



ORLANDO C. HOWE
Captain of Co. L, Ninth Iowa Volunteer Cavalry.

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THIRD SERIES

JUDGE ORLANDO C. HOWE SOMEWHAT OF HIS LIFE AND LETTERS

BY F. I. HERRIOTT
Professor in Drake University

[Continued]

PART III—CORRESPONDENCE—1863—1865

I

Judge Howe enlisted first, as already indicated, in the Eighth Iowa Cavalry, a regiment authorized under a special order of the War Department at Washington. He held a commission as a second lieutenant, and was mustered into service at Davenport on June 5, 1863. His career in the Eighth is not certain: but from a letter addressed him by Captain William M. Hoxie of Company M it may be inferred that he was advanced to a captaincy. On November 30, 1863, Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood issued him a commission as captain of Company L of the Ninth Volunteer Cavalry, and he was mustered into the service on the same date.⁹⁶

His regiment was ordered south on December 8, going into quarters first at old Camp Jackson in the suburbs of St. Louis, where they suffered sadly for a few days from low temperature and lack of tents and camp equipment. On the 16th they were transferred to Benton Barracks, where they remained until

⁹⁶ Judge Howe's papers contain both commissions referred to above: but the *Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers* does not record his name or appointment in the Roster of the Line Officers of the Eighth Regiment of Iowa Cavalry. See Volume IV, pp. 1507-1525.

For officers and men and movements of the Ninth Regiment, *Ibid.*, pp. 1643-1658.

In footnotes following which give the names of members of Captain Howe's company of regimental associates reliance has been upon the *Roster* herein cited, unless otherwise stated.

April, 1864, undergoing severe training. This regiment's officers, unlike those of earlier regiments, had to pass a rigid examination in the "technicalities of cavalry tactics and army regulations," that kept the officers on the anxious seat until it was over.⁹⁷

The Ninth Iowa Cavalry was ordered on April 14, 1864, to proceed to Rolla, Missouri, with Little Rock, Arkansas, as its destination; but the defeat of General Banks's Red River expedition caused a change of plans and on May 19 they went into quarters at Devall's Bluff which was then the main distribution point in the movement of troops and supplies for the southwestern campaigns. Here for the next year and more the regiment was held for the most part, intermittently going on scouting and foraging expeditions, and various military forays in pursuit of sundry guerrilla bands that infested that portion of Arkansas. The operations of the Confederate generals, Price and Shelby, occupied the energies and time of the various regiments brigaded together.

II

Captain Howe's letters from Missouri and Arkansas, in consequence of the conditions in camp affording him more time for leisurely composition, are more varied and thus more interesting and instructive reading than his earlier letters previously printed. He is more expansive in his descriptions of people and landscapes that attracted him. They give us, too, the feelings and trials of one who was not exactly on the ground with the private soldiers and yet who was not far up in the official ranks. We may suspect—and with much reason, too—that Captain Howe entered into the feelings of the men of his company, or regiment, more easily than he did into the feelings and attitudes of the higher officials of his regiment, brigade, or corps. There is a constant modesty and unpretentiousness about the man and his letters that are engaging; and these facts enhance their verity and value. Captain Howe's practice as a lawyer probably induced the careful concern for moderate statement one may observe in all of his letters.

⁹⁷ *Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers*, Vol. IV, p. 1644.

His letters are uniformly serious in tone; but here and there he allows his sense of humor to play about the subject of a paragraph, and anon a flash of gentle humor illumines a page. Thus in the first letter of his that we have from Benton Barracks (Feb. 15, 1864) he indulges in various facetious flings anent a photograph of himself in his uniform as a captain which he sends home.⁹⁸ In his letter of June 8 there is a delicious bit in referring to the traditions respecting the origins of the natives in the region roundabout Ashley's Station, Arkansas, where his regiment was then encamped:

The Rackensacks do not inhabit the prairies but live in the timber and swamps and bayous. They are said to be amphibian, and some of the men say they have ascertained that the people, especially the females, have rudiments of fins, but of course you know I am too modest to ascertain the truth as to this.

Obviously Captain Howe and his men were more or less familiar with Darwin's evolutionary theories then splitting the heavens and disturbing the peace of the saints.

Anon here and there in his letters there is a genial lambant cynicisms that gives a tang to some of his observations and discloses that he was not unobservant of the ways of the world and the doings of Demos. For many reasons—anxieties about business at home, his health, etc.—Captain Howe was anxious to obtain a furlough, and had made application for one, but he had withdrawn it because of his improving health, and anent the matter he quietly observes August 31, 1864: "You may wonder why some can get leave of absence and others not, but you need not wonder at nothing in the army unless it be common sense which is rare here." In his letter of July 19, 1864, he asked Mrs. Howe if the society in Newton concerned with promoting the physicial comforts of the men in camp and on the march could not forward some needed articles, medicines, etc., direct to the camp, and then he put a query, "or does it all go to some general fund and thus become subject to the Circumlocution office?" Apparently he was familiar with Dickens' famous descriptions of governmental work in *Little Dorrit*.

⁹⁸ See frontispiece.

III

Mrs. Howe's letters confirm Mr. R. A. Smith's recollections and characterization of her ability, disposition and versatility. She was mentally alert and keen in her observations of men and things. She had a facile pen and a lighter touch in description than Judge Howe, although she was always earnest in narrative. Her sentences are clear-cut, and in general more concise than the latter's. She was more conscious in phrasing her letters than Judge Howe was. Occasionally she quotes her favorite poets or throws in an allusion with a literary flavor; and she shows that she remembers her Virgil.

Her household and wifely cares were always her constant concern. The welfare of her husband and children absorbed the most of her daily thought and effort. She seems to have cared but little for club or social life. Her letters also demonstrate that amidst trials she maintained with rare exceptions a steady balance of feeling and a reserve which betokens staunch character. When intense anxiety gripped her heart lest the next news she would hear from the army bring tragic words, she might let her feelings go; but there is no display of a complaining spirit, no sentimental gushing, no assumption of grievous personal sacrifices, no outcries in the midst of her many troubles against others or the Fates.

Mrs. Howe's letters disclose more conscious religious concern and religious feelings and dependence than her husband's letters do. This difference was to be expected. He was always in the midst of the press of practical problems and harrassing perplexities, concrete and crowding—conditions which kept his mind on things right in front of him. Mrs. Howe, although busy with domestic cares and distractions, was not contending with the harsh elements, clashing with men and foes. She had to stand or sit and wait through the days and in the long watches of the night when fears and imagination would riot in dread possibilities, and the religious tenets and traditions of her folk alone sustained her.

Mrs. Howe's letters give us many glimpses of variable phases of an interesting personality, of an optimistic disposition, and of many fine and solid traits of character that make the Ameri-

can housewife, be she on the American frontier, or within the crowded urban centers, the major factor in the home, on which so much of what is best in our civilization depends, and whence the chief hope of the future safety of states.

