

## DOCUMENT

### LETTERS FROM SHILOH

*Edited by Mildred Throne*

Probably no war was so well reported in the newspapers of the nation as the Civil War. Only the large metropolitan papers could afford the luxury of a "war correspondent" at the front, but their reports were freely copied by the small newspapers throughout the country. These reports, however, were supplemented by letters from the men who did the fighting to their families or directly to the local editor. Naturally these letters give only fragments of the whole picture. Their importance lies in the personal accounts, the reactions expressed, and the actual picture of army life and fighting as seen by the citizen soldiers of the North and South. The drama, the horror, the excitement of a battle are better portrayed in these letters than in the more professional accounts of war correspondents or in the official reports of the officers. Hardly an issue of the local papers throughout Iowa appeared during the war years without at least one letter from some boy at the front, telling of his small part in great events. The following letters are a selection of the many written by the Iowa boys who fought in the Battle of Shiloh.

The battle fought at Pittsburg Landing in Tennessee on April 6 and 7, 1862, later came to be known as the Battle of Shiloh, the name being taken from the Shiloh church in the center of the battlefield.<sup>1</sup> It was the greatest and bloodiest battle that Iowa troops had fought in up to that time. Eleven of the state's regiments took part: the Second, Third, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Eleventh, Twelfth, Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth. Of these, the Second, Third, Seventh, Twelfth, and Fourteenth had fought

<sup>1</sup>For accounts of the Battle of Shiloh, see Kenneth P. Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General: A Military Study of the Civil War* (3 vols., New York, 1949-1952), 3:345-95; Stanley F. Horn, *The Army of Tennessee, A Military History* (Indianapolis, 1941), 122-43; Lloyd Lewis, *Sherman, Fighting Prophet* (New York, 1932), 219-31; *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* (2 vols., New York, 1885), 1:330-70; *Memoirs of Gen. W. T. Sherman . . .* (2 vols., New York, 1891), 1:251-75; Adam Badeau, *Military History of Ulysses S. Grant . . .* (3 vols., New York, 1881), 1:57-98; *War of the Rebellion, A Compilation of the Official Records . . .* (Washington, 1884), Series I, Vol. X, Part I, *passim*. (Hereafter listed as *Official Records*.)



in the Battle of Fort Donelson on February 15, 1862, and thus could no longer be considered novices in the arts of war. The Third had also been at the Battle of Blue Mills in Missouri in 1861, while the Seventh had fought under Grant at Belmont, Missouri, in November of 1861. The balance of the regiments from Iowa were "greenhorns," having seen only minor service in Missouri. Nine of the eleven regiments had arrived at Pittsburg Landing during the week of March 16-23, had been assigned to the various commanders, and had set up camp in the area surrounding the Landing. The Sixteenth had arrived on April 4, while the Fifteenth reached Pittsburg on the morning of April 6. Without ever having fired the guns which they had received but a few days before, the Fifteenth and Sixteenth were thrown into one of the bloodiest battles of the war.<sup>2</sup>

The Army of the Tennessee which had gathered at the Landing under the command of Major General U. S. Grant was preparing to move against Corinth, Mississippi, some thirty miles away. Pittsburg Landing was merely that—a boat landing where steamboat passengers could disembark for Corinth. The site had been chosen by Brigadier General William T. Sherman as a likely place for a base for the gathering army,<sup>3</sup> and on the morning of the battle, five of the six Divisions were there. They were commanded by men whose names would soon be known throughout the North—the First, by Major General John A. McClernand; the Second, by Brigadier General W. H. L. Wallace, the highest ranking officer to die on the battlefield at Shiloh; the Fourth, by Brigadier General S. A. Hurlbut; the Fifth, by Brigadier General W. T. Sherman; and the Sixth, by Brigadier General B. M. Prentiss. The Third Division, commanded by Brigadier General Lew Wallace, was some ten miles away at Crump's Landing on the Tennessee.<sup>4</sup>

All in all, Grant had some 38,000 troops under his command on the morning of April 6, 1862. Of that number, almost 11,000 were casualties before the evening of April 7, and of this number, about 2,400 were Iowans.<sup>5</sup> The reason for the high ratio of Iowans in the casualty lists is that the Eighth, Twelfth, and Fourteenth regiments were captured, late in

<sup>2</sup> For the various regiments, see *Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers . . .* (6 vols., Des Moines, 1908), Vols. 1 and 2, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Sherman, *Memoirs*, 1:255.

<sup>4</sup> *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. X, Part I, 100-108.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 105, 112; S. H. M. Byers, *Iowa in War Times* (Des Moines, 1888), 145.



the afternoon of the first day of battle, in the bitter fighting in the "Hornet's Nest" under Prentiss, who himself became a prisoner of war along with his troops. Over 1,000 Iowans from these three regiments were listed as "missing or captured" after the battle.

Shiloh became one of the most controversial battles of the war. Was Grant caught napping? Many said so at the time, and military historians have, in the main, agreed. When the attack began about 6 o'clock on that Sunday morning in April, the Union troops were at breakfast or preparing for inspection. Grant was eating his breakfast at Savannah, several miles down the river from the Landing, and Major General Don Carlos Buell with his Army of the Ohio was making his leisurely way toward the encampment of the Army of the Tennessee. In spite of several brushes with Confederate pickets and cavalry on Friday and Saturday, Sherman and Prentiss, the two generals closest to the front, seemed blissfully unaware that Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston had moved some 40,000 troops within striking distance of the Army of the Tennessee. At the first sounds of the attack, Grant left at once for Pittsburg to take command of whatever was going on, but such was the force of the first Confederate assault that the Union troops were already reeling under the blows. Many of the green troops ran away and crowded the Landing, frantic with fear. Other troops, just as green, stood their ground and fought fiercely, giving way only when ordered or when their ammunition ran out. Officers, some as inexperienced as their men, rode back and forth, trying to rally their frightened regiments. Eighty-seven of the officers of the Army of the Tennessee were killed during the battle, and 336 were wounded; of these, 13 Iowa officers died and 48 were wounded.<sup>6</sup> Some regiments, with all their officers disabled, fled in panic for the safety of the Landing or attached themselves to other commands. All was confusion, and few of the men under the withering fire of the Confederate assaults saw Grant as he rode from post to post, organizing his defense, regrouping his divisions, rallying his officers to stand their ground.

Whatever the judgment of history on the battle, the men in the front lines, with almost one accord, blamed Grant for the surprise and the fearful slaughter, and gave him no credit for the victory. A few days after the battle a group from Iowa visited the troops. Justice W. E. Miller of Iowa City reported on the attitude of the men:

<sup>6</sup> *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. X, Part I, 100-105.



Although our victory on Monday was complete and the rebels routed, yet it was too dearly purchased. The criminal carelessness, or something worse, on the part of Gen. Grant, whereby so many brave soldiers were slaughtered, admits of no palliation or excuse. Newspaper correspondents may write as they please, but the united voice of every soldier in Grant's army condemns him, and it is now time that the Government should do likewise. Belmont was bad, Donelson was worse, but Shiloh [sic] was the worst generalship of the war. Many officers told me that they were ready to exclaim, "O for night or Buell." Buell came, and our army as well as our country was saved.<sup>7</sup>

Dr. A. Ady of West Liberty also visited the Iowa troops shortly after the battle and wrote to the *Muscatine Journal* in a similar vein:

Nothing in the arrangements of the battle indicate that our army was within an easy day's march of a vast force bent on our destruction, and commanded by one of the ablest chieftains in the world. With such a record as this for the transactions of Sunday and the few preceding days, it is the sheerest folly to claim for the General in command on that day that he exhibited any of the characteristics of a prudent, still less, of a great commander. Nor can there be found one out of fifty of those who were engaged in the fearful carnage of the 6th of April to re-echo the servile praises showered by the newspaper press upon the great *Illinois General*. . . . Gen. Buell, and not Gen. Grant, is the real hero of Pittsburg Landing. It is owing to his timely arrival that the American people were spared the great sorrow of seeing their splendid Western army pass under the yoke of the conquering Beauregard. . . . His glory far surpasses that of Blucher [sic] at Waterloo; for while the one only brought a force of fresh troops, the other gave us, in addition, the vigor of an abler soldier where previously there was nothing but the imbecility of a pompous charlatan. The name of Grant really has no magic for the soldier.<sup>8</sup>

This opinion was echoed in letter after letter from the men who fought at "Shiloh, Bloody Shiloh."<sup>9</sup> The soldiers under Grant had learned, by bitter experience, that war was not glory and glamor; they had experienced the horrors and drudgery of modern warfare, with its frightful loss of life; and in their bewilderment, they blamed their commander. But when many in

<sup>7</sup> *Iowa City Republican*, Apr. 30, 1862.

<sup>8</sup> *Muscatine Journal*, May 2, 1862.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis, *Sherman*, 219-31.



Washington urged Lincoln to remove Grant, the President replied, possibly thinking of the fumbling, overcautious McClellan, "I can't spare this man. He fights."

When night came on the 6th, it was a defeated army that sought rest and shelter from the pouring rain. But Grant, who made his headquarters under a tree during the night, surveyed the situation and found it good. Night had come, and Buell had come, and even Lew Wallace — who had taken all day to find the battlefield — had come. Grant was "confident . . . that the next day would bring victory to our arms."<sup>10</sup>

And victory did come the next day. Reinforced by the fresh troops of Buell and Wallace, Grant's forces pushed the exhausted Confederates, who had no reinforcements to look forward to, from the field. Then it was that the men in the lines could sit down to begin writing their letters home, telling of their terrible and exciting experiences. The records of the generals and the officers have been preserved, but the records of the citizen soldiers in the line are scattered in old letters, cherished by their descendants, and in old newspapers, gathering dust on library shelves.

A collection of all the letters published in just Iowa newspapers alone would fill several volumes. The following are only a few of the many letters from the regiments that fought at Shiloh. Some express the drama of the two-day battle; some try to report whatever humor they could find, no doubt to relieve the worries at home; one, from a young drummer boy of the Iowa Sixth, is poignant in its very inarticulateness.

The letters have been arranged by Divisions, so that each group gives a slightly different picture of the battle as seen from several parts of the battlefield. When the Confederates under Johnston struck, Sherman's Fifth Division was on the right, centered around the log church known as Shiloh; to Sherman's left was Prentiss' Sixth Division; beyond Prentiss was the Second Brigade of Sherman's Division, under Colonel David Stuart. Back of Sherman was the First Division under McClernand; back of Prentiss was Hurlbut's Fourth Division. Still farther back, and closest to the river, was W. H. L. Wallace's Second Division. Lew Wallace's Third Division did not reach the battlefield until evening.<sup>11</sup>

To show, roughly, the progress of the fighting, and the part played in it

<sup>10</sup> Grant, *Memoirs*, 1:348-9.

<sup>11</sup> For maps of the progress of the fighting, see Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General*, 3:358, 373, 375, 387.



by the Iowa troops, the letters are arranged as follows: Sherman's Fifth (6th Iowa); Prentiss' Sixth (15th and 16th Iowa); McClelland's First (11th and 13th Iowa); Hurlbut's Fourth (3rd Iowa); and W. H. L. Wallace's Second (2nd, 7th, 8th, 12th, and 14th Iowa). Good letters from all the Iowa regiments have not been found, but enough have been included to give a picture of what Iowa soldiers experienced on April 6 and 7, 1862.

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FIFTH DIVISION (Brigadier General W. T. Sherman)

SIXTH IOWA

*Letter From a Drummer Boy in the Iowa Sixth to His Mother*

The following is the copy of a letter from William Harris,<sup>12</sup> drummer boy in the 6th Iowa, to his mother in this city:

Camp Shiloh, April 10, 1862.

Dear Mother:—I now sit down to tell you about the battle here. Mother it was a very hard one. The Rebels attacked us Sunday morning when we were eating our breakfasts. It was half-past seven when they came into our camp, and they made us retreat down to an open field, where our regiment made a stand and the 46th Ohio came up to help us. They fought us all day. Our Captain was killed by a cannon ball, which cut him in two.<sup>13</sup> The whole number of killed and wounded in our Company is, I think, 23. The rebels had a large force. We fought all day Sunday and all day Monday. Sunday night we were reinforced by Buel [*sic*], and then we were too strong for them.

