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Iowans in Southern Prisons, 1862

*Edited by Mildred Throne**

After the battle of Shiloh at Pittsburg Landing on the Tennessee River, April 6-7, 1862, some 1,000 Iowans from the 8th, 12th, and 14th Regiments were listed as "captured or missing."[1] Late in the afternoon of the first day of the battle these three Iowa regiments were among those surrounded in the bitter fighting at the "Hornet's Nest" or "Hell's Hollow" and forced to surrender, together with General B. M. Prentiss, commanding at that point. The prisoners were hurried back toward Corinth and thence to Memphis, from where they were sent by train to Mobile. There the officers were separated from the privates, each group being sent to separate prisons.

Among the prisoners there were about 400 from the 12th Iowa; about 50 of these were from Company D. Many years later the surviving members of Company D decided to prepare a history of their company and assigned the task to Erastus B. Soper.[2] Working from diaries and letters of the members of the Regiment, Soper, between 1885 and 1903, prepared a lengthy history of the company and had it typed up and bound in a large volume. He wrote most of the account, but several members of the company prepared some of the chapters. This document, now in the possession of Harlan Soper of Emmetsburg, Iowa, was loaned to the Society recently, and it is from this work that the following accounts of the imprisonment of the men of Company D have been taken.

The first part, written by Private Byron Plympton Zuver[3] of Mason City,

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[1] *War of the Rebellion . . . Official Records . . .* (Washington, 1884), Series I, Vol. X, Part I, 101. (Hereafter listed as *Official Records.*)

[2] Erastus B. Soper of Fairview, Jones County, enlisted in the 1st Iowa (a three-months enlistment) on Apr. 24, 1861, at the age of nineteen. Mustered out on Aug. 21, 1861, Soper re-enlisted on Sept. 20, 1861, as Second Sergeant of Company D, 12th Iowa. *Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers . . .* (6 vols., Des Moines, 1908), 1:77, 2:525. (Hereafter listed as *Roster and Record.*)

[3] Zuver enlisted at the age of twenty as a private, was captured at Shiloh, re-enlisted in 1864 and was thereafter promoted through the various stages of corporal to Fifth Sergeant. *Ibid.*, 2:550.

describes the fate of the privates in their various prisons. Since this was only the beginning of the second year of the war, conditions in the South were much better than in 1864-1865, and the prisoners were treated fairly well. The second part was written by John H. Stibbs of Cedar Rapids, the captain of the company at the time of its capture. After returning to his regiment Stibbs was promoted to major and then to lieutenant colonel in 1863 and finally, in 1865, to colonel. He had also served as first sergeant of Company K in the 1st Iowa before enlisting in the 12th.[4]

The material is reproduced here exactly as typed, except for obvious typographical errors, but the punctuation, with a too-liberal sprinkling of commas, has been modernized to make the reading easier.

PRISONER OF WAR, BY B. P. ZUVER

As soon as the surrender was complete,[5] the firing in our vicinity ceased, and, while awaiting orders to move off the field, our boys entered into conversation with the Regiment in our immediate proximity, which proved to be the 1st La. Inf'y, a body of well dressed and well appearing men. From them it was learned that the Regiment we had met and dispersed from our rear at Hell's Hollow was the 2nd Miss. Tigers, and that Gen. Johnston[6] had been killed. They also pointed out to us the confederate Gens. Beauregard, Hardie [*sic*] and Polk,[7] and had considerable to say (intending probably, to be complimentary) about our not being Yanks, and that our fighting had cost them a man for every one of us captured. As we moved to the rear, we met troops pushing forward towards the front, but the explosion of shells from the gun boats,[8] caused the lines occasionally to

[4] *Ibid.*, 1:78, 2:526.

[5] Prentiss surrendered the troops under his command at about 5:30 in the afternoon of April 6, 1862. *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. X, Part I, 279.

[6] General Albert Sidney Johnston, commander of the Confederate forces, was killed early in the afternoon of April 6, the first day of fighting. See Joseph W. Rich, "The Death of General Albert Sidney Johnston on the Battlefield of Shiloh," IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, 16:275-81 (April, 1918). For a graphic description of this battle by a member of the 15th Iowa, see Mildred Throne (ed.), "The Civil War Diary of C. F. Boyd, Fifteenth Iowa Infantry. Part I," IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY, 50:70-82 (January, 1952).

[7] G. T. Beauregard, second in command at Shiloh, succeeded Johnston after the latter's death. Lieut. Gen. William J. Hardee commanded the Third Corps of the Confederate forces, while Maj. Gen. Leonidas Polk commanded the First Corps. *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. X, Part I, 2.

