

Steamer Westmoreland
Aug. 8. 1863

My dear Jane

It happened as I last wrote you that I had no more opportunity of writing you from Milldale, but I am not sorry for it as I now write from a better place. We are far up on our way towards Cairo, and expect to be there tomorrow afternoon, from which place I shall mail this letter as soon as I land. I cannot yet give you any definite idea of our further destination but the prevailing opinion is that it is to be Kentucky.

The day after I wrote you last a boat arrived at the landing and just at dark the drums of the 100th beat the "assembly." They were under arms in a minute and it was announced that they were to leave. They started off in high glee, except the sick, who had to remain till the following day and go in the hospital boat. On Saturday the Roundheads sailed and are no doubt in Cairo waiting for us. The sick moved down to the landing the next day. One died there. No other boats came till Tuesday when we got two more. The Col. & staff took the Westmoreland and in that boat and the Ohio Belle we got our whole brigade packed. They also forced that heathen battery of Capt. Edwards on our boat. I had some difficulty in getting down to the landing, but it was my own fault. I was not so strong as I thought, but am all right again. It is well the boats came and that we did not have to wait a week or two longer. By that time there would not have been many to bring away. The men were dying very fast - the dirge and farewell shot, was heard from morning till night. The congestive fever of that region was becoming epidemic, and it has been following us along. The surgeon of the 20th Mich on our boat died since we started, and the other two are lying very low. Col. Leasure had to attend to the sick himself. He wanted me to take charge but I plead being too weak. I did not want to do it - besides they had no medicine on board and I won't work without tools. Several of the soldiers have died on board as well as the Surgeon, and I expect more will yet. It is no wonder, when one looks how closely they are packed - it makes me think of the black hole of Calcutta. The Col. knew I had quinine and came for it. I refused to give him any. I gave his son some on the march from Jackson when he took a shake on the road and he thought I had plenty. I had what I took from home and had carried ever since for my own use and now the first time I ever needed it I determined to keep it. It was hard to see the men die for want of it, but it was all that I had to keep myself up and I stuck to it like a life preserver. It would have went hard with me if I had not had it. When we got to Memphis he got a supply of drugs and a Surgeon from another boat, but no guinine to be had there. I can't supply the 9th Army Corps with medicine if the government don't. It is not my business to

say whose fault it is, but certainly it is somebody's, that this Corps has been so abused since we left Jackson. I can prove that at least 100 men have died from neglect - and probably three times as many besides, on account of sickness that never existed before. Our fine Corps that came down - now we hardly know ourselves. Our best officers are resigning & going home in disgust. Already Col. Bowman, Norton & Drillman have gone, also Maj. Goodell, and as soon as they can get their resignations accepted many more. They can speak when they get away, and can say what I dare not.

But we will look on the best side again - we are now far up the river with Kentucky on one side of us and Missouri on the other, and the trees look more natural and more green. I fancy the sky too looks bluer, and the birds fly brisker across the river. The houses look better and people live in them, we see cattle along the shore, and feel as though we had got out of the desert at last. One thing we get plenty of water - our men draw it up in bucket fulls and drink till they are tired - it is a luxury now after such a long drought. No one says a word about the muddy water of the Mississippi as they did when coming down. Still we will no doubt be very happy to change it for better water when we get it.

I received your No. 26 of 13th before we left. I cannot find that any of your letters have missed on looking back, but it takes a long time for them to come. When we stopped at Memphis our postmaster examined there for letters, but got only a few. I got a Phila. paper. He left word for no more to be sent down. However you can direct as usual to "Care of Lieut. J. Justice A.C.S. 3d. Brigade 1st. Divis. 9th A.C." via Cincinnati". You need not put Co. G. 100th Pa on.

I am sorry to learn so many of our acquaintances have been so unfortunate at Gettysburg, but if they are only wounded they will have some chance there for their lives -- Here they would have had none - to be wounded here is to die - The little mounds along the road show that - it was almost too hot for well men to live.

It was all right to put up the flag for the fall of Vicksburg. It is the most important victory of the war so far- we took 32,000 prisoners and artillery without count. Genl. Grant sent a complimentary letter, thanking our Corps for their assistance and telling us to put Vicksburg and Jackson on our flag. Vicksburg we didn't claim but Jackson we do, and no one else can. We took it, and would have had it sooner if he had not stopped us. They may try to fix it as they like, but the 9th Corps did that work. The rebels knew it. Their two long trenches of dead showed it, and [when] the North Carolina troops saw our mens caps coming up the hill they broke, crying they are not Grant's men, they are the Roundheads and Highlanders. They had met them before and learned to keep out of their way.

I am afraid I shall at last lose one of your letters. The mail boat was burned last night coming down. We met a boat that gave us this information. We are getting on very well, are up past New Madrid now and getting near Island No. 10. This will be our last night on this boat and I am right glad of it. I want to get room to stretch myself at full length once more and get clear of vermin. The air begins to feel free and fresh as though one could live in it.

I am glad you are all well - that is the best news you send - take good care of yourself dear and try to keep well - don't be trying to do too much and make yourself sick again. If Lib lets you do it I'll try to keep her from getting a [beau] as much as I can. Has Andy come back yet?

You make a very unnecessary apology about your letters getting worse, etc. Now dear on the contrary they get better. I only wish I had your first ones to convince you of it. But it is plainly so, whether you are aware of it or not. If you go on improving so for twelve months more, it will be hard to find any one to compare your letters with. See what the war has done for you, and this is only one of the benefits of it; you will not doubt discover more. I don't say this because you praise mine, for you always did so anyhow, and I have got used to it. I won't say I don't like it dear, but will say that I don't deserve it.

Now that I am coming nearer home (will be within 1200 miles of it to night) I begin to think of your visit again, but can't come any nearer giving you any advice about it, the contingencies are so numerous. It must remain as it is till you hear further - You need not be surprized if Johnny goes home with Lt. Justice - we will know in a few days. It is getting almost too dark to see the lines, & I must get this done up to night for tomorrow will be a busy day getting disembarked. I might have written earlier in the trip, but I was waiting till I could say I was entirely well again and near home.

Remember me to the folks - My love to the children and a double portion for yourself from

Your affectionate husband
William