

Camp Opposite Fredericksburg

Dec. 5, 1862

My dear Jane

Yours of 30th came to hand this morning, which is the speediest trip that any of your letters have made yet. If my memory serves me right the last one I had from you was dated the 10th. making a gap of twenty days which I think unlikely. Probably there is another on the way. It is not unusual for the latest letter to reach here first. By the same mail I received one from Jr. Haworth and two from George. In your letter was a .50 P.O. note. If you sent it because I wrote for P.O. stamps it was a mistake. It is the little .3 stamps for letters that I want. The paymaster was here yesterday and paid us to the 1st November. We got \$24.25 so we have now plenty of money, although it being in large notes we can hardly use it. In a week or two I will send some of it to you or George. It is not prudent to send so soon after pay day. Our P.O. arrangements here are not the best or safest in the Country. Today there is a great change in the appearance of our camp. At morning drill it commenced to rain, and about dinner time to snow, and now it is between the two so that I can't tell which. The spray from it comes through our muslin tent and make these black places under the pencil as you perceive. The men of several of our messes have built themselves chimneys of sods at the entrance, and some of them have made log huts & covered them with the canvass. They are comfortable today. Expecting to leave ever day, we did nothing and now have to take it. But it is likely we will soon move. Perhaps today yet, or tomorrow. Our Chaplin has been sick. Col. Leasure called to see him today and inquired if he could move with the regiment, as it might have to cross the river today or tomorrow - that there were four pontoons laid across now, and we might have to move at any moment. We are ready & will likely have the honor of being in the advance as skirmishers. He says the whole rebel force is opposite & we will have to fight our way to Richmond inch by inch. I have time to write up all my letters this afternoon as the weather is too stormy for drill, and I shall finish your's first dear as it may be that the hand that now directs these hearty lines to you may have forgotten its cunning before they reach you. But be of good courage darling, the content is not so unequal as one as was David's was when alone he smote the Lion and the Bear or the God defying Philistine. David & our God is still on his throne and directs all. In him let us trust and into his hands let me fall rather than into those of the enemy. I trust they shall never take me alive. You might suppose that such news might make a change in our camp, but not a bit of it; except that here and there you may see a man oiling and cleaning the back of his rifle. We have splendid rifles they will kill a man 3/4 mile off as easy

as a squirrel on a tree top. In the tent next me a man with a splendid voice is singing "We'll be gay & happy still" and the other two join in the chorus. The storm has no effect, except on our camp fires, it makes them smoke more. Talking of smoking, George sent me some tobacco & Willie Henderson & I are smokers again. We also got some fine hot pepper from him by mail & are able to beat most any one with our cookers. We have serious thoughts of publishing a new cook book and eclipsing Miss Leslie & the national. I will write George about the Medical & Surgical Reporter. We are all right about provisions now. We are getting full rations and even more, for to day we got potatoes. On the march we can't have things hauled & then we need them most. I am getting so fat that I had to let my vest out as far as I could and now even at that I have burst the buttons off. Willie's foot is well. Henderson has a very sore finger and that is all that is wrong with our men. Their appetite is equal to mine and we get through our rations a day & sometimes more before we should. Since I got the small change I have got Johnny to buy us crackers etc and I have got acquainted with the butcher now and he keeps me a chunk of liver or heart etc which keeps us from want. We are getting a little saucy too for at this same time we have 6 or 8 pounds of pork in one corner of our tent untouched. When we cook it it goes all into grease. We use this grease to fry other things in like lard. Sometimes we spread it on our crackers like butter & then put sugar on it. I am glad the children are getting along so well, and hope it will continue. I will try to write to them today but am not sure but it will be dark before I am done with this and George's letter. I noticed all the news you sent about the folks, and like to hear it, but will make no remarks. Our mails back may carry things where I don't want them. I could send you some items from here which might be news, but for various reasons think it is better not. Will tell you all sometime. As Joe Moon told me. "A bud of the air might whisper it back." I am sorry to burn your letters dear, but I burn all letters as soon as I answer them. The rebels shall never see them.

I have just been invited out to draw our rations. We get five days rations. There can be no march with that for we can't carry it. It is either a feast or a famine. This morning we had enough for breakfast. I bought 2 pounds of crackers & a pound of rice. Willie & I went to drill. Henderson can't drill with his sore finger so we left him to cook our rice for dinner. When we got back we found that the smoke blew in his eyes & the pan upset & our dinner was gone. Now we have five days rations. Crackers, rice, beans, potatoes, coffee, pork, smoked bacon, sugar, molasses, vinegar, salt & compressed vegetables for soup. They must want to fatten us before killing time.

A few days weather like this will be worse on this army than

a battle. The ground is white with snow, except in paths worn into mud by our feet. No signs of it stopping. I stand it first rate. I have not warmed my hands while writing this whole letter, and one end of our tent is open. If it gets colder I have your warm gloves to put on and a blanket to. So you can see me prepared for even worse than this. A few days more of it will stop the army. Artillery can't move on such roads.

It is supper time and I must close dear or it will be dark. I will write again the first opportunity.

Yours with much love

William

P.S. I enclose an order on the Commissioners for the County bounty. I have made it payable to Squire Pringle and you can give it to him to collect. He often has business in Mercer and it will save you the trouble of going after it.

W Taylor