Camp Opposite Fredericksburg  
Thursday Jany 22. 1863

My dear Jane

"All is quiet on the Rappahannock" This is the pass word here as it used to be on the Potomac with M'Clellan. The storm continued last night preventing any farther movement of our troops, and although the rain has considerably abated there are occasional gusts of wind accompanied with a misty rain. The sky is overcast and threatening. All is indeed quiet on the Rappahannock. It flows on in quiet majesty showing no trace of the mortal conflict witnessed on its banks, or giving evidence of the clash of arms or the thunders of the murderous artillery that is soon going to break fast there again, purpling its tide with the best blood in our land. It needs that we should see but one such scene to make us pray more earnestly than ever for the reign of the Prince of Peace. Oh for the time when none shall hurt or destroy! You see by the heading of this note that we are here still. No orders have come and so we keep waiting, waiting, waiting. I was not away from my quarters yesterday except a few minutes, when I ran over to see Johnny. We are getting along just as if we were not to fight. The only difference is in our rations. We are now only getting marching rations, which are rather poorer fare than what we had last week. It requires some ingenuity now to pass the time, but we manage it pretty well. Willie got a small singing book somewhere, and Henderson and he sing a good deal. We smoke, play chess and checkers etc. I find a great source of satisfaction in writing these notes, and if they keep us this way you will likely be troubled with one every day. Quite a difference from what I promised you a few days ago, when I thought that I would not have an opportunity to write to you for a good while. Had. M'Bride paid us a visit last Evening. He is the Colonel's clerk and from him I learned a little about the movement about to take place. This I write to you as it is different from what I supposed yesterday when I wrote. We are not to cross at the city where we did before. Our batteries are still opposite it as they were formerly, but the real guns are all gone and quaker ones in their places. Our corps is only to make a demonstration and cross in the rear of Porter's division to support him. This will reduce the amount of danger in the aggregate, but to which individual personally no one can tell. You will probably not feel so uneasy in this case.

I had to stop my letter as I received a message from Col L. with his compliments, asking me to come down to his quarters and play a game of chess. I went down and beat him a couple of games. He appeared very lonely. He as just waiting like the rest of us for orders to move. His tent is fixed up very comfortably with a board floor and stove. I remarked to him how smugly he was
quartered. He only replied, "To night we may be all quartered alike." I think the approach of a battle takes the stiffness out of the officers, although I have seen none about him.

When I got back I found Johnny in our tent, taking dinner in my place. Willis is out on a wood party, the same as I was last week. Our camp is becoming a wretched looking place, and nothing like what is was when we came here. The trees are nearly all gone, and in place of the nice grassy carpet we have the deep abominable Virginia mud. Our tents are getting smoked and soiled, and have, to look at, an air of discomfort. But inside we are pretty snug after all.

I have just heard that the fight has been postponed on account of the weather. I don't know whether it is true or not yet, but I see a good many wagons going back, and have talked with the guard accompanying them, and they tell me the whole army is moving back to its old position.

We have had no mail the last two nights.

Very affectionately
Yours
William