

EXCERPTS FROM THE CIVIL WAR DIARY OF LIEUTENANT  
CHARLES ALLEY, COMPANY "C,"  
FIFTH IOWA CAVALRY

*Edited by John S. Ezell*

One of the most trying periods in a new recruit's life is the training interval preceding his active service. During this time he must make the transition from civilian to soldier, adapt himself to new modes of living and patterns of thought, exchange independence for army discipline. For many men the threads of the past are loosened only after bitter internal conflict, during which the citizen-soldier learns much about himself and his fellow man.

The following extracts<sup>1</sup> from the unpublished diary of Charles Alley show the reactions of a young, well-educated, Irish immigrant to this experience. Alley, a resident of Nebraska Territory, volunteered for service and was sent to Benton Barracks, St. Louis, Missouri, where his company was formed into the unit known as "The Curtis Horse." On February 6, 1862, the group left St. Louis for Cairo, Illinois, to join the Army of the Cumberland, under General U. S. Grant. On June 25, 1862, "The Curtis Horse" was assigned to the state of Iowa and Alley's group was designated Company "C" of the Fifth Iowa Cavalry. He served for the remainder of the war, rising from the rank of private to that of second lieutenant.<sup>2</sup> The selections cited cover, roughly, the first six months of his military career and the period of his apprenticeship as a fighting man. Since he was extremely religious, the only excisions made deal with personal aspects of his religious life.

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October 9, 1861. Went on with some others also going to volunteer.

<sup>1</sup> These extracts are made possible through the courtesy of the author's daughter, Mrs. F. B. Alford, Seattle, Washington, who graciously placed the diary at my disposal, and of the grandson, J. N. Alley, Department of Modern Languages, University of Oklahoma, who called it to my attention.

<sup>2</sup> For a record of the members of the Fifth Iowa Cavalry and the Fifth Cavalry Consolidated, see *Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers . . .* (6 vols., Des Moines, 1910), 4:845-1112. For Charles Alley, see pp. 870 and 1020.

Oct. 10, 1861. Called on a family near Plattsmouth [Plattsmouth, Nebraska] which has two members in the army. The mother a pious woman told us she was willing to work out of doors — & she was at it making molasses — & let all the men go to defend our government against its enemies. Exhorted us while we stood up in defense of our country to be good subjects of our heavenly fathers Kingdom. Reached Omaha & had a pleasant time with McHart, a dear friend & a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, who did not fail at his house & after at evening prayer meeting in the church to address myself & others on the necessity of being prepared to meet our God. May God for Christ's sake bless these warnings to our eternal benefit. . . .

11th. Took the oath of allegiance to the United States Government & to obey my officers. May I be enabled to obey it in the letter & in the spirit. God grant that I may make at the same time a brave & a gentle soldier & honest upright Christian man.

12th. Marched from the capitol to the Herndon house & were presented with our colors by the Ladies of Omaha and an address by Lawyer Poppleton,<sup>3</sup> calling on us to defend to the last extremity the colors we had just received. After this the volunteers gave three cheers for the Ladies of Omaha & the citizens responded with three cheers for our men, when we took up our march for Council Bluffs. Here Lieutenant [William] Kelsey<sup>4</sup> got into an altercation with one of the citizens who drew a revolver threatening to shoot him when the Lieutenant got one from a companion & shot him on the spot. Such was the wretched end of a day so auspiciously commenced. O Lord for Jesus sake enable us all to control our evil passions.

13th Oct. 1861. Sunday. Marched 10 miles from C. B. & encamped on a small stream. What a Sunday to spend just the same as any other day. Oh how little we care for our privileges till we lose them. How I wished for a chance to go up to the House of God in company with my friends & take sweet counsel with them, thus escaping the profanity of the camp but I

<sup>3</sup> Omaha was the capital of Nebraska Territory, and Herndon House was the residence of the governor. The lawyer referred to was probably A. J. Poppleton, the leading lawyer of Omaha, its mayor in 1858, and a member of the first territorial legislature. J. M. Woolworth and W. S. Poppleton, "Biography of Andrew Jackson Poppleton," Nebraska State Historical Society, *Proceedings and Collections* (second series), 2:94-110 (1898).

