

Camp of 3d. Brigade 1st. Divi. 9th A.C.
rear of Vicksburg Miss.
June 18. 1863

My dear Jane

On landing from our old boat the Sam Young, I mailed your letter, or did what we call mailing, that is hand it to our postmaster to send off by the first opportunity. The old boat did as well as the rest of them. It commenced storming on the way, and we had a heavy blow with lightning and hail, as soon as we entered the Yazoo. The Yazoo is a much narrower river than the Mississippi, not being more than half a mile wide and in some places not even so much, while some places the Mississippi is two miles wide.

The difference in the color of the water of the two streams is very striking. The Mississippi is very muddy looking and runs rapidly, while the Yazoo looks quite still and is of a green color. The water of the Yazoo is not fit to drink. Its taste is not unpleasant, but it is very unhealthy, producing an incurable chronic diarrhea. The Indians knew this, and hence the name Yazoo, which is the Indian for River of Death. The commander has issued a general order forbidding the men from drinking of it. We have water enough when we get back into the country, but it is very warm. No cool water can be had here. We remained on board the boats all night and only prepared to disembark in the morning. We got ourselves and our baggage and stores on shore, and a hard job it was. The banks were very steep and the rain had made them very muddy. You can have a pretty good idea of what it was by comparing it to the hill up to John Haworth's only that this is much higher and rougher. The heavy cannons and caissons had to be pulled up this steep bluff. They got ropes and it took hundreds of men to pull them up. It was well on in the day before we got all off. In the meantime crowds of soldiers came down to see the Eastern troops as they call us. All the men in the Army here are from the West. But a great many found acquaintances and relatives. Among some inquirers I noticed a young Irish officer inquiring if there were any Penn. troops there. I told him there was and asked what part of Penn. he was from. He said he was not a Pennsylvanian but had relatives there in Mercer Co. at a place called North Liberty, and had not heard from them for a long time. I asked who they were, and he told me a Mrs. Courtney wife of Wm. Courtney [Miller?]. Well it turned out that he was Andy Drennon's brother, and I was able to tell him something about his relatives. He asked me to let Andy know when I write home that he is here and well. He is first lieutenant of Co. F., 70th Ohio, 3rd Brigade, of Smith's Division. Please let Andy know the first time you see him.

We could not get wagons to haul up our stores immediately and

I got tired waiting on the shore, so I started up into the country to find the brigade at my leisure. The place we landed is called Snyder's bluff, and is about three miles below Haines bluff. It is strongly fortified and I can't see how it could have been taken. It is high, broken and wooded, full of ravines and natural obstructions that make it difficult to get over the ground without anyone opposing you. Besides these obstructions, every high point was defended with very heavy guns, and where the ground was in any way smooth, rifle pits had been dug. We now have possession of all these works and there appears to me a larger army here than was in the Potomac last fall. Lest Johnson should come in our rear to relieve the rebels in Vicksburg we are felling all the woods around our outer lines, and they are very thick woods. It looks almost impossible for an army to climb over them. Besides we have two army corps outside watching for him. I strolled along leisurely and examined as far as I could. I got a good feed of blackberries from the sides of some ravines.

It was one of the warmest days I ever felt, and in the evening I came into camp as wet as though I had fallen into the water. We are camped about four miles behind Vicksburg. The ground is very broken and hilly, with deep ravines and thick woods. Whenever it was practicable, roads have been cut for the convenience of the army. Every available spot has been used as a camp at one time or other. Not a house remains. All have been burned. It is a rule here I am told. There are no mistakes made. All are rebels. We confiscate everything and drive the people off before us farther into Dixie. There are thousands of darkeys camped around our office now - their masters have run off. There are 6000 of them working on our fortifications. Grant feels secure and able to take the place, and is in no hurry about it. A perfect sense of security prevails here, and things have not that desperate look they had at a distance. Probably the rebels will give in when their provisions are done. We can afford to wait for them. Our present business is to keep them in. There is again a rumor that they have surrendered. Can't believe it however. The bombardment has not been going on for the last twelve hours for some reason but I don't know why. We miss the sound of the mortars very much.

This large army is very healthy for such a place and time of year. There are very few sick men in our regiment, and less in the others than usual. You will probably hear of the taking of the place through the papers long before I can send you word. As to taking it, no one appears to have a doubt, and if it is not done it will be by design that they are let slip. We will probably have a few days rest in our present camp. I have set up my desk again and will try to get a lot of work done that has got behind during our travels. Willie and Johnny are well.

I hear that a boat has arrived with a mail for us, and our postmaster has gone down to see after it. It will now be as rare to get a mail as it was during our Virginia travels. It is getting to be a good while since I have heard from you dear. I hope to hear of your being well when I do get word.

I shall have to close now and go to work. I enclose you something I wrote coming down in the boat, but forgot to put in my last letter. With much love I remain.

Yours affectionately

William