

JUDGE ORLANDO C. HOWE  
SOMEWHAT OF HIS LIFE AND LETTERS

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[Concluded]

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PART III—CORRESPONDENCE—1863—1865

VI

In the letters which follow, beginning with Captain Howe's of June 26, 1864, dated at Devall's Bluff, Arkansas, and closing with Mrs. Howe's written approximately six months later at Newton, Iowa, we have many glimpses of the kaleidoscopic events of that momentous year. They deal, as those previously presented, mainly with their intimate personal concerns, domestic difficulties, business plans, relations with acquaintances, neighbors and relatives, but incidentally the writers disclose more or less of their feelings and opinions about events and personalities in the national theatre of the Civil War and their immediate local reactions.

It was in the six months covered by these letters that Captain Howe's health broke down. The months of July, August, September and October almost proved fatal to him. Amidst the relentless heat, the lack of pure water, forced in the many hurried marches to camp in low swampy regions along the rivers and streams between Devall's Bluff and Little Rock, and compelled to breathe air and drink water polluted with miasmatic poisons Captain Howe and his men struggled with ague, dysentery, fever and typhus. Captain Howe was several times incapacitated and finally succumbed and after a period in the hospital was invalided home with meager chances for recovery.

In the previous letters we have displayed the variable feelings of the correspondents in the first days after the disturbance of their domestic routine and severance of their home ties—they deal with efforts at new adjustments on Mrs.

Howe's part and with Captain Howe's new relations and first flush impressions. The letters now presented are more serious—the horrors of the incessant bloody strife weights the pen of the wife struggling with her anxious feelings, and despite a natural optimism of temperament, discouragement and weariness, due to ill health, show in the husband's letters.

Captain Howe's letters, as previously indicated, remain astonishingly free from personal animadversion upon associates or casuals. But Mrs. Howe, amidst her trials and harassing aggravations, anon dips her pen in acidulated ink and with much reason. In the military crisis of 1864 when President Lincoln was calling for men to fill up the armies of Grant, Sherman and Thomas in the grand closing in movements of that year, enlistments were slow. As Mrs. Howe heard the neighbors discuss the course of things and listened to sundry lusty patriots, the "Home Guards" in Newton, and thought of her husband's trials and dangers and those endured by neighbors, whose husbands and sons were also on the distant firing lines cynical feelings surged up in her heart and biting comments got into her letters. As they were intended for her husband's eye only, I have struck out all names of those adversely referred to, lest living descendants or other relatives suffer needless irritation or injury.

Many a passage in the letters of the period covered might be noted or quoted for their general or local interest. Captain Howe displays the same serene, steady confidence in the wisdom of the course of President Lincoln in the conduct of the war, and his dissent from and disgust with much of the captious popular criticisms of the nation's chief are clear and emphatic. At no time during his trying intermittent, progressive illness which finally brought him to the ground did he manifest in his letters any irritation at the treatment he was accorded by those in authority over him. The effects of his illness, however, were clearly indicated in the discouragement that appears more and more in his letters home when speaking about the financial prospects of the family when he contemplates his return, or considers the possible effects of his growing weakness from the fevers which sapped his strength.

Mrs. Howe's ceaseless devotion to her family and her imperturbable confidence in her absent soldier husband shine steadily and more brightly in these letters and because of the fact that the word from the front about him was more and more discouraging, she was kept in a constant state of dread. The test of courage and faith are the periods of constant trial and trouble when dark clouds are roundabout. Those who can stand upright and staunch through the long days with their hours of weary waiting are of the earth's elect. The following passage from Mrs. Howe's letter of October 16, 1864, gives us an earnest of her evenly balanced soul:

You speak quite often, my dear, of our being "poor folks" after your return as though that had some new, undefinable terror for us. . . . Why my dear haven't we always been such? To be sure we never seemed to half believe it, neither will we now, but the facts will be the same as ever. There is no terror to me in any future that includes my husband and children in one family with myself. There is now no difficulty in all men finding such employment as pleases them but no doubt after the war when all the soldiers return there will be more competition but we shall surely find a way to make a comfortable and also respectable living among civilized people. I do not fear it, my dear, and do not let any thoughts of this kind trouble you. If only God in his goodness will bring us together an unbroken family again then surely must all our life be a thanksgiving song.

One must be obtuse who can read those lines with indifference. Such devotion, such love and trust, and buoyant confidence are not the accompaniment of a frivolous soul nor the complements of a shallow person; and such a nature, we may assume

. . . . does not come with houses or with gold,  
With place, with honour and a flattering crew.

## VII

The movements of Captain Howe's Company L between June 26, 1864, and December 1 ranged over at least seven counties in central Arkansas between the White and Arkansas rivers.<sup>112</sup> His letters mention expeditions or marches to Searcy, the county seat town of White County on the north and to

<sup>112</sup> The counties were Arkansas, Jefferson, Lonoke, Monroe, Prairie, Pulaski, and White.

Austin on the north middle line of Lonoke County, the former fifty miles north of Devall's Bluff, to Clarendon in Monroe County, and St. Charles on the White River in Arkansas County about forty miles to the south and east of Devall's Bluff. The letters here reproduced were written for the most part at Devall's Bluff, where the company was apparently encamped when not on scouting expeditions.

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Devall's Bluff, Ark.,  
June 26th, 1864.

My Dear Wife:

We are here again after several marches having been sent to aid in opening White River which the rebels had blockaded at Clarendon 15 miles below, but a boat up this morning shows the river clear and also brought two letters from you. We were too late to go on the expedition to do the work of clearing the river, though a hundred or so of the Ninth convalescents &c who were in camp got there in time. We were on the way from Searey to our camp in hot haste having learned that Shelby<sup>113</sup> had come southward when a message came that we were all wanted here as the rebs had sunk a gunboat at St. Charles &c. We stopped 2 hours in camp after 25 miles march on a hot day and then came in the night here 18 miles further. The men feel disappointed about the matter as they bore the march in hopes of a fight, and there is a camp rumor that the few who came from camp have distinguished themselves. For one I am willing to wait my time and meanwhile do such duty as I am called on for. My company has had a very hard time having been scouting 12 days, but company E has been out 10 days longer. I never fail to go when L goes, and though we have had no chance to get much glory yet the Bushwhackers have learned that the "Gray Horse Company" as they call us are not to be trifled with. On this last scout my men were recognized by that title and I learn that my own self had been noticed by them while in the bushes, but I cannot get a fight out of them.

Company B on this trip had a brisk skirmish that I wrote you about but maybe the rebs got the letter from near Austin. Do not be alarmed if the river should be closed and you have to wait to hear from me, as this is liable to happen at any time. We do not expect to stay long but cannot tell an hour ahead where we will be, and of course I cannot even guess where we will be when you try to make that visit you speak of in the fall. If we are at Little Rock or here it may do. I hope to get money but cannot even guess. While on the trip we lived partly on the inhabitants who are learning what war really means and will not I think be in a hurry to begin it again. There is but little union feeling in this country but a good deal of submission and contrary to my former

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<sup>113</sup> General Joseph O. Shelby.

opinion the people except the rich are a servile people, and will be conquered either by us or the Guerrillas, they claim to be neutral.

The man Kennedy shot in Jasper County was the father of Milton Lee one of my soldiers. Let me know the facts as they appear to the public.

Linnie's letter was easily read and she must write again when you have time to wait for her.

Hurrah for Lincoln and Johnson.

Your Husband,  
O. C. Howe.

I will write as soon as I can again.

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Duval's Bluff, Ark., July 10, 1864.

My Dear Wife:

A fleet of boats with gunboat convoy is expected to leave soon and of course a mail will go, and I only write at such times. The river is all the time exposed to the incursions of squads of rebels and steamboats are often fired into but generally without damage.

I visited Little Rock and returned yesterday, saw Capt's. Campbell, Sennett, Cozad, and Thompson, and Col. Garrett and Maj. Smith. Judge Edmundson and many other Newton men.<sup>114</sup> They all appeared in fair health and it was a good visit.

On going I found the rebs had tinkered with the track at Ashley's Station so that the interruption I wrote of in my last was caused by them. One fireman was killed by the engine falling on him and the engineer badly hurt. We found the track not meddled with on either trip but between trips they attempted to burn the bridge at my old station, Ft. Miner, but the guard there beat them off. The rebs burnt the house of a Union man near, and some Ohio boys have severely retaliated by burning several dwellings. One was of a notorious Bushwacker who carries a hair rope for the purpose of hanging such soldiers as they capture. Two of the Ohio 22' were found dead, one had been shot and then both hung. This is their reason given for burning the building and I do not blame them.

A captain of the Ohio 22' served the Bushwackers a pretty trick. He came with a party through Hickory Plains some 20 miles northwest of here, and commenced recruiting for Shelby, representing that he had captured a lot of Fed uniforms and arms and was going down to take Brownsville and then return to Shelby's command. Fourteen volunteered, nearly if not quite all had the Amnesty oath in their pockets. They had been good peaceable, neutral citizens when I was there, but

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<sup>114</sup> Captain Frank T. Campbell, Co. B, Fortleth Ia. Inf., editor *Free Press*, later lieutenant governor of Iowa, 1878-82; J. W. Sennet, captain of Co. E, Fortleth Ia. Inf., attorney; Felix W. Cozad, captain of Co. D, Fortleth Ia. Inf.; probably William Thompson, captain in Co. E, First Ia. Cav., colonel and brigadier general; John A. Garrett, colonel of the Fortleth Ia. Inf.; S. G. Smith, major Fortleth Ia. Inf.; David Edmundson, sheriff of Jasper County, Ia., 1846-48, and county judge, 1858-62.

on enlisting were quite communicative to their captain and told him all about the Bushwacking and were exulting over the dismay the Yanks would feel when they had entered their lines by means of the uniforms and were boasting of their bloody intentions to kill the Yanks, when some of the citizens whom they passed told them of the deceit. They are held as prisoners of war, but ought to be executed for taking arms after taking the oath, but I expected they would be released and sent home to Bushwack and so am much pleased at their detention.

The rebs are always lurking about our posts taking stragglers, four soldiers (none of the 9th) were found murdered in a field near here a few days ago killed while blackberrying.

