

Camp of 3d. Brigade 1st. Divis. 9th A.C.
Milldale, July 25. 1863

My dear Jane

It is just a week since I have had time to write you a line. I hardly suppose that you will receive the last few letters I sent you, as they were mailed under difficulties that I have never experienced before.

I wrote last from Gaines' Mills on the Pearl River, ten miles north of Jackson on Saturday last, and after a week of unusual difficulty and fatigue I find myself quietly in our old tent at Milldale on another Saturday evening. Such a week I never want to go through again—a few hours on the battle ground is far preferable, and I am sure we lost more men on our return than in all the fighting before Jackson. The worst of it is it has occurred through the carelessness and stupidity or probably selfishness of our own officers. On Saturday 18th after conflicting orders all day we were finally directed to leave the ford at four o'clock in the morning and return to our old camp at Jackson. This we did arriving in good time. The brigade was up the railroad destroying it and did not receive their orders till later in the morning, but by making a forced march arrived tired and worn out at three in the afternoon. They had no food but the corn they took from the fields. We had by great exertions been able to procure half rations for them for three days. We were ordered to issue it and start on at four o'clock in the morning of Sunday. Then commenced a march which was nothing but murder. We marched till after dark, with a rest in the middle of the day — making about twenty miles. It was one of the warmest days I ever experienced — hot was hardly a name for it — the men had not full rations, and why they were compelled to make a forced march under such circumstances without an enemy behind or before I cannot imagine. It is said (but I cannot believe it) that the commander of our corps made a bet of \$1000. with the commander of the 16th corps that his men would best him marching back to Vicksburg. We beat them, but at a great loss. How I pitied the brave fellows struggling along kept up by the hope of getting home again and trying to not be left. Only once or twice on the way did we get a drop of water. Some had just got out of the hospital determined not to be left in Mississippi. Towards night hundreds had given out, and were lying along the road, begging for water. From necessity we had to stop three miles short of Brownsville where we intended reaching that night and making the rest of the route the next day. But that days work showed it could not be repeated—human nature could not stand it—the beasts gave up too—On Tuesday we started early and after another nearly as bad days work came to the Big Black river. They did not go so fast, but kept longer at it. This day completed the disorder of the previous day, and it

looked more like a rout than a march. Johnny's feet got blistered the day before. He was going ahead saying nothing about it—With a good deal of coaxing I got him to take my horse and ride. He was afraid I could not stand it, and I was sure he could not. Willie got a ride in our wagon most of the time. They had to remain during Wednesday at the Big Black, and send their wagons all back to gather up such of the men as could not come any farther. Scores were found lying in the woods. On the way that day we met our mail wagon coming out to us, and while we got dinner it was sorted and I got your No. 25th of 6th July. You don't know how much it helped me along.

I was glad to hear of all being well at home. Johnny also received one from Bessie, and I think Willie got one too, but I heard nothing of it. Your information about the taking of Vicksburg was rather premature, and ahead of time, but has since turned out to be true enough. I hope the rest of the news is equally true also. If so we will soon finish the balance of this work. I am sorry to hear of Andy Drennen's sickness—hope he is getting better. I saw his brother last Sunday when we came into camp before Jackson. I had promised while at Milldale to return his visit, and finding that day that the 16th corps lay near us I went over to see him. His Brigade was next to ours in the fight before Jackson. He came over in the evening with a can of preserved peaches for me. He is a very different man from Andy—he is quick & witty and full of fun. His men appear to like him well.

I shall wait to hear from Mrs. Floyd first. I am afraid that I can be of no use to her in her business affairs now, but am willing to do all that I can. She had better defer writing till I get nearer home—there is no use sending anymore letters here now. I received Hugh's letter, and will attend to it as soon as possible, but am too busy at present. You see that I am even neglecting you.

But I hope this extraordinary state of affairs will soon be a small affair. There are 114 men in the hospital of one regiment alone, and that not a large one either in ours there is 25. Three died this week. Some of our wounded died on the way back and were buried on the road. But I am getting back to our return trip and I must finish it. So returning to the Big Black I will leave our men encamped in a large cornfield while Lt. Justice and I start off on Thursday for Snyder's bluff to make arrangements to feed them. We got in in the afternoon and drew rations for them and had them ready to give them all plenty as they arrived on Friday afternoon. They looked hard, dusty, tattered, many barefooted, many in their drawers only, very few owning a coat or blanket; they came in and threw themselves on the ground. But in the evening orders came to get ready to leave, and we have been at

work since three o'clock this morning getting ten days rations up from the river for them. It is no small job to feed 6000 men. We gave out 21,700 pounds of crackers, over 12,000 bacon, 4600 pounds sugar, 2100 pounds coffee and lots of other things and are tired enough to sleep sound tonight in spite of the mosquitos. We are going back to Kentucky as soon as we can get boats - It may be tomorrow or it may take a week to get them, but the sooner the better. The men are satisfied with the Mississippi campaign. They used to tell me last fall when we were going down Virginia towards Fredericksburg, that that was nothing to their march from Culpepper to Warrenton, but they admit that this was worse than both. I can't see however that I am any the worst for it. I have lost nothing in weight and am perfectly well. I was able to stand the loss of sleep better than most of them. I walked most of the way, lending my horse to someone worse off than myself, except the last day that I rode in ahead with Lt. Justice, and I believe I was more tired that day than any of the other days from riding all day. Our horses are beginning to break down. They could not stand it much longer. I shall have to close dear, for it is near midnight, and perhaps I will have time to write again tomorrow, though I would like to go on now since I have started. Lt. Justice will go home from Cincinnati or Louisville as soon as we reach there. I will write by him - I enclose orders to get signed. Sign the 25th Morrison etc., the one share by your father - send them to Barker Brothers etc. telling them to collect and place the amount to your credit. They will let you know how much it is. You can then check for it as you need it. With much love.

Yours affectionately,

William