They took me prisoner and put one man over me. I shot him and then run for my regiment. The bullets were thick after me but did not catch me.

I went over the battle field this morning and it is a hard looking place with dead men and dead horses. I helped to bury our Captain this morning. They [the Confederates] took his sword and pistol, and the very boots off his feet. They burnt our clothes and tore up everything about our camp. It is useless for me to tell you about this. The 6th Regiment fought well.

<sup>12</sup> *Roster and Record*, 1:845, lists a William H. Harris of Burlington, who enlisted in Company K at the age of eighteen, but does not mention that he was a "drummer boy."

<sup>13</sup> The Captain of Company K on April 6 was Richard E. White of Rome, Jefferson County, Iowa. He had been mustered in as a Second Lieutenant on July 12, 1861, at the age of thirty-one. On Oct. 19, 1861, he was promoted to Captain. He is buried at Shiloh National Cemetery, Lot 2, section B, grave 32. *Roster and Record*, 1:907.



The battle field is five miles square, and every step you make you step on dead horses, dead men or blood. This is the hardest battle which has been. It is a terrible place to look upon. They took my drum, but I did not care for that. I got a gun and went in for life or death.

This morning there were a great many arms and legs which had been cut from the wounded. It was a horrible sight, mother. They bury the dead fifty in a hole or trench. Tell the folks I am well and came through safe.<sup>14</sup>

*Further Particulars of the Pittsburg Battle*

We print this extract to show the stupidity and criminal carelessness of our commanding officers:<sup>15</sup>

Pittsburg Landing, Tenn.,  
Sunday, April 6, 1862.

At 3 o'clock on Friday one of the pickets of the 6th Regiment of Iowa Infantry was killed on post within 300 yards of this camp, whereupon a company of Cavalry supported with two or three companies of Infantry made a reconnaissance and discovered large bodies of Cavalry within two miles of our camp, pitching their tents. Another regiment of rebel cavalry were reconnoitering at the left, and blundered upon ten Companies of the 72d [Ohio] Regiment, who were at the time out for regimental drill. They opened on them and a lively little fight ensued, which only lasted for a few moments, but resulted in routing them with a loss of about 40, our loss being only 2 killed and 7 or 8 wounded.<sup>16</sup> All of the Regiments in our part of the camp formed up in line, and remained until evening. They were then

<sup>14</sup> Burlington *Hawk-Eye*, Apr. 21, 1862.

<sup>15</sup> This letter was written by the sutler with the 6th Iowa.

<sup>16</sup> This was one of several brushes with Confederate cavalry which occurred for several days before the battle. These encounters should have warned Grant and his commanders that something was brewing, but they all seemed convinced that the main body of the Confederates was still at Corinth. Sherman commented on this: "From about the 1st of April we were conscious that the rebel cavalry in our front was getting bolder and more saucy; and on Friday, the 4th of April, it dashed down and carried off one of our picket-guards, composed of an officer and seven men, posted a couple of miles out on the Corinth road. Colonel Buckland sent a company to its relief, then followed himself with a regiment, and, fearing lest he might be worsted, I called out his whole brigade [the Fourth] and followed some four or five miles, when the cavalry in advance encountered artillery. I then, after dark, drew back to our lines, and reported the fact by letter to General Grant, at Savannah; but thus far we had not positively detected the presence of infantry, for cavalry regiments generally had a couple of guns along, and I supposed the guns that opened on us on the evening of Friday, April 4th, belonged to the cavalry that was hovering along our whole front." Sherman, *Memoirs*, 1:257-8.



ordered into camp to be ready to march at a moment's warning. — Twice during the night the camp was thrown into commotion by the firing of pickets, which kept up a fight at intervals along our entire front line during the night, with occasionally a shell from the enemy, which was quickly answered by the artillery, which had been sent out to assist the 72d [Ohio]. In the morning a general attack was anticipated, but in that all were disappointed, as everything remained quiet through the day with the exception of a little picket fighting. All remained quiet until this morning — at about 8 o'clock we were completely surprised by at least 20,000 men entering our camp at our weakest point.<sup>17</sup> This, of course, threw our men into a sort of panic, and a portion of certain Regiments behaved most disgracefully, the men throwing [away] their guns, knapsacks, and every other article likely to be of any hindrance to them, and broke like deer for the levee, where they came near sinking two or three commissary boats before sufficient guards could be stationed to keep them off, some clinging to the guards of the boat, and many were drowned in attempting to swim to the boat. . . .

Wednesday, April 9th, 1862.

. . . Our regiment, the 6th, lost everything, among which was the subscriber's establishment containing \$5,000 worth of merchandise; my tents Gen. Beauregard made his headquarters (a mighty good place). I little thought of entertaining so important a personage. On their retreat all of our batteries lost in the fight the day previous were retaken together with a large amount of prisoners. . . .

They lost some of their best Generals, among whom was Gen'l Albert Sidney Johnson [sic], killed dead.<sup>18</sup> . . . The 6th Iowa suffered severely. Their average was 20 to the Company, in killed and wounded. They fought most nobly, and at times under the most discouraging circumstances. Their support were all young troops and were panic stricken at the onset. They were engaging five times their own number. . . . Col. McDowell [John Adair McDowell of Keokuk] was acting Brigadier, and behaved most nobly, always in the thickest of the fight. He commanded the 1st brigade, under

<sup>17</sup> Actually, Sherman was attacked by Confederate Major General W. J. Hardee, whose Third Division consisted of between 5,000 and 6,000 men. *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. X, Part I, 398.

<sup>18</sup> Albert Sidney Johnston, the Confederate general in command at Shiloh, died about 2:30 in the afternoon of April 6th from a gunshot wound in the thigh which severed an artery. He bled to death before his physician could reach him. Beauregard then assumed command. Horn, *Army of Tennessee*, 134.



Gen. Sherman, on the extreme right wing. The flower of the Southern army were in the engagement. I think our General, Grant, underrated their strength, and did not prepare himself sufficiently. Their attack was a complete surprise to our whole army, causing a panic among all the young troops. The enemy entered our camps, so says prisoners, with between forty-five and fifty thousand men,<sup>19</sup> completely out-generalizing us, and the surprise was so great at first, that before a regiment or brigade could form in battle line, they would be completely overwhelmed by numbers and broken up. Our troops could not fight at first, and it was impossible for them to hold their ground. This would encourage the rebels, and on they came hooping [sic] and cheering. Their army was brigaded within three miles of our camp. . . .

The battle field was a heart rending scene, and in places the rebel dead were in piles, where our batteries played upon them the second day. . . .

L. M. BLAKELEY<sup>20</sup>

#### SIXTH DIVISION (Brigadier General B. M. Prentiss)

##### FIFTEENTH IOWA

##### *The Fifteenth at Shiloh*

The following extracts from a private letter from Lieutenant Studer,<sup>21</sup> of Company B, 15th Iowa, are valuable as showing the part taken by that Regiment in the battle of Shiloh:

Gen'l Hospital of the 6th Division  
in the Field Between Pittsburgh and Corinth  
May 15, 1862.

The 15th Regiment of Iowa Volunteers left St. Louis on the 1st of April, in the steamer Minnehaha, and after delaying at Cairo and Paducah for a considerable time, arrived at Pittsburgh [sic] Landing, early on Sunday morning, the 6th of April. I suppose it was about 7 o'clock in the morning, while eating our breakfast, when we could hear from a long distance the booming of cannon; which reminded us all that the bloody struggle had commenced. Soon after, I went into the stateroom, which I had the

<sup>19</sup> The Confederate forces actually totaled 40,000, *ibid.*, 124; *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. X, Part I, 396.

<sup>20</sup> Burlington *Hawk-Eye*, Apr. 19, 1862.

<sup>21</sup> Adolphus G. Studer, of Des Moines, was of Swiss birth. He had enlisted in November, 1861, at the age of thirty. He was promoted to Captain May 24, 1862, and resigned the service Jan. 18, 1863. *Roster and Record*, 2:1016.



good fortune to share with our kind Major Belknap [William Worth Belknap of Keokuk], and got my trunk ready for the landing; and when the gentleman just mentioned came in, exclaiming: — "Lieutenant, get yourself and men ready; we are ordered out to fight in Gen. Prentiss' division! Take it cool! We will ship them!" I thought that was rather a queer introduction, on Sunday morning, on a stranger's premises, but I said nothing, more than just passing a few remarks to the Major, about the talents of Prentiss, as a Division General. He is a prisoner, now; and therefore I make use of the old Latin proverb, "*demortuis nil nise bene.*" I buckled on my sword, looked after my six shooter, went up on deck and ordered Company B, to "fall in"; had the roll called, and after that I announced to them the order I had just received. At the same time, I made a short speech to them, reminding them what they had enlisted for; besides that I gave them a few instructions necessary to be known by raw recruits. They answered "We will follow you, Lieutenant, and obey your commands!" I felt proud of them, I assure you. All the Companies were now ordered to form into line of battle on top of the hill or bluff overlooking the Landing.<sup>22</sup>

By that time the wounded were brought in thick and fast, being 8½ o'clock A. M. — Great numbers of stragglers had gathered about the Landing. . . . Officers, of all grades, rode and walked around, praying, cursing, and imploring the men to form again, and to start out again to fight. A good many obeyed, and some fell in with our Regiment. Ammunition was now issued to all our men, who all seemed sanguine to meet the enemy. This I considered as a good omen, for raw soldiers who had drawn their arms but ten days previously; considering the sight of all the wounded soldiers, the stragglers, and the general panic.

It was about 9½ o'clock when an Aid-de-Camp of Gen. McClelland rode up, ordering us to proceed out to his Division and to support Dresser's Battery, with the 16th Iowa Regiment, which had arrived with us. The command, "right face! Forward — march!" immediately followed. Forward we went, over hills, ravines, and through the timber; the 16th following in our wake. On our march, we begged stragglers standing on the way side, to fall in with us. Very few obeyed, and the balance walked away.

<sup>22</sup> For a graphic account of the part played by the 15th Iowa in the battle, see Mildred Throne (ed.), "The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd, Fifteenth Iowa Infantry, 1861-1863," IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY, 50:70-82 (January, 1952).



We met the Battery which we were ordered to support, on the road; announcing that they were out of ammunition. This looked rather awkward. The 16th Regiment, on a cross-road, left us, filing off to our right.

It is necessary to remark here that we were marching by the right flank in double files. We arrived now at an open, cleared field enclosed by timber. About half the regiment had entered the field, when the enemies artillery, hid on our left in the timber, greeted us with shells, grape and canister. — The grape and canister told on a few on the right wing. On we marched, and the regiment had just gained the field when we were greeted by a shower of musketry. This sudden cross fire was enough to make veterans careful. The sudden thought struck me that we were either outflanked or that our own troops were firing on us. The regiment got in disorder, threatening to break up in squads. We succeeded, after much difficulty, in reforming the line. Capt. [Wilson T.] Smith, and especially Lieut. [Christian E.] Lanstrum, assisted me very much. At the same time our gallant Major's cheering voice would be heard. The 16th regiment had arrived on the field in a shape that their right wing would come in with our extreme right at right angles. They kept low under cover of a fence. That was the last I saw of the 16th during our engagement, as they were drawn up in line afterwards on our (the 15th's) right, our company being on the extreme left. Then we marched by the front towards the timber. The enemy's skirmishers opened fire on us, and our regiment gave them a round which, according to their own telling, killed 40 men. We kept advancing through the timber down a gradually falling hill until we reached at the foot thereof a small creek nearly parallel with our front. — In front of us on a gently sloping hill, very thinly timbered, lay the enemy behind tents, which in their advance they had previously captured from our forces. They were thus almost hid from our view, the tents, logs and stumps affording them a good screen. Opposite our right wing they had a masked battery of 9 guns playing on us and the 16th, and at the same time they had a chance to rake the ground in our rear and on our right and left. We crossed the creek and a few steps beyond it we halted. I ordered our men to lie flat on the ground or to take advantage of any cover which the ground might afford. We had not one piece of artillery to support us, neither could I see any reserve forces in our rear, and our left was perfectly open, for I could not detect any forces on the prolongation of the line on our left, nor could I hear the report of arms in close proximity. I feared from the beginning, judging



from our position and the enemy's murderous fire, that unless supported by artillery our ground would prove untenable. We were at the mercy of the enemy's fire. The boys of Company B. advanced bravely. . . . Further to our right my observation did not go, as I was too busy watching the interests and progress of our own company. All I could see was that the whole line was there loading and firing with all their might, doing their duty faithfully, many of them advancing close to the enemy's position. I noticed some of our men that advanced within 20 steps of the enemy. Captain Smith stood up well on the right of his company, cautioning the men not to shoot unless they saw something to fire at. I ordered the men to gain ground by degrees, which they faithfully did. If any man should ever tell me that the 15th regiment did not do its duty, I should certainly make it a personal matter. Our Captain changed his place from the right to the left of the company, where [he] stood until we left the ground. . . .