[8] Grant had two gunboats, the *Tyler* and the *Lexington*, in the Tennessee River at Pittsburg Landing. He gives them much credit for stopping the last push of the

stagger and stragglers to hunt for a safer retreat. We were constantly reviled and taunted with all manner of vile epithets from these so called chivalrous sons of the South; but, owing to our peculiar situation, we had little to say. Still the boys did tell them that their boasts of driving Grant and his army into the Tenn. River were vain; and declared that, on the contrary, they would be hunting their back tracks before that time on the next day; all of which they received with howls of derision.

That night we stopped near Monterey, seventeen miles from Corinth, and were guarded all night in what had been the previous year a cornfield. We were without food or shelter and exposed to the rain; the mud was deep, and the marching had been fearful. Here we left Thomas Barr [of Shellsburg]. He was shot through the thigh and could march no further. We afterwards learned that three days later he escaped from a field hospital where there was mostly rebel wounded, and reported at Camp. At this place, the officers and men were required to turn over their side and personal arms. Lt. Hale [Hiel Hale of Cedar Rapids] took his revolver apart and gave Boughton [Judson L. Boughton of Cedar Rapids] the cylinder, which he concealed in his canteen, splitting it open for that purpose, and closing it up; Gephart [Perry Gephart of Cedar Rapids] laid his upon the pile; all offers of the boys to carry it and take chances of detection were declined. A squadron of rebel Cavalry, in the morning, came rushing into town determined to shoot the prisoners rather than permit them to be recaptured. They erroneously supposed themselves pursued by a force of Federal Cavalry. But the scare was soon over, and we took up our muddy march toward Corinth, where we arrived about the middle of the afternoon and halted in the street near the depot, while the train was being made up to give the "Yanks" a free ride; while waiting, the corpse of Gen. Johnston, with its guard, passed through our lines. This gave occasion for much angry talk on the part of the citizens. Wherever we went during the whole trip South, the people flocked to see us, manifesting the keenest curiosity and most malignant hatred. Finally we were loaded in freight cars and, late at night, pulled out on the Memphis & Charleston road toward Memphis, arriving at Grand Junction, Tenn., about noon. At La Grange, about three miles from there, we were held three hours, while trains loaded with troops from Island No. 10 on their way to Corinth passed by. . . . Speeding on,

Confederates toward the Landing late in the afternoon of the first day's battle. *Ibid.*, 109.

at a moderate pace, the train was run into the M. & C. depot at Memphis on the evening of April 8th, where we found about all of the population of the city awaiting us. "Heres your mule" the gamins sung out. We unloaded ourselves from the box cars and were marched to the "Bradly Block," a large brick Tobacco Warehouse near the river, and there given quarters for the night. A few gunny sacks found in the building were speedily converted into blankets or rather something that could be used as a substitute for them.

From our prison windows the Mississippi River and the Arkansas shore were in plain view. Steamers, flying the Confederate flag, were plying on the river, and the rebel gunboat, Gen. Bragg, under construction, was moored just below us.

On the morning of the 9th the prisoners received a ration of boiled ham and hard bread, the first food since breakfast the morning of the 6th, except what the boys had stolen from their guards or what had been smuggled to them by sympathizers among the citizens. About eight A. M. they were marched into the streets and thence to the depot; during the march and while waiting at the depot, they found many sympathizers who surreptitiously conveyed to them provisions and tobacco in considerable quantities, greatly to their relief and comfort. Again they boarded the train and set out on their Southward journey. On the tenth they reached Granada, and changed cars to the great Northern R. R., arriving at Jackson, the capital city of Mississippi situated on the banks of the beautiful Pearl River, on the morning of the 11th. The railway runs through the central portion of the city. From the R'y prison doors the city, with its fine residences and spring flowers and verdure, looked beautiful. Across the tracks from the depot was a fine hotel, the "Confederate House." The train stopped in front of the Hotel, and the guards, an aristocratic organization called the Memphis Home Guards, sang, for the edification of the crowd or the admiration of the ladies in the Hotel balcony, the "Bonny Blue Flag." Bands of music from the piazzas of the Hotel continued for hours to discourse the same, to them, patriotic airs, with Dixie occasionally thrown in for a variety, while the lower order of the populace swarmed around the cars bandying epithets and abusing the "Yanks." They could not, however, peal any bells, as they had previously devoted them to be cast into Cannon. The prisoners did not leave Jackson until near midnight and then on the Meridian and Jackson R. R., arriving

