Camp of 3d. Brigade 1st Division  
Middleburg, Ky  
May 18. 1863

My dear Jane

I have nothing new or interesting to write to you to day, but as I have written to Mr. Barnes and enclose his letter to you to direct and send to him I must send you a line or two also. You can find out his name, somehow, and have it put into the first office at Centreville. Jo. Kirkpatrick, if he visits Centreville as often as he used to will find his name in full down there, and direct it for you.

As you see we are still at Middleburg doing nothing. That is I am doing nothing. The soldiers however think they are working very hard. They are on picket or guard every third day. This was in consequence partly of the rumors of Morgan's approach, and partly to keep them employed. Idleness does more harm than a fight. When idle the evil disposed ones stray out from camp, get into difficulties with the citizens and come back drunk and make trouble in camp. Since Rutter broke that man's arm there was such another affair in Co. K., only without any breaking of bones. When the commander of the company came to rescue the man, the assailant struck him, and had to be tied at last to keep him from doing more mischief. So it is in the other regiments also. Last night five or six of the 36th Mass., came prowling around the house of a citizen and scared his family. The man inquired who they were, but they did not answer. He told them to clear out, but they would not go. The citizen then got his gun and fired a load of buckshot amongst them, striking one of them in the arm. He had to get it cut off to day to save his life. The matter on being inquired into was found to be all right for the citizen and wrong for the soldiers; they were after a mulatto girl at his house.

Morgan is not anywhere near us. He has not crossed the Cumberland, and I think is careful enough of his health not to do so.

We have heard at last from Hooker. It is as bad as I feared. I did hope that he would change the state of affairs there, and be for once successful, but it appears that he is not the man. And so we had our illumination here all for nothing too!

The weather is now delightful. The evening and mornings a little cool, but not very unpleasant. It is very much like the same season of the year at home. In farming and gardening, things are behind the part of the country we passed through before reaching here. We are just on the extreme ridge of the Cumberland Mountains, as Western Pennsylvania is on the extreme Western ridge of the Alleghenies.

A few more men went home on ten day furlough on Saturday.
Dick Holmes has not got his yet. Tish telegraphed to him from Covington a second time. I think myself that he might have got there anyhow if he had tried hard. I know that if you had been there I could have gone. But he was in this as he is in all things, a little too easy with a lack of energy. Lieut. Justice offered him the use of one of his tents if he would write for her to come on, but after considering over it a day he declined to accept the offer. The Lieut. intends going home soon if nothing new turns up here. He at first mentioned it to me privately, but now he talks of it openly. The more he thinks of it the more he likes the idea.

I shall not ask for a furlough now. I might want to go home after a few months worse than I do now, and then I could not get off again so soon. I am not sure that I could get a furlough even if I applied for it. See the case of Dick Holmes. The officers of the regiment do not grant them. The papers have to be sent on to Cincinnati to General Burnside and it is him that grants them if he thinks the reasons assigned are sufficient. It is amusing to hear the excuses and reasons the men assign for their preserve at home. Lieut Hammond our adjutant started yesterday. He lives in Wilmington. His father keeps the hotel there at which I saw Horner your mother's cousin.

There was a wedding at our nearest neighbors yesterday. I was invited as well as a number of others, but it was a hard looking crew, and some who went are sorry for it. They got drunk and into trouble by it. Except the family of Mr. Jones (and he is not overly nice) I do not see any body here that I would like to be acquainted with. The men are a tall thin shambling awkward set of fellows, and the women sharp lean, wrinkled, yellow & toothless even the youngest of them. Their darkies look quite as respectable as they do. Certainly they dress with more taste than the whites, though it would make you laugh to see either of them. Hoops are still in fashion here. Are they still in force in Mercer Co.?

I am beginning to feel like I did just before we left Newport News. That is wishing as I then wrote you that we would move, not expecting as I wrote that the order for our march was at that moment on the way to us. It took me by surprize as Fitz James was when Roderick Dhu tells him "Have then thy wish." But I don't care if it turns out so now too.

It is becoming very difficult to feed our horses here. We have gathered up all the hay and corn within several miles of us, and now have to get everything from Cincinnati. That is a great ways to haul it. The supply train brings it from there to Houstonville and we send our teams from here to Houstonville (ten miles) for our share. But we don't get quite enough. We try to make it up by letting them eat grass.
I can tell you what amount of hay and oats will keep a horse in good condition for work. We never give them more than that and they are exposed with a stable too. Fourteen pounds of hay, and twelve pounds of oats a day is a full ration. They seldom get that much. That would be ten bushels of oats a month, and a fifth of a ton of hay in the same time. We only give the mules 9 pounds of oats a day, and the same quantity of hay. When we have no oats we give the same weight of corn.

For ourselves our rations are still the same. We didn't get as good crackers as we did in Virginia. The ones we have here are baked at Lexington, and are either of Spring wheat or mixed with rye, and can hardly be broken at all. They are larger. Four of them are a days allowance. However, those who have money can get other things. We had fried eggs for breakfast - Roast duck for dinner - corn fritters for supper - Poor soldier! What hard fare! The camp is plentifully supplied with country biscuits and pies, but we don't trouble them.

I am beginning to fatten up again - my beard and moustache are getting too long and I must get them cut down a little. I wish you were as well as I am, and hope this pleasant weather is making an improvement in you.

We got no mail last night - don't know why - it is the first time it missed for several days. I did not however expect anything, as I had a letter from you so recently, and no one else writes to me now except you. However as long as you do darling I don't trouble myself about the rest, it only gives me more time to write to you, and there is more satisfaction in that than in writing anywhere else.

With respect to all enquiring friends I remain with much love to yourself and the children.

Yours affectionately

William