A. G. STUDER<sup>23</sup>

SIXTEENTH IOWA

*From the 16th Iowa Regiment*

We received the following private letter last evening, and aware of the anxiety felt in regard to this Regiment, take the liberty of publishing it —

Pittsburg, Tenn, April 7, 1862.

Brother Alfred: — The "bloody 16th" has availed itself at an early day of an opportunity for its first battle — and the greatest battle has just been fought, or is now fighting, that ever occurred on this Continent. — The forces engaged altogether amounted to perhaps 150,000 men,<sup>24</sup> although the newspapers will most likely give each side that number. The rebels had the advantage in numbers the first day, but at the close of that day reinforcements commenced arriving from Buell's army, conveyed across the river here by steamboats. But I can attempt no description of the great battle which, for some hours, raged fiercely at several far distant points at the same time. There are to-night *thousands* lying dead within a few miles of the place where I write, and some within a few yards.

<sup>23</sup> Des Moines Register, June 14, 1862.

<sup>24</sup> This is wrong. The Confederate forces totaled some 40,000. Grant reported on the Union forces as follows: "At Shiloh the effective strength of the Union forces on the morning of the 6th was 33,000. Lew Wallace brought 5,000 more after nightfall. . . . Excluding the troops who fled, panic-stricken, before they had fired a shot, there was not a time during the 6th when we had more than 25,000 men in line. On the 7th Buell brought 20,000 more." Grant, *Memoirs*, 1:366.



The battle at Fort Donelson was a mere trifle in comparison with this, as I have been informed by two Generals who were at both places. In fact, there were more killed the first day here than all the time there — yet today, [with] both sides largely reinforced<sup>25</sup> the battle raged still more fiercely than yesterday. The rebels gained a decided advantage yesterday, penetrating into our camp, destroying many tents, capturing a large number of prisoners, and seriously threatening the destruction or capture of our army. They fought bravely and had a much larger number in the field than we had. The attack was sudden and able, Beauregard being their General, and for a time everything looked threatening. It was their last great desperate effort seemingly, and desperately fought out to the bitter end. This evening the rebel army is miles away, our army in pursuit, and our danger over — but the loss on both sides fearful. How far our Iowa regiments have suffered, and how many of their well known officers have been killed or captured, cannot now be told. There is every reason to believe the 12th and 14th regiments have been captured — others have lost severely in killed and wounded. . . .

But I must tell you something of the 16th. We arrived here Friday night last, after a pleasant trip. It was, of course, very muddy. We had to make a road up a steep bluff to get out our wagons, mules, goods &c. — We were ordered to join Gen. Prentiss' division, next to the advance line, nearly four miles out, and one of the first afterwards attacked by the enemy. We nearly succeeded in getting out there Saturday night. Had we done so, we would have lost all our property, and perhaps all our regiment. The move, however, was fortunately delayed till Sunday morning. We then had everything ready to start, when the booming of cannon and volleys of musketry announced a battle. The 15th and 16th formed on the bluff, distributed ammunition, and by ten o'clock were on the march to battle — raw troops, only partially drilled, and utterly unpracticed in the use of arms. We ought never to have been put in the field under such circumstances — more especially in a battle between . . . ourselves and experienced troops with a battery of sharpshooters. We marched out several miles — then a General, *who*, I don't know, ordered us across an open field.<sup>26</sup> . . .

<sup>25</sup> The writer is in error here. The Confederate forces were not reinforced on Monday.

<sup>26</sup> Such was the confusion during the battle that, although the 15th and 16th were assigned to Prentiss' Sixth Division, they actually fought in support of McClernand's



Our boys stood it very well for new soldiers, although bombshells burst over their heads, and several arms and legs were knocked off by cannon balls. We finally got them in what was designed as our "position" — in an open space, near a battery, with their sharpshooters protected by large trees in open woods. It promised to be a clear case of butchery. The men laid down flat, half rising to fire. They did all they could, and held the position longer than more experienced troops probably *would* have held it. The regiments retired, but not in hurried confusion, when an attack was being made by a large body of troops in front and flank. Col. [Alexander] Chambers received a ball through his right arm, but only a flesh wound. Another ball shockingly tore his coat, struck the saddle, went into his coat pocket, tore several holes in his handkerchief, and the ball was found in his pocket. I lost both my horses, Bally and Lettie, and my Wentz, saddle and bridle — so now I am on foot, but expecting hourly to confiscate a horse. Adj. [George E.] McCosh rode Bally by special favor. The horse had his leg shattered and was led off, but I suppose never got far. My Wentz mare received three balls before she fell, the last when I was trying to rally the 16th for a stand. Before I arose the regiments were off the ground, and as I walked off, the bullets whistling around thick, I was the last man alive or unwounded on the ground. Dozens of regiments were broken into fragments during the day, and men [are] looking everywhere for their companies.

I rallied a portion of the regiment on our return, and led them out again. This time we were called with others, to protect a battery, or series of them. Our men laid three hours under rushing cannon balls and bomb shells — nearly all fortunately aimed too high. These batteries of ours probably stemmed the rebel tide of victory for that day, and kept them from planting a battery which would have been terribly destructive. From that position we were marched to the advance line, and there remained all night. — From 7 A. M. to 11 P. M. I was in the saddle, excepting an hour, when I had no horse to ride — had nothing to eat for twenty-four hours — sat up all

First Division. Colonel Alexander Chambers of the 16th Iowa reported: ". . . on Sunday morning, April 6, while my regiment was preparing to join General Prentiss' division, as was previously ordered, an aide of General Grant ordered my regiment in line on the right of the Fifteenth Iowa Volunteers, to act as a reserve and prevent stragglers from reaching the river. The line had been formed but a short time when I was ordered to march it, following the Fifteenth Iowa, to General McClelland's division, whose right was giving way." *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. X, Part I, 286.



night, the rain literally *pouring* down at intervals. I call that a pretty rough beginning anyhow. To day we were left to protect a battery, only needed in case of a reverse, and were not, therefore, in the fight. . . .

But I must close. We have not had an opportunity yet of pitching our tents or getting our baggage, and we will sleep in the rain and mud to-night, uncovered except by our blankets, a *single* one each, and no overcoats, as they have been laid aside for fighting. We sleep just where we happen to be at night — and may be called on to march at any day on the track of the flying but still hard fighting enemy. It is now late at night, and I have had nothing to eat since breakfast, and that breakfast was a hard cracker, a piece of fat bacon, and coffee made out of coffee grains boiled whole. No chance of supper, although the boys have had theirs. — But I rather like this life. It is *novel* anyhow, to me. . . .

ADD. H. SANDERS<sup>27</sup>

FIRST DIVISION (Major General John A. McClernand)

ELEVENTH IOWA

*Letter From the 11th Regiment*

Near Pittsburgh Landing, Tenn.,

April 28, 1862.

*Editors Republican:* "The great battle on the Tennessee" must still form the theme of any letter from this locality. You have already had many histories and descriptions of it, and mine will probably seem stale and toady. I therefore only propose to give a sketch of the part taken by the Iowa Eleventh in the action.

The 11th numbered, on the morning of the battle, 750, officers and men. Col. [Abraham M.] Hare, in the absence of Gen. Oglesby, being in command of our Brigade — the first in McClernand's Division — the command of the regiment fell to Lieut. Col. [William] Hall. Col. Hall, though a rigid disciplinarian [*sic*], is an exceedingly-kind-hearted man—being considerate

<sup>27</sup> Des Moines Register, Apr. 20, 1862, copied from the Davenport Gazette. Addison H. Sanders of Davenport was mustered in as Lieutenant Colonel of the 16th on Nov. 14, 1861, at the age of thirty-eight. He was wounded in the Battle of Corinth, and taken prisoner at Atlanta. He was brevetted a brigadier general March 13, 1865. Roster and Record, 2:1071. After the war Sanders became postmaster at Davenport, and in 1870 was appointed by President Grant as Secretary of Montana Territory, then as acting governor of the territory, and later as Register of the United States Land Office there. Later he returned to Davenport and did editorial work on several newspapers there. Benjamin F. Gue, *History of Iowa* . . . (4 vols., New York, 1903), 4:230-31.



of the sick — and as gallant a cavalier as ever strode a steed. You may, therefore, well suppose the regiment was eager to follow him to the field. Col. H. followed, at home, I believe, the profession of the law, but when he entered the army he laid aside the arts of the special pleader. The regiment was therefore spared the agony of a military harrangue [sic] before the battle. Military stump speeches have sometimes a palatable flavor when subjected to the decomposing process of age and enhanced by the labels of the press, but they are excessively mawkish when fresh drawn.

The first intimation our regiment had of the commencement of the battle, was a report of musketry on our left, followed by the roar of cannon. Then came a cannon ball from a rifled muzzle, which seemed to say, "*Ladies and gentlemen, I am none of your smooth bores; let us bring the matter in dispute to a point.*" When I represent the cannon balls as holding sweet converse with *ladies* I mean it, for we had no less than two of these angelic visitors in our camp at the time. One of them was the wife of Col. Hall, who had accompanied her husband to the camp, and who probably can lay as good claims to being a participant in a battle as the famous Joan of Arc.

The regiment soon took up a position about a quarter of a mile to the left of their camp. It is now conceded on all hands that they held their position longer, made more bayonet charges, and disputed the ground more bull-dog-ishly, than any other regiment on the field. Twelve men from the 11th consolidated the fragments from several artillery companies, consisting of three pieces of cannon, and for eight hours illustrated the glory of American arms by pouring the hot shot into the enemy's ranks. Gen. McClellan seemed to depend more on the 11th than on any regiment in his Division, for he was seen with it more than with any corps of his army — delivering his orders in person to Col. Hall. The most brilliant feat [sic] performed by the 11th was the capture of a rebel flag. Col. Hall's horse having fallen under him, the pugnacious little hero gathered himself up, and waving his hat upon the point of his sword, ordered his men to charge bayonets, which they did in gallant style, plowing their way through or driving the enemy before them. . . . The history of the part taken by our regiment on the memorable 6th of April, may be summed up in a few words. It was a series of alternate charges and repulses, desperate sallies and sullen retrograde movements — gaining each time a little ground, till ammunition became exhausted [sic]. Only think of a regiment in a desperate



hand-to-hand struggle, having to go three miles to replenish their ammunition! In extenuation for any negligence which may be laid to the charge of those whose duty it was to have guarded against this, it may be said that the 11th had already expended eighty rounds which is about twice as much as is generally used by men even in a full day's fighting. The regiment having gone to the river for ammunition and procured it, returned to the battle-field on the double-quick, and renewed their acquaintance with the secesh, much to the disgust, no doubt, of the latter, for it was about this time in the afternoon, four o'clock, that the tide of battle was turned and victory assured. The rebels occupied on Sunday night, among others, the tents of the 11th, but they must have found them beds of thorns, for the gun-boats, Lexington and Tylor [*Tyler*], sent out among them, every few minutes, a pleasing invitation to wake up. The enemy got very little booty from the 11th, for thanks to the thoughtfulness of Col. Hall, the sick and baggage of the regiment were put on wagons when the battle first began, and when a retrograde movement became inevitably necessary, they were ready to move. But as a specimen of the moral status of the rebels, I may say that the Surgeon of the 13th Iowa, in the same Brigade with us, who left a barrel of medical whiskey standing in his tent, had it all sucked dry — they not even leaving enough for bitters for the hospital corps the next morning. I have dwelt upon this illustrative incident of the battle, because reading Beauregard's dispatch, thanking Almighty God, I expected more piety on the part of his army, and knowing his French pro-generation, I had expected more politeness from those under his command. I am happy to be able to add that the 13th have procured another barrel, and that the Surgeon is doing well. It was astonishing, by the way, to see the effect of grape shot on some of the rheumatic cases in our camp. There were some laboring under this volatile disease, who declared that nothing less than an ambulance could take them to the river. Having secured seats in these, and the whole stock and generation of teams becoming stuck together in the road, these same gentlemen, under the influence of canister and shell, would leave the ambulance, and pronouncing another mass on the sons of female dogs, who thus rudely interposed between them and comfort, and take to their heels. These were probably the same gentlemen who crowded to the bank of the river to welcome Buell's army with cheers and tried to swim to the hospital boats, to prevent their steaming off in a cowardly manner before the battle was fully assured. . . .