at the former place about ten A. M. of the 12th, when exchange of cars was made, and at three P. M. left for Mobile, Ala., via the M. & O. R. R., where they arrived after dark the evening of the 13th of April, 1862. The principal incidents of this trip, as remembered after a lapse of more than twenty-five years, are: an altercation between Corporal Stibbs [Joseph Stibbs of Cedar Rapids, brother of Capt. Stibbs] and Private Whittam [John J. Whittam of Cedar Rapids] settled by the Capt. without serious damage to the participants, or breach of disapline [*sic*]; Orderly Serg't Hilton's[9] buying a bunch of young onions and dividing among the boys by the bite; and the refusal of our gentlemanly guards to give us, without proper orders, any of the quantity of sugar scattered about the broken hogsheads on the platform at Meridian.

At Mobile the prisoners parted company with the Memphis Home Guards, and their places were taken by a like organization from Mobile. The cars were soon unloaded of their living freight, and the boys divided into squads or divisions to be sent to different points. Co. D boys determined, as much as possible, to remain together and so arranged themselves. Commissioned officers, Capt. Stibbs and Lt. Hale among the number, were first taken out; then the wounded and sick; many of the latter, however, evading the vigilance of the Surgeon, preferring to remain with their comrades rather than take their chances in rebel Hospitals and among strangers. After thus separating the prisoners, the different squads were marched to the wharf and placed on steamers. The enlisted men [of] Co. D succeeded admirably in keeping together. Capt. Stibbs and Lt. Hale were sent to Selma, Ala., with other captured officers. Corp'ls Moorhead [*sic*. Homer C. Morehead of Cedar Rapids] and Pangborn [Howard Pangborn of Shellsburg], and Privates Snell [Louis Snell of Cedar Rapids], and Tarpenning [James M. Tarpening of Shellsburg] wounded, and Lutz [William B. Lutz of Cedar Rapids], sick were sent to Macon, Ga., where Snell subsequently died in prison hospital from the effects of his wound and want of proper care. The remainder, forty two in number, were put on board the steamer Alice Vivian and the next morning pulled out from the great Cotton Mart of the Gulf into the Mobile River and glided thence up to the confluence of the Tombigbee with the Alabama River, thence up the former to its

[9] Sergeant Robert W. Hilton of Shellsburg. Hilton was the only member of Co. D who took the oath of allegiance to the Confederacy while in prison. His story is told at the end of Capt. Stibbs's account. *Roster and Record*, 2:468.

confluence with the Black Warrior, and then up the latter over tree tops, across bends in the stream past Demapolis to Tuscaloosa; at every town and wood yard along the river the calliope screeched, in tones of C flat, "Dixie Land." The steamer during the night of the 16th tied up at the landing at Tuscaloosa. The water in the Black Warrior, as denoted by the gauge on the bridge, was at that time sixty feet above ordinary stage.

On the morning of the 17th the notorious Henry Wirz,[10] a Swiss by birth, a hyena by nature, a tool of Winder and his thieves, ranking as a Sergeant in the rebel army, with a squad of confederate soldiers relieved the Mobile Home Guards and took charge of the prisoners. Both the Memphis and Mobile Guards had treated the prisoners as men and having some claim upon them for decent treatment, and their conduct and behavior towards them showed themselves to be gentlemen, but when Wirz took charge there was nothing but an evident purpose to pander to the malignant hatred of the prisoners indulged in by his employers by most cruel and tyrannical administration of prison rule and discipline. From the Steamer the boys, under heavy guard, surrounded by a hooting and exultant populace, marched to the several prisons assigned them. In making this distribution Co. D was separated into two squads; one squad, numbering eighteen, was put with many others into a large building formerly used for a paper mill on the river bank, while the other, numbering twenty four, was taken into the city and confined with many others in the old capitol, a large brick building, which had been used as a state house when Tuscaloosa had been the capital city of Ala. The Co. D boys were assigned, in the old capitol building, two rooms fourteen feet square, twelve to a room, one fronting on the street, the other immediately in its rear. Originally, one of the 8th Iowa boys had been put in this room, and Orderly Serg't Hilton put also here, but an exchange was afterwards affected [*sic*], and Hilton put in with the Co. D boys. Other prisoners were put in a brick