The letters make vivid the anxiety and trials of those left at home by husbands and providers who were in army camps or on the firing lines—when the normal income was made uncertain, first, by the stoppage of income from the usual source, second, by the difficulties of the transmission of funds by husbands from migratory camps, which was enhanced by the irregular payment of troops because regimental paymasters could not always be certain of safe communications with troops in transmitting the pay of officers and men. Mrs. Howe suffered no little distress on this account. The housewives of those days were not provided with doles because their husbands were drafted or in distant camps. Despite many trials she was always cheerful, although many times she was sorely perplexed by pressing demands or needs. She was fortunate in having to deal with neighbors and creditors at Newton who were almost always considerate and lenient, they realizing that her difficulties were in no sense due to her indifference, or heedlessness, negligence or trickery in avoidance. They knew: *C'était la guerre.*

Mrs. Howe's letters give us many pointed, and often pungent observations upon human nature as she saw its kaleidoscopic phases in the characters and conduct of neighbors and relatives—and the nearness of kinship did not blind or dim her keenness of vision. Her lively sense of humor frequently flashes through or about the edges of her sentences; and such is the case often when her heart was sadly distracted with anxiety anent household cares and the pressure of urgent money needs. Some of her keen thrusts may be appreciated in the following, dealing with the efforts of the government to secure enlistments in the call for men for "One Hundred Days" in the middle months of 1864:

. . . . Recruiting for 100 days drags slowly here, they are doing better at Monroe⁹⁹ and other places.

⁹⁹ In Jasper County.

A number of ladies married and single volunteered to take the place of all clerks who would enlist and retaining only 13 dollars a month give up all surplus wages with their place upon their return, but there is no enthusiasm among those who can go and many will not. Mr. G. is most industrious in trying to influence others, calling on all professional men to go en masse assuring them (the truth) that the country will spare them 100 days. Dr. W. replied to him by saying that he would go as a private if G. would go and that G. should be Capt., W. said further that he would go if any Minister or County officer would volunteer, but no. How I do wish the draft would take T., A. and H. with big S. and scores of others.

We can almost see the sardonic smile spreading over her features as she penned the words "the country will spare them"; and we may suspect that local discussion in Newton's families and roundabout her public square was caustic, peppery, and violent as the women of Newton sought by open drives and scorching irony and winged quips, to coerce their lusty compatriots into enlisting under the national colors.

The deftness of her pen and the airy fancies with which she covers her lonesomeness and drives out the sprites of gloom and melancholy that flitted about her may be seen in the following quoted at length from her letter of May 15, 1864:

Certainly my dear husband you are very much in my debt on this letter question. I have written, this is the fourth in the week, and received one in 12 days, now think how impoverished my poor brain will soon be at this rate, to say nothing of the starving condition of my heart. You must indeed mend your ways or I will take a trip down the river just to give you a scolding; now appropos of scolding *how are all these military men* who are so long free from curtain lectures, ever to be brought into a tolerable state of "sub Jugam matrimorium" again and all these administrators at home will they voluntarily give up the reins after a three years lesson of "going it alone." I know of *one* who intends never to see a market basket for years after her lord's return and to forget entirely that fires must be built mornings. And as to care and so forth I just intend to "sleep in the carriage" for awhile. You might suggest perhaps that the carriage may be a wheelbarrow, just as well only it shall not be self propelling. Can you realize how pleasant it is to be told what to do instead of deciding it yourself?

Although often hard put to make ends meet, and sorely harrassed by anxiety about the house rent, and nagging worries about the family budget, no acid got into her blood, and there were no parthian arrows in her facetiousness.

There are few expressions of political views in the letters of either correspondent during the period covered, although during the time the nation's affairs were passing through very critical developments; and it is interesting for Judge Howe was always in the thick of politics when at home. But in his first letter quoted (Feb. 15, 1864) in his facetious references to his photograph he intimates that his wife may infer that the man, whose features are pictured, is governed by a "hatred to tyranny, slavery intemperance, meanness, &c, and still more apparent can be seen from the expression a strong admiration for Abe Lincoln." He was evidently a "conservative" in the best sense of the term, a supporter of public authority. Mrs. Howe, likewise, was more conservative than liberal, or, better, than radical, for she was liberally minded in the large. Thus dwelling upon the horrors of the conflict—which she deemed a punishment in part of the people's sins, she said: ". . . 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." Her conservatism in religion was disclosed when she deplored the holding of army reviews on Sunday—" . . . 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 [O. O.] Howard—dont you?"

Another fact stands out in the letters. The alluring beauty of the region roundabout what was the first real home of the Howes in Iowa between the Okobojis and Spirit Lake made a vivid and lasting impression upon the minds of Judge and Mrs. Howe. They never forgot the wooded shore lines and glorious sunsets, and the shimmering waves of West Okoboji under beams of a full moon. After removing to Newton when Mrs. Howe saw an entrancing sunset, or the brilliant colors of the autumn leaves they reminded her of the multi-colored shore line of the Okobojis. When Captain Howe was relating his observations of attractive landscapes seen on scouting expeditions in Arkansas in 1863-64 he compared them with

the views about the Lake region in Dickinson County, but the beauty of the southern views never excelled nor quite equalled the charm of Mini-Wakan. Variable Fates caused the Howes to travel farther and farther from the Lakes, but fond memories of their sojourn there always made them long to return.

IV

Captain Howe's letters, and Mrs. Howe's also, written while he was at Camp Roberts at Davenport, between the time of his being mustered into the Eighth Cavalry in June, 1863, and his going with the Ninth regiment to St. Louis and thence into quarters at Jefferson Barracks—if any were penned—appear to have been lost either in the migrations of the family, or in the storms experienced at Lynn Haven, Florida.

The letters of this section (save the first two) were written during his period of regimental drill at Jefferson Barracks. Because of the delays in the mails the logical order in presenting the letters has not been attempted. They are given in their chronological order.

The date of the second letter presented is not certain. It is included at the outset of this section because from its contents it seems to suggest that Mrs. Howe assumes that Captain Howe was within easy travelling distance, and Davenport fits this assumption. On the other hand it could with almost equal assurance be assigned to September, 1864, when Mrs. Howe was hoping that he would secure a furlough and knowing his hopes naturally expected to see him get out of the coach at Newton any day.

In the letters of both Captain and Mrs. Howe the comma is often used in lieu of a period—due to the hurry of composition—but as it is not always clear whether the sentence was closed, or whether the writer was simply adding another clause, no editorial clarifying has been exercised.

Des Moines, Iowa
Aug. 8th, 1863

Capt. Howe
8th Iowa Cav.
Newton, Iowa:—Dear Sir:

Have you received as yet marching orders?—I see by this morning paper that one company has already gone to the rendezvous but have

received no orders as yet myself. If you have received orders please let me know also when you intend sending your men down. I have about 90 men with a fair prospect of soon making it up to 100.

Let me hear from you.

Respectfully,

Wm. H. Hoxie
8th Iowa Cav.

Newton, Sept. 8th, [1863?]

My dear Husband:

I have not written to you for a long week as I have watched the coach every night hoping to see you get out of it. As I got no letters since the one saying that you would bring the next perhaps and that you would send money soon if you did not come. I think you must be on the road and only write for fear something bad has happened and you are not able to come. I have company to night, two ministers from Dubuque who have come here to the Synod and they will be with me until Monday. They are old men one Mr. Newberry buried his oldest son Sunday his remains sent home from the Army. He was Capt. in the regular and was killed last month on the Weldon R. R. name of the other Holmes.

If I do not hear from or see you soon I shall not know what to think. I have a long letter in my mind but must save it to tell if you come tomorrow.

Yours loving and looking

M. W. Howe

Benton Barracks, Mo.
February 15, 1864.

My dear Wife:

Your letter came since my last to you but it was not the long one you promised, and which you must send, as the Regiment is any day liable to be sent *anywhere*, and I may soon be where mails are scarce.

