My dear Jane

I have ceased writing right to you. I have better opportunities. Even to you dear I must be very brief. I left off my last I believe while on a march. It was a pretty tiresome one. We heard cannons all the way & saw horses lying dead that had been killed in cavalry charges, but we never appeared to get up to the rebels. We stopped that night at a place I could not find the name of, near Ashby's gap. Next day we started again & were hurried on. We saw shells & broken fences all the way - passed a house with wounded men. The day became hot. I had to stop a while on the road & the whole brigade got past me. I hurried up as the firing appeared nearer than ever. I overtook our regiment - was in a great sweat. Mr. Brown made me put my coat on his pony. He told me that we would have a fight before night. I got my coat & went up to my place. I found a spring by the road & filled my canteen - still evening came on & we saw no enemy. This was the hardest march yet. Henderson most gave up. He had no water. He picked up after I gave him a drink. Willie too was very tired & dry. We crossed the Manasses Gap RR at a quick march & went up the side of a mountain. At the top we saw what we thought was skirmishes, but it turned out to be one of our Brigade after fence rails, & in ten minutes we were at the same thing. We were very agreeably disappointed. It was a very wild mountainous place, but with plenty of rails we soon had good fires. We got plenty of straw & pitched our tents. We were soon very comfortable. It was a stormy night, but we didn't feel it. Johnny & Dick Holmes spent the evening with us smoking, etc. We heard that we were to stay there a few days, but at 3 o'clock in the morning had to pack up and make a forced march. We had a long hard march - passed through Salem & at dark stopped at Dover, tired and hungry. We soon had coffee & were then informed that our company must go out on picket. There was a good deal of growling, but we had to go. It was a bitter cold night and we had to make fires or freeze. It is not allowed for pickets to make fire, but we did. We were put into parties of 4 to 6 at some distance from each other, along the road & through the woods, about a mile from camp. We got along very well. When we started out we thought we would starve, but we got warm at the fires. I saw two hogs go by & told our men. One of them went out & shot a nice hog. We divided it with the next post. We soon roasted & ate it up. Six hungry men can soon eat the half of a little hog. About daylight we shot a sheep & kept it all to ourselves. It was a fine fat one. We cut it up & divided it, we put the best pieces in our haversacks. I just ate my last mutton chops for dinner to day. About noon a bucket of coffee was sent out to us, and that would have been all we would have got if we had not foraged for
ourselves. We all keep coffee. I have tea too. We make it in our tins. We were called in in the afternoon. It was a good snow storm all day. When we came in we found that the regiment had been gone two hours. We tried to catch up, but night came on and no word of them. We had lost our road. We turned back & struck over some hills towards camp fires we saw, but we soon got tangled up among the hills & creeks & had to stop. We got our suppers while an officer started to find the regiment. It was getting late and we were encamped for the night when he came back with orders to go on immediately. We had to start - we found the regiment on the side of a bleak hill - cold night - snow on the ground & a few sickly fires & no more wood. They told us where to get straw to make beds. I warmed myself a little at the fire & started about the last one for straw. Instead of bringing back straw I crept into the inside of the stack & slept there as warm as pie till the morning. Here we are yet - Saturday afternoon 2 o'clock with order to march - we don't know where. We heard very little firing today. Have heard it every day for a week, but seen no enemy. It is getting very cold. Send me a pair of warm gloves by mail. Willie should have a pair too. The gun gets very cold to our fingers. We have had no mail since we left Pleasant Valley - we are traveling away from it, but if we get to Warrenton we can get it every day. I have got all well again & like the marching well. If I had time I would like to send you a letter every day, but for the present it can't be done. Willies feet are getting sore. Sabbath Nov 9. We did not leave here yesterday after all, but are still here. It was a very cold night, but we got along very well. We see no signs of moving today. It is more pleasant, and we have nothing to do. I would like to be home with you to day dear. It would be nice to spend a few hours again among the children. However we will only be better able to enjoy and appreciate the comforts of home, after being deprived of them. We heard firing this morning but it soon stopped. It is strange that we have now heard cannonading every day for two weeks & sometimes seen the effects of it. Yet we have not been brought into action. We are all well to day.

Monday, Nov. 10, 1862

Still here, no move yet. A pleasant morning. I am writing in my shirt sleeves. I gave out my washing as it is Monday & regular wash day. Harvey Weakley is doing it for me. We were gladdened this morning by the arrival of the mail. We expected none for a while. There was a rumor that the rebels had captured our supply train & mails and it looked true as we are out of provisions. Our mess has had crackers, as we can't eat all our allowance and had some laid by. We had our last for breakfast. Your letter of the 25th was in the mail. How glad I was to get it. It looks like old times to get something from home. It makes
me feel nearer you to get a letter, even the little pokes you made for our sugar & salt, how we find they have been. I don't know how we could do without them. I think of you at every meal as we get them out. To day I am using your needles & thread. I am enjoyed in the great work of sewing a pocket in my overcoat. I think I have made a pretty good one. We are learning to be very useful and it will be a great blessing to our wives if we don't forget it all when we go back. Willies foot is very sore, He wont have to march till it gets well. There is a good deal of sickness among the soldiers lately. The weather is against them. I received a letter from Squire Pringle to day & by rights should answer it, but I cant. Please make my excuse for this time. I have no more paper for one thing & no money to get any more & I wont borrow. And if I had the paper I have no time. But I will write him a long one some of these days.

If you could come across some of those .10 or .25 notes you might send me .50 or a $1- of them in a letter. Large notes are no use here. I had $5. and it was no use at all - no would change it or look at it. I sent it to George to get me small change for. We have stamps enough yet.

Can you read this pencil writing dear. I hope Siss has got better by this time. Take good care & don't expose yourself this winter. I would like to write to your father or mother & Uncle William, but it is impossible while we are under marching orders, so you must explain to them & tell them as much of what I write as you choose.

Also remember me to all enquiring friends & with much love I remain Yours Affectionately

William