My dear Jane

April 16. 1863

Such a great interval has now elapsed since I wrote you last that you might suppose that I had forgotten you. It is now a day over a week since I wrote No. 37. I have not since then had an opportunity or I would have done so, but now the only amends that I can make is by sending you a big one.

I left off at Florence in the afternoon of the 8th when there I learned from men who had passed our train on the way that they were still seven miles behind me, and as the day was pretty well advanced I did not suppose that they would overtake me that day, and accordingly had my horse put up at the hotel. But I was mistaken, and the train did come up in the Evening and Encamped just outside of the town. Most of the officers came and stopped at the house where I was, and among them the Quartermaster and Norman Maxwell. We spent a very pleasant evening, but had a bad nights rest on account of having to sleep on feather beds. We passed a resolution to sleep on feather beds no more, and after settling our bills we started on our journey once more at an early hour on Thursday morning.

We had only come nine miles the previous day, and found that we would have to make far better travelling than that to reach our regiment on Saturday as we intended. The whole distance between Covington and Lexington by the road we came, turned out to be eighty four miles; so that there were seventy five miles left for us to go in the next three days. But as we wanted to get into camp before dark on Saturday night we resolved to try to make about thirty miles the two next days each, thus leaving only fifteen to be travelled on Saturday. This we supposed we could easily do as the road was very good. It is one of the best roads that I have ever seen. It is as broad and smooth as the Frankfort road the whole way, and no steep hills on it. Where there is a rise it is so gradual that you can scarcely perceive it. One thing however was very annoying: that was the dust. It was a little windy, and you can imagine what a dust nine hundred horses and mules would make if you were behind them. The train was about a mile and a half long when in motion. Our brigade has twenty seven teams, then there was the division quarters wagons, the supply train, the ammunition train, and all the ambulances belonging to our division.

When we started I went ahead again, for the purpose of keeping out of the dust, which rose in a cloud. On looking back sometimes I could see them a mile behind. It had the appearance of a great fire in a city in the day time. It was a very cold morning, and I soon got cold in the saddle. A few miles on I came to a tavern and tied up my horse and went in to get warmed.
Several others came in too for the same purpose, and I waited there till the whole train had passed, dust and all, and then followed behind at a safe distance. As the day advanced it became more pleasant, although it was cool all day, and a little more so in the evening. We made quite a good day's journey that day; passed through the village of Walton, a small place very much like Centreville, and a few miles farther on a town called Crittenden. This was a nice place, somewhat like Frankfort. There I stopped a while and had a talk with Dr. Timney who resides there and with whom I got acquainted in Covington. The Dr. looked very sleepy and was not very entertaining. He said he had been at a wedding the previous night. We still went on and at last arrived at Williamstown where we had intended to stop for the day, but as it was still clear we pushed on three miles farther, making a march that day of thirty three miles. The country through which we passed all day was very nice indeed, resembling very much the better part of the land you see on the road between Liberty and Mercer. But there is one remarkable difference between there and any where else I have been in a hilly country. Since leaving Covington we had not crossed or seen a single stream of water, not even the smallest approach to it. The hills on each side of the road at times appeared large and high enough to have some small creek running at their feet, but not one, and we were informed that we still had a day's march to make before we would come to any running water. It was difficult to find a suitable place to Encamp with so many animals on account of the scarcity of water. There were very few springs. The people have dug out small ponds on their farms, and the rain water that gathers in them is the only supply that they have for their cattle. For themselves they all have cisterns at their houses in which they keep the rain water that runs from their roofs. Most of the farmers have ice houses, which they supply with ice cut from their ponds, but this summer they will have none, the winter having been so mild that no ice was formed of a sufficient thickness to cut. The want of this will also prevent them from packing the usual amount of butter they formerly did. Another peculiarity of this section is the want of barns. Many of the largest farms and finest houses have no barns at all, and where they have any they are mere apologies for such a building and a Pennsylvanian would hardly call them a wagon shed. I asked some of the farmers why they did not have barns. They say they do not need them: they stack their grain, and let their stock run. This is the region where so many mules are raised. We did not however, see a great many of them in the field. The fences were always good. On the roads you can seldom find a worn fence, although the fields are often divided by them. Their road fences are palings, boards, post and rail or stone. The stone fences are very nice. Some have hedges of the Osage
Orange. I did not stop in Williamstown but followed the train to its stopping place in a large field in which there was one of those ponds of rain water. My horse would not drink at it, although he had not had a drink all day. My next concern was to look out for where I was to sleep that night. There was no hotel at hand this time and I had to make preparation once more for sleeping under nature's canopy. I missed Willie and Henderson with their share of the tent that they used to carry. At last I hit on a plan, by unloading part of a wagon I got room enough in it to lie down, and got a better sleep there than in a feather bed. The officers did not like to take to the ground again so soon, but scattered around among the farm houses and staid there that night.

