Waterford, VA Nov. 1, 1862

My dear children

I promised to write to you again if you could be good and dutiful children. Your mother tells me that you are trying to be, and if you know how much good that does me here you will continue to try and pray to be made good children like little Samuel in the Old Testament or like Timothy in the New Testament. You must love and help your mother while you are with her, for you see that I cannot do anything for her away off here except to act so as to not disgrace her. Now Siss if you have been a good girl since you may have that box, and I hope your finger is not sore now. And Willie I don't hear much about you, but suppose you help a good deal. Bert I hear that your neck is getting better. You must not forget to take your pills regularly and you will likely get well. You will both have your old teacher Mr. Elliot this winter and I hope you will improve your time while with him. You seldom get as good and at the same time kind man as a teacher. Obey him, he will not ask anything hard of you. But I suppose you would rather hear something about Soldiering and I will try to tell you some things that you can mind now. Well, Willie we have no powder monkeys in the army: so you could not have got that place with Uncle Hugh. And Uncle Hugh is not here now. You have seen a company of soldiers.

10 Comps. makes 1 Regiment
3 or 4 Regts make 1 Brigade
2 or 3 Brigades make 1 Division
2 or 3 Divisions make 1 Corps d'armee

So that a corps is from 20 to 30,000 men. To each brigade a battery is added, consisting of 6 guns & 124 horses, and from 80 to 200 men according to the size of the guns. The cavalry is kept separate always. Attached to each division is an ambulance Corps with light spring wagons to carry the wounded off the field etc. They are commanded separately from the rest of the army and are under charge of the medical director not the Generals. The Generals have nothing to do with them. They need a good many horses to haul all these wagons and they have other wagons and horses to haul hay and oats for these other horses. I saw our horses at Berlin near Harpers ferry eating hay that grew in New York. I believe I left you at Pleasant Valley the last time I wrote. (Tell your mother the cannonading has stopped for a while) It was called a valley although we had to climb up high mountains.
to get to it, but when there were others so much higher that we still had to call it a valley. Well very early on Sabbath morning we had to leave Pleasant Valley and march we knew not where. It takes a good while to start 20 or 30,000 men, wagons, horses, mules etc. but they are used to it, and by every one doing just his own part, every part gets done and there is no confusion. It rained on us all day. At 12 o'clock on we got to Berlin in Maryland. You can find it on your map about 10 miles East of Harpers ferry. We ate some crackers while part of the division crossed the Potomac River. There was once a fine bridge here, but the rebels burned it. Genl. Burnside had one ready for us. They call it a Pontoon. That is about 20 boats anchored across the river and planks laid across this way. [INJECT SKETCH] The boats float in the water and the planks all fit slick into each other so that it makes a very good bridge. It can be set up in a very short time & taken to pieces very soon also. Every piece is numbered and has its proper place both when a bridge & when on the wagon that hauls it. It is getting too dark to see to write any more to night. (Sabbath Morning Nov 2 1862 we hear cannonading again & have orders to strike tents and start immediately) After crossing the Potomac we marched up the hill about 3 miles & camped near a town called Lovettsville. You can see it on the map. It was raining very hard & the ground was soft. It smelled nice of mint. We had to lie down on the wet ground. Henderson George got some straw but it was not much use. After we fixed up best we could I told him his father's dog was better off that night for bed. After we crept in the rain came after us & all night you could hear croaking & barking as if one hundred men had the croup. It was clear the next day 7 we were as usual. You ought to have seen the 8 mules pulling a cannon, with a driver on each mules back & using whips & spurs. On Wednesday we had to leave here & marched to Waterford. They went very nicely at first, but towards night they went too fast for me, and after being hot with marching I got too cold had a chill. This is a nice place. The country is pleasant to look at and we have good water that tastes like home. I could not go on guard or at least they would not let me when my turn came. We have a rule here that no one gets more to do than another. The names are all on a roll & when a call is made for guards or other duty they commence & take them just as they come till they are all done & then they commence again. This is a good plan & prevents favors by officers. Nothing lets one off but a note from the doctor. I got an excuse from the doctor every day since and have done nothing (we hear shells bursting now, but have not gone yet.) since then. This camp ground is a very nice one, a little run of good clear water passes through it. It runs too fast to get soapy. When several thousand men wash in the same water it soon gets soapy & the fish die in it. This one runs so fast that
the water keeps clear & no soap to be seen in it. I go down there to wash. The last time I washed I got sick afterwards & Henderson brought the doctor to see me. I think they were scared without cause for I did not feel sick, but only nice & warm. I could not eat any that day. Our men were very anxious to do something for me & it was funny to see the nice things they had managed to steal or beg on the road. Some had honey & some, preserves, nuts, etc. I thought I would like to have some tea & some toast like your mother makes. But we had no bread or butter. I had some tea. The boys had no money among them. I gave one of them a dollar & he ran to the guard & came back with a good hot loaf of bread & 3 pounds of good butter. When I saw it I could not eat it. I gave the butter to the men except a little to try in the morning. They heard me say I would like to have a pickle & one of them hunted up every house in town till he got a saucer full. The woman would not take any pay for saucer or pickles. They tasted good & was the only thing I could eat. I have been getting better ever since & am ready to march to day. The doctor wanted me to ride in the ambulance, but I didn't like to. He wrote the order & I have it if I need it. I know I am too weak to carry so much, but I put all my things into the ambulance except my gun & I feel as if I can go as well as the rest of them. I filled my pockets with cartridges. We may have a battle before night. We hear the firing now very plainly, but don't know where it is going on. We are sitting on the ground waiting to take our place. Thousands of men & guns are passing along the road & round the hill where we hear the firing. It is curious to hear the guesses as to how far it is off. The men say we are being kept back as a reserve. They don't like reserves. It is very well if they are not needed, but if they are, there is then hard work to do. You are probably at church now while I am writing this. It is a great privilege you have & you should be thankful for it & improve it. But all these privileges were purchased with battle after battle & you are enjoying privileges now that your ancestors bled for. Tell mother that Haworth does not send a chronicle. He did, but I wrote for him to stop it. I expect to get the Philad. papers. (The firing comes nearer - it can't be over six miles off.) We have marched off at last. It is a very warm day. The thermometer will be between 70 degrees & 80 degrees. The soldiers are very warm & tired already. We are stopped on the roadside to rest. I don't know where we are going, the road is so crooked, but it looks generally toward Winchester. Willie is tired. He has to carry three days rations besides knapsack etc. The firing has ceased 12 1/2 o'clock we have marched 5 miles now to Hamilton. The firing commences again. They give us half an hour for dinner. We got at our crackers & cold meat. The march has improved me. I could not eat a nice piece of toast that Willie made me this morning, now I eat a hard
cracker & slice of salt bacon that Henderson gave me. Willie had boiled beef, but I like the bacon better.

