

Camp of 3d. Brigade
Rear of Vicksburg
June 21. 1863

My dear Jane

I had been promising myself the pleasure of writing to you to day, but here it is now tattoo and I am only beginning. I have managed to waste the day far better than I anticipated. This has been the first Sabbath that I have had a good rest for a good while past. We had either been on the march or issuing clothing, rations or doing something else as busily as any other day. But to day I had nothing at all to do. There was to be sure, plenty of work on hand, for our old quartermasters business is still unsettled, but the Lieut. does not expect us to do writing or accounts on Sabbath, but only such work as special orders or movements make absolutely necessary. I worked till twelve o'clock last night - not because it was necessary, but because it was so hot during the day that I had not the energy to sit up, so I spread my blanket in the shade and lounged the afternoon away. As it became cool in the evening I felt more like doing something and so went to work to make out a regular days work after all. I slept the better of it, but did not wake up at reveille and the Lieut. did not wake me, so I got sleeping till breakfast time. Well after breakfast I went out into the country to see a lady. But she had sent me an invitation two days before. It looks strange don't it? But it is so. It was away beyond some of the hills where the 1st Brigade was encamped. The 36th Mass. that used to be in our brigade is encamped on the farm, and shortly after they arrived there she inquired if there were any Philadelphians among Burnside's men. Lawrence our old Wagon master was there and said he thought there was. She asked him to try to get me to come over and see if I could not tell her something about her relatives in Phila.; as she had heard nothing from them since the war commenced. I thought her chances for my knowing her relatives among such a number of people were very small. But having nothing to do I took a walk over there and called on her. She introduced me to her husband Mr. Pender. Her maiden name was Lexton and I knew her brother for the last twenty years, ever since I went to Leech Co's but have not seen him since I left Philad. He has a dry goods store in Market St. The firm is Sexton Seal & Swearingen. She has not been able to get any letters to or from there since the rebellion began. I could give her no later news than she had. She wanted me to mail a letter for her in our bag, but I am not that green. No citizen's letter should go in our mail. I don't suppose it would have contained any information of use to the enemy, but I did not want to have any hand in any such business. I offered to send any proper kind of word for her through George, and promised to let her know

anything I considered proper in return if we remained here long enough. But I think her chance for hearing anything through that channel was very poor. I pitied her fix, but could not do anything to help it. It is one of the blessings of secession that these folks are enjoying. She says she would leave here if she could and go back to Phila. But she can't get away for want of money - has plenty of confederate money but it won't go on the Mississippi for fare. The family was wealthy - had a large plantation, plenty of stock and niggers, but all was taken in one day by our men. They are destitute now. She has been living here twelve years, ever since she was married. She appears to be a lady. She is doing her own work now, but can't do it very well I should think, from the appearance of the house. Her youngest child about two years of age got cross & she did not know how to please him. It annoyed her very much and she confessed she had never nursed him till last week. I took charge of him and with a few buttons I had in my pocket, got him all right in a few minutes. He wanted to come along with me. She had on an old calico dress. She had to send to Montgomery for it and paid \$40. for it there. Her children are barefooted and she says shoes for them cannot be purchased at any price. Her husband professes to be a Union man, but I would not like to trust him on that question if the rebels were the strongest here. This is only a fair specimen they tell me of the benefits of secession as far as they have tried it. Mrs. Pender tells me that she thinks Vicksburg can hold out for three or four weeks longer as far as provisions are concerned. She says they never had very large stores there, but enough to do till now, and by great care they might be made to go a few weeks farther. As we kill some every day there are less to feed and the longer they can hold out. She tells me the hot weather has not commenced yet. If this is so it must get nearly hot enough to boil water. I never felt such hot weather before in my life. Some and that some is a great many of our men have taken off their trousers and go about in their drawers.

Well I have made a long story about my visit and it don't amount to much, but it is so seldom we see a woman any more that an invitation to go and see one is a great thing here. Well after staying there an hour or two I had to start back again. I can't say much on Southern hospitality for I lost my dinner by the operation. They never asked me to take dinner with them. But I think they are pretty badly off to get one for themselves now. I made up for it pretty well on my way back, by getting into a cane brake and among a lot of very fine blackberries. I ate all I could hold and had to leave as many more. There are large savannahs of canes growing all round here - they are the canes we get for fishing poles in the North. Some of them are 30 feet high. I saw a good many lizards running among them, but no

alligators, although they are found here too. They don't come ashore in any great numbers till August.

Since I wrote last the bombardment has again commenced. On Saturday morning it opened about three o'clock with greater fury than ever before. We opened with 100 large guns from one hill, and I know not how many from other points, besides the gun boats, throwing their great 200 lb. shells every few minutes. We could hear their roar above all the other noise. It has been kept up ever since, but now slackened since the middle of the day. A large gun is fired about every time I write a line of this letter, and this is about the rate they shoot both day and night, except in the cool of the evening and morning when they go too rapidly to be counted.