We did not get off quite so early the next morning. The men and animals appeared to feel the effect of the long journey of the previous day. My horse was just as spry as ever. He is a hardy little fellow just like the one I got from Haworth. The morning was cloudy and sultry and we had a good prospect of rain which we wished for that it might free us from the dust which was very annoying. In this we were disappointed as it soon cleared off. The country changed in appearance as we advanced further from Williamstown. We intended to try to reach Georgetown before night, thirty miles distant. The country became rougher, the houses poorer and smaller and at last it was much inferior in its general appearance to Butler Co. in Penn. This part of the route also was the only one on which we apprehended any danger, as the hills had some time before been infested with guerrillas, and we heard of a squad of Morgan's Cavalry being within thirty miles of us a few days previous. We doubled our advance guard and went on meeting very few people on the way except beggars and refugees. Of these we met several partys. They consist of whole families, except the men. Two or three women usually with from five to a dozen children literally clothed in rags, barefooted and wretched in the extreme. They always represent themselves as being refugees driven from their homes by the rebels, but the farmers say they are the families of men who have gone into the rebel service, and getting no pay of course are unable to do anything for their families at home. Whichever way it is, the poor creatures are a picture of wretchedness, and I could not help pitying the poor children who at least were innocent of bringing such misery on themselves. They generally got something from our men, and such of them as were going our way we gave a ride in the wagons. This day we suffered somewhat for water. To keep out of the dust I still kept ahead, and about the middle of the afternoon saw the first well since I came into Kentucky. It was near a small frame house and old man who lived in it gave me a gourd to drink out of. He said he was seventy five years old, had been in the War of 1812, and that his two sons were in our army with
Rosecrans. I can't tell whether this is true or not for we are very suspicious of the loyalty of this section. They don't act as they did in Ohio or any place where we knew the people to be on our side. There they would come out to see us pass, and waved flags or handkerchiefs while in sight, but here they keep their houses closed and themselves out of sight, so that were it not that you occasionally catch a glimpse of some one at a window you would think the country deserted. Not so with the Negroes. They turn out and appear glad to see us. Towards the Ohio River we could see no Negroes, but now we are beginning to find them, and they are becoming more plenty the farther we go. The old man at the well told me that he lived on and took care of a farm for Mr. Osborne; that Osborne owned nearly all the land from there to Georgetown. We did not reach Georgetown that night as we intended but encamped in a park where we found water, three miles short of Georgetown, making a march of twenty seven miles that day, and leaving us just fifteen miles for Saturday. Before night we met a troop of the 7th Ohio Cavalry sent out to escort us in to Lexington, but we felt safe now at the distance we were from our own troops and persuaded them to go on and bring in a weaker train belonging to the other division that was to follow a day after us. The park we encamped belonged to Osborne. He made a good deal of fuss about it, but that made no difference to us, and we proceeded to make ourselves comfortable. To save trouble loading and unloading the wagon I slept that night under it. It goes very natural again to lie on the ground, and people who think it is a bad or uncomfortable bed have probably never tried it.