I am glad you were willing to judge for yourself in Nellie's case instead of doing just what the doctor's say. I do hope you will depend on yourself much, though of course you will need a Doctor too when any are sick.

Let me know when Abbott¹⁰⁰ leaves and to what point as I have not learned where his regiment is. It is the 13th, is it not? We have lost our General Hatch who has been ordered to Charleston under Gilmore, so we are relieved from some of the difficulty I wrote you [about]. But we are far from being a pet regiment, on the contrary, we are generally reported as "Demoralized" but this is entirely false as I do not believe any cavalry regiment as new as this is in better discipline or better instructed. I think the trouble is that some of the officers grumbled at what they thought some swindling operations respecting our fuel &c, and that you know will never do. Our Colonel is a trump, (if you know what

¹⁰⁰ Harvey Abbott, husband of Isabelle Wheelock.

that is) (and a right bower, too).¹⁰¹ There is not a man but what likes him and though he will enforce discipline, he is kind to the men.

I send you my likeness. The straps have so faded that the bars do not show making me look like a Lieutenant. What do you think of it as a likeness? As a picture it is of course superb from the beauty of the original. Can you see the fierce soldier in it or does it show the contemplative philosopher or sagacious statesman? The grizzly beard may cover all three, but I can detect underneath the surface a latent love of some particular ones in Iowa together with a hatred to tyranny, slavery, intemperance, meanness, &c and still more apparent can be seen from the expression, a strong admiration for Abe Lincoln. But that crook in the nose indicates disgust for north western speculations.

But my dear, do you never regret that lovely home that we had formed with such toil and suffering? At times I do much, it was so beautiful, but pleasant as it was in some respects, and also pleasant to have so many relations around us yet the trouble of those years there was too much for the pleasure yet I have often been surprised to find a lingering hope that sometime I might have our old place, farm and all back again for the children's sake at least, yet it seems certain that if we could have our health, children & all, that Central Iowa is the better place. But being a soldier a home for us all may be conquered in a still more pleasant climate. I would much like to provide a home as soon as possible and if I had the money would buy a place near Newton for you in case I fall or perish by disease, but yet I believe that we shall after the war have such hard times as we have not yet experienced, for business of all kinds is now on a fictitious basis and farming products must then fall, so if we are not able now to buy we then can get a home much cheaper than now. It would be strange if at last hard times should help us, wouldn't it?

I am glad that you find opportunities of being acquainted with some of my old business acquaintances, and besides it seems as though you were quite successful in picking up soldiers both at home and on the road. I wonder if your thinking of a soldier down here does not lead you to this. I feel pleased that you seem to think in that way though I do not want you to dwell so much upon the army and my small portion of it in particular, as to neglect thinking of other matters, or so as to become melancholy. Do strike to divert yourself and feel as pleasant as possible.

Today while writing this the weather was like June, now (10 o'clock P. M. or later) it is again winter, freezing and some snow falling. I fear you are to have another cold spell.

By the latest from the south it seems as though the rebels were not going to raise their soldiers as fast as expected. Desertions from their army are now very frequent. I do hope that a strong energetic display of force will end the war this summer coming. I feel willing to do my part of considerable sharp fighting to close it up, but may feel different when the danger is to be faced. Do you think I will be apt to falter

¹⁰¹ Col. M. M. Trumbull.

when the trial comes? Sometimes I feel as though if danger should come when I am in a peculiar mood that it will require all my fortitude to stand up under it, yet I have seen danger in worse forms than a battle threatens. You all had to pass though as trying a scene as anything I need expect.

I have laid still three days from sickness more properly exhaustion but am now well, both my lieutenants are sick, not seriously.¹⁰² Joseph Logston from near Newton and Stephen Welch from Prairie City were returned from Small Pox hospital today, cured. They had it light, the last one so light they are doubtful whether it was that or a slight rash. Thomas Broomhall was sent to the Barracks hospital day before yesterday quite sick, fever I think but he is not considered dangerous. Sick ones from near Newton are slowly gaining except James R. Gentry who does not regain his voice.¹⁰³ I will write oftener now, will you too? How do you like the Colonel's looks?

Your husband,
O. C. Howe.

Newton, March 18th. [1864]

My dear Husband:

I am sorry that you have waited so long without hearing from home as I know so well how hard it is to wait without the brain becoming fruitful with all evil imaginations. I have not written you as often as usual the past ten days but have never failed of writing as often as twice in a week at least, but my fore finger is still sore enough to prevent my using a pen with any comfort or in fact using anything else.

The Thirteenth is now at home, Capt. Skiff¹⁰⁴ in command (it was Miller's company). We gave them a fine reception with the best supper could be got up. You will excuse the vanity if I say that Mrs. Howe's fruit cakes, (two large really splendid ones) were universally acknowledged as never having been equalled in Newton [or the] county. I was very proud of their looks as the frosting was superb and our mottoes all legible and plain. — has changed entirely in looks and to my fancy not for the better. He is now more stout than — was with a great fat red face, he must be 50 pounds heavier than when I knew him. The whole regiment being sent home on furlough of course my evil genius in the form of — returned having been only six days in Vicksburg. I was really very sorry to see him but the stay will not be long. His mind is much steadier than when he left, but is yet by no means in a sound condition if it ever was. He is now very jovial and laughs loud and long. He seems quite incapable of keeping money as he buys the most trivial things at great prices and has spent I know now far more for conveniences and fixins generally than you have done since you have been in service.

¹⁰² Wm. W. Moore, first lieutenant and John G. Rockafellow, second lieutenant.

¹⁰³ All four men named were members of Captain Howe's Co. L.

¹⁰⁴ Harvey J. Skiff, later husband of Lavinia Wheelock, widow of B. F. Parmenter.

I have heard nothing of Campbell giving up the Press but he is yet there and I think will be.¹⁰⁵ Mrs. C. visits and calls frequently and I like her with increasing like. I am sure that I do not know one item of news that could interest you the town is improving all the time and many more would stop here if they could find houses. We have yet no prospect of a house and I do not know what we will do, but do not fret yet as I hope we shall find some place, but rents are very high and I don't know but it would be almost as cheap to board but much less pleasant, I think you will have to take me along with you for want of a place to keep me in don't you think so? Lockie¹⁰⁶ has just come in from the kitchen radiant with fun to tell me that — has broken a saucer which he thinks a joke. I do hope that you will not over exert yourself but am almost sure that you are doing that very thing. When the 13th went to Meridien — was not (by his own account) well enough to go but stayed at Vicksburg and his Lieut. took his company. He really looks like a coward.

I do wish that I could send you some goodies and if you think there is prospect of your being in St. Louis long enough to get them I will try and find something for you but we have had only four pounds of butter for three weeks, it cannot be had here now, but will soon be more abundant. I know that now when you are recovering your appetite ought to be petted a little and I wish I could help you. Could you get a cheese and shall I send you a fruit cake?

I am interested for us both on the pay question which threatens to be a serious one if not relieved soon but we have weathered too many monetary squalls to be easily upset by small ones. Linnie has a sore finger now and cannot write very well but is talking about it. A letter from Mary yesterday says they do not hear from you often and only through me or Maxwell. I have written them since you were discharged from hospital. You say nothing more of your Cousins.

It is so very hard to rent that it seems to me that it would be a good plan to buy the house that Porter is occupying if I can do it by paying when we could get possession, which would not be until October. It is valued at 275 dollars and we will soon pay that for the rent of worse places. Tell me in your next what you think of the plan and if you think favorably write to Bill Skiff and tell him what you will do in the case, or I will see what a bargain I can make. Sherrill has bought the Helfrey house and every old hut in town is full.

