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 His name is Hans  
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U. S. A. Gen. Hospital  
 Chester Penn.  
 Jan 20<sup>th</sup>, 1863.

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Contributed to Maine Memory Network by Maine Historical Society  
 MMN # 81017

Date: January 20, 1863  
 Description: Writing to Nathan Webb, her future brother-in-law, Rebecca Usher relayed the history of the U.S.A. General Hospital in Chester, Pennsylvania.

ty, & a rival candidate for the highest office. The ladies showered luxuries of all kinds upon the soldiers, & the surgeons found that the men were in many instances being killed with kindness, & when they tried to regulate the diet of the patients, they the ladies turned against the Drs, reported all through the County that they were drunkards & profligates. In this state of affairs Mrs Tyler was sent for by the Surgeon to come & take charge. When she arrived the President of the Aid Society requested a private interview with her, & informed her that the Surgeon in charge was drunk every day, that he lived such a profligate life that he had been turned out of all the scientific societies in Philadelphia & much more of the same bearing. Mrs Tyler had friends living in the vicinity; she took a carriage & went to see them, as she knew them to be well acquainted with Dr La Conte & asked the truth of the allegations

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of the Aid Society. They told her that  
they were all false. That Dr. La Conte  
was not an intemperate man, that he  
was still a member in regular standing  
of all the Scientific Societies in Phil.  
& that he was a good & honorable man.  
Mrs Tyler then returned; when the Pres.  
requested another interview, repeating  
what she had said before, & adding that  
of course Mrs Tyler would not stay un-  
der such circumstances, & if she did  
the Hospital could not be sustained, as  
it would receive no countenance or  
aid outside the walls. Mrs Tyler replied  
that her remaining was not entirely vol-  
untary on her part. As she was sent to  
the work by a religious society & if she was  
needed here she should <sup>trusting in Providence for supplies</sup> probably stay. Then  
the President went into the wards & de-  
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who of course sided with the ladies who for six weeks had supplied them with every imaginable dainty. Next day came an order from the Surgeon General at Washington dismissing the Ladies Aid Society & installing Mrs Tyler as Matron of the Hospital & ever since, there has been a deadly feud between the Ladies of Chester & the Officers of the Institution. So the great majority of the people in the vicinity absent themselves from the hospital; & the institution is left dependant on foreign supplies, chiefly from Mass, with an occasional box from Connecticut - Rhode island, Maine, & Baltimore. Our supplies were getting so low a few days ago that I had concluded to write home for a big box, but that day one came from Salem Mass, to Miss Trucker with 35 flannel shirts 20 prs socks, a variety of wines & other liquors packed in sago & some tobacco. So that at present ~~we~~ we do not need more than the few things I have sent for in my letters to Mat & Ellie. I wish May Bacon would write me about her letter from a soldier in Chester Hospital & send me his name. I would like to hunt him up. I think it may be one of the Guard. & some of them are fine

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fellows. Tell Mat, she need not be so modest about her letters. Louise & I find them exceedingly interesting. To be sure they are not read in public, but the audience though small, is highly appreciative. The announcement of the Chaplain that the Paymaster was coming proved a sad disappointment to most of the soldiers - as although he did come, yet he paid only a very few of them & but two months wages. I shall be thankful if they are ever paid & if the States are ever sufficiently possessed to provide for their families & keep them from actual want. I hear more complaints from soldiers from New York State on this account than from any other State. There was a rumor here a day or two since that our Hospital was soon to be closed. I told Mrs Tyler that if it was closed, I had a proposition to make to her. It was, that she should ask the Surgeon Gen. with whom she is well acquainted to send us all to Alexandria, & allow us to take a house in the vicinity of the Convalescent Hospital. I had been thinking of that place all day, & thought it a disgrace to the nation, & I felt sure that if she was anywhere in the vicinity it would be cleaned out. She said well she was ready to go as soon as she was no longer needed here. She is a splendid woman, & has I think great dramatic talent. She reminds me of Charlotte Cushman in this. Though she is older & much handsomer. She is a very handsome & brilliant

