Camp of 3d. Brigade 1st. Division  
Flower Hill, Miss  
July 1. 1863

My dear Jane,

We had a large mail today, but they have not thought proper to bring your letters in it, so I must do without. If they won't carry any to me I will give them double work in making them carry more the other ways. Here we are sitting in the churchyard without anything to do all day long. It has been a great disappointment to our men, but rather an agreeable one though. It has several times so turned out before to us the same way; that was when we expected a hard time of it, it turned up it was better than expected. From the haste with which we marched here, and the disposition of the troops after our arrival, an engagement looked probable at any moment. An orderly arrived just as I closed my letter yesterday, announcing that our advance had had a skirmish with some of the rebel cavalry. A few men killed and the rebels driven back. Two hundred men were ordered under arms at once and remained so all night but no enemy appeared. Nor is it likely there will. I find that there are thousands of men out beyond us. I had no idea of their being so many soldiers here. It is not likely that Johnston will attack, and if he does it will be something of a miracle if he can effect anything, and as to his relieving Vicksburg it is absurd. It is not likely that we will have any fighting to do, that is our Corps. The Western men are very jealous of us and don't want to give us a chance. They call us the Yankee division. As long as we do not get teams we can go no further, and we are not likely to get them. We did not get enough to bring our baggage up here. My desk and knapsack are not here yet and are not likely to come. Willie will have to stay there as long as so much of our stuff remains back. Our tent is still there. We sleep in the churchyard, but if it should rain we can take refuge in the church. I don't like to sleep there now. You know the preachers don't like folks to sleep in church! We are putting in a very lazy time now. I don't know what to do to kill the time, and if I had I would not like to do it. All that I have done today was to gather a basket of blackberries. They are very near camp and very plenty. You can imagine how plenty they are when there is abundance for our whole army, and the men don't spare them. We use a great many both raw and cooked. We are living very well now since we are in the Commissary department. We have charge of all the food, and use it at will. Mr. Brown, Col. Dawson and Maj. Kline have joined our mess. We have soup of the mixed vegetable like the kind I sent you. We also have desiccated potatoes, prepared somewhat like the vegetable. We make soup of it and also bake it with fritters. We get plenty of pickles and dried peaches. We get tea now as well as coffee.
They have ordered that the men shall have at least one third tea. It is very good in quality. It costs the government $1.06 1/4 a pound by the thousand chests. Besides this we have our old rations of crackers, pork, bacon, rice beans, hominy, etc. We have two cooks now, and they are both good ones. We are said to keep the best hotel in the brigade. We get plenty of fresh beef. It is all taken up in the country around by our cavalry and driven in by the cavalry for the use of the soldiers. Among the last lot sent to us were several fresh cows. We picked out the two best, and gave Col. Leasure one and kept the other for our mess, so that hereafter we will have milk for our tea and coffee. The troops here are allowed to take anything wherever they can find it that is of any use to them. No guards are put out on the farms to protect the rebel property. We take everything or anything we want. We make a mess out of our crackers and blackberries that we call "Slump." They are boiled together and taste like blackberry pie. The scarcest thing is water. To get any that is fit to drink we have to go a mile for it. A man would about as soon give you permission to kiss his wife as to put your mouth to his canteen here. It used to be very common to find the men begging a chew of tobacco, but now it is a drink of water. When the cooks come up from the spring they go in twos and threes to keep the men from dipping their tins in the bucket. If they did not their buckets would be empty before they got into camp. We are getting to look as though we had the smallpox, with the bites of so many insects. They are too numerous to mention. We have fleas, mosquitoes, gnats and spiders, besides vast numbers of ticks and bugs that lodge in the skin and stick there. Then there is the chigger that raises a great boil, and grows to be three or four inches long, curled up under the skin like a watch spring. But the worst thing I have found is a kind of hive or pusticle that is very itchy. The more you scratch the more it itches, till at last you bring the blood. I have had a plenty good time with it. It has got up to my thighs now. It commenced at the ankle. Some of the men are covered all over with it. I was scratching my legs to day as Col. Leasure came by. He laughed at such a light touch as he said. He showed me his legs. He has torn them so that he has to get the shoes covered with sticking plaster. It is funny to see a few hundred men sitting and scratching all at once. Then the lice comes next. Men and officers alike. No one tries to conceal it now. You may be sitting talking with a captain or colonel and suddenly he has a bite, and up goes his pants and he examines his stockings, perhaps catching the offender. This is now our principal occupation. But all the insects we have are not so numerous. We have the largest and most beautiful butterflies I ever saw. Our fire flies are about three times the size of the ones we have at home. The lizards are also very pretty little
fellows and are very harmless. The weather continues as warm as ever, and we have the consolation of knowing that the hottest has not yet come. It is getting now very fashionable to go in our shirts and drawers. The men are beginning to be more sickly. Three died yesterday in our brigade. One was in our regt. Co. E. I did not know him. This makes two in our regiment this week gone. On the way from Kentucky two others died. One was in Co. C named Wimer and the other in Co. G named Thos. Taylor. Johnny is well, and I suppose Willie is too. Lt. Justice is not very well, but don't complain much. They die very suddenly here. The congestive fevers of this place cut the men off in 24 hours. I expected there would be more of it than there is. Col. Leasure has sent round to all the surgeons in his brigade instructions in regard to it, and I believe we have less sickness than any of the others. Report says that there is a great deal of sickness in Vicksburg. There has been very little firing to day - less than any day since we came. I have heard no reason assigned for it.

I am very well dear, and have great reason to be thoughtful that I am. There is no one around me that I see enjoying as good health as myself or who has so little to complain of. These little bites and hives that I mentioned just keep me in exercise enough to have a good appetite. I am the best eater in our mess except Mr. Brown.

Now love I think I have told you everything I can think of about here for to day. In fact I did not know when I commenced that I had anything to write about, and intended to write you a love letter, but as you probably don't like such nonsense I tried to put it off as long as I could and tell you everything else first. It is the most pleasant way I have of putting in the time, and I have spent a very pleasant hour since I commenced this. It is rather more pleasant than thinking for then the mind wanders on and ends you can't tell where, but when you write you are obliged to preserve some order and connection in your ideas. But I fear darling that I don't preserve much order in mine, and am presuming a good deal on your partiality for me and my performances. But I have learned a good many bad habits by your indulgence dear, and am getting too old to be cured now. Maybe if you are a little stricter with me when I go home you may make some improvement yet in one. I can only promise to try dear. It is beginning to get dark now. These are very long days here and it don't get entirely dark till night, but will soon be too much so to see to write. With the quiet of the evening I always go home and sometimes I am there a good deal during the night. I never dreamed so much before. Every one is noticing the same thing. It must be enchanted ground. It is very pleasant as far as I have experienced, but some of the folks dream of snakes and lizards. So long as I dream of you I don't care how much, though it is a
poor substitute for yourself dear. With much love I close once more subscribing myself.

Your affectionate husband

William