How I hate to be cooped up here when so much might be done if I could be turned loose with a few men outside the lines, and my success in horse hunting etc. ought to let me out some, but none can go without such limitations and restriction as prevent doing anything. It would be so easy for me to lie in wait for the marauders while a few should be apparently straggling that I wish much to try it and the first excuse I have by being sent on any errand will do so.

The soldiers of course know nothing of the plans of the commanders but we feel disheartened at what might be done by small parties even if we are too weak for any general attempt (as I think we are) in this department.

Shelby has in my opinion recruited and conscripted at least 1500 or 2000 men, north of here and within reach of us, but been unmolested except when he took the advance and attacking part.

A fleet is expected today, with letters, news, and money for us all, we are anxious about Grant and Sherman. As to politics I care only that our country be sustained by a united north even if they differ in the way of doing it, but northern traitors and fools will perhaps write and do much hurt. Lincoln has the heart of the army and will have their vote unless some new matter changes everything.

You seem to be in good health now, do you think the climate there healthy enough? I do not admire the south quite well enough to live in [the] way we would be compelled to here and the beautiful northwest has too much danger to incline me to risk you and the children at Spirit Lake, and much as I loved that place and long for it now I do not know as I should live there with its dangers, all are gone we care for but P's<sup>115</sup> family. Newton is the next to home of any place and I am longing for a look at my little home there though it has neither house or land. I am not going to save much of pay as it will take so much to support us, but we can I hope buy a home of some kind, and I would prefer a farm even 6 or 10 miles from Newton to living there entirely unless some good business offers, but perhaps my thoughts of Newton are all colored by thinking of the four in it that make any place so dear.

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<sup>115</sup> B. F. Parmenter's family.

Iowa soldiers never find a country that excells our incomparable state and "It looks like Iowa" is the extreme of praise for a fine country, but its equal in beauty, fertility, and natural resources I have not seen. Only cotton cannot be grown, and cotton is riches if not King. My old notion that wool as a staple will be grown in that treeless northwest so as to enrich thousands is renewed but it is not for me to try it. The war has put off that experiment at least 20 years.<sup>116</sup>

I am glad to hear you are satisfied with Linnie's advancement as I fear she will be discouraged. I have no doubt of her active mind being all we used to think it if she is not mentally stunted, and her erratic way of thinking around a matter then approaching with startling directness is her father's. That combination of the slow and active is only natural. Her knowledge of mathematics will all come right. Don't you recollect I was something at that, and don't you also know that my dullness at [reckoning] always vexed you? It is so with her, but don't by all means increase that little evil by discouragement.

I wish much to see Catherine and Maria but must wait for another visit and more peaceable times. My love to all and all to you.

O. C. Howe.

July 13 2½ o'clock a. m. no boat has left since writing and I have been busy as officer of the day and am now up and write this while the Co. are getting ready for two day's scout. You shall hear from me whenever a mail goes.

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## VIII

From middle July, 1864, for the next eight months the country's common thought was centered on the movements of Grant's and Sherman's armies. The battles waged by Grant in his great enveloping movement about Richmond were appalling in their frightful losses of life and the daring advances of Sherman's columns towards Atlanta, while steadily successful, were accompanied with heavy toll of precious lives, to say nothing of the increasing popular dread that he was making a risky, suicidal movement into the heart of the Confederacy. Captain Howe's and Mrs. Howe's letters reflect the common feelings of the people of the North and West. Captain Howe, after the manner of your true soldier, thinks mainly of the movements of the armies in the mass and his confidence in the grand maneuvers and objectives of those two famous generals, and not at all of the losses of treasure and man power; while Mrs. Howe, like all good women, thinks of

<sup>116</sup> The national census for 1930 states that Iowa had 1,131,000 sheep, exceeding Minnesota's quota, and but a few thousand less than Missouri had.

the horrors of the conflict, of the fields littered with the killed and wounded, and of the stricken homes, the desolate wives and orphaned children—yet she steels her heart with the hope that the end will soon come and righteousness will again prevail in high places.

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Duval's Bluff, Ark.,  
July 19th, 1864.

My Dear Wife:

The long waited for boat whistle sounded today and part of a fleet came up the river, the mail is behind, hourly expected. The few papers bring news of Sherman's movements, the sinking of the Alabama, and the raid toward Washington and Baltimore, but just enough to let us conjecture what may have happened by this time. I sometimes wish to be in some more important point of operations but am resigned to my fate of banishment, and will exclude thought of the outer world (except the little world of home) and only write of the unimportant but perhaps to you interesting events of daily life.

The next day after returning from the foraging trip I wrote about, six of us went out of the lines towards night looking for a stray horse. No incident occurred except one of the men and myself got shot at by an officer of scouting party of Union soldiers whose zeal or something else were too much for his judgment, but his revolver was as wild as he and we were in no danger, till he found out at last we were friends. We stayed over night about 8 miles out at a house where there were four or five families of widows the men being in the Union army or workmen here except one real widow whose son was a week before taken by the rebels and conscripted. Of course we kept a good lookout and I laid down at 1 o'clock A.M. but rose before daylight and we came back. In two hours after returning we heard that the railroad had been torn up nine miles from here and I was sent with 50 men to follow them with orders to return before daylight. We started before noon of the hottest day I ever knew and started over a prairie for 3 miles which worried the men and horses much, but I halted for water at the edge of the timber and then we rode on in the shade. We found the trail and learned that from 150 to 300 variously estimated had come down the night before and did the mischief early in the morning and then part or all returned in the direction toward Searcy. I returned in the night and reported to Colonel Geiger who commands our brigade and then to General Andrews<sup>117</sup> the commander of the post and our division. They were satisfied well with my days work. We made 30 miles (part of us 40) and both men and horses were fresh and vigorous. I can make better distance without fatiguing either than any of them here,

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<sup>117</sup> Colonel W. F. Geiger of the Eighth Missouri Inf. and General C. C. Andrews of the Third Minnesota Volunteers.

thanks to frontier experience of traveling without grain and of resting and selecting the times for travel.

I fell asleep a few times while listening or talking to the General but guess he did not know it but if he had known how much I had been up he would not have blamed me. I was waked before day (went to bed after midnight) by the Commissary notifying me to draw ten days rations as the Regiment was going to march. I let the others attend to it till sunrise and then got everything ready for the word to saddle but it has not come and has probably blown over, so yesterday and today I rest in good part. But Moore is sick again and R.<sup>118</sup> is away with a few men guarding haymakers and the work is considerable.

The whistle sounds again and I will wait for mail.

July 20th, sunrise. Last evening the mail came and the whole camp was busy reading letters, my share was two from you of June 30th, and July 3rd., and now I must wait for the next boat again to hear from home. I am pleased to learn that Newton is to have the railroad as I expect to remain near there after the war. Matters are in a peculiar state here, the war is conducted about as the whites managed on the frontier, and I am tired of waiting to see intellect used in war. The President's Amnesty proclamation has not the esteem of all the officers from its want of effects but I think if it had been fully tried it would have proved a wise and beneficent measure. No punishment has followed its violation and men who take the oath and then aid the enemy are only laughed at. The execution of one hundred men in Arkansas though it would have been a terrible thing would have saved many lives.

I do not like to think much about your circumstances without money and prices so high but it is a continual trouble. For a time the hope that money would soon come sustained me, but come it has not.

Nothing could induce me to leave the army but to save you from suffering, but I would at once resign if I could reach home in time to earn in any way a little money, but it would be many months before that could be brought about, and probably I should then only be waiting as now, only now for pay then for a discharge, and which would come first none can know. In the distressed state of the inhabitants here I see only our own situation, fine homes desolate, property abandoned, and women and children left to themselves, only this difference, here the rebel soldier's families have never received any money that will buy anything. This cruel war teaches us what suffering is, and I only bear to witness the distress we inflict by taking away the teams, cows &c of the miserable inhabitants, by thinking how you have suffered and still do, and in fact from the indirect work of these rebels.

The regiment is now sickly and in accordance with the usual management of public affairs, it is without medicine and the surgeon in charge this morning wished the Captains would send for quinine for

<sup>118</sup> Wm. M. Moore of Newton, first lieutenant of Co. L, Ninth Ia. Cav. "R," refers to John G. Rockafellow, second lieutenant of the same company.

their companies, but how they are to get the means I dont know. I only wish some sanitary or other commission would send this necessity in this climate at this season if only an ounce in a letter. Could your society send us this summer a few things needed, or does it all go to some general fund and thus become subject to the Circumlocution office?

We have none in this company dangerously sick from Jasper County, but several that are considerably sick and the worst season of the year has only commenced. It is not uncommon to see men drop from sunstroke. My greatest trouble is want of water except the warm sickening fluid of White river. On scouts we sometimes fare better and while over the river on the "surrounded hill" I never tasted better, several wells have been dug here and there is now enough for hospital use and some to spare and our regiment is at work on several more wells and in a few days we expect to have one. The water is good but from 40 to 50 feet deep and the soil caves so as to need curbing all the way down. We had one nearly finished that caved.

My health is good only over work and climate has exhausted me, weight 125 pounds which does well enough. I hear that Lieutenant Moore will resign from ill health, but do not know. He will not be able to bear the climate long I do not know [who] will take his place if he does. Sergeant Richardson<sup>119</sup> would be the most help to me but I do not know as circumstances will allow that to be done.

You see that all the letter is about myself but letters to you must be egotistic, and I think of nothing about you at home except want of money and that troubles me all the time.

Good bye,  
Your Husband,  
O. C. Howe.

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Devall's Bluff, Ark.  
July 23rd, 1864.

My Dear Wife:

The fleet left yesterday, and this will not reach you for some time, but I feel lonesome and concluded to write though there is nothing new. Scouting parties are daily leaving, but none know of their destination till they return, and I am considered entitled to a little rest, but when my papers are fixed up I shall wish to start out again.

As the cars went west an hour ago I noticed a Battery of Artillery on the train, which is suggestive of fighting going on or expected somewhere, and there was a rumor yesterday that there was fighting at Searcy again. The other affair there I wrote you about was that part of the 10th Illinois cavalry about 250 men were surprised by 800 of the enemy, and considerably over 100 of our men killed wounded or prisoners,

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<sup>119</sup> Norris Richardson of Monroe, first sergeant and later first lieutenant of Co. L, Ninth Ia. Cav.

mostly the latter. Since then we had orders to march there but was countermanded.

