Soil, beneath the massive branches of some old Virginia pine I would try to entertain you. And with thoughts joining in the same lofty design, with hearts swelling from the same holy cause, with tongues knowing no language but the purest concord, I believe, Mary, the occasion would be interesting to both—would it not?

You caution me to beware lest I meet with a fate similar to one of my friends. There may be danger & I shall *beware*. Thank you for the advise. It will be remembered. Yet I have never seen anything that I believed dangerous, but I may meet it some time. Didn't see the attraction of the "birds" the first time—'tis true. Didn't get a *Second Sight* or I perhaps could have seen it. Couldn't stay so long. But enough of such nonsense. You are sick of it I know.

Three days ago I was relieved from the Quartermasters Department by the return of Q.M. Burlingame. The same evening I was redetailed as Acting Adjutant of the Regiment in which capacity I now am. Adj't [Anderson] Miller is suffering under a severe indisposition which may confine him for some time.⁴⁴ The position as Adjutant I believe is the most desirable of any in the Military Catalogue. At any rate it has always been my ideal. The Duties are pretty heavy but it is a "*Hoss Office*" which makes it desirable.

I received an order yesterday and read [it] on Dress Parade among many others, from [Major] Gen [John F.] Reynolds commanding all public animals to be shod before Tuesday the 14th. This looks like there was work before us. I also received another order last night to report to Brigade Head Quarters the number of men able to march in our Reg. My Report was sent in showing 483 men ready for active service. The roads are drying fast. The weather warm & balmy & you may look out for [a] fight.

I forgot to mention in my last that Jim Adams had at last got his *Commission* as 2d Lieut. We have so arranged it as to make my Commission as 1st Lieut. date from the 1st of Oct. 1862. If I don't write next Sunday—know that I am sick or marching. A happy Sunday to you Mary. Sweet dreams tonight, dear girl. I am your Vestal

⁴⁴ Adjutant Miller, a native of Aurora, died of smallpox December 31, 1863. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 40.

Army of the Potomac
Pratts Point Va. April 19, 63

Miss Mollie Hill
Pittsboro Ind.

My dear Mary

When I wrote you last Sunday I expected to be on this one fighting the enemy or following him to Richmond. Such were then our intentions but Fortune and Circumstances has changed that programme & I am still here & may still be even on the next but I think it hardly probable. We got orders to begin the campaign last Teusday. Got ready, packed up evrything. Knapsacks [and] haversacks with eight days rations. Tremendeous load—were to march at 4 P.M.—began to rain terrible. Orders were countermanded. Our Regiment was then sent on Picket. Me in command of our Company. Didn't cease to rain for the first night & day. We had not a particle of shelter—wind blew cold—my oil-cloth proved a bad one & leaked fearfully.—Became saturated with water & nearly froze.

Moved my Head Quarters towards evening to the house of a widow—whose family consisted of one boy 10 years old. She met me kindly. Talked freely, & familiar. Knew some things and made some pretensions to literature. She wasn't violent but was purely secesh. Spoke kindly of our Army but had a brother in the Southern ranks. Staied with her all evening & night & until I was relieved. Slept on a *feather bed*. Ate from a white table cloth. Cut my meat with case knife & drank my coffee from cup board ware. It seemed domestic like and had it not been for the color of my clothes & the rattle of my sword dangling at my side I really would have felt my self a citizen again.

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And I tell you, dear Mary, as I sat by a dimly burning fire, all alone and considered this three years blank of my life, how full of dangers, how full of temptations, how uncertain its passage, & how long it would yet be before I could cry "it is finished"—it was to me a painful reflection. But I would forget this threatning Gulf & stand on the other side where war was only remembered. This favorite pair of mine were happy. They were sitting before a sparkling fire in a cozy little room. The cat froliced. The watch-dog barked.

And evrything *necessary* to a happy begining was theirs. Mary this day is very warm. The sun strikes me with peculiar force and I am fearfully lazy—wish you were here to rest my head—what an excellent sleep would I have.—Wouldn't wake for a week if you didn't distrub me.

The "lady soldier" has been sent home to her folks.⁴⁵ Her *man* remains in the Army. Sorry for the girl—forced to leave him at last & in much worse condition. I understand [a] contribution fund has been established in the Army to give her boy a military education. I hope it is so. I have a mite to cast for such a purpose.

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Health is now good.—All quiet. When we march we carry 13 days rations, 8 in haversacks & 5 in waggons. I am with the most tender regards—Yours J.V.H.

Army of the Potomac
Pratts Point Va. Ap[ril] 26, 63

Miss Mary J Hill
Pittsboro Ind.

My dear girl

I haven't received your letter this week. Am sadly disappointed. Yet it may come this evening, I think it will. At least I hope it will. Oh it is so hot to day. We have just returned to Quarters from General Inspection. We've' been out since 9 o'clock this morning. Tis now 1 P.M. Sweating and swearing was the order of the forenoon. Stood in column for three hours with knapsacks. Who wouldn't swear? Who wouldn't sweat under the scorching rays of this days sun? But tis over now & who cares? Only dread the next one.

Havn't any news for you to day. Will go back a few days when I was last on picket. Tell you of a little incident or

⁴⁵ Probably this was the woman mentioned in the history of the regiment. "Pratt's Point, March 2. 'Quite an exciting and unusual incident is reported as having occurred on the picket line two or three nights since,' (unusual to the army, but not with well regulated families,) a soldier gave birth to a baby. The story ran thus: the soldier belonged to a New Jersey regiment, had been with it nearly a year, and had been in four battles, so said. Her lover had enlisted, and determined to meet the fates with him, she donned the male attire, passed examination, and joined the company with him. It was said no one had suspected anything wrong up to the very hour of the picket line denoument [*sic*]." Thomson, *Seventh Indiana*, 150-151.

two. It so happened that I had Comamnd of our Company on that time. Luke couldn't go out. "*Had business*" in Camp. My services were not needed as Adjutant on the Picket line & from request took out the Co. A mile of the line fell into my charge. On my territory there lived an old man with immense wealth & a small family. He had considerable personal property yet left. Was once well fixed to live. Had many out houses, cribs, graineries, sheds, &c, and 30 or 40 Negroes. The old man was radically Secesh. Had one son at home Discharged from Stewarts [Major General J. E. B. Stuart's] rebel Cavelry & two more still in the Southern ranks. Well it so happened that on the night that we took command of his house that 12 of his most valueable Negroes, hitched up a yoke of fine oxen to the only cart the old man had left—put in their little Domestics & Drove over to the Provost Marshel of our Corps. Of course they got transportation to Washington and their team turned over to the Quartermaster's Department.

On arriving on the line the day previous it was my duty to take a man & relieve one that was posted at the old man's house as a safe guard. I detailed John Ridgeway of Brownsburg as good looking and fine a man as is in the Camp. Was escorted over by the relieved Lieut—introduced to the family—highly recommended [and] received kindly. And evry thing promised me rustic enjoyment (for by the way there was a young daughter, 20 years old, who smiled and courtced when my friend Lieut Smith 34 N. Y. remarked "that you will find good protection in the hands of my young friend Hadley["]".) Sat 10 minutes with the family. Promised to call frequently. Went to my post—spent the night as usual in the rain.

Still rained hard in the morning. Concluded to go over to Bullards and stay while it rained so hard. Says I "Dave hurry & prepare our coffee for I must go over & see how Ridgeway gets along". Coffee soon ready—drank it, filled my *pipe*—started. Arrived at the house—darted in out of the pelting rain with a light heart. Felt that I had shelter for the day. No body in the room but Ridgeway. He arose laughing & remarked "Hadley there is Hell here this morning. The old man's negroes ran away last night—took his oxen & cart. They accuse us of causing it—mad—furious".

Just here we heard a low rumbling noise in some other apartment which sounded much like the frightful noise of a hundred horse in a desperate charge. As it neared us, however, we found that it proceeded only from, chairs, churns, tables, stools, &c flying before the approach of four infuriated demons. Father, mother, sister, brother, came dashing headlong into the room with faces red & fiery as a boiled lobster and tongues making a worse jargon than was heard at the tower of Babel. Louder and more threatening than was made by the two Devils among the tombs. Ridgeway seized his faithful musket, & prepared for the conflict. My sword was snatched from its sheath for I thought there would be sharp work for it to do. And both standing at a guard we prepared for the conflict.

Soon discovered that words would be the only arms used. Met them best we could. Scene closed by me ordering the guard to camp. They now became suppliant. Said they would take back all that was said & feel sorry for it. Begged Ridgeway to stay & me to let him. But I wasn't "*letten*" like I was. Ridgeway wasn't "*stayen*" like he was. Could tell you what they said but wont here. Want something to tell you when I again sit by your side.

Hadn't been half an hour from the house when I saw the boys charging on his out houses. It was raining. They didnt leave a board on top or side. Also carried off all his garden fence for fire. I didn't care—glad to see it. Went over to [Brigadier] Gen. [James S.] Wadsworth and reported me. Expected to be Court Martialed for taking the Guarg [Guard] off without proper authority. I sent a statement of the facts to the Gen. Guess they were satisfactory. Grand Officer of the Pickets endorsed my actions. [Brigadier] Gen [Ly-sander] Cutler said I did right. Don't care—wouldn't guard such a man if [Major] Gen [Joseph] Hooker would give me possitive orders.

Mary what would you say if I were to accept with an Adjutantcy of a Negro Regt? I am still Acting Adjutant of our Regt. Must close—Happy Dreames to night, I salute you.

J. Vestal⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Included among Hadley's letters is another description of the incident at the old man's house. This material has been omitted since the beginning of the letter is missing and much of the language is the same as that given in the April 26, 1863, letter. From internal evidence it appears that the omitted description was part of a letter written to Mollie a day or so after the other one.

Army of the Potomac.

Near Falmoth Va. May 10th/63

Miss Mary Hill

Pittsboro Ind

My dear Mary

The battle was a desperate one. In many instances the carnage was the greatest of this war. For Seven successive days, begining on the 29 of April & ending on the 5th of May, clouds of smoke could be seen rising from the battlefields along the Rappahannock and yet strange to say, Fortune so willed that the 1st Army Corps should not be hotly engaged.⁴⁷

During the entire 7 days, there were but 12 hours that we were not under the enemie fire and during all we lost but one killed and a dozen wounded in our Regiment. Two brothers in Co G—Higden [Benjamin and Daniel Higdon] by name—one killed & the other severely wounded by the same shell⁴⁸—no one hurt in our Company. Battle of the Wilderness on Sunday Morning was terrible. On an elevation of 50 ft we had in position 36 peices of Artillery. It was the only place in the neighborhood was a gun could work with advantage—so level and wooded. It was in our center—Rebels wanted the position as they wanted the guns. Our Center once broken, this position once lost, & our pontoon bridges would at once be sceized, but 3 miles in the rear our Army divided & cut off, whip[p]ed and destroyed would have been the result.

The enemy saw & knew this and the way they fought for it will never be forgotten by history. Our batteries were heavily entrenched and 15,000 infantry defended them standing behind piles of oaken logs which were impregnable against bullets and shell. Notwithstanding our position & strength the Rebels presumed to charge it 12 times on Sunday & four times on Monday, before they would yield the hope of

⁴⁷ Hadley's reference is to the multistage Battle of Chancellorsville in Virginia. The major fighting occurred May 1-4, 1863. Confederate losses were 1,581 killed, 8,700 wounded, and 2,136 missing. Federal casualties totaled 1,575 killed, 9,559 wounded, and 5,711 missing. The Seventh Indiana lost 1 killed and 4 wounded. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XXV, pt. 1, pp. 173, 185, 191, 809, 854, 1051. For a human and excellent summary of the Chancellorsville campaign, see Otto Eisenschiml and Ralph Newman, *The American Iliad* (Indianapolis, 1947), 378-414.

⁴⁸ Private Benjamin Higdon, of Decatur County, was killed in action. His brother, Private Daniel Higdon, was wounded but returned to duty and served out his enlistment. Thomson, *Seventh Indiana*, xxviii.

possessing it. We lay about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile to the right of the batteries & formed part of their support. Could easily see & hear the charges. 'Twas beyond discription. In column[s] of Regiments they would march up within 400 yds of the 36 guns, unmolested. Then they would all open with a double charge of canister & the havoc would be frightful. Sometimes they would almost reach the mouth of the guns before beaten back which once commenced our infantry would charge them from behind their works with great effect making many prisoners—nearly 3,000 in all—one Brigadier Gen [and] 4 Cols—6 stands of Colors & 4 peices of artillery.

