Dear Miss Lewis,

Some time since I requested the privilege of corresponding with you – a privilege granted as I am informed by a tardy letter just received from your beautiful little City. I am aware that I am entirely unworthy of this favor, and but for the circumstances by which I am debarred from the pleasure of communication with the fair sex, I should never have dared to seek it. The home of our choice, the State of our love is far distant, but the sights and scenes of camp life, by similarity sometimes and more frequently by contrast, are suggestive of home and its endearments. We are reminded on the toilsome night march, in the privations of camp and the dangers of the battle-field, of the comforts it was once our lot to expect and receive. What, when these are so vividly presented to our minds, is more pleasant than a letter from the place we love, where hallowed associations linger, and where, too, when the sounds of battle are hushed in blissful peace, we pray to return and reenact the scenes that yielded us a rich harvest of joy and happiness?

War to me in its most enticing phase is at best uncongenial. To view it through the records of history, it presents a field where fame may be sought, and every youth, as he peruses the past, becomes a military aspirant; but alas! how different the realization! It presents to the inexperienced a series of successive pageants, but to him, who has witnessed it in its details of carnage and misery, it is naught but a disgusting calamity. Stripped of its elegant surroundings, it is a hideous picture, a loathsome deformity. No one, who has never been a soldier, can form an adequate conception of war, for the powers of language are at fault in its description. I would not have you believe that I am sickened of the present contest, or that I am unwilling to endure hardship and sacrifice comfort for the promotion of the common cause. I merely lament the necessity which has forced us to go to war, for war, however just, is a calamity to be deplored.

How, or when, this accursed contest is to terminate are questions, whose solution demands a greater foresight than I can justly lay claim to. They are the all-engrossing themes of discussion in Camps, and you would be amused to witness the display of credulity in regard to every one of the thousand and one groundless rumors, that go the rounds daily. So eager is the soldier to hear the glad tidings of peace, and “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh”.

We are now encamped within ten miles of Winchester – probably to rest. The army is recruiting rapidly – the stragglers are all coming in, and so stringent are the rules to be enforced in the future, that the game of straggling may be regarded as “played out”. I think that Lee will remain inactive for some time. I hope that the fighting is finished for this year at least, lest, by an impolitic or hasty step, we should mar the most brilliant campaign of ancient or modern times. Surely no army with the same means, not even the best trained troops of Napoleon or Frederick the Great, ever underwent such hardships or achieved so many splendid triumphs, as the Volunteer Soldiery of the South. Half-starved and half-clad, they’ve marched hundreds of miles and fought ten fights, in every one of which success crowned our arms. I might furnish the details of suffering, such as would melt a heart of stone, but I forbear. After all this, is there no prospect of peace? None – none. The war cloud gathers now, and ere long the storm will burst with unparalleled fury.
upon our devoted heads. A presentiment possesses us all, that the decisive conflict is yet
to be fought, and in this neighborhood. As I write this, I look around instinctively at those
of my comrades, who have survived the battles of the past, and are now preparing for the
one to come. They are yet true. I see no signs of cowardly fear, but a firm resolution to do
or die. Every man is nerved for the approaching hour of danger, and rest assured that the
day will be ours.

The recent battle of Sharpsburg was probably the most hotly contested of any ever
fought on the American Continent. Northern accounts represent the battle-field as
literally covered with the dead and dying. They pronounce it a drawn game, but Gen. Lee
estimates the enemy’s loss as twice as great as ours. Upon our side, Georgia lost more
than any other troops by far, and many a wail of sorrow is heard from the “Empire State”,
mixing strangely with the shouts of triumph. Truly nothing but a defeat is worse than a
victory.

With feelings of respect and high esteem,
I remain very respectfully,
Your friend and obdt. servt.
Eugene S. Mitchell
Co. F, 45 Ga.
3d Brigade
Light Division
Maj. Gen. A.P. Hill
Richmond,
Va.