

Hospital 1st Division 9th A.C.
Near Petersburg Va
June 19. 1864

My dear Jane

It is long since I wrote you that you will begin to think I have given it up entirely. In fact I almost have. I cannot get either time or opportunity, and even if I had I do not feel like writing. I do not know what to say. I have taken every opportunity of sending you word of our safety, and that is all that I can do, or will likely be able to do for a good while. Johnny has for a good while been in the rear with the baggage trains and he promised to send you word frequently. It no doubt appears strange that I cannot write oftener, but I really cannot until circumstances change here. It takes every ones whole energy to live and do nothing else. I have been kept on the stretch until the last few days. Lt. Justice was most of the time away, and I had to attend to his business. Our new General Crittenden never sent any orders, and I had to keep constantly on the lookout to save our cattle and provisions. So rapidly and often did our army move that it was very hard to keep the run of the moves. To miss one of them was to fall into the rebels hands with the supplies for our Division, and we did not like to accommodate them that way. Only once did Gen. C. send me orders, and if I had followed them that time, we would have been lost. He ordered our drove to follow the rear of his division that day. Had we done it we were lost. That was the day that Lt. Offut was wounded. He can tell you what kind of a place the rear of our division was. That evening our regiment was in the hardest fight it ever yet has experienced. Never before did they fight so long and well - pressed by overwhelming numbers both in front and rear, they stood their ground, and saved the Army of the Potomac. The battle was just on the ground where McClellan gave way when he was here. It cost us many of our best men. Lt. Offutt I understand is at home. He can tell you all up to that time.

Since then we have had fighting almost every day. There is no rest. We have marched, changed base, crossed rivers, time and again until here we are within sight of the Spires of Petersburg. Last night our regiment was in the fiercest of the fight once more. Col. Dawson [Mathew M. Dawson] is badly wounded - think he must die. [Died June 30th, buried in National Cemetary, Arlington] Capt. Morrow is killed - [Leander C. Morrow, Co. H] Lt. Kirk [Lester K Kirk] is wounded severely - also Lt. Dougherty. David Breckenridge is wounded - skull fractured, but appears not much the worse - Dr. Book shot in wrist. Many others, but I cannot give you particulars. Our division has lost one thousand men in the fight. I cannot tell you anything about our moves and battles unless I would sit and write all the time. The fight

never ceases except when we march. We have no front - no rear - always ready, always fighting somewhere.

We have been incorporated into the Army of the Potomac. The consequence is many changes. Lt. Justice was removed as Commissary. Old civilians are filling these places. The Lt. had to return to the regiment as soon as his accounts would be settled. I was to remain with him till they were settled. I have not been mustered yet. I cannot tell why they take so long. I applied for my discharge and mustere as Lieut. - as soon as my commission came. As Lt. Kirk was wounded yesterday I should take his place to day. But I do not like to go, and will try to not do it unless mustered. It would make a considerable difference in case of injury or death to my family and I shall try to have the muster made first. A privates pension is only \$8. and a Lt. \$17. Until mustered I can only be recognized as an enlisted man, no matter in what capacity I serve.

I have not seen Johnny for several days. He is in the rear, near City Point with the baggage of his brigade. He will send you word from time to time. From here I cannot send often. Willie has been sent away from White House - probably to Washington - Johnny wrote to Hugh to look among the arrivals there for him. He was getting better when he left. I arrived at White House in the night, and he was gone early in the morning before I had an opportunity of seeing him. He was falling into Typhoid fever when I got him persuaded to go to the hospital. He has broken down pretty badly and quickly too. The climate is very unhealthy. I am surprized that I am so well. But I attend to nothing else than myself now. Men are breaking down and dying all around. My health is about as good as ever. I am not so strong as I was in the winter, but that is all the difference. I think I can get through this campaign - it will not last all Summer - men cannot endure it.

You must not suppose the soldiers are tired of this. I never saw them in better spirits. They are in favor of this plan. It saves life after all. Short and sharp. We have full faith in the result. We are always successful. It costs heavy to be sure, but we always succeed.

Yours of 2d & 9th inst. were received. I was glad to hear from you once more. These notes of \$14 are the ones of Beaty. There are several of them. They were to be paid one every month.

If this fuss was once over & I could get time I could write to you once more as usual, but till then you must not expect much from me. It takes all my energy to keep well and get through with my duties satisfactorily.

I promised to do justice to the Christian & Sanitary Commissions in case they ever did better than heretofore. They are all right with us now & the 9th Corps has much to thank them

for. I have not seen anything of Mr. M'Watty yet. Perhaps he has not come. No one should come here who can stay away.

I would like to be home with you today. Very few here know that it is the Sabbath. All are preparing for a great struggle tomorrow. From appearances then the great fight of the war will come off. Grant or Lee must come down. The "niggers" have been brought up and will have to go in. They have not fought till yesterday. They did well - very well. I wish we had more of them. The fighting to day is general, but not very hard - firing steady - very few hurt. Our great batteries are getting in position etc. We drove Lee's men a mile and a half yesterday.

I am tired of such sights as I now witness daily. The hospitals are horrible. Lt. J. was today ordered to take charge of the Commis. Dep. of the 1st Divis. Hospital & I came up with him.

I received a letter from Jos. D. Kirk but have not time to answer now. Please make my excuse.

Give my respects to all my friends. Remember me to your father & mother, the children & with much love to yourself I am dearest

Your affectionate husband
William