Camp of 3d. Brigade 1st. Division 9th A.C.
Milldale Miss June 28, 1863

My dear Jane,

Once more I have a leisure moment on another Sabbath which I shall devote to you. How little we prized the quiet of the Sabbath at home in peace and quietness, with ordinances and privileges on either hand! Now we feel the want. Instead of the call to go up to the House of God, we have the beat of the drum, and instead of the happy well clad families wending their way to the sanctuary we see the war soiled soldier with his measured tread marching out to the lonely picket post or the frowning trenches. Early this morning our regiment was assembled and sent off, not to shoulder their rifle, but the pick and spade - another days work on the earth works and rifle pits. These works now line the hills for miles around. Acres of trees have been felled on every hill side, making the ground nearly impassable, and on the slopes and hills above, long lines of rifle pits have been dug that command every approach to us. Above all on every commanding point our cannon are planted looking like great watch dogs for the approach of the intruder. Much work has been done by our men, and every day that Johnston delays his approach he will find his chances for turning our position lessening, till it is not likely that any increase of force he may have received will be of any use to him. Except the necessary work in perfecting our exterior defenses and conducting our usual camp duties all is quiet on our line. Not so in the interior lines. The cannons boom never ceases. Two weeks now we have been here, and except one day there has been no interruption in the bombardment. It goes on both from the river and from our inner line in the rear of the city.

The last time I wrote you I promised to give you such further information of our position and prospects as I could learn from a personal inspection of the works from a proposed visit to them. Early on Friday morning the Lieutenant and I started off for the inner line. There was no mistaking the direction although we could not see far before us. The sound of the cannon was a good guide. We wound our way around hills, over hills, up hills and down hills for a long time. The roughest part of Butler Co. is level compared with this ground. Here and there on the road you see King Cotton upset. Bales and bunches of it lying around abundantly. From the profusion of it and the uses we make of it, no one would suppose it was worth sixty cents a pound. It was a glorious morning and pleasant withal except for the heat. After mounting numerous hills we came on a more level and rolling piece of country, with some resemblance to farming land. The woods were very dense. The stately magnolia with is large white blossom perfuming the air pleased the eye, while the long heavy bunches of moss trailing and waving from all the tree branches was both a
novel and beautiful sight to us. The vines and creeping plants with which this country abounds were here to be seen in more than ordinary profusion. But all of this the eye soon tires — you want to rest it on the field of waving grain or verdant meadow, but in vain, you can only find the weedy cotton field or the dense cane brake. The ear can distinguish from among the discordant notes of the howitzer and Columbiad, the sweeter tunes the "sweet warblers of the grove." Among the many birds here I recognize many an old acquaintance. The meadow lark and bob-white has followed us, and the blackbird and swallow are still the same. I miss our robin. But time has passed and our horses have been going at a brisk place. The ground gets rough once more. The woods became thicker, the air heavier and a painful stillness prevails. We turn a corner, the wood is passed, the scene has changed — there before us are men and horses hurrying to and fro — lines of glittering arms in the sun — the noise is louder — here is Grant's quarters — there is Sherman's flag — there in the thickest of the fray is Logan — Where shall we go? Logan's position is the highest — there we shall see best. We approach on the side of the hill through a small ravine and among some small bushes commence tying up our horses, proposing to go forward on foot. While tying them an insect buzzed by as I thought, but the Lieutenant's practiced ear told him it was a bullet. It came on alone. zip—zip—ziss—zirr they came, faster and faster, these leaden messengers — For whom were they intended — Perhaps for us — One has hardly time to think before he is thus saluted here — but this is no place to think — it is only for action — no more safety in backing out than going in — so on and take your chances in the trenches or in the saps — are there not crowds there? Are there not ambulances there? Do you not see that red flag on yonder house to let you know the surgeon is there, ready to amputate limbs free of charge — So on we went to the outer parallel. Inquiring if strangers and visitors were permitted to enter the forward saps we were told. "Yes, go in, it's a free fight" — A minute more and we are in the traverse — shall we take to the right or left — the roar of the cannon now begins to shake the honey combed ground, the sharp crack of the rifle never stops and you have to modulate your voice like in a factory so as to be heard — yet all goes on smoothly — no one is confused or in a hurry — long practice has accustomed the men to this, and they fired and loaded, ate their crackers and drank their coffee here just as we do in our camp miles away. For the best view of the enemy we are directed to the right, between two bastions, and just beyond a large white house. By this time I was pretty well satisfied with what I had seen, but the Lieut. was not, so on we went. Passing the white house a ball cut some twigs from a bush over his head and lodged in the house with a thud, another sent
the dust up around us and so on till we quit keeping account of them. On we went into the front saps and took a position among our sharpshooters. No head can be raised above the sap without getting a ball in it - sometimes the men put up their hats on a ramrod to try [to see] if the enemy are on the lookout. The balls sing overhead continually- All are equal here- the general keeps as low as the private -no one cares to hold a high head among these men - they are black with powder and smoke - you would think they are living on powder- the cartridge always in their mouth - the line is long - the fire is steady - it takes us a while to comprehend the situation -

