

Barrack no 3
Elmira Sept. 25, 1863

Dear Friends,

As there was no letter for me today from home I concluded to send one to home and perch up in my bunk in the top of the room, behold me enjoyed penning a communication for your especial and particular benefit and as I have absolutely nothing of consequence to write about I shall be under the necessity of writing on matters of no consequence. It is a cold, cloudy, lonesome day, without the wind blows chill and dreary. Within the fire burns briskly and roars up the stovepipe. If I could hear the old familiar sound of the spinning wheel, I might imagine myself at home, but alas war is over the land and the hum of the bullet and the whizzing of the shell now greet the ear of the soldier in place of the cheerful buzzin of the family spinning wheel. Do you know that many kinds of bullets have precisely the same sound when they are flying past ones head, as that produced by the spinning wheel? When the "good woman," is spinning or twisting (I forget which whirls her wheel very rapidly once or twice just before the yarn is wound on the spindle she makes the sound of a flying bullet exactly so when you get to spinning this fall remember it. But Although there is not much difference in their sound, there is considerable difference in the results for while the hum of the wheel adds both length and strength to the threads of the house, the hum of the bullet frequently destroys the brittle thread of life and so effectively at times that it is impossible to splice it again.

But I will have done with spinning these yarns and talk of something else. Last week I was at New York with a squad of substitutes. We went down in the night, so as to be in the City by daylight, but came back on the morning express. None of the subs succeeded in getting away from us but the party ahead of us and one after us both lost men. The drafted men never run away. It is only those who have gone in as substitutes and got large bountys. They will jump from a care while in full motion getting out at the windows. They very often get killed in the operation, but it is no loss to the world for they are not fit to live. One of them, only a few days since, not being able to get out at te window went into the water closet and let himself down through the hole. He succeeded in escaping from the guards but he was so badly injured that "Old Death" drafted him before morning without giving him the opportunity of furnishing a substitute. We have not much sympathy for the class of men here.

The country through which the NY& E RR passes is wild and romantic and for about 150 miles almost a wilderness. The land is cleared up I suppose but the road seems to run through all the woods it can find. It wind around among rocks and hills as crooked as a serpent and when it can't get around a hill, it either goes over or through it. For miles it follows in the valley of the Delaware, which valley by the way is mostly a steep sided hill. Mile after mile you ride along from 20 to 75 feet above the river for the narrow track with from 200 to 500 feet of rock and hill towering above your head on one side and the river far below you on the other side. Twisting and crawling around among these hills, they sometimes turn around the point of a mountain so square a corner that on looking back you very much wonder

where the train came from and you shudder almost to think of running 30 miles an hour on that ledge of rocks way up on the hill side. At one place you look down on a small village only 75 feet below you and if the cars should run off the track there, they would fall into the tops of the houses. I arrived at the conclusion that if a sub should jump out at this particular spot, he might get hurt perhaps. The distance from New York to Elmira 273 miles and they run it in less than 10 hours including stopovers . While I was in the City I attended evening services at the John Street Church and heard a very good sermon indeed, and with equally good motives , though perhaps with not so beneficial effect to myself, the very next night I attended the theatre to hear the celebrated Achwin Booth play "Hamlet." This you remember is one of Shakespeare's best and I assure you it was well worth hearing.

Fearing if I write more, I shall exhaust my stock of ideas, or whatever you may do to please to call them, I will now subside by wishing you all good night.

John