(No. 3)

July 1861

Camp Leibels, Union Ford Va.

Dear Jim,

I commence this my no. 3rd letter to you very early indeed after writing to father. But it is because I am looking for orders to march every minute & know not where our destination will be or how long before another chance occurs to write. Fearing you may think I am neglecting you I will write now though it is late at night & I am tired having just returned from a scouting expedition on which I set out a few minutes after writing letter (no. 2) to father. I will tell you how I am fixed at this instant. I have found a piece of crockery which by the aid of a little melted tallow pored on it serves as my candle stick. It is placed on the top of my tin cup which elevates it a little higher. Same cup also serves as a table on which I place my inkstand. My paper rests on my knapsack which is indeed so pliant & so far from being a plane surface that it takes a great deal of trouble to hold it by constant changes in a writeable position. Self is seated on the ground - feet in front on each side of knapsack - not a very agreeable posture - On each side of me are snoring away the others of the mess

with great glee by the little girl who seemed very much amused by their actions. Must close as here is chance to send to office. B. Hall Jr.

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But enough of this — The object of our scouting expedition above mentioned was to see what we could learn of the fate of our missing men supposed to be killed when we retreated from Sangster's cross roads near Fairfax Station. We were fortunate in learning that they were all taken prisoners & not killed. They retreated at the approach of the enemy through the woods & coming up & finding we had left supposed we had gone to Seibels while they immediately hastened but were surprised by running in on the enemy's camp at that place instead of Seibels's who had just retreated. They were taken tied & sent to Fairfax Ct. House jail if we were correctly informed. We supposed they will be exchanged. We also learned that the enemy had fled quite to Alexandria but the thefts, robberies & insults heaped upon the defenceless people especially women & children was perfectly astounding. Mr Sangster who is one of the most influential citizens about Fairfax Station had every horse taken from him, every cow shot down. They killed all his sheep cut off the hind quarters & left the remainder in the fields shot his fowls in the yard & pillaged his house stealing what they pleased — would break open every trunk

box &c in the house & turn out the contents. Langston's wife was confined at the time so he could not leave. He took his position at the foot of his stair steps (she being placed up stairs) with a double barrelled shot gun whenever any of the yankees were in his house & told them they might kill him but he would shoot down the first one who attempted to go up. He kept them off by this means but not without great difficulty for one party were about to go anyhow when an Irishman from their own number stepped out with his gun & defended L—. He is now a ruined man for most of his negroes were taken away some have escaped & got back however but he has not a horse to cultivate his crop. One poor woman was telling us how badly they pilloged her — She says "They took every rag of clothes I had even my Sunday bonnet & my hoop." She latter seemed to trouble her most for she couldn't divine what they wanted with it. One widow lady with two nice daughters, one however a little child was very grossly insulted by them. To think of the manner in which real respectable & intelligent ladies as these were with no protector were treated is enough to enrage the most peaceable disposition that ever existed. Their great crime was

that they had taken a couple of our sick men to their house & nursed them. It so happened that our captured picket guard had passed by this very house that morning in going out on picket & had left their blankets there. when the Northern army came upon them so suddenly they retreated back the same way closely pursued by some of the enemy on whom our boys fired as they passed through the yard fired & instantly passed on. This certainly was thoughtless. The enemy returned the fire several of their balls striking the house. The lady announced closing her windows when the Yankees cried out "You had better shut up your windows" She immediately threw them all wide open again. The Yankees now made a regular investment & seige of the house which depended as it was only by women surrendered. They said they thought it was a fortification of the rebels. After she had rebels concealed in the house & that she had been harboring rebels (alluding to her nursing the sick ones) & commanded a search in the whole house. Then around the soap in a barrel commenced dipping in their crackers supposing it was molasses & devoured several swallows before they could stop when they suddenly halted & began to curse awfully. This was related to us with great