The destruction before these batteries is said to be without parallel. I didn't visit the field myself—did want to—but I have it from authority that in one place 8 rebels were found lying upon each other just as they were killed. This may be exaggerated—perhaps it is but 16 charges as desperate as was made by the rebels on such powerfull workers of death, is expected to cover the field with slain. I should like to speak of the battle in detail, but I have just given it to my sister & am tired—it grows very long when all told.

The principal object of our move was in my opinion a failure. We fell back across the Rappahannock this is plain & certain, but the object is not so possitively known. Some crowned heads assert that Hooker accomplished all he planed, but I can't see it. He surely was not fool enough to march his army over to fight for fun or favor. He surely was not knave enough to order [Major General John] Sedgwick to charge the Hights just be cause it could be done.⁴⁹ No he had his plans admireably laid and would have made a complete success had the 11th Corps proved "warriors worthy of their Steel".⁵⁰

Victory was once ours. Hooker with five Corps, on Sunday the 3d, was 10 miles to the right of Fredricksburg,

⁴⁹ While Hooker's major force moved through the Wilderness in search of Lee's army, Sedgwick's Sixth Corps assailed and finally carried the heights to the east at Fredericksburg, Virginia. Yet Sedgwick's subsequent advance was checked in bloody fighting at Salem Church on May 3-4.

⁵⁰ Major General Oliver Otis Howard's Eleventh Corps, which formed the extreme right of Hooker's line, caught the full onslaught of "Stonewall" Jackson's most successful flank attack. Half a century later Howard wrote about the surprise Confederate assault: "It was a terrible gale! the rush, the rattle, the quick lightning from a hundred points at once; the roar, redoubled by echoes through the forest; the panic, the dead and dying in sight and the wounded straggling along; the frantic efforts of the brave and patriotic to stay the angry storm!" [Oliver Otis Howard], *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard* (2 vols., New York, 1907), I, 370-371.

holding the enemy at bay. Sedgwick with the 6th Corps charged the Hights Saturday night and carried them and Sunday the Stars & Stripes floated over the rebel strong hold. Our Corps the 1st was a cross the river one mile below Sed[g]wick and was his support.

11th Corps most disgracefully ran in panic—periled Hookers center.—Our Corps was withdrawn from Sedgwick to Hooke[r]s support.—Marched on a double quick. Consequence was—enemy concentrated against Sedgwick—drove him from the Hights—almost ruined him.

Tis easy to trace the cause of our failure & it must rest though heavy upon rightful shoulders. It was no fault of Hookers. Joe is a fighting man and a General. Better plans could not be laid. The world should know this for it is true. [He?] drew the enemy from their works to fight us on fair grounds or behind works. They gained the Hights with but a few drops of blood but all was lost by the fiendish cowardise of the 11th Corps. Our loss was heavy with Sedgwick also in the 11, 12, & 3 Corps caused again by the runing of the 11 [Corps].

11th formed the center, 12th Right, 3 left, & when center gave way right & left were flanked. Our loss was probably 15,000 of whom, in my opinion 10,000 are prisoners. We captured 5,000 men—30 peices of artillery &c—papers will tell you all about this. The Army is generally occupying i[t]s former positions. Our Corps I believe is all who didn't return. We now lie a half mile from the Rapp[ahannock] river & two miles below Fredrick[sburg]. Dont know when we'll move again—some think soon. For the present I remain your affectionate John.

Your letter of the 29 ult was recd last evening. Thanks for its warmth of feeling. If my letters don't come regular you will judge the reason & not fail to write. J.V.H

Army of the Potomac
Falmouth Va. May 24/63

Miss Mary J Hill
Pittsboro Ind.

My dear Mary

Our Regiment being on Picket last Sunday I was prevented from writing you and as I had no news to commu[ni]cate I thought it unnecessary to write during the week. And in fact I've felt but little like writing letters for

the last three weeks, and write only to a particular few, and to those only on those rare occasions when I felt that necessity or obligation compells me to do so.

I have been confoundedly "blue" of later days I acknowledge—so sadly disappointed in our last move against the enemy. Often have I reviewed the proud Columns of the Army of the Potomac under Hooker, with pride, for in it I recognized the most efficient that ever bore that name. I believed, that for it to march was to certain victory. Gigantic in numbers, powerful in strength, unequaled in discipline, faultless in equipment, strangely enthusiastic,—I had a right to expect for it to do battle was to gain victory. But we marched, we fought, we failed. We were not defeated but we did not defeat. A failure we must acknowledge inasmuch as it was our intention to route the enemy which we didn't do. There is no doubt but they feel our blow heavier than we feel theirs for they have already acknowledged that the death of Jackson was to them a greater loss, than the whole of Hookers' [army] would be to us. . . .⁵¹

Our boys and the rebs have grown great friends since we were last over the river. Our camp is now but a half mile from the Rappa[hannock] and we can see them at any time or in any numbers by going to the river. A friend and I went down yesterday on horse back and as we sat mounted watching the rebs fishing with a sein a couple of secesh officers came dashing up on the other side to see the fun. Here we sat for a half an hour, within stone throws distance of each other and I couldnt realize that we were enemies. We have orders not to communicate but 2 boys did it last Sunday in spite of orders.

The officers would retire and let the boys go in. They ate, drank, smoked, played, bathed, together. Exchanged pipes, knives, rings, and coffee for tobacco and the occasion was marked with as much hilarity as if it had been the meeting of long absent brothers. Our friends were the 7th La. Distinguished as our antagonists always in battle and friends on picket. In the Reg. we found two Hendricks County boys. One [was] Jim Givens, 1st Lieut Co. F 7th La. who used to be much about Danville and another [was named]

⁵¹ On the night of May 2, 1863, Jackson was accidentally shot by his own men. The amputation of his left arm produced pneumonia, and he died eight days later.

Lindley.⁵² They had many questions to ask about the County &c.

Regiments are daily leaving us for home. Inside of 20 days all the 2 years & 9 monthes men, 60,000 or 70,000 strong will be Home ward-bound. Army quiet—no signs of a move. Health good & weather hot. A merry Sunday is wished you by your devoted friend Vestal

Army of the Potomac
Falmouth Va June 7th/63

Mary J Hill
Pittsboro Ind.

Dearest Mary

I snatch an opportunity this morning of dropping you a line, for it is Sunday and may be the last too for some time upon which I can discharge this sacred duty. Our Army is again in commotion where it is going I can not tell you—neither do I know. But one thing I do know & that is, the 6th Corps has again crossed the Rappahannock & we are laying under arms ready to cross. The main body of the Rebel Army we think has moved & ere this reaches you I should not be at all surprised that you will hear of another bloody battle fought upon the twice gore stained field of Bull Run. I must not tell you what I believe to be the task of the 1st & 6th Corps, for such is at present contraband to letter writers—but I hope my view of the matter is correct & that it will meet with success.

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You asked me what I now think of the battle. I think it was a failure but not a defeat. But am not without hope—believe that all will yet be retrieved & that the Army of the Potomac will yet redeem itself.

Did we go back to our old Camp? No. We pitched our camp two miles below Falmouth & a half mile from the Rappahannock. Do I look as *well* & have my health as good as when I was at home last winter? My looks, I would think,

⁵² The Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers (National Archives, Washington) lists neither a "Givens" nor a "Lindley" as serving in the Seventh Louisiana. A Lieutenant John D. Givens and a Private Battle B. Lindsey were members of the Twelfth Louisiana, but no record exists of this unit being in Virginia during the period in question.

have not materially changed—but I can't see the *well* you speak of.—My health, if it is bad, I'm not aware of it. Guess if you were to see the quantity of food that I consume daily you wouldn't think it very delicate.

Mary I write this note on my knee—it is short & without interest, but in it is infolded a kiss budded from a loving heart which I wish to give you for the trouble of reading it. Good by Dear Mary. Your image will prompt me to do my duty in the coming conflict if come it must. I am your John

Boonsboro Md July 9th, 63

Miss Mary Hill

Dear girl

No mail has left us for a month nor promises too for a month to come. While we rest a moment by the road side I write you this note as a citizen among us promises to mail it for me. I passed through the great battle & have shared in the glorious victory.⁵³ Cant give any particulars now—nobody hurt from your part of the county. Our victory amounted to about this. In killing & wounding 25,000 of the enemy [and] capturing 12,000. Nearly all his train & pack animals, considerable artillery, & 2,000 horses. Add this together & then tell us of a more glorious victory. Western Army look well to your laurels or the Cowardly Army of the Potomac (as they are pleased to call us) will eclips them. Will write again the first opportunity. Heavens' blessing on you My dear Mary.

John

Army of the Potomac

Warrenton Junction Va Jl 26 1863

Miss Mollie J Hill

Pittsboro Ind

My dearest

I cannot delay longer in writing you a short note. I dropped a note to you immediately after the battle of Gettys-

⁵³ It is unfortunate that Hadley did not pen reminiscences of the July 1-3 Battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania. As part of the Federal First Corps, the Seventh Indiana lost 2 killed, 5 wounded, and 3 missing. The engagement took a combined toll of 43,500 casualties, Federal and Confederate. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XXVII, pt. 1, pp. 155, 173, 187, pt. 2, p. 346. For the Hoosier regiment's participation, see *ibid.*, pt. 1, pp. 281-285.

burg but it was placed in strange hands to mail and I have no assurance that it ever reached you.

Appreciating the anxiety that you may probably feel in my behalf I have been more than desirous of writing you for the last month but it has been impossible. And today I have but time enough to tell you that I still live, that my health is unimpaired, that it was never better, that we are still trying to do something for this rebellion, that we are still active, &c.

We are considerably worn and wasted. Many sore feet and slim jaws but none sick or disabled. I have hardly seen a sick man since we left Falmouth. Strange but true. Since the 12 of June up to this date we have marched 325 miles and bid fair to make another hundred before we stop or end the campaign. I needn't tell you anything about where our Army lies or where the rebels are for they change evry day & ere this reaches you it would be old. The particulars of the Gettysburg battle I mean to give you in detail as soon as circumstances will permit. There are some incidents connected with that affair that are worth relating or at any rate I am going to relate them "when quiet comes and heated steel is cooling".

We are stopped here but for a single day to draw rations & then "on to Richmond". Dont know when we ll get there but I guess as soon as practicable. We have excellent times here when we halt in picking blackberries which abound in Virginia as they do in no other State. I have stood in one spot & picked a quart of larger berries than I ever saw in Indiana. They are most excellent and most timely for us fellows.

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Jim [Adams] and the boys of Pittsboro are all able to act well their part. Jim is now on picket. Write me often. You have plenty of time & chance. I have almost none or as good [as] none. I close. I am *yours*. J.V.H.

Army of the Potomac

Rappahannock St.[ation] Aug. 9th 1863

Miss Mary Hill

Dearest

for the last 10 days we have been doing Outpost Duty and I couldnt possibly write sooner for want of pen and

paper. Not a Team, Sutler,⁵⁴ or News boy was permitted to come near us either fearing to be seen—or fearing a shot from the enemy.

While out we didn't do much in the shooting business. But now & then an occasional shot from some tired picket. The Cavalry boys on our right quareled with the enemy some and last Thursday night captured 8 because they insisted on standing picket upon the same post. Our Out-post at this point is a mile & a half South of the Rappa[hannock]. We were relieved yesterday from duty there and came back to the North bank of the river and established ourselves in camp. I think we'll rest here for some time.—Can't see why or where we'll move. It wont do to move on [General Robert E.] Lee—now fortified on the Rapidan for he is too many for us. We will not try to flank him for it wouldn't be expedient just now.

Conscripts are rapidly arriving to fill up the Yankee Regiments to 7,000 each.⁵⁵ When once completed we will be a powerful Army—in numbers if nothing else. At present the Regts. in our Army average 300 men.

Mary it is killingly hot to-day. And as I sit out in the middle of a parched field, under my little shelter tent, with my whole system apparently melting I think that if I could but feel the touch of a single breeze that fans the beach [beech] in your yard that I should be made one of the most comfortable and happiest being[s] in the world.

There is no place that I have ever been where the Sun seemes so much like striking to the heart as in these baren & desolated fields of Va. With but few trees large enough to make a shade and the fields covered with rock the sun has nothing to resist it and when the rocks once become properly heated, it is like living in an oven to live in Summer along the Rappahannock.

Sweat and swear is the occupation of the Army now. Heat is not the only anoyance. Musketoes, oh musketoes. I have read of the Musketoes of the Arkansaw swamps and have heard something of those that infest region of the Nile

⁵⁴ Sutlers were civilians who followed an army with wagons laden with all sorts of goods. They reaped rich profits at the soldiers' expense.