<sup>4</sup> William Kelsay (not Kelsey) of Omaha, 1st Lieut. of Co. A, 5th Iowa Cavalry. See *Roster of Iowa Soldiers* . . . , 4:863, 932.

could not there being no meeting in the neighborhood but a Mormon one just closing.

14th Oct. 1861. Marched today 13 miles encamping on the west fork of the Nishnebotona [Nishnabotna].

15th. Marched 13 miles farther & encamped again on a small stream. Last night some of the men stole some chickens & had quite a feast. How wicked! Going to hazard their lives in war & steal. God grant that they may feel their wickedness and repent.

16. Reached Lewis, the county seat of Cass co; 50 miles from C. B. Here I was walking about by myself singing a familiar hymn in the evening when I was addressed by a citizen of the place who was in the camp, with the remark, "You have been where Methodists sing." I answered in the affirmative, that I was a member of the M. P. Church. A pleasant conversation followed, & he exhorted me to continue firm in the faith. He told me he was a member of the M. E. Church; how pleasant to meet a brother in a stranger.

17. Marched today 15 miles.

18. ——— 15 miles.

19. Marched 19 miles. Last night the men made a regular marauding expedition killing sheep chickens pigs &c. We are all of opinion that Capt. Patrick<sup>5</sup> in command of Company A & in charge of B. & C. is allowing it all — he last night gave the countersign to the orderly Sergt. of Co. A, who took a large party of men on the stealing march. It is openly stated he shared the plunder of the men about Omaha.

Oct. 21, 1861. Here we are at Winterset a pleasant town about 125 miles from Omaha having arrived here yesterday after a march of about 20 miles — Sunday marching — the only way we observed the day was by marching a few miles farther than we did any other. I went up to the Methodist E[piscopal] Sunday School in the afternoon. In the evening most of us attended service at the New School Presbyterian Church. We had a very good sermon, & I am glad to say that it was listened to attentively.

And now I must say a few words on the pleasures & pains of camp life. It is very pleasant in fine weather & quite the reverse in wet. In the morning before day we generally have breakfast. It is quite a sight to see the dark forms of the men moving among the white tents & the bright fires. The

<sup>5</sup> Matthewson T. Patrick of Omaha, Captain of Co. A. *Ibid.*, 4:863, 1017. Patrick was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel of the regiment, Nov. 13, 1861.

cooks stooping over their pans & pots, now rubbing their eyes smarting from the smoke; now drawing back suddenly as the wind drives a burst of flames in their faces; all this with the others moving round in anxious waiting for the call to breakfast with their forms now bright as the fires flame up, now dark as it dies away; makes quite an animated scene. Well breakfast comes at last, & then there is a general scramble as there are not enough cups, plates, &c., and nobody hardly wants to be last. Presently all are eating with the keen relish caused by such an open air life. Those who are to go on guard, hurriedly for fear of the Bugle calling them to their posts before finishing. But hark! The bugle! Plates cups &c., are thrown aside, a grumble or two, a muttered imprecation or more likely a volley of them & the guards fall in and are marched to their posts. But there is one comfort, as comrades will take each one's place and let him finish after a while so the disappointment is only temporary. Saturday last a number of us had a pleasant time singing hymns together. We are hoping soon to have a regular prayer meeting established. God grant that it may be a means of good.

Oct. 22, 1861. Yesterday we had a day to rest — in lieu of Sunday, I suppose, at least so much of it as was not taken up in two dress parades & preparations for them. Today we marched about 20 miles through a fine rolling prairie with a better supply of timber than I have yet seen. Our course was on the north of Middle River, a stream running towards the east. Day cold and cloudy wind north. Today I stayed in bed till daylight & so had no chance to retire for private prayer. . . .

Oct. 24. Yesterday we marched about 12 miles & stopped at a pleasant village called Indianola. Our course was through a fine rolling prairie well settled, & a good share of timber. A good deal of comfort appears to be enjoyed by the people in comparison of those farther west.

A number of the young ladies came into the camp to see — as they said how soldiers lived. They appeared to be quite interested in everything they saw. They said that four companions had left there for the war. They said they had not seen so many soldiers at once before. They appeared to be very intelligent and some of them were well educated.

Today we have come 16 miles through a better settled & better wooded country than any I have seen before. A number of young groves of timber & orchards are scattered over the country giving it quite a homelike appearance. We passed a little village on our way, Sandyville, & are now encamped at Pleasantville.