We have received orders to be stationed again at Bayou Two Prairie but this is revoked and we are here indefinitely. Since some wells have been dug we have good drinking water and the health of the regiment is already improving, but the sick season is upon us and many of the men look puny. The Newton boys are none dangerously sick, but several poorly, Lieutenant Moore has signified his intention of resigning but I do not know as it will be accepted. Several officers have lately sent in their resignations, but none accepted now, and one refused, the others to hear from. I expect to be able to stand the service better than the majority of the officers, but the want of vegetables may hurt me until scouting commences again in my company.

If I should become so sick as to render it necessary I will take a sick furlough and visit you, if means can be had which I suppose could in such a case as I believe preparations are made for such cases.

24th—I found yesterday the letter I had written to you, and it troubles me much to think it was not sent by the boats as the one that carries this may not go for several days, but I shall send all that I write even if they are old. The fleet carried at least two letters and the next will carry more, that you will probably get at a time. I have found it necessary to be off duty for a few days to rest and get recruited, and feel better this morning than for a week past. The weather has been comfortable for 3 days with refreshing breezes, the nights cool as August at the Lakes, and this is helping us though it may increase the ague. We now get little or no fruit and will have none till on a scout, except a little dried apple which is not dear at 15 cents a pound, and sometimes the luxury of canned fruits at high prices.

We are to have a review of the troops at this post at 5 o'clock and my company will be small, I shall go. We had one last Sunday or two weeks ago, I forget which and it is quite a sight to see several regiments especially the mounted troops, though the ranks of the old regiments are sadly thinned. You cannot tell how much your letters encourage me and I cannot help showing them at times to my brother officers with much pride as well as affection. That picture of yours turned up at last it had slipped into some papers or probably I put it there as I have a dim recollection of hiding it when I had the smallpox and was a little out of my head.

The fact that Judge Edmundson went on the last fleet consoles me a little for the loss of those letters that should have gone, as he saw me only the day before as I was starting on a short scout and probably heard of our return before he went. I will see to it myself that all our letters go in future.

We hear a rumor that money for our pay started down the river for us but news of blockade sent it back to St. Louis, if so it will come next fleet and I can send right back to you, but how are you to live

in the meantime? As to us what we get from Government is cheap as transportation is not added but we have to pay cash on delivery, and we can sometimes get credit for some things but at exorbitant prices, but all the officers manage to get along somehow.

July 25th.

On the way to review grounds last night we heard the welcome boat whistle which told us of news from home and made me impatient of the review. It was however a fine scene, the place a level prairie two to four miles wide running away to the south west with points of timber running into it and occasional small mts of timber in its midst, and the cavalry extended nearly two miles across it. What added to the scenes was the smoke of "Linkum Gunboats" and steamers of the fleet that rose over the timber in plain sight. On our return at sunset found a letter from you and also from Linnie of the 7th and 8th July, but no news of any pay having come up this time. My letters to you do not go very regularly it seems or you would by that time have received later ones from me than you tell of.

I am glad you had a visit from so many relatives and it made me homesick to think of missing them, for you know all your relatives are also mine, and Robert has been like an own brother in many respects, and will always seem nearer to me than any of the others of the brothers-in-law.

It is pleasant to learn that the boys write favorably of me, and that so influential a man as Mr. Grinnell<sup>120</sup> hears of it, but you must not expect to hear of any promotion for me in this regiment for there are too many senior captains to give me a chance, and besides this, though I am liked well enough by my fellow officers, still I am not "in the ring" of those who would endeavor to control promotions here. There are too many old officers that is, those who have seen former service, who would of right have the advantage of me. A friend or two at home could at almost any time give me a promotion if they were so inclined and hit the right time, but of this enough, I have no wish to quit my company or regiment and am content to take matters as they are and be Captain till the end of the war, provided I can have a furlough once in awhile, say one a year.

I have been interrupted by Lieutenant Moore, who is trying to let me have my time now, but has some trouble in discipline with a man who would not work nor go to the guard house either, and none but Lieutenant R. seems to be able ever to make the men obey unless I am present. Lieutenant R. with all his faults can command, but is too arbitrary perhaps not so severe as I, but less discriminating. My punishments generally trouble some but are not complained of, as they are always deserved.

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<sup>120</sup> Josiah B. Grinnell of Grinnell, member of the Senate of the General Assembly of Iowa 1856-1859 and representative from Iowa in the Thirty-eighth and Thirty-ninth congresses.

This time I had merely to tell the man who was shamming sick to go and he is now in the guard house.

A party of 100 has left this morning for St. Charles on the river below where it is rumored the enemy are in force but this is a mere rumor and if true we would know nothing about it only as some of the regiment have gone there.

Good bye,  
O. C. Howe.

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Newton, Aug. 4, 1864.

My Dear Husband:

I wish all vainly that I could see how you were passing this Fast Day. All is quiet here; every store on the square is closed and the morning service was fully attended. There are meetings for prayer this afternoon and evening. Externally all seems subdued, how much of real humility of soul exists God only knows.

To me it is a very solemn day, with the terrible fight still progressing at Atlanta and the destruction of life at Petersburg, not to think of losses of property through rebel raids, how death enshrouded is the prospect everywhere. I cannot doubt the result ultimately, but must all this generation pass away in blood that those coming after may be free, I often look at Lockie and wish he was old enough to be with you that you might be sure of love and care, and then how quickly I rejoice that he is so young that he at least may escape the slaughter of the battle field.

I saw in a Chicago paper that a cavalry force had been sent after Shelby in the direction of Searcy and all the time since have felt that your regiment would go, and had gone, but I do not know that I fear more for you there than cooped up in Devall's Bluff which is by all accounts so very sickly. My nights are long, and wakeful, weary with doubt and anxiety. My Darlings are what and where, in the turmoil of camp, in the gloom of impending battle or, tossing with pain in the hospital? If not to me, all this sorrow, oh, to how many wives all this, until the final crowning sorrow of widowhood.

These are all far from the promise of our youth, trouble and care we did expect doubtless, but not this; for so many years in fact ever since I thought at all, I have been an abolitionist not of the Gerrit Smith school perhaps, but a hater of slavery and of the compromises made with it, but I little thought that my husband would be one of the many who must stake their life against its barbarism. Perhaps it is that nothing is heard from Abbott, and I think him dead, perhaps he thought that Bell's sorrow may be mine, though how fearfully heavy in comparison it may be this that distresses me so now, and although not sick my heart cries out I can not bear this anxiety and absence.

What land has borne such a weight of sorrow in so holy a cause. Armies counted by millions, and mourners, who can enumerate! Ashes

for beauty all over our country, God grant that the nation on its knees today may cry unitedly for help. There has not been so many from Newton wounded at Atlanta as we feared. Lieutenant Hunter<sup>121</sup> in the thigh, not very seriously, and two or three killed who were not known to me. How many more today's mail may bring word of, I cannot tell. It still continues healthy here, remarkably so all summer and our own little ones are very well indeed.

Lockie said today, that if his Pa must go from home he wished he would go to Idaho for then if he got gold it was good, but now if he did get a rebel they were not good for anything dead, and too bad to live.

My dear husband, I was interrupted just here for a long time and see this unfilled for fear it would not go.

God bless and keep you my darling and restore you safe to your wife.

M. W. Howe.

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## IX

In the next letter dated at Devall's Bluff August 5, we encounter for the first time a plump, outspoken adverse criticism from Captain Howe of the way matters were conducted by those in charge of the military department in which his brigade and regiment were operating. He says: ". . . our people are in despair at the way matters are in this department. The whole thing is same as frontier management on a large scale, and it discourages us though complaints must be secret or none at all." His company and regiment were with General West in the futile expedition from the Little Red River starting from Searcy to the White River. Failure of expected boats to arrive in time was a major cause of the brigade's inability to cross speedily the white River. The delay at the crossing enabled Shelby's divided columns to reunite and General West deemed it best to retreat and avoid a general engagement.

Devall's Bluff, Ark.,  
August 5, 1864.

My Dear Wife:

When we reached here as I last wrote there came a rumor that a party of rebels had taken 2000 mules and captured or killed the guard of 50 men near Little Rock, this has been confirmed, and our people

<sup>121</sup> James L. Hunter, first lieutenant Co. E, Fortleth Ia. Inf.

are in despair at the way matters are in this Department. The whole thing is same as frontier management on a large scale, and it discourages us though complaints must be secret or none at all. I do not know what the end will be but it would be better to abandon the State than to occupy it and merely to bring supplies to the rebels.

We are suffering much from the sickly season, Baldwin had been pretty sick but recovering and is a great help, he is with Charles Mendenhall and Cross, my best corporals. Springer also a good corporal is in poor health but recovering. James Gentry is very sick and for two days we had little hopes of him, but he is better now, Daniel West has been dangerously sick is better and nearly well. Corporal Cross is sick but able to be about. Wm. Moore (Barton) has been severely injured in the groin by accident while riding but is improving. Banks general health is good, Burrow and Ellis are better than they have been. Wm. Allen is in good health, Charles Jennings is poorly, but on duty, I think of no other ailing ones from near Newton. I am suffering some from diarrhea which is the common complaint, Scott and Knapp of Monroe are pretty sick, and several from other places.<sup>122</sup>

Yesterday we sent off our pay roll, signed as ordered and I have some hopes that pay will come.

Evening. An hour ago came the welcome order to prepare to march with the effective men at a moments notice, and my time has all been taken up and your letter neglected, we expect to be gone about ten days, but may be much longer. I hope to send you the money as soon as we return. Do not my dear think of blaming me for want of it as I have tried every means known to raise some, but could not. Do keep up your courage.

The White river is falling fast, and may be unnavigable soon and our letter not reach either way, so do not give way if you hear nothing for a long time. I will try and send word when possible, but cannot for ten days to come.

Believe all you can wish as to my affection for you and the little ones.

This march will improve the health of the men able to go which will be about 40 of my company. It is supposed we go northwest to Austin, near which place I have written to you.

