

Dreams of Alex S. Paxton

Beginning with the night of Jan. the 7th of 1864

Will only give the snatches of the dreams that could remember.

Dreams

1.7.64

Was at Mr. Echols'. Met him at the door – Miss Millie was there + Mrs. Echols. Was eating dinner. I ate too. Slapped a (“N”-word) up stairs + had to explain.

Was in engagement with enemy above Mr. Echols.¹ Was going black cherrying(?) and got into the mess.² One battery was riddling a brick house. We had to cross a road commanded by Yankee batteries. Nobody hurt. Next was at a meeting of some kind. Saw many ladies and some old friends – Mary Watson amongst them. Cruised and pryed around generally. Next was in Lex. @ Mr. Compton's. Saw miss Lula B. – now Mrs. Semmes. Last but not least was promenading on some beautiful walk in Lex with Miss Frances. Was another lady and gent too, don't remember names. Enjoying myself amazingly when awoke and to my regret 'twas all a dream.

Also thought met Mr. Rucker (Wm.) near Lynchburg somewhere.³ Had no teeth in his mouth. Spoke to him and didn't know me at first.

1.8.64

Was going to school in Arnold's Valley at Gray Spring.⁴ Miss Bell Anderson. Was writing. Mr. Paine was the teacher. Barred(?) him out for a holiday.⁵ Got him on the ground and was choking him, when agreed to our proposals, got up and said 'twas rough treatment. Thought Sam Lyle (Lieut) was there.⁶ He and I got into a mess somehow.⁷ I choked him no blood shed tho'. Thought was at my scales weighing out meat. Had beef and bacon. Gave some companies beef and some bacon.⁸ Was crossing river at home.⁹ River high. Nobody drowned. Tho' was somebody scared. Came out on south side some distance below the landing at the old persimmon tree.

1.9.64

Thought Lex. was Head Quarters for our Brigade. I went foraging for corn down near Balcony Falls.¹⁰ Went in canal boats instead of wagons. Good deal of trouble turning under the bridge into the James River Canal. Got in. Got corn. Had two mules in boat stable and two pulling it.¹¹ I started up home to get box to take back with me.¹² Met Pa at lower quarry. Had a barrel of eatings for me. Didn't get back with the corn. (Run into a blank)

Was at Lex. At Ruff's to get me a hat. Had none. Fellow gave me a hat. ___ got Ruff to do it up for me. Left it there. Was on a splendid horse, got from some fellow conditionally. Rode up to the hotel and dismounted. Saw and spoke to Capt. Jim White.¹³ Was going across Main St. opposite ___ Coveney's(?) I saw someone in window. Ran down towards' Waltz's to ask old fellow about my horse. Cousin R called me and told me to come up, that Anne was quite sick. Promised to do so and went on. Was at Col. Walker's. Staid all night. Got up next morning and was in a barn. ("N"- word) brought me water to wash. Made old man bring more, as said someone had washed feet in that. Was again in Lex. at Col. Edmondson's. "Marsh" 'twas there too. Both of us got on my horse to ride down street. Got pitched off. Led the horse. Stopped at McGown's¹⁴ the hatter and blessed him¹⁵ for disappointing me so long about a hat. Next was at somebody's house + at breakfast. Had "break" very late in the day.¹⁶ Strange gal ate opp. from me. (Into a blank)

1.10.64

Was sending rations down to men on picket. Looking for wagon to come by some forage. One came by. Had barrel to put in. Great running after men to get rations. Lt. Fulton was dividing loaf of bread.. Smyth Blue¹⁷ snatched it out of his hand + liked to have had a row.¹⁸ A confused recollection of riding a horse. Got home. Took them all by surprise. My sister Emma didn't want to kiss me because had a big mustache. Mrs. Drake was there too.

1.11.64

Only remember being at coz. (cousin) R. McClure's. Kissed them all and called coz. Mary his "fat-wife".

