

Camp 1st. Division 9th A.C.
Blains X Roads, Tenn
Jany 9. 1864

My dear Jane

Once more from these Cross Roads, but probably the last time. Appearances indicate that we will soon be done with this wretchedly mismanaged mail. I have not received a letter since the day we came down here. It is a good while since I wrote you, but what use in writing when it is so unlikely the letters will ever reach their destination.

The weather has been bitter cold since I wrote last. Winter does not appear to be anything milder among these mountains than in Pennsylvania. The ground is covered with snow, and the streams are freezing up. I am not equal to the task of describing the sufferings of our men. The descriptions of our Revolutionary army at Valley Forge in the Winter of 1778 does not meet the case. Clothing, we have received none since we came here. Our men are literally in rags; one hundred and ninety of our regiment have no stockings or socks; forty have no shoes; many have no blankets, and when a party is sent out now on duty they have to borrow shoes and clothes from some one else who has to lie in his tent in a blanket till the other returns. Their feet are sore and bleeding. In one regiment there are three men who have no covering but a blanket. Our supply of food is as bad as ever. They try to make half rations, but it is not even that. Till now we have got plenty of beef, but that is failing. After the cattle are driven across the mountains they are skeletons, and there is no food here for them, besides they do not come over fast enough, and we are likely to be short entirely very soon. We have taken and killed all the cattle within forty miles of here. Our last foraging expedition came in to day, having been gone six days across the Clinch river, a distance of over thirty miles, and all they got was 30 chickens, a bushel and a half of potatoes and a peck of dried apples. The citizens are starving. In Knoxville the government has to feed the citizens. In addition the small pox has broken out. Every one you meet has a sore arm. They are vaccinating every one that wants it done. It makes me sad to go through the camp and look at our poor shivering, ragged boys, crowded around the fires. But I have yet to hear the first complaint. It has gone by complaining. They say if the rebels can stand it, so can they.

In the midst of this the government sends word that they want more men, and that they prefer the old soldiers. The next day of the 303 men present in our regiment, 299 reenlisted. A few hung back - some said if I staid, they would too - I could not leave them and we are in for three years more or till the end of the war. I came to this decision for various reasons - for not doing

it I had only one, and strong as that one was I was induced to overcome it. Our example was followed immediately by all the old regiments here, though not so unanimously, and so we have laid the foundation of the new "Veteran 9th Corps." We are to have a furlough of at least thirty days. We were detained a few days making out the papers and rolls, but have them finished now, and expect to start homeward early next week. We will stop at Cincin. or Pittsburg to get the men clothed. Then probably will have to go to Harrisburg from whence we are to be furloughed by Gen. Curtin. We may get more than thirty days. I do not know how to speak of this action of our regiment under the circumstances. Was there ever the life of it? The 2d. Mich, also who had only four months to serve, have also enlisted again. Their ranks now reduced from 1000 to 190 men. We see and feel what we have done during the last six months - we can do it again and such another campaign will finish rebellion. We do not know where to get rations to bear our journey back across the mountains. What a contrast with the way we came here. The men were then grumbling at having to carry Eight days rations; now they have not eight hours rations to start back with. Still we will undertake it. The barefooted men are making snow shoes or moccasins of the hides of the animals slaughtered, and are that much better off than having none at all. A sorry looking set we are to look at now, but still none the worse as soldiers. The enemy has disappeared from our neighbourhood, havinge a wholesome respect or fear of the Ninth Corps, but I hear of skirmishing on our right with the 23d Corps. The 4th Corps is here too - old soldiers under Granger - and the 8th is in its way to take our place. Yesterday Capt. Dodd of Texas was hung. He was found in our line, dressed in U.S. uniform and papers on his person proving him to be a spy. We get no news and are beginning to care little about it. If they only give us plenty of rations we can make news. Johnny is relieved as Quartermaster so that he can go with us. So is Lt. Justice. Col. Leasure is at Crab Orchard waiting for us. We will not get home till near February. It will take us two weeks to get to Camp Nelson, and there we must stop for clothes. That is the nearest place that we can get any. No doubt we will have a hard time going over the mountains at this time of year, but I have no doubt we can do it. The same Providence that has brought us so far will not desert us at last. Mr. Brown left here a few days after I wrote you last. His resignation was accepted at last, and he left at once by way of Chattanooga. I did not know of his leaving in time to send a letter by him. We will not be much later getting home than he will, and I don't envy the man who deserts these men whose firmness and endurance a few weeks ago saved us from being now starving in a prison at Richmond. A less determined and brave set of men would have given up or been

defeated. Willie and I have been returned to our regiment so as to go with them. We are well, and able for our rations. I have Lt. Justice's papers all finished except about a days work relating to our captured train; that will delay me a day or two at Crab Orchard, but I expect to overtake the rest at Pittsburg at the farthest.

You need not send any more letters after you get this, unless I write you to do so, as they will probably be lost. But in two or three weeks from now you might write to me directed to care of John Haworth if you want anything from Pittsburg and I'll bring it along.

It is too cold to write. My fingers are numb, and I hasten to close, wishing you good health and patience till I shall get home and have a talk with you once more.

Affectionately

yours,

William