⁵⁵ On March 3, 1863, as a result of "the necessity of some more thorough and vigorous system of recruitment," Congress passed a conscription bill known as the "Enrollment Act." The one major flaw in this sweeping legislation was that any person could exempt himself from military service by furnishing a substitute or by paying a \$300 commutation. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, I, 45-56.

but I never came in contact with such gigantic cannibals, such Mammoth blood suckers, such unprincipaled gluttons as the Musquetoos of the Rappahannock. Our camp kettles & mess pans have all very mysteriously disappeared and Col. Ashby (Tom) very mournfully remarked the other day that he knew what had become of them. Said that they had all been worn out by the Musquetoos wheating their bills on them. The only way that a picket can sleep is to build a circular fire & then lay down in the ring. Smoke drives them away.

You asked me what I think of the war by this time. When I am to come home to stay with—oh you know who. Well in my opinion the prospects of an early peace is better now than they ever were before. Still there is much yet to do. The fall of Vicksburg, the surrender of Port Hudson, the defeat of Lee, the demoralization of [General Braxton] Bragg, the disaffection of North Carolina—are all crushing blows to the Confederacy but they can & will stand more and still harder ones. Mobeal [Mobile], Savan[n]ah, Charleston, and Wilmington must be reduced and their ports blockaded. [Major General Ulysses S.] Grant must push into Miss[iss]ippi, [Major General William S.] Rosencrans [Rosecrans] into Georgia & Alabama, & [Brigadier General George G.] Meade to Richmond. And when this is done, then indeed we may expect to see the beginning of the end.

No mortal has a more consuming desire to live to see the Armed Minions of our Government returning to their friends and families and to be one of them. Im tired of war. Im tired of wearing away my life in loneliness when it might be blessed with Angelic society. I watch, I hope, I fear, I wait anxiously for the Angel of peace. May your guardian Angel whisper to you this evening the name of your Devoted
J.V.H.

Army of the Potomac
Rappahannock St Va
Aug. 23d 1863

Miss Mary J Hill
Pittsboro Ind.

My dearest

Three weekly mails from Pittsboro have been received but neither has brought me any intelligence from you. Three weekly letters have been written and mailed, but neither has received an acknowledgement from you.

How painful this delay. When in health, your promptness to write forces me now to believe that illness can be the only cause. How serious this illness I have no means of judging but hope it may be slight and soon pass. Mary when possible do not neglect your duty. Remember that your letters are to me a source of happiness that nothing can possibly replace. Remember that their delay is the source of my greatest punishment.

One whose interests have been so closely studied, one whose happiness seems of so much importance to me, one whose life seemes to be the great Arbitrator who is to decide my life desirable or worthless—cannot be forgotten, neglected, or disregarded by me.

I will write once a week when it is possible. This I have promised to do, and if you can but reciprocate the sentiments that I have so often expressed I need not again urge it upon you. If I had but one line to answer from you this morning, my task would not be half so heavy.

Mary I am not a believer in dreams this I believe I have before told you nor do I attach any importance to their Revelations, but I had one the other night so singular so unlike any I ever before had in the service that I make no excuse for unfolding it to you.

I was on Picket four miles from Camp sleeping on the Second floor of a deserted farm house that had once no doubt been the theater of pride and Southern licentiousness. The war was over. Peace was smiling in the door of evry household. Our bloody hands had been washed in the waters of the Potomac. Our sabres had been returned to their scabbards. Our arms stacked on completely and honorably finishing our task we boarded the cars for *home*.

There was singing and dancing and "much merry making". Evry heart danced light upon the expectations of soon seeing the "loved ones at home". 48 hours and we were at Danville. There were many people there, many strange faces, many familliar ones. But how disappointed the soldiers.

The bright eyes they expected would "mark their coming and look brighter when the[y] come" discerned us not, only to shun us. The hearts that we expected to see swell with gratitude for what we had done in restoring their Government were turned aside in cold and haughty indifference. The tongues, which we expected would be busy in welcoming us among them again were mute only in blaspheming the name of Soldier. Mothers were there, but they preferred the hand

of the son who had stayed by her side. Sisters were there but they preferred the society of brothers who remained dreaming behind & had not the tawny & worn look of the soldier.

Maidens were there whose hearts had once been given, but were now reclaimed & possessed by those who hated the profession of war. Shunned and disowned by all we turned, enraged, heart-broken and distressed, from the mothers who bore us, from the board that had nourished us, from the friends that had once owned us; and when I awoke we were tossing on a bark which was bearing us to San Francisco [San Francisco].

It's later. Of course I don't believe anything it tells—glad I don't. If I did I'll bet I wouldn't sweat another hour under this little yard of canvass. I'll bet I wouldn't march another mile through suffocating dust to save the Union. I'll bet I wouldn't stand again before the enemy & offer my life for a principal no better appreciated. But instead thereof, I can sweat & march, & fight every day with increased enthusiasm.

We're doing nothing—nor will we in my opinion for some time to come. Weather dry & very hot. Health good. May the angels of Heaven crown you with the completest happiness and make you believe that I am sincerely yours.

J V H

Army of the Potomac
Rappahannock Station, Va. Aug 25 1863

Miss Mary J Hill
Pittsboro Ind

Darling Mary

Your long looked for letter was received but yesterday. In addition to the usual interest I find in your dear good letters, was the reception of your photograph. It was a long time before I could persuade my self that that was the shadow of my Mary. So changed. So unlike the rosy tinted girl I had in my possession. But the change is not for the worse—happy to say it. The girl has given place to the woman. Such female physical power—such prominent intelligence—such exponents of genuine goodness—such blossoms for the richest harvest of *love*—are rarely found associated in sex. I'm proud of the picture as I am proud of you & vie with liege lords in the possession of the noblest sweetheart.

Mary, you seeme to have a passion for hospital Duty & do me the honor of asking my opinion in regard to its propriety. I am ever ready to render advise when asked for but in this case I feel a little loath.

I don't like to shape your actions or influence you from the path of duty which seemes plain, while such relations exist between us and while I know it will be contrary to your wishes. Not that I oppose the system of female nursing—for it is good and noble as well as consoling and comforting to the soldier. There are thousands of obstacles that would rise before you that you never behold in your sympathetic fancy. Having been 10 weeks a patient in hospital I should know something of its character & being constantly attended by females I should judge whether it would suit you or whether you would suit the soldiers. That you would give satisfaction I am sure—this I know but that you would receive satisfaction I am not so sure.

If none but gentlemen found their way to hospitals it would be easy enough, pleasant enough, safe enough, but some of our meanest society is always there—men who have no respect for female presence or female modesty. To make a bed, to carry a cup of water, to prepare a nice toast or steak would be the easiest thing out of a hundred that you would be called on to do. The labor is most fatiguing as well as embarrassing and while I know that you are not unwilling to *do* yet by the labor you would be worn & wearied and while I know you are not fastidious, there are hospital scenes of hourly occurrence that would be unpleasant to one raised in modest retirement.

And the hospital is such a place to shade the heart and fetter joys. *Sadness* is King and *Melancholy* Queen, and to their rule you are as all are the most crouching vassal. *Last* farewell words, *agonizing groans*, *frenzied screames*, dying struggles, laying out of the dead, &c. are their constant amusements and you the constant spectator.—Have you nerve enough for such things?—study well.

Were you to spend six months in hospital I should expect to *find you* in a nunnery wearing the emblems of the sisterhood of Charity—never expect to see your face smile or radiate happiness again.

There are those who love to feel sad and mour[n]—who prefer it to any other life—who have lost irreparable happiness—such are fitted for hospitals and such only, I

believe, can enjoy the life. But dont let me influence you. If you want to go & have good company to go with I say go & my best wishes shall go with you my darling.

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I m on picket again—got the—toothache. I salute you.
John

On Picket. Near Rappahk[.]
St. Va Sept 13th 1863

Miss Mary Hill
Pittsboro Ind

Dearest Mary

If the enemy gives fight this sabath is to be commemorated by another battle from the Army of the Potomac. The Cavelry Corps is now drawn up in Mass Column in front of my Picket Post and scarcely a hundred yards from where I sit the 2d Infantry Corps is filing out side the lines with flying Colors & glistning steel.

Before I am half done this hurried letter I shall expect to hear the begining of the fight. Can't believe it is a general move. Think it is a heavy reconnosance to learn the enemies' whereabouts. As far as I can learn our Corps has not yet received marching orders. At any rate we've received none on the Picket line.

I hope we will not receive marching orders for we have just completed the nicest Regimental Quarters in the world—none can beat them I defy the world. Evry available man has worked hard for a week upon them & just last evening pronounced them done. Wish you could see them. Instead of appearing like a camp of rusty soldiers it looks like a city of magnifficent splendor—shall not attempt to describe them—for we are going to have them photographed if possible & if we succeed I shall send you one. *As I expected.* Away goes a shell screaming in direction of the rebel Pickets. Another comes howling towards our Cavelry.

My darling you ask me *when*. *Oh how I wish I could say now.* If it were even to-morrow I would be sorry. And as it must be many morrows hence it pains me to the hearts' core to think of it. *One long year* from this date I belong to the army & if kind Providence favors me so much as to lead me out unharmed, I should not wish to delay the consumation of our happiness *a single day*.

Tis true I am not yet done study—much of it to do before I am ready to meet the world. But I believe that I can study as well if you bake my biscuits & make my beds as if they are done by other hands. What think you?

The cannonade in front is becoming savage—the Rebel Pickets fall back stubbornly. So much excitement I can't write more. Farewell my dear—John

Raccoon ford, Rapidan River Va
Sept. 27th 1863

Miss Mary Hill
Pittsboro Ind.

My dearest

I write you today from the Rapidan where I believe I addressed you a little more than a year ago. Three days ago we were given 15 minutes to get ready to march from Culpepper [Culpeper] and though no immediate danger was apprehended, it was believed that our move was a necessity. 15 minutes passed & we were filing out of camp and continued a brisk march Southward 6 miles, when the heights of the Rapidan thickly studded with cannons and bayonets rose frowningly before us. We all believed that our mission was to cross the river & give the enemy battle but to our great surprise we relieved the 12th Corps who pulled up & went back to the rear. Reports tell us today that the 12th & 11th [Corps] have taken cars at Bristow [Bristoe] St. for Rosecrans' Department. Can hardly give it credit but it may be so.⁵⁶

Our situation is a little more mysterious to me now than ever before. Don't know where our army is—know it isn't here—none but the 1st Corps. If a portion of it is not going to Rosecrans I believe it is trying to flank the enemy here. Probably by way of Fredricksburg as I hear there are no rebels in that vicinity. God knows where it is going no body els I guess. We must do something here—times and circumstances demand it. Rosecrans has been whiped—badly too.

⁵⁶ On September 24, 1863, Major Generals O. O. Howard and Henry W. Slocum, commanding the Eleventh and Twelfth corps respectively, received orders to reinforce Major General William S. Rosecrans' army at Chattanooga, Tennessee. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XXIX, pt. 1, pp. 160, 184, Vol. XXX, pt. 1, p. 37.

A bit of Lee's Army has gone down there and showed them a little earnest fighting.

That army as well as the Army of the Miss. has looked upon the Army of the Potomac as a multitude of *cowards* because of so many failures. When at the same time we can take them to a half dozen fields and count more killed & wounded on *each* than they can in *all* their bo[a]sted engagements. Antietam, Fredricksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg are among them. At Gettysburg alone the rebels acknowledged a loss of 30,000 men, while ours was 20,000 & we fought altogether on the defensive which gave us great advantage. Consider these figures for a moment and remember that in all the campaigns and battles, Champion Hill, Bakers' Creak [Creek], Port Gipson, Jackson, Big Black, and the entire seige of Vicksburg which was [described?] by them as *awful*, all told, there were but (1050) one thousand & fifty men killed, & five thousand wounded. This was Grants official report. A little more than *one fourth* in six *awful battles* than we lost in a single one. And a little more than *one fifth* as many as we disabled in a single battle. And still they say we wont fight. And it must be remembered too that we fought the battle of Gettysburg with 40,000 men while they sieged Vicksburg with 70,000. They fight a cowardly enemy with a superior force. We fight with an inferior force the bravest of the brave. There's the difference.⁵⁷

Natural enough I feel pride in western troops. They have done their duty & done it well but it has not been of the severest kind, but I believe that if the Army of the Potomac had been composed entirely of western men that its history would have been no brighter than it is. One thing I *know* that Yankee valor is *just as good* as western & it greatly displeases me to see so much abuse thrown upon it by western *knownothings*. A few days ago I noticed in a letter from the

⁵⁷ Hadley's tirade was typical of the keen jealousy that existed between the Eastern and Western armies. His slight juggling of statistics is therefore understandable. At Gettysburg Confederate losses numbered 20,451 men, while the Federals suffered 23,049 casualties. In the course of the Vicksburg campaign, Grant lost a total of 9,362 men. Meade, commanding the Army of the Potomac, officially reported 84,158 men "present for duty equipped" at Gettysburg. On April 30, 1863, Grant listed 97,344 men present for duty in his western department. Most of these troops were besieging Vicksburg, defended by 30,000 Confederates. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 2, p. 167, pt. 3, p. 249, Vol. XXVII, pt. 1, pp. 151, 187, pt. 2, p. 346.

