

P.O. Address

Camp near Chancellorville
3rd Reg. N. Ca. Troops
Richmond VA.
May 19, 1863

Josiah Collins Esq.

My dear Friend;

I have owed you a letter for some time, but if you knew all I had gone thro' & the work I have had to do, you would readily pardon my otherwise gross neglect. But then you know I ___ have written if ___ I shall make no further apology.

We are now leading a strange sort of life. The excitement of the battle is now over, & we wake up to the stern act, that we are now in the woods with but 2 or 3 tents, and a few flies for our soldiers, with a vast multitude of ticks, very bad eating, & very little of it. I am not yet rested from the fatigues of the late engagement, neither have I had enough to eat for a past ten days. Bad bread, worse bacon, only bearable when we can eat wild onions, wh I am learning to do very fast.

May 20th since I wrote the last sentence, we have had quite a severe march, leaving our old camp last night, at 9, marching until 12 M. & then starting again this morning, & only just stopped, possibly we may only remain here for the night; we of course do not know, never know anything until all is over, or until we reach a place to where we may be assigned.

I am ___ ___ on a log out of doors, feeling a little wearied, I now have the use of a horse, & I find him very useful. I allow the officers to ride him occasionally, & to-day especially several ____. I as then compelled to hike it on foot. Yet I ___ ___ write a ___ trusting in ___ ___ to get the letter completed some time or another.

Well: my dear friend, I feel as tho' I had a different nature from what I had when at the lake.

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___ Judge Stevens of Mass. came over in the flag to truce to get his son's body. He sent for me, & rec___ me with great warmth, & offered to remunerate me for what I had done for his son; I told him if he wd get a letter to my mother for me, I shd feel more than repaid. He said that he would not only do this, but that he wd visit my mother, & tell her all about me. I wrote to my Mother by Judge Stevens & trust that she has recd the letter by this time. If so how rejoiced she will be to hear from her only son! There were many affecting instances wh occurred during the battle. I was walking on the road from on hospital to another, when I heard a noise in the woods just by the road side. I at once went to the spot, & found a Yankee in the very ___ of death, I asked him if I could do

anything for him! He simply asked for water, I gave him some from my canteen, & talked with him, I asked if he had ever been baptized; but it was too late. I had to leave him dead for the living required my services. When I returned I found the body of this boy-lying out- & 2 were searching his pockets, & otherwise robbing him of his personal effects. I saw another instance of a Yankee- being nearly dead, & two men taking from him what he had, before the breath had even left his body. This seems shocking to us, but when we remember who ___ to ___ with & their savage ___, when they are in ___, I cannot feel so badly at seeing such sights, as I should if we were fighting with a ___, or a civilized nation. Think of the Yankees. When they were driven back in the late battle, destroying their medicine chests with all their contents, & then coming to us begging us for medicines for their own wounded. Then again, the Yankee surgeons & their own nurses did not attend to their people as they should have done & I was compelled to go to them & beg them to do their duty. Indeed, if they had done as they ___ have done, I should not have been compelled to serve the Yankee Col. in any capacity save that of a clergyman. But Mrs. Josiah, you can have no idea of the enemy. I did not ___ until I met them face to face—

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I have heard such sounds, & seen such sights, as make my flesh almost crawl ___ I think of them. Such suffering, agonizing & terrible in the extreme, I never had the least idea of before. And the sorrow was not confined to our men merely, but to these miserable Yankees who were strewn all around. The woods & roads were alive with dead men, many of them unburied, one with a head left out of the ground, another the feet sticking out; & this was not confined to one or two instances but to several. Our men are generally decently buried, tho' they are wrapped up in their blanket, while they are uncoffined: & always unshrouded. One day I buried 18 soldiers, & many I ___ not only, for the actual want of time. Then I assisted in nursing, both night & day, except towards morning when I would creep into some wagon & sleep for 3 or 4 hours, when I would get up & go at my labors again, generally the same exciting round of the day previous. Fortunately we were only living this way for 6 or 7 days as our wounded are ordinarily carried to the rear at the earliest possible moment. While the enemy had to be left behind in charge of his own ___ as we were again ordered to the front to establish another hospital, until at length we reached our Regiment which has suffered considerably in the late engagements: Happily, this fight is over so far as we are concerned; yet we know not what a day may bring forth, -I find myself kept busy all the time, visiting about among the men, preparing sermons, attending on the sick, & such like, the mark is different from that of a Parish Priest, I find myself always on the go, with no time for rest save at night, but then I sleep in an ambulance, & have not as yet gotten used to ___ boards, with only a bed quilt between my body & the floor of the ambulance, still I get along remarkably well, all things considered.