1.12.64

Was in a fight. Exposed to musketry fire. Shot at fellow. Missed him. Knew he would return the compliment. Tried to hide myself behind log. Yet he hit me in side. Started to go off but fell. Was at the ferry at Mr. Anderson's. Wanted over. Watson's John (?) brought canoe over. Said would charge me \$5.00. Told him to go ahead. In danger of going over dam. Yet come out safe and nobody was drowned. Good Eggs (?) Also thought was in Lex. Saw Miss. Semmes. Formerly Miss Lula B. Sitting on a bank near spring. Said "So I've got out of your way at last Mr. Paxton." Told her I hoped she was pleased with the investment. Then told her Mr. Semmes was reserved and stiff in his manners. She agreed to it.

1.13.64

Was in a fight. Some "shelling" and they burst near me. Didn't fancy it much. Didn't get hit. Was making a speech somewhere. Was rolling out the ideas. Old Irish woman had my speech, copy of it. Gave it to me. Was going to college or school somewhere. Studying (don't remember) Also had a tooth pulled. Came out easy.

1.14.64

Was at home. Several girls there. Carried wood upstairs (old). Was down picking potatoes with the bloods.¹⁹ Old sow knocked me down and was chawing at me at wonderful rate. Bloods didn't notice me at first. Liked to have killed me. Was in orchard getting apples. Went all over it. Some of trees didn't have many on, others were loaded. Next thought our company²⁰ were on picket in front of our house on river bank.²¹ (N-Word) were in the kitchen. Boats were coming up the river. Went into tunnel. Were working it in large force. Went in on upper rail road track. Thought (I) was shunning some fellow. I insulted. Missed him. Talking with Pa about digging a canal, so as to let lock boat come up to mouth of tunnel. I proposed to raise the dam at Balcony Falls, so as to back water up branch. Then remembered 'twould overflow our bottoms.²² Came over Salling's Mt.²³ Met a friend. Went into a store with him. Old man ____ and some boys in store. I got to "skinning the cat" on the rafters.²⁴ Got into a dispute with old "Chick" about the word suple. Pronounced s~uple or s`uple. Was in barn. Asked some school teachers about the word suple. Thought I was suple on the cat skinning. Guess I was up in our hay ____ and dividing our rations to the regiment. Gave Co. G six spoonfuls of salt. Called for "D".²⁵ Said they had gone to Chancellorsville. Told them had better have drawn their rations first.

Also had an indistinct recollection of seeing Miss Frances somewhere. Was counting out some money to some fellow. Couldn't get it right. At last made the right change. Then went into some confectionary + got some good things to eat.

1.15.64

Was going to school in Arnold's Valley. Was coming home. _____ Yankee line of battle. Was a funeral procession of some Yank officer. We had to fall back.²⁶ Fellow was going to shoot at me. I had no gun. Scared me like thunder. However jumped over a fence and escaped him. Was quite an engagement. I got behind.²⁷ Hid in brush. I saw Yanks going by. Had lots of our prisoners too. Old Yank at last got me out of brush pile. Tables were turned. I was taking prisoners. Got splendid gold watch and chain from old Yank. He grumbled about it. Told him to "Dry" up or I would shoot him.²⁸ Dried up in quick time. Got in sight of schoolhouse. Yanks were thick there. Was on the road leading down the creek. Yanks saw us. Had to leave our prisoners and run like thunder. Yanks close(____) after us. I ran up the mtn. close by the big hole in the creek.²⁹ Caught by a tree to pull up mountain + and old tree gave way by roots + fell down, thus telling old Yanks that I was going up the mtn.³⁰ 'Twas so steep that rocks and dirt slid down as [I] went. He came on and got me on top.³¹ Brought me back to school house. Went by Coz. William Greenlee's old spring. Saw some ladies at house. Miss Sallie Case. Tried to go up but couldn't get up. The bank so steep.

Was in a room somewhere. An old Yank, the one [I] took watch from was trying to shoot me through the window. Didn't do it though. Was trying to get out from between two Yankee lines by crossing _____ at Mayo's and getting on packet.³² Next was in a canoe. Went into the mouth of Valley creek.³³ Water was running from the river. Went curling down stream.