We march again and pass the Penn Reserve, also 142 Pa. see our pickets out everywhere. Half past four p.m. We halt in a shady wood to rest. The cannonade shakes the ground here. It is twice as rapid as in the morning. We must still be several miles off as I see men coming to the rear. Perhaps McClellan has the rebels between him & us.

Monday morning Nov. 3. Dear Jane, I commenced writing to the children, but have been interrupted so often & so much that I hardly think they can make anything out of it. We marched till about 9 o'clock last night, and turned into a large wood. We were all tired but, got our coffee before we went to bed. We had passed through a town called Snickersville and at the place we are camped the fight began yesterday. Willie & Henderson offered me their blankets as mine were behind in the wagons, but as they had sweat themselves carrying them in the heat of the day, it would have been wrong to have taken them from them at night. I lay down under a tree & had a good sleep till sometime in the morning when I waked up with the cold. I made a fire & lay down by it and slept again till daylight. Sunrise was beautiful from here. Hill after hill of the Blue Ridge rose to the west & colors like blood fading gradually to pink & then to gold. Here & there we could see the effects of the shells - some dead horses & blown up caissons. We hardly thought we were so near. We find that the enemy have retreated five miles since yesterday morning. We don't know whether we must follow up today or not. You ought to have heard how confidently the old soldiers calculated on giving them fits etc.. They say " Just let us give them old 100 etc. etc." But all that the old 100th will do will not amount to much. It's best days are over. Where are her 1100 men. On last Brigade drill we had out 214 men only, and that is what an old regiment amounts to now. We will count very well for what is of them, but there are only enough men to make two or three companies. It is colder this morning. I had tea for breakfast. And have just had rice for lunch. We had a feed of persimmons off some trees. There will not be a chicken or pig left in this country after we are gone. Lucky are the ones who capture them. Johnny was over to see us this morning. It is hard to find one now among such a crowd of regiment & the roads are blocked up with wagons & cavalry. I can see from the hills our cavalry at least two miles ahead. We have just had dinner & are ordered off.

3 p.m. Gen. Burnside & body guard have passed at a gallop - we hear a gun once in a while. It is getting colder & the marching is easier. Dr. Sherlock got so cold a little while ago that he dismounted and walked a mile alongside & we had quite a chat. We can't reach the gap till after night. We see marks of the
cannonade of yesterday on the road.
Nov. 4th
We camped on the hill. I don't know its name, it is on the Blue Ridge near a gap. We hear that McClellan is on the other side and the Rebels between us. We have had no news for several days. I am almost well again. Dr. D gives me an order to ride in the ambulance every day if I choose, but I have walked with the rest yet. Willie is well and says this is not so hard as he thought soldiering would be.
I find it difficult to get writing while on a march & if this continues I shall either have to write seldom or be very brief. I do not think it any trouble dear, but in case you do not hear for a while you will know the reasons why. We still are not likely to march before dinner. I don't know whether we will get through the gap without fighting for it or not. No one appears to care much. We go to sleep as comfortably here as you do at home. Last night we saw the enemy's fires opposite ours at night. Still we slept well. I think love that my confidence was not in the number or bravery of our troops around, but that I put my trust in Him that David did when he said "I will Both lay me down & sleep
& quiet rest will take
Because thou only me to dwell
In safety Lord doth make.
This is a fine fall looking day. I hope you have it as nice at home. You will see by the papers what we are doing although we don't know anything except what we actually see. Hoping I have better news to send to you next time I remain.
Ever yours affectionately,
William