I could not help thinking last night, as I walked through the camp, what money many would gladly spend to be able to witness the magnificent view our encampment presented, and this morning when the reveille from fifty bands and ten thousand feathered throats woke the dawn, I inwardly exclaimed, "It is good to be here." . . . The reveille is truly beautiful, but occurs rather early in the morning for fashionable men.

Yours, in camp,

ONE OF MANY.<sup>28</sup>

*The Battle at Pittsburg Landing*

The following interesting detailed account of the battle of Pittsburg Landing is given by Serg't H. M. White,<sup>29</sup> of Co. H, 11th Regiment, in a private letter to C. Elliott, Esq., of West Liberty. It is the most minute narrative of the experience of our Muscatine boys in the fight that we have yet published:

Pittsburg Landing, Tenn., April 16th

My Dear Friend: I dare say you are at this moment better posted in regard to the "great battle of Pittsburg Landing" than your humble servant, who had the good fortune to be here at and during the fight. Nevertheless, I am certain you will not be content until you receive a full, true and particular account from your own correspondent — so here goes.

In the first place, endeavor to fix in your mind the location of a few prominent points.

Pittsburg Landing (a simple landing place, with no houses) stands on the west bank of the Tennessee river, some ten miles south of Savannah. From the Landing, a road leaves the river, and, running at an angle of some 45° from the river for the distance of three miles, reaches the camping ground of our brigade (the 8th and 18th Illinois, and the 11th and 13th Iowa). Thus, you see, we are at the southwest of Pittsburg, while, some twenty miles to the southwest of us, lies Corinth, the crossing of the Memphis and Charleston and Mobile and Ohio railroads. South of us, and between here and Corinth, is an extensive swamp, which, starting from the river, extends

<sup>28</sup> Iowa City *Republican*, May 14, 1862.

<sup>29</sup> Harold M. White of West Liberty was mustered in as third sergeant of Co. H, 11th Iowa, on Oct. 18, 1861. He was promoted to first sergeant on May 12, 1862, but died of chronic diarrhea in December, 1862. *Roster and Record*, 2:401; *Report of Brig.-Gen. Nathaniel E. Baker, Adjutant General [Iowa]* . . . Jan. 1, 1867 (2 vols., Des Moines, 1867), 1:642.



several miles to the west. Through this swamp, with a view of transporting our heavy artillery and baggage, our Generals had constructed a causeway, but, unfortunately, we never had an opportunity of traveling on our new and elegant road.

As Mohomet [sic], in despair of the mountain coming to him, condescended to make the mountain a visit, so our friend Beauregard — the hero of Sumter and Manassas — concluded that we were not at all anxious to enjoy the entertainment of "Southern powder and Southern steel" prepared for us, made up his mind to come and partake of our simple Northern cheer. And so he came, bringing, as I am told, part of his army over our newly constructed road, without even going through the formality of paying toll. He evidently intended remaining through the day, as he came before breakfast. Before he reached our camp, however, the morning meal was over, and we were preparing for inspection. But the sounding of the "long roll" through the camp told us that sterner work was at hand.

The regiment was formed, and, after remaining standing for a short time in the field where our camp was located, we marched into a piece of timbered land to the south of us. Through this we advanced perhaps half a mile, to a sort of clearing, an occasional cannon ball passing over our heads, indicating the nature of the day's work before us. — Reaching this clearing, we were ordered to lie down, and presently the firing commenced, and the contending parties were speedily engaged. The regiment that was advancing against us, was evidently an A, No. 1. One look at them was enough to convince a man that courage and discipline are virtues peculiar to neither North or South. Without a waver the long line of glittering steel moved steadily forward, while, over all, the silken folds of the Confederate flag floated gracefully on the morning air. What regiment this was, I have not been able to ascertain positively. At first I was told that it was the 8th Mississippi, but since then one of the prisoners has told me that it was the Crescent City Guard, from New Orleans. At all events, it was a superb one, and we speedily had the most convincing proof that it was good for something else besides to look at. At their left, and slightly in advance, was another regiment, of which I did not take so much notice. Both of these regiments did their best against us, while we were assisted by a section (2 pieces) of artillery.

After about half an hour of good work, we were ordered back. At this point, I judge that we must have suffered more than during any other part



of the day. . . . The order at length came to fall back, which was done in good order. And, by the way, I must say that the regiment (I have not as yet learned who they were) that was in the fight before us, is not entitled to this praise. They came running back in the wildest disorder. One frightened fugitive in particular I noticed, who, as he came along and ran through our ranks, exclaimed, "Give them h-ll, boys. I gave them h-ll as long as I could." Whether he had really given them any of the *sulphurous* or not, I can not say, but assuredly he had given them everything else he possessed, including his gun, cartridge-box, coat and hat, and was in a fair way to leave his unmentionables and under garments, to be accounted for perhaps by the return so commonly made — "lost in action."

But to return. Our regiment was ordered to fall back, which we did in good style, and at the distance of perhaps a quarter of a mile our line of battle was re-formed in a very creditable manner. Being so drawn up, a second time we advanced, halting at first on the brow of a slight elevation, firing and by slow degrees advancing. This time most of the boys fired while standing. The line was also much more extended than at first — there being a regiment on our left and one, I believe, on our right. The enemy occupied about the same ground that we did at the time of the first attack by us — that is, they were firing from the same spot where we were lying about half an hour before. This time, I should say, we remained some three-quarters of an hour, and again fell back into the timber. Our ranks re-formed and a third advance was made. This time we remained perhaps half an hour, when our cartridges having given out, it was directed that we go to the river for more ammunition.

This was for all practical purposes all the fighting done by our regiment during the day. How severe it was may be inferred from the fact that our regiment, numbering I think not more than six hundred men, lost about one hundred and eighty in killed and wounded.<sup>30</sup> The Colonel was shot in the hand, the Lieut. Colonel in the ankle and the Major in the head. Both our regimental and company officers have shown themselves possessed of an abundance of pluck, and capacity for command.

There were some scenes positively ludicrous, although it was such a serious time. Some of our men were given to firing from some distance to

<sup>30</sup> The official report of losses of the 11th Iowa was one officer and 32 enlisted men killed; 5 officers and 155 enlisted men wounded; and 1 enlisted man captured or missing, for a total of 194. *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. X, Part I, 100.



the rear without thinking sufficiently who were in front, and in some instances wounded our own men, who were too far in advance of the regiment. One of these, with a view to protect himself from what he regarded the most dangerous fire, took position in front of a tree, having nothing between himself and the enemy, but a most excellent defense against the injudicious attacks of his own friends.

One little fellow in our company was wounded in the head at the time of our first advance, and while I poured water from my canteen on his wound, he gave me an account of the manner in which it was received, garnished with such an abundance of oaths that it would have made a sad inroad upon his pay, had the pecuniary penalties imposed by the third article of war upon "any non-commissioned officer or soldier who shall use any profane oath or execration," been strictly enforced.

One of our greatest misfortunes was the want of suitable cartridges. The powder used in them was of such a poor quality that after firing the first few shots, the guns were so dirty that it was almost impossible to load them, the bullet being forced down with the greatest difficulty. — Why such powder was used can only be explained on the supposition that poor powder costs less than good, and by using it somebody's friend, in the shape of an army contractor, made a "big thing" which might have been considerably reduced by the use of the proper article.

Our march to the river was not a very regular affair, as each man got there as best he could and by his own route; nevertheless we all, or nearly all of us who were unhurt, reached it. . . . I came up on the bluffs when the regiment was forming and where several boxes of cartridges had been provided for the use of our regiment. Again we started back for the scene of action, but were ordered to take a position in front of one of our batteries, which was situated about a half a mile back from the Landing and which at the time had not commenced firing. We remained there for a short time only, when we were directed to take another position half a mile in advance, where we remained nearly an hour. The enemy in the meantime were approaching us gradually but surely. The rattle of musketry during the whole day had been unceasing and at two or three o'clock it seemed to be increasing in fierceness and intensity. Our lines were assuredly giving way before the steady and vigorous attack of the rebel army, and while the masterly genius who directed their movements had infused his own spirit into their ranks, on our side something was lacking.



The work assigned to us during the afternoon was exceedingly light. The order now came to fall back behind the battery. Other regiments had already passed us and taken their places there. The battery then opened. It was comprised of a good many pieces, among them which my attention was principally attracted by a couple of monster guns, said to be one 84 and the other a 64-pounder. — They belched forth their iron hail upon the advancing enemy, — and should these fail, the word came from an old staff officer, our last and only resource was the bayonet. We were not forced to this dire alternative, however. The artillery proved to be very effective. . . .

Just before sunset, as our regiment — now fearfully reduced from killed, wounded and exhaustion, was standing in its place, a fresh regiment of Buell's command made its appearance and relieved us. Capt. [William] Grant of Co. A, who had been in command the after part of the day, directed us to a place of rendezvous, which was near an old house, in which but a few hours before a sutler was doing a thriving business. But commerce, you know, is proverbially timid, and trade does not flourish amid the rude clangor of arms. So the sutler finding that it was unpleasant to transact business while cannon balls were flying through the roof of his establishment, had prudently abandoned it to its fate and taken care of himself. The judicial decision which pronounces pirates on the seas enemies of ships of any nation, is paralleled by another decision — if not of the military courts, at least of most members of the profession, to the effect that sutlers are foes to the human, or at least the soldier race, and their goods therefore lawful subjects of capture. I assure you the theory was acted upon promptly that night. A barrel of excellent crackers was the first to suffer, in the general scramble for the sutler's estate, of which I was so fortunate as to receive as many as my two hands would hold. With these and a chunk of cheese of most prodigious strength I made a most excellent supper, after which a transient acquaintance of mine from Company I gave me a large paper of excellent smoking tobacco, which I feel confident he never obtained by any legitimate purchase. I sat down, and filling my pipe, commenced musing over the affairs of the day, and you may well suppose my musings were not of a very agreeable character. The prospect was most decidedly *blue* — not the bright, cerulean tints of the summer sky, but a dark, despairing, deplorable blue.

That we were whipped was certain. That on the morrow we should all be taken prisoners was more than probable. Nothing but the appearance of



Buell could save us from utter destruction. Fortunately, Buell was near at hand and all the night long we could hear the constant splashing of the steamboat wheels as regiment after regiment was brought over the stream. During the night, as if nature was disposed to add to the general gloom, a furious storm came on, which continued for several hours.

