

Camp Opposite Fredericksburg
December 29, 1862

My dear Jane

Yours of 21st was received yesterday and is now before me. I have lately received a number of letters which remain yet unanswered, but yours must be attended to first as you are entitled to the preference in every thing. If I had time now it would only be amusement to write, as we are now in circumstances very favorable for it. We had anticipated your advice about building huts, and have done so. We went out to the woods and cut timber and built quite a smart little shanty. We covered with our tents for a roof on one end, and have applied to the quartermaster for an extra piece of tent to close the other end, and will probably get it in a few days. We built a fireplace and chimney of sods, and can keep ourselves very comfortable during the day, but we have to let the fire go out at night for want of room to lay down. We got a lot of straw from a barn when we were out on picket the last time, and are as snug as soldiers ought to be. We do our cooking inside at our own fire.

It appears singular that the mails do not reach you better, as they go and come from here every day. The day we went over to Fredericksburg I saw Johnny and got him to promise to write to you every day till the fight was over. You should have heard sooner. I wrote to you that night and enclosed \$5. Did you get it?

You have reason indeed to be thankful for our escape from that slaughter. We were put into a dangerous and responsible place at first, but Providentially were not called upon to take an active part in the fight, and were not noticed by the rebels further than the throwing of a few shells that hit none of us. But after the failure of the assault, there was a rumor that Burnside wanted to take our Corps and lead it himself against those batteries on Sabbath morning. And that morning we were all drawn up in line in the streets of Fredericksburg but we then knew not what for, but since I saw it stated in the papers over his own signature that that was his intention and that was the reason we were there. Probably his old corps would have followed him and succeeded, but very few of them would have been alive to day to tell how hard it was to do it.. What led him to change his mind I know not, but am thankful that we are still spared. As to danger we are always exposed to it, even at home, but we feel more so in such a place as this, but the place of safety is at the front of duty. One thing about our exposed life is of advantage to us, as it leads us more to look to God as our protector, and it makes us feel more forcibly our continual dependence on him. It is in such scenes and near approaches to the mortal struggle that causes us to claim God's promises and realize their fulfillment in our experience as

"Thou shalt not need to be afraid
For terrors of the night
Nor for the arrive that doth fly
By day while it is light.
A thousand at thy side shall fall,
Ten thousand dead shall lie
At thy right hand; yet unto thee
It shall not once come nigh."

I expected to write you a great long letter to day, but guess now that I shall not. We had our usual Sabbath morning inspections and I supposed we would have the rest of the day to ourselves except preaching at 2 o'clock but orders have come for Brigade Inspections at 2 and then preaching afterwards, which will make it near dark when we get back to quarters. On this inspection we will have to appear as at the last one, with all our fixtures on the same as if on a march. A march is generally ordered a day or so afterwards, and that is what is expected, although no one knows whether it is so, or where it is likely to be. I may mention another rumor is that our corps is to go back to guard the fortifications at Wash. this winter. How it originated we know not. We have had a great number of visitors lately from the new regiments in our neighborhood. Harrison Nelson was over on Christmas the day of our raising, just in time for the housewarming. If your Christmas dinner had been here we could have done justice to it. You must not attempt to send anything except what you want to get lost till I send you word. It is impossible to get anything from Washington here. A good many citizens have visited us in camp here. I saw Dr. Wallace to day. He will send some grapevine cuttings to N. Liberty for me. Squire Woods is here with us. He has two sons in our company. One of them is little Cal Wood who worked with Joe Kirk.

Addison Gilfillan is well. I don't know why he can't write, he has as much time as I have. The folks must look to their own for word from their relatives. I have nothing to do with any of them who came with me, as they all left me except John Miles, and must take care of themselves. Some of them won't speak to me. It is a matter of no consequences, although not pleasant. It was all owing to mischief raised by that drunken black guard John Blair and helped on by young Johnson who lived at Bovard's. Fortunately they are all in other companies and I have nothing to do with them, except when they want something they can't get anywhere else.

You had better pay the Plaingrove Church the \$25. if you feel that you can spare it. It is not for the congregation, but as an acknowledgment to the Church of God, who gave us the money, and he demands a good use of it. It is only giving God his own. It is the amount we gave them for 1862 and I suppose they will need it

as much for 1863. Anytime during 1863 that suits will do, although the sooner the better.

It is true about Oliver Breckenridge being wounded, and said to be seriously too. The Lieut. from Centreville of the same company has not been heard of since. Last night a message came to me from James M. Knight who is lying ill with typhoid fever, that he wanted to see me. The man said he was getting flighty. I could not get a pass to go to day as it was Sabbath. He is about two miles from here. They promised to let me go tomorrow. There is a great deal of sickness in that regiment. Such is the rules in the new regiments. Poor fellows - how they expected to guard forts etc and now every visitor describes them as a dead regiment, without life or energy enough to clean round their tent doors, while in our old ones you can't notice a change of any kind. That regiment took their knapsacks over the river with them, and in their hurry to get back left them and their blankets there. They had to sleep on the ground without ever since. We left our Knapsacks on this side with a guard and found all right when we returned. We had been fooled before. So much for the experience of the "old uns." They also had a good deal of money in theirs. The rebels thanked our pickets across the river the next day for our kind donation of blankets and green backs left with them as they said they were very seasonable.

After our raising on Christmas our Quartermaster sent us a present by Johnny of a lot of apples and onions. They were very acceptable. This Q.M. Lieut. Justice has acted the most friendly to me of any one I have met here. I can never forget him for it. Johnny says he is the best man he ever came across. Will write again soon if we don't leave here. My respects to all the folks & love to yourself.

Yours affectionate

W Taylor

P.S. If your father can spare 50 stamps, please send them.