Oct. 26th, 1861. Yesterday we left Pleasantville & marched about 16 miles nearly all the way through a timbered country, being close to the Des Moines River. Day pleasant. Passed through the town of Knoxville, a pleasing village as indeed all of these we have passed lately are.

Today we resumed our march & reached the Des Moines at Belle Fontaine where we crossed — the mounted men fording, the rest of us being ferried over. Four miles farther we reached a village called Rochester & encamped, making about 15 miles. A couple of our mess (the first) being up in the village some people insisted on their staying for dinner & sent them back to us with quite a present. Some first rate biscuits, milk, & molasses which being added to our mess fare, made a capital dinner. This was our first piece of kindness since we started. The nights are mostly cool & frosty but the past few days have been delightful.

Oct. 29, Sunday. I obtained leave to go on before to Eddyville, which was about twelve miles distant. I reached there about 10 o'clock & went to the M. E. Church. After service our boys having come up, I went to the camp. After dinner I went to the Congregational Sunday School & was invited into the Bible class, a piece of politeness I must say I have never met in the Methodist Church. They had a very good school. In the evening I attended service there. Altogether I spent a pleasing Sabbath.

I could not help thinking how pleasant it was to escape from the profane influence of the camp to spend a few hours again in the assembly of those who meet together to worship God, nor lamenting my own carelessness in neglecting to improve my former privileges.

God grant that I may be faithful in all coming time. The ladies from the Church came to our camp & offered to bake bread for us or do anything they could, saying they knew we would be sure to have enough of hardship to meet, & they thought it their duty to do what they could for us who were going to defend their liberties. It was an offer gladly accepted, for we had no means of baking good bread.

Here ended our foot march & we have had great reason to be thankful to our Heavenly Father for His goodness to us; for we have not had one shower of rain in the day time & only enough twice at night to lay the dust. The weather being on our whole march extremely beautiful for the season. Yesterday we came to Keokuk, on the railroad 92 miles,<sup>6</sup> arriving about an

<sup>6</sup> The Des Moines Valley R. R., originally the Keokuk, Des Moines & Minnesota R. R., had been completed from Keokuk to Eddyville in 1857, where further con-

hour after sunset; we marched at once to the wharf & went on board the steamboat *Die Vernon*,<sup>7</sup> for Saint Louis. Started this morning & are now (5 o'clock) at Hannibal awaiting the express train from St. Joe [St. Joseph, Missouri], when we start for St. Louis, which we hope to reach tomorrow morning.

30 Oct. Today we reach St. Louis about 8 o'clock and we were marched directly to Benton Barracks, where we now are. The part of the camp where we are quartered is laid off in the form of a square; a long line of sheds on each side of it for the soldiers, back of these are the kitchens & sheds for the soldiers to eat in. Altogether it looks as if it would do very well for men who are soon to take the field to live in. Thus ends our first stage. . . .

Sunday, Nov. 10th, 1861. I have been here now for some time and I must confess I find things worse than I expected. Oh! what wickedness, evil in every shape, moral degradation everywhere showing itself. Close to so large a city as St. Louis where there are so many Christian Societies & we have no visit from one of them. & what a field for the Christian philanthropist. So many men gathered together to fight in their country's cause and almost no effort to lead them to Christ. One sermon on a Sabbath afternoon. How much good might be done here by a few tracts or other good books. God grant that the pious people of St. Louis may be stirred up to look after the spiritual good of the poor soldier. . . .

Nov. 13, 61. Things have been quite busy in camp thus far this week. Training of horses to run up on the muskets and to the mouths of the cannons, while firing and also being drawn up in line when the foot would charge on them with muskets & fixed bayonets. They have been some time used to hearing the artillery at a distance. Also, but not so much, the musketry. It is surprising how well they stand all the noise, &c. From these movements I would infer that they must be preparing these troops for the field. Troops are coming in and going out almost constantly. Fremont has

struction was halted until after the Civil War. This road is now a part of the Rock Island System. Nelson C. Roberts and Dr. S. W. Moorhead (eds.), *History of Lee County, Iowa* (2 vols., Chicago, 1914), 1:239.

