

3rd Division—2nd Army Corps Hospital—
Gettysburg, Pa. July 26th—Sunday.

My Dear Mother

- 1 Today is Sunday but there is no semblance of it here. It is now about five o'clock in the morning. Our hospital has been moved and our stores have given out. There is nothing to cook with, hence I have nothing to do, and, therefore, have time to write. Such days will come here that we have to see our wounded men fed with dry bread and poor coffee; and I can tell you it is hard to witness some cursing for food, some praying for it. It seems to be no one's fault but will happen. All the luxuries that the men get come through the Christian Commission, Sanitary, Ladies Aid, etc. I would give anything to have a barrel of butter, and some dried rusk that I have seen in our parlor. I wish you would get up something of the kind and have Mrs. Jones requested to forward to me. I should think it would be as satisfactory for me to have them as for them to be sown broadcast on the land. I could make a report of everything I received and write to the Society.



Cornelia Hancock was a celebrated volunteer nurse, serving the injured and infirmed of the Union Army during the American Civil War.



Savage Station, Virginia: Union field hospital after the battle of June 27. Photo shows a makeshift field hospital with wounded soldiers sitting and lying on the ground while some receive care.

- 2 I received a silver medal from the soldiers which cost twenty dollars. I know what thee will say—that the money could have been better laid out. It was very complimentary though. One of the soldiers has a sword that he found on the battlefield, which he is going to give to me before I come home. If they were only where they could buy I should be so loaded with baggage, I should never be able to get home. I shall not come home, unless I get sick, while this hospital lasts. I have

two men detailed to wait on me, which suits of course. They are now fixing up nice little tables and all such things around the tent. I have eight wall tents full of amputated men. The tents of the wounded I look right out on—it is a melancholy sight, but you have no idea how soon one gets used to it. Their screams of agony do not make as much impression on me now as the reading of this letter will on you. The most painful task we have to perform here is entertaining the friends who come from home and see their friends all mangled up. I do hate to see them. Soldiers take everything as it comes, but citizens are not inured. You will think it is a short time for me to get used to things, but it seems to me as if all my past life was a myth, and as if I had been away from home seventeen years. What I do here one would think would kill at home, but I am well and comfortable. When we get up early in the morning, our clothes are so wet that we could wring them. On they go, and by noon they are dry.

From thy affectionate daughter—
C. Hancock

(Excerpted from *Letters of a Civil War Nurse: Cornelia Hancock, 1863-1865*, published by the University of Nebraska Press.)