The gun-boats which had somehow obtained an idea of the position of the enemy kept up a pretty regular fire during the night. — The roar of that firing was appalling, and the next day we learned that the effects of it had been destructive in the extreme. In the morning the enemy, acting on the maxim that "the early bird catches the worm," commenced operations bright and early. But during the whole day the tide of success rolled the other way. Not only had the forces of Buell crossed the river, but Buell was with them, and it is no more than the truth to say that his personal presence was worth more than his whole army. To-day we had generalship; yesterday chance seemed to rule the hour. The change was miraculous. Regiments the day before had gone into battle with no idea of what they were to do; without support and with no provision for following up their success, or recovering what they had lost. To-day it was different, and for the first time we could perceive the difference between a scientific soldier, for such Buell assuredly is, and an imbecile character, which term describes somebody else.

Towards night, when it became evident that the enemy was in full retreat, we were near our old camp and concluded to stop there for the night, so turning the head of the regiment in that direction we came in about half an hour to the pleasant spot which some six and thirty hours before we had left under peculiar circumstances. Our home looked decidedly the worse for wear. In our principal avenue nearly in front of the Captain's tent lay a dead horse. The tents were considerably torn by balls. In our tent was a six-pound ball which had torn quite a hole in the side of the edifice; two canister shot had also passed through it and left their marks behind them. When I saw these evidences of what had been the character of our visitors, I could not help entertaining the inhospitable thought that I was glad I was not at home when they called. Our knapsacks had all been broken into. Our blankets were all taken. From my knapsack they had pilfered a pair of sky-blue pantaloons, which were my especial pride and joy, and in which I had been wont to array myself when preparing for any great occasion. The marauding vagabonds had carried off my Bible also; for what purpose



I can't conceive, unless to have the ten commandments and more especially the one which says "thou shalt not steal," hard by to refer to in case of need. I fared no worse than my neighbors, however. Each man lost something, and the Texan Rangers, who are generally supposed to have perpetrated the theft, are in consequence by no means popular.

Since then we have remained here and are in daily expectation of moving forward or being attacked, but neither event has as yet happened. Perhaps I have been too jocose in giving a description of the fight as I saw it, but God knows I feel sad enough as often as I think of the dear friends who were stricken down to rise no more, and those who are lingering in pain and suffering. . . .

H. M. W.<sup>31</sup>

#### FOURTH DIVISION (Brigadier General S. A. Hurlbut)

##### THIRD IOWA

##### *An Iowan at Shiloh*

Ed. Register: — For the benefit of history I forward to you for publication, a statement of what my son<sup>32</sup> saw and experienced at the battle of Pittsburg Landing. If it shall enable any future historian to cull from the vast mass of incidents that occurred on that day, any facts unrecorded, my only object will have been accomplished.

Very respectfully &c.,

GEO. M. SWAN

Norwalk, Warren co., Iowa, June 5, 1862.

It had been rumored several days previous to the battle, that the rebels intended to drive us out of Tennessee, but the rumor was discredited — considered a "camp report." On Friday, about 5 p. m. a skirmish took place between a large body of rebels, and a part of Gen. Prentiss' command, at the out-posts. — The long roll was beaten, and in a few minutes our whole brigade, (Gen. Hurlbut's), was on the road, "double quick," to participate in the fight; but when we reached the scene of action — it being some four miles from our camp — the fight was over. Our loss was two

<sup>31</sup> Muscatine *Journal*, May 2, 1862.

<sup>32</sup> William Swan of Norwalk enlisted in Co. G, 3rd Iowa, on May 21, 1861. He was wounded slightly at Blue Mills, Mo., in September, 1861; promoted Second Corporal, Feb. 1, 1862; again wounded at Shiloh; and discharged for disability Aug. 21, 1862. *Roster and Record*, 1:382.



killed and three or four wounded. We took thirty prisoners, and the rebels left ten of their dead on the ground. Among the prisoners was a rebel Lieutenant, who was mortally wounded; he was brought into camp and a few minutes before he died, he said: "I regret very much that I am among the first to fall in the great coming struggle, but my footsteps will be followed by thousands, before many days." These words, uttered by a dying man, ought to have put Gen. Grant upon his guard, and thus saved many brave soldiers, whose lives were sacrificed on the following Sunday. On Sunday about six a. m., while eating, heavy cannonading and musketry were heard in the direction of the outposts, which were about three miles from our camp. The firing was heard by us with interest, for a few minutes, but it was regarded merely as a skirmish. Our imaginings were, however, soon cut short by the sound of the "long roll," and with it came the welcome command, "Fall in — lively, boys"; and very soon every one had his cartridge box on, and, musket in hand, was soon in rank, and in another moment we were on the road at "double quick," to meet the enemy.

About a quarter of a mile beyond our camp, we found the road and woods literally swarming with soldiers of Prentiss's Division, who were retreating from the outposts. As we were passing them, going on "double quick" to meet the enemy, some of our boys asked them why they were running away? They replied: "Don't go out there — they will *give you hell!* We are all cut to pieces." Our reply was, "Out there we are going, and if the rebels have any *hell*, we intend to go through it!" and on we went, not stopping. A short distance further on, we met a Government wagon, in which were some rebel prisoners, which I supposed had been captured in the fight. As we passed them they commenced cursing our Regiment, calling us "damned Yankees," and swearing that they would give us enough of "Dixie's land" before that day's work was over. I never felt more like shooting a rebel.

We were still about two miles from the battle-field, and, on the full run, to reach the scene — all in high spirits, and eager to get into the fight. We soon reached the ground, and barely had time to form our brigade in line of battle, and get a battery in position, before we were greeted with a storm of shot, shell, grape, and canister which literally mowed down the brush and huge oak trees, carrying with it death and destruction — but our boys met the terrible shock without flinching — every man at his post — and with shouts which sounded above the roar of the artillery, they returned



the volley, and the engagement became general. The earth trembled as we fired volley after volley, well directed, into the rebel ranks, which mowed them down like grass before the scythe. Here the horse of our own gallant Colonel Williams was shot by a cannon ball, which passed through him behind the saddle, and through the saddle skirts. The sudden fall of the horse caught our brave Colonel under him, and injured him so severely that he was carried off the field, supposed to be in a dying condition.

The command then devolved upon Major Wm. M. Stone — than whom a braver man never lived. We were charged upon by a rebel Regiment, believed to have been the New Orleans City Guards — who tried to take our Battery, and who charged across an open field. Our Regiment about 700 strong at the time, was stationed behind a rail fence, which afforded us some protection. Major Stone commanded us to lie down, and as he rode along the lines, said, "boys, lay low — don't fire a gun, until you can see the whites of their eyes — then rise and give 'em ——!" On they came, confident they could take our battery. At the command, with a shout which could be heard above the roar of the battle, we poured a well-directed fire into them — they wavered, and then fled in confusion — the ground was strewn with dead and wounded rebels. They retreated to the woods on the opposite side of the field, and again formed into line. We were ordered to lie down, and await another charge of the rebels — on they came, at a charge of bayonets, on "double quick" and when they were within about a hundred yards of us, we arose and poured volley after volley into them. — They delivered their fire at us, killing many of our brave boys, but those who survived our fire, fled. Of the whole rebel Regiment, I do not believe more than 200 escaped unharmed. The rebels now seemed to throw their whole force against the right wing, but being foiled, they appeared to engage the whole line, for, to our right and left, we could hear brisk firing. Again commenced the fearful struggle — our boys fighting like heroes, some falling on every side, but like *men* who never knew defeat, or how to *retreat*. — At times the rebels seemed to direct their whole fire at our noble flag, which was pierced with many bullets, and our noble little color guard were falling. Corporal Farber, of Company D, had his right arm shot off by a large piece of shell, which exploded near the flag. He was standing by my side, doing his duty like a true soldier. — As he was carried away he said with emphasis, "Boys, take care of our flag, I am sorry to leave you." Corporal Tracy, of Company A, fell with his left arm badly shattered, and



now the scene can scarcely be described — it was terrific. The whole earth seemed in a blaze — the sharp, ringing crack of our muskets — our batteries belching forth their shot and shell, and roaring like a deep toned thunder — the enemy's cannon balls screeching above our heads, and ploughing through our ranks, tearing up the earth before and behind us — large oak trees being splintered as if by lightning — limbs of trees falling, and twelve pound and twenty-four pound cannon balls — and still our brave men held their ground, like heroes, who were determined to conquer or die. Our gallant Major, Stone, was every where cheering the men, and was heard to exclaim "My God! what are my men made of — they must have hearts of steel!" We withstood the assaults of the rebels, at times driving them, and then being driven, until about half past three p. m., when General Hurlbut ordered the line to retire slowly, as the rebels had turned our left wing, which rested upon the bank of the river; and slowly, step by step, did our whole brigade dispute the ground. After retreating in this manner for about a quarter of a mile, we formed again in line, about three-quarters of a mile from our Regimental camping ground, and now the conflict raged, if possible more fiercely than ever — our men falling rapidly, and we in turn dealing death and destruction to the rebels, and beating them back at each and every furious onset — the rebels bringing up fresh Regiments as fast as we would thin their ranks, and thus relieving their own men, while our troops had fought them all day without rest — and thus they were able to bring fresh troops against us, yet our men stood firmly to their work — every discharge telling with terrible effect upon the enemy — not daunted in the least, still fighting as men only can fight in the cause of the Union — the bullets flying thick and fast — only two of our color-guard remaining, the Color Sergeant still unharmed, bearing aloft our flag. About five p. m., as I was in the act of firing my musket, I received a Minnie ball through my left foot, the shock from which stunned my whole frame, and benumbed my leg and foot — in fact, I came near falling — and then came the deathly sickness which always follows a gunshot wound. Having partially recovered from the first sensation of sickness, I determined to give the rebels another shot or two, but after firing my musket, I was in so much pain, that I concluded to leave the battle ground, and with that intention, I started to the rear, when two men of Company F, Marsh and Merchant were their names, were detailed to assist me. We started to the rear; March was on my right, and Merchant on my left side — my arms



upon their shoulders, and walking on my uninjured foot. We had gone but a short distance when I felt a distinct *thud* and poor Marsh fell dead — shot through the side. Merchant still helped me, and we proceeded but a few rods when he was killed — fell dead at my feet — a ball had passed through his head!<sup>33</sup> I was then left alone, and hobbled off as best I could and had not proceeded ten steps, when a musket ball struck me behind my right ear. I fell senseless. When I became conscious I examined my head and found the ball had carried away a small bunch of my hair and scalp, not penetrating my skull. I attempted twice to regain my feet, and each time fell — everything was whirling rapidly. The third time [I] succeeded, and I started off — saved my wounded limb as much as possible — was bleeding freely, and I began to feel weak. I saw a soldier standing behind a large tree — saw that he had a canteen, and asked him for water. He did not reply, but held up his canteen. I was really thirsty, having had no water all day. I put the canteen to my lips and took a large swallow — found to my discomfort that it was whiskey — he urged me to drink more, but I refused — I craved water to quench my burning thirst. I then asked him to assist me, which he did for a short distance, but about that time, our troops were forced to fall back, and the man who was helping, advised me to lie down behind a large log which we were passing. I refused, saying I never would be taken prisoner. He forsook me and ran off — our troops rallied again and held the enemy in check, and thus I was enabled to proceed, though slowly. — A ball grazed the middle fingers of my right hand, near the nails — another ball cut the fleshy part of my left hand, near the wrist — and a third passed between my left arm and body, close to the arm pit, not even abrading the skin, but greatly to the detriment of my blouse — which was seriously injured. Those were, however, mere bagatelles. . . .

Major Stone was wounded and taken prisoner, doubtless doing his duty. . . .<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> William Marsh, age twenty-two, a native of Canada, was from West Union; George Merchant, age seventeen, was from New Oregon, Iowa. *Roster and Record*, 1:359, 360.