<sup>7</sup> "Keokuk was a grand rendezvous for the army during the Civil War; scores of steamboats departed from the Iowa town for St. Louis and points below. . . . Keokuk almost daily dispatched companies southward aboard such boats as the *Jeanie Deans*, the *Die Vernon*, the *Hannibal City*, and the *Jennie Whipple*." William J. Petersen, *Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi* . . . (Iowa City, 1937), 183-4.

been here on his way to Washington, having been superceded.<sup>8</sup> I was in hopes of making the campaign this winter under his command, but it is not to be. Well, all I have to do is to obey my officers whoever they may be & to serve my country to the best of my ability no matter who commands. We had an election last evening for sergeant. I do not very well like the one elected. He being a man who by his own account would never come into the army if he could have got better wages out of it, & would leave it any time for higher wages if he could. A poor patriot surely for his fellow soldiers to delight to honor! And here I may say *en passant*, that I would have been proposed but I was an Irishman & was too religious. As many of my comrades were pleased to say that they thought I was the most competent in the Co. for the office. Well, in old times many of the Lords servants took joyfully the spoiling of all their goods & even gladly gave up their life itself & shall not I gladly forgo [*sic*] all hopes of promotion for a similar cause. Surely I can with Gods grace assisting me. God grant for Christs sake that I may continue to be as pious as I am & to grow in grace & in the knowledge of God every day of my life, & as to my birthplace — let me not dishonor the glorious birthright of an Irish protestant & I think I will not be less than equal to even an American citizen. Amen.

Nov. 17. Smoky & cloudy. This last has been a rather stirring week in camp, men going off, & coming in. The week commenced by a sham fight on Monday between a regiment of horse & one of foot. Every day since it has been continued & also with the artillery.

The horses are fast becoming inured to the firing & to be steady. Some of the foot maneuver very well. From these movements I would infer that these regiments will soon be sent into the field. Some accidents however, happen.

On Friday two horses threw their riders & each of these had a leg broken. One of the men of the seventh Iowa had the top of his head blown off, killing him instantly; such are the sad accompaniments of war. On Friday also the seventh Iowa came in from Belmont<sup>9</sup> to recruit and rest. The regt. has

<sup>8</sup> John C. Fremont was relieved from duty as "Commander of the Department of the West" on November 2, 1861. The move was unpopular with both the soldiers and much of the Northern public. See Allan Nevins, *Fremont, The West's Greatest Adventurer* (2 vols., New York, 1928), 2:611-16.

<sup>9</sup> Belmont, Missouri. Grant estimated his losses in this battle at 485 killed, wounded, and missing out of the 2,500 engaged. U. S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* (2 vols., New York, 1885), 1:271-81.

only 225 effective men, having lost 175 out of 400 at Belmont & having had 500 sick at the time of the fight. Yesterday the second Michigan cavalry numbering 1200 men came into camp. Yesterday we were obliged to double up, two companies being put into one room. There are 1300 more cavalry to be in from Michigan in a few days, & there are several thousand other troops to arrive, so will soon be pretty well thronged. . . .

20 Nov, 1861. Still we go along in our daily rounds of duty without any change of movement. Fresh troops continue to arrive and our camp is fast filling up. Yesterday we had quite a rain storm accompanied with lightning & thunder, which drove us from drill in double time. At night the 11th Iowa foot came into camp; they must have had a time of it from the river up. Today is sunny & beautiful for the season. Four more companies have been joined to us. At this rate we will soon make a regt.

Monday, Nov. 25. The weather for the last few days has been cold and wintry. Troops still coming. The 11th Wisconsin and 13th Iowa have reached here in the last few days. Measles & smallpox are now in the camp. Diarrhea follows me close, but bodily disease is not much if the health of the soul is preserved. . . . We — or all of us that wish are being vaccinated. I have been.

Friday, Dec. 6. After a few days of cold weather, it has changed again and is now mild as spring. No frosty nights and days of mingled cloud & sunshine. There are still about the usual state of things in camp. Once in a while a man is hurt or killed. The camp is still filling up with men & "the cry is still they come."

For myself I have been mercifully preserved from sickness, thanks to my kind Heavenly Father. . . . Death has already entered among us. Small as is our number, three of them have been already laid in the silent tomb, without even seeing the foe against whom they came out to fight. What need for all to be ready.

