My dear Jane

Shortly after I had mailed No. 22 your No. 8 arrived. If it had come sooner I would not have had room in it to have answered all your questions. You appear to think we cannot be comfortable here because the weather is very cold in Mercer Co. In this you are mistaken. It is seldom that an old soldier is placed in such a situation that he cannot extract some comfort out of it. The first care on encamping is to make himself comfortable. It would amuse you to see the various plans and contrivances. One from a mess will set up the tent, another will go in search of wood and water, and still another will be cutting the long grass and weeds and filling his gum blanket with them for bedding. Some gather leaves, others cut the twigs off the pines and a hundred things are done that would not come into our heads at home. We had a pretty severe storm of winds, rain and snow on that Sunday you speak of. It blew Col. Leasure's tent over the bank into the river, besides a number of other pranks that we did not like. Since then it has generally been very pleasant until the last few days. It has for three days been very cold. The wind prevails from the West, and it is likely to be cold enough till the wind changes. We are well enough prepared for it. Our tent is quite as close as our old one, but we have a larger fire place and plenty of wood. I guess we were as snug the night of your closing exercises of the Literary society as any one there.

The balls and cap box that Thomas George left, were I supposed, for himself. I understood it so. They were of no use to me here, and I gave them to him if he chose to take the trouble to carry them home. I suppose he didn't want them. The cartridges are not Minnie ones, but for Sharp's rifle. Our balls are a little larger. Rob. Maxwell has a Sharp's rifle that he took home, the cartridges will fit it. The mosquito net came from Fredericksburg and the compressed vegetable I sent to let you see the kind of soup we had. We have got none of it since we came here. Squire Wood was rather slow in delivering his package. The crackers were fair samples of the kind we use. We get ten a day and that you know would not make much more than three at a meal. They go farther than bread. We are getting to wish crackers now and then for a change, but we have not got any since we landed here.

We heard of the wedding at Dillinger's before your letter came. Hugh Dillinger had got word of it. You do not appear to be getting too sociable with Mr. George yet. You must arrange such matters according to your own judgement. Probably you will be all the better friends for not writing each other too much. I hope Jim will get you in plenty of coal. It should have been done in
the fall.

The renting of the house at Abbott is well, better than to Logan or any one else I can not think of. From what I saw of him I think he will do what work you want very well, and so long as you want it done you had better give it to him if he does it right. He wanted to hire with me for a year.

I heard from Ann that Robert was poorly, but did not think that he was so bad. I have not heard directly from himself since he went to Philad.

As to Tommy's coming home I shall not interfere. If he is doing well and they are satisfied to keep him, it is probably best for him to stay, but if you need him or would rather have him with you, you had better have him at home. It is a matter in which you must decide yourself. It is not of any great importance as far as we can see.

The cellar should be fixed, and this time it should be done well. It will not pay to dig up the pipe. The digging will cost more than the pipe. Let a good wide drain be dug behind the building the whole length of it and carried on back of the smoke house to some point beyond the hedge and then down to the road. An outlet from the cellar can be made into it. If your father will take the trouble to see it, let him have charge of its construction his own way. The only suggestion I can make is to carry it out beyond the old drain. It is too bad that your verbenas should be lost in the water.

I suppose by this time you will have the report of your silver mine agent at Philad. Could you not beat Butler Co. and find gold or diamonds in Mercer Co?

You are correct I think in Uncle Robert's balance. I cannot remember the amount of interest but it is in the book for last year and I think the sum you name is right. If it is, the balance or $32.08 is right. Uncle Robert will let you know what he makes of it.

I understood your figures in speaking of Bovard's very well. I know your style well enough. A few o.o.'s didn't make any difference between you and me.

I believe this is all that there is to answer now. I have read your letter the second time and thrown it into the fire. It is a pity so many of them have perished thus, but in this kind of migrating life it cannot be helped without running the risk of their falling into wrong hands. I have our cabin all to myself this afternoon. The rest of them are out on Brigade drill. I have two excuses for staying in today. I was on guard yesterday, and that clears me of all other duty until dress parade this afternoon. I also have a sore throat, but did not report sick with it, as I knew that I could get excused at any hour if I wanted. The rule is that all who are sick must present themselves
at the Surgeon's tent when the sick call is beat in the morning
and he decides who is ill enough to be excused for that day. I
did not go, nor am I the least sick, but as able as ever I was to
do anything we have to do. But I can not go on Brigade drill,
although I like it better than the regimental or company drill,
but the dust raised by the tramping of 2,500 men and the horses is
so thick that it got into my throat and irritated it so that I was
afraid yesterday that I had the diphtheria. There are pretty
extensive ulcers in it, and my mouth is sore too, but my appetite
is still too good to indicate anything serious. I showed it to
Dr. Maas yesterday afternoon when I met him and he tells me that
he will excuse me from any duty that produces such results. These
drills are going on now every day. Each brigade is trying to look
better than the other, and I suppose if they keep on at the rate
they are going lately they will require every man to get a band
box and wardrobe to keep his fixtures in. Yesterday I was sent
back from the rendezvous to my quarters to have my boots
blackened, before I could go on guard. There was a time not long
ago when marching through Virginia, that the man or officer who
was not pretty muddy or dusty was suspected of not keeping in his
place. Mud & dust were honorable then when our march lay through
them, but now we are doing the fanciest kind of soldiering.
Perhaps a squadron of rebel cavalry may make a raid down amongst
us some night, or a rebel ram run down the James River one of
these days and then we will not be required to mind anything but
our guns & cartridges.

I shall try to write a little oftener dear, even if we have
no news to send you. You are my only regular correspondent and
must on that account if no other have the best kind of attention.
The news from Liberty is always more interesting than from
anywhere else. It is a good while now since I have heard from
either Philad. or Pittsburg. I wrote once to Bernie since she went
to Pitts.. Haworth is a poor hand to write so I get most of the
news. Did Barker B. G. advise you of having collected your
dividend yet?

With much love, dearest.

Yours ever

William