<sup>34</sup> William M. Stone, Major of the 3rd Iowa, had been wounded at Blue Mills, Mo., in 1861, and was captured at Shiloh. He was promoted to Colonel of the 22nd Iowa, Aug. 1, 1862, but resigned in August of 1863 to campaign for governor of Iowa, an office to which he was elected. He served two terms, 1864 to 1868. Another Iowa officer, Colonel James M. Tuttle of the 2nd, who commanded the First Brigade of the Second Division at Shiloh, was his unsuccessful Democratic opponent in the 1863 election in Iowa. Gue, *History of Iowa*, 4:253; *Roster and Record*, 1:294.



A loose Cavalry horse which had lost his rider came trotting along, and I caught him by his halter-strap, mounted and rode to the Landing. Going down the hill which constitutes the Landing, I met Gen. Buell with a part of his forces coming to reinforce our almost exhausted troops. These reinforcements were throwing away their knapsacks as they went on the "double quick," the men were covered with mud, and wet up to their waists from wading creeks to join us. They arrived in time, and many a soldier's heart was gladdened by the sight of Gen. Buell's forces, and shout after shout rent the air as they moved rapidly onward eager to participate in the bloody fray. At the Landing I saw those miserable cowards who had run away in the morning. Their Officers were vainly trying to rally them and form them in line to assist our men who were bravely fighting about a mile and a quarter from the river, but many utterly refused to fight. I rode down to the boats, turned the horse loose, and some soldiers helped me on board the Commissary boat "Continental" which was crowded with wounded soldiers. Nearly every spot upon which a man could lie, was occupied — on boxes, and under tables; the floor of the cabin was covered. So numerous were the dead, dying and wounded, that a person could scarcely move without stepping upon them. I was finally placed upon some sacks of corn, which I did not occupy long, preferred the floor — ripped off my boot, bound up my foot with my handkerchief, and applied cold water.

The scene upon the boat was heart-rending — men wounded and mangled in every conceivable way — the dead and dying lying in masses, some with arms, legs, and even their jaws shot off, bleeding to death, and no one to wait upon them or dress their wounds — no Surgeons to attend us. I suppose there were about 1200 wounded on the boat; and thus we laid from Sunday night until Wednesday in the afternoon, without water, save when a soldier happened to pass through the boat in search of a comrade! and hundreds would beg for a canteen of water to cool their intense thirst and bathe their shattered limbs and ghastly wounds. Some begged the Captain to broach the Commissary Stores on the boat, but he would not allow them to be taken without a *requisition*! Many tried to buy when they could not beg food, each time the gong sounded summoning the crew to their meals, regularly three times a day, but the Captain replied that he had nothing to sell! I saw wounded men unable to move, and heard them *praying* for strength even to reach a musket to shoot the wretch! Enough of this sickening scene.



On Wednesday afternoon a Colonel of some Ohio Regiment came on board and immediately detailed a squad of soldiers to take possession of the caboose, and we soon got food. Each man received half a pint of beef soup, a small piece of boiled beef, a hard cracker and two small potatoes. This to us, was a feast; it satisfied our almost insatiable hunger. Soldiers were detailed to dress our wounds and we were rendered comparatively comfortable — the dead were buried. It was surprising to witness the heroic fortitude with which the wounded bore their sufferings, while they were nearly starving — with no one to attend to their wants.

On the Sunday following the battle, we were removed to the Hospital boat "Louisiana," and soon arrived at St. Louis, where we were kindly cared for.<sup>35</sup>

#### SECOND DIVISION (Brigadier General W. H. L. Wallace)

##### SECOND IOWA

*From the Iowa Second*

Pittsburgh Landing, Tenn.

April 8, 1862.

Mr. Editor: — The storm has fallen unexpectedly upon us. The rebels inspired by the name and eloquence of Beauregard, assisted by abundance of powdered whisky, attacked [sic] us with the fury of demons last Sunday morning. The battle raged all day Sunday. Buell, whose reinforcements the enemy dreaded, arrived on the opposite side of the river during the day and commenced crossing in the evening. Our outposts had all been abandoned and the enemy were within cannon shot of the landing at dark, when the firing ceased. Col. Tuttle's<sup>36</sup> Brigade, consisting of the Iowa 2nd, 7th, 12th and 14th, were surrounded and the last two taken prisoners. A few of each Regiment escaped. . . .

Yesterday after a terrible artillery duel for several hours, the enemy were forced to give way and nearly all our camps secured before night. The artillery taken from us has nearly all been retaken.

This morning McDowell's Brigade was attacked and driven in, but Buell was soon there and after them, and swears he will have our boys back if he has to march to New Orleans. We had no General nor Generalship until he came. Grant is played out most decidedly.

<sup>35</sup> Des Moines Register, June 11, 1862.

<sup>36</sup> See note 34.



Our mortality list is awful. . . .

H. S.<sup>37</sup>

Leonard B. Houston, of Co. D, 2d Iowa Infantry, writes to his friends in this City. In the course of his letter he says:

"It is hard to give any description of the battlefield which would make you realize what it was. I thought the battle of Donelson was awful, but it was a slight skirmish compared with the conflict at Pittsburgh [sic]. As I walked over the battlefield after the sanguinary engagement was over, I saw multitudes of the dead; and I saw great heaps of the dying who were calling for help; some begging for God's sake to give them a drink of water! The wounded were terribly mangled. In one place I saw the dead bodies of five men, all of whom had been killed by the same ball. Alive, they stood in line; dead, they lay together.

One incident of that day I will here record. While the battle was raging most terrifically, and when it seemed like a mighty hurricane sweeping everything before it; when the great storm of cannon balls made the forest in places fall before its sweep; when men and horses were dying, and a blaze of unearthly fire lit up the scene; at this moment of horror when our Regiment was lying close to the ground to avoid the storm of balls, the *little birds* were singing in the green trees over our heads! — They were as happy as if all were perfect calmness beneath them and around them! What a contrast between the happiness and innocence of those birds and the war of turbulent passions raging on that battlefield!

I don't know how our Regiment escaped. We were at one time surrounded, and had to cut our way through, with loss of 85 killed, wounded and missing."<sup>38</sup>

*From the Second Iowa*

Pittsburg Landing, Tenn.,

April 16, 1862.

*Editor Gate City:* The smoke of battle has cleared from the bloody field. The terrible visit we received from our brethren, the *Corinthians*, will not soon be forgotten. They seemed to "be perfectly joined in the same mind and the same judgment." — Great generalship was shown by the enemy.

<sup>37</sup> Burlington *Hawk-Eye*, Apr. 18, 1862.

<sup>38</sup> Des Moines *Register*, May 29, 1862.



None on our side, except by generals of divisions, until Buell came. When will the Government learn anything? — General Grant, in semi-disgrace for his conduct at Donelson,<sup>39</sup> was placed, without any public explanation, over the army here. Can such conduct be practiced upon so intelligent an army without an effect? I have ridden over the whole field, in every division, and am a frequenter of Grant's headquarters, and speak the sentiments of *the army* when I say that Gen. Grant is responsible for much of the terrible sacrifice of life on the 6th.

We fought on our own hook. "What was the plan of the battle, General?" asked Gen. Buell of Acting Brig. Gen. Tuttle. "By God, sir, I don't know!" he replied. Gen. Sweeney on our right, said he gave all his orders on his own hook, and so of many others. The army was scattered over about twenty square miles. The greenest regiments were on the outposts, and not a shovel full of dirt thrown up to protect them until they could be reinforced from the interior of the camp.<sup>40</sup> — As a natural consequence they were panic stricken and retreated in, reporting their regiments "all cut to pieces." Col. Peabody's Brigade, on the left, had none but green regiments, viz: the 12th Michigan, 16th Wisconsin, and the 23d and 25th Mo. They lost both their batteries, which were soon turned upon us. Sherman's regiments on the right and Prentiss in the centre had few troops that had ever seen a fight.

Our brigade, 2d, 7th, 12th, and 14th Iowa, under Gen. Tuttle, being encamped near the river, three fourths of a mile west of the Landing, marched out about 8 or 9 o'clock, found a hole in the lines four miles from the river

<sup>39</sup> Immediately after the victory of Feb. 15, 1862, at Fort Donelson, Grant had gone on to Nashville to consult with Buell on their next moves. His reports to Major General Henry W. Halleck, his superior, at St. Louis, miscarried, and Halleck, who had no love for Grant, complained to the authorities at Washington and was given orders to remove him. This he did, on March 3. There followed a series of letters of explanation; the misunderstanding was straightened out; and Grant was restored to his command on March 13. Badeau, *Military History of U. S. Grant*, 1:60-66; Grant, *Memoirs*, 1:325-9.

<sup>40</sup> Grant and Sherman both explained later why no entrenchments were made at Shiloh. Grant wrote: "Up to that time the pick and spade had been but little resorted to at the West. I had, however, taken this subject under consideration soon after re-assuming command in the field, and . . . my only military engineer reported unfavorably. Besides this, the troops with me, officers and men, needed discipline and drill more than they did experience with the pick, shovel and axe." Grant, *Memoirs*, 1:357. Sherman wrote: "We had no intrenchments of any sort, on the theory that as soon as Buell arrived we would march to Corinth to attack the enemy." Sherman, *Memoirs*, 1:275.



which we took possession of and *held* until 4 o'clock in the afternoon, when the enemy drove back the brigades on both sides of us and surrounded us, compelling us to fall back which we did, losing our left wing, 12th and 14th Iowa taken prisoners in so doing, besides quite a number of our men killed and wounded by the enemy's cross fire. We then found the main line falling back in a perfect rout despite the cheering news that Buell was crossing with his troops. Our brigade then formed in the line a mile west of the Landing and held it all night in a drenching rain, and next day assisted Buell in driving the enemy out of camps.

The Iowa regiments, I believe, *all* did well, and all the Illinois regiments. Some of the Ohio regiments acted shamefully.

Let it be remembered by the friends of the Iowa 2d that it was in the battles of Sunday and Monday, and on Tuesday, *of its own accord* went with Buell through mud and rain from morning till dark on armed reconnaissance. . . .

H. S.<sup>41</sup>

*Letter From Capt. N. W. Mills*<sup>42</sup>

Pittsburgh Landing, Tenn., April 9, 1862

Dear Brother:— On last Friday afternoon, a reconnaissance in force was made towards our lines by the rebels, and a skirmish was had at camp of 8th Iowa. That night cartridges were distributed to all the troops. Saturday was quiet, and a day of waiting. — Sunday morning at guard mounting, while standing in my position as retiring officer of the day, the enemy commenced on our lines with musketry. The long roll was beaten throughout the camps, and troops began moving rapidly. Our regiment soon fell into line, haversacks and canteens on, and with everything as near ready as it was possible to be at such a time. The 7th, 14th and 12th Iowa fell in on our left and the Brigade was formed, Col. Tuttle commanding, and moved out towards the line of battle, and took position with the remainder of Gen. W. H. L. Wallace's Division immediately in front of the battle line of the enemy and about the center of our lines. This position was about three

<sup>41</sup> Keokuk Gate City, Apr. 30, 1862.

<sup>42</sup> Noah W. Mills of Des Moines was mustered in as Second Lieutenant of Co. D, 2nd Iowa, on May 27, 1861. On June 1 he was promoted to Captain of the Company; one year later, June 22, 1862, he became lieutenant colonel. He was wounded in the battle of Corinth, Oct. 8, 1862, and died a few days later. *Roster and Record*, 1:174.



miles from our camp. While we were marching to it, the musketry firing was constant — first a fierce roll of it would be heard to the right, lasting several minutes, then on the left, with artillery firing at short intervals, at various points. Then it would settle down into a regular fight along the whole front of a brigade or division lasting for one, two or more hours.

