My dear Jane

I notice that it is getting a little longer between my letters, and I can hardly tell you why, unless it is that I feel very unsettled here yet. We have been here more than two weeks and are not fixed up yet: that is not as we wish and intend to be. In fact, although we have more room and a nicer place I believe we will hardly ever be so snugly fixed to our minds as we were at Fredericksburg. We do some work every day, but some days undo what we did before. We have nearly completed our outside works, and have only to finish the interior. We are not going to sleep on the ground any more, but are making bunks out of pine trees that we split. We have a very nice fire place and chimney. We did not build them of sods this time, for we could not. The ground is too sandy for sods, but we got plenty of bricks. We had to go a good way for them, but got wagons to haul them. I went four miles up the river one day for some. All these things have taken up a good deal of time. The men are getting rather lazy, and the General has ordered six hours drill every day. This is not very hard work, but the men dislike it very much. We drill three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon. This was the first day of it, and I feel a little tired on account of having to measure my steps so long. The weather is very nice now since the snow storm. It feels like spring. It rains very often, and sometimes very hard, but it makes no mud like it did at Fredericksburg. The ground is so sandy that it is dry in an hour after it is done raining. It is raining this evening as I write.

Your No. 7 of 20th came to day, and I was very glad to get it. I felt anxious to hear about Siss. I was afraid she would be very ill and you would get sick waiting on her, but I am glad that she is improving. Tom George delivered the handkerchiefs to Johnny & Willie the day he came. He has been at Aquia Creek waiting for McKee Dillinger to get his discharge. He had got it I hear, and probably they are both home now. I see that there has been a regular outbreak of silver fever in your neighborhood. Probably it is abating by this time. From all I have heard of it, it is a great humbug. From the point that I look at it the whole thing looks silly, if not absurd. I hope the people will not be disappointed as much as I think they will. Even should there be silver there, the question would arise as it has done in many places where it has really been found, "Does it pay to get it out?" There are many places where silver does exist that it costs two dollars to dig out one dollars worth of the ore, and these of course have to be abandoned. I hope you have got clear of yours by this time, and let Pike and the rest of them get as much for the poor and the heathen as they can from some one else. If the
heathen have to wait for Butler Co. for relief I am afraid the millennium is a great ways off. The agreement is not of much account. The part that I don't like is that in which you agree to pay your part of the working expenses. This might soon amount to a good deal.

I received the stamps, and am much obliged. I shall not want any more now for a good while. I do not need any money yet. I have a few dollars left, and Capt. Hamilton has about $10. that he will pay me any day I call for it for expenses at Mercer last summer.

The keg has arrived at last. We got it last night. As soon as I found we were going to stay here a while I wrote to George to send it on. He shipped it on the 18th. The Turkey and sausage were spoiled. He only wrote me a note stating that he had shipped it. It was full to the top. There were two turks head cakes in a large piece of cheese and a lot of dried apples. The butter is good yet. It goes very nicely to our bread. We get excellent bread here now. We have not got a cracker since we came here. The bread comes fresh every day a large loaf for each man. There are 25,000 of us, so you will see that it takes a large bakery to supply us. It is baked in Fortress Monroe. When I got word of the keg having been shipped I mentioned it to Lieut. Justice, and as he was going down to the Fortress the next day on business, he took me along on his pass to assist him. He did not really need any one, but wanted to get me an opportunity to see the Fortress and look after the keg. We got there and found the keg at the Express Office. We got into the Fortress, and saw all its wonders. It covers about 50 acres of ground, has a wide canal all around it, and has hundreds of guns pointing in all directions. Two of the guns are as thick at the butt as you are tall, that is, if they were on the ground you could only see to the top of them. The shot fired from them are not balls, but just like a can of preserves, only made of solid iron and as wide round as a horse bucket. They are hoisted up to the mouth of the gun with a windlass and rammed down by machinery. After looking at the things inside we took a walk along the shore. I picked up a few shells, that were small and will send them to you tomorrow in a newspaper, also two or three acorns from one of the live oaks within the Fortress. This oak keeps the leaf green all winter. I also enclose you a leaf of what I think is Holly. It grows about here in great abundance. Inside the Fortress at Gen. Dix's house the crocus and daffodil were just opening, the robins were hopping round and many other birds were singing in the trees. The air was warm and we had just such weather as they have in Spring. We came home in the evening, after having spent a very pleasant day. We opened the keg at night, and found things in as good order as could be expected. One can of peaches and one of apple butter had burst open and had wet the segars [?] and soiled the cloths over
the butter. We can dry the sugar. There appeared to be letters in the keg, but they were so wet and mussed we could not make anything out of them. We now consider that we are living in style and have enough to set up an eating house. Thank Joe Kirk for his present, none the less welcome even if it spoiled, also Mrs Pringle and Mrs Synder. If I was only a young man and they unmarried too, I would be tempted to write to them myself. It is curious how strange it seemed to me to see a woman once more. I saw ten or a dozen at Fortress Monroe, wives of some officers there. In short time I would have forgotten what they look like. It also made Lieut. Justice & me laugh as we got our dinners at a restaurant on the wharf, to sit at a table and see a table cloth, the first time to me now for nearly six months.

The best thing in your letter is the statement that you are well yourself. As to being contented, that you must learn. I would like to be home to be sure, and would not care whether you "growled" as you say or not. But when I will be home I can't tell. It is stated to day that part of our Corps has left for Norfolk. However, I didn't believe it, and think I certainly would have seen them start if they went, for we are all out in a straight line now, and not hid in the woods like at Falmouth. Still it is not likely we will be kept here idle a great while. We will know more when Burnside comes down. We had better leave the matter in God's hands, and both trust in him, seeking for his will to be done and not our will placing all our cares and hopes in a merciful Savior, who is able and willing to keep that which we commit to him to the great day, and pray him that if we meet not here again we may best be found on his right hand in his heavenly Kingdom, where war and strife shall never enter.

Yours affectionately
William