[10] These comments on Henry Wirz, the notorious commander at Andersonville prison in 1864, are no doubt colored by his later career. After the war Wirz was arrested, tried, and hanged for his treatment of the Union prisoners held at Andersonville. General John H. Winder, also referred to here, and his son Captain W. S. Winder, were Wirz's superiors. See William B. Hesseltine, *Civil War Prisons, A Study in War Psychology* (Columbus, Ohio, 1930), 133-58 (for Andersonville), 235-45 (for trial of Wirz). Also, for trial of Wirz, see *Official Records*, Series II, Vol. VIII, *passim;* and N. P. Chipman, *The Tragedy of Andersonville: Trial of Captain Henry Wirz, The Prison Keeper* (n. p., 1911). General Chipman, judge advocate of the military court that tried Wirz, was an Iowan, originally with the 2nd Iowa.

building across the street from the old State house. Within fifteen minutes from the time the prisoners [arrived], two men, of whom one was deaf, were shot for putting their heads out of the windows, and that too before the rules governing the conduct of the prisoners had been communicated to them. The prison rules were, however, posted in the building and on the principal that ignorance of the law excuses no one, the poor devils were shot.

In the state house were prisoners captured at Belmont, Ft. Donelson, and other places, as well as sailors and some forty political prisoners from East Tenn., and among them Parson Brownlow, a man of National reputation.[11] Acquaintances were sought among them and, in some instances, found; Zuver found in two 7th Iowa prisoners old acquaintances of northern Iowa, among them Andy Felt,[12] a well known Newspaper man.

Those older in prison life were mostly in the Hall of the House, or the old Senate Chamber. Before the Yanks were incarcerated, every article of furniture of any discription [*sic*] had been removed from the building and none was furnished the prisoners. Neither did the captors furnish clothing, blankets or bedding of any discription; not even a spear of hay, or straw, a bunch of cotton or a handful of leaves. With what the boys managed to supply themselves on the battle field and pick up on their travels, there was an average of less than one blanket to every three men. But each prisoner did receive a tin cup holding one gill, which was the whole of his table outfit. The rations for a day per man consisted of a piece of what was called corn bread, five inches long, three wide, and three quarters of an inch thick, made of unsifted cornmeal coarsely ground with portions of the cob mixed with water; a cubic inch of meat, of doubtful character, as to whether of asinine or bovine species; and a gill of rice, or meat broth all without salt. For desert [*sic*] nothing but water, and that

[11] William Gannaway Brownlow of Tennessee, known as the "Fighting Parson," had been an itinerant preacher, an editor, and a politician. His opposition to secession had resulted in his arrest in December, 1861. However, he was not in prison at Tuscaloosa at the time the men of the 12th Iowa were there; he had been released and sent into the Federal lines in March, 1862. This is probably an instance of faulty memory, after a long period of years, since these memoirs were written in the 1880's. For Brownlow, see *Dictionary of American Biography*, 3:177-8.

[12] Andrew J. Felt, editor of several newspapers in Iowa before the war, had joined the 7th Iowa, been captured at the Battle of Belmont, Missouri, in November, 1861, and remained a prisoner for over a year. After the war he became active in the Republican party and later moved to Kansas where he served as Lieutenant Governor. Benjamin F. Gue, *History of Iowa* . . . (4 vols., New York, 1903), 4:91-2.

too from wells situated in close proximity to the sinks and naturally of horrible quality. The sinks were located outside the building, and from a total of seven hundred prisoners, only seven at a time were allowed to visit them, and that only during the day time. At night tubs — half barrels — were placed in the halls and carried out in the morning, to be returned at night without rinsing. When it is remembered that at the time of their capture nearly every man was suffering from diarhoea, and what the effects of such diet, water and filth must have been, the condition of affairs can only be faintly imagined.

The lack of table utensils and the want of employment set the boys at work making plates, spoons, knives etc. from wood, pieces of bone, etc.; also finger rings, breast pins, charms etc., embellished with carvings of various designs; the incisions or cavities in which, filled with melted sealing wax of various colors, made some of their productions tasty and striking. Corporal Boughton proved to be the better artist of the Co. D squad. Sometimes relick hunters purchased these articles, and with the proceeds the boys bought eatables, tobacco, newspapers, etc. Tobacco was a scarce article and would be carefully utilized by first soaking it in the mouth, then chewing, and afterwards, when dried carefully, smoking.

Sometimes a squad of four, six or eight would be allowed to go outside the enclosure and procure water and wash, but always under a strong guard. Still the lucky fellows had a chance to get fresh air and exercise on mother earth.

Body lice became so bad that a general organized search was made daily by stripping and carefully examining every garment seam by seam and inch by inch. The distruction [*sic*] of life was great, but the supply was unfailing. From the incidents of these skirmishes no little amusement, grim as it may seem, was derived, and it helped the boys to forget their discomforts. Jimmy Lanagan [James Lanagan of Cedar Rapids] had his arm tattooed by a sailor confined as a prisoner of war in the same building, from which it became sore, and considerable diversion was caused by Orderly Hilton's teasing. Corporal Stibbs and Buttolph [Edwin A. Buttolph of Cedar Rapids] got up a flirtation with some girls whose window was in view across the street, but owing to the peculiar conditions surrounding the boys, no harm resulted.