But for fear I anticipate I must go back a little. A short time before we reached our position, Capt. [Robert] Littler was wounded in the arm by a passing shell, so that he had to return to the rear — his arm has been amputated. We were posted, the 12th and 14th Iowa, on the left and in the timber, with timber and brush in front. Our regiment and the 7th rested behind the fence of a cotton field — our right a hundred yards or so from a road running across the field, and a couple or three hundred yards from a house and out-houses deserted by their owner. A battery of the rebels was already posted just in front of us, in the timber across the field, which was playing alternately towards us and obliquely towards a battery at the left of our brigade. We had not been in position but a little while when a projectile of some kind knocked the dirt into the faces of several of us, and we considered ourselves called upon to be on the alert for fear of being taken unawares. A battery of our own was shortly afterwards posted on a little rise in our rear, which played on the rebels and drew their fire in our direction, but the discharges nearly all passed over our heads. This continued for a time when the enemy moved up and attacked the line where our left rested, and the 12th and 14th did some excellent fighting, driving the enemy back, when the enemy renewed the attack with increased vigor. Our men retired then to their first position, and forced them back again when they retired to attack some other point. Soon after, the firing commenced over to the right of us and continued for some distance away with considerable energy on both sides, and Colonel Sweeney, commanding brigade next to us, came wanting reinforcements for his left. — Our right wing was detached and marched down to the right till the left of Company D rested in the middle of the road, when we fronted towards the field. At this time the troops whose left rested near us in the brush fell back and the enemy planted a battery exactly opposite to us, supported by infantry but out of musket range. They fired so accurately that we laid down, when we were to some extent covered by a slight rise in the ground in front of us. This battery played over us at a furious rate, certainly with all styles of ammunition they had, answered by the battery on our side mentioned be-



fore. — We fired an occasional shot when we first came to the spot but the range was too long, and we ceased entirely. While we were here I received a glancing shot on my chin, which I think was from a canister shot which struck the earth before it did me. I thought I had a broken jaw till after examination I found the bones were all sound and that the hurt was of but small extent. Burbridge was struck at the same time on the arm, and many more might have been without precaution, for the shells and shot passed over us terrifically at about the height of a man's head from the ground while sitting down. This continued so long that it was a relief when the rebels began to advance upon us. There was a cry raised that they were our men. Lieut. Bradshaw of a Missouri Regiment who had dropped in with us handed me his glass and I stood up and examined them thoroughly till finally convinced that I was not mistaken, and at the same time I saw a flanking force moving in concert with them, coming out of the woods, to the left of them, and filing in the edge of the timber down towards the unoccupied ground that extended to our right, and immediately sent Lieut. Godfrey to inform Col. Baker that the enemy was flanking us. The Lieut. passed over the ground notwithstanding the raking fire which was poured across it and delivered the message in safety. We lay in wait for the approaching force till they were in good range, when we rose and fired a volley into them, and kept it up at will, receiving a brisk reply from them, in which several of our men were wounded and some killed. Sharp of my company got a buck shot in the side of his head which he still carries, and a stray bullet made a hole in one of my coat sleeves.

The rebels soon took cover out of sight of us and the firing ceased, except occasional shots from those who saw a chance for a little sharpshooting, when the right wing rejoined the regiment, and the order came from Col. Tuttle to fall back steadily. It did not come a *minute too soon*. The Brigades to the right and left of us had fallen back without orders from Gen. Wallace, leaving ours isolated in front of the enemy while his flanking parties were cutting us off. The one on our left fell back first, allowing the enemy to get in the rear of our two left regiments. When it was understood that we were being flanked on both sides, Gen. Wallace ordered Col. Tuttle, whose Brigade had held its ground all the time, to move back. We about-faced and commenced our march in line, but the 12th and 14th coming in contact with the enemy first, were forced to march by the flank, which resulted in a great many of them being cut off and taken prisoners,



but not till the enemy had opened fire on us from both the right and left. We were then obliged to make a flank march ourselves, passing through a murderous fire, along with several other regiments of Wallace's Division. This terribly hot spot was a road which passed by the camp of the Iowa 3d, and the ground contiguous to it. — The 7th and 2d were the last to come out of the angle, according to my observation. . . . A great many were killed and wounded while we were passing through the lines of opposing fire. The Adjutant's horse was shot under him. Gen. Wallace was brought down near our company, and the ground was strewn with wounded and killed. As soon as we arrived in the timber again in a position not so much exposed, all those who had not become too far separated were rallied, and moved to a position to repel an advance upon the successful maneuver of the rebels, but we had some revenge on them, for when we got out from between them, they pitched into each other, and at the same time a battery of ours commenced peppering them, and prevented them from coming farther. — A portion of Buell's force which we had anxiously expected all day, arrived at this juncture, and took position next the enemy, who brought up a battery and commenced a heavy fire toward us, which was replied to with such accuracy by guns of ours that they were forced to desist and move out of range.

About this time it began to rain, and the drops fell heavy, thick and fast for much of the night, on the men, but few of whom had the slightest protection against it. There was no firing from the enemy during the night, but our gun boats, to keep them awake, fired in their direction at intervals of half an hour.

At the breakfast hour in the morning, our reinforcements having been properly disposed, and our other force arranged for supports, the attack was made by our side with such cool determination that we soon began to see by the sound moving away, that the enemy were being driven, though slowly and steadily, before us. Our Brigade was moved by Col. Tuttle right along close to the line, ready at any moment to take another turn at the enemy. Part of the time we were under fire of artillery and part under musketry. Some time about noon or after, Gen. Buell called on Col. Tuttle for a regiment to send to the left to Gen. Nelson's [Brigadier General William Nelson, commander of the Fourth Division of Buell's Army of the Ohio] command; we were sent and conducted to the left nearly a mile, and placed in line in the edge of a field which terminated in an orchard, and



companies A., B. and D were deployed as skirmishers down into the orchard, to feel of the woods beyond, from which bullets were whistling numerously. I had just got Company D in position when the regiment came on the charge across the field towards us, led by Col. Baker. I immediately rallied my skirmishers on the battalion and we joined in, charging up to the woods, but the enemy had disappeared towards Corinth. No one was wounded here but Capt. Cox, severely in the knee. Videttes were thrown forward, who had an opportunity of sharpshooting at the stragglers in the rear of those who had occupied the woods. An Ohio regiment came up to us and took post on our left, and a battery in our rear played toward the rebel lines. We remained here hearing the fighting going on to our right, coming nearer to us, then even with us, then beyond us, and we knew the rebels were being forced to yield the ground. After a while the firing ceased, when it came to be understood that they were in full retreat. Towards evening Col. Tuttle sent for us, and we marched back to camp, all the ground lost the day before having been regained. The rebels had not destroyed our camps but had destroyed much of the property in them. In all of them were the dead and wounded of both sides. We passed through the ground we had lost the day before, and saw the effects of the fighting; nowhere were the dead out of sight, mangled in every conceivable way.

Next morning we were in the field again, in a new position, but there was no fighting in our immediate neighborhood, and at evening we were ordered back to camp, where we have since remained.

In our marching and countermarching and other operations on this great battle field we have had ample opportunities to observe the results of war. There is a scope of country about seven miles long and three miles wide, nearly every acre of which has been fought over, and the dead were, up to Tuesday noon, strewn all over it, and hundreds are not yet buried, but the work is going on as fast as possible. The scent from the dead horses, which decay sooner than human bodies, had already begun to pervade the air, when the weather turned cold and rainy and arrested the hurried decomposition.

In two places where we passed were clusters of five rebels killed by one discharge of cannon and terribly mangled; and I am very positive in saying, all prejudices aside, that there are at least two rebels killed to one on our side. There are places where you could stand in one spot and count 50 to 100 bodies at a time. Our artillery was better served than theirs and did



more execution. We had more of it;—and our musketry was better aimed. But it is time our people were getting rid of the idea that the courage is all on our side; it is a mistake. The enemy seemed to fight determinedly, and I know they fell back steadily when forced to, contesting every step of the way, until further resistance proved too disastrous.

During all the fight Col. Tuttle's presence was a tower of strength to us, and wherever "Yaller," the Colonel's horse, could be seen, confidence was there. What Col. Tuttle was to the Brigade, Col. Baker was to the regiment. However, the last two days, the authorities appreciating his ability, gave Col. Tuttle the command of a Division, and the last day Col. Baker command of a Brigade.

On Monday, while the 2d was detached, part of the Brigade under Tuttle assisted materially in taking a battery.

On Sunday our Brigade, exclusively an Iowa one, was the only one in that part of the line which held its place till its Division Commander, Gen. Wallace, ordered it back, for which we all think it and its commander deserve more than ordinary credit, done as it was in the face of an enemy considerably outnumbering us. The opportune arrival of Buell's forces made our number equal to if not larger than the enemy's. We are all enthusiastic concerning his manner of operating on Monday, and have abundant faith in him for the future. All of Company D who were there did well. . . .

Your affectionate brother,

NOAH W. MILLS<sup>43</sup>

#### SEVENTH IOWA

#### *Battle at Pittsburg Landing*

Sunday morning, April 6th, whilst taking breakfast, we were startled by the rapid firing of cannon in the direction of our advanced encampments. There had been a skirmish to our front the day previous, indicating the near presence of the Rebel forces. Yet it was deemed hardly possible that they would venture to attack us in full force. But the continuous roar of artillery, and the heavy volleys of small arms, soon dispelled all doubt, and convinced us that the great battle of the war had commenced. — Directly every camp was busy with the note of preparation. The long roll beat to

<sup>43</sup> Des Moines Register, Apr. 23, 1862.



quarters — ammunition was distributed — the men formed in line of battle, and advanced to support our front. Our camp was nearest the river, and our regiment, the 7th Iowa, was in the 1st Brigade of the 2d Division, (General Wm. [H.] L. Wallace commanding,) Col. Tuttle commanded the brigade. When brought to the front, we were placed near the centre. To our left was Gen. Hurlbut's division, to our right the division of Gen. McClernand. As we advanced to the front, we were met by stragglers from the regiments that had been driven back, some bare headed — some without guns — some powder begrimed and wounded, and some helping off others that were wounded. Army wagons loaded with baggage, and scattered parts of two or three batteries that had occupied a position nearest the advancing forces of the rebels, were mixed up promiscuously with the crowd of flying fugitives. Steadily onward through these advanced the 2d division to the relief of our hard pressed troops in front. We soon reached the point where it had been decided to make a stand. This was at nine o'clock. The fighting was then principally confined to the left wing of our forces.

Very soon, however, the enemy attacked our position. To the left was an open field. One of our batteries was placed in position to command this. Gen. Lauman's [Brigadier General J. G. Lauman commanded the Third Brigade of the Fourth Division] brigade, composed of the 31st and 44th Indiana, and the 17th and 25th Kentucky regiments, were ordered to support this, flanking it on the right, constituting also the right of Gen. Hurlbut's division. The 2d division occupied ground to the left of this, and was posted in the edge of the woods fronting an open field. These arrangements had hardly been effected before the rebels assailed our forces along nearly the whole extent of the line. The fight was opened by heavy cannonading, which was vigorously replied to by Willard's Chicago, and Major Cavander's Missouri batteries. Under cover of this fire, the rebel infantry advanced to the attack. Soon the whole line was one blaze of fire. Our men stood their ground firmly, and repelled four successive attacks. The storm of bullets was terrific. The most desperate charges of the enemy were against the position occupied by Gen. Lauman's brigade. But animated by his presence and example his men behaved like veterans. He rode up and down the lines, perfectly calm, and stopping here and there to address a cheering word to his men. I could not but admire his noble bearing, though momentarily expecting to see him fall. The Major of the 31st Indi-



ana fell mortally wounded near my side. Assistant Adj't General H. Scofield, was also disabled by a shot in the thigh. Colonel Crofts was wounded, Lt. Barnes, Aide to General Lauman, your correspondent, and Gen. Lauman himself, successively had our horses shot. But still the fight went on, and the rebels were forced to retire. The underbrush in front of our line was literally chopped to pieces by the repeated volleys of rifled musketry, and the ground was covered by the rebel dead. It was now about two o'clock P. M. The fighting had been heavy all day on both flanks, and now the left began to yield. Gen. Lauman was ordered to move to the support of our retiring troops. This he did; and by the most desperate fighting, and skillful handling of his brigade, saved the left wing from annihilation. But the moving off of these troops left a gap in our lines, of which the rebels, with their superior forces, were not slow to take advantage. About this time, the right also began to give way, and the 2d division was soon fairly flanked. The order was finally given for them to fall back, but it came too late to save all. The 8th, 12th and 14th regiments of Iowa Volunteers were cut off, surrounded, and after desperate fighting, forced to surrender. — The remains of our army were now driven close to the river, and the prayer of all was, "Would that night or Buell would come!"