As we had but a short march the next day we were in no hurry about starting, and the sun was well up before we were ready to take the road. When once started we went on at a lively pace hoping soon to be at our journeys end. I was up and on the road a good while before the train. The farmers, or planters as they are called here, ring a large bell early in the morning. This is the negroes reveille, and immediately thereafter they have to make their appearance so that their masters can see that none are missing. At the same time they receive their orders regarding the work to be done during the day. The man Osborne on whose place we were had a large number of slaves, and they were dispersing in different directions for their days work as I started. Quite a number of them went along the road that I was going and I asked them a few questions to ascertain how they liked Mr. Osborne and their mode of life. They said he was a pretty good boss: that he had the best niggers thereabouts; the most land, the best dogs and horses, and raised more hemp than any one in the neighborhood. In regard to their being contented they said they thought they were pretty well off, but would rather wear worse clothes and own them themself. One of them told me he was about sixty years old, that
when Mr. Osborne bought him he cost fifteen hundred dollars, but that now he would not bring more than three hundred, that he had been a very stout, smart nigger, could split more rails or cut more hemp than any other nigger and that Mr. Osborne had let him have four wives at a time. Now he was getting old and worthless. He said he remembered when the turnpike was being made, and when Mr. Osborne was not worth a thousand dollars; that he had made all his money within the last, few years. He also told me that it was the negroes that had built the nice stone fences that I saw along the road. He said that an Irishman had come out there several years ago and taught them to do it. They are built of limestone which breaks up in nice flat pieces that make a good substantial fence. I must mention Mr. Osborne's dogs. He had about as many dogs as negroes, all nice spotted ones like the ones that used to run with Pierce Butler's carriage in Philadelphia. The negroes tell me they are splendid hunters, and unequalled for catching coons.

Leaving Mr. Osborne, his negroes, dogs, etc. I will now start on my last days journey as I supposed. I proceeded a good way in advance of the train. As the day was sultry, I took my time, and reached Georgetown about Eight o'clock. This was the finest looking place I have yet seen in Kentucky. It appears to contain about four thousand inhabitants, and the buildings are very neat and clean. Nearly all the houses have nice gardens in the rear or at the side, and a nice flower plot and evergreens in front. The spring flowers were just blossoming in them. I saw a great variety of hyacinths in the open air full blown. The people in the town were out and it appeared in every respect a lively and pleasant place. Their churches and other public buildings are large and tasteful. They also have a very large hospital and quite a respectable woolen factory which is run by steam and in which the operatives are negroes. Here I saw the first stream of water since I left the Ohio. I did not inquire the name of it as it was a very insignificant affair, but the people appear to think it quite "a big thing." A few white and black boys were sitting on the banks with fishing lines in it, deluding themselves with the idea that they were fishing, but as I could see the bottom without getting off my horse, I think there chances for fish would have been quite as good in a tub of water at home. I had plenty of time to examine and admire Georgetown, as well as to stop at a pastry shop and get my haversack filled before our train caught up. When it did I started on again and about eleven o'clock I saw from a hill the steeples of Lexington. Here I had been riding over the play ground of the "millboy of the slashes." At noon we reached the camp of the Roundheads just on the outer edge of the city, but no Roundheads were there. What had become of them? We sent in to the office of the post commander and found that the
whole brigade had been gone for several days and were now at Camp Dick Robinson about twenty six miles farther on. This was too far to go in one afternoon and we agreed to go on about ten miles more and finish the journey the next day. We were hurried through Lexington as fast as possible for fear the teamsters might get drunk. I therefore saw very little of the place, and only had a few minutes to see the burial place of Henry Clay. The fine Grecian Column erected near his grave is in process of being spoiled by the soldiers who have commenced chipping pieces off the corners of it for relics. So much of this had been done that a guard had been placed there to protect it. I was disappointed in not having time to visit Ashland which was only two miles and a half beyond. Our trains formed on the south side of Lexington and halted for three hours while we loaded some wagons with ammunition. We only got four miles farther that night. We were joined here by a company of the 27th N. J. who had their drum and bugle with them, and that was the first night I had heard the Tattoo since leaving Fortress Monroe. The Quartermaster and I slept together on the ground under a wagon cover which we spread over our blankets, and a good idea it was too, for it rained during the night, but the canvass kept it off us and we got up dry.