God bless and keep you my darling.

Your wife,
M. W. Howe.

Benton Barracks Mo.
April 14th, 1864.

My Dear:

It is now night and our things are all ready to start tomorrow morning

¹⁰⁵ It is not certain whether Mrs. Howe refers to Frank T. or A. K. Campbell, owners and publishers of the Newton *Express*.

¹⁰⁶ John Wheelock Howe.

for Rolla by Rail from St. Louis and from there to Little Rock by way of Springfield Mo. We should have started this morning but we learned that the first battallion which went yesterday had to leave part of their horses on the way, so Co. L staid while the other 3 Co's of the battallion went today. The men are all noisy tonight and I have had to go in and stop the muss and you will have a confused letter. My Co. are good soldiers but when elated are not *all* strictly total abstinence men and there is always whiskey in the Army.

I will try and get word to you often but while traveling for the next trip you will not receive the letters regularly. Do my dear take good care of your health and keep up that visiting you spoke of as I see that when you have just been out by your letters, as there is not so much *moping* style. I fear that your eyes are growing weak, is this so? How I would have liked that visit we have thought of so much but as we cannot now meet we can call it postponed.

Our destination is not one I object to at all, as the country is probably healthier than any other southern route as part of the country we pass through is mountainous. I hope the Newton people will not be disappointed in the railroad, as I have strong hopes of some time having a quiet home in that vicinity.

You may think it is like a new start for the war to go to Arkansas, but except the time it takes to get letters it seems only an ordinary trip to me so many soldiers are passing through from there. It is possible we will stop at some point on the route for a month or two to recruit our horses some of which are very young. My Co. has the youngest in the Reg't. and Col. Marez said the youngest he had seen in the service were in the Reg't. I have only lost 3 horses while the other Co's average from 6 to 15 each, all because I am so poor a horse tender as a horseman always kills his beast to show his skill.

That examination is over as to me by default as tomorrow would be the day and I march then. Lt. [John G.] Rockafellow was examined yesterday as I could not leave and he was sent instead and will doubtless pass as he has studied hard and has a good idea of tactics.

I have expressed 80 dollars to you today and sent you 20 when paid and hope to get pay on the route if we stop to camp or at Little Rock if not and will send you a larger sum then if possible.

You see my letter is a rambling concern but I am busy and the boys are very noisy though very good natured. By the way I get along decently with the men and though lenient as the other officers say to a fault yet we have a fair discipline and I control the Co. easily while some have considerable difficulty. R. can do nothing with them except through fear and but little anyway and Moore can only coax and succeeds fairly for that way.

I would so like to see the littlers¹⁰⁷ tonight as well as the *other one*. Poor Linnie seems to be sick a good deal. I hope to see you in the fall as by that time a furlough will have been deserved. The Rebs are stir-

¹⁰⁷ His name for the little ones of the family.

ring about Kentucky and Tennessee and some of the boys are hoping to have a brush on the way but except guerrilla attacks I apprehend nothing. I think the danger less than a solitary journey from the Lakes to Sioux City any time for the past four years. Yet we may of course have a battle and you must not begin to think I am about to fall as soon as I start, for the business of the rest of the 3 years or more I am to stay.

Every one thinks the summer will end the war as far as large armies are concerned and the Rebs think so too but they say they are going to beat.

I will write again soon but must go to sleep now I was up night before last till morning and last night till 12 and up by 5. I will sleep tonight and start fresh.

Good night and God bless you all.

O. C. Howe.

Benton Barracks, Mo.
April 18th, 1864

My dear Wife:

On Friday we were ready for the cars but did not get orders to start, and on Saturday saddled up and went to the cars 3 miles to start for Little Rock by way of Rolla, on reaching the railroad found there were no cars for us, came back for the night and yesterday started again and took the cars, horses and all baggage and reached Rolla in the southern part of the state 120 miles from here about 8½ p. m. and found a despatch there ordering a return of the 9th to St. Louis so without unloading we returned and are now waiting for orders. We do not know our destination but expect to start tomorrow or else as soon as the rest of the Regt. can be brought back from Rolla. Seven companies are there having preceded us. This is the uncertainty of the army. I will write you as soon as we know where we are going but that may be only an hour before starting. Keep writing me here and I shall get some of the letters. Our horses all stood the car ride alive, but Perry junior is some the worse for it, hope he will be well soon he is too lively for such a trip.

The part of Missouri we passed through is a most miserable country, rough, rocky, sandy, with a poor soil covered with scrubby timber and the few inhabitants a miserable looking set.

If this is a specimen of the south the country was hardly worth conquering and the people not worth subjugating, but we can hardly be fair judges of the country as everything is compared with Iowa and Minnesota etc. while we must not expect to find them equaled unless it be in Texas.

It is generally supposed we are going to Kentucky and Tennessee, I am ready for either and was willing to be recalled from the poor route we were sent.

I cannot hope to hear often from you now, but you must write all the oftener or I shall not hear at all. I will write so often to you that you will be fully posted up as to our movements.

I sent you \$80. by express. Send me word whether it reached you.

The Newton boys are now nearly well: Banks has recovered from his hurt, Wert has been here to see us nearly well from the smallpox, Church is sick in hospital and will probably remain an invalid. James Drake will remain as nurse in smallpox hospital as he is poorly not recovered from measles of last summer. James Gentry is fast recovering his voice, can talk tolerably well now. That box has never arrived though one for Cross and Baldwin sent at about that time came through right.¹⁰⁸

My dear, you must imagine all the love I feel for you, but I cannot express it, how I would like to see you all, but that must be postponed. I do not permit myself to doubt but we shall be allowed again to meet as one family.

That awful crime of Ft. Pillow fill us all with indignation and desire to avenge the cruel massacre and I do think will aid in ending the war. Such acts show the desperation of the rebels and if we can only defeat them in Virginia soon we will have peace.

Goodbye and God bless you all.

Orlando C. Howe.

[Newton] May 5th, '64.

My Dear:

I write only a little tonight or I shall lose the mail which closes at 8 o'clock. We are well. By the evening paper I see we are losing in North Carolina and am now waiting with great anxiety for the battles which seem to be necessarily soon coming on in Virginia. I am much disgusted to see so little alacrity in responding to the call for 100 days, but two or three are going from Newton, in Monroe, they are doing much better. Baxter George is going from here, he is the only one of whom I have heard. Sister Kate Winspear is to be here in June and Maria Long comes with her. Jim is going to California soon. He is at Poughkeepsie now.

I am teaching the children at home this summer and teach Ella and Henry Vaughn with mine so as to have some stimulus for Lockie and Linnie, Locke learns fast, and Nell also. Linnie is a slow scholar which is a great grief to me some times I cannot understand it, how one who really knows so much should learn from books so slowly. She cannot memorize quickly and is not quick in reckoning, maybe she will "come of it" as the Hoosiers say. When I remember her great love of the beautiful everywhere and her sensitive nervous indolent ways I am often troubled about her future.

About coming to St. Louis I don't mean to think anything of it now, there is such a long line of if's to be overcome.

Good bye,

"Mizpah"

M. W. Howe.

¹⁰⁸ Baxter Banks, Daniel M. Wert, Napoleon Church, David Y. Cross and Julius A. Baldwin and the other two named in the above paragraph were all members of Capt. Howe's Company L and residents of Newton.