You cannot tell how our Iowa people think of their State, we all know there is nothing that compares with it, though a few of us northers put in a claim for Minnesota. If your health is good and you like Jasper as well as ever, we will probably stay there though I still dream of the great and beautiful North West, but to us it has also been terrible.

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<sup>122</sup> Those referred to in the above paragraph were in order the following and all of Newton or environs unless otherwise stated:

Julius A. Baldwin, promoted from fourth sergeant to commissary sergeant; Charles H. Mendenhall and David Y. Cross; Oliver P. Springer, promoted from seventh to second corporal; James R. Gentry; Daniel West was probably Daniel Wert; William Moore (Barton) probably refers to Wm. H. Barton; Baxter Banks, James F. Burrow, Jehu Ellis, Wm. W. Allen, Charles H. Jennings, James B. Scott and Carmi D. Knapp were each of Monroe, Jasper County. The latter died on August 8, 1864.

Several officers talk about that region and think of going there to settle and raise sheep and cattle. I generally recommend Palo Alto or Pocahontas as being the best and safe. What do you think of that? The country on the Little Sioux above and below Correctionville would perhaps be better if safe and as healthy. How would you like Monona or Harrison County, or do you like Jasper well enough to live there, even if I do have to labor at something to make us a living. Can you help in the Dairy or sheep business, or will you learn to hoe corn if you stay there. At any rate believe we can do something that will make an honest living and take care of the little ones.

God bless you all, good bye,

O. C. Howe.

P. S.

I learn that we start by daylight with 10 days rations.

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Newton, Aug. 14th, [1864]

My Dear Husband:

How do you do this warm Sunday? and what have you been doing? You can hardly think how often I wait almost expecting an answer to these queries which seem so abiding in my thoughts. Why I have been thinking, thinking, until my heart aches with the burden of its own dark thoughts.

If I could sit just one little half hour now with you, your arm thrown tenderly around me, how it would lift this heaviness from heart and life. My poor dear husband, how do you get along with so little of home comfort, and not even the pomp of war, only a dull routine of disagreeable, or the same recurring monotonies. Surely if you can not feel that it is duty, and God wills it so I am sure you have little else to satisfy you.

The summer is passing away, this summer which was to accomplish so much good for us all. It will soon be gone, and the end of the war continually removes itself beyond mortal reckoning I confess that I have full faith in all that is written of the atrocious Valandigham<sup>123</sup> Conspiracies and look with much of fear as to what may precede the elections of November.

Would you laugh to know that many nervous people in Newton are often troubled by fear of an invasion from Missouri. Even Mr. G— declares himself convinced that we may hear at any time of Guerrillas a few miles from us and traitors helping them in our midst. I don't attach much consequence to what he says however as he seems always asking for a chance to make a speech I have heard him so much this summer that the last time I saw him I felt like singing out "Lift up your head, you everlasting G—." I believe I have not told you yet

<sup>123</sup> Clement L. Vallandigham, member Thirty-fifth, Thirty-sixth and Thirty-seventh congresses, whose violent opposition to the prosecution of the Civil War by President Lincoln lead to his arrest and deportation to the Confederate States.

that we have a letter from Abbott. He is just getting well, has been free from small pox of course for a long time, and writes sad accounts of neglect and suffering I am so distressed often by what I hear of suffering among sick and wounded soldiers in the ranks that I fear the sight would be more than I could endure. William Skiff's son writes to his sister Mrs. Emerson that he has been assisting in hospital for some weeks and that it seems impossible to keep the maggots out of the wounds of the men. He says his own clothes swarm with them continually from coming in contact with the wounded. Such things are terrible. The soldiers now at home whose time has expired are all enthusiastic in praise of the Sanitary Com. unite in saying that thousands of lives have been saved by the efforts of the commission which must otherwise have been lost.

Great efforts are now made all the time in the direction of Sherman's forces as the continual fighting there makes the call for supplies the most urgent. It is cheering to know that those who labor do it not vainly. On Friday we had an ice cream festival for the benefit of our exhausted treasury and although it was horrid muddy and rainy cleared about forty five dollars which will give us quite a lift until something else turns up. Mr. K—— called on me yesterday to tell me not to worry about the rent that he would wait just as long as it seemed desirable and seemed rather to enjoy the chance of showing his kindness and wealth. He is a good patriot so far as he knows which is of course not very far. There is a good deal of quiet slurring about —— . His company lost a number in killed and wounded before Atlanta but they say "of course he want [wa'n't] in the fight, he never was yet." Jordan of Spirit Lake memory told me last winter that —— said he was not well enough to go with his company when they went on a raid into Mississippi and said Jordan we were all glad he didn't go for we would have had to put him in an ambulance every time we saw a rebel or heard a gun. I have not heard from Kate or Belle since they left here and don't know where they are. I think they must have gone back to New York before this time. There is great alarm in the vicinity of Buffalo now for fear of an invasion of rebels from Canada to burn the city. Danger seems every where and perhaps some time we may learn as a nation that we are in a state of war. I was sorry to read of your grand reviews on Sunday it may have been a grand sight but I am sure it was an offence in the sight of Heaven and I do believe that so much needless Sabbath desecration is one of the sins which is prolonging this war, and will prolong it until heart and strength shall both fail. I wish your division commander was such as Howard don't you? The little ones have all been asleep some time.

Both Linnie and Locke seem at times quite homesick for their old home. They do not realize as well as I can that it is the missing "pa" that makes home seem lonely. I am expecting you in the fall and hope I am not to be disappointed in this. I look with much anxiety for my tomorrow's letter and hope you will not be sick although I fear you

have been sick instead of a little ill. Catharine says that both James and George experienced great benefit from a bandage a quarter of a yard wide, of flannel, worn round the bowels. They wore it all through the hot weather in the Cheektowaga country [?] or Chickahoming. It prevents diseases of the bowels.

My eyes are very poor and I would not write in the evening if I could be free from interruption any other time.

What can I say my beloved "now I sit, alone alone and the hot tears break and burn" but this is a sorrow so common now that it hardly merits a mention although its very commonness is the saddest thought of all.

God bless thee, and keep thee safe from harm and sin. How much need have all of us poor weak mortals to pray that we be not led into temptation as well as delivered from evil. God keep us both and bring us together that our joy may be full.

Yours truly, M. W. Howe.

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Devall's Bluff, Ark., Aug. 19, 1864.

My Dear Wife:

We returned night before last from our chase after Shelby which resulted in much chase and little catch, took some prisoners, wore out some horses and tired some men, and lost several sick men.

It has rained considerably for several days and a regular wet season has set in. I started out sick came back exhausted, but cured of the terrible diarrhea that is so troublesome here. Found your letters of the 5th and 8th with acid and quinine. They will be in good play, especially the acid.

We lost one of our best men in the hospital here, Corporal Carmi D. Knapp of Monroe who leaves a family. None of the rest are dangerously sick. Most are getting better. John Knox of Prairie City is pretty sick. Bartley Courman of Vandalia had a large tree fall across him while we were out but it was so bent that the surgeon thinks he will recover without permanent injury.

I am hurried and just heard that a boat will perhaps leave in an hour and must send a scrawl or lose the chance. Pay is coming soon but my restored health may prevent a visit home. Sennett is at the depot I hear but cannot now go to see him.

Do keep up courage and health and believe not half the stories of battles and defeats &c that get into the papers.

Good bye in haste,

O. C. Howe.

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Aug. 21, 1864.

My Dear Husband:

I wonder who writes such long letters and says so little. Life here, is varied only by the recurrence of the same events each day; to rise mornings, and eat so many meals each day, seems to embrace it all.

To say, that "we are all well and hope you are in the enjoyment of the same blessings", would in the old stereotyped phrase express about all that it contained in my longest letters; and yet, when I know there is nothing to tell the pen runs on.

I have around me just now, a cloud of witnesses—and of what—of the truth, never a pleasant one, that to us, in all probability, life's longest shadows now point backward. Here are three likenesses of yourself—one life like and precious, the others precious but, from the military dress less husband like, and familiar. In all of them there is a sprinkling of the silver sheen, that tells of life's meridian.

Sister Catherine seems to smile pleasantly at me, but there is a look of care that shows her mother heart has suffered, while the image of James a tall, fine looking young man and yet so like his boy face, tells me more plainly perhaps than all the others that the Spring is over.

This thought of growing old, (you will remember) was never a pleasant one to me. Not I think, that I dread more than others the dimming touch of time, but the fading out of youths' fancies, and loss of heart bloom, this is saddening.

The bubbles on our cup are only hollow nothings but when they are all gone the wine is flat.

The great gain of growing old together, is that we do not see these changes in each other, they come over us so gradually, and for the image that we love, we draw from memory, quite as often as from sight. I do hope my husband can come home before he is much changed, and before time deals too hardly with his wife, but joy is a great rejuvenator, and I think we shall count our years backward, for a season after your return.

It is strange, how absence or death invests the merest trifle with a sacredness, the trifling toy becomes a relic. I have near me now an old account book, which I keep always in sight, but when you come back it will be thought unsightly. In this diary of your expenses, your luxuries seem all to come under the head of figs and apples, what now constitute them, when buttermilk has become desirable. I fear your fig eating propensities find no chance for exercise now.

Perhaps you don't hear much about peace propositions where you are, but I suppose petitions for a delay of the draft until an attempt at negotiation has failed, are getting many signatures, among the rowdies of Democratic cities, and silly women every where. What a fearful development of treason is the expose of "The Son's of Liberty," our poor unhappy country so betrayed by her own children.

I am glad that this is a Republican town as even the dullest fear riot, and mobs, as an accompaniment to the fall campaign. If Lincoln is not elected, then will all this suffering, and bloodshed be in vain, and to those who have risked all, how terrible this is. The Democrats say we may make a desert and call it Peace, but would even that be any more a mockery than the Peace described by Mrs. Browning, "That sits at home in self commended mood, and takes no thought how wind

and rain by fits, are howling out of doors against the good of the poor wanderer. Peace which admits all outside anguish while it sleeps at home.'"