We commenced our march pretty early. A slight shower came down, just enough to lay the dust and make it pleasant travelling. I could hardly realize that it was Sabbath morning. We met no one going to church, and when we passed a church building it was closed up like the peoples houses. Our march to day lay through a more wild and wooded country, and most of the way the fences were gone and the ground in many places bore evidence of having been the encampment of an army. This had been disputed ground, and the scene of several skirmishes. Both armies had been here, and the traces of them were not hard to see. We passed through Nicholasville the nearest point to our present camp that the railroad touches. It was occupied with soldiers. I noticed one church open. Continuing on we came to the banks of the Kentucky river, where the banks were high and rocky, and the road very tortuous. Part of the way it was cut out of the solid rock leaving a high mountain on one side and a deep abyss on the other. At this point a few hundred men with artillery could stop the passage of a great army. We crossed the river here on an old wooden bridge. The marks of picket fires were plenty now for miles, showing how important this part of the road had been considered. We kept on making very good time and soon from an elevation got a glimpse of the smoke of Camp Dick Robinson. It took an hour more to reach it. We arrived in the afternoon while Mr. Brown was preaching. I felt something like getting home after a long absence. My mode of life for a month previous had made me
feel very unlike a soldier, but a sight of our men and being among them once more brought me back again to the old point. The first one I met was Willie. He was as hearty and fresh as when I left him. I soon saw Johnny too. He looked a little different on account of his fixing up with his red sash and sword. He is well too, and nothing to complain of but an occasioned twinge of the toothache, and that he can get rid of as soon as he musters up courage to go to the surgeon who now has a complete set of forceps etc for that purpose. I soon saw all the boys and after exchanging salutations pitched our tent and fixed up a little. This evening we received the first mail that had reached the regiment since leaving Fortress Monroe. It was a very large one, being the accumulated letters for over three weeks. Some of the companies had over a bushel of them. For my share I received three, all of them from you dear. No. 11 and two. No. 12's. Although I had seen you since you wrote them there were many things in them that was new, and anyhow I was glad to get something from you. Since I commenced this yesterday evening I have received another No. 13 written since you got home, and I don't know now whether I will have room enough left to answer them all. I shall begin and do as you do darling, by taking them up one by one and answer separately, and I hope that I shall never be fixed again so as to get so far behind in my correspondence with you.

