

Camp Opposite Fredericksburg

Dec 17 1862

My dear Jane

I wrote you a short note yesterday, for the purpose of letting you know that we were all well and back at our old camp again. This is more than I expected for I was informed that the battle to be fought was to be the battle of the war. The night I wrote you before the attack in Fredsbg. I was one of three only besides the Col. that knew we were to start in the morning. I made use of the information, to pack up to get ready and make Willie do so too. Henderson did not have to go - his finger is so sore he can't load a gun. We were woke up early in the morning and marched out into a field, drawn up in line of battle & stopped there all day. Towards evening we were taken down to the river & then marched back to our quarters. Some of the troops fared worse. In trying to lay the pontoons they were fired at by concealed marksmen in houses on the other side. Our batteries then opened in the city and destroyed it. It has not one sound house in it. The next day we crossed early in the morning and lay all forenoon in the street opposite the gas works. These were there drawn in line behind each other the 100th, 25th PA, 27th N. J., 46 NY & 175th & 20 Mich. We were huddled up closely to prevent the enemy seeing us. In the afternoon some of the soldiers foolishly strolled up to the higher ground & as soon as they were seen, the Enemy commenced to shell us. They threw a number of shells & killed 2 & wounded several. At last our batteries silenced them. We were toward evening marched into one of the streets of the city, and prepared our beds or blankets there. After dark Willie & I slipped into a cellar and slept there. The next day was Saturday or the day of Slaughter. We were ordered out about a mile behind a hill. Our whole brigade was there. Gen. Burns disliked the position for the Artillery as it was brass pieces of short range. He changed it, and our regiment moved off to support it. This is always a dangerous business & soldiers dislike it. But during that whole day they lay there without firing a shot. The enemy threw a few shells at us in the afternoon but did not hit us. From where we lay we could see the murder of our fellow soldiers as from time to time they were led up against those batteries. How our hearts beat as we saw them sometimes almost at them; but a fresh burst of flame from others yet concealed would soon drive them back, only to be rallied and brought up again. On the left in Franklin's Division we could not see what was going on although it was nearer to us. Hills & woods intervened. From 9 1/2 a.m. till after dark the cannon and musketry never ceased. The sound can only be compared to a terrific thunder storm. We also heard the cheers of the men when they charged. At night it was evident that our attack was a

failure. The next word was that Burnside said that with his old corps (the 9th or ours) he could & would take the batteries. His staff persuaded him not to risk himself & the best corps in such an attempt. This we did not know till long afterwards. Every preparation was made for us to make a charge in the morning. What a Sabbath mornings work. The Roundheads were to lead. Johnny came over the river the night before to see us. That night he did not. I sent him word by the quartermaster. At dark we were called out alone and as we filed round the hill we found three other picked regiments waiting for us to join. Col Leasure stood on the side of the hill. He acts as General now and Maj. Dawson commands the regt. We were ordered not to speak above whisper or make any noise. As we passed Col. L. spoke in a low clear voice "Now Roundheads do your duty." Our old comrades whispered "There's hot work for us now, those batterys must be taken." We marched up a ravine & lay there till the middle of the night, when we were quietly filed down to the city and to our surprise instead of turning up toward the batterys were turned to the bridge. In an hour we were across and no bridge there. We were the last to cross back. In an hour more we were in our old camp. I was very tired & did not help to set up my tent. The army appears disheartened. It must not be fooled with too much. The men fought well. They always have. They have never been complained of, neither has their loyalty been doubted, but so much cannot be said of the officers. When will they learn. The rebels are back again in Fredericksburg or in what is left of it. We can see their fires again. You will see by the papers what the loss is, before we can know it here. We have a vast field of tents full of wounded that cannot be moved, and thousands have been sent away. We know not who is killed. One of the 134th told me that Oliver Breckenridge was badly hurt. We got no papers here since the battle. The weather is colder now. We built a chimney fire place of sods at the end of our tent, and can keep ourselves warm, but have to let it out at night as one of us has to sleep right up against it. We have to go on picket tomorrow. I wrote you a note this morning, but as we go on picket I might not be able to write again this week. We may have to try to get to Richmond yet some other way. I hear Siegel has come today and joined our left. The pontoons are lying back about a mile from the river where we left them. They can be laid across in 15 minutes. We are all very well - appetites good. Henderson's finger nearly well. He reported for duty to day.

Our candle is getting nearly done & I must hasten to answer your two letters. If Sissy's throat gets sore gargle well with the chlorate of Potassi. There is plenty in our drawers. In case you suspect Diphtheria get Livingston and Pierson too perhaps. They should both attend if they are on good terms. If not get

Livington. Mr. Gilfillan can thank Addison for not getting into the Co. with me. He chose to go where he did - he might have come into Co. G if he liked, but if he is as well satisfied as I am no one will complain. He is learning fast & would like to be a little farther off perhaps. He have not heard from George Campbell since we marched from Sulphur Springs. He was sent from Warrenton Junction to the hospital at Alexandria. It is likely he is dead - He looked half dead when he left & if better care was not taken of him than was here there is not doubt he is. Johnny has his shirt and we have our night caps. Mine won't stay on at night, but I wear it in daytime when in quarters. You cannot send us anything. There is no way of getting things from Washington to here. I sent to George for \$5 of tobacco for our company ten days ago. It got to Washt with some pickles, sugar, molasses & other things they sent us, but we can get it no farther. Our Q.M goes there tomorrow in Fredericksburg for nothing. They throw lots of it in the river, but our men fished it up & got a good deal in the stores to. Since we were fired the sutlers have come. They sell butter at 80 1/2 high cheese 25 cents, boots \$12 a pair, cotton glove \$1. a pair so. We bought nothing from them but a can of concentrated milk for an experiment. They charged .75 cents it lasted 4 days. I understand the sheep business now. It is all right. Don't lend the wagon to such drivers as Uncle Jock's boys or in fact to any one, except to use for yourself.

I received Ann's letter - am much obliged would like to get more, but cannot answer it - Can't write to Mr. Mutty. It takes great maneuvering to write to you and with business matters can't be helped. If the days were longer I could do better. I have not answered Tom yet nor written to the children. Also if you are writing to Haworths let them know we are all right since the battle. Willie is writing to Bessie today. It takes him very busy to get one off once in a while to Mary Jane.

Advise till the next opportunity which I hope will be soon.

I remain your affectionate

W. Taylor