A long quotation this my dear, and somewhat varied from the original, but better words than mine and equal truth. And yet how I long for the first promise of a coming peace not for my sake alone, but for the countless ones who sit alone and watch in night that has no coming dawn, but moonless, starless dark, as the dark night of Death. I know from what you have written that I need not expect to hear from you for a long time, and yet how I shall look for the letters. Captain Frank Campbell from Little Rock is expected here tomorrow and I hope to see him, and find out how you looked when he left.

My dear Husband you write often of different plans for the future . . . I dont wish ever to go to the wild north west to live either to raise sheep or anything else. I think the prospect of Indian troubles greater now than it ever was before and have had enough of all such excitement. I never could be pleased to go to Arkansas. . . . The climate here this summer seems very favorable, so the children and I am well although my throat has never recovered from the effect of last winter burning coal with a poor draft. I hope I can get some wood to mix with coal the coming winter but dont know, at any rate I have a straight pipe here that will ensure a good draft, I often wish you could look in and see how comfortable we are here this summer, such large cool rooms and such pleasant neighbors. Mr. Kennedy seems accommodative, and I think will not trouble me about the rent which is kind, as he can any day rent our part of the house for more than twice what I pay him. Six dollars seems a high rent, but it is very cheap now, every old tumble down tenement of any kind is now filled up and filled to overflowing. There are many families here from Missouri and the railroad brings some, while war widows find it cheaper to live in town and more comfortable to be where some one can care for them.

Linnie is very anxious that I shall ask her Pa what books he has to read and what kind of church he goes to, and if they have a chaplain in their regiment. Lockie wants me to tell Pa that he has had the "Relaxes" awful from eating "crabs," his diminutive for crabapples. Nellie says tell him "I am always just as good as I can be" which must be qualified by a recollection of natural depravity, in order to know her real state of goodness.

A letter from your mother says she wrote to you the Monday before, I hope you got it. One word as to your pains about writing of your boys, particularly, if you could see the pleasure on Mr. Cross' face when I read to him that his own son was a good soldier and also Miss Mendenhall's delight in her brother's good name, it would surely more than pay you all the trouble not to say one word about the mother's blessing which poor Mrs. Banks sends the Captain for his kind mention of her Baxter. I tell you my dear, these good wishes are worth something to us both.

Would there be any use to send you papers. I have asked several times and you do not tell me to send them, so I have thought you saw no chance to get them.

The corner stone of a new Baptist Church will be laid this week. Winslow and Lindley<sup>124</sup> have occupied their new office on the north side of the square for some time.

Major —— is expected home this week. He is not spoken of favorably here as a military man. Was he liked at Little Rock? —— has resigned, also E—— but probably you know these things much better than I can tell them.

I do hope you will get a furlough this fall, I think even more of that than the long looked for pay. Don't worry about us at home, we will do well enough and I am sorry I should have written what has troubled you. I never doubt that you would do all you could to send home.

I send you the state nominees, you will see the name of Allen for attorney general.<sup>125</sup> He is the one I spoke of as beaung me so finely in the winter when I saw Mr. Sells<sup>126</sup> at Marengo. I am going to vote for him, he is so gallant.

[Last sheet missing.]

## X

From Aug. 23 to about September 28 Captain Howe was engaged in seeking the whereabouts of General Shelby's Confederate troopers who proved so elusive. They had captured a considerable number of the Federal troopers who were cutting and gathering hay near Ashley's Station; and on the 24th of August Captain Howe's company L witnessed their first real battle, but they were held in reserve and could watch the contest and not participate in the clash.

Devall's Bluff, Ark., Aug. 25, 1864.

My Dear Wife:

Yesterday we had our first battle that could really be called such, and the 9th acted as reserve and though within range did not lose a man. We were waiting in camp and preparing for inspection by General West<sup>127</sup> and about one P. M. I was lying down looking at the preparations, not being well enough to attend the review, when the alarm was sounded and while arming the command was given for every available man to arm and mount and we were soon ready. The enemy were rumored

<sup>124</sup> Horace S. Winslow and S. N. Lindley—the former later elected district judge, and the latter circuit judge.

<sup>125</sup> Isaac L. Allen, attorney general of Iowa, 1865-66.

<sup>126</sup> Elijah Sells, secretary of state of Iowa, 1856-1863.

<sup>127</sup> General Joseph R. West.

to be advancing to town on the railroad, and we soon started with the 11th and 8th Missouri regiments all under Colonel Geiger our Brigade Commander, in all about 800 men all mounted, our regiment in the rear. Many thought the alarm a ruse to bring the ailing ones out to review. I thought the fight was close by and went in command of my company, both lieutenants with us. As we reached the prairie I sent back a few men too sick to go further, having learned the enemy were two hours before about 12 miles out, from some fugitives passing the line, and I also changed horses with a sick man, as Perry<sup>128</sup> is sick and hungry and lame. We saw smoke rising from where haymakers were at work guarded by infantry and pressed on and soon heard the sound of cannon and could see the smoke of the battle. We traveled 10 miles over the level prairie and our advance came up with them about  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour after the rebs had burned all the hay, and killed or taken all troops defending them, about 200 in all, perhaps more.

The enemy's artillery was withdrawn out of sight and we followed them about a mile when they halted and threw out a line of skirmishers, and one of the strangest scenes of this or any war was exhibited. A prairie fight on a level plain between cavalry. Their skirmishers were extended about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile in a single line across our route and the 8th and 11th Missouri, deployed in the same way and attacked them; we following in a column of 4's (a long line of 4 abreast of each other). We drove them slowly a mile or more, the two fighting lines about parallel and 40 to 80 rods apart, when they stopped and we formed in another line or two lines a portion in the rear and part at nearly right angles with the others. The boys had a full chance to see the kind of work on hand, as we had followed over the battleground a mile, meeting several wounded or dismounted men, and the whole of the time everything in plain sight. We passed one dead enemy a few feet from our column, shot through the head, the imagination of some of the boys magnified this body to 3 or 4.

We remained halted in the rear about  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile from the enemys line for an hour of very sharp fighting, the balls in many cases passing through and over our own line, but only hit one horse except two or three spent balls. The enemy gradually fell back and we kept our relative positions. The 8th Missouri a splendid set of men made a strong advance from our left on the enemy who then hastily withdrew his right after a sharp close exchange of fire, but extended his left rapidly apparently to flank our right.

One battallion of the ninth went to support the Missouri 11 on our right and we were ordered to advance to relieve (the) 8th who were withdrawn for that purpose. As they withdrew the rebs again advanced in the center and against our left cheering and we soon passed through the line of the 8th (both lines in open order) who were coolly watering their horses along the ditch of the railroad. We were halted and the

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<sup>128</sup> Perry seems to be the name of his horse.

enemy did the same and we waited for the order to go in, our lines being from  $\frac{1}{2}$  to a mile apart. We could see about 1000 or 1200 of the enemy in three parallel lines the last resting upon the timber and could give no guess as to the rest of their force. This looked a little ticklish as we suspected a ruse of some kind and could not account for the silence of their artillery which had not been used in this fight at all. While waiting I counted 42 riderless horses on the battle ground between us showing a sharp contest for the number engaged. After waiting a while we found the enemy were withdrawing slowly with a menacing rear, but our horses were starved, and exhausted and we could not charge and it of course would be madness to follow a vastly superior force into timber where was artillery some where in wait, so the Ambulances were set to work gathering the dead and wounded, and their side did the same. I noticed Wert<sup>129</sup> of Newton busily at work between the lines with his ambulance.

We then returned here leaving the battlefield free from a living enemy at about an hour before sunset and I reached here exhausted. On our side the 8th Missouri lost 34 wounded 4 killed, and I have not heard from the 11th, I think our loss in all about 50 killed and wounded out of about 400 or less who took active part in the fight. The enemy I think lost considerably more and were fairly beaten by not much more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  their force in this battle.

But the whole affair was I must own in their favor as they came down upon the railroad tore up the track burned large quantities of hay and stores and destroyed or captured several hundred men and escaped with the slight defeat we gave them.

Now as to our own affairs, the paymaster missed one train, the next I suppose turned back and no communication with Little Rock now and I fear it will not be till next week the money comes. As soon as money comes, and if matters are less exciting here and I do not recover my health I shall try to come home for a few days, do not be sanguine about it. I am at times almost home sick and have only your letters to solace me. I got yours of 12 today and one from Father who has heard you had gone to Sioux City on a visit. Tell the Littlers to keep the bugs off one tomato plant for me if I come.

Good bye,

Your husband

O. C. Howe.

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Devall's Bluff, Ark.

Aug. 29, 1864.

My dear Wife:

I have just a moment to write a line as I am to go out on the guard line to relieve one who has not had any chance to come into camp for 36 hours. We have been paid and I have just expressed \$150. to you

<sup>129</sup> Daniel M. Wert.

at an expense of \$5. Will write soon again but boat may leave before I come back. The well men of the Regt. are off on a scout and for once I stayed here. We learn that Shelby's forces were worse defeated at our battle than I supposed, his loss in that battle over a hundred, ours about sixty, but he had just taken and destroyed some three hundred men of our side whom we were too late to relieve.

Lieut. Collins of Iowa, 32, is on his way through here. You may remember the tall trapper who ran against Smith and Smeltzer for legislature.<sup>130</sup>

My health is better but I may visit home in the course of the fall.

Good bye

O. C. Howe.

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Devall's Bluff, Ark.

Aug. 31st, 1864.

My dear Wife:

Your letters of 15th and 18th post mark came in this morning and were of course welcome messengers from home. I am pleased to see you find something to interest you about, but do not let your mind run too much on war matters. We have at last received some sanitary aid in a supply of 25 barrels of potatoes which were welcome enough. Our boys are enjoying themselves and we all riot in potatoes and in sutler's stores since pay day, having canned fruits regardless of expense though I do not intend to dip very heavy into such excess, but an occasional steamboat meal I do take, at the dollars expense. My health is improving much and it is doubtful whether I am entitled to a furlough, as present appearances point to complete recovery, this is the fourth day without diarrhoea. I have had much work writing through the day as it is regular muster day for pay, as it is rumored that if the Regt. comes back before the paymaster leaves he will pay us the two months now again due, but I do not expect this, and we may have to wait again.