Jany. 2, 1862. After nearly a month I set about scribbling a little more. For the first time since I joined I am on the "sick list." I hope only for a few days. A bad cold & some fever, the causes. . . .

I am sorry to say that I have got into a dispute with the Lieut. Col., M. T. Patrick. Some of his acts not being palatable to the men, they agreed to report him to the General. I was asked to write the paper & consented, as I thought they had a perfect right to do it, having before refused to have anything to do with them, when they were making pretty warm comments



on the matter. The Lieut. Col., finding out that I had written the paper, sent for me & ordered me to tell him what it contained & who were the chief actors in getting it up. I asked him by what authority he ordered me to tell him or where he got it. He said I had sworn to obey the orders of his officers. I said I did not think I was to obey unlawful orders & asked him if he was to order me to kill one of my comrades if I would have a right to obey him. He said I would. Well then, said I, I certainly would not and neither will I answer your questions unless you show me some right you have to put them. If you don't, said he, I will send you to the guard house & when you lie there a month or so you will perhaps think it good policy to do as I tell you. It may be that I think it good policy now, said I, but I do not look to policy where right is concerned. If you will show me I have a right to answer your questions I will do it now & besides there have been a great many good men shot, hanged, and burned to death, who if they had looked to what people said was good policy, they would not have suffered these things. This was on Monday evening, Dec. 23rd. After two days in the guard house I was liberated on the evening of Christmas, being the first time I was ever in "durance vile." I at once charged the Lieut. Col. with unjust imprisonment. The trial was postponed, however. I wish I was in good health to attend to it, but as long as I am able to get around, I will not look for any delay on my part. It is melancholy to see how soon men placed in authority can become tyrants even in this land of boasted Freedom & equality. May I be enabled to do my duty uninfluenced by any angry feelings even towards those who may seek to injure me.

Jany. 6, 1862. Almost well again. Still I have reason to thank God for his goodness to me, but how little do I thank Him. . . . My charges against the Lieut. Col. were examined into on Saturday and came to nothing, partly from the partialaty [*sic*] of the officers & a great deal more from the cowardice of the men, who could swear to anything outside & knew nothing inside; & such *things* call themselves *men*. Men? Well I must not let angry feelings disturb me, but go on doing my duty and praying to God to enable me to love even those that injure or ill treat me. . . .

Saturday, Jany. 11, 1862. My cold still continues with a good deal of cough but I am on duty again, since the 9th. On Wednesday afternoon, feeling pretty well I thought I would go on drill; it had been thawing for a couple of days & was pretty icy. My horse was not shod, & being idle for some days wanted to run a race pretty bad and as he could not do that, he

took to jumping instead and soon rolled himself & me on the ground. I got off with a wetting & after that he did not appear to think his fun paid & went quieter. Last night one of our men died, the first of Co. C. . . .

Sunday, Jany. 12. Today among the orders read on inspection was one to the effect that no officer should hold any communication with his men except on duty. How pleasant for the sovereigns to be reminded that they were no longer fit company for "gentlemen." Thieves & companions of thieves I would say, but no matter. They wear shoulder straps and should be "obeyed and respected accordingly." In the afternoon we had service in the quarters by our chaplain, A. M. Spilman, from Nebraska, a little too much of a dandy to suit me, but he preached a good sermon from the words, "And it pleased God that in Him should all fullness dwell." Today also two of our comrades were deposited in the silent tomb. One, John McMichael, a fellow countryman from the North of Ireland & I trust that he is now reposing in the bosom of the Savior. The other from Nebraska named Henry Deuel. How should soldiers live & all others too.

Wednesday, Jany. 15, 1862. On Monday last the Illinois 55th & the Iowa 7th left for Cairo. Since then we have heard that the steamboat Continental on which the seventh were embarked got fast in a gorge 20 miles below the city. They are to come back & go by railroad. No news from the 55th. Today the Minnesota Battery of six guns left. Troops are moving in all directions. I hope — or rather wish — something may be done, but will there be?

