My dear Jane

Another week has passed and it finds us in a different place. Our recent movements have been numerous and harassing but did not extend over much distance. Last Sabbath when I wrote we were at Loudon bridge on the east side of the Tennessee river, while the troops were on the western side facing the enemy and a battle appeared to be imminent. That night our men lay in the open field on their arms, expecting a battle in the morning. To all appearance preparations had been made for such an event. Every kind of vehicle or article not of use in a fight was sent across to our side, and the ambulances sent to the side on which the men were.

A long, cold and dreary night it was; it rained torrents and withal was very cold. The men were not allowed to make fires lest their position would thereby be revealed to the enemy. During the night the enemy's cavalry made a dash on our pickets and captured two of them. In the morning however, on throwing forward a force of skirmishers, no enemy could be found for several miles. Genl. Burnside did not advance and towards evening our pickets and those of the enemy were once more in sight of each other. On Tuesday evening we received orders to be ready to move at four o'clock the next morning - which way the move was to be we did not then know, but after a short nap we got up and had every thing ready at the appointed time. The order arrived punctually, and it was to fall back a mile and a half and there await further orders.

The train of baggage and supplies started, and I mounted but hung back intending to cross the river and see the fight. Much to my astonishment I met our brigade coming over to our side, and regiment after regiment followed until all our troops had come over and abandoned Loudon by daylight. The enemy had not discovered our movements. We had with a great deal of trouble taken a locomotive across for our use on the rail road on that side but had no time to take it back, so they fired up, put on a full head of steam & started it at a full speed over the abutment of the burned rail road bridge, where it plunged into the bottom of the Tennessee. Next came the taking up of the pontoon bridge. This was done quickly and well - all the pontoons and planks were saved and carried up the bank. There they were loaded on a train of cars waiting for them and they have since been taken to Knoxville and laid across the Holston making a good bridge which supersedes the old ferry boat formerly in use there. After waiting a few hours in our new position we received orders to go back as far as Lenoir's Station, and we arrived there in the afternoon, and encamped on the very spot we had occupied a few days before on
our advance. Our tent was pitched in the same place near Lenoir's burial ground that I mentioned in my previous letter. About noon the order came directing us to move camp to the other side of the station and go into winter quarters.

And so here we are twenty one miles south east of Knoxville for the winter. The reason for all this we do not know. Every one gives a reason of his own, and they are so numerous that it would take several sheets to contain them. But the fact is, here we are, and Genl. Burnside and all are cutting down the woods and building shanties. Instead of an army of soldiers you would think it a crowd of mechanics building a city. And although this is only our third day here, many buildings have gone up already. We have a chimney and fire place up to our tent, and a bunk inside. We were lucky in getting enough bricks from the old railroad depot that was burned by the rebels. Bricks are very scarce, and but few chimneys will be built in this colony. The railroad cars run past our door. To hear the axes and hammers going no one would suppose this was Sabbath, but it is almost if not altogether a work of necessity, for last night was a bitter cold one, and the men suffered much. In our tent, although we left a good fire burning when I went to bed, I could not sleep for the cold, and we had good thick ice in the morning. The weather has been very damp. A great deal of rain has fallen. Some of our men have no blankets yet, and they are very anxious to get a building up. I do not like the location in this part of the country. The rebels are hanging around us and occasionally cross the river, capturing a picket or two. Yesterday they crossed above, between us and Knoxville and chased some of our forage wagons for several miles.

For myself I do not believe it is intended that we shall remain here all winter, and that the order for winter quarters was only intended to amuse the men and keep them busy and prevent growling. They are living on quarter rations, except beef. That is just about as little as a man can live on, and while we have to draw our supplies from such a distance there is no prospect of it being any better, but as the roads get worse so will our supplies decrease. Fortunately the commissary department is the last one that starves, and now I'll stick to it as long as I can. Cap't Gregory has not come back yet, and Lt. Justice is still Division commissary. He is in Knoxville to day. They are building ovens for the purpose of baking us soft bread. We are putting an old flour mill in [in] order to make flour and there is plenty of wheat in the country to buy or confiscate. We have confiscated all the sheep, hogs, and cattle we can find except the milk cows. Capt Douglas has just arrived with one of our supply trains from Crab Orchard. It took him a month all but one day to go and return. He brings me word of the death of Mr. Holliday's son at that place. We left him there sick when we started. He got well, but commenced
eating sutlers trash etc. and got sick again and in a few days
died from his own impudence, for the surgeon had warned him about
it.

Willie is well, and retains the same position with Capt.
Johnston the new commissary that he had with the old one. Johnny
is hearty too, and will resign as soon as the paymaster comes in
again, which we expect soon, as we were mustered yesterday. He
will then come into our concern as a civilian, but probably will
take a visit homeward first.

It is very provoking the way our mail works. The last time I
heard from you was Oct. 4th and I suppose you are served the same
way dear. But as the time goes round it brings us nearer the time
when we will not need to write any more.

I am very comfortable by what many of our men are, and
besides enjoy good health. We get no news of any kind, not even a
paper till it is a month old. I hope you are well at home. It is a
blessing that no matter how far they move us away they cannot
prevent me thinking of you. As the mail starts so seldom it is not
worth while writing oftener than once a week. You need not direct
my letters to Co. G. care of Lieut. J. Justice – 3d Brigade 1st
Division 9th A.C. is sufficient.

With respects to the folks at home and much love to yourself
I am dear

Your affectionate husband

William