I would like to see you and talk of our future course, but cannot and so will write a little. We will not be able to save much and I wish to get a home again. If I return it will be necessary for me to live much in the air, and my dear, I fear my capacity to stick to office business so as to depend upon law alone. How would it do for us to calculate upon my working at anything that comes up in Newton that will not take all my time and earn enough to keep a hand on a small farm of not over 40 acres within a few miles. I can teach, clerk, trade little, or form a special partnership in a law office keeping short hours and working hard during court, or find other business, any one of which will pay 30 dollars a month and upwards if not support us would do so if we could keep a few cows and farm some, principally raise cattle or colts. Four miles out would not be too far if we kept a team and buggy, provided you were willing to live so far. The great advantage

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<sup>130</sup> Amos S. Collins of Fort Dodge, first Lieutenant of Co. I, Thirty-second Ia. Inf. Lewis H. Smith of Algona and C. C. Smeltzer of Clay County.

of preparing for this is that we could pay for a small farm soon, and it would cost no more than a poor house and lot in town, and be of much more value for a means of living and also be better for you in case of my not returning.

I am willing when again at home to work hard, but sad experience makes me distrust my ability to stick to business unless I have some such change almost daily. Still I could be content to work moderately at farming or office work, if alternated and hope to have acquired more stability. If you would like this, can you find a place to suit near town that is improved? Mrs. Logston whose son Joe is in my company bought a pretty place of 40 acres, a fair little house, 10 acres timber, rest improved, four miles northwest of Newton for \$200. It was called the Linder place and I used to think it a fine little place. Joseph says she will settle for 300, and I think it worth 400 nearly, if land is raising. Can you not make a pleasant visit there and see it and if you think best buy it, of course in your own name. You can make arrangement to pay down 300 or 400 or more and I will now be able to see you can borrow the full amount of my acquaintances here, and still leave me a chance to send you enough to live on. In this way we can get a home. I think that place may possibly be got for \$250 or 300. The White farm west of Newton, four miles is for sale at 800 but that is too much for 40 acres and indifferent buildings. How do these suggestions strike you? Do not be in the least troubled if you do not like them for I merely think of this thing and sometimes think a house and lot would be as well. I must own that another employment is all the time depended some upon by me that is "Orpheus C." King if you can stand a parody. And the mode I speak of would aid more than exclusive law business. Of course I would not like to say as much openly but anything to you.

Morning Sept. 1st. I learn that the officers who sent for furlough on account of ill health have been refused and recommended to be sent to Little Rock hospital, for treatment. I am glad my application was taken back by me, as it would have failed. You may wonder why some can get leave of absence and others not, but you need wonder at nothing in the army unless it be common sense which is rare here. I may come home this fall but it is doubtful, as I expect soon to be in full health and now am nearly so.

Just notified to go out on guard and must start now. It is no work but I need to stay and write.

Goodbye for 24 hours, will write again when back.

O. C. Howe.

I sent by express \$150.

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## XI

The letters which follow indicate increasing concern about domestic difficulties and concern about Captain Howe's health.

Mrs. Howe shows the strain of the long struggle and relentless pull on her heartstrings of the daily anxiety and the frightful news from the eastern fronts; and Captain Howe's letters give like signs of the wear and tear of the manifold anxieties to which his condition made him subject.

September 19th, 1864.

My Dear Husband:

I have left Linnie to wash the dishes while I write to "Pa". I was disappointed in not getting a letter last night but felt as if I deserved it for not writing to you all that week when I thought you were surely coming home. I shall keep on writing until you really show yourself.

We are having very cool weather here for the season and I hope it is cool with you and that your dangers from sickness may lessen as they increase from the enemy.

My dear Husband I am homesick for you, that is I know how you must want to come home and it makes me think less of my own disappointment when I remember yours. For a long time your part of the army seemed only to lie and stagnate inactively at that sickly post, but now that inactivity seems all over with. Of course this does not lessen the anxiety at home and I look so anxiously for news and mail. Sherman's sweep at Atlanta has revived some little hope that if it is followed by Grant's at Richmond and all by Lincoln's reelection then perhaps we may look for peace, but oh, those are so many (ifs) in the way of all this and even the attainment of all must cost more precious lives. You may recollect perhaps that you thought there was really no prospect of your having to serve out three years in actual service. What do you think of the prospect now. A term not yet half out and the end seems so far off; but I will not think of this if only God is kind in giving you back to us, we will wait the time.

Now, my dear husband while I do not wish to conflict in the least with your wish in this matter yet I will say that the more I think of it the more I am impressed with the belief that a home in town is the thing for us at present, then this secured, a few acres somewhere for a small farm (say four or five) within walking easy distance. If the railroad comes here the rise in town property will be so great that a house a little fixed up will sell for more than we give and two years rent or more perhaps saved. This rent eats up everything while I think every day how fortunate that I have so good a place even at what seems so much I could rent the same any day for 10 or 12 dollars and Kennedy can take 10 any day that I leave. I would not think it nearly so hard to get along with my little ones here with a home as on a small farm. Perhaps you may wonder my dearest how I spend so much and aside from your absence it is the grief of my life that what you are risking all to earn should be spent so soon but there is no use in fretting. The Littles will eat so enormously and victuals cost so much and old

accounts did run into this year so far. I only do think that I am very economical even if it seems against appearances. Just think flour 12 dollars a barrel and butter 45 cents a pound with cotton cloth a dollar a yard. Yesterday I paid 75 cents for a poor broom, why one cannot afford to keep swept up now a days. I have received your money and paid out most of it but do intend to secure postage this time. Now that it is over let me tell you how we worked to keep in stamps when I had used up the last why, then Locke sold paper rags for 35 cts. which just lasted until the money came.

I have been wondering whether your regiment would be sent any where else this fall, or whether you will stay all winter where you are. Of course we can only guess at these things. If you stay there can't you tell me of some things to send to you that you need. I have asked you often whether—it would be of any use to send you magazines or papers and as you did not say yes I thought not. Now good bye this time do not forget to pray with and for us, with us in heart and for us always, and God bless and keep you my husband dearer to me than all else and now so far away and whether we are present or absent may we always be present with Jesus and humbly waiting His purposes for us.

Yours in love,  
M. W. Howe.

Sept. 25, [1864]

My dear Husband:

Vine and Parmenter<sup>131</sup> are here to night and Parmenter leaves for Chicago tomorrow. He is in the fur business. Until Vine came he boarded with me this winter and will stay awhile but as this house is sold and I can not tell what I may do for myself I don't make any great calculation upon her staying.

I have a month yet before leaving and it will all come out right bye and bye. I look very anxiously now for letters<sup>s</sup> as I fear every day to hear of some terrible battle in which your regiment is on the field. I fear that Price can not be headed off from —, then there will be the old bloody scenes of the early war over again. Oh, how anxious I am now from day to day, and while I know that I ought not to expect to hear regularly yet I find it hard to wait. I am glad that you are better than formerly but the only alternative seemed a hard one to me, sickness or absence so it is.

All are well at home and just recovering a little from the great disappointment of your not coming home. I have no word of news to night. On Saturday Gov. Stone made a long [and] very good speech to a large crowd. Much is expected here from Lincoln's election and

<sup>131</sup> Livinia Wheelock Parmenter and husband B. F. Parmenter.

many prophecy that as nearly the end of the war, I am not so sanguine by any means, are you?

What a great fall in Gold. To day quoted at 180, this looks like less expensive living here.

My dear husband, I am so full of thought for you that I seem not to think much of matters in general and am scarcely affected by anything which does not connect itself with you. It is very late tonight and this is one [of] the days when every body has been here and I have been to Aid Society and worked hard all day. I find so much determination among the ladies here that I shall continue their President that it seems almost ugly not to but I resigned today and they voted unanimously that they would not receive the resignation and so it stands. I can not give so much time and care and they offer to do my sewing and come and help me any time. For once I believe I am popular as both Mr. Vail and Mr. Barnes (Congregationalist minister)<sup>132</sup> have been to see me and request that I would not leave the society as it had never done so much and work so harmoniously as the past six months.

I will send you a few stamps to night, all I have in the house and more the next letter.

Good night and God bless and keep you my most beloved.

M. W. Howe.

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Austin, Oct. 5, 1864.

My dear Wife:

I am so troubled that I do not know what to write. I got four letters from you day before yesterday and was much pleased with them, as I am quite unwell and have written to you fairly about my health. And, now this morning I learn from some of my company that you were about starting to come and see me. How could you do this after my writing so often about its absurdity? But I need write nothing as you will have started before this gets to you.

I have been taking a course of medicine and hope soon either to get well or to know that I cannot stand the service and resign, Moore has resigned.<sup>133</sup> I write on the supposition you have not committed that awful folly and are still at home, but the rumor and the fact that the fear of this has all along troubled me has hurt me much and I am not able to bear much addition to present troubles.

It will take over \$100 to get here and God only knows whether I shall ever draw pay to raise another 100 to send you back with, and it settles the question that I cannot resign however sick, as I shall not in two years be able to raise the sum to get home.

I write plainly in case you are at home so that you will write a promise and set at rest the most horrible fear that has haunted me

<sup>132</sup> Mr. E. S. Vail, pastor Presbyterian church and Mr. H. E. Barnes.

<sup>133</sup> First lieutenant Wm. M. Moore.

since in the army, that is, that you would leave the children to, I don't know what fate and come and if by some remote chance found me, then for us to live on nothing. I had thought seriously of resigning but must wait now two months to get word from you and if you are on the way of course I cannot resign.

I did not like to write a word about it as some things must not be written even to you without fear of being seen on the way and doing much injury and I could not in any way intimate anything without your taking it as certain.

I see that you were much affected by my not coming home but I wrote for two weeks preparing you and telling you how doubtful it was and then merely wrote that I had applied and if successful would bring my letter. How you could have taken this as any encouragement I cannot see as I let you understand that I had not one chance in a thousand of coming.

Now, if you have not started do promise me you will consult with me and give me a chance to tell you why you cannot come but, I do not like to write all the reasons by letters that can be opened. I have waited thinking you would not start but trust me at least a little.

O. C. Howe.

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Oct. 9th, 1864.