Jany. 22nd. Last week the Col. complained that the men of Co. C. did not take off their hats when business brought them to his office. On tattoo the men were told of it by the second Lt. and enjoined to take off their caps. As soon as we were told to break ranks there was a storm of hisses for the Col. and an outspoken declaration to refuse compliance. They said they were willing to take off their caps in any mans *house*, but not to any *man* when they went into an *office* on business. It was complained that Co. C were the delinquents, as if no others acted so. The curses on the Col. were mingled with cries of "Bully for Co. C." The curses apart, I have no word of blame for the men, for the officers in general have shown a spirit of arrogance that if I did not see it I would think incredible. The commands of many of them are accompanied with abusive language, oaths and curses, "God damned privates" being a common expression. Thank God none of the officers of Co. C. are guilty of it. Of Co. A, Capt. Kelsey was guilty of

manslaughter at Council Bluffs. Lt. [J. J.] Lower takes his share in cursing the privates. Lt [Horace] Walters led a sheep stealing party in Iowa when he was orderly sergeant, as stated by me before, and there is pretty good evidence that all shared the plunder. And in verification of the old proverb, "like master, like man," the men of the Co. in general are worthy of them. From being partakers of their evil deeds, Oh Lord deliver me. Amen.

Sunday, Jany. 26th, 62. We were informed a few days ago that we were under marching orders, & to leave last week. Now it is said we leave on Tuesday. "Maybe so and maybe so, lie," as the Indian said. Today I heard a sermon from Dr. Elliot,<sup>10</sup> Editor of the Central Christian Advocate, St. Louis. He is a fellow countryman. He addressed us for a while from the words of John the Baptist to the soldiers, "Do violence to no man, and be content with your wages;" but his text was from Oliver Cromwell to his soldiers, "Say your prayers and keep your powder dry."<sup>11</sup> His discourse was a fair one for his audience & he gave us all good advice. I wish it may have a good effect. I have been reading the life of Gen. Sir Henry Havelock<sup>12</sup> and been much struck with the noble Christian character he displayed. Oh for such men to command us & for such in any capacity. . . . How cold & dull I am in all religious exercises. Oh for grace to warm up my heart in God's service.

Wednesday, Jany. 29, 1862. Rain & snow for the last three days & it is today snowing after heavy rain last night, followed by a slight frost this morning. Troops are still leaving. The 13th Missouri and the 12th Iowa left on Monday. Today a part of the Ind[iana] 3rd was marched in here under a strong escort of Cavalry. They are, it is said, charged with mutiny. Poor fellows. I am sorry for them, for I am inclined to think in such a case the fault is most on the side of the officers.

Cairo, Monday, Feb. 10. During the past week troops have been busy moving in different directions. The 14th Iowa left for Cairo on Monday. After them the 25th Ia., the Ill. 43, 3rd Iowa Cav., and last the Curtis Horse, also the Benton Hussars, for Rolla. Benton Barracks is left with few inmates. We left on Saturday morning & got here last night. What a

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Charles Elliot. See *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 11:495.

<sup>11</sup> This quotation is usually given as, "Put your trust in God; but mind to keep your powder dry!"

<sup>12</sup> British general (1795-1857) chiefly active in India. He was the leader of "Havelock's Saints" and was noted for his piety. *Dictionary of National Biography*, 9:174.

change is here. Everywhere the signs of war are visible. The low land on the Mississippi is clearer & occupied by a long range of Barracks & a parade ground. Here are six or 8 gun boats, some of them bearing marks of the Fort Henry fight on them.<sup>13</sup> There are a dozen mortars in the cars & soldiers everywhere with a rebel flag captured at Fort Henry. The point of land at the junction of the rivers is occupied as a battery. Across the Miss. is birds point [Bird's Point, Missouri], and on the Kentucky shore another camp.

12 o'clock. We are just about to leave for Tennessee so we may soon see the enemy. On our way down from Saint Louis there was a good deal of ice in the Miss.; a short distance above here was a gorge we had to break through. The ice cut a hole in the boat. The Ohio is high and muddy but no ice.

1/2 past 12 — Underway once more for old Tennessee. May the time soon come when all these boats will be again employed in peaceful trade. But where shall I be then? God only knows, and He knows what is best.

"Fort Henry," Tenn., Feb. 17th, 1862. We arrived here on Tuesday last and landed the same day. The cannon of the "Fort" looked black & gloomy at us but they are harmless now.

