

Camp of 3rd Brigade 1st Division 9th A.C.  
Milldale Miss  
July 26, 1863

My dear Jane

In God's good providence I have been spared in health and comfort to open my eyes on another Sabbath. Oh how sweet it dawns on us here though far away, with all its hallowed associations, and though we are not permitted to go up to the house of God as formerly with the multitude, yet we have verified the truth of Jesus' promise that he is in the midst of but two or three who are assembled in his name. Our song of joy and praise though feebly sung in the weed-grown ravine at Milldale, was sent up to mingle with the praises of his people this day, and to me sounded as well as where through "The long drawn aisle and fretted vault, the pealing anthem swells the note of praise." What a contrast between the fine dressed worshippers at home and our ragged little congregation here! Our preacher in his shirt sleeves, and some of his hearers even without a shirt. But what of these externals so that we be "clothed upon with the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness." Never had we more cause for thankfulness than now returned after a march the severest we ever had, and a fight fatal to many, when as a regiment engaged in it all, we have not lost a man. Day and night they were in the front, grape, canister and shell fell amongst them, before, behind and on each side of us others were cut down, but not even one man was wounded.

Of course Mr. Brown did not fail to do justice to the occasion. Last Sabbath I did not hear him preach - we were on the march, but the Sabbath before I did, as our regiment lay in line of battle before Jackson. There he held the usual morning service while our batteries and those of the enemy shelled each other over our heads. There was but one other chaplain in our division that followed his men out there. But there are few such faithful men as Mr. Brown. He is always at his post. He goes into the fight with the men - they always know where to find him. On the march you generally see him walking along carrying some tired soldier's gun, while another is riding his horse. His attendance at the camp hospital is as regular as the surgeons.

If you see any of Thos. Nelson's folks you can let them know that he is recovering rapidly. He had a congestive chill - The disease that is so rapidly fatal here. Dr. Shurlock told me that he fooled him badly for he would not have given a copper for his chances, but now he is out of danger. Capt. Maxwell is improving. John Gaily has the intermittent fever, but is still going round. A great many are about half sick and half well. Johnny and Willie are both as well as usual. I am as well as ever - probably a little better than I have been for a year. My nose is almost

well. I scarcely ever need to use a handkerchief. I am afraid the trouble will return with the cold weather. It may look strange that I stand it so well but I don't feel anything strange about it. I determined to go through and stop at nothing and I must fail a great deal before I go down unless they have harder times or a worse country to take us to.

Last night I gave you some sort of sketch of the hardships of our recent expedition to Jackson, but I did not and could not do it justice or tell you the half of it. But it would be of no service to you to know it. For all so hard as it was it had an opposite side, and there was also a good deal of fun and enjoyment. Although we were short of Uncle Sam's rations yet we generally made it full by foraging. Our mess lived pretty well anyhow. We got plenty of hot corn. We pulled the green peaches and stewed them. I ate plenty of the sour ones and that quenched thirst. We got plenty of fresh beef. We have a cattle guard who gather up and drive after us all the cattle in the country we passed through. We came back to Milldale with one hundred and seventy head. We have plenty of good cows. I wish I could send you some of them. Turkeys, geese and chickens were all taken. Nothing that was of any use to us was left, but we made ourselves as comfortable as possible. Water was what we suffered most for. It is not over plenty here. We have a great distance to go for it. Lt. Justice and I walked nearly a mile the other night to a little run to get washed. The smell from the slaughtered cattle and dead horses and mules is becoming very offensive. We try to bury them all now. I sent you a few letters etc that I confiscated. I have some more that I will send when I get nearer home. I also have a few books, but don't know how to get them sent; perhaps I will get a chance from Kentucky.

About your coming to Kentucky I cannot come to any conclusion. I don't know where we will be. Lieut. Justice will go on as soon as we get to Cincinnati or Louisville. You can go down to New Castle and see him. He can tell you all about it. He will probably be too backward to tell you what he really thinks about it, but he is a bachelor and has queer notions about women yet. If you want to come, he would be a good companion to come with, and would be sure to find me as he will come right to the brigade wherever it is. His mother died since he came to Mississippi, and he missed seeing her which he had expected to if he had got home when he wanted from Middleburg. Perhaps I shall be able to send my books by him. I was out of envelopes and could get none here, but I captured a lot at the Post Office at Clinton. They don't look as well as our own, but are strong and good if they are Sesesh. They were made at Columbus Ga. I have enough to do me till the war is over.

Our business and papers have got a good deal behind and I

will have a week or two of hard work to catch up. In fact I am about as busy as ever I was in my life, but I believe it is all the better for me and helps to keep me well. I received a letter from George today, which is the first news from Phila. for a good while. We get very little news here. Papers seldom come this far. George says he sends me a paper every day, but it never comes. No one gets a paper except by accident.

However I expect this will soon be over, and we will get nearer civilization in a week more. There are no boats at the landing yet, but there may be in a few days, and then we will be back in ten days. It does not look natural here without the cannonade. When we arrived there was continuous firing and so it was when we left, but now all is as quiet as the country. Things are a little changed, roads have been cut during our absence and the earthworks completed so that this whole section is fortified so as to be impregnable.

When we heard of Lee being in Penn. we thought that it might be there we were going to, but as things now stand I have no notion that we are wanted now.

I enclose you a profile portrait from the house of Alex M'Gehee a lawyer near Jackson. The house was plundered before I arrived there, and there was nothing left but the books and furniture. We will try to attend to that matter for Hugh, but I am afraid it will not amount to much. Strong political influence would accomplish more. Col. Leasure will give him a good recommendation.

Give my respects to all the folks, particularly your father, mother and Bessie. I would like to see you all again if only for a short time, but I suppose it is better to wait dear and after a while get home for good. You must try not to get tired of the delay now, as we are doing some good. Another year's work like this one will finish the rebellion - perhaps it will not take so much. With much love dear I shall again close, and hope hereafter to be able to write more regularly even if I have no news. Kiss the children for me, and add it to my arrears.

Your affectionately  
William