My dear Jane

It is just a week since I wrote you last. I had a good deal of work to do towards fixing up our quarters. They wanted us all to fix up as neatly as possible, as the present understanding is that we will have to remain here a good while. Next came two days of the stormiest weather we have had since we left home. We had a very uncomfortable time sitting in our little shelter tents without a fire. We had to sit in them for the storm was so severe no one could stay out. Our little tents have worn considerably, and are not as good as when new, and at last the rain came through and wet us considerably. I got my knapsack badly wet, and several things spoiled. Johnny brought me a nice new portfolio from Washington when he came back, and it got ruined too. The nights were very cold too, and altogether we had a few very uncomfortable days. Our cooks could not make fires it rained and blew so, and we had to do without our hot coffee. If I had had a place fit for it I could have had plenty of time to write, but our tent was in a kind of a mist. To complete all I took the toothache, and I had to stand it, for I dare not have it pulled as I would not then be able to chew the crackers. It swelled my face and broke and is perfectly well now. Fortunately I have not had to eat any crackers since we came here. We each get a large loaf of bread every day - more than we can eat. There is a bakery at Fortress Monroe, and they send us bread up Every afternoon in wagons. On Friday and Saturday the weather again was very fine, but I had no time to write. We had to commence fixing up our camp. Each regiment is trying to look the nicest. They have given us nice new white canvass tents. They are called A tents because they look so much like the letter. They cover a space of 7 feet by 8, and each four men get one. We build up 2 1/2 feet with logs, and then put the tent over it. They are so high that I cannot touch the top with my hand, we can all four walk in and stand up in them at once. We took another man into our mess and got one of the new tents. It took us very busy on Friday to get the wooden foundation laid and daubed. The tents when pitched have a very beautiful appearance. The ground was all laid out and measured, and streets left running through at regular distances. You can have a very good idea of it by looking at a full paper of new pins when opened out.

Yesterday I was sent out with teams to get bricks to build chimneys for our company. It was a very fine day. We went out about three miles into the country. The country looked beautiful, but has been ruined like the rest of Virginia. The houses had been all frame and most of them had been burned down and we found the chimneys standing - we picked the bricks off and sent them
into camp. There were many fine large orchards, the peach trees were in bud, and so were many of the rose bushes. I felt sorry to see so many nice shrubs and plants all around and had no way of sending you any. They are going to waste. As far as we went we could see the mark of where M'Clellan's army was encamped last year. At one of the houses I saw a white woman, the first one for three months. There are plenty of contrabands around us who visit the camp, selling pies and cakes. I returned in the evening, and found our tent raised, and the chimney built as high as the woodwork only. We moved our baggage up and took possession of it. We ate our supper there and thought we were fixed up a little better than ever before. But alas how little we knew what was coming. During the night another storm began, and I woke up this morning with four inches deep of snow on my blanket. We have had the deepest snow this time we have had since we left home. The tent had broken loose on my side, and it is a wonder it did not blow over, as many others did. The wind was tremendous. It rained a while, then snowed, then rained again. This is the worst storm we have had, and new tent and all we could not keep dry. I just gave it up and came down to the Quartermasters tent for refuge. Here at his desk I am writing. Willie is here too. If the weather gets good we will have a splendid camp. It could hardly be fixed nicer or in a nicer place.

We are all well, and getting good living. We have had no crackers since we came here. We have bread and butter. We bought two pounds at 35 c/ oz. We can get almost anything to buy here. We bought a quart of oysters for 25 cents and after I get time I expect to catch a good many fish, as I see them for sale here too. I received your No. 6 on Wednesday evening, and have been anxiously watching for another to learn how Siss is. I hope she is better by this time. I would have liked to [have] been there to hold her head when she "threw up." But I could not get away dear, nor any of us, even to wipe the death sweat from the brow of our dearest friend on earth. Probably furloughs will be granted if Burnside comes and takes command, but they will only be for ten days, and to one or two out of a company at a time. Then they will be given to those first, who have families and have been away eighteen months, so that at the best my turn would not come for a good while. Talking of furloughs Mr. Brown did not ask for one, but he got a pass for his wife to come here. She arrived yesterday afternoon.

As to our destination, I cannot learn anything. The prevailing impression is that we are to remain here a good while. One would think so from the way they are fixing up. but they tell me they did the same last summer when here, and only stayed ten days after all. The keg has not come yet, but it has not had time yet. I wrote to George the day after we landed. We can get
anything here very easily. The boat arrives once a day. There is a daily mail, and I get your letters a day sooner than I did at Fredericksburg. There is a naval engagement expected every day. It is supposed that the rebel Merrimac will soon be down the river to try to run the blockade, and we have a monitor the Sagamore lying opposite our camp waiting for her. These monitors are very funny looking things; neither like ships or boats, but more like a plank floating in the water, with a bucket upside down in the middle of it. We saw her trying her guns a day or two ago. I hope to be in a better frame for writing the next time, the weather has got into my bones so that I can't write to please myself. The storm is now raging worse than ever - it is now blowing the tents away. It has blown down the hospital, the doctors tent and Col. Leasure's besides many others. We are looking out of Lieut. Justices and laughing at the fun. The snow has ceased but it rains. Have you sold out your Silver stock and made something on it? I think that will be the only way you will ever make anything on it.

Yours affectionately
W Taylor