"Mighty 11th Ind" that they had been Reviewed twice & the writer was afraid that if they were Reviewed again they would become as *worthless* as the Army of the Potomac. Who ever the writer is, is a *fool* for the want of knowledge, a braggart, & I'll bet a *coward*.

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By the way I was up to witness the execution of private [Charles] Williams of the 4th Md Vol. 3d Div. 1st Corps who was sentenced to "be shot to death with Musketry" for desertion.⁵⁸ There was a little more circumstance than pomp about the occasion. The entire Div was out, & drawn up forming 3 sides of a hallow [*sic*] square. At 4 P.M. the convict & company made their appearance at the open end of the square in the following order. In front was a band discoursing a dirge that seemed to proceed from crying instruments. Next were four men bearing a rough emty coffin immediately behind which walked the doomed man with hands fastened behind him. Behind him were six files or 12 men, the firing party, with bayonets unfixed & arms at a shoulder, and lastly was a guard of 30 men escorting 12 prisoners hand-cuffed, for the same crime.

The doomed man, was marched by the company around the entire column, closely to the ranks, following but a few inches from his coffin & stepping in perfect time to the Music. Not one of the whole escort had a firmer step or a more soldierly bearing & his countenance did not show half the internal agony as was manifest in the officer in command. The grave was at last reached all ready to receive the body. A long prayer was held by the chaplain of his Regt. The firing party placed. He takes one *last, long, lingering* look at the Heavens. Then at the Earth. A farewell look at his old comrades in arms, who look like stone walls standing to behold his death. Then at the men who are to kill him & he submits his eyes to be closed forever by a bandage. His coffin is placed near his grave—he stands beside it—turns & confronts his executioners—says I'm ready—a sharp note from a bugle—a volley—and he is dead, lying across his coffin.

⁵⁸ The September, 1863, monthly return for the Fourth Maryland [U.S.] Infantry contains the following postscript: "Private Charles Williams, Co. D, 4th Regiment Maryland Volunteers, was executed on Friday, September 25, 1863, between the hours of 12 o'clock and 4 o'clock P.M. in the presence of the 3d Division, 1st Army Corps. By order of General Court Martial near Rapidan, Va." Civil War Records Branch (National Archives, Washington).

I had a letter from Bob Parker but a few days ago. He is *Discharged* from our Company. Has accepted a Lieutenantcy in the 1st [4th] United States Colored Infantry. His Regt. I believe is in New Orleans where he will doubtless soon go. I shall know in a few days however. He is well.

The "*Strange reports*" you refer to are perfectly familiar to me. None very recent however. A month ago I believe was when they came in the greatest abundance. In fact the fatal day was at one time set, which day had expired ere the reception of news, & it was fixed in the minds or mind of a particular *few* that before the news reached me that you were Mrs Mary J ——— I felt perfectly easy for I didn't believe a word of it. Would speak of it when *forced* with great indifference which soon crushed the pleasure of ———.⁵⁹

Army of the Potomac

Rapidan River Va. Oct. 4th/63

Mary J Hill

Dearest

Night has again stretched his mighty wing over the earth and put out the lamp of another Sabbath. The Panorama of earth has begun. The light of a thousand camp fires appear like so many golden violets growing in Earth's garden. While above us "in the Measureless Meadows of Heaven blossom the beautiful Stars the forget-me-nots of the Angels". It is a fit time for my mind to revert back to one by whose side I would now be so happy & to whom my pen owes a duty to be discharged on this holy day. . . .

A consuming excitement has prevailed among us to day. We have received an order from the War Department that if our Regt will, enlist for three [years] from this date that it shall be sent home to recruit its numbers to the maximum of 1,000 [?] with a Bounty of \$402. The inducement is a strong one and many are anxious to reenlist. A great majority I think will go into it. This will secure our coming home. A meeting of the Regt will be had in the morning and I shall not seal or send this until an expression of the Regt. has been had. I for one will not reenlist for infantry. I am tired of walking for Uncle Sam. If the Regt goes home and they will give me privilege to raise a Company of Cavalry I will reenlist, upon no other terms will I.

⁵⁹ The rest of this letter is missing.

There is no doubt that while the war lasts & I have strength & health but what I shall be identified with it but it must be on horse-back after this term. The question you ask me I defer answering at present through hopes of seeing you soon, when we can review the matter at length and consider all sides. If however the above mentioned scheme fails I shall answer you in my next. Evrything is quiet. No threatning signs of an early engagements.

It is generally believed that we will have no fight in this vicinity. I am of this opinion or at least for some time. Persimons are in abundance here & ripe. I have an engagement to [go] and hunt them tomorrow. Will eat one to the health & happiness of my Mary. Am writing a History of our Regt. to be published in Indian[a]'s Roll of Honor, prepared by Dr [David] Stevensin [Stevenson] State Librarian. I sent in yesterday the history of the three monthes Campaign.⁶⁰

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I shall now lay this sheet in my book & await the results of tomorrow.

Oct 5th 1863

Our meeting over. Result much as I expected. Boys enthusiastic. Much in favor of the Veteran Corps.⁶¹ Believe our Regt will come home soon.

In hopes of soon greeting my beloved

I am as ever J.V.H

Army of the Potomac

Thoroughfare Gap Va. Oct 21st 1863

Mary J Hill

Dearest Beloved

Sorry am I that this great delay has been forced upon me by the circumstance of war. Sorry because I couldn't tell my darling where I was & what doing but doubly sorry because I couldn't hear from her. For three weeks we have been all astir, marching & countremarching, advancing & retreating evry day without exception.

⁶⁰ Possibly this history by Hadley, or an edited version of it, appears in David Stevenson, *Indiana's Roll of Honor* (Indianapolis, 1864), 74-81.

⁶¹ Those Federal units that re-enlisted at the expiration of their initial three-year term received the title "Veteran Regiment"—in distinction to "Volunteer Regiments," made up for the most part of conscripts.

Dont know what we've accomplished or what escaped, at what we've aimed or how succeeded, but do certainly know that we have made some hard marches, suffered cruel exposure, lost much sleep, been mighty hungry, & been shot at a few times. Wont attempt to tell you where we've been or what we've seen or felt, for we are only halted here & I may not even get to fill this sheet, before we are ordered to fall in.

I will say however that we were last Sunday within the fortifications of Centreville boldly fronted by Lees' Army & skirmishing with his Lordships Cohorts. Expected that a fight would surely come off on Monday but to our surprise on Monday morning the enemy had "flewed". We started after him as is our game when he runs & his when we run. We had a keen little brush with him night before last which kept us up & watching *all* night & half froze to death. Our Regt was out as skirmishers & not a man was allowed a blanket or a wink of sleep. We were prepared for a fight yesterday but when morn came the enemy was again gone. We again followed & are now here & speaking for my self I have no idea where the rebs are.

The last three weeks have been full of privations. Until this evening we had not seen our baggage for four weeks, nor had a change of shirts in that time. I have seen people fastidious enough to call us dirty—perhaps we were certainly our shirts did not have the same color when pulled off this eve as they did when put on a month ago. Officers in a much worse fix than the men—having sent evrything extra to the rear expecting to see it at most in a week. Men carry all their clothes with them & consequently could change. Much fun has sprung however from our dirty shirts & their carniverous inhabitants.

You asked me if I am still of the Negro persuasion. As much so as ever I was but was never overly enthusiastic on the subject. Would feel no disgrace if I had command in a Negro Regt. Believe if it is honorable to use them as soldiers it is honorable to be their officers—but of course prefer those of my own blood & color. If in Bobs situation would have taken the same steps. Massa Lieut. Parker will make a good officer & no doubt like his *posish*. I am wedded to the Potomac Army, as you intimate & hope not to be divorced until my term of service expires & then I will gladly leave here only to enter into a higher, holier, happier, wedlock.

Darling, I think in my last I spoke something about coming home soon to reorganize the Regt. Oh what a wicked delusion was this that forced itself upon me—fledged my hopes with silvery wings to soar on high, but to crush them to earth again in a few days afterwards. When I wrote you I firmly believed that the Regt. would soon come & believed that I would come with it though not to reorganize for three years more. To stick myself for three years more, before this job is done, to use a familiar phrase, "I couldn't see it".

The Regt may come yet, but I don't think it will, yet if it does, I shall not be with it, as I understand that all will be transferred to other Regts who refuse to reenlist to serve their term out. I believe I am as patriotic as the majority of people but I think I shall like a little rest when I have served 3 years. And then again I am not pleased with the infantry service. I prefer cavetry. When I have walked 3 years for Uncle Sam, I think if he needs me longer he must let me ride. Do you blame me for the course I take? I am the only Officer from Hendricks Co. who refuses to reenlist.

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As to "The Question". I think now I should not like the postponement until after study if sooner would suit my darling. How is she in this respect? It is too hard to fight two wars at once. A war with hands & a war with hearts is too overpowering to wage at once. & if the one must continue I hope to settle the other soon on happy & holly [*sic*] terms. May I have a free expression from you?

No Regular Mails now leave us. This may never reach you but I shall cast it upon the waters & pray God to drift it into the hands of My Mary. . . . I salute you. J V H

H.Q. 2d Brigade 1st Div. 1st A.C.
Bristow St. Va. Oct. 27th/63

Mary J Hill

My dearest lady

"There is a tide in the affairs of Men which taken at its flood leads unto glory" says somebody. "And there is a tide in the affairs of Armies which taken at its ebb leads the d___l knows where" somebodyelse laconically adds. I am no philosopher & know nothing about the former but do observe a little sometimes and therefore know "there is a tide in the affairs of Armies" and an impetuous one too upon which we

have been drifting for a month and where it will lead us God knows—nobody else.

It is hardly a week, if I remember right since I wrote My Mary from Thoroughfare Gap. Since that time we have had the usual activity in marching, wading streams, &c. and have stopped again at Bristow St. waiting for something to turn up. And we thought it had turned up yesterday. A furious canonade was heard yesterday in direction of Warrenton⁶² all the afternoon and at Sun-down we were ordered to get ready on a double-quick to march. But something else turned up that we didn't march and are here yet.

I know not how much truth there is in the Report but we have it today that a brisk fight occurred yesterday in which the 3d & 6th Corps participated which resulted in the Burning down of the beautiful town of Warrenton. Rebel sharp-shooter[s] are said to have been posted in the garrets & persisted in shooting at our skirmishers & which caused [Brigadier] Gen. [Hugh Judson] Killpatrick [Kilpatrick] to fire the town.⁶³ Guess it was right enough.

Since I last wrote you I have been detailed on Brigade Staff—[Brigadier] Gen. [James C.] Rice⁶⁴—as Commander of Provost Guards. I have near 100 men under my charge. My duties are easy and agreeable—have plenty of transportation—a good wall tent—will be mounted. In Regts no line officer is allowed anything but a shelter tent and here we are allowed one wall tent for evry two officers. My mate is Lt [Homer] Chisman Inspector General—an excellent fellow & full of fun.⁶⁵

There are 8 of us in all & all of whom I like very much with a single exception. I tell you more & all about them when I have more time. We have also the best living the Country

⁶² What Hadley heard was a heavy skirmish that took place at Bealeton, Virginia, a few miles south of Warrenton. See *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XXIX, pt. 1, pp. 338, 418.

⁶³ Hadley erred here. No Federal force, including Kilpatrick's cavalry, attacked Warrenton, Virginia, during this period.

⁶⁴ Rice commanded an enlarged Second Brigade in Cutler's First Division of the First Army Corps. In this brigade were the Seventh Indiana, the Seventy-sixth, Eighty-fourth, Ninety-fifth, and Hundred and forty-seventh New York, and the Fifty-sixth Pennsylvania regiments. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XXIX, pt. 1, p. 217.

