My dear Jane,

I did not expect to have so much time to write to you so soon, but you see how often things turn out a great deal better than we could reasonably expect. To be sure our time is as precious as ever and we have as much business to do as ever, but in such hot weather no one can do it. It is a little warmer than ever I experienced before, and that is the reason why I am now writing. I tried to work all day yesterday, but accomplished so little that I might as well have let it alone. In the evening it moderates and one can then do a little. I announced my determination not to work any today after dinner till dark, and then I know that I can do more from dark till midnight than I could do in the whole day. It takes about half ones time to wipe off the sweat and brush away the insects. Such a place for insects I never saw. Here they are of all kinds, large and small in the greatest abundance.

I have just had dinner and have gone out into the woods and located myself under a large shady tree to spend the afternoon—probably to take a nap, but I brought a sheet of paper along so that you might have part of my afternoons siesta. You are beginning to be appreciated in my mind with a sheet of clean paper now, probably because it is the only way in which I can talk with you.

And now that I have commenced dear, I find that I have very little to say that I have not already said at some previous time, and I don't want to tire you with repetitions. As to news I can send you none. I never was so long in place without hearing—more. Even of camp rumors there are none, for which strange circumstance there are probably two causes. First the heat has destroyed the energy of the originators of them, and secondly everyone knows that all sources of information are cut off from us, and nothing would be believed that we did not see.

What would strike you as most remarkable at a place like this, with an enemy in the city before us, made desperate by want, and a force behind us with one of their best generals trying to relieve them, is the perfect sense of ease and security exhibited by all. This probably arises from the knowledge we all have from observation of the means at our command for protecting ourselves or injuring our enemy. Perhaps a better place for making defense against an attack could not be found. Whether the rebels in the city have surrendered or not we do not know, but the bombardment has ceased. You will probably not receive this till the affair is all over anyhow, as I learn that no information or letters are allowed to leave the lines. This is all very well if it is
strictly so and probably there are good reasons for it. The result to you will be a long delay and then a number of letters all at once. I don't know whether information is also prohibited from coming in, but presume it is, as none of us have received a letter or paper since we came here. Our division has to move tomorrow about three miles farther on to the right, to a very rough and hilly piece of ground. The colonel says the roughest we have seen is a meadow compared to it. There we are to construct lines of rifle pits. The worst feature will be the want of water, of which there is none, but arrangements are in making to haul it to us. The men will take it pretty hard to dig in such hot weather, but I presume the work will be done during the night. A white man could not work out under such a sun for an hour. You can have some idea of the heat when I tell you that sitting still out here in my shirt and pants the sweat is running off me so that I have to keep a sheet of blotting paper under my hand to keep the letter dry. There is some appearance of rain, which may come and cool the atmosphere for a while. I hear one of the Mercer Co. songs, the cooing of the dove. This same cooing was strangely mixed the other day with the screaming and explosion of the shells from our batteries. The men have gone to work and fixed themselves up as though they were to remain here all summer. They will however have to abandon their booths and bowers tomorrow and commence in a new place. Some of them have dug caves in the shady sides of the high banks of earth, and lining them with twigs and leaves have very comfortable dens. The health of the troops is very good as far as I can see. There are only five in our hospital. Our regiment numbers only 425 men present for duty now, but there are a good many more than that. Those that are detached like Willie and I, are not counted in. Willie and Johnny are well. This is a very different place for spending the summer in from Kentucky where we expected to be, but if we are accomplishing more I am perfectly satisfied. I can stand it as long and as well as any of the rest. You know I like hot weather better than cold, though this is the first time I ever went south for a summer trip. There is a general expectation, but I don't know on what ground it is based, that when this affair in over, we will return to Kentucky. If so you shall have a chance to come down and see us yet. Women are not allowed inside this department. I suppose it is hot enough without them.

I hope you are getting along finely now. I shall think so till I hear otherwise, and I know you will tell me everything when you write. You had better not write oftener than once a week, and even not so frequently as that unless it is very convenient for you to do so, for it is not likely that we could get a mail oftener than that under the most favorable circumstances. I am merely writing to pass the time and amuse myself, and if you fail
to get a few such letters it will be of no consequence, whereas as yours have the home news condensed in them I should not take to miss any of them. There need be no change in the directions last given you to bring them here, and perhaps before I could advise you of any we might be gone somewhere else.

I suppose this will be called a letter, and it bears the appearance of one, but it will bother you to get any information out of it, for I can't imagine what I had to say in it. But you know that in writing to you I can blather in a good while without saying much, and leave it to you to make sense out of it if you can. You may scold me for it if you like, I'll just go on till experience comes and teaches me better. I don't think I am getting a bit more sober or settled dear, although you know the army and navy are strongly recommended for doing so with hard cases. I believe I am incurable, unless you study out some plan for me by the time I get back. But perhaps dear you are like me in one thing and that is I like you better just as you are, and don't want to find any great change in you. I still think of you as my dear patient wife, that loved me so well and spoiled me so much, forgiving and loving again no matter how much I provoked her. I believe I have not changed darling unless to love you more, and I only wish to prove it to you. I hoped to close without any of this, but could not love, it comes over me irresistibly and makes my hand tremble and my throat choke to think this is going to you, and if words would only come right I could say volumes more, but they could not even then express the half of what I think of you or what you deserve from.

Your affectionate husband

William