My dear Husband:

I hardly know how I should maintain my regular correspondence with you if it were not for this inexhaustable old book which always furnishes so large a sheet when I have neglected to provide any other.

Since I have known that you are located in Austin I have watched the papers narrowly and seen nothing yet of that place and have never found it upon any map. Well, if it is only where the raiders do not find it, that is well. Since this last alarm about Price attacking St. Louis, I have thought that perhaps Fremont was unjustly blamed for his expenditures there upon the defenses. No doubt they are now a source of comfort to many who growled at their construction.

I suppose we are having an exciting election campaign but see so little of these things that I can judge only from papers and the occasional speeches that come to my ears.

Last week Grinnell and Mitchell had a discussion here.<sup>134</sup> I have heard no comment upon it. The day was rainy and not as much enthusiasm as usual in Newton. Tomorrow is a grand rally and all expect a "big affair" were it not that I think the election of Lincoln almost a military necessity now, all this speech making and everything in its connection would seem only a sorry farce. Now perhaps it has a meaning and a use.

P— has gone. He was as formerly, quite disgusted with Newton, particularly the "want of culture and courtesy" among the gentlemen

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<sup>134</sup> Hon. Josiah B. Grinnell and I. C. Mitchell, the Republican and Democratic candidates for Congress.

of the bar, and it was the old song over again about its very exorbitant prices, and the many ways of avoiding their payment. It was easily seen that his old home gone and himself outstripped by those who were boys here at that time had a souring effect upon his view of all things, but it is no wonder.

Linnie and Vine are at church this evening with Ralph, now a great boy, and I have told stories to Lock and Nell until my throat is tired and even then there was no sign of their being sated.

Linnie is improving in looks and manner and is a great pet among teachers and scholars. She certainly is one of the most amiable of little girls and manifest no inconsiderable talent in her "essays", as her weekly productions are named. If she lives she will hold the pen of a "ready writer" but, whether that will be of equal use with skill in housewifery depends I suppose upon very many contingencies. I sometimes think that she is the valuable woman "who only bears sons" and that they are most blessed among women who know nothing, care for naught, and having no wit of their own, have perhaps no will. If the children of such mothers were not always fools, I would adopt it as a firm belief, but even women ought not to be merely fool producing animals. Now I wonder what sent my pen off upon such a steeply chase as these last long sentences. I believe it was thinking of the apparent connubial bliss of Mr. — and Lady, the latter of which is certainly calculated to retain a husband's love only by her extremely uncommon sense of good victuals. The fact is it makes me sour to see them so cozy these lengthening evenings while I to whom the law has given equal right, to equal comfort "sit alone with fading hair and lips unknissed".

Another thing, I have got to move soon, and to move with no man, this is enough to dissipate all sentimental opposition to second husbands.

This house is sold and after wandering more days than Noah's famed dove, I still found no resting place. Up street, and down street into every possible and impossible looking house, have I found my way, until the very dogs forgot to growl, they saw me so often and found me always so gentle and harmless. At last good Mrs. Lee from pure pity will let me have two little rooms in her house. The largest is only nine by fourteen feet, the other, nine feet square. Now, how to so concentrate and shrink myself as to fit these new quarters is my only present study, as it is two weeks before moving time I have proposed the system of quarter rations for the coming fortnight but it meets with no favor even as a theory and the practice I fear would fail of success.

Now, my dear husband, I feel very much like just telling you how lonely I am tonight, with no sound but the breathing of the little ones, and no hope of a coming step for which I have often longed. But does it make your duties lighter or chase away any gathering

shadow of homesickness to hear or read these things. We both know that they must be and are. That to both of us are appointed days all dark, and nights all moonless, when we do so yearn for home faces and fond words that the heart is sick and the whole soul grieves. The rest have just come in and I must stop writing now so God keep you my dearest, and keep you near to Him and hide you as in the hollow of His hand from all evil and danger. Let us live my dearest, as in the light of God, so shall the darkness of sin and of sorrow fail to mislead us, and the end will be well. Think of us all at home not only fondly but prayerfully and remember us not only as subject to the ills of life but the joy or sorrow of eternity. Oh, may we be kept from temptation, from weakness, and sin, and be united to live a song of praise.

Yours fondly,  
M. W. Howe.

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Newton, Oct. 13th. [1864]

My Dear Husband:

I have just come home from prayer meeting which was interrupted by Mr. Seymour coming to tell the members of Capt. Manning's Company that they were ordered to arm and march to Oskaloosa as 500 or more Rebels from Missouri were now at Ottumwa. There is excitement again among most of the town people but it does not worry me at all, Guerrilla scares have no terror for me beside I have had no letter from you for a long time and that is my great source of anxiety as I do not know where to send your letters I send part to Austin and part to Duvall's Bluff. Where shall I send them? I am feeling very sad tonight and don't think I will write much as I have no news to tell. I have written a number of times about the difficulty of finding a house and that I have to move, also about my great disgust at that Logston place in the country, and of the houses to sell in town. The old Shellenberger house, red bordered and two by Mr. Edmundson. The house Mr. Porter lived in is for sale at 700 dollars and property everywhere now is at speculation prices. The Shellenberger house with its two well fenced lots and good well for 500 is far the lowest in price of any that I know of.

McGregor whom you will remember as the grocer here long ago has come back and gone in with Meyer<sup>135</sup> again. Newton has a strange power of drawing its settlers back again to itself after they have tried vainly to do better elsewhere.

The rush here is immense and the amount of business of all kinds increasing daily. The merchants are so much afraid of a great fall in dry goods that they are selling at auction a trifle below, or at cost. We are having most delightful October weather and it makes my heart ache badly to think what pleasant walks and rides might have been

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<sup>135</sup> James McGregor and probably John Meyer, Lieutenant colonel of the Twenty-eighth Inf.

to us under less trying circumstances. You can easily imagine just about how I am employed much of the time washing dishes, making fires, putting children to bed etc, etc, while I can have no idea of what duties or pleasures, time, or season, can bring to you. You can think of your home as a thing remaining while you are drifting here, and there, while my divided loves and fears toss to and fro without rest or calm. Parmenter told me of a clergyman from Rockford who went to Petersburg sent by the Christian commission and while there during a battle, saw so much of misery and death as the result of *only one* day of war, that his sentiments were all changed, and he became (although a hater of Southern policy and principle) almost a peace man. Now while I do not commend nor yet quite sympathize with this man, I do not in the least wonder at his conclusion. If I did not believe that in some way (now all dimly understood) all this sorrow was necessary under God's plan for our redemption I too would feel that nothing could pay for all of sorrow and death that darken our hearts and homes.

We are all well and thinking much of the time when Pa is coming home. Nellie was much disappointed that you could not see how large she was on her birthday. I do hope tomorrow will bring a letter, Yours in love undying

M. W. Howe.

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## XII

From middle October, 1864, Mrs. Howe had increasing cause for anxiety about her husband's health and prospects. His letters due to illness were less frequent. Further she was hearing from officers of his regiment, home on furlough, that his physical condition was precarious, and that his health was in such critical stage that he might be unable to come home even if granted leave or discharged.

In the beginning of her third paragraph in the following letter Mrs. Howe refers to two incidents of the Civil War that shocked the public peace rudely and produced panic in south and central Iowa. The first event was the sudden invasion of Davis County by a band of guerrillas, who by murder and rapine spread terror until checked. The second was the brutal murder in Poweshiek County south and west of Grinnell of two deputy provost marshals, Captains John L. Bashore of Appanoose County and Josiah L. Woodruff of Marion County, who had been sent to apprehend some men who refused to answer to the draft. A local organization composed of resident Southerners who called themselves "Demo-

cratic Rangers" (it was probably a unit of the Knights of the Golden Circle), focussed the opposition, and backed the resistance of the local resistants—it had delegated Messrs. Mike Gleason and John and Joseph Fleener "to attend" to the deputies and prevent their mission, with the sorry conclusion named by Mrs. Howe.

Newton, Oct. 16th [1864]

My dear Husband:

Yours of Sept. 29th came in last night the first letter in 12 days but I kept up pretty well as I knew everything in your region was all confusion.

I am very sorry to know that your health is still poor but I had heard so from Maj. Smith who told me some weeks ago that the maj. of your regiment told him that your health would not permit you to go north if the regiment did go in pursuit of Price.

The big invasion panic here seemed to resolve itself into 200 Missourians who came within a few miles of Ottumwa and were driven back. It created quite a panic here. Capt. Manning's company are armed with Enfield rifles and are to be mounted infantry.<sup>136</sup> Capts. Woodruff and Bashore were the men killed in the Grinnell War as we call it here.<sup>137</sup> I take more hope from the late election returns from the East than from anything for a long time before. I believe a heavy Union majority in New York and Pennsylvania would be better tokens of a coming peace than even Richmond taken. You speak quite often, my dear, of our being "poor folks" after your return as though that had some, new, undefinable, terror for us. Why my dear haven't we always been such? To be sure we never seemed to half believe it neither will we now, but the facts will be the same as ever. There is no terror to me in any future that includes my husband and children in one family with myself. There is now no difficulty in all men finding such employment as pleases them but no doubt after the war when all the soldiers return there will be more competition but we shall surely find a way to make a comfortable and also respectable living among civilized people. I do not fear it my dear, and do not let any thoughts of this kind trouble you. If only God in his goodness will bring us to-

<sup>136</sup> The Captain Manning referred to above was probably Wm. Manning, formerly first lieutenant of Co. I, Tenth Ia. Inf. and later adjutant. Mrs. Howe repeats the rumors current in the press that 200 Missourians had invaded Davis and Wapello counties (see article entitled "The Guerrilla Raid" in *Ottumwa Courier* for Oct. 13, 1864). The number was considerably exaggerated. Lt. Col. S. A. Moore in his report to Adjutant General N. S. Baker states that there were only twelve guerrillas who invaded Davis County. But they were disguised in Federal uniforms and did much sorry damage before Col. Jas. B. Weaver dispersed and captured some of the murdering marauders (see *Adjutant General's Report*, 1864-65, Vol. II, pp. 1417-28; reprinted in *ANNALS OF IOWA*, Third Series; Vol. XIII, pp. 362-374).