⁶⁵ Chisman, a native of Lawrenceburg, was a member of Company K of the Seventh Indiana. Like Hadley, whom he later met in prison, Chisman was captured during the Wilderness campaign. Along with two other men, they escaped from "Camp Sorghum" at Columbia, South Carolina. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 46; John V. Hadley, *Seven Months a Prisoner* (New York, 1898), 9-13, 43-46, 62-63, 75-76, 97-105.

and Commissary affords. Of milk & chickens, two great luxuries of mine, there has been no lack since I joined the Generals Mess and the way it is served to us is more home-like than one could expect in the Army.

.

Dearest I believe love of woman will conquer love of war and if God in his providence will once more lead me to civil life that I will remain there unless I feel that my services are absolutely necessary. May Heaven bless & keep you for the happiness of J.V.H

Head Quarters 2d Brig 1st Div 1st A.C.
Near Beverly Ford Va Nov. 15th 1863

Miss Mary Hill

Dearest

A longer time has elapsed since I last wrote you, than I have desired but circumstances have rendered it difficult & almost impossible to write sooner. Since my last there has been some fighting by our Army but not by our Corps & therefore I shall enter into no particulars concerning it. Sufficent to say that it was one of the most brilliant affairs of the war & also one of the most successful. With a loss of 75 killed & 250 wounded the 6th Corps took 2,000 prisoners, 6 peices of artillery, 8 stands of colors besides a great many rebels that they chased into the river & caused to be drowned.⁶⁶

By the spirit of Hymen, Mary I thought you were never going to write to me again. I had forgotten what I had written you or what I had not written, but could not believe that I had intimated anything to cause a secession or unfaithfulness. I would not believe you sick for I could think of no reason why you should be so & consequently a thousand *strange* thoughts forced themselves upon me. Don't punish me so again, darling I beg of you. If you hear of my doing wrong write & scould me for it—that is what I meant. If you hear of any waywardness or misgiving in me don't fail to notice them at once in an early letter.

⁶⁶ Hadley here refers to the November 7, 1863, Battle of Rappahannock Station, Virginia, waged between the Federal Fifth and Sixth corps and Major General Jubal A. Early's Confederate forces. The Federals lost 83 killed, 330 wounded, and 6 missing, while Confederate casualties totaled 19 killed, 123 wounded, and 1,631 missing. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XXIX, pt. 1, pp. 558-560, 616-617, 629-630, 635. For a detailed description of this engagement, see Douglas Southall Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants* (3 vols., New York, 1942-1944), III, 264-268.

You thought I was going to reenlist did you? Well I'm sorry you didn't know me better for I would not have you believe me so indifferent [to the] "*pursuit of happiness*." You say dear not to let them persuade me into a re-enlistment. This might be done if I had not learned the first lesson in Natures' book "*take care of yourself*"—nor let them *hire* me. Money is not what I soldier for, if it were I should have a thousand dollars a month.

There was a time when I believe I was as patriotic as the common class of people & truly I don't know but what I am yet, but I have got tangled in the wily meshes of *love* which has extinguished much of my patriotic fire. But others have been as unfortunate as I in this regard. Wiser and better men have bowed before this indomitable God.

.

Our Hd.Qs. are near Beverly Ford on the Rap [pahan-nock]. river in a large house. Have finely furnished rooms above & below. Rich carpets, chairs, paintings, sofa, & piano are among the furniture. Like my position on the Staff finely. Splendid associates—gay & festive around our fireside. Was with the Gen. yesterday on a big Review in the 5th Corps—a huge time—your devoted

John

Army of the Potomac
Culpepper C.[ourt] H.[ouse] Va
Dec. 27th 1863⁶⁷

My Dearest

I write you to-night under disappointment—rather hurtful. I expected when I wrote my last that ere this date I would be on my way home if not there. I say I have been disappointed—well I have—but am not to be pitied. I might have been on the cars to-night with Lt Chisman with high hopes & a happy thought to surprise my Darling before the expiration of three days.

But I was too selfish I wanted to go home on the credit of the company for 35 day[s]. I was sure I could go. So much was intimated to me by General Orders that Companies, re-enlisting would be permitted to go home & take their Officers.

⁶⁷ In his letters Hadley does not mention the Mine Run campaign (November 26-December 2, 1863) in which the Seventh Indiana lost 1 killed, 21 wounded, and 7 missing. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XXIX, pt. 1, p. 678. The regiment's action is described in *ibid.*, 688-690.

My Company have reenlisted or at least signified their intention to do so & I had a right to expect to go with them. So I gave my place for a leave of absence to Capt W [Burutt?]. He went home this morning.

But while my hopes were highest & chances of success seemingly the best an order came down that officers would not be permitted to go home unless they first obligated themselves [to] Serve three years or during the War. Now to serve three years more is a big thing they say but I can't see it. So if I can't come without such an obligation you will please excuse my presence, Darling, about 9 months longer. If I come this winter it will be about the middle of next month.

.

We've moved again. Left our splendid huts at Kelly's Ford & now lay on the bleak hills about Culpepper C. H. Men have suffered greatly the last 5 days—been very cold & but a very little wood to use—are discouraged about building huts & manifest no intention yet to build again. As far as my personal comfort is concerned it is as full & complete as could be. Could be no better at home.

Our H.Q. are at the house of Hon. John S. Pendleton, who was six years in Congress & five as Minister to South America.⁶⁸ He has been very rich [and] is a perfect specimen of Southern Aristocracy. The best I have seen. Egotistical & vain he is [a] perfect wreck to vices & vulgarisms. The only good thing in my opinion he ever did for the world was to build his excellent house for our Hd.Qs. We are as nice here as bugs in a rug. All have our rooms & featherbeds, our carpets, & myrros. Our chairs & sofas thanks to Mr Pendleton. Had a merry Chris[t]mas. Was to Dinner at H.Q. 1st Div. Cavalry Corps. Met many of my old friends. Hadn't seen them for six months. There was a feast of Turkies & a flow of wine.

This Sunday night it is raining. Has rained all day. & evry time I would go to the door I would think of My Mary. I feel heart sore that I was not with Chisman on my road to meet her. But I dont yet dispair. I think I will be permitted to meet you about the middle of next month. I will promise

⁶⁸ John Strother Pendleton, a prominent Virginia Whig, had had an illustrious career that included three terms in the Virginia legislature and two in the United States Congress. He had also been chargé d'affaires to two South American countries. *Dictionary of American Biography* (22 vols., New York, 1928-1958), XIV, 422.

so much at any rate & if I disappoint you'll forgive. But if you dont write me soon *very* soon I wont forgive. I cannot be happy for the want of a letter from you. I want you to know of what I think about what he has said.

I am as ever Yours devotedly J. Vestal H

Spencer House
Indianapolis Ind
Jan 21st 1863 [1864]

Dearest girl

I leave this place to-night for the Army with but one regret & dear that is that you are not with me. May I never go away again with a heart so heavy. May the evil spirit be blasted, that caused me to destroy the letter that would have filled my cup of happiness to overflowing. Love if you were with me to-night I would be supremely blessed, while I am without you painfully disconsolate. You felt dearer to me to night than you can possibly believe. Try & feel, Dear, from this note the spirit that writes it, for though short & written in the dark it contains a mountain of feeling & love enough for a million *all* conferred upon you. May the Angels love you as I do & make you happy as I wish.

Yours devotedly
John

H.Q. 2d Brig &c
Jan. 28th 1864

Mary J Hill

Beloved lady

My return to the Army was attended with no accident & would have been the most pleasant travel of my [life] had it not been for a delay of 20 hours at Crestline Ohio. The workmen on the Crestline & Pittsburg[h] R.R. had struck for higher wages & the Company were able to procure only help enough to run a single train per day. This train I missed as it left at 8 A.M. & I did not reach Crestline til 12 M. Consequently nothing was left for me but to lay over til 8 A.M. the next day. This delay was very embarrassing in as much as it would render it impossible for me to reach the Army within the limits of my leave.

But the tedium of the day was much releived by Fortune placing me in the way of Capt [William W.] Fellows &

Dr [Lewis] Humpries [Humphreys]⁶⁹ (the latter an old friend of mine four years ago at Indianapolis), from the 11th Army Corps now in the Army of the Cumberland. They seemed glad to see once more an old friend & representative of the Army of the Potomac. As I took them by the hand I remembered that they were from a Corps that left us some months ago with stained banners & I was too happy to remember also how gloriously & gallantly that stain had been erased & that they now unfurl to the breezes, that fan the summit of Look Out Mountain & the formidable rebel works thereon escutacheons as bright & victorious as were ever borne in battle.

.

Be it sufficient to say further that I reached the Army at 3 P.M. on the 25th [?] one day after the expiration of my leave. I found my faithful groom waiting at the depot with my horse & after a five minute gallop met the *boys* & the Gen on the veranda of our H.Q.

I lifted my cap as gracefully as I was able when Gen. Rice said—Lt Hadley permit me—Mrs Rice allow me—Mrs Rice, Lt Hadley. The first question the Gen. asked me was “did you get married?” & as the sluggish “no” crawled out I felt guilty & no doubt looked guilty of leaving undone something which I knew to be my duty. Dear, I wish I had my 15 days to spend over. I think my circumstances in life would be materially changed. As two happy husbands go galloping by my window with their laughing brides “my heart yearns to be one of those”.

I believe I said something to you about the Theater at our H.Q. I find it in full blast & a perfect success. Since I returned I have been evry night & I never laughed harder in my life. We have as good a Troupe as I ever saw anywhere.

Darling, the ring & Photograph I promised you from Washington I failed to get for want of time. . . . I think I shall go to Washington in about 4 week[s] & will attend to it then.

Your Devoted J.V.H.

⁶⁹ Captain William W. Fellows died June 27, 1864, at the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XXXVIII, pt. 1, pp. 633, 725. Dr. Lewis Humphreys, of South Bend, had formerly been surgeon of the Twenty-ninth Indiana; at this time, he was the medical inspector for Northern prisons. *Alphabetical List of Battles and Roster of Regimental Surgeons . . . during the War of the Rebellion . . .* (Washington, 1883), 105; Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General*, II, 281.

H.Q. 2d Brig &c
Culpepper Va
Jan 31st/64

My Dearest

So natural seemes my vocation, in the army that I can hardly realize the fact that I have lately seen anything else than the monotonous routine of military life. I cant see that I gained anything at all by going home. The pains of meeting & parting countreballansed all my enjoyment so I returned just even, having lost nor gained anything. Tis true that my mind is fresh in the memories of the golden moments I spent in the society of those I love but these memories are no more pleasant than the many happy dreames I had & have about the same reality. I do not regret my visit home nor would I if I had only been there to hear you speak my name & let my mother see the boy she "loves not wisely but too well". The only regret I have is that I didn't reap all the happiness there was for me in the Harvest. But I believe I missed it through a good motive—fearing it would be asking more of you than you could conveniently & willingly grant.

We gave an immense dinner party at our H.Q. last Friday. The day was set apart for a General Review of the Division & as many visitors were expected to be present at the Review it seemed good to the Gen to give all Officers a grand carnival at his H.Q. The day was as bright & fair as was ever known in Va & at 1 P.M. there might be seen youth, beauty, & chivalry assembling on the eminence that overlooked the plane [*sic*] where the Review would commence at 2 P.M. An immense crowd were present at 2 oclock when the troops marched on the ground. The Review was as fine as I ever saw for its size. Men looked well & moved by the Gen. with that stern look & sturdy step known only to battle tried veterans. After the Review 125 Officers repaired to our H.Q. . . .

We at present have two ladies on the Staff & are expecting *five* more from Baltimorr [Baltimore] tomorrow. Also expecting to be reinforced in about a week with five more from Albany N.Y. making 12 in all. When they all arrive the women will be the controlling power of these H.Q. & what measures they will adopt for the prosecution of this war is very hard to conjecture. But I am not apprehensive that they will do anything unfavorable to "Union right or wrong". Surrounded by this multitude of uncompromising women I fear I shall be in mortal terror least I be forced into a policy of warfare very different from the one at present sustained.

But, darling have no fears. My heart is iron-clad & locked & there is but one key in the universe that can unlock it & that you hold. Keep it secure, dear, til God in His Goodness appoints a time for you to unlock it & take therefrom its jewel its all.