The rebels were following up their advantages, and seemed on the point of cutting us off altogether. But most fortunately now, General Buell's advanced forces came up, and ranged themselves in line of battle. Col. Webster, Chief of Gen. Grant's Staff, had by this time, got some heavy siege guns into position, which began to pour a destructive fire upon the advancing columns of the enemy. They replied vigourously with both artillery and small arms, but were finally compelled to fall back. Night now closed upon the scene, and the forces on both sides slept on their arms.

The gunboats Tyler and Lexington had taken part in the closing fight and continued to throw shell amongst the rebels at intervals of fifteen minutes during the entire night. The scene was grand, yet sad, for thousands of our brave fellows lay bleeding on the ground, and we knew that the morning's light would see many more stricken down by the bullets of the enemy. During the night a heavy rain set in which completely drenched our exhausted troops laying out on the naked ground.

Before it was fairly daylight the next morning the battle was renewed by Gen. Nelson's Division on the left, and Gen. Lew Wallace's on the right. The rebels soon began to fall back, and were steadily followed up by Buell's



forces who were constantly arriving and immediately sent forward. All through the previous night the transports had been busy ferrying over his forces from Savannah nine miles below, and also from the opposite side of the river. Gen. Buell everywhere inspired confidence as he rode along the lines and addressed words of cheer to his troops. His superior generalship completely foiled the rebels in all their maneuvers, and whilst he preserved his own line of battle intact, he completely broke theirs, driving them from one position to another until we had regained all the ground lost on the preceding day — captured several batteries, and pursued them far out on the road to Corinth. The troops belonging to Gen. Grant's army that had fought on the previous day, including Generals McClernand, Sherman, Smith, Hurlbut, and Prentiss's Divisions were organized into reserves, and hurried on to the support of Buell's forces.

The fighting of the second day was principally done by the several divisions under General Buell's immediate command. All feel that our salvation is due to him alone. He himself arrived at the scene in advance of his troops, and riding up to our men assured them final victory if they could only hold the enemy in check until his troops arrived. At 5 o'clock p. m., he rode along the lines and said to our jaded and disheartened men, that if they would hold them in check two hours longer, he had men enough to engage them alone in the morning. . . .

Many of the dead still lie unburied. The battle field was one of the most heart rending sights it was ever my lot to witness. For miles the ground was strewn with the mangled remains of the dead, and the dying, and those disabled by their wounds. The loss on each side can only be counted by thousands. The rebels too took the most prisoners, but it is probable that their dead and wounded will far exceed ours. The fire of our artillery was terribly destructive to their ranks. . . .

C<sup>44</sup>

## CAPTURE OF THE 8TH, 12TH, 14TH IOWA

*The Iowa Boys — A Correction*

<sup>44</sup> Burlington *Hawk-Eye*, Apr. 18, 1862.



Headquarters 12th Reg't Iowa Infantry,  
Pittsburg, Tenn., April 23, 1862.

Editors Chicago Tribune: From reports of the battle of Pittsburg published in the St. Louis and Chicago papers, I notice that it is the general impression among the reporters that our Iowa men were taken prisoners in the early part of the engagement, on Sunday, and some have gone so far as to state that our soldiers threw down their arms with little or no resistance. The latter statement is too palpably false to deserve notice.<sup>45</sup>

The Iowa 8th, 12th and 14th went into the fight early in the day, held, and even gained ground during the day, while regiments on the right and left were repeatedly forced back, and not until 4 o'clock were they surrounded and taken prisoners. I examined the ground where they were taken, and it was literally covered with rebel dead. Our men instead of throwing down their arms, smashed them against trees, and raved like madmen because they were compelled to surrender.

The reason why they were taken was because they stood their ground while our forces on the right and left were driven back, allowing the enemy to surround them.

LIEUT. D. B. H.<sup>46</sup>

*How the Three Iowa Regiments Happened to be Captured*

A correspondent of the Dubuque Times gives the following explanation of the manner of the capture of the 8th, 12th and 14th at the battle of Pittsburg:

Pittsburg Landing, Apr. 10.

Dear Times: — Though the news of our fight at Pittsburg Landing will reach you long ere this does, I will venture a line. The whistling of bullets is not as unpleasant as I had anticipated. But for their effect, the music would be exhilarating [*sic*]. — The rebels attacked us on last Sunday morning, with Beauregard in command. The army on both sides was immense,

<sup>45</sup> Early newspaper reports of the battle had claimed that the Iowa regiments had been overrun and captured — or had "surrendered" — at the first onslaught in the morning. Iowa papers took every opportunity to point out the error of this report. This and the following letter are examples of this defense. The various reports of officers published in the *Official Records* give the time of surrender at between 5:30 and 6 in the afternoon.

<sup>46</sup> Keosauqua *Republican*, May 9, 1862.



and the carnage commensurate. The battle field was six miles long, and the range of the Minnies and Dahlgreens will indicate the width.

On Sunday about 7 o'clock p. m. one portion of the line of our troops composed of several Iowa Regiments with Ohio troops on one flank, and Illinois troops on the other, seemed to be a point of special attack. The enemy charged with both infantry and cavalry. In this hour of peril, when every man ought to do or die, the Ohio and Illinois troops fell back, or rather took to their heels, and fled leaving the line something in the shape of a U, the middle of the letter being represented by the Eighth, Twelfth, and Fourteenth Iowa. This conduct on the part of the right and left flanks, while the Iowa boys stood their ground, gave the advancing enemy a chance to surround our boys, which they were not slow to improve, and though they fought bravely, they could not escape. And they fought, till their officers saw that to continue the struggle was to sacrifice *all* the noble lives entrusted to their keeping, so what could they do but surrender?

Even then it was with difficulty that the boys could be induced to cease fighting, many of them preferring certain death to surrender. But it was inevitable, and now those three noble Iowa regiments above named, are prisoners.

Where, in the meantime, were the troops who ought to have stood by the Iowa boys? Away down at the steamboat landing, huddled together like frightened sheep, to the number of thousands!! And there they staid, and even refused to return at the command of distinguished officers, until the General in command ordered our own gunboats to commence shelling them, if they remained disobedient!!!

Mr. Editor, these are rather stubborn facts, more so because the organs of military renown, especially of Illinois, have sought of late to claim all bravery for their own men. . . .<sup>47</sup>

## AFTERMATH

### *Our Army Correspondence*

Camp of the 11th Iowa  
Pittsburg Landing, Tenn.

April 19, 1862.

Dear Journal: — Quiet is once more restored along our lines. The heavy

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, May 2, 1862.



booming of cannon and the clashing of small arms is heard no more. Peace, temporary peace, now reigns, and we have full time to review the devastation of the field on which the late battle was fought. Now we may study the revolting effects of war, the fruits of which bring naught but bitterness and woe to a once happy and prosperous people. To appreciate fully its horrors one has but to participate in a battle, or visit the ground before the interment of the dead. This I have done and seen, and God knows that I have little desire to witness a re-occurrence of the scene again.

The mangled bodies and the groans of the suffering wounded cause one to fully realize the dreadful storm, the result of which has entailed so much misery on the friends of those who were engaged in the slaughter. Many anxious parents will look in vain for the return of their sons whose bones are now mouldering in one common grave by the side of strange companions. Such is the fate of war.

The woods around, in which we are encamped present a different appearance from what it did before the battle. Scarcely is one's eyes directed to a tree or bush that does not bear the mark of a cannon or musket ball. The desolation is complete. Visitors from the different States, sent here to enquire into the condition of their respective troops, are loaded down with trophies of the field. You see one man seize upon a gun twisted into an extraordinary shape by its collision with a cannon projectile, another contents himself with procuring fragments of shells, flattened bullets, &c., while one, more ambitious than the rest, carries off the field a 60 pound shell thrown from one of the gunboats. The soldier is satisfied to see the sights and let the missiles repose as they were thrown from the mouths of the guns.

Our dead and those of the enemy's are buried promiscuously, through the forest, the ground chosen for our own dead being generally on high land and marked by neat head-boards with suitable inscriptions, erected by the boys to distinguish them from those of the rebel dead, and also to enable their friends to find their last resting places should they ever wish to disinter them.

The wounded rebels have been sent down the river and have either gone to St. Louis or Chicago. One old man I noticed was badly wounded; he was accompanied by three sons who refused to desert him and fell prisoners to the Federals. Another my attention was particularly directed to; he was a Lieutenant in a company from New Orleans; his wound was in the



thigh and painful in the extreme. He, however, seemed very patient. While watching him he motioned me toward him and requested that I would raise him in a position that he might rest on his elbow. This I did. He then grasped my hand and asked me "do you think I will get well?" I answered that I thought he would, and that his wound was not necessarily a fatal one. At this reply the poor fellow burst into tears and said: "O, my mother, my poor mother, what will she do? she will think me dead!" The sight was truly affecting. I consoled him as best I could, and informed him that I thought, in all probability, his mother would, by some means, learn of his whereabouts, and promised that I would write her if he wished for this promise. He seemed gratified and expressed his gratitude by warmly pressing my hand. This was the last I saw of him; the next day he was sent down the river. He seemed to appreciate the kindness shown him by our boys, and acknowledged that they were more humane than he had been led to believe before making their acquaintance. . . .

E.C.H.<sup>48</sup>

*From the 6th Iowa*

We have been permitted to publish the following extracts from a letter from Ed. Fracker [who] had been home on furlough, and did not get to Pittsburg until two hours after the fight.

Pittsburg Landing,  
April 10th, '62.

We left Savannah [and] arrived at this place just at dusk; it is no town or settlement but merely a landing. . . . I went ashore. Here all was hurry and confusion; wagons were hurrying off to the battle-field after wounded, soldiers were running around hunting comrades to learn the whereabouts of their regiments, details were coming in for provisions, from the boats, for the hungry fighters, now resting in their recovered camps, squads of "secesh" prisoners were scattered over the shore guarded; but among all the crowd I could not see a familiar face. I enquired of many soldiers for my regiment, also for the 16th. . . . but could get no answer as to their whereabouts, except that they were on the field, and both regiments "all cut to pieces." It was now quite dark and I began to look around for a place of shelter for the night, as it was beginning to rain. I went up

<sup>48</sup> Muscatine Journal, May 2, 1862.

<sup>49</sup> Iowa City Republican, Apr. 23, 1862.



the hill to a lot of tents and a log house, but all were full of the wounded, the dead and the dying; every inch of shelter afforded by tents, houses, or wagons were occupied and used as hospitals. While wandering around I came across a poor fellow lying on his back with his face turned up to the rain; its paleness attracted my attention; I placed my hand on his forehead, it was very cold, he was the first dead I had seen, and not wishing to see more that night, I put my baggage under a table, near the log house, to keep it dry if possible, then throwing my blanket over my head and shoulders I sat down on a stool near them with my back against the house, but tired as I was I could sleep or rest but little in this position, surrounded by the groaning victims, and the noise of the coming and going ambulances; but I kept my position until day began to break. . . .

I started off to find the 6th, following the road and passing camp after camp I soon began to see signs of the battle, and the further I went the thicker they became. I passed over hills and hollows, through woods and fields. The dead lay scattered on every side; dead horses, broken down cannon, muskets and equipments, clothing, bullets and cannon balls everywhere. I had passed over five or six miles, when arriving where the dead were the thickest I found our Orderly Serg't and a private of my Co. searching for our missing men. . . . We then started for our camp, passing numbers of dead lying in all positions, eyes open and glaring; men were busy at work burying them, two or three deep in a hole, our men in front, the rebels behind them.

We found our boys hard at work cooking and straightening up the camp, for the rebels when they had possession of it Sunday night had broken open everything and carried off blankets and clothing of all kinds; our officers lost everything except what they had with them on the field. . . .