Camp 9th Iowa Cav.
Near Jefferson Barracks, Mo.
May 6, 1864

My Dear Wife:

Your letter of the second is here today and yesterday one in which you said you had the dumps. I am some alarmed about your health by what you write but hope the summer may improve it. It seems horrible to think that I may be spared in the army and you sacrificed at home. As to climate it is doubtful whether if Central Iowa is not healthy for you, which would be preferable Missouri or Minnesota. I hope the awful punishment of your loss is not to fall upon me during the war.

As to peace I believe that it will come soon either by the subjugation of the rebels or some patchwork for a few years. It seems as though the northern people were now depending solely upon Grant's success this summer and look no further. I do not like this but prefer that a determination to conquer at all events should be the feeling even if several more favorites of the people made so by circumstances instead of talent or genius should follow McDowell, McClellan &c into disfavor. We can succeed and we ought to use the effort necessary.

I passed the dreaded examination day before yesterday and a few minutes ago received the very agreeable "sentence" "Qualified" so that trouble is over.

We are still in camp with orders to be ready to march at one hour's notice and Co. L. shall do so at all sacrifice. I suppose that we will be sent into different part of this State and perhaps Illinois if there should be trouble there.

Goodbye
O. C. Howe

No pay yet.

Camp of 9th Iowa Cav.
Near Jeff. Bks. Mo.
May 12, 1864

My Dear Wife:

I received your letter yesterday and they are not very common occurrences though I must admit being more remiss of late than usual. Since passing the examination I have been in good health and Spirits.

The news from Grant, Butler and Sherman is now so very favorable as to enliven us all though there is a chance of being too sanguine.

Banks and Steele's repulse are terrible reverses for the West and there will be a desperate fight in the southwest perhaps in one great battle or more likely in a destructive guerrilla war.

We are hourly expecting an order to march somewhere to meet those Guerrillas but know not where we go of course. Two companies left last week as we supposed for up the Missouri but it turns out they were for Palmyra Mo. opposite Quincy, Illinois.

Since sundown last night till now (noon) we have been waiting expecting orders for two more companies to start for Central or Western Missouri. If orders come and L is one of the Co's we will be ready in an hour for me to start my Co.

I now think that we will most certainly be needed in this state and that Gen. Rosecrantz was right in bringing us back, though at the time I thought the matter had no particular intention in it.

I wish you would send a copy of those lines on Murfreesboro that you wrote and I admired so much. I would like much to send them to the Sanitary Fair of which General R. is President. If you wish it shall be anonymous.

Do not think me neglectful if I confess to losing that picture of yours but I wish another so much that it must be told. I have not been able to find it since I was sick, it disappeared with many other things while I was sick but without any fault of mine.

Do write oftener send to me as usual to St. Louis.

Goodbye

O. C. Howe

Newton, May 10th, '64.

My Dear Husband:

After a long cold season of wet, and wind, it has cleared away warm and pleasant, and just now there is one of those mellow sunsets so often seen at the Lakes, which makes it beautiful even here and reminds me of the surpassing beauty which seemed at times to rest upon all nature there. But I miss the familiar Lakes and the landscape here has no comparison with that. Perhaps when we are so spiritualized as to be insensible to cold and terror we will transmigrate into that country. It has more homelike memories than any other place although they are nearly all under a cloud. So far, my dear, was written on Sunday and now it is Tuesday and O, how cold, quite a thick ice formed on the water pail last night and an east wind this morning is very chilly or freezy.

I have been waiting some days for a letter as it is now ten days since I had one, and while I am less anxious than if you were nearer the expected place of heavy battles yet I do not wait long beyond my usual time without much uneasiness. Yesterday I went to League to hear Mrs. Simmins (State Agent for the Iowa Sanitary Commission) and the League disbanded and organized an aid society as an auxilliary to the General Commission.

It seems to me that as this matter is now systemized it must [be] an agent for much good although much quite unnecessary expense is incurred in its various agencies. I suppose you have not seen much of its working personally but what is the opinion of those officers who have seen field service. Last fall on my route home from Marengo I conversed much with Col. Redfield¹⁰⁹ and the Surgeon of his regiment in regard to this

¹⁰⁹ Lt. Col. James Redfield, killed at Allatoona, Ga., Oct. 5, 1864.

matter both of whom said that these voluntary aid societies by whatever name called were of more benefit than the surgeons themselves certainly work more than all except surgeons while Dr. Hunter from what he saw or did not see, at Vicksburg speaks of them as of (no account).

I suppose you are through your examination by this time but cannot tell how you came out, I can not wish you to fail as it would be a trouble to you but it would have some equivalents certainly as you would come home. I did not think you would be so long in the army without getting further from home and did hope that a whole year would have brought the 'beginning of the end' more than is now to be seen.

I wrote you that Catherine is expected here in June, I think my trip to St. Louis will hardly be in time for the Fair which I did not have much anxiety to see. I think three days at home would work more than six in St. Louis, but I think but little of either as among the speedy possibilities. Nell is learning very fast and Locke does tolerably, Linnie does not learn readily but is not well enough to be forced to hard study and she has no will for it. Railroad matters are not favorable to Newton at present as the roads are to [go] somewhere west of here, this road running northwest from Grinnell to meet the other and then a single track to Des Moines and westward, this is the present programme but it is very variable. Business is lively here and everything both to eat and wear is at enormous prices, approaching what it was south two years ago. This does not hinder the sale of things, Mr. Ford told me they sold four barrels of sugar now to one three years ago, while we get but 4 pounds for a dollar, 25 cts. is big price for one pound of sugar and this is only brown.

I hope tonight will bring me a letter and I will not wait again before writing.

Yours fondly,
M. W. Howe.

Camp 9th Iowa Cav. Near Jeff. Bks. Mo.
May 13th, 1864

My dear Wife:

The order for the 9th to proceed to Little Rock, Ark. with all dispatch came in an hour ago, and we are packing and waiting. Our major started for town to see as to transportation, as we do not know the route we are to take, but most of us think we will go by River to Devall's Bluff.

I think we are needed there, and do not fear the danger more than what we might meet scattered in this state. Write both to Little Rock and here and I will get the letters after awhile.

We are anxiously reading the news from the Potomac army and rejoice with fear over Grant's success so far.

If Lee should be defeated finally, then our fighting is soon over. But it is yet not impossible for a terrible reverse there.

[Other pages missing]

Newton, May 13th, 1864.

My Dear:

The Littles are all through with books today and are out in the brush at play. Summer seems at last to have reached us but was a long time coming. On the 11th there was quite a thick ice on the water in the house, and nearly all the early tomatoes were nipped, I am now feeling so well that I hardly know myself and am sorry that I wrote to you the day that I had the dumps. I suppose it is now settled that the railroad runs some miles north of Newton, and perhaps this will bring down house rent.