Hoping that as I close this sheet, you are dreaming of happiness replete with him whose all you are I remain very affectionately yours J.V.H

H.Q. 2d Brig &c
Culpepper Va
Feb. 3d/1864

Miss Mary J Hill
Pittsboro Ind

Dearest Mary

Crinoline has crowded me out of the house & I am now in my tent shivering with cold. The most hard hearted man in the world could hardly wish his enemy a more disagreeable day than this. A painfully cold wind is blowing a hurricane. The fly of our tents are beating the long roll & the smoke of our fires is distressing. There is no comfort anywheres to-day. In the fire-place of my tent is blazing a big fire, but so successfully does the cold wind perforate our canvass walls, that I am nearly frozen with my coat on sitting two feet from the fire. It is on such occasions as this that men become discouraged with military life. As I sit here trembling with cold & with eyes smarting & dropping smoked out tears, I am almost forced to exclaim "Soldiering you're a humbug".

Had a bit of disturbance at these H.Q. night before last. Very unusually we sat up rather late in the parlor with Mr & Mrs Needles, two guests of the Gen's & very interesting people. Whereupon it called forth from the Gen. an order of reprimand couched in the most *insulting* language. This order was followed early yesterday morning by another upon the same subject—dictating what we should say, when we should go to bed, & when get up—& charged us to see that our *conduct* was becoming of officers & gentlemen & "to so devote our time that we might say at the end of each week that we had rendered to the Government services equivalent to our pay". Both orders were grossly insulting & in convention assembled yesterday for that purpose, it was *unanimously* agreed to secede from the Staff unless the orders were revoked. This is not yet done, nor have we yet seceded,

but we will *all* go unless things become as we dictate. This is sworn to.

Have not yet heard from you since I returned, but hope that the head of the column of your letters will reach me in a few days. I want to hear from you very badly.

Have had an invitation to two balls since I returned but have attended neither. One at [Brigadier] Gen. [Joseph B. Carr's] Carrs' H.Q. & one last night at [Major] Gen [David B.] Birney's H.Q. Gen Rice goes & leaves his lady at home. Lt Chisman my right bower, says such treatment may indicate a faithful husband among *blooded* Yankees, but in the West where he was raised it always speaks better for the husband to take the wife along.

.

Hoping that you are in a comfortable house with easy head & easy eyes, I remain

forever yours J.V.H.

H.Q. 2d Brig &c
Culpepper Va
Feb 11th/64

Miss Mary J Hill

Dearest Mary

I said in my last that I was going to write you twice a week, but failed as soon as promised, it being a week yesterday since my last was dated.

Sunday the day I should & would have written our Corps was on a reconnoissance to the Rapidan & did not return til Monday. Monday I couldn't write of course. Teuesday I had my tent torn down "to found it upon a rock". This day I had no place to write. Yesterday my excuse was the same as on Teusday. Moved in my new house last night then went to the T[h]eater at Culpepep[er]—had a good laugh & cold feet—returned at 11 o'clock [and] drank two & half cups of tea—*smoked my pipe*—went to bed & had a good sound sleep—rose at 9 o'clock this morning.—Inspected the Grand Guard & gave it "fits" for a particular or two.—They swore to be true to the Discipline & straight out soldiers. I threatened to send them all to their regiments. Its made *men* of them. 20 have already been to see me to know if they couldn't do something for my comfort. I later [told] them they could "build my chimney higher" & there are just one dozen working at it now. Just here I heard the mason say he would build

it to the moon if it didn't quit smoking. But what on earth am I writing this senseless stuff to you for? What do you want to know what I said to the Guard? What do you care whether my chimney is high enough or whether it smokes or not? This is a matter that concerns me only.

Our reconnoissance didn't amount to anything one way or the other, only the showing of the strength of the two armies. We didn't loose any men or catch any. One or two miserable, cowardly, wretches deserted to us & perhaps an eequal number deserted to them. The Washington C[h]ronicle noticed a desperate charge made by the 7th Ind., but none of the Regt saw it. . . .⁷⁰

I shall not attempt to enumerate the number of our guests present. (I say ours but I mean the Gen's) but will say that we are expecting *eight* more to-morrow. I find ladies in the Army to be the most destructive & inconvenient things in the world. They have driven Lt Chisman & me, who have no interest in a million of them, out of our room—have taken half our blankets & rode our horses nearly to-death. They eat amazingly, want more riding whips & letter paper than a dozen wives.

.

I salute you—John

HQ 2d Brig. &c.
Culpepper Va.
Feb. 14th/64

Miss Mary Hill

Dearest

Your first dated Feb. 9th has just been received & read the third time. I was very glad indeed to hear from you. So long had it been since I had read a letter written by your fair hand that I was growing fearfully impatient.

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I took Mrs Rices' sister, Miss Thorpe, to see a cavelry Review yesterday—went in an Ambulance—Driver let the horses run off—Miss Thorpe scared—screamed very naturally—got weak—tried to throw herself out of the Ambulance—

⁷⁰ A newspaper correspondent reported from Culpeper, Virginia, that on February 8 the Seventy-sixth New York and the Seventh Indiana had "charged almost to the river" and seized a Confederate position in the Raccoon Ford area of the Rapidan. *Washington Daily Morning Chronicle*, February 10, 1864.

I gallantly fled to the rescue—with extended arms saved her—concluded she would rather fall into my arms than into the road. Took her *some time* to recover but when she did seemed satisfied with her choise. “For he maketh me to *lie down* in green pastures” was her motto I think. Had not the horses ran off yesterday I think I should not have been so tired last night, nor had such *ugly dreames*. These poison creatures will be the death of me yet I expect. Mrs Lt Col. Banta & Mrs Maj. Welsh tumbled into the arms of their husbands two days ago in Culpepper. Mrs. Banta said if I had done my duty when home she would have met you here. She looks to day as if she had been an angel.

Opened our theater again last night. The Troupe [took?] a benefit & realized \$50.00 [?]. Good night love. Your John

Hd.Qs. 2d Brig &c
Feb. 18th/64

Miss Mary Hill

My Dearest

this has been the coldest day of the winter with us & painfully disagreeable. The wind which peirced to the center has threatened all day to blow off my tent but yet it stands with some assurances of being able to stand the storm and I've been smoked again nearly to-death.

.

Four more young ladies & two gentlemen arrived at our HQ this evening. I cannot wish for any more—nor wished for these. think if I had the blankets I loaned them to-night I should enjoy them about as well as I will enjoy the ladies society tomorrow.

.

For the present I leave you.

As ever your
devoted J.V.H

H.Q. 2d Brig &c
Feb. 21st 1864

Miss Mary J Hill

Loved Mary

I'm tired tonight. Tis Sunday but I 've been running all the day. After going through the usual routine of Sunday

Morning Lt Chisman & I went to the 3d Ind. Cav. on a visit & business. . . . Of all classes of people in this army there are none so poisonous & dangerous to go among as Indianians. Their hospitality is so unbounded that it leads them blindly to commit many indiscretions.

Yet we Indianians love to meet out here. We are so few among so many, that the word Hoosier electrifies & makes us old friends. We are proud of our Indiana out here for what she has done & doing & other people pay her homage too. The other day Capt [Frederick L.] Clark of Gen. Meades' Staff was sitting at the table with us. The relative merits of troops were being discussed & the Capt. made this observation [:] "Gen. there is one thing I've noticed during my two years' association with this Army & in the many battles where I've participated & that is this—Indianians take them as a whole—are the best troops in the Army—both in camp & on the battle field. They have fewer deserters & fewer coward[s]—need less attention & less discipline than the troops from any other State".

Capt Clark is a New Yorker & he didn't know there was a Hoosier near. Lt Chisman was not present & all eyes were concentrated on me & I confess I wilted under the compliment. But it was rather a pleasant wilting.

I said in the begining I was tired. I am. Returning from the 3d Cav. about 2 P.M. I hitched a piece of calico to my arm, Miss Libby McClure, & "*went to meetin*". Led her gallantly through an astonished crowd of soldiers to a front seat & sat by her. After Church the evening was so perfectly splendid that we could not commit the sin of staying in doors. So we walked out to the 1st Brig. & back again over the fields.

Not yet satisfied, we rested a half an hour & again left the gate in another stroll. Never was there a more enchanting evening in Feb. The sun was sinking in the West, reflecting back as parting salutations, ten thousand golden glories, while the warm balmy breezes came gliding by touching our cheeks as softly as a lover's kiss. My last walk was replete with pleasure drawn from the society of Nature & Miss Cara Bush. While out I thought a dozen times of you, dear, wondering whether you were out walking with some agreeable company or whether you were sitting in the parlor writing to me. I could but wish the former & hope the latter.

I've had but one letter from you darling, since I returned. If you don't write oftener I will certainly have to come to see

what is the matter. Inclosed you will find \$1.00 of genuine rebel money. You will please treasure it for me as a relic of the rebellion.—Your devoted J. V. Hadley

H.Q. 2d Brig &c
Feb. 29th/64

Miss Mary J Hill

Dearest Mary

the 6th Corps went out yesterday on a reconnoissance to Madison C.H. & have not been heard from yet. Guess they have met with no trouble or we would have heard from them. We got orders last night to be ready to march at an early hour this morning, but we didn't march & evrything has been as quiet as usual today.

The ladies have been in some consternation, but this has given me no trouble inasmuch as I have a horse this time & will not have to stay behind & serve them in their panic. Officers wives I regard as having a perfect right to come to the Army, tis a nice thing & would like to have one here myself, but for New England to belch forth all her old maids & husband seeking girls, into our rooms, to take our beds, & eat up our savings—is, I think, a questionable right.

We've had one of those *dear* creatures here now for more than four week[s] & she insists upon not leaving until some of us agree to marry her. Chisman says he wouldn't mind it & would do it if she were only 35 but being two days more, thinks he'll wait. . . .

Made application to-night for a Leave of Absence for five days to go to Washington City. If I get my Leave I shall fulfill my promises.

Our Army is to be consolidated into three Corps as follows[:] 6th with the 1st, 5th with the 3d, & the 2d to be increased to 20,000 by new troops. The 1st will be commanded by Maj Gen. Sedgwick, the 2d by Maj Gen. [Gouverneur K.] Warren, & rumor says that Joe Hooker will command the 3d. I don't believe it though.

Mr. Pendleton was in a furious passion this morning. He thought we were going to leave him without giving him a Bill of Damages. He cursed the Gen terrible. Since his visit to the President he has been very independent—thinks that Abe will support him in any thing he may say or do.

.

Have you always preserved my letters? If so, how many have you on hands? I close—Good night dear—J.V.H.

H.Q. 2d Brig 1st Div 1st A.C.
Culpepper Va.
March 13th 1864

Miss Mary Hill

Dearest Mary

I have adopted a new plan. I wrote twice a week until I ceased to get letters & now I have written once in *two* weeks to see if I won't get two letters in *one* week. I won't scold any more, but *punish a little* to let you know how very uncomfortable it makes one feel to receive such few letters from the expected partner of life. No, darling, I don't mean what I've said. I've had two letters from you since I wrote, & will explain myself why I have not written sooner.

On the 4th inst I went North on a Leave of Absence & have just returned & once more settles [*sic*] for business. On my return I found two dear good letters awaiting me & felt only too sorry to believe, that in all probability, my dear Mary, was anxiously awaiting an arrival from me. But they shall come now & continue to come as many as you will want to answer.

Among the many friend[s] & places visited in my Leave was Falls Church & the good people with whom I was once sick & received such kind treatment. I need not tell you that we are *good* friends, for I've told you that before. I needn't tell you that Lizzie Sherwood is young, handsome, & accomplished & has manifested & still manifests some regard for me, for I guess you will remember what I've said upon this subject before. The family expected a visit from me, Lizzie more particularly, for I had promised it Six monthes ago & more recently doubled the assurance.

I didn't "surprise the camp" for I had received a note a few days before from Lizzie, stating that she would expect me on Saturday morning the 5th inst. I was up to time on said morning, but was not surprised to find one one to meet me at the depot for it was raining furiously when I arrived. The house stood a quarter of a mile away, & after a few questions & answers with the Capt defending the Post, "swift on the wings of *love* I flew". As I drew near I saw that the window curtains were drawn aside & had a disposition to believe that I was seen, but had no ostensible assurance of the fact. I entered the gate—approached the house—heard the hall door slam—heard rustling feet through the passage—saw a fairy of sixteen summers rush out at the front door—and———no matter what.

I was very *kindly* received & while there my treatment could not have been better. I [s]pent the days very pleasantly with the family & the evenings with a very *small portion of the family* in a manner after the fashion of———. I expected to stay with them two days & nights, but the cars refused to stop for me on the second day & I was *stuck* for another 24 hours. On the morning of the 7th I went down to the R.R. where stood an engine smoking on the track, & insisted upon the Manager of the Road to take me to Alexandria—stating that I was on important official business for the 1st A.C. & that I *must* be in Alex. to connect with the noon train for the Army, as the result of my efforts *must be* laid before the Genl. that evening. After some questions asked & some *lies* told he agreed to send me to Alex. in a *Special Train*—the engine. He asked me if I were ready & I told him that I must go to neighboring house & get my baggage. He said hurry & I hurried.