<sup>137</sup> L. F. Parker, *History of Poweshiek County, Iowa*, Vol. I, pp. 190-192; Gue, *History of Iowa*, Vol. II, pp. 91-92.

gether an unbroken family again then surely must all our life be a thanksgiving song.

Mr. Edmundson asked me if you had ever got your pay yet for the time spent in the State service before your regiment was mustered in? I told him no. Was that not correct? He said then there was so much laid up as it was all right when you wanted it. If so that will help some about a home if we do not find one sooner.

I often wish that I dared to teach school or do something that would help a little more but really my dear, I dare not for the great anxiety for you and perhaps a change of climate has not affected me very kindly as to health while I am not sick much I am tired all the time and find that I need to take expectorant often to keep down the pain and soreness of my lungs and throat. I dare not now venture more as a few months of sickness would lose more than I could make.

My dearest, I have written a long letter about nothing. I hope that you have learned long ago that I did receive the money sent by express. One hundred and fifty dollars but no money ever came in letters nor did any letters come that told of enclosing any. Good night again, so often said, always so sadly. God bless and keep you and return you to your loving wife.

M. W. Howe.

Locke wants me to tell you that he has made the fire and put on the kettle for two days.

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Newton, Oct. 20, 1864.

My dear Husband:

I have received nothing from you since yours of Oct. 5th in which you were so disturbed about my coming down the river. I have been looking anxiously all the week hoping that in your next you would say that all uneasiness on that score was gone, or it seemed to me that my letters must soon convince you it was all nonsense even without the assertion from myself. But the letters do not come yet and I fear either that you are expecting me or that you are unable to write, both of which are a sorry state for you and me.

It is one of those beautiful Oct. days so often seen in Iowa when we can hardly realize that the "year's departing beauty bides of wintry storms the sullen threat" for the air seems all sunshine and balm and the russet dress of the trees is as if a golden summer sunset was bathing them. Do you remember those splendid sunsets at the Lakes, when after a heavy thunder storm with the dark clouds piled as a solid background in the east? The whole landscape, wood, field, and wave, seemed bathed in such a flood of golden light as if it were indeed reflected from the very pavement of Heaven. It was such beauty as this united

with the feeling of a home all our own that made a residence in that far off region not only tolerable, but at times delightful, not that I have ever had one momentary regret that we left all this for the beauty is to me only as the beauty of death; the rose around the tomb, nothing to rely upon, nothing to sustain us, only a veil over the realities of disappointment and great sorrow.

I find every where, even in my own mind, the hope, almost belief, that the war is drawing to a close, and yet the reason for this is hard to give, since every step southward is just as sternly contested now as three years ago. Perhaps it is that we are all expecting great results from the re-election of Lincoln, (now so trustingly hoped for) perhaps relying some upon the rumors of a wish for peace among some of the rebel states themselves, or it may be that we are only without reason believing what we all so earnestly desire. Oh, these three years of cruel war, in which over the bleeding hearts of many, others have strode on, to wealth, and power. This is one of the sad things in the war that so many seem not to have coined their own, but their brothers blood, and have built up their immense fortunes from their Country's sorrow.

There are evidently some things troubling you of which I am ignorant and which you think not best for various reasons to write about. Is there any probability that letters written to you are ever meddled with? I am sure that your position must naturally furnish difficulties enough for you to surmount, and if you have to encounter those not on the record, it is hard, truly. There were a number of allusions which I could not in the least understand but they shall give me no uneasiness, (apart from the knowledge of their trouble to you) and some time it will all be right.

I wish you were not so discouraged both about things at home and with you, for I can only feel that we have already lived through so much real trial that it is worse than useless to anticipate anything. We have many causes for thankfulness. In but few, comparatively very few, of the families of those in the army, do things remain as they were, so many have lost either husband, wife, or child, that while we all remain an unbroken household, even although separated widely, let us thank God for the mercies and not, not grieve about some sorrow or trial which may never come, and for which at best the only remedy is submission and patience. Forgive me, by dear, that I have written such a lecture particularly as no doubt it is needed most by myself.

I wonder if I had better tell you what a time I am having trying to find, and not finding a house, while the new owner of this is waiting not very patiently for us to get out, well you may imagine it all just as well as I can tell it, only the hunt for a house when you were here was all a joke compared with now. I do not even think of a house, one or at most two rooms is all that I could think of paying rent for, so much has rent raised the last year. The rush here still continues and I often wonder what people are coming here for when it is full to over-

flowing now. I hope if Moore comes home that he will come and see me. His wife will almost or quite be glad that he was sick as she is very tired of living alone. It is so dark that I can only guess the lines and say good bye and may God keep you in safety and bring us together soon.

Yours in love,

M. W. Howe.

I have been to church and just got back. You cannot tell how often on Sabbath Evening I wonder where you are, and what you are doing, whether there is any even apparent regard for Sabbath. Do you have any Chaplain and does it seem of any use. I have often wished that I could get a clearer view of your every day life in camp, but must wait until like old Aeneas in the olden time school book, "it shall delight you to tell."

You seem very desirous that the children should "be good" nothing can do more towards bringing this about than such expressions addressed to them as they all think much of hearing pa's letters read and are always pleased when they are mentioned particularly. I think they are good children though of course each of them have faults of character, and their own individual ways of them showing.

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Brownsville, Ark.

Nov. 1, 1864.

My dear Wife:

Gaining fast and will be able to start for home on furlough as soon as it can be got, unless it is denied which all say is not going to be.

Goodbye,

O. C. Howe.

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Newton, Dec. 5th. [1864]

My dearest:

For a long time I have tried to school my heart to bear with patient fortitude the blow which I knew must come some time, but it is a rebellious heart and now I feel all unprepared to bear this my greatest trial. Oh, will nothing but blood and tears wipe out our Nations sin? I know the path of duty is the one where we should love to walk and that you have chosen it I feel, but it is a false theory that teaches joy as the inevitable fruit of duty, no, no it is those who "come up through much tribulation" whose robes are whitest. This stunning grief must pass away and life will roll on in its dull sluggish current looking only to the "coming home" as the one thing desirable. It is very easy to preach patriotism and sacrifice to others but when the gift upon the altar is our choicest I fear we would if possible recall the offering. I do not know that I have any wish to come to Davenport, I fear I would not without injury to us both, for do not, my dear husband, imagine that I am so selfish as to think the pain of parting all my own.

I am going to do better by and by and although I think I shall hardly covet the cheer of a flirting "war widow", I will try and do my duty by the children and not keep them in an atmosphere of gloom, also will I cultivate that brave trust which has so often the power of prophesy. There is much of account and business matters at home which I had hoped you might settle yourself before leaving the state. I will do as well as I can and you can when settled still advise in many things although absent. Perhaps I can come and visit you in the spring. Do make such an arrangement if possible.

If you have not written to your parents do so at once after reaching St. Louis, I believe you have some cousins there. Now, my dear husband, I beseech you that you do not amid the care and tumult of camp life forget your God. Oh, try and live nearer to Him when absent from all your earthly loved ones. Pray often for your wife and little ones who will not forget their father.

I have not another moment before mail time, and can never tell you how dear you are to me now and have ever been. God keep and comfort us.

M. W. Howe.

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December, 1864.

My Dear Husband:

I have just heard from you that you were mustered [out] and expected to leave soon for St. Louis. Well, it has been expected a long time but will be no easier to bear when it comes. I do hope that you can come home as Linnie and indeed all the children wish so much to see their Pa but if not I suppose I must bear that too. I hope you will remain in St. Louis all winter and that the war will be over before many months. I am doing very well, Abbott has been here since Saturday and banked us all in as you never saw a house banked, all around and under, and fixed us up generally for winter, besides doing some marketing for time to come. Belle will stay here through the winter. Abbott says that he has written to you upon some matters and seems anxious for an answer. You need not call this a letter as it is only an attachment to Linnie's letter.

The greatest trouble we have in the house keeping line is for fuel. Wood is scarce and very dear and coal can hardly be obtained in quantities for the demand. I think when I am in funds I will get two or three cords of wood and try to find some one to cut it then we can have that for exigences and not be distressed for fuel. Phillip Reitter was buried last week and many children are again sick, with a variety of diseases. I will write again soon and you have probably received a long letter from me written last Sunday. Goodnight.

Your loving wanting wife

M. W. Howe.

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Brownsville Station Arks. April 25th, 1865.

Mr. O. C. Howe:

Dear Sir: I have the honor and pleasure again of writing you a note. My health is very poor again this spring and appears to be continually failing. I am going to resign if I can for if I have to stay here I will die before fall the health of the Regiment is good, better then I have ever saw it since we have been in the service. Co. L. is right side up the boys are all well and in good spirits they think of getting to come home soon there is flags of truce passing between Kirby Smith and General Reynolds the supposition is that Smith is about Surrendering all his army to the U. S. Authorities and if so fighting is very near plaid out in the west. Well Captain I have disposed of your horse I employed a man to take care of him just as soon as you wrote me word that you wished me to take the horse and do the best I could with him he had the greese heel then and did not get well for a long time neither did he improve any and just at the time that I thought he was about well took sick and for ten days I never knew him eat one bite of anything he had reduced very much but I finely disposed of the horse for fifty dollars I have paid Martin Beeson twelve dollars which Serg. Richardson says you owed him I then paid the remainder thirty eight dollars to J. G. Rockafellow as Company fund enclosed is the Receptt given by Lieut. J. G. R. I am sorry that I could do no better but I have done the very best I could for you knowing that you needed all the money you could get well Captain if I am fortunate enough to get home once more the rest of my time shall be spent in some other business where I can enjoy the associations of friend and home I would be glad to hear from you and family but I may be at home soon if so I will give you a call. I remain your friend as ever

Lieut. Richard Armstrong.

O. C. Howe, Newton  
Jasper Co., Iowa

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Captain Howe's condition apparently was so serious that instead of a furlough, for which he had applied, he was given a complete honorable discharge from service on December 6, 1864, and invalided home. His health must have been precarious for he remained for some weeks in the army hospital at Davenport, where for a time his life was despaired of; but his rugged constitution withstood the ravages of the fevers that for weeks had harassed his health, and Mrs. Howe was able to take him to their home in Newton:

[Concluded]

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