On Sunday, April 20, 1862, a battery was drawn up in the street, between the prisoners quarters, and addressed by a preacher of the fire eating

kind, who with prayer and exhortations, after they had pledged themselves never to surrender, commended them to the care of the God of battles, and they left for the front. But in only a weeks time that same battery was captured near Corinth, and their guns turned on them, and some returned to tell how manfully they had endeavored to sustain their pledge.

One day Sylvester R. Burch [of Kingston] took a little union flag that Lyman M. Ayers [of Cedar Rapids] had as a keepsake, and put it in a split stick and stuck it out of the window over the guards heads, which made Wirz very wroth, and he ordered S. R. Burch, Ayers, Gephard and S. H. Flint [of Malvern] to be placed under arrest and taken to the guard house and there confined with ball and chain, and threatened that if they did not divulge the name of the guilty party, they would be put on bread and water for a week, and another four from that room similarly treated, and so on until they divulged, or the whole twelve should have starved. The situation appeared critical, but the boys agreed to stand firm. For some unknown reason, the four were released, but Wirz never found out who hung out the flag. Robinson L. Johnson [of Shellsburg] was the only member of the Masonic fraternity we had among the enlisted men in the Company. He was recognized as a Master Mason and allowed privileges denied to others, but he used them for the benefit of his comrades as much as practicable.

On the 9th of May, 1862, many of the prisoners in the old State house, including Co. D squads, were transferred to new barracks on the river bank and enclosed in the same stockade with the building in which the other portion of Co. D were confined. The boys could look at each other but hold no communication unless they happened to meet at the sinks, which were built on the river bank and out over the water. By this time the confinement and fare commenced to tell on the boys. Their garments were ragged and threadbare, their steps unsteady, and their countenances [showed signs] of disease and starvation. Still no murmurings escaped their lips. They were equally gritty as Josiah Scott [of Shellsburg] when his Uncle, the mate of the Alice Vivian, wanted to feed and treat him as a passenger and not as a part of the freight of the Steamer. "Not much" says Josiah, and not much did he.

As soon as the boys were removed from the city to the barracks, all sorts of schemes for escape were devised. The barracks were constructed around a square, within which were guards. The barracks were surrounded by a stockade about twelve feet high, and about six feet distant. Between

the stockade and barracks sentries paced. Just on the outside of the stockade another line of sentries walked their beat, while still farther, ten to twenty rods away, another line of sentries guarded the prisoners. Some escaped by dropping themselves into the river from the sinks. Both in the city and at the barracks, when any escaped, the boys managed to keep Wirz from finding it out by stealing from one room to another, or by changing places in the line when being counted, so that the required number should appear. This did not always work, as prisoners were frequently recaptured before the count was made.

Soon after going into the barracks, a tunnel was begun by some forty odd prisoners under the floor of a room occupied by a squad of Co. D. A couple of boards in the floor were removed and, by using tin plates for making the excavation, and concealing the dirt in various ways, the work was speedily done, and the tunnel so far completed that, on the night of May 13th more than forty of the prisoners departed from the prison without asking Wirz. The only Co. D boys who were out were Orderly Hilton and Private Whittam. They were, as we subsequently learned, after numerous adventures, recaptured, but again escaped only to be again recaptured and returned to prison. Before the escape it was reported in prison that steamers were at the landing to convey the prisoners to points where they would be paroled, but, of course, the report was not generally credited. On the morning of the 14th, Wirz was furious. Many escaped prisoners had been recaptured, and no one knew how many had escaped. The prisoners were ordered into line for a general count. Wirz, with his finger on the trigger of a loaded and cocked revolver, passed down the line pointing the muzzle at the head of every prisoner as he was counted off. When twenty had been reached, a guard came in and announced, "Serg't, we have found how the Yanks escaped." Wirz asks, "How." The guard answers, "Under mined," which word was repeated by Wirz in a tone showing astonishment and consternation. The prisoners laughed in derision, and Wirz, half crazed, left the room, and the count to be concluded by a whiffet and a deserter from the Federal army, afterwards captured and shot as a spy by a man named Peacock. The report that there was a steamer for us at the landing proved true. The same forenoon, May 14th, 1862, the prisoners were ordered out, counted off, and a portion started for the landing and were placed on board the Steamer James Delett, which proceeded down the river until it met a larger Steamer, called the Chero-

kee, which, by reason of the low stage of water, was unable to reach Tuscaloosa. To the latter boat the former transferred its load of prisoners and returned for another load, while the Cherokee proceeded down the river at a slow pace, being frequently obliged to use spars and capstan in getting over shoals and sand bars. Co. D was well represented in the first load of the Delett, into whose store room some of the boys broke and secured some provisions, but the mate ended the matter by throwing the balance to the crowd.