1.16.64

In Lex. Went to P Church.³⁴ I saw Maggie C. and Coz. As were going from church. Went to P.O.³⁵ Went down below to get letter. Was leaving town. Roads muddy.

1.17.64

Was in meadow at home. Saw Harry Estill.³⁶ Talked to him about Ordinance. Was at Uncle William's. Several young persons there. Was down at river. Uncle William fell in. Was wading or fording [river] 'twas in a big fight. Balls were flying thick.³⁷ Was not engaged but under heavy fire. Fight was in our back field. Enemy on hill + we down in hollow. Enemy routed + fled. At first I was going over field hunting wounded friends. Also looked for good Yankee overcoat. I saw several of our company. J. Moore and other wounded. Met some old _____ hunting for 5th Regiment.³⁸ Told them to follow me. Fight commenced again. I got shot in right foot behind big toe. Went off on a gun for a crutch. Hospital was at big oak in road. Sandy place. Got two crutches before got there. Couldn't get wound dressed. Came back saw Dr. _____ eating. Came back to hospital. Next was put in house. Two beds in it. Didn't like it a bit. Next was coming home on crutches, Mack³⁹ and "J" too, down through Uncle William's field. Snow deep on ground too. Pa and the bloods saw us. Came to meet us. I got up new stairs. Aunt Eliza was washing fancy article of _____ Came down. Never had my wound dressed. Ma probed it and got out the ball. Hurt badly. Felt good tho' afterwards.

1.19.64

Was at home. Saw Uncle William's cat. Someone had thrashed him. The old Judge was hitching up carriage. Put 4 horses in. Put saddle on. Was going to drive like wagon. Thought 'twould be like a "bully-drive" Thought he was going to drive me to Lex. Was going back and forward from Army to Orange Court House.⁴⁰ Going up with some fellow. Showed him camp fires(?) of another _____ drives away toward the south. Passed a pretty house built like the Institute in Lex.⁴¹ Said it was an academy. Was coming back. Got into an old fellow's barnyard. Some officer was riding along and insulted me. I slipped off and knocked him over with my fist, then I made quick time getting away as he had a sword. But he got on horse + coming up to me, cut me on head and arm with sword. I took sword from him and he had to dig away.⁴² Next was in the forks of the North River and James.⁴³ Was studying medicine and going around with some Dr. Went to old negro's house to see a child. Child was very sick. Died whilst we were there. Didn't do much good that trip. Was down in Augusta visiting. Went to see Miss Sallie G. She was standing out on porch. I was coming in on side way. A "Blood" saw me. I cried out to Miss S. - "Here comes your sweetheart. She

ran in the house. Met me at door. Went in and was having a nice time when awoke + 'twas all a dream.

1.20.64

Was getting furlough. Got it and was going home. Was leaving C.H.⁴⁴ on top of a car.⁴⁵ Showed my pass to sentinel and all right. ...forgot balance.

1.21.64

Thought I was at a friend's visiting. Miss Frances lived there. Saw her and thought she never looked so interesting before. Was sitting by her and enjoying myself amazingly when I awoke and to my deepest regret found 'twas all a dream. "'Twas bright, but 'twas a dream."

Was in our Co. Lt.'s tent. Furloughs came in, D. Ruff⁴⁶ got one for 30 days. Had scuffle with Jones.⁴⁷ Lt. Roberts⁴⁸ and I went somewhere.

1.22.64

Was in Lex. Went over to college. Met good many new students. Had a "Delta Delta" badge on. In a room studying. Next was over at Mr. Compton's. Out on porch and only saw Mr. Compton. Came back again + my sister Emma with me. Went in room where all were except Miss Kate. All were in at dinner. I had just come in. Suddenly Miss Kate opened the door and came in looking beautiful as an angel. I spoke to her. Told me, she congratulated me on being married. Told the miss she was mistaken, but if she was willing I'd soon be. Don't remember her answer.

1.23.64

Dreamed I was playing chess with Jones.⁴⁹ Was just working it on him.