Lieut Drenner called to see me in the afternoon a little while after I returned. He spent the afternoon with us and took supper here. His regiment is about three miles off. This was why I did not get commencing your letter till dark.

The most important thing that happened since I wrote you last was the arrival of a mail. This proves that we are allowed to receive what letters come for us, and our division post master tells me that it goes away too. By this mail I received your 22 & 23 of the 5th and 8th June. I was very glad to hear from you once more dear, and more so because it was then so unexpected. I shall have to devote a large part of this sheet at answering them they are so large and full. If this war lasts ten years it will make you the best letter writer in Mercer Co. if you go on improving so. Well I sympathize with you at your want of success with your dahlias, but you must attribute their bad growth to the dry weather and not to me, for if they don't grow for you they won't for me or any one else. I am obliged to Mr. Floyd & Miss Kenah for their visit and compliments, but shall dispense with their love as I am not a widower yet. As to the young and handsome ladies that have been inquiring about me you must I think be either mistaken, or they have come there since I left, for I saw none when I used to live there.

As to old Lightner and the threshing machine I think you may as well keep it unless he pays the \$100.00 for it. He will give it if he wants it. If I had asked him only \$50. he would have offered \$25. Besides he can't get one like it for \$150. now. All things of that kind have raised to nearly double. I don't care a great deal about selling it anyhow, and would not take a cent less for it, from any one if I was there. I would not advise you to bother about advertising it for sale or take any trouble about it. It will be a very useful thing yet if we have any threshing to do and it is paid for.

It is curious how the letters pass each other on the way. I was not aware 56 & 58 were missing till you mentioned having

received them in this last letter. Your No. 19 has never come yet.

I answered all Jos. Kirkpatrick's letters. The last one I got from him was on 31st May. It was dated 2d May, but from the incompleteness of the directions it had probably travelled all over the Corps before it came to our brigade. I answered it the same day. Has he received the answer yet? I have answered all letters except Pringle's last one. I don't remember whether I told you to direct "Via Cincinnati" again or not. If not please do so. Your last two were mailed on 6th & 9th of June and went to Cairo I see by a mark stamped by the P. O. there on the back of them. They were nine days coming from there to the regiment - I just got this far when a large miller flew into the candle and put it out. We had no matches, I went out, but saw no lights burning anywhere, all were in bed and our guards have no fire in this place to keep them warm, so I had to give up and go to bed and now I am finishing in the morning. I had heard of James Nelson's return from his brother who was home on a furlough. They made a great fuss over the return of the regiment in Pitts and New Castle.

It is true I might have been home now if I had gone with them. So one might think dear. That if has to be put in. But facts do not admit of ifs. How do you know I would have got back if I had gone with them. How many of them have got back? I well remember some of them who never will return. I might have done it then, but now after having seen the difference I could not go into such a regiment. But apart from that, how can a man come home and sit down now, more than nine months ago? Is the work done? Is the country safe? Do not the same reasons exist and the same calls speak to him till it is finished? I could not feel satisfied in coming home without bringing peace with me. I can not consider that I have a home while an armed rebel stands out against us. No one knows how long he will have a home while our enemies remain unsubdued. And in the southern states we should make the war. Home guard and Union League are very well for old men and boys. They are in the right place, but the men should meet the enemy in their own ground and not by staying at home inviting him there to attack them. If they ever see their homes invaded they will see things in a different light. I would go cheerfully to the South pole to keep the rebels from coming into our county and seeing you in the predicament I see their wives in here. I have not nor cannot tell you half the horrors of it. If Mr. Whitten is satisfied with his course, I am with mine. If he is doing more good there then it is all right. We need not complain. When it is all over and we are all gone, our children may have to settle the matter as to who has the best title to their peaceful homes, and as to whose forefathers did most to

secure it for them. I will leave it to them and posterity. We have enemies enough here without making any at home. But I am forgetting to answer your letters again.

I don't think the business at the mill has been improving. You may let Siss imagine that her roses have come or not as you please. I am as much obliged to her for the intention, and you have sent their perfume in the letter.