On the bow of the Cherokee the boys found a pile of corn bread, covered with a tarpaulin, and from which one fellow, in attempting to forage, got a prod from the guards bayonet which served to keep any more from trying it.

The boats progressed down the river very slowly. By the night of the 15th rations were done. Some beans and corn was attempted to be cooked at different times, when the boys were off the boat to lighten her, but were unsuccessful, and they were unfit to eat, and those who eat them wished, when the gripes came on, that they had not.

The Delett returning found the Cherokee and proceeded with her load to Mobile, while the Cherokee passed through the cutoff from the Tombigbee to the Alabama, eighteen miles above their confluence, and proceeded up the latter, passing Cahaba, but, on the night of the 18th, stopping at Selma for rations and landing at Montgomery late in the night of the 19th of May 1862.

On the morning of the 20th three members of Co. D were selected to go into the city and cook the corn cake for the Company; while absent they saw Lt. Hale, who, with other members of the Company, viz. Morehead, Pangborn, Lutz, Snell and Tarpenning, were confined at that time in the city. The prisoners were required to hand in their name, rank, Company and Regiment. Corporal Stibbs made the list of Company D, and persisted in reporting himself, Ross [Henry W. Ross of Kingston] and Boughton as Corporals, which many of the boys thought a mistake, but which he thought would secure them better treatment. The citizens lined the bank of the river anxious to get a view of the Yanks. Large amounts of cotton were piled upon the levee ready for shipment to Mobile, to be used in fortifications or blockade running.

On the 21st the prisoners were ordered to disembark and were marched into the city and placed in an old Machine shop, and the next day paroling

began, but only of the Privates. The Corporals then saw their mistake but too late; the paroling proceeded slowly letter by letter alphabetically. The roll was called, the boys gave their occupations as that of farmers, but, to the surprise of the rebel officers, showed their ability to write by readily signing their names to the following undertaking.

Montgomery, Ala.
May, 22nd, 1862

> I pledge my most sacred word of honor that I will not, during the existing war, between the Confederate States and the United States of America, bear arms or aid or abet the enemy of said Confederate States, or their friends, either directly or indirectly in any form whatever, until regularly exchanged, or otherwise discharged.

Thirty-nine privates of Co. D were thus paroled at Montgomery on May 21st, 1862, and soon after took their departure for the north. There were left Capt. Stibbs, Lt. Hale, Orderly Sergt. Hilton, Corporals Ross, Stibbs, Boughton, Morehead and Pangborn, privates Lutz, Snell, Tarpenning and Whittam.

Officers As Prisoners, by Capt. J. H. Stibbs[13]

After reaching Mobile, as described by Zuver, the officers were separated from the enlisted men, after which the lieutenants were put in a party by themselves and sent to Montgomery, Alabama, and subsequently to Macon, Georgia. The Captains and those of higher rank were sent first to Selma, Alabama, where we remained two or three days, and were then taken by rail to Talladega, Alabama, where we were confined in the court house for a week or ten days. Here we were guarded by a company of home guards that had for their Captain a man who impressed us as the "pink of politeness." He drilled the company in the Manual of Arms on the evening of our arrival, and I remember one of his commands was, "Now then, gentlemen, you will please come to 'shoulder arms.' " On that night one of the guards, who was half crazed with fright lest he should disobey some order, refused to be relieved except by the Corporal who placed him on post, and who could not be found; nor would he permit the relief guard to pass his post. For hours he made the night hideous with his cries of "Corporal of the Guard Post, Number 8!" Finally an attempt was made forcibly to

[13] A part of the following account appeared in David W. Reed, *Campaigns and Battles of the Twelfth Regiment* . . . (n. p., [1903]), 107-110.

relieve him, and in the fight that followed he was shot down, was carried into the building where we were, was attended by Dr. Gregg of our party, and died before morning. The company muster roll giving the particulars of this man's death was found in Vicksburg by a member of our party after the surrender of that place July, 1863.

