

U.S.A. Gen. Hospital
Chester, Penn.
Sun. Nov 23^d, 1862

Dear Ellen,

I wrote to Mattie yesterday & will send you a continuation of her letter to-day. I arrived here Friday morning in a pouring rain. Mrs Tyler met me at the door & ushered me into her room & then sent to the ward for Louise. The main building of the Hospital was erected for a normal school. It is an immense building with large airy halls & high studded bed rooms heated by furnace & lighted by gas. There are five wards, each ward containing three divisions, each division capable of holding 60 men. The wards are long one-story buildings plastered outside & inside lighted by gas & heated by coal stoves. Miss Titcomb's ward the only one I have been through as yet, presents a very cheerful appearance. The beds are arranged

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Contributed to Maine Memory Network by Maine Historical Society
MMN # 80992

Date: November 23, 1862

Description: Rebecca Usher wrote to her sister Ellen Usher Bacon of Hollis, about her arrival at the military hospital to begin work,

on either side the room heads to the wall, & the gas fixtures ^{running through the center} are ornamented with large wreaths of evergreen & artificial flowers & small United States' flags. The men are very cheerful & very kind to each other, doing all they can to entertain each other. I helped Louise give out her supper the other night. She has a soldier detailed as servant who brings the food up from the kitchen, she serves it to each person according to direction upon tin plates, which are taken on a waiter by the servant & distributed according to as she directs. ~~she directs~~ - the tea & coffee is brought up in wooden pails & served in bowls. One boy about seventeen came in to ask for some paper. Louise remarked to me that "he had a ball in him." But said I, addressing the boy - what is to be done with the ball? "Oh" said he, "I don't know, I guess I shall have to keep it to remember the battle by." After he had gone, Louise told me that the ball was very near the heart. Mrs

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Tyler left for Baltimore the morning of my arrival so I have had no ward assigned me as yet, & busy myself mending stockings & doing sewing which is brought me for the soldiers. Yesterday I altered three shirts for wounded men cutting them open the whole side, sleeve & all, hemming them & sewing on tapes to tie them together. Last Saturday a rebel soldier in Miss Newhall's ward died from amputation. He was so low that he did not recover from the effect of the ether. He was from one of the Carolinas (South I believe). He told her he did not think he should live through the operation. He said he should be willing to die if he was sure he was prepared: that he had never spoken but one profane word, & then he got angry with a boy at school, & it had always haunted him; — that he had always endeavored to do his duty through life - but he was afraid he was not a Christian. ~~He was buried with~~ I remember now that he was from North Carolina & was in partnership in business with

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of the Rebellion they differed so much
in politics, that his partner left him
& came to Philadelphia - After he was
sent to this Hospital the partner visited
him, sent him comforts - & finally came
& took his body away. We are very much
in need of stockings here, & some what in
need of flannel shirts, but have plenty
of bedding & every thing else I believe.
Should we have a new arrival of wounded
then we should need bandages, old cotton
& many other things. I am afraid all
our soldiers must suffer for stockings
this winter. Too great an effort cannot
be made to supply them. It seems to
me that there might be a system estab-
lished at the Hospitals of gathering up
the old stockings & sending them out to
be footed; but I do not know how it could
be managed. The stockings here are washed
perfectly clean, so there would be nothing
disagreeable about them. Tell Ella &
May that unfortunately for them no
more nurses are needed here, but I think
they would be quite competent for the place
if they were well. Mrs Tyler is in need
of a person to assist her in overseeing
the kitchen department, for which I think
Mrs Webster would be admirably fitted. When
Mrs Tyler returns I will enquire all about
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& shall be delighted to recommend Mrs Webster if she has any ~~desire~~^{idea} of coming. I suppose Mrs Tyler would want her immediately if she has not already supplied the place. Mrs T. will return Monday or Tuesday. I feel quite impatient to have my ward assigned me, & begin my work. Louise seems very much interested, is very popular & is doing a good deal of good. & so is Miss Newhall. Please say to Miss Newhall's friends that she is perfectly well & writes home often, & cannot imagine why her letters are not received. George Woodman told me that Horatio has lately written an article on the Virginia Campaign which I should like very much to see. Am sorry I did not ask George to send it to me. If you should get it, send it to me & I will return it, if you wish. The day I arrived here the Chaplain had invited Signor Blitz to come & perform for the entertainment of the soldiers. So in the afternoon, they were all assembled in their dining room & the Chaplain

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sent an invitation to the ladies, adding that he would reserve seats for them. At the appointed hour, we went & were escorted through a dense crowd of men to a seat directly in front of the Signor. I do not know that I ever enjoyed any thing more, than hearing those soldiers laugh. We all regretted that there were numbers in the wards too ill to be present at the entertainment. But the Chaplain said he would get up something for them. The Chaplain is an Episcopalian & Mrs Tyler is a Sister of Mercy of the Episcopal order. When the Hospital was first established it was under the direction of the Ladies of Chester. But they gave the sick soldiers so many cakes & jellies, that the Surgeons said they were killing them with kindness & set about establishing a new order of things; had the Hospital taken suddenly the ladies found themselves

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relieved from all command, & Mrs Tyler appointed to take charge. This produced a great deal of ill will towards the incoming government which was far from pleasant. Yesterday, however, a lady came with a proposition from the people of Chester, to give a Thanksgiving dinner to the Soldiers. & this we hope will heal the feud. Louise has gone to attend religious services in the Chapel. We have a very sweet toned Melodion which is carried to the Chapel every Saturday evening where a singing meeting is held. & religious services every Sunday afternoon. The other evening Dr Grier (one of our Surgeons & son of Judge Grier of Philadelphia) came into Mrs Tyler's room to see one of our nurses who was suffering from Rhumatism, & when he was introduced to me asked if I was from Portland Maine? Said he was acquainted with Judge Clifford & Mr Boyd. I asked

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if it was Charles Boyd? He said it was. Where upon I wanted to shake hands with him; but contented myself with saying that I came on in his charge - adding that he was a fine man & I liked him very much to which he responded with a good deal of enthusiasm. Give my love to the Boyds & say to Mrs Charles Boyd that I had a delightful journey with her husband - that I am afraid I was a great deal of trouble to him but that he took excellent care of me & I enjoyed every moment, notwithstanding the bad weather & the unavoidable accidents of travel. Tell Dan there is a drummer boy here not much older than him, who drums away every day like a hero. Give my love to Carrie Jonas & all my friends (I am sorry I could not have called to see them all) & Believe me

Very truly yr Sister Bep.

Send this letter home after you read it. If Mrs Tyler wants Mrs W will write immediately

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