Went back to my friends & told them that I was going at once when they replied they couldn't see it—that I should not leave their house until I had my dinner, though it was not 11 o'clock. I had to yield—dinner was hastily prepared—& I ate frightfully of the very best their larder contained. I then again met the family in the parlor to take a last adieu, which accomplished[,] Mrs. S. said—"Come folks I'm sure we're not wanted in here any longer" & they all obeyed *but one*. The old lady was right, but I didn't tell her so. The room thus vacated there followed—what?—tragedy of course. Ten minutes more & I was out of the house, feeling very much like I had swallowed a 20 lb shell, which had lodged in my *left breast*.

When I got to the R.R. & found that the cars had been waiting for me some time, I could hardly persuade myself that I was not a Maj., Genl., or a Gov, or a Senator, or something of that sort, that the cars would wait for me, when I had always waited for them or been left, & then to be the only passenger, & what was more to hear the Manager tell the engineer to make all haste with me, least I be too late, but before I got out of that infernal engine I was very well convinced that I was nothing but a petty Lieutenant if that, for really they or it ran so furiously that I like to have frozen to death. The wind blew through me like I was a sieve, & I was a[s] wet when I got to Alex. as a soaked pongue [sponge?]. I wanted to kill somebody, when I got off, for I thought they had taken that plan to punish me for my *lies*.

I was in time for the Washington train, where I went. Lt. Genl. Grant was expected in W. that same evening. I[,] like evrybody else, was wild to see this man of might[y] deeds. Went first from one hotel to another to see if he had yet registered. Could learn nothing til I saw this. "The President will give a Reception to Lt. Genl. Grant, at the White House this evening, begining at 8½ o'clock, to which all members of Congress & Officers of the Army & Navy are Respectfully invited". I claiming connection with that fraternity—went of course. My friend Capt Richardson furnished the white kids—& I was dressed for the occasion. Was met & welcomed by father Abraham himself. Will tell you all about the levee in my next—havn't room in this. With the best wishes of a kind heart, & sanguine hopes of coming happiness I am, dear Mary your affictionate Soldier.

I send you my photograph—may I not have another one of yours?—The ring I spoke of I found to[o] expensive to risk by mail—twil all be right.

You complain that time draggs so slowly by—guess if you read this letter—two days of your Time will be well employed. I shall expect to receive a blast from this letter—a bad spirit has got into me & written it for me.⁷¹

HQ 2d Brig &c
March 15/64

Miss Mary Hill

Dearest

I didn't go to the Ball to night in the 5th Corps for I thought I might spend my time as pleasantly & profitably at home. Gen Rice gave me a *very special* invitation to go with him to accompany Miss Thorpe the reigning beauty of these H.Q. Miss Thorpe is a *fine* girl—but not my stile & even if she were I had no inclination to go to the Ball.

.

Dear Mary I'm tired to-night. I've been writing hard all day & am now dull & stupid as you find this letter to be.

⁷¹ Although there are several other postscripts also written in the margins or superimposed on the body of the letter, these have been omitted because they are so difficult to read.

How I wish for your presence—that I might find a rest for five minutes. I think it would brighten & animate me.

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You will please notify me a week before you go to *Richmond* [Indiana] that I may mail your letters there. What you were to tell about *that Recruiting officer* I have not yet read.—May I read it soon. Have you seen Col Ashby?

Beloved I salute you. J.V.H

HdQs 2d Brig 1st Div &c
Culpepper Va
March 23d/64

Miss Mary J Hill

Dearest

A very heavy snow lies upon the ground—perhaps eight inches at any rate—much the largest snow we've had this winter. It was quite cold & unpleasant yesterday & last night when the snow was falling but this day has been beautiful & shiny.

I expected yesterday to be in the saddle all day as I knew it would be the day for our Genl to ride the Corps Picket Line which is always a days work not to be wished for but once. We have to take turns in going with him & it was mine yesterday, but the Genl was in an extra good humor because he was not arrested for keeping his wife two days contrary to orders, & when we were about ready to start he made the very pleasant observation to me that I need not go unless I so desired—the weather was so very bad. I never thought so much of my Genl as I did yesterday when sitting by my pleasant fire & thinking how he was suffering on the Picket line. . . .

The rats are very bad about *our house* (*our house*—what is it in these two words that makes them so full of endearments to me) & I thought I would put an end to some of their frolics over *our floor & bed* at night time. For this purpose I procured a steel trap. Lt [Archibald] Bush was in this morning & suggested that we so arrange the trap as to catch & scare evrybody that came into the tent. I was agreed & the trap with its ugly jaws wide open was soon above the door so fixed by a string that when the door was opened it would

fly & make a terrible rattling if it didn't catch anybody. It was a perfect success. I think we scared Lt Chisman, an ordely, & the mail-boy til they were mad. It caught Chisman by the back of the cap, the ordely by the hair, & came so near catching the mail-boy's ear that it would have been no worse if it had. The laugh was so good in each case that I enjoy it yet. I wish it had caught the mail-boy because he didn't bring me a letter. You will think this big business for our ages I reckon but if you do you are mistaken for it was certainly very little business. But what do I care what kind of business it was? I m in for anything to hurry off my six monthes more.

I understand that our army is to be increased to 200,000 men & that all Veteran Western regiments are to be ordered here. Grant joins us tomorrow—his Head-Quarters will be in Culpepper.⁷² Considerable preparation is being made to receive him.—Dearest, adieu.—J. V. Hadley

Hd.Qurs. 2d Brig. 4th Div 5th A.C.
March 27th 1864

Miss Mary J Hill

My dearest Mary

You write very short letters, I must remind you. Perhaps Sunday evening is a bad time for you to write—for I expect *he* comes sooner always than you expect him. If it conflicts with your *arrangements* to write on Sunday evening I will not insist longer on this particular time. These "Ky. Bloods" & "Ten. Refugees" require proper attention to win their favor.

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Since my last our Army has been consolidated & you will please hereafter address me at the Hd.Qurs., 2d Brig 4th Div. 5th A.C. Some changes have also been made in our Gens. At present they are our Brigade Commander Brig. Genl. J C Rice, Division Com. Brig Genl. [James S.] Wad[s]worth (our old Com.), Corps Com. Maj. Genl. Warren, Army Com. Maj. Genl G. G. Meade. I would tell you about

⁷² On March 10, 1864, President Abraham Lincoln had placed Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant in supreme command of all Federal armies. *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XXXIII, 663.

the different changes that have been made but you knowing nothing about the old organization would know nothing about the new.

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3,000 more hearts are now sighing in the North than there were a month ago. *All* ladies have at last left the army.

Dearest Mary good-night—J.V.H.

I send you the photograph of our Genl. & one member of the Staff.

Hd.Qs. 2d Brig 4th Div 5th A.C.
March 31st 1864

Miss Mary Hill
Pittsboro &c

My dearest

Last night was my time to write you & I should have done it, but Chisman wouldn't let me. He perhaps had reasons for his course which I won't explain here least I might give greater cause for a "blast" than I did some weeks ago; Chisman says he had reasons but "I couldn't see it".

You seem to be interested in the "particulars of my visit to Falls Church." My visit there was very similar to all my visits made on such occasions & under such circumstances. My business there was to see Lizzie & I saw her. the time we spent together was varied by *a few touches of the lips—a few enfoldings of the arms—a few tender words—a few sighs & a few———no nothing more.* This young girl said she never expected to see me again & of course treated me kindly, which kindness I felt bound to repay. I am going to tell you of all my tricks so that I will have nothing to confess when you will demand it as your *right* to know all.

You saw a couple take upon themselves the holy or unholy (I don't know which it is) injunction to "cleave unto each other" did you? I am very glad that you are trying to learn how *it's done* for I may want you to show me some day; for I have a disposition now to sacrifice myself *soon* "for weal or for woe". As you looked upon this newly established relation & comprehended its *meaning* did your heart, like Smith's, "burn to be one of those"? I don't mean *Howard Smith* I mean the Poet Smith of England.

Our Review day before yesterday was a very stupid affair. It was a general Review of the Army by the Great Grant but it rained all day & in consequence all formality was waived & the distinguished man rode along our line formed in "double column at half distance" (you understand it of course) slowly, looking at evry man & officer as interestedly as a drover would examine his herd of oxen which he was preparing for the slaughter.

I had a little variety in my official duties yesterday. Information had been brought to H.Q. that four citizens living near our picket line were suspicioned to aid men to desert from our army through our lines to the enemy. I received an order from the Genl. to examine into it & learn if possible the facts in the case & if sufficient evidence could be obtained to arrest them & turn them over to the Provost Marshel. I wont say anything about our preliminary opperations—too tedious—suffise it to say that greatly assisted by Maj. [Robert W.] Bard of the 95 N.Y. V[ol.] we got on the right track. We got a man in whom we could put all confidence & had him propose desertion to a suspicious party of the 95 Regt.—proposial was accepted with the further statement that it was already arranged for two of them to desert to-night which was to be effected through the kindness of some citizens. Our friend went with his victims to see said citizens about reb clothes &c. & then & there learned that they were organized for that purpose by the confederacy & were opperating with another party at White Oak Hall the rendezvous of Deser[tters]. Three were at home & belonged to no Regt. in particular [and] the third a member of the 17th Va. Inft. on Special Duty. They showed their papers to our friend & were very happy to admit him into their grace &c. They parted to meet at 9 P.M. for business but they met a little before that time. The earnest deserter[s] were soon in irons, & the four citizens in jail at Culpepper. One of the chaps, [of] the 17th Va., jumped out of a 2d story window & broke for the woods but my revolver persuaded him to stop. He seemed to be of the opinion that he hadn't done anything deserving of arrest, but when our faithful servant stepped ov[e]r & remarked—"these officers have come to be present at the meeting to-night"—Mr. Reb replied—"Yankee trick by G—d".

I had scearched Humes' house the day before by order of Genl Rice & found 5 pairs of Federal pants & 25 pairs of

drawers all of which I confiscated. At that time Hume insisted on being the best Union man in the Government & his wife affirmed that she had always called him an abolitionist & a Yankee &c. But the following day when I told him he was my prisoner, she demanded what was it for. I told her because he was a *white washed* Yankee & an abolitionist of our army. She sighed "my dear husband". I consoled her. I have a story to tell about my adventures this afternoon which I will give in my next.—It was one of the best of my life I thought. You shall hear of it.

Do you think your father asks too much of you?—please answer without reserve—devotedly J.V.H.

H.Q. 2d Brig 4th Div. 5th A.C.
April 3d 1864

Miss Mary Hill

Dearest Mary

I am just in from a ride. Chisman, Bush, & I celebrated the afternoon (when we should have kept it sacred) by going to the front. I mean to our out-post pickets.

A dirty looking sentinel with a white dimond shaped badge on his hat, which bespoke him to be a member of the old 3d Army Corps, but now of the 6th A.C. was slowly pacing his beat by the road side & as we rode up on the gallop, brought his gun to a "charge bayonet" with—"halt—can't pass here". We knew very well that we couldn't, by existing orders, but wanted to see if he were doing his duty.

Asking him some questions about his friends in grey, who were similarly employed a few hundred yards in the front, we galloped up a neighboring hill to "view the land-scape o're". The scene was magnifficient. Directly in our front, 3 miles away arose the Blue Ri[d]ge Mountains, their bases belted with stately green pines & their summits covered with a white mantle of snow. The sun was pouring his rich radiance upon these majestic heads which reflected to us ten thousand glories.

At intervals in the valley below, we could see, away round to the left as far as the eye could reach, slowing [slowly?] moving upwards, columns of smoke which without doubt were ascending from the camps of the enemy. From their number it is very supposeable that Lee has still a great

Army & from the stout persons & good clothes of his pickets near by it would seem that his army was in very good condition.

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Darling we perhaps feel an interest in each other, or at least should, & would it not be well for us to adopt a system of criticism in our letter writing? I have many imperfections I know particularly in spelling, to which if you would call my attention you would be of great service to me. I would not have you think, by my making this suggestion, that I have found any unusual amount of errors in your letters for, upon the whole they have been very perfect, but they contain some as all letters do & as all letters are expected to. Your composition & grammar are *very good* & the only faults that I have been able to discover are in the use of capital letters.—I believe we are taught to begin all sentences with capitals. This you sometimes fail to do. It is in the kindest spirit, that I make this suggestion & in the belief that it is for our best good.—May it be accepted so.

