

Swann House
Parkersburg, VA
March 30. 1863

My dear Jane

I hope you did not wait around the corner or on the bridge to see the steamboat start on Saturday night, for if you did you had a long stand in the cold. It was about nine o'clock when we did start in earnest. How different I felt in starting the time from the day I bid you good by in September and I think you also took it more comfortably too. The satisfaction of seeing you again threw a charm over the journey, that a stormy cold night could not dispel - everything was just right, and in fact the boat was hardly big enough to hold me. The night was very stormy and a good deal of snow fell, but the most trouble we had was from the wind, which threatened to overturn us, and finally we had to stop and lay by for three hours until its violence abated. Of all this I was not aware till told of it in the morning, for I slept so sound that little short of Gabriel's trumpet would have waked me. The Melnotte must be a fast boat, for notwithstanding the delay during the night reached Wheeling at breakfast time. We took in a few more passengers there. There were several ladies on board bound for Cincinnati, but I did not get acquainted with any of them, for having none with me I had no business in their part of the cabin. We reached this place at four o'clock on Sabbath afternoon. The Captain promised to wait till I found out whether our brigade had passed on, and if it had I was to go on to Cincinnati in his boat. He did not have to wait long, for I saw our drivers on the wharf boat before we landed. They did not know me. I inquired and found that Lieut. Justice & Johnny were still behind and not expected on till the evening, so that you see I was in plenty of time, and had redeemed my promise to the Quartermaster about being here on Sunday, which will be in my favor in case we are ever passing again. I went up to town where our men were quartered, and found it to be in a stable. I suppose it was considered good enough for a soldier. I went in too, and got my soldier [?] out of the carpet bag and put it on once more. But I did not like to stay there, and in fact could not, for my blankets, haversack etc were all back with the Quartermaster's servant. I came down to the landing and took boarding at the Swann House. It looks very much like a hotel, but it wants a man who knows how to keep one to manage it. It is managed by an old Philadelphian, a broken up dry goods merchant, whose daughter was married to Rev. John Chambers son. This end of Virginia appears to be stricken with the poverty of Eastern Virginia. I went to the office of the hotel to get a sheet of paper to send word by this mornings mail of my arrival, but not a sheet was in the house, and I was informed that I could get none to buy till

Monday. The consequence was that I had to postpone writing till to day, and no doubt it was fortunate I did, for during the night, the post office was burned, and of course my letter would have been burned too. We had a first class fire during the night. I heard the bells ringing and folks running, but on reflecting that I owned no property and has no friends in the place I resolved to lie still till the fire came nearer. The fire commenced in the Richmond House, which was said to be owned by Stonewall Jackson or his brother but the fire did not stop there, but destroyed a whole block of buildings, including the post office, a drug store, etc. But if the whole place had been burned it would be a small loss to the country. It is a wretched looking place, and I don't care how soon we leave it. That will not be very soon from present appearances. Two trains arrived late in the evening, but Johnny was not on either of them. They had some more horses, mules and wagons. Our mules are in a sad pickle. They got nothing to eat on the way, and commenced to eat the collars off each other. The harness was tied on top of the cars. The top was comprised of slots, and the mules eat the straps and ropes and the harness tumbled off on the way. The quartermasters saddle is gone, the men are drunk, and everything else in the same prospering and promising condition.

Johnny and the Quartermaster arrived this morning and are stopping at this house. Our chances for getting off look at present, about a week from now, but we will try to make it as much less as we can. There is only one boat here, and that won't take half our stuff. We have some hopes of crossing the river and going down by the Marietta and Cincinnati R.R. We will try our best to get off soon, but even then it will take at least two days work.

I might have stopped at Pittsburg three days longer if I had known all these things. Probably it is as well that I did not, for during that time you might possibly have induced me to desert or some other foolish thing. All together I am satisfied as it is, for I only expected to get time to speak to you a few minutes, and instead of that I had more than a whole day. Next time probably I can make a longer stay.

Norman Maxwell came in the same train with Johnny. They had a pretty hard rough ride. Norman says that the road is nearly all underground. I worried him a great deal by telling him what a nice trip I had and how well you looked etc. He was going round town to day to see how long it took to go to Pitts, by rail road. He did not like to ask me. You need not be surprized if he does make his appearance at W. Liberty before going West yet. It is very cold to day, and was so yesterday, not much like spring yet. The citizens here are a queer looking set, clothed in patches like Joseph's coat, for they appear to not be very particular about the

color. They are with all more loyal however, than anywhere I have been in Virginia. In stead of that studied silence and dragged look we saw in Eastern Virginia, they here are Evidently pleased to see us, and are very willing to enter into conversation. They expect this city to be the capitol of their new State. Lack a day what a capital! But it may improve - much worse it can't be. I hope the new state won't be so bad.

Now dear I can't tell you when you may expect to hear from me again. Not likely till we reach some other stopping place. I shall have quite a post office of letters when I reach the regiment, for I can't get any till then.

I wrote to John Haworth this morning. If you have left Pitts, he will forward this on, if not yet off give him my respects, also thank Sallie for me for Harper's Magazine which I forgot to do myself, and don't forget Bessie too.

With much love to yourself.

I am ever your affectionately
William