

Near Jackson, Mississippi
July 16, 1863

My dear Jane

The way in which we have been living and moving round together with the uncertainty and almost certainty as we supposed of not getting better off had so discouraged me about writing that I gave it up. I thought it was useless to write letters here to remain in the military mail bags, be burned at headquarters or fall into the hands of the rebels. So I have to a great extent given up writing, waiting till we get to a place where the mail does better. Perhaps considering all the difficulties it is doing very well. The last letter I wrote you I had to keep several days before I had an opportunity of sending it down to Vicksburg. At last Lt. Martin our Brigade Quartermaster sent it down by a driver that was going, and with whom he was acquainted. I sent a note by Sam to Sarah telling her to send you word all were well at that date. Between the two you may get word. However do not be uneasy if it should be a long time between my letters now. There are difficulties in the way of getting them that will make correspondence very uncertain while we remain in our present position.

Last night a mail arrived, and I once more received two more of your letters, those of June 25th and 29th. This is so much better than I expected that they were twice as welcome as usual. Willie also received word from Phil. So we are still in reach of the outer world. We also got newspapers. I received one from J. D. K. for which I am much obliged. We were greatly pleased to learn of the success of our arms in other places besides the West and South. It appears that we are successful at all points now.

When I wrote last Saturday we were three miles behind the regt.. On Sabbath morning I went out to the front to see the folks. I found them beyond the Lunatic Asylum. They had been relieved that morning by another division. They were in the woods, lying down resting themselves. Our 20 pound battery was playing over them on the city and rebel works. Johnny was as hearty as ever. I took out some tobacco, a very scarce article here now, and we all had a smoke. Shortly afterwards the regiment was called and there was preaching by M. Brown. He was with the regiment all the time. On Saturday the skirmishing was very heavy. Our Brigade cleared several hills, took the Asylum and the heights beyond and if let alone would probably have either got whipped or took the town, when orders came to fall back and hold the heights parallel with the Lunatic Asylum. When Gen. Sherman made a tour of the lines he was surprised to see how close we had advanced, and ordered us to fall back still farther. Not one of our regiment was hurt. One man was sunstruck, but is recovering. Some of the others had several killed and many wounded. It was

strange as the enemy fired grape and canister through our regiment. They saw it coming and lay down till the storm was over and then with a cheer advanced, driving the rebels back. One of the 33rd. Ohio in Smith's division I heard telling about it at the cistern where we go for water. He says "They were a jolly set of chaps and went in as if it was fun." I found most of the men stripped and picking the wood ticks out of each other. They get full of them in the woods. Gen. Welsh has his quarters in the Lunatic Asylum. The yard and garden is used for a hospital. I reported to Dr. Ludington, but got off from serving there as the casualties had ceased pretty much and he had a sufficiency of help. I was glad of it as I dislike the hospital service worst of all the branches of the army. Three of the wounded had died during the night. Three or four more must die soon, but there are some hopes for the rest. The artillerymen tell me that from where the rebel batteries are they could shell us, the asylum and our camps behind it. I could hardly credit it, but found it true since by experience. They have tried it, and sent a shell up as close to our tent as Wm. George's is from our house. It stuck in the ground and did not explode. We are going to move up to the regiment today, and keep as near it as possible hereafter if we can only get wagons to hand our stores up to them. The skirmishing and cannonading goes on day and night just as it did at Vicksburg. The rebels have taken advantage of all the high ground and fortified themselves, and we have to move them by the same process. Earthworks and cotton bales are rising on our side, and soon our superior artillery and sharpshooting will drive them farther off. Still some get hurt notwithstanding all our safeguards. The Col. of the 50th Penn. was shot yesterday.

I believe I told you of Thos. Nelson being left behind - He has been brought up, but is no better and will hardly live. Wash. Brown of Co E. died yesterday. He is a relative of Dillinger's. Several of our men are sick. Fever and ague, Typhus and diarrhea prevail. What a blessing we are well. Willie and Johnny are as well as usual, and I have got entirely over my diarrhea, and am eating green corn and peaches with impunity. We have had some interruption or mismanagement in our supply train and are only getting half rations, but we can't starve here where corn is so plenty. We gather up all the cattle in the country and we give the men as much fresh beef as they want. They don't complain. The troops have ransacked every house and plantation and the roads and camps are stored with books and furniture. The men can't carry them with them and everytime they move they are abandoned. I enclose some rebel correspondence that I found at Gen. Griffith's [Richard Griffith] house which I would like preserved as it bears on Jeff Davis & the secession movement even before he announced it publicly. One of the letters is Davis' own. I also mail you a

map of Kentucky on which I have marked our route from Covington with red ink till we took cars at Lebanon. It may be useful to refer to hereafter, for we will probably return there before long, at least as soon as this affair with Johnston is settled. It is taking longer than we expected. The worst thing here is the want of water. The cisterns are all emptied and we are using now the water that stands in pools which our horses refused to drink when we first came. We must take Jackson or flank it so as to get to the Pearl river. The weather is not so very warm as it was when we first came, but still exceeds anything we ever had at home. It is about the commencement of the rainy season, and that may cool it a little. The rebels sent a flag of truce the other day, asking time to bury their dead. We gave them till 5 o'clock p.m. and then commenced killing more for them. I have been working at the papers for last month and will get them finished in a few days if we stand still that long. Please excuse me to James Nelson and Joe Kirk for not writing to them yet. I have had no time, and have written none except to you and a note to Pitts, since we moved, and that was principally to take two chances, of getting word home instead of one. If we stop much longer I will get my papers finished and will then have time to square up with everybody once more as I did at Milldale.

I shall be much pleased to see Mr. M. Watty here. So will many others. He will no doubt be surprised to see us so comfortable under so many difficulties, and I feel satisfied we will be able to entertain him better than he expects. I would like to see you along with him, but could not advise you to take such a journey. Nor could you live here. You don't like fleas, but here they are but a small part of the animals that attack us. Wait till we return to Kentucky and then it will be a nice place and a nice distance for a visit. I enclose also some little pictures for the children. I could get plenty of books etc. if I could only send them. With my respects to all the folks at home I must close, and with much love I remain darling ever.

Your affectionate husband,

William