Camp at Little Bethel, Va  
March 13. 1863

My dear Jane

It is now just a week since I have heard from you, and somehow it has appeared to me one of the longest weeks I ever passed. I cannot tell why it was so, we have been very busy except a couple of rainy days. I expect to find difficulty in writing you anything of a letter this time, for things have settled down into a regular routine here, and one day goes just like another. As for news there is no such thing. I waited until the mail came in to-day before beginning this, hoping that a letter might come asking me some questions or giving me something for a text to write about, but as none came I must try to amuse myself by conjuring up something to fill up and get the worth of the three cent stamp from Uncle Sam, by giving him a full letter to carry. I don't mean that I am disappointed at not getting a letter from you, for although I am always glad to receive one it would take away from the pleasure of perusing it if I thought it had tuned your time or interfered with your other affairs to write it. The fact is, I think you write frequently enough, and a good deal oftener than I expected. You are the most punctual and prompt correspondent that I have, and I doubt whether any one in camp gets letters from their wives as often as I do. In our company I am sure none do.

Since I wrote last we have had most remarkable fluctuations in the weather; one day it would be as warm and fair as a day in June at home, the birds singing and the grass beginning to show a fresh green, during the night the wind would shift to the N.E. and a drizzling warm rain would commence which would increase into a storm, then the wind shifting to the East and South would bring a kind of semi hurricane that would threaten to blow our tents away. The next day it would continue to blow around towards the West till the masses of black clouds would lift up, leaving us a clear sky and sharp wind bringing us in mind of a clear Mercer Co. December day; then a freezing night. Next morning the sun would rise in midsummer splendor, soon melting the frost and making us throw off our overcoats before noon, and then again before night be as balmy as a summer evening. So it goes on. The consequence is an abundance of colds. I managed to catch one as well as the rest, but it has done me no harm except make my tooth growl again, and my voice so bad that I have to speak in a whisper. This is one of the cold days; this morning we had ice, and just before I sat down to commence this letter we had a slight fall of snow.

I received a letter from Uncle Robert this week, in reply to one I sent him about a month before. Among other things he gave me a copy of the analysis of the Butler Co. Silver Ore. It was pretty much what I expected. There are a good many letters due me
now from different quarters. I always answer as soon as I can any
that are sent me, and I find that the people are not very much
interested in what I write them, or else have a good deal else to
do than write often judging from the time between their letters.
I was sorry to hear of Robert's illness. Probably that accounts
for his not writing. I wrote to him once since I left home, but
have never received anything from him. I am now entitled to one
from Squire Pringle, Mr. Bovard, John Haworth, brother George and
your sisters Kate, Bessie and Sarah, also Ann Kirkpatrick, but it
is only a short time since I wrote her. Also your brother Hugh,
but perhaps it is too soon for him too since I wrote him. If we
were moving about and scenes and incidents crowding us I could get
material for making a more interesting letter, but then is just
the time that I can't get a chance to do it. Probably it will not
now be long till we do move. Today the third division of our
Corps is leaving. They are going to Suffolk. You will find it on
your map twenty four miles south of Norfolk. Dr. Sherlock tells
me that we will leave on Monday next for the same place. From the
way we fixed up here, and the improvements made by our officers
around their quarters I supposed we were to stay a good while. We
had our quarters as nice and even nicer than the streets of
Philad. and we had to spruce up and get new clothes etc as if we
were to go on promenade. We are also about getting white gloves
and all that kind of nonsense. The officers were sending home for
their wives and a good many of them have got here. Col Leasure's
wife arrived to day. The Col. had made extensive arrangements to
receive her. His quarters are decorated in a magnificent manner
with evergreens etc, and look a great deal nicer than his
residence at home. Mr. Brown left for home yesterday. A few of
our men started home to day on a furlough of ten days. It will go
hard with those who have spent so much time and pains to make
themselves comfortable, to go off now and leave things. The fact
of our going to Suffolk or any other place in this neighborhood
does not look as though we were to be engaged in active service
for a while. It is rather the opposite. It was not to be
supposed that 25,000 men were to be kept at a place like this
where there is no enemy for nothing, and the dividing them up and
sending to points in this vicinity as garrisons carries out the
idea advanced some time ago that this Corps was to have a rest. I
do not like the idea of going to Suffolk. It is not near so good
or pleasant a location, and I understand that the water is bad.
However, we are here yet, and it will be time enough to complain
when we get reason for it. We will let the morrow take care for
itself.

We have had an English man of war lying in the river for the
last few days. Her name is the "Defiance". We can see her tall
masts from our camp. Our little iron clad "Sangamen" looks like
nothing alongside of her. We have an unusual or even more than
the usual amount of camp rumors floating about, of army movements,
battles lost and won, now by the rebels, then by our army etc etc
but none of them I presume are true. You will get more reliable
news from the papers, and I will not tire you by repeating them.
One thing is certain we are closing nothing toward settling the
rebellion except drilling. Of that we are getting pretty tired
and are not coming much speed in my opinion. The men are too
careless. But I should not say this. We have been cautioned
about writing discouraging letters home. Much of this thing has
been done, and some of them published, which has done their
writers here no good. We as a regiment have passed a lot of very
strong resolutions and sent them home to the loyal papers for
publication. They will not afford much consolation to the Race
Democrats or Copperheads, and if we were home I would not like to
insure the lives of some of your neighbors. Some of these men
will have a terrible account to settle one of these days for their
abuse of the army & their charging them with disaffection to the
cause we are engaged in.

We are living well now, and eating your butter up very fast.
There are four us, and I gave some to Sam George, and some to the
quartermaster & Johnny, also one roll to the Surgeon's mess. I
was afraid it would spoil before we could eat it all, but now I
find it is getting pretty near done & we have invented a way of
keeping it pretty well in the ground.

Can you send us some more? A keg half the size of the first
one will do, or a strong box. The express & forwarding men handle
things roughly. A keg because it rolls is not so apt to break.
Send to Haworth the same as you did before. Write him to send to
George & he will forward from there by express. The Express would
charge nearly as much as it was worth from New Castle. I got a
box from Phil. this week with a new pair of boots I ordered. I
needed them badly my old ones had got to leak very badly & I had
wet feet several times. When you send me word what the keg costs
& what it costs to Pittsb. as we all use of it we also divide the
expense, and I want to know what it costs so as to do it.

Well, I have got the sheet nearly full of one stuff and
another, and will have no more room than to say my compliments to
all my old friends & acquaintances out home & my love to yourself.

W. Taylor