The "Fort" is a space of several acres enclosed by a ditch about 15 feet wide & 8 or 10 deep. The river was very high, over the low grounds, and the lower part of the fort was overflowed. There were 17 guns in the works, one a 128 pounder, one a rifled gun which burst. A smaller ditch was carried out I think not less than a mile & a half from the river. Then a piece of wood not cut down, then about forty rods wide of timber cut down so as to stop cavalry or artillery, & to be difficult for infantry. A great deal of labor to be lost in an hour. We encamped on a gentle rise a short distance south of the fort. We had to clear a place for our camp, but the rebels had cut down all the heavy timber for us, thereby saving us some hard labor. The weather was fine.

Wednesday evening — four volunteers were called for from a Co. to form a scouting party it was said. I was one from our Co. After we reported we found we were for picket guard. Several of the men grumbled at this vowing that they would not have volunteered if they had not expected

<sup>13</sup> Grant began an expedition against Fort Henry, on the Tennessee River, on February 2, 1862, and captured it February 6. Grant wrote, "All the gunboats engaged were hit many times." Grant, *Personal Memoirs* . . . , 1:292.

a chance for a shot at some rebels. The moon was shining brightly and the stars twinkling merrily as we rode out from camp. The night passed calm and peaceful. One could hardly feel that within a few miles of here was a hundred thousand men, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against one another. It was my first night all awake, & I was pretty sleepy towards morning. We were relieved at nine o'clock. Then 120 men started to scour the country. They found no rebels that morning. The attack commenced on Fort Donaldson<sup>14</sup> by our troops. Every once in a while we could hear the booming of the great guns. Our boys went within three miles of the fort. They all wanted to go on & join in the melee. The officers said they were afraid to go nearer for fear the men would run off of themselves, they were so eager. In the evening we got orders for our first battallion to hold themselves in readiness to march at a moments notice. Next morning I felt unwell and ate nothing, but said nothing as I thought a ride would stir me up, & we all expected to go to the fort. We were kept about an hour on horseback in the bitter cold — and it was cold — & then came orders to cross the river. When we came down the boat was so busy crossing troops to go to the fort we had to stay till near night & then stop on the boat. I don't know when I felt so miserable. Could eat no dinner, a cracker for supper. Next day I was better, a cracker and some cold fat meat for breakfast, & then ashore. The sun came out warm & we began to feel comfortable, but what a time on our brave men fighting at fort D[onelson].

I have heard that many wounded froze to death. How horrible; such is war. And still the roaring of cannon can be heard continually. Our Nebraska boys are there, many of my acquaintances from Nemaha Co[unty]. May God watch over them. A number of our men were out at once on a scouting expedition, 1200 rebel cavalry being reported near. They saw none. At night 4 men from a Co. were detailed as pickets. Yesterday 100 men went on a foraging expedition. They got back at night bringing corn, fodder, &c., hogs, chickens and so on and very merry over the misfortunes of the search. We heard no firing since morning. At night word was brought that fort D. surrendered at 10 o'clock. Three generals, a large number of officers and 10,000 men captured. So the good cause prospers.

<sup>14</sup> Fort Donelson lay eleven miles east of Fort Henry. For the part played by another Iowa regiment — the Second Infantry — see Mildred Throne (ed.), "The Civil War Diary of John Mackley," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY*, 48:163-4. For Grant's account of this famous battle, see Grant, *Personal Memoirs* . . . , 1:294-315.

Last night it rained, and clouds, water and mud are the order of the day. But the sunny south will, I hope, soon vindicate its rights in this respect.

Saturday, Feb. 22, 1862. Rain, sunshine and frost alternate here. Monday we staid in camp. Tuesday we went out on a foraging expedition, Uncle Sam footing the bills, orders having been given not to take anything without paying for it. The country is rolling, most of the hills very steep and rocky. The soil looks to me very poor, & none of that scarcely except on creek bottoms. The roads miserable, streams not bridged, and in some places the roads follow their course. Log houses and very poor ones at that, the people about as mean looking as their dwellings and nothing looking well, only the slaves, who generally look pleased and happy.