Mary, will you tell me your age?; if I ever knew I have certainly forgotten.⁷³—Yours only J.V.H.

H.Q. 2d Brig 4th Div 5th A.C.
April 10th 1864

Beloved Mary

I didn't write you last Wednesday on account of having an extra amount of duty to perform on that day. I was sent by Genl Rice to inspect all the roads leading to & from our brigade, also all the bridges which are numerous, also with instructions to superintend all necessary repairs. I was not out of my saddle one hour at a time from 9 o'clock to 6 P.M. & when I came to my tent after supper I thought "to dream instead of write to Mary".

I see from your last that you are obstinate in nothing. If I want to go to the service again I can go with your consent. This certainly shows a sacrificing disposition but from my present plans I hardly think that I shall ever enter the Army again as a soldier in which case the sacrifice, if sacrifice it

⁷³ According to the sources available, there is some disagreement about Mollie's age. Her obituary in the *Danville Republican*, August 29, 1929, states that she was eighty-seven years old at the time of her death. But the county history edited by her husband gives August 13, 1844, as the date of her birth. Hadley (ed.), *History of Hendricks County, Indiana*, 176.

would be, will not have to be made. I have soon soldiered three years for patriotism, if there is such a thing & if I live with the Army longer it will be for some other purpose, & that purpose is *money*—a very convenient article when there is a *family* to support.

Lt Chisman & I have been *warm* friends for a long time & our relations in life are *very similar* & we have decided, that if we can get a position, which we are quite sure of, to go into the business of *Sutler*. We desire a situation in the Army [of the] Potomac. I feel quite sure that we can get one, in which case it is the intention of the Firm (Chisman & Hadley) to bring their calico to Baltimore, the H.Q. of all Sutlers in this Department, where suitable private rooms will be found to store it. How would you like to wear my *calico* & in my *absence* be the room-mate of Mrs Chisman, who is now Miss Minnie Elliott?; or would you prefer being the wife of a Capt.?

The Company of Cavelry of which I spoke could not be enlisted until we are mustered out of the Service. It was only to make my claim prior to some others, of the privilege to raise such a Company when our time is out, that some have insisted on my promise. I have never made it yet, nor think I will.

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I salute you—J.V.H

Hd.Qrs. 2d Brig &c
April 17th 18[6]4

Miss Mary Hill

Well dear Mary

I must confess that your letter of the 10th inst had a little ring of scoulding about it. First I believe I ever got of you that could claim such a spirit, & for some reason & can't account for, never got one that did me more good. I think I read it a dozen times before I put it up. Lemonade is good when sweetened & so is a few sour words when there runs through them such a rich vein of *sweet love* as I could trace through your letter. . . .

As far as my knowledge goes there is no truth in the report that our Regt. is to guard Genl Grants H.Qrs. It would little effect me if it were true. My fortune is with Genl. Rice instead of the Regt. or Genl Grant, & our campaign is

certainly close upon us. Orders are issued relative to the "impending battle". The badly sick are going North, & all army followers ordered to "git up & dust". I am ready for the fight & "let it come, I repeat it, let it come". My sword is bright, my revolver clean, & pouch full of cartridges. My valise is also well filled with such articles as are "necessary to the good of the service["] among them, soap & towels.

What our campaign will be & how it will be has been thoroughly discussed by all & thoroughly understood by none. It is the popular opinion though I believe now, that when gunpowder explodes, *it makes a noise* & further more, that if a 20 lb shell strikes a mans' head at an angle of 90 degrees *it will destroy his equilibrium*. I also heard a gentleman belonging to the brass button fraternity the other day advance the theory that fighting was dangerous, but if a man can escape all bullets & bayonets, & is not accidentally killed, nor dies by any disease, he will get out of the service alive. Such is the philosophy of this army & it is generally thought to be sound—Genl Grant believes it.

I was up, & had an *interview*, the other evening with the Genl. [Rice] at his *own proposial*. He *suggested* to me the *propriety* of *obedience & faithfulness* to superior officers. I bowed at an angle of 45 degrees & replied—"Genl I'm of the same opinion" at the same time inwardly murmured—"Lord thy will not mine be done". Genl Rice is an animal so constituted that it is actually necessary to his happiness, to give some body a "blowing up" once a week. We want to make him happy & take the "blowings". We take it by turns & this week was my turn. Because I sometimes take 27 inches at a step instead of 28 (a military step)—

"His waking wrath took great offence
To see such cr[u]el disobedience".

I felt *easier* when I closed the door behind me, but felt like I "couldnt help it," as Lieut Bush said yesterday when his horse threw him into a Slop sink.

You regard Lt Bush "as very handsome indeed" do you? So do I & shall watch the mail *very* closely hereafter to see that no letters come from Pittsboro addressed to the boy.

I go to Washington tomorrow shall stay 4 or 5 days—will probably write you from the city.

Do you get my letters—one each mail, or both (of each week) in one mail?

Write very soon to your loving friend J.V.H

Clarendon Hotel
Washington City D.C.
April 20th/64

Miss Mary Hill

Dearest

I intimated to you that I was coming to Washington City & I believe I promised to write to you from here. I had some business here or I certainly would not have come.

If there is any place on God's foot-stool that I hate it is Washington. Not so much the town as I do the people. I have looked all over the place for an honest man, & I find that among all her boasted 60,000, that none are honest but Abe & three weeks ago when I attended his Levee & saw him so warmly welcoming *evrybody*, these lines of Cooper suggested themselves to me

"O friendship cordial of the human breast
So little felt & fervently professed".

Out of some curiosity I went to Congress yesterday after-noon. I had been there often before, & was always bored, save once when Henry S Lane made a speech in the Senate on arbitrary arrests.⁷⁴ I was bored worse yesterday than ever before. There was nothing doing in the Senate but offering & refering Resolutions. I am ashamed to speak of the House, for I blush to acknowledge that there are so many traitors in our Government. [Ebenezer] Dumont of Ind.⁷⁵ offered a Bill on Revenue, which the Democrats disliked & wanted to kill. As soon as they got ready to consider the Bill, the Democrats began moving to adjourn, (which unfortunately is always in order) & would demand the "yeas & nays" on evry vote.

It would take at least 15 minutes to call the Roll & record each man's vote & they continued this process for

⁷⁴ A founder of the Republican party in Indiana, Henry S. Lane had won the 1860 gubernatorial election by a 10,000 majority. Two days after his inauguration, however, he resigned to accept a post in the United States Senate. Lieutenant Governor Oliver P. Morton succeeded him as the state's chief executive. *Biographical Directory of the American Congress*, 1189; John D. Barnhart and Donald F. Carmony, *Indiana: From Frontier to Industrial Commonwealth* (4 vols., New York, 1954), II, 154.

⁷⁵ This congressman had been colonel of the Seventh Indiana when Hadley joined the regiment. Although Dumont was promoted to brigadier general, ill health forced his resignation from the army in 1863. He won election to the United States House of Representatives as a Unionist candidate. *Biographical Directory of the American Congress*, 834.

two hours, when it was night & the Republicans seeing that there was no hope to accomplish any thing, one of them at last moved to adjourn when evry Dem. in the House voted *against it*. Anything to be contrary was their motto. But the Rep[s]. beat them on the vote & the House stood adjourned.

As the members were leaving the Hall the Speaker⁷⁶ brought down his hammer & desired to announce a meeting of the Nation[al] Union club, when the Dem[s]. began such a *hissing & groaning* that it was impossible to hear a word the Speake[r] said. Verily our Government is more rotten than I thought it was.

I go to the front tomorrow—only yours J.V.H.

Hd.Qurs. 2d Brig. 4th Div 5th A.C.
April 27th/64

Miss Mary Hill

Dearest

Your last letter was short but a very good one. One thing however I noticed against which I must enter my protest. It is the appellation you used—*Johnny*—I dont claim to be much of a man, but I certainly claim to be something more than a little boy. I dont like the name.—Call me Tom, Dick, Pete—anything else than *Johnny*. I was sorry to hear that you were sick. . . .

Our Regt. has been transfered from the 2d Brig. to the 1st Brigade of this Div. Genl Rice & Genl Cutler had a seven days fight over it & Cutler proves the victor.⁷⁷ I dont blame Cutler for asking for the Regt. & fighting hard to get it. He outranks Rice by 12 monthes & while Rice was commanding 2700 men he (Cutler) was commanding but 1700, & it was right that he should ask for *our Regt.* inasmuch as his brigade are all Western troops & our Regt. the only other Western Regt. in the Corps.

The 1st Brig. has a big reputation—none bigger in the Army [of the] Potomac—known as the Iron Brig. & composed of the 2d, 6th, & 7th Wis., 24th Mich., & 19th & 7th Ind.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ The speaker of the House of Representatives was Indiana's Schuyler Colfax. For more information about him, see Willard H. Smith, *Schuyler Colfax: The Changing Fortunes of a Political Idol* (Indiana Historical Collections, Vol. XXXIII; Indianapolis, 1952), 102-209.

⁷⁷ See *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. XXXIII, 463, 1041.

⁷⁸ The celebrated Iron Brigade was the only large all-Western unit in the Army of the Potomac. The Twenty-fourth Michigan and the Seventh Indiana did not join it until late in the Civil War. The best history of this unit is Alan T. Nolan, *The Iron Brigade: A Military History* (New York, 1961).

Our Regt. does not seem much pleased with the change for they had become much attached to the old 2d Brig. Though their associates were all N.Y regiments with a single exception (56 Pa. V.) the 7th if they had had their choise would not have left the old 2d Brig. for any Western, or any other Brig.

Dont know how it will effect me. As yet I am with the 2d Brig. Staff, & may remain. I would rather be in the Brig. with my regiment & intimated as much to Genl Rice, but he said he would not let me go unless I insisted. I shall soon see what to do.

The campaign may begin tomorrow—we have evrything cooked & ready. When my letters cease to come regularly, know then that we are at work. Be hopeful dear, that the coming campaign will not destroy our happiness. Heavens blessings upon you dear Mary.

John

Hd.Qurs. 2d Brig &c
May 1st/64

Beloved Mary

I little expected this letter would be written. I had supposed we would be on the march before this time, but we have no stronger evidences of an early march now than we had a week ago. I may write you several more letters from this same place & then this may be my last. We are all ready & have been for two weeks, & when the day of doing comes we'll know it & not before. It will not disappoint us at any hour. When we streach ourselves out on our blankets we have no assurance that we will lay there til morning. Such is war & such I have got tired of.

.

You don't know certainly whether you should like to be a sutlers wife in Baltimore or not. Nor do I know certainly whether I should want you to be or not. That was only one of my & Chismans' air-castles. Baltimore or no Baltimore[,] sutler or no sutler, I feel now like I should'nt be in any great panic to get into the army again as a soldier.

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Dearest good-night—four month[s] is but a short time, & if life lasts I shall soon be at your side to assure you how much I am

Your devoted Jno.

Hd.Qrs. 2nd Brig. 4th Div. 5th A.C.
June 21st 1864

Miss Mary J. Hill

Your letter asking for information in respect to Lieut Hadley was received yesterday. I am happy to state, that we have heard of his whereabouts within a day or two. He was sent, on the morning of the first day's fight (May 5th), with Lieut Chisman of our staff, to advance the "skirmish line" $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. He did so, and came back and reported the same to Genl. Rice, and immediately returned to stay with the "skirmish line" until the "line of battle" came up. This was the last seen of him, as he was captured with the entire line. Lieuts Chisman and [William] Mi[t]chell of our staff were also taken prisoners on that day.⁷⁹

We heard nothing concerning him until day before yesterday. We then saw his name among a list of wounded Federal officers, at Locust Grove Hospital, Wilderness, Va.

This list was copied from a southern paper. Under the list was a paragraph, which said, the above list have been sent to Orange Court House, Va.

I am very glad that I am able to give you this information, and if I hear any thing further from Lieut Hadley I will write you again. I am

Yours Truly
A[rchibald] m C. Bush
Lt and A.A.D.C.

P.S. Please excuse pencil.

Indianapolis Ind
Jan. 31/64 [1865]

Miss Mary Hill

Dear Mary

I have returned—have done my business at Washington—have become a *citizen* of the State of Indiana & feel fully the liberties I once enjoyed.

If God in his goodness will permit I shall be supremely happy to greet my Mary at her fathers' house on next Saturday evening.

Devotedly
J.V. Hadley

⁷⁹ For the Seventh Indiana's position in this battle, see Rufus R. Dawes, *Service with the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers* (Marietta, Ohio, 1890), 259-261.