The rebel authorities evidently concluded we were too near the Union lines at Talladega, and within a few days we were returned to Selma, Alabama where we were given quarters in an old hotel building, and remained about two months. About the last of June we were taken by boat to Montgomery, Alabama, remained there a day, and then went by rail to Atlanta, Ga., where we remained under the charge of a Major Leyden for a little more than a week. We reached Atlanta on the day that "Mitchells Raiders" were taken out and executed. . . .

From our windows we could see the troops as they marched the men to the place of execution, and on the evening of the same day we learned, from persons who were present, the particulars of their death. The affair had a very depressing effect on our party, and we passed a sorry night, but on the following day we were moved to comfortable quarters in one of the public buildings and were treated with so much kindness and consideration by Major Leyden that the disagreeable features of our situation were almost lost sight of. We were boarded at a fairly good boarding house, received visits from the prominent people of the town, and many who called proved to be staunch friends of the Union, and in divers ways they managed to contribute to our comfort. Some in taking their leave would shake hands and leave in one's palm a ten or twenty dollar bill, while others tendered the loan of a book or a blanket or some other equally desirable article, with the private understanding, however, that the articles might be returned at the end of the war. This sort of management though did not suit the rabid rebel element there, and very soon remonstrances were sent to Richmond, and in reply telegraphic orders were sent directing Col. Lawton to take us in charge. It was he who had Mitchell's men in charge, and carried out the orders for their execution, and while he made no move towards hanging any one of our party, it took him but a day to transport us to Madison, Georgia, where we were placed in an old cotton mill and consigned to the tender mercies of a so-called gentleman from South Carolina, one Captain Calhoun, who, during the three months or more that he watched over our welfare, succeeded in engaging the affections

of some of us in a degree that time could not efface. This fact was demonstrated a year later when Vicksburg surrendered, and it was learned that Captain Calhoun was a prisoner. Some of our party walked miles for the privilege of saying a few "cuss" words to him, and telling him just what kind of a "son of a gun" they believed him to be, but the orders of our commander protected him as it did others, and he was paroled at once, and for that time at least escaped the confinement he richly deserved.

While at Madison, Georgia, the lieutenants of our party were sent from Macon to join us, and officers of the Michigan and Minnesota regiments captured at Murfreesboro, Tenn., were also given quarters in our room. So that in the end we had a party of about 250 men, all officers, all confined in the same room, and on the lower floors in the same building with us there were nearly a thousand political prisoners, most of them from East Tennessee. This building was situated about one-half mile from the town of Madison, was surrounded at a distance of fifty to one hundred and fifty feet by a high board fence, and within the inclosure the guard, three companies of a Georgia regiment, were encamped.

When our lieutenants joined us there I was a member of one of the tony messes, one that was composed of jolly good fellows who could sing songs, tell stories, and be entertaining under the most adverse circumstances, and when there was a dollar in the party we were sure to have pie for dinner. Shortly before that our number had been increased by a couple of Chicago boys, who brought into the mess a good roll of money that they had managed to secrete when captured, and it was not thought desirable to admit any new members unless they could add something to our scanty mess fund, but when Lieut. Hale came, I demanded that he should be admitted to our mess, and it was done. Dear old Hale! He was poor enough then, poor in purse and poor in flesh. So thin that every joint in his body seemed to be trying to make a hole in his hide, in fact there was not much left of him except the running gears, and when he sat down one could not help wondering whether the old machine would ever get up and move off again, but notwithstanding the fact that he was received into the mess as a kind of charity patient, he proved a benefactor to all in the end, for on being provided with a red and blue pencil, he demonstrated his ability to transform a rebel 5¢ "shin-plaster" into a 50¢ note that would pass current with the average Georgian, white or black. . . .

About the 7th of November, 1862, orders came for us to be sent to

Richmond and paroled, and we went via Augusta, Georgia, and Columbia, South Carolina, where we spent a day in the penitentiary; [thence] to Raleigh, N. C., Weldon and Petersburg, to the famous Libby Prison, where we signed a parole, and the following day, November 13, were once more placed under the protection of the old flag at Aikens Landing, Virginia, and went thence via Fortress Monroe and Annapolis, Md., to Washington. . . .