I know nothing in the way of news. People are rejoicing much over the Eastern battle news but I think there must be an undercurrent of fear, there is to my gladness certainly as a day may change all so fearfully. I imagine that if your regiment had not been ordered back you would have seen shot and shell when Marmaduke approached Little Rock. Banks defeat on Red River did not involve many from Newton in trouble. James Wilson is reported killed and some one named Brothers. There is less activity and zeal here in regard to the 100 days service than in most Republican towns. At Grinnell the whole College who are old enough are going with one of their professors as captain.¹¹⁰ We have been in this house three weeks today and paid one month in advance when we came in and I expect Kennedy on hand the 20th of May for another month's rent, which I wish you would send me if you can, (it is six dollars) I am not in want of money for anything and am not quite out but will be by then. When you send me again and every debt is straightened up as it will be I shall feel quite rich. It has often troubled me that I cannot make money last longer but it will not. Since the last August I have spent 300 dollars and it is hard to tell for what, although this does not include some considerable of last summers grocery bill at Ford's. I sometimes fear that you will be discouraged that I cannot make less answer but you must know something of the expenses of provisions & since you are a housekeeper too. We cannot get a yard of calico now for less than 28 or 30 cts. and sheeting is 50. As I made no calculations upon going to the Fair at St. Louis I am of course not disappointed and now have taught my heart to wait until fall, when surely you will have earned a furlough I would send you Newton papers if you think it worth while. I anticipate much from a visit with Catherine when she comes. Eight years have probably changed us both much, but we will soon forget that and the old time will come back to us again. Abbott is nearing Huntsville, Jim Winspear is going to California. I will write on Sunday, day after tomorrow and tell you the news if there is any. May God love and keep us in his care until we meet.

Yours with increasing love,

M. W. Howe.

¹¹⁰ Professor Leonard F. Parker.

Newton, May 15th, 1864.

Certainly my Dear Husband you are very much in my debt on this letter question. I have written, this is the fourth in the week, and received one in 12 days, now think how impoverished my poor brain will soon be at this rate, to say nothing of the starving condition of my heart. You must indeed mend your ways or I will take a trip down the river just to give you a scolding; now apropos of scolding, *how are all these military men* who are so long free from curtain lectures ever to be brought into a tolerable state of "sub jugam matrimonium" again and all these administrators at home will they voluntarily give up the reins after a three years lesson of "going it alone." I know of *one* who intends never to see a market basket for years after her lord's return and to forget entirely that fires must be built mornings. And as to care and so forth I just intend to "sleep in the carriage" for awhile. You might suggest perhaps that the carriage may be a wheelbarrow, just as well only it shall not be self propelling. Can you realize how pleasant it is to be told what to do instead of deciding it yourself? Just now I hear the piano at Mrs. Vaughan's and Ella singing which reminds me that girls are rather expensive affairs and useless I suppose. Something like roses in the garden, compared with cabbages, beans and such like masculine representatives, but they can't be drafted and won't volunteer which may comfort some mothers. It is a beautiful evening, just sunset, and in every direction mothers and little ones are walking fearlessly, nothing rude to insult, nothing evil to fear, so was it a few years ago over all this Land, and now how changed? And so would it soon not be here, were it not for brave hearts, a wall of defense between their homes and ruin. Christians are spoken of as living stones in the temple of God and surely Union Soldiers if all not Christians are doing duty as a living barrier against the advance of sin. I know that I have written to you before that this war would lose its worst of horrors to me, if all who fell were under the "Captain of our Salvation." If to all death were martyrdom it were no further to God from the battlefield than the midst of home loves and delights. The past week of battles brings these thoughts home closely and while I thank God hourly that you have not yet been called to walk through the fires of conflict, I pray that when the time comes if come it must that you go not alone, Jesus being with you. Never my dearest, almost all of life worth having, never since I could think at all, did I know so much of the misery of remorse, when I remember my life, and its errors, known to you so fully, when I think of my wilfulness and want of wifely duty. I feel that for me to write to you as I often feel impelled is only to irritate you or if [not] to irritate to grieve or sadden. Tell me often that you do love me, that you still trust in me and look forward with joy to our reunion. Oh my husband love letters in the long ago were worthless compared with letters of love now.

I am quite well and hope that the warm weather will make my lungs all right again. I have began to fatten fast and am heavier than two

weeks ago. When you know that Belles' dresses have been quite loose for me you may know that I was not fat, but am fattening fast now.

The church bell is ringing and I go. Please write often if you can, the letters do me so much good.

Yours in love,
M. W. Howe.

V

The letters of Captain Howe in this section—save the first—were written chiefly from or near Ashley's Station in what is now Lonoke County, Arkansas, midway between Devall's Bluff on the White River in Prairie County, and Little Rock, Pulaski County, on the Arkansas River. Captain Howe's alert interest in business possibilities of the region are manifest.

Steamer Sultana
At Wharf at Memphis, Tenn.
May 17th, 1864 Sunrise

My Dear:

We are just at this point at sunrise and I do not know whether we go on or disembark here but may learn before sealing this.

We overtook Co. B who preceeded us here and part of Co. E went on from here last night.

Last night at sunset we were landing to wood up and the woodman called out that it was unsafe as Gurrillas were there and the Capt. of the boat cast off, we learned there were 300 just out of gun shot, and I was mortified to think we had to leave them without a "skrimmage" but there were some circumstances making it almost impossible to wait or attack them.

They may waylay the other part of the Regt. and fire upon a crowded boat and do much mischief and leave before a landing could be made. We hope to start by 9 O'clock up White River to Duvall's Bluff but cannot tell. From there to L. R. [Little Rock] is 60 miles which I hope we will march rather than railroad as it gives a better chance hunting Guerrillas and a much better chance also to escape from them if needful.

Living is awful on board the boat, 50 cents a meal and such meals. I should take to soldier's fare in preference if it were allowed.

Write me a letter here as we may change our destination.

Dr. Wasson is keeping a Drug Store here and I shall go up and see him if possible.

Goodbye
O. C. Howe

May 20th [1864].

My Dear Husband:

I received your letter written at or near Cairo and am glad that you are in good health and spirits and I do hope that "your last chance for military glory" will be only the ghost of a chance, and that the necessity will be over, I know that I ought to be satisfied with your direction as the climate is healthier than in the Gulf States and the danger at present less than in the Atlantic States. The soldiers from Newton who are now at Little Rock had a hard time indeed while on their forced march from Camden but those familiar with the facts say that there is now plenty of provisions there so that if you are not prevented by rebels from reaching the place you will not suffer from hunger there. I fear much that I cannot now hear from you often and that you will seldom get word from home. All communication is so often cut off in that direction that I am already trying to have myself to do with fewer letters but it will be very very hard. I had really hoped to see you before you left St. L. but I know it was not right for you to leave the camp at this time. It is no time for absence when every man is so needed for duty.

I must write only a few lines now, I will write from this time three times every week directing where there seems the greatest probability of your getting them. I wrote four times last week not one of which I suppose will reach you.

We are all well and have no particular trouble of any kind but as Belle has paid the last months rent and I wish my turn could come next but do not fret, it will be all right some time. Expecting Kate in ten days. Good bye, I must not wait and do not wish to tell you just all I feel to night of love and fear and hope and trust. God bless and keep you ever in His love.

M. W. Howe.

May 22nd. 1864.

My Dear Husband:

You see by this portentous looking paper that I did again forget stationery last night and also that I have not forgotten to write my three every week no matter upon what they may be written.