Directly a man breaks the sight of his gun and has to go for another - I get his place and through his look hole I can see outside. There on the other side 200 yards across the ravine is the rebel line - their line runs along the hill and at a point about 400 yards from us both meet thus < - at the point where they meet the men can nearly touch each other - they are firing their rifles at one anothers faces- some are lighting shells and rolling them over on the other side - some throw hand grenades. Beneath these combatants the pick and spade are contending- it is a fight who shall dig through beneath first. Our men have dug in the bank the day before and blown it up during the night, but it was not far enough and now it had to be tried again. Our cannon was raised over our heads and kept playing on the rebels at this short distance. Their cannon never fired a shot - No man dare come to them to work them. Our rifles keep them back. This was the state of affairs when we arrived and so it remained when we left after spending an hour. We had a consultation about going over to the point, but concluded that our chances for getting hurt there were too numerous, and it would not look well to go away from camp without leave as we had done to a place where we had no business, and come back unfit for our business, so we concluded to return. From my loophole I saw the steeples of Vicksburg - the road to it -men on horseback going that way, and ambulances coming and going. Our men would occasionally call out "see there goes another ambulance." But if they would only have looked behind they might have seen our own going too as we did when we returned. But they get used to it - no one stops to inquire who it is that is carried by or where he is hurt - no crowd of men and boys follow the wounded man here as they do when an accident happens at home. We got satisfied and prepared to return. Passing the white house again the balls continued to strike it as fast as ever. It is pitted like a man with the smallpox. Here flies a twig, there a piece of bark, and yonder the dust rises showing where the ground received the harmless bullet. We found our horses - mine was not where I left him - He had got his bridle off and was browsing on the leaves of the shrubbery - my gum coat was gone from behind the
saddle and I could not find it. I found the bridle and we started for home (as we call it) once more. We stopped on the way and had a good feed of blackberries. We got back towards evening, got our supper, lay down on the ground and had a sound sleep after our ride. The cannons still continue, and from that I conclude the work is yet going on. How long it will last no one can tell. Gen. Grant says he will stick to it, if it takes seven years. That is the kind of man he is.

But I suppose you are by this time tired of such things. I have little else to write you this time. We are all well here. Willie begins to get fat, in spite of the heat, and Johnny looks as well as ever I saw him except a little sunburning. The weather is almost intolerable. The thermometer is not here, but if it was it would be about 110 degrees or 120 degrees in the shade. In the sun it nearly roasts. It heats iron so that we cannot pick it up. We are better off for water than some. We have to carry it half a mile, but to some camps it has to be hauled in wagons. We get no rain. This must have been a dry moon. The mosquitoes are in their glory - fleas sport with us- and the lice are getting so fat that we are going to brand them US like our horses. With all these little companions and a good allowance of goats, lizards, spiders, centipedes and alligators we have quite enough excitement in this outer line till Johnston comes.

I hope you are as comfortable as I am dear and as well. If so you will have no reason to complain. Shall look with anxiety for a letter from you. With respects to your father, mother and all my friends, and much love to yourself and the children I am darling yours ever.

William