My dear Jane

I take the opportunity to day while I have time to write you a few lines. I believe I promised to write to you every week or every day. I'm not sure which, but you find that it is not done, although I would like to do so very much. Well we have passed into another year; the old one is gone by with its record for or against us. How many commenced it with us who dropped off on the way, one here, and another there? How many reasons have we for gratitude and thanks to the Author and Giver of all good for his mercies to us unworthy as we have been?

I really have no news to send you since my last writing. We are still lying here in camp, and employed as usual. I have not been on picket since. Yesterday, Squire Wood started home. I sent to you by him a sample of our rations. I did not send any rice, beans, coffee, pork, beef or sugar, for you know as much about them as you would with a specimen, but I sent you a couple of crackers, or M'Clellan pies and a little piece of the desiccated vegetables. He will be in Liberty shortly after you get this, and any attention you can pay him will be the only compensation he will have for his trouble. Try to get him to stay for dinner, he can tell you all about us as he was here several days. To make you a dish of soup out of the vegetables you must steep them in water at least half an hour before cooking, having first broken the lump into small pieces. It must then be well boiled for an hour or even two hours according to the kind of a fire you have it on. There is no fat or grease in it, so you must put in something of that kind. We put in some fat pork. When boiled enough, salt and pepper to suit and you will have a pretty good soup. We can now get it to buy here at 31 cents a pound which is about 2 cents an ounce. An ounce is calculated to make a quart of soup. We get it once or twice a week from the company, but bought some for ourselves and make it whenever we feel like it. They gave out onions last week too. Some of the men were taking the scurvy and they had to give them more fresh vegetables. We also got potatoes. You know I was never fond of onions, but somehow I now can take them very well and like them too.

I got a pass last Monday to go over to the 134th for the purpose of seeing James M'Knight. I had a good deal of trouble in finding the place. You may imagine the extent of the army when I tell you that I walked from 8 o'clock in the morning till 1 in the afternoon before I found his regt. & was all that time only through three army corps. Even beyond on every side where I went were more camps. I found Jim in the hospital, or what they called an hospital, a large tent. Two rows of sick men lay on the ground so close you could not get between them; there was only a passage.
down the middle between their feet. The nurse was handing round crackers to them, and the poor fellows were not able to even break them. They got soup. Jim is pretty sick, with typhoid pneumonia. If he was at home I think he might get well, but where he is I have no hope for him. All the patients there have typhoid. One died while I was in the tent. Such occurrences do not help the living. It was painful to see the two other sick men on each side of the dying one, trying to keep us far off him as possible during his dying struggles. This was only one tent full of the sick of this regiment; there are three more. Their wounded were all sent away. I did not see James Nelson; he was out on picket. The whole regiment appears used up, without energy. What a mistake they made in not going into an old one! There has been only one death in our regiment since we came to it. On my way to the 134th I saw Capt. Giebner and Cowden Craig. One of our men a son of old Capt. Leslie of N. Castle went over to the 134th yesterday and I asked him to bring me word how Jim McKnight was getting. He reports him a little worse. You had better tell Uncle William if you see him, so that his folks may be prepared for hearing worse news still.

I received yours of 26th ult last night. Our postmaster was sick, and I went down in the evening to the Adjutant's tent to see Hal McBride and find who was to attend to our letters. While there I got to playing checkers with one of the clerks. While at it the Colonel came in hunting for his chessboard. It was the board we were playing on. He waited till our game was finished and then said I might play on if I would play chess with him. I agreed and he took me over to his own tent and introduced me to Nelly. We played chess and smoked till midnight or maybe longer. I won all but one game. He wants me to come down again and spend the evening, which I will do in a week or two. I don't want to go often. In the meantime I wish you would send me "Staunton on Chess" by mail. I think you will find it on the top of your book case in the sitting room, or perhaps it fell back of it. I would have liked to have had it before now, but could not carry it. The Col. will carry it for me he says if I allow him the use of it occasionally. Col. Leasure is still acting General of our brigade. Our Lieut. Col. Leckey has resigned and gone home. Maj. Dawson now has command. He is a very different kind of a man from the others and I am glad to see him in command.

You appear to have had a troublesome time with Bert. I hope he has got well by this time. Tell Siss to take good care of her doll so that I can see it when I come home.

If the Commissioners still refuse to pay that bounty I will try to make them repent it. The excuse is as false as it is silly. Two of them told me that they would do as well for us as for any of the others. Besides they know very well there is no Laurence Co regt. Our regiment has companies from Laurence,
Mercer, Beaver, Washington & Armstrong. Was it a Mercer Co.
Regt. that Snyder or Giebner's men went into? This talk about
Laurence is all stuff. They know or should know that all of us
who left Liberty were credited to Mercer Co. and that exempted
Liberty from the draft. Tell Pringle these things. If they don't
pay it, be sure and don't pay them the tax they assessed for it.

Our camp is full of rumors about moving etc and there is an
air of probability about some of them. The 5th Corps is moving
back and the 2d had marching orders. The 2d & 9th used to be
under one Genl. but I don't know how it is to be managed now. Our
quartermaster has been ordered to keep six days marching rations
on hand. That would just take us to Washington which is six days
march from here. Where we would have to go from there I know not,
but imagine it will be down to the Yorktown Peninsula once more
and try to take Richmond from that direction. We don't care much
as we get used to this kind of life. As for danger I think there
is no more in the field than the camp. We are liable to be shot
in camp any day from guns going off accidentally in the hands of
careless soldiers. More than once have we heard the bullets
whistle over our tent in this way. Some of our comrades who were
left behind when we crossed to Fredericksburg are now lying low
with Typhoid. We went over to danger, they remained to assist in
the hospital, we came back safe, they nursed the wounds and are
now nearly done with either nursing or soldiering forever. So it
is dear, we know not when we are safe unless in the line of duty,
and in God's covenant care; but then although the Earth remove we
need not be afraid.

Give my respect to all my friends & with my love to yourself
& the children I remain.

Yours Ever
William