Linnie has gone to Sabbath School concert from which I stayed at home to write. We have just had a needed and most refreshing shower which makes the view from the chamber windows very pleasant. I hardly ever sit in quiet, here looking out upon scenes of peace and tranquility without strong thought. The tender thought of love, almost a prayer, for those by whose self sacrifice all this is preserved to us, my Dear Husband, egotistical as it may sound let me say that great thoughts sometimes come to even me, and for a few moments I feel the nobleness of your services. If I could take advantage always of these best moments, rather if I did take advantage of them I would become a better soldier's wife, a better patriotic women, for my dearest, women need all the

inspiration born even of enthusiasm to enable them to endure their part bravely. I sometimes think that much of the work for the soldiers in which so many are now engaged springs unconsciously to them not more from the wish to benefit others than to escape from the brooding, saddening quiet of their own hearts. There seems just now a lull in that terrible storm of battle which has raged so long, but before this sheet will reach you it will be broken by a renewal of the conflict and then you, and I though widely separated will rejoice together over victory or mourn in a defeat, so much seems staked upon Grant's success that I cannot bear to think the opposite, but under every hope there nestles a deep fear, a fear I almost dare not read myself. I read of the fearful slaughter that marks the line of entrenchments, where the dead in piles four and five deep lie, a fearful mangled map of wrecked humanity. All these that God hath made and man has marred and from my heart comes a fearful and tearful and almost despairing wail—How long, O God, *how long*? Sometimes my faith in Heaven seems nearly shaken that such things must be, that martyrdom to so many seems so slow in advancing right, and then again the thought can never exist as a band of brothers after this wholesale attempt at each other's destruction. But still over all God does reign and the path of duty is the one to follow though it lead down to the valley of death. Life at the best is only a conflict individually with the "world, the flesh and the devil," and the Christians of the entire Nation ought to be engaged collectively in this war which surely is the battle of the Lord if the name could ever be applied to any warfare. We have a new minister today, a Mr. Barnes¹¹¹ who was 18 months in the army and came home sick. He preached his first sermon today. I think he will be an improvement upon — who with his impractical transcendental notions has been so engrossed with proving this world a sort of purgatory for fallen angels that he has seemed to have no taste for the ordinary duties of the Gospel pastor.

There was a rally yesterday but I have not learned how many volunteered. I do wish the draft would come and take some of the unwilling ones. The long trains of emigrants to Idaho excite my indignation to its highest pitch, most of them are young strong men and probably screech at heart, but I would give more for one skirmish in which they were in danger from rebel bullets to enlighten them than anything else.

I look with great anxiety for my first letter from Little Rock and hope that if you get there in safety, that [Gen] Steele will have so large a force Kirby Smith will not attack the place. The children are all talking at once and I cannot write more. May God bless you my dearest, with all needed health and strength and give you ever that preparation of the heart which is from the Lord. Keep my memory green darling all except my *badness*, ever that—out of your mind's eye, with love, all love.

M. W. Howe.

¹¹¹ Rev. H. E. Barnes of the Congregational church.

Newton, May 27th, [1864].

My dear Husband:

This has been washing day and I am very tired tonight for although quite well now, and no cough at all, I am not very strong and tire quickly. If you could see how much I have gained in flesh and color this last month you would believe your chance for a fat wife still good.

I have just read the Davenport daily and find nothing adverse from the East and hope that Lee will be driven southward soon. In the daily is an article taken from the *Independent*, which affects me much. You have probably seen it, I mean the letter written by Gen. Rice to the poet, Whittier, in which Rice gives the death scene of a young Sergeant who died of wounds received in that week of battles. Since then Rice has gone to his rest also, and it is very pleasant to think of him in connection with that letter which breathes so fully the spirit of the brave Christian soldier. He who fears only God and sin. What a terrible time the 40th had in their march from Camden to Little Rock and perhaps my husband is now in a similar situation as the last heard from that vicinity they were all surrounded by Rebels. If I ever hear of your arrival there and find that the mail communications is not cut off I will have more courage to write to you but it is not pleasant to believe myself writing for any Guerrilla chief. We here in Newton are much interested now in working for the State Sanitary Fair to come off in June. I had a letter from your mother yesterday. All are well at your father's, Katy is there and Babcock and Arthur had gone to Minnesota. Robert and Ellen stayed there the night your mother wrote on the way to cars. Levinia is teaching in Estherville, Parmenter has not yet decided where to go, but has sold off everything but his stock. The Jasper County men are slow in enlisting for 100 days, none but the recruiting officers from town as yet, but more may go. All now here who have any patriotism are wishing for the draft. I have wished it long. Abbott is at Athens Georgia. It is growing dark fast and I send you this short letter the first for a long time but if you can get them you shall hear often and I have no news to write. I hope your pay day will come soon as I can not see how you can manage without money and I would like some as soon as convenient.

Good bye tonight and another on Sunday. God bless you darling and keep you very near to Him.

M. W. Howe.

Newton, May 30th, 1864.

My Dear Husband:

It seems a long time not to hear from you, nearly 10 days, but from all inquiries made of those who know of these matters I must often expect to wait much longer than this. Excepting the time you were in hospital you have been comparatively free from danger while absent and I have tried to think always that "no news was good news."

Now I know that you are in the midst of enemies, perhaps at this

time in a life for life struggle and my anxiety must increase proportionally.

The *Press* has again been prohibited from publishing war movements and I suppose we will only conjecture what is transpiring at the East. Recruiting for 100 days drags slowly here, they are doing much better in Monroe and other places.

A number of ladies married and single volunteered to take the place of all clerks who would enlist and retaining only 13 dollars a month give up all surplus wages with their place upon their return, but there is no enthusiasm among those who can go and many will not. Mr. Gates is most industrious in trying to influence others, calling on all the professional men to go enmasse assuring them (the truth) that the country will spare them 100 days. Dr. Wolfe replied to him by saying that he would go as a private if Gates would go and that G. should be Capt., Wolfe said farther that he would go if any Minister or County officer would. There were many of both kinds there and I did hope some one of them would volunteer, but no. How I do wish the draft would take Tom, Arthur and Harris with big Shags and scores of others. Mr. Moore called here a few days ago to hear from his son, from whom he has not heard from for long, also Mr. Banks and Gentry are very anxious about their boys. Tell them all to write home as soon as they can, I write so often that I forget what I do write, but am almost sure I told you that Vine was teaching at Estherville and Parmenter assessing. Ellen has gone East. One B. F. Robinson from Des Moines called on me a few days ago, to buy Dickinson County warrants of which he had heard I was the owner of some six hundred dollars. I could not in the time he could wait find the fifty or I would have sold it, for his price (25 cts.) because I needed the 12 dollars it would have brought, I have it now and will sell it perhaps some time. You may have received a letter directed to St. Louis in which I wished you if possible to send me 6 dollars for rent, as I knew Kennedy does not wait willingly. Belle got some from Abbott before it was due and paid it, so that it is safe for three weeks ahead. Just this moment goes past two loads of men 25 in each load, 50 recruits for 100 days. God bless them all my dear husband and as well as those who serve their 1000 days. I almost love every one who wears the blue coat, at least I can forgive their errors and magnify all their merits as I cannot others.

The women here are very patriotic and if they would answer to man the forts you could have a regiment from Jasper alone. It is very sad to hear the little ones talk of their Pa. Poor Nell whom we have thought less loving than the others, has been (as all feminines are so often) sorrowfully misjudged. She extemporises sometimes an additional sentence to her nightly prayer, adding to the usual "bring my Pa home safely", do it quick for Jesus sake. I can see now Mrs. Hawk still wearing the mourning color for her lost son, and oh, I think of the acres of graves now consecrating Virginia's soil.