First is No. 11. In it you inquire about my throat. That you know from hearing me speak had got entirely well, and has kept so ever since. In it also you speak of the arrangement with M'Gonigle about the sheep. We talked about that, and I leave the matter altogether with you. It is a safe business and he is a reliable man, and any arrangement you make with him will have my entire approval. Your list of births, marriages and death was new to me for I had not heard of any of them before. Your next No. 12 of the 19th March, mentions the rumor of Uncle William going to be married again. This must be very annoying to him. I didn't suppose he has any notion of the kind, but the people must have something to talk about. You need not be anxious any more about Willie being in danger in the regiment any more, and you can let his mother feel easy on that account too, as he has been detailed as assistant clerk to me in the Quartermaster's office. Your second No. 12 of 22d March reminded me again of the political change at home, and that fuss that Pringle was making, which you told me about. If we only had him and the rest of the Copperheads here the boys would soon make a Union between their necks and some of our mule halters. If the peace men and croakers at home knew how little the soldiers think of them and their foolish efforts for a peace by giving up everything they would feel ashamed of themselves if they have any shame. They will have to keep a good
deal quieter if ever the soldiers get home or there will be some sore heads. As to resisting the Conscription, that is absurd. One company of old soldiers in Mercer Co. could soon settle that, and as to the Resolutions of the 100th if the chaplain had not tempered them down after the regiment held the meeting the folks would have seen a good deal stronger ones. The thing originated with the men, and they talk and feel a good deal more bitter than their resolutions express. The men consider that they have slept in mud and snow, marched day and night too long and suffered too much to let it all go for nothing and instead of wishing peace on any terms, they will only have it now on our first demand of the enemy laying down their arms and submitting unconditionally. If they don't do that we can and will whip them, and it may take time, but no matter how long we are determined to do it. I was very glad to get your last letter No. 13 as I had not heard anything from that direction since I saw you. I hope your cold is better by this time. I would have liked to have had my boot within reach of that driver who would not take you home. He is a copperhead you can depend. No man would have acted so. You should have waited at the store house till the morning dear, for it was too much of a walk for you at night. Let me hear how you are after it. I hope you will not be much the worse for it, and I feel much obliged to Joe for his attention to you. I have two letters from him unanswered now, but will attend to them at an early day. The reason I was so long here without writing was because of our business getting behind so much during our travels, and for fear of having to move farther. Soon the Quartermaster wanted it written up as well as possible. He worked hard himself all the time, and so did I, neither of us taking time to write home. We were getting pretty well caught up to time when he found that he had to go back to Lexington yesterday on business, and as I am not enough acquainted with his business yet I took the opportunity to start this newspaper. He will be back tonight, and then I will have a few days more work to do, after which it will be very easy, and between Willie and I we can run the machines ourselves. Our camp is a very pretty one. It is on a farm belonging to a loyal man named Dick Robinson who has rented it to the Government during the war for camping purposes. You will find it probably marked on your map about half way between Nicholasville and Danville. I don't think we will stay long here. We have an order from Gen. Wilcox directing us to keep trimmed up and ready to move at a moments notice. There is much speculation as to which direction it will be. I would not be surprized dear if it was back again towards Washington. If so I will try to let you know in time so that you may have another trip to Pittsburg if the roads are good. One bad thing here is the want of regularity in the mails. We have only had letters twice. It will be better in
future I am told, as Gen. Welsh has ordered a man to go to Nicholasville daily for us. Gen. Welch has command of the brigade now, and Col. Leasure is back with the regiment. One of the first things he did was to punish the men who disgraced the regiment on the way and at Lexington. From all accounts the boys had a jolly time at Lexington. Great numbers of them got drunk, etc. The Col. got a list of the names as far as he could. The non commissioned officers he reduced to the ranks again, and the whole lot are put out six hours a day to do all the hard and dirty work about the camp. He ordered them to be kept at this for thirty days; also took off one half of their pay for three months. They are to day sweeping the whole camp up with brush brooms, and shoveling the leaves and sticks into piles for the teams to haul away, while the others are looking on and making fun of them. Among them is my respected friend John Blair. On Wednesday afternoon we had seventeen of Morgan's men brought into camp prisoners, also a cannon captured with them at the same time. They were taken by eleven of our pickets: they are Tennesseans, and a fine looking set of men. I rather think they wanted to be taken. We have got a new regiment added to our brigade to day. The 27th Michigan. This will make us seven or eight hundred stronger and make some more work for the Quartermaster. It looks very spring like to day: the leaves are coming out and the peach trees are in full bloom. I must now draw to a close darling, and will try to not be so long of writing again. Please remember me to father & mother and the rest of the folks. I will try and attend to some unanswered letters soon and Bert's among them. Kiss Siss for me and tell her to come with you the next time you come to see me. With much love ever yours.

Affectionately

William