Camp of 3d. Brigade 1st. Division
Army of Ohio
May 9. 1863

My dear Jane

I have a great deal more leisure now than I had this time last month. I have now caught up to the business and if I am well will not let it accumulate any more, but drive it instead of letting it drive me. Last month it was very different. There was nearly a month's business ahead and I knew nothing about the way they do things here: now I have got somewhat used to it, and get along with very little trouble.

We have not moved since I wrote last, but are still lying near the banks of the Green river, waiting for orders. It was rumored yesterday that our batteries had orders to return to Baltimore. I can hardly think this is true, but still it may be that they are needed by Hooker. I would be very willing to go to his help too. We were with the Army of the Potomac during its period of humiliation, and now would like to be with them in their hour of triumph if triumph it is. At any rate Hooker would not be put back any by having the Ninth Corps with him now. I do hope he'll succeed.

We hear occasionally from our front, which is composed of Cavalry and our first brigade. They have numerous skirmishes, and are always successful. They report that the enemy is now completely driven out of Kentucky. The Green river has fallen again and is fordable. We can easily get our mails and provisions across. The rain has ceased, and a clear warm sun is shining over us, making amends for the hiding of his face for the last few days. The camp is all alive and everybody out instead of seeking shelter inside their muslin tents. The ground and fences are covered with the men's blankets, which are set out to dry, and the men are brushing up their guns and accoutrements. I have just had breakfast and the day is before me with nothing to do. I have had the subject of a fishing excursion under consideration, and after reviewing the matter decided that it won't pay. Well what shall I do? I have filled my pipe and shall spend the first hour in writing you this sheet without knowing what I am going to say, so you need not expect it will be very interesting. However, it will afford me satisfaction while it lasts, and I know you will not refuse to take it out of the post office. I will have it written just about the time the pickets are mounted, and that operation will amuse me for another half hour, after which I shall seek some other occupation till dinner time. The pickets are mounted on the green just opposite my tent door. They are drawn up in a line and inspected by one of the Colonel's staff. Every gun and every part of their equipment is examined, the band playing all the while. It always draws a crowd of idlers around to see how they pass.
There is considerable rivalry among the different regiments in regard to their appearance on these occasions, and many jokes are passed between them on matters that civilians would feel uninteresting. The new Michigan regiment that has joined us has been getting rather vain, and the old ones have been taking them down a little. The other day when their pickets were being inspected and doing their best, our band was playing for them. While they were showing off all they could our band struck up "Away Away to School." It made quite a laugh at the expense of the poor Michiganders. We have the best band in the brigade. The other musicians admit this. There was a comic looking old butternut living in this neighborhood who came over to see the soldiers the other day. What took his attention most was the music. He was a lank loose seedy long tailed fellow with a high rusty stove pipe hat. He followed the band all around. When it stopped to play at the head of the line, he stopped too, but he could not stand still. His legs, arms and head jerked and bobbed with the music, and when at last they struck up Yankee Doodle he broke out into a regular shuffle and hoe down, which was too much for the gravity of officers and men. After parade the band took him in charge and found him to be a good musician too. They kept him playing with them for part of the day.

We are getting very familiar with Mr. Jones our neighbor. He spends a good deal of his time in our tent. He owns a good many "niggers" or "boys" as he calls them. He won't sell any of them. He has raised them all and thinks a good deal of them. They appear to be better behaved negroes than most others about. The old man Jones is a good Union man. He lost a son at the battle of Shiloh. His grandchildren live with him. He has a young "second wife" now. He has a salt well on his farm down near the river, and he never gets tired listening to our account of the oil wells in our country. He wants some of us to come back here when the war is over and go in with him in boring for oil here. He says there is plenty of it, for he has seen it when boring, for salt. He has a little vial of it that he uses for medicine. So much for Mr. Jones. Mrs. Jones I have not had the pleasure of speaking to yet, but see her every day in her garden with her "boys" giving directions etc.

I forgot for the last time or two to ask you to send me a box of pens. Look in the desk of the big book case in the parlor, in one of the pigeon holes and you will find a package of Gillott's Magnum bound pens. They are in little boxes. Please do up one box in white paper and direct it the same as a letter. I cannot get any pens that I like to write with as well as them, and the box I brought with me is done. Maybe the fact of your sending me some will make me write you a better letter sometimes.

I send you to day with this a Cincinnati paper. You will
find in it a few samples of the advertisements for correspondence which have been the rage for a month past. It is subsiding a little now. Sometimes a whole column of the paper was filled with them. You will also see on the fourth page the Eastern prices of your old styles of muslins & calicos, also the prospects for the prices of wool, which as a sheep breeder you are interested in. I have no need to advertise, for I have just the right kind of a correspondent, and hope all these seekers after fun and matrimony may be as lucky as me. Until now I have had but little opportunity of writing to you, because I had an easier way of communicating with you. Yet this writing though agreeable enough is but a poor substitute for your word of mouth. It is about fifteen years I believe since we were married and but few letters have passed between us during all that time. Do you remember the night we landed out at Spruce Street? Mr. Jones geese brought me in mind of it last night. They gabbled around our tent all night. I was disposed to get mad at them at first, but as they brought such pleasant reminiscences with their noise I let them alone. His hogs run round all day and even have the impudence to come right into our tent. They bring me in mind of shooting hogs at Liberty, but as it is not allowed here I have to content myself with clubbing them. If Mr. Jones takes the trouble to count them once in a while he will find himself gradually getting short of pork. I know of one that died without a squeal. We are living too well to need to do much foraging here. I bought five pounds of good butter yesterday at .30 per lb. The same man asked 25 cents a quart for his buttermilk!

I did intend writing you a whole lot of soft nonsense dear when I commenced this, but have rambled on to near the end without knowing what I was saying, and perhaps it is as well. I could only repeat what I have probably said before and make you tired of it. But no matter how often or seldom I say it darling I love you dearly and think of you often, and have realized that no lapse of time or amount of distance can weaken that esteem for you that you have given me so much grounds for. I shall now close with kind remembrance to your father & mother, my love to the children and much more of it for yourself.

William