Camp of 1st Division 9th A.C.
Knoxville, Tennessee
September 27, 1863

My dear Jane

After a lapse of eleven days I have the pleasure of writing you once more. I hope you may get the letter, but know that even if you do it will be a long time from now. No mail has been sent back since I wrote you from Barboursville, Kentucky, unless it was the day that I arrived in camp here. When I arrived I was told that a mail was sent that day, but I rather doubt it. When the Loudon bridge is finished we may have better mail facilities via Nashville, but till then you need expect no more regularity than the last month. As to receiving letters here we scarcely know when to expect any. None have been received by us since the mail that brought your letter from Paris. I would like very much to hear from you again, but must be content to wait till the government reorganizes the mail over this conquered country. The only intelligence we receive is by couriers sent from one general to another, and as they tell very little we get but scanty information. Such news as has leaked out is very favorable to the success of our arms if true. In our part of the field everything is going on better than we could expect. Every move is successful, and if it is going on as well at other points rebellion will soon be finished.

There is now a great gap in my home diary, and there will probably be many more before this campaign is ended, but as soon as I can depend on letters going home I will send word often.

On the 16th, I was at Barboursville waiting for Lt. Justice to come up, and the troops had gone on. The next day at noon the Lieut. arrived just in time for dinner. He had started his train and left a good wagon master to bring it through. The drove of cattle he started with a strong guard under charge of Henderson George. He rode from Crab Orchard to Barboursville in two days. After dinner we started on, and overtook the army at dark, encamped near the Cumberland river. The roads became somewhat better. On the 18th we remained in camp all day to rest the men. The bad roads and hard marching was wearing them out and about one fourth of them did not get into camp till late at night. On the 19th we started again. Capt. Curtin took my horse from me and since then I have had to go on foot. That day we marched only ten miles and forded the Cumberland River. We stopped for the night within seven miles of the Cumberland Gap. The next day "Sunday the 20th." (one week from today) we started again and passed the Gap, encamping one mile beyond it in Tennessee. I cannot describe the wildness or grandeur of the scenery on these mountains or the strength of the fortifications at the pass. How the rebels came to give it up, I cannot imagine, unless they wanted to. A
thousand good soldiers should be able to hold it against fifty thousand. On the top of the mountain the three states of Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee meet, and a store marks the point at which their boundary line joins. By walking around it you can be in the three states in half a minute. On the southern slope of the mountain stands the remains of the rebel mill that Col. Shackleford burned the night before the rebels surrendered. In this mountain are immense caves. One of them has been explored for seven miles and a half, but no one has ventured farther. Some of our officers explored another one for a few miles, but gave it up. Our destination was for Knoxville, but during the night a message came from Gen. Burnside ordering us to go with all speed to Morristown. This was 42 miles distant. They started before sunrise on Monday morning and passed Tazewell about noon. This was a nice town, but about half of it was burnt by the rebels. The buildings were fine and expensive. We went on and encamped for the night at Flatlick having marched 20 miles. We started at 5 o'clock the next morning 22d and after an hours march came to the Clinch river. It had to be forded. The water at the ford was from two to three feet deep. Above the ford was a rope ferry. Capt. Tyson had a guard there, and only allowed the sick men to go over on the boat. I was not aware of this arrangement. As Henderson & I were passing on the Capt. called to me to come over in the boat. I got him to let Henderson in too, so we got over dry. By this piece of good fortune we got ahead of the troops, and went on ahead. In a few hours we came to Clinch mountain - the worst one to cross in the United States. Words can't tell how bad it is. You can't get an idea without seeing it. After climbing the rocks for hours we were repaid by the view from the top. But then came the descent which was worse, because it was more steep. It made my feet sore the first time since I marched, going down over the loose stones. Our cattle came in with their feet torn and bleeding, and our blacksmiths had to work all night putting on new shoes, etc. We also crossed the Holston river. The troops forded it also, but I got over in the ferry boat. It is a good deal deeper than the Clinch and some or our mules were drowned in crossing. We got into Morristown about dusk, but the most of the troops & wagons did not get in till the next day. The wagon with our blankets did not come, but we found a straw stack and passed a very comfortable night. As Morristown was our destination and we had marched 22 miles the day before we expected a rest, but there was none. The 3d. Brigade was ordered up the rail road to Greenville and started off. The rest of us remained. During the day we discovered the 3d Brigade order was incorrect; it should have been Knoxville instead of Greenville, but they had got there 28 miles before they could be overtaken. They came through Morristown during the night in the cars and passed on to
Knoxville getting there by daylight. In the morning Genl. Burnside came down in a special train from Greenville on his way to Knoxville and Gen. Ferrero and staff went on with him. I got in the same car. We left our baggage with the teams and troops of the other two brigades who had to come by the turnpike 42 miles. Gen. Burnside rode on the Engine most of the way. We arrived in Knoxville at one o'clock in the afternoon. I had time during the afternoon to see the town. It pretends to be a fine place and has a splendid location. Many of the houses are very costly and highly ornamented. The inhabitants are sadly demoralized. You could hardly believe how much so. I saw all that I wanted, Parson Brownlow's house etc and went out to camp, where I have remained ever since. On Friday and Saturday the troops and wagons came in by degrees and all are here now. We are under marching orders again, and will start tomorrow morning. We have not been told where, but it is supposed towards Chattanooga. If Rosecrans has not beaten Bragg, that is no doubt where we will go - if he has we will be scattered along the railroad to guard it, with a brigade at Loudon bridge etc. We have the prospect of being on short rations. Our supply train that was loaded the day after you left Crab Orchard has not caught up with us yet and even if it does it has only a few days supplies. We can get very little here. The farmers bring some produce here, but they charge the same prices they did when they got secesh paper. They didn't know the difference between that and greenbacks in value. I have spent a good deal of my last pay. We buy sweet potatoes, milk, etc. I don't like to send by mail for fear of losing as it had to go back by the route we came, and it is certainly unsafe.

This East Tennessee like the rest of the South is a grand humbug. There is no uprising of the people as we were told by parson Brownlow & Andy Johnson there would be as soon as we drove the rebels out and liberated them. They are like the other southerners, a mean dogged set. If anything a little worse than in Mississippi. The women are all whores and the men all vagabonds.

I shall be anxious to hear from you darling. I am glad we have been moving in so lively as it has given me occupation and kept me from missing you so much. I could scarcely realize that you had been here and gone again. It passed like a pleasant dream. but it will be only eleven months now till our regiment is mustered out, and then I shall not be under the necessity of writing to you any more, but will be at home again under your orders.

Johnny and Willie are well. Johnny is pretty well tired and with this trip, and does not fancy his new position at all. He talks about resigning sometimes. I am again quite well, as you may know or I could not have walked 20 to 22 miles a day. The
country through which we have passed lately is remarkably healthy and continues so till we get near Chattanooga, where the fever & ague begin again, but of that I am not afraid. The winters here are mild compared with Penn. and if we remain here it will be pleasant by what it was on the Rappahannock. The days are still very warm but the nights are cold. There is no doubt but we can stand it eleven months longer. On account of our moving so much I have not done any work since you left. As soon as the old Brigade business is settled I shall not have more than one days work in the month, and we have another clerk, so I shall have fine times doing nothing.

It is so long since I wrote now that it goes quite strange, but I hope to get somewhere before long where I can write to you again every day.

With much love to yourself & the children I remain
Yours affectionately
William