1.24.64

(Omitted to write until it escaped me)

1.25.64

Was at home. Came as were eating dinner. 'Twas at old house on river bank. A great many persons were there. Miss Lula B. and coz. ____ was talking to her.

And someone commenced teasing me about being in love with a lady somewhere. (All can remember, was several days ago.)

1.26.64

Was dividing out rations. Mr. Frank _____ came. Said he was from Dr. Early's. Brought me a bundle of something good. Maneuvered around considerably.

2.26.64

Saw Miss Frances. Rode up to her house. She came out on porch and blushed deeply when saw me. Then went in and shook hands with them all. Then had a splendid time.

3.1.64

Saw Miss Frances. Was having the nicest kind of a time with her. Was just about to "pop the question" when some persons came in and caught me. They had impudence to laugh at us. Wished they were all "_____"⁵⁰

(Final Entry related to dreams -3.1.64 above)

Notes

- ¹ Mr. Echols was a merchant/ landowner who had a large farm near the confluence of the Maury River and James River in Rockbridge in the vicinity of Paxton's home.
- ² I believe this means he was picking wild cherries
- ³ Mr. Rucker is mentioned occasionally in diaries
- ⁴ Southeastern Rockbridge County where Paxton grew up
- ⁵ The students were trying to coerce the teacher into giving them a holiday
- ⁶ A fellow member of Liberty Hall Volunteers (LHV)
- ⁷ Got in a fight
- ⁸ As Army Commissary Sergeant, this would have been common duty for Paxton
- ⁹ James River
- ¹⁰ The river gorge section of James River that flows through the Blue Ridge from the Glasgow area east towards Lynchburg.
- ¹¹ Often mules towed the canal boats from a path parallel to river
- ¹² A box was a care package. To the civil war soldier, receiving a "box" was a very special event – it was often full of fresh meat/fruit/veggies/cakes/pies, etc. as well as clothing
- ¹³ Likely Capt. J.J. White commanded the LHV through Battle of 1st Manassas, and then retired to continue teaching Classics at Washington College.
- ¹⁴ McCown's?
- ¹⁵ verbally accosted him
- ¹⁶ Had breakfast
- ¹⁷ "Smyth Blues" were a company of the 4th Virginia Infantry Reg. Paxton was their commissary officer.
- ¹⁸ A quarrel
- ¹⁹ blood-hound dogs
- ²⁰ The Liberty Hall Volunteers
- ²¹ To be on picket was to be on guard duty between lines of your army and the enemy's
- ²² bottomland /flood plain
- ²³ near Paxton's childhood home – Glasgow, Va.
- ²⁴ Balancing and swinging between rafters, parallel bars, or the like
- ²⁵ Company D
- ²⁶ retreat
- ²⁷ He was unable to keep up with his fellow soldiers during retreat
- ²⁸ This is assumed to mean "quiet down"
- ²⁹ By the swimming hole
- ³⁰ The narrative here is obviously hastily written and is a bit confusing. I guess he's saying that his escape route was up a steep section of the mountain – and he was using trees to assist his uphill clamber.
- ³¹ The "old Yank" captured him?
- ³² A packet boat
- ³³ Possibly Arnold's Valley Creek, which empties into the James River
- ³⁴ Presbyterian Church
- ³⁵ Post office
- ³⁶ From Lexington, an artillery/ordnance officer and likely childhood friend
- ³⁷ Bullets were called mini balls
- ³⁸ Soldiers looking for their unit
- ³⁹ Brother
- ⁴⁰ The county seat of Orange, Virginia – a focal point of Virginia Civil War Army movements
- ⁴¹ Virginia Military Institute
- ⁴² Run away

⁴³ The North is now Maury River. The rivers merge at Glasgow, Va.

⁴⁴ Probably Orange Court House , where they were often camped

⁴⁵ Flat or boxcar of a train

⁴⁶ LHV

⁴⁷ Lt. J.H.B. Jones

⁴⁸ Thomas H. Roberts LHV

⁴⁹ Lt. J.H.B. Jones - mentioned previously

⁵⁰ written in Greek