The stockings have not come dear. George has written advising me that he has sent his too, so that if they all come I shall be well supplied. I began to think that I would get none that way, and bought two pairs of socks at Cairo. But I see they won't last long, they are too thin to stand much marching. I am very much obliged to you for your charitable wish that Morgan would capture me. That would be a good joke. He will have to come a good ways to do it now. Very few captures are made here. The people here on both sides look more in earnest - captures are few - they fight to kill, and never parole except on a march, and even then a parole is a dangerous thing to start off with. I like the Western style of war. It looks like war. But I will reserve for another letter a fuller description of that and our mode of doing business here, as well as a description of our fortifications. I am glad your health has improved, but it is very unfortunate that just then you have to go to work again, and I fear you will soon make yourself worse. Can't you let things stand till Lib comes back? I would not sell old Lucy. You should not feed her so much. It will only take a ton of hay and sixty bushels of oats to feed her during the six winter months. That is plenty for a horse that stands out in the open air all winter, and they thrive when they get that. Our horses look well and did not get that much. 14 pounds of hay and 12 pounds of oats a day is a full ration for a horse to work on. I shall not be able to give you much information to enable you to answer the peoples questions regarding their sons. They should write for themselves. You can as a general thing tell them they are well or I would mention it. There are none sick that I know of now. You know I have quit particularizing for a long time. It is as well to let every one send home what word suits himself. Gill's son particularly so. You may say they are well. The one in Co. C. is well I believe. The other one is fit for duty I believe, but you must not say any more. When I was in the hospital for those few days at Newport News I had to dress his privates every day for Syphilis. He had it badly, and though he is able to keep up with us now he will never be a sound man as long as he lives. If word gets back of what is wrong with him he will probably blame me for sending it as I was the only one then that knew what was the matter with him, although others have found out since. So you see the folks might be as well without hearing from their boys from me. Some old

elders would hardly thank me for telling them that their sons were the best card players and swearers in the regt. Dillinger's son is well, fat, greasy and dirty. He is cook for Co. E.. Ad. Gilfillan is doing well. He is improving and will turn out a good boy. He makes a very good soldier. He keeps very quiet now, and minds his own business. I have not heard how Joe Moore is getting for a long time. I believe the only one I mentioned lately was his son Newton who jumped into the Mississippi and saved a drowning man. He did it promptly and well and it was a kind of thing I liked to mention. They are mistaken about my having more time to write than they have. Except on a march, and then we are just on equal terms for time, they all have a great deal more time than me. The fault is not want of time anyhow.

As to finding out Joseph I think this is the wrong direction. If he is in the 1st. Penn. it is among the reserves and is near Washington. They are not here. The only Penn. regiments here are the 45th, 50th, 57th & 100th. A letter directed to any soldier will reach him if directed to Washington with the number of his regiment and State plainly written on it. But if he wanted to write or send word to his mother he knows where to send to without her hunting him up to tell her. I think I could do your cooking now, but probably you would hardly fancy the style. I am getting rusty at it however, for since I came to Lt. Justice I have quit. We have a man who does all the cooking and we never go near the fire or look after it. As to washing dishes we make very little of that to. We have only one plate, and no dish pan. We sometimes clean it off if very dirty with a piece of paper. Our tin cup is never washed. This is the rule. But they appear never to get any dirtier. In our mess which is an exception the old cook has his dish water warming while we are eating, and he goes through all the ceremonies the women do at home, although I would as soon see them go unwashed as to see the drying with the dish cloth that he sometimes uses. But any one that can't eat his "peck of dirt" has no business here, and we get such an appetite in a short time that all these small matters are overlooked. I find that the appetite is the most important part. The dirt don't give dyspepsia.

Mr. Brown returned late last night. He brought news of a raid of rebels into Pennsylvania. There is a chance for the invincible militia and home guards to fight at home now. What have the Union Leagues been doing to let them come right at them. I still go in for coming this way to keep them off. Always make the war in the enemy's country if you want to hurt him badly. The rebels understand that and are itching to get into some fertile country where they can make a living. In Virginia I am sure they can't. Tennessee and Mississippi are the same. There is a mail in too, but has not reached our quarters yet. If I get two more letters from you it will take me all day to answer them without

attending to my neighbors, and I have plenty of writing on hand, without touching a letter. Tell Jos. Kirk to send no more papers. It is not worth while taking the trouble when I can't get them. I only received one. I got none from Phila. or Pittsburgh either although I believe they send them. I am sorry for the folks there if they are too busy to write. I would not like to work that hard any more. Soldiering is not so confining you see. I hope you won't get so busy dear. Johnny and Willie are very well and appear to be enjoying themselves as well as any one.

I have just a little scolding to give you for flattering me so much. You had it in here and there through your letters in so many places that I could not stop to complain every time, but will just do it all at once now. You must stop it if you don't want to spoil me altogether. You will get me to think I am doing so well that I might just write once in a while and that would be enough, and then a little less till at last you would find me slow enough. You had better never mind me dear, and let me remain in the notion that if I did nothing but write to you all the time I was not doing more than you deserve. I shall go on however till you give further orders. I do hope we will get away from here before the weather gets warmer. Yesterday it melted an adamantine candle in our tent so that it fell over and broke just like a poor tallow candle. And they melt and run together in the box. This I never saw before even in the hot weather and in the cars.

Breakfast is just ready and I must finish quickly. Remember me to the folks. With much love I am yours darling

Ever
William