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woman, with great executive ability.  
I wonder if Carrie Hersey is with Mat now?  
I hope she is, & I wish Lizzie could be there  
too. I am so sorry for them. The one bright  
spot in their horizon had become suddenly  
dark. It seems to me that private grief  
is much harder to bear at this time when  
such a black cloud is overhanging our Country.  
Has the 7<sup>th</sup> Maine been sent back to the  
field & did George go with them? & what do  
you hear from Charlie? The weather is like  
Spring all the time here & some of the fields  
are as green as emerald - & the maple branches  
as have a purple tinge as if the blood of the  
tree was running through all their veins. It  
is warmer than I like much of the time. I  
feel better when the north winds blow. We  
have had no cold weather since Thanksgiving  
week - an unusually mild weather they  
tell me. Have you sleighing in Maine?  
There is a military funeral in Upland  
to day. A soldier sent home from the  
war to be buried. The band & procession  
are just returning. Tell Jeannie that she  
had better come here; as Miss Titcomb's  
serving man looks so much like Mr White  
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they would be better as the wards are scrub-  
bed twice a week & it takes more than twelve  
hours for the floors to dry. It is like fording  
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The Pennsylvania method of scrubbing is to throw down several buckets of water & then wash it round with scrubbing brushes & mop a while & then sweep it off. One almost needs a life preserver here on scrubbing days. In our ward we are not so extravagant of water, but as the floors are made of soft pine & unpainted - they are a long time drying. Mat asks if I do not find Butler's speeches good entertainment. I have seen none of them. I wish you would send them to me & anything else that's stirring. We nurses are not a literary coterie. I have not read a book or an article in a magazine since I have been here, & only a very few times have I read even the war news in a newspaper. I depend upon my men to tell it to me. I wish you would send me one of your woodland crosses in Mat's box. What Mat wrote about the sale of the timber is not clear to me. She says "he got \$2100. half down - have invested 2000 in a mortgage to Nat Deering & have \$2500. waiting for investment!" Question - Is the \$2100. the half down, or is it the whole price of the lot? I am sorry I did not leave my hat at home for you as I have no use for it here. I shall not be so audacious as to attempt to vie with DL Sweet in letter writing but Miss Titcomb's Ward Master can beat him ex platerating. We find every variety of character here & see quite as much of the ludicrous side of human nature as of the fearful effects of war. Every body's sins seem to rebound upon the soldiers, & in some parts of the country there is

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a man wounded in the leg. The wound  
has been enlarged within a few days by  
the Surgeon so that now it is eleven  
inches long, & they are fearful he may lose  
his limb. He is from Wadhams Sussex Co  
New York, has a wife & five children, has  
been in the army two years, has received  
no pay for sixteen months. He received  
a letter from his wife saying that she  
had done her best to support herself &  
family, had taken in washing & done  
everything she could, but with all the ex-  
ertion she could make she was \$15.00  
in debt, & hoped he would get his pay  
soon so as to relieve her of that. He says  
there is a committee in the town to look  
after Soldiers' families but the only thing  
that had given her, was two bushels of wheat  
I advised Miss Kendall the lady of the  
ward to write to the Com. & she will  
do so to-day. John Nichols & wife passed  
through here yesterday on their way home  
from Washington, & I sent a hospital ring  
to Mat by them, made by Mr. True of  
the 5<sup>th</sup> Maine from North Yarmouth. He  
is a relative of Prof. Wood of that place,  
& is well acquainted with Dan Eaton.  
Tell Mat she must not count too much  
upon the heart, as he has a wife & family.  
Has anybody heard from Nell Dow lately?  
Shall call on Georgie as soon as I learn  
where she lives. Sam & Jane I see have  
gone to Cuba. Please remember me to  
Madam Anderson, Mr & Mrs Dow, your sister  
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