God bless you, dearest,

M. W. Howe.

Newton, Iowa June, 1864

Dear Father:

I should like to see you We are all well and I hope you are to. Seems as if hunting guerrillas is some like hunting indians. A little while ago I had a ride on Flat she has a little colt but it is not as pretty as her other one. Yesterday Aunt Bell killed a rattlesnake it was in the yard and Mrs. Donnel called and asked if Ma could kill a snake it made a great turn out and I run and got the ax and when we threw it in the road two boys came and played with it. Two letters have come to Aunt Kate and we think she will soon be here. Do they have any strawberries where you live There are none here this summer.

If you can read this message I may write again.

From your Loving Linnie.

Camp Near Ashley's Station, Ark.

June 8th, 1864.

My Dear Wife:

Our Regiment is now in camp on the railroad, nearly midway between Devall's Bluff and Little Rock upon a Bayou, that now furnishes water for the horses, but may dry up in August or September.

Company L has the care of some bridges a mile and a mile and a half from camp. There are two block houses which one half of the company are in and I start soon to relieve them with the other half. The work is easier then for the companies that remain here to do picket and scout duty. The railroad from White River here passes over a prairie except a few strips of timber. The prairie is from 2 to 19 miles wide bordered by the heaviest of timber and though flat in the finest country I have seen yet, though very thinly inhabited even before the war. The middle of the prairie is flat and probably at times very wet. The Rackensacks do not inhabit the prairies but live in the timber and swamps and Bayous. They are said to be amphibian, and some of the men say they have ascertained that the people, especially females have rudiments of fins, but of course you know I am too modest to ascertain the truth as to this. The prairie near the timber is level but drained by Bayous and small creeks, or rather places for water to run in while there is any. The proper crops for this country are cotton (of course), corn, beef and pork, while wheat is a fair crop.

If I were sure that peace would bring safety and quietness I should be inclined to settle in this country and run a plantation, but if bushwhacking follows the war then it would compel me to stay on the plantation, and I should prefer Memphis to any place I have seen here.

I think this railroad will be lined with Northern farms and villages in five years after the war and will then be the finest garden in the country. Peaches are a most sure crop though smaller this year than ever known and are said to be finer than any other country produces. Apples are produced in plenty for the few people, but are poorer than

at the North. Grapes are abundant and of a fine quality, there is one kind that is very fruitful and grow very large, of a white color said to be equal to any cultivated kind. If we remain I shall find out their quality.

News reaches here very slowly. You may direct to me at Little Rock as it will be surer to reach me than at Devall's Bluff.

My health is good and I think the climate will be favorable to me though we have no good water, the best is after a rain.

We are having many showers now that would help crops if there were any.

Tell me all about your health and how you get along without money. The first I can get you shall have.

Keep a warm place in your heart for me for I hope to return after the war and if all is well that may be soon though I hope with fear. I was just told by one of the men there was a rumor in Camp that Sherman had surrendered with 50,000 men; too absurd to believe but long before this reaches you, you will know all the news.

I am nearly out of P. O. stamps. Can you order two or three as I can not get any here and have not heard that I can at Little Rock.

Yours in love,

O. C. Howe.

Camp Near Ashley's Station, Ark.,
June 11th, 1864.

My Dear Wife:

No late letters from you but hope to get one by next train which passes from Little Rock soon. I was at my other station two days (Ft. Miner). I have two log or block houses to garrison and use half of the company for that and the remainder care for the horses and camp but have no camp guards to attend to. My guards fire nearly every night either at spies, thieves or animals, probable at each of the three. We are having a rainy time but quite comfortable, several of the men are sick but so far the climate is fine for me and I think would be for you, but such a population as Arkansas has, so ignorant, and servile, whites as well as blacks. The men in the rebel army are there because some great men told them to go. I astonished one family by mentioning that my father was a blacksmith, for they said such men did not often get office here.

It is wheat harvest now but very late, as May is the usual time. I have had very good new potatoes and string beans, blackberries are red, will be ripe in a week or two. Cattle live without feed in the winter. I like the country and think if no better turns up we had better come to this State either at Little Rock or Devall's Bluff, though Memphis may be better for me to practice law. We have had an unfortunate and disgraceful affair here. Major —, with a party of men went out from camp and the Major stopped at a house and sent the men further on. When they returned a woman came out crying and claimed of the Sergeant

protection alleging that the officer left by them had violated her by force and threats of calling soldiers to aid him. The Sergeant came in and reported the case to the Colonel who arrested Major — and sent for the woman's deposition. The Major is sent to Little Rock and imprisoned. I hear his version only denies the violence and threats and alleges pay. This of course lessens guilt, but I do not think a man fit to hold a commission who takes a guard of soldiers to ensure safety in his amours. We all feel troubled at the reputation this will bring upon the regiment for we have been very proud of it.

The mail has come but brought no news from home but a daily paper of the 6th gives us the news from Grant and Sherman who are still succeeding. I notice also the contradiction of a report that Devall's Bluff and Pine Bluff were taken. Those must have been strange rumors and I suppose you are often alarmed by news of that kind. We expect of course sometime to advance and meet the enemy but have no apprehension that they will be so foolish as to make the attack though it would be a fine thing for us as there are enough troops to meet anything they can send.

Little Rock and Pine Bluff on the Arkansas are very strong points, the latter south of here and Devall's Bluff is now able to defeat nearly all Kirby Smith's army.

It is my impression now that an expedition from Little Rock will be sent south or south west to meet or rather flank the enemy and placing Smith, Marmaduke and Price between them and the Mississippi. I only guess this from the troops sent this way, though Texas may be their destination. In either case we know nothing as to whether we go or remain guarding railroads.

Do write oftener and just think how you would like me to make the excuse for not writing that I feared you would not get all the letters. Of course we cannot expect to get all that are written by either, though I believe all of yours so far have come up to the 22nd, I believe is the date of the last. Direct to Little Rock at present and some to Duvall's Bluff.

Do the littlers now go to school or do you still teach them as you commenced. I do not wish you in your state of health to teach so as to injure you in the least but you know how I feel about the associations of common schools, especially such as that at Newton, and would certainly prefer them to grow up in utter ignorance to being under such influences as were there last year, if the stories we were told were correct. I feel delicate about writing as to this as I know nothing of matters at home and am liable to be misunderstood, but Linnie is growing up fast and impressions made now will last always.

No pay yet. Good bye all and love to all, most to you.

Your Husband,

O. C. Howe.

Camp Near Ashley's Station, Ark.,
June 14 or 13th, 1864.

My Dear Wife:

I came up from my other station and in an hour got orders to move with Major Drummond to Searcy some 50 miles from here. Direct your letters to Little Rock as usual. It will be some 12 days before we return and perhaps no opportunity for writing. We start in an hour. Just as I mailed my last a letter of the 1st came in from you and I was most glad to hear so late. It seems you have not received my letter with ten dollars in it, I hope it will reach you.

We have had great rains here but now it is pleasant and not too warm. The Bushwhackers are scarce and appear to let us alone now though Company A of our regiment lost two men prisoners and one was wounded also lost one man killed by our own pickets. So far the enemy has hurt us but a trifle, but we have had several accidents.

Write often and I will write every opportunity.

Good bye, my dearest,
O. C. H.

Camp of June 20th near Austin, Ark.

My Dear:

We are here and not prisoners as reported in your letter of June 1st, that met me in the woods. I have heard from you to the 4th of June. We have been to Searcy and West Point and are still watching and looking for the whereabouts of the enemy who are reported to be in the country. There are some small parties but we have seen no large force.

Good bye, my dearest

Your Husband,
O. C. Howe.

[To be concluded]

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