

Annapolis March 27. 1864

My dear Jane

I wrote you yesterday, but was rather hurried, and must have sent you a rather brief and unsatisfactory epistle. I have no news to send you to day, but it being Sabbath and having somewhat got settled here I have leisure enough, and knowing that it is usual for you to be writing to me just about this time, it gives me a double pleasure to be engaged in the same way. I would like to have time to write to you every day darling, and make up in some measure the want of intercourse that space compels us to keep for a while. I do wish very much that I could say exactly what would most tend to divert your lonely hours, but I always know as I rise from the desk that it is but very poorly that I have succeeded.

Just across the street from our quarters is the chapel for this camp. We are at present in what is called "Camp Parole" or the camp where our paroled prisoners are sent on arriving from Richmond. The storm has passed over, and we feel the heat of a Southern sun once more. Our Chaplain preached for us at the Chapel to day, and I heard him for the first time. I cannot of course form a correct judgment of him from one discourse. As to his delivery it is I think very good. He labored under considerable hoarseness, and from where I sat, it was difficult to hear him. His discourse was from Paul's Epistle to the Romans: "I beseech you, therefore bretheren, by the mercies of God, that you yield your bodies, etc." His discourse was short and plain, and not remarkably forcible. The attendance was large, there being more than usual of our own regiment present and many others of the occupants of the camp. Two other preachers were present, Methodists, I presume, by their manner, and I think the bulk of the audience were of the same persuasion from the "Amens" that were uttered during the prayers. Our chaplain commenced by announcing that we would "Commence the worship of God by singing the 24th Hymn." As this hymn in the books that were distributed around turned out to be the 103d Psalm of Holy Writ or at least part of it I could join heartily in the singing of it, but must confess that I did not do so with the succeeding ones. How could you after singing the sublime lines

"O bless the Lord all ye his works,  
Wherewith the world is stor'd  
In his dominions everywhere,  
My soul bless thou the Lord!"

commence and worship God by singing

"Land where my fathers died,  
Land of the Pilgrims pride.

etc"

Or another jingling attempt of Dr. Watt's to teach David and Asaph

to speak Christian common sense? Much as I love that land, and willing as I have agreed, even to die for it, yet I cannot feel that I am worshipping God by singing about it. Yet books with these songs or hymns as they are called together with the "Star Spangled Banner," "Home Sweet Home" and the like are put into our hands here by the Christian Commission. I should not be surprised at some people doing this, but do think an Elder in the Reformed Presbyterian Church like George H. Stewart, who has his name printed on the back of every one of these books, might know better than to build up the Christian Church by such devices. In fact I would like their Hymn book better if they had nothing in it but their political songs and infidel hymns, and not mixed up with that which really is sacred. Here again I have found both the "Christian Commission" and the "Sanitary Commission." They have their Head Quarters in a fine building down in the City. The "Sanitary" has a branch out here in the "Parole Camp" or just exactly where they are least needed. I was yesterday a witness to the profusion with which their gifts were showered at the Navy Yard, where the soldiers are living in good brick buildings with plastered walls and stoves glowing with fires of anthracite coal. Here they had been given nice iron bedsteads, white blankets, sheets, pillows and coverlets; on racks are white crash towels all bearing the indelible ink label (Sanitary U.S. commission), and this is not among the sick, but the regular garrison. It may be all very well. But I think they are making altogether too much fuss about it. Just the same with the Christian Commission. They want to be too much in the newspapers, and do their alms too much before men. Why did not Christ have the walls placarded, announcing where he was to preach each day, and the newspapers announcing how many miracles he had performed? Why did he not have the five thousand fed from loaves and fishes put up in boxes marked U.S. Sanitary Commission, and instead of tiresome walks from city to city to preach himself; rather send tracts headed "Fire! Fire!" or "All for the best" sent instead. If these Commissioners would only go on and mind their business I would never think of finding fault with them, but they make such a blowing and fussing that it disgusts me. There was just such a set of men in Christ's time on earth - see Matth. v1 and 2d. These were the Sanitary Christian Commission, and same chapter and fifth verse, these were the Christian Commission. I guess I had better now stop and let them alone, till they find us out in the front, and should they ever catch us in our tattered garments once more beating back Longstreet, Lee or any other rebel leader, or give a man a cracker when on short allowance, I will be the first to do them justice and assist in defending them against the charges I am now preferring against them.

One feature about this camp is good. There is a building

called a library and reading room, well supplied with books and newspapers, where the men can go during their leisure hours and read. It appears to be well attended.

The storm is all over, and the ground is as dry as though there had been no rain, so quickly does it drink it up here. Tomorrow we will move our camp to the neighbourhood of the other Pennsylvania regiments, and go into tents once more. There are about 15,000 men here already, and some more will be here tomorrow. There is one regiment of negroes here from Connecticut, and there are nine more to come.

I have not received any letters since the one I answered, but they will no doubt follow us here. Our post office arrangements are well attended to at this place.

Now dear I am almost done. Are you not tired? I hope something will turn up so that [I] can get material to write about. If I don't I will have to commence writing love letters, and if I do I will have to say the old things over and over again.

Please remember me to all inquiring friends, your father, mother & the children. With much love and many kisses.

Yours affectionately

William