Wednesday, rain, cold and chilly, at night frost. Thursday, cold and disagreeable. Friday, fine. Another foraging expedition. Took a different road. Country worse than before, nothing good about it that I can see except the timber and maybe the stone if the latter was not so abundant as to be a plague. Got back at about bed time and then it commenced to rain. Kept at it all night and all day, till now (two o'clock), when there seems a chance for sunshine. A great many of our men are sick. Thank God I still keep well. May I praise Him for His Goodness to me. A few negroes came into camp yesterday and the day before. I trust they may soon be all free. No other union men about.

Monday, March 10th, 62. Again troops are moving. Our camp here is about deserted. Last week the five regiments of infantry here struck their tents and left. Boats have been coming and going. A large number is now up the river, having taken troops, stores, &c. Yesterday the artillery stationed here left, escorted by about one hundred men of our battallion. Two companies of the Indiana 52nd came over here.<sup>15</sup> So our force is small, but soon we too may leave here for fresh fields. Camp life is having its effect on our men. Dysentery and diarrhea are prevalent. Except a slight attack of dysentery, I have had good health. May I be truly thankful to my Heavenly Father for all His goodness to me, but how little do I care for religion; how my thoughts wander on other subjects and how much the world holds as its slave even here, when at any moment I may be hurried out of it. . . .

<sup>15</sup> During March, preparations were under way to send troops from Fort Henry against Eastport, Mississippi, and Paris, Tennessee. Grant, *Personal Memoirs* . . ., 1:325.

Monday, March 17. On Friday last about 4 o'clock A. M., we were getting ready to start for Paris — a town about 26 miles southwest of our camp & soon started. After a march of 9 miles we stopped to feed our horses & wait for a battery of artillery. Noon we started again & just at sundown entered Paris, white flags being displayed from different parts of the town. The rebel camp was about a mile on the west of town. We passed on and in a little while the thunder of the artillery told that the fight had begun. We only mustered all together about 200 men. The rebel force was variously stated at from five to 1500. The rebels not making any answer, the cavalry were ordered to charge on the camp. Cos. A, B, & D advanced, Co. C being ordered to stand by the guns and baggage. Our men came within a few rods of the camp when a force of rebels lying down in the brush rose & poured in a close volley. Some of the horses of our men took fright and ran away with their riders. Some stood firm & some of the men not being able to quiet their horses, dismounted & went in on foot. A short time, however, showed that our cavalry could not do anything among the timber & brush & they were ordered to fall back & form on the artillery. A warm contest was now carried on for some time between these & the rebels, whose fire well sustained for some time, began to slacken as darkness came on. Our guns also ceased firing, but after a short time the rebels resumed it & leaving their cover advanced as if to charge on the guns. A few shells drove them back to the woods & their fire soon died off. When we could get no further answer we followed suit & returned to town. Our loss was our sergeant Major, one sergeant of Co. A, 1 corporal and three privates and one private of Co. B killed and one or two wounded. The artillery Captain, Bullitt, was also mortally wounded. After consulting together, our officers determined to retreat, as there was a large force of rebels only a few miles on the railroad, & we were far from ours, so we continued on till about three o'clock next morning & I finished the night on picket guard.<sup>16</sup> Next day we returned to camp. Here I had to get five days rations for the men & after working till midnight, I was right glad to get to bed. Next day we moved

<sup>16</sup> See Grant's report of this skirmish to Major General H. W. Halleck dated March 13, 1862. He gave the casualties as four men killed and five wounded. The artillery captain was Robert E. Bulliss. He estimated the enemy loss at 100 killed or wounded and 8 prisoners. The raid was to break up a Confederate group engaged in conscription in the area. *The War of the Rebellion: . . . Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1884), Series I, Vol. X, Pt. I, 16-19.

towards Paris again & encamped a few miles out. Friday, two Cos., C and G, went out on a scouting expedition and passed on till within four miles of Paris. We came home through a pouring rain, lost our way in the woods at night & reached our camp wet & weary after tattoo, after a ride of 40 miles. Saturday, rain all day. Sunday cloudy & misty. On our way in on 12th, we met our 2nd battallion coming out to reinforce us, also 7 Cos. of 52nd Ind. Inf. These last have had a hard time, wet and hungry, not having tents & only one days provisions & at last in consequence of the wet, were ordered back to camp. Such is a soldier's life.

Today is fine & sunny; had some frost last night, a day or two more of dry weather will make the roads passable again, & then, ho for Paris & no retreat —