While our party were at Selma, Alabama, a committee was appointed to correspond with General Beauregard with a view of effecting a special exchange of the Union prisoners captured at Shiloh for the "rebs" we had helped to capture at Donelson. He approved of the plan and offered to send a committee of three, whom we might name, on to Washington via Richmond, with authority to negotiate an exchange as proposed. We selected for this committee Col. Madison Miller of the 18th Mo., Maj. Wm. M. Stone of the 3d Iowa, who was subsequently made Governor of our State,[14] and Capt J. M. Gregg of the 58th Ill. When they left us we were full of hope that but a few days would pass before the glad news that we were going home would be received, but weeks went by before any word was received from our committee, and we began to think that their mission had been fruitless, when one day at Madison, Georgia, we espied the tall form of old Capt. Gregg marching up to our prison gate carrying in his hand a satchel in which there was a bag of gold, and an hour later a couple of boxes filled with a miscellaneous assortment of clothing were brought to the prison. From the Capt. we learned that the committee had failed to effect the special exchange desired, but that they had been largely instrumental in bringing about the cartel for a general exchange, after which they were offered special exchanges for themselves. This offer was accepted by Col. Miller and Maj. Stone, but Capt. Gregg would not consent to be exchanged. He said he was there as the representative of a party of gentlemen who would not be satisfied to have him abandon their interests to better his own condition and demanded to be sent back to the prison. Before starting, however, he went to President Lincoln, told his story, and showed him the list of names of those he represented. Good old Abe was not slow to appreciate the situation and act

[14] William M. Stone, lawyer, editor, and judge from Knoxville, entered the war as a major of the 3rd Iowa. After his release he was appointed a colonel of the 22nd Iowa. In 1863 he resigned to accept the Republican nomination for governor of Iowa, a position he filled from 1864 to 1868. Gue, *History of Iowa*, 4:253.

accordingly. Seizing his pen he wrote out an order directing the paymaster General to pay over to Capt. Gregg one month's pay for each of the officers named on the list, and to the Quarter Master General an order that the Capt. be given transportation and safe conduct to the enemy's lines at Richmond. The Capt. drew the money, invested forty per cent of it in clothing, and the remainder he converted into gold, and with the endorsements he carried he found no trouble in delivering his goods and money at our prison pen in Georgia. He remained in prison with us for more than two months after his return, and was paroled when the others were.

I am sure I voice the sentiment of our party when I say: God bless old Capt. Gregg! May the world keep green the memory of such a hero! The gold brought us we sold to the guards at the prison, receiving at first four or five dollars in confederate money for one of gold, but we soon found there was scarcely a limit to the premium they would pay, and before many days we had the price fixed at $50 confederate for a $5.00 gold piece. The money thus secured we expended for food and vegetables of all kinds that were brought to the prison gate and sold by the colored people living there. The clothing was given out to those most in need of it. The money drawn by Capt. Gregg was only for such of the party as were present at Selma when the committee was sent to Richmond, but we divided with our lieutenants and the officers captured at a later date, so that before our parole came our money was gone, and we went home "busted," but I feel safe in saying that many lives were saved in that party by the relief brought us by Capt. Gregg.

Within a few days after our arrival at Selma, in April, we received a call from a St. Louis gentleman who was doing business in the south, and who was anxious to send money in some form to his wife in St. Louis. He proposed to cash any draft that Gen. Prentiss would make on the Pay Department at Washington, and as many of our party were without means, the General made a draft for $2000.00 and loaned the money to such as made application for it. We received confederate money and paid the draft in greenbacks, but their money at that time had not depreciated to the extent indicated by our purchases made at Madison, and the amount we received enabled us to purchase many necessary articles of clothing, etc.; our greatest want then being a change of under-clothing.

Very soon after our capture Capt. Townsley [Lloyd B. Townsley of Decorah] of Co. G and myself agreed to cast our fortunes together, and

we shared the same blanket throughout our imprisonment. The prison authorities at Selma and at Talladega distributed a few blankets and quilts to our party, but not enough to go round, and it was fortunate for Townsley and I that we anticipated the situation. On the boat going from Mobile to Selma we borrowed from the boat's table a knife, fork and spoon, and before going ashore at Selma we each secured in like manner, by borrowing from one of the boat's state rooms, a small blanket and comforter. Townsley hesitated at first about taking part in the transaction, fearing we might be detected and punished, but I argued to the effect that the most they could do would be to put us in prison, and as we were already prisoners, our lot could not be made much worse. This settled the question and by a little sharp practice we got ashore with our plunder and were never questioned concerning it. Our personal effects not necessary to our comfort or convenience in prison were traded off from time to time, as occasion demanded, but Townsley had one article, which I thought unnecessary to keep, that he could not consent to part with. It was a silver-plated tobacco box, rather a showy affair, worth at home about a dollar, but it had been given him by a friend, and he was determined to keep it. We reached a crisis, however, on the tobacco question while at Madison. Our money was gone. We had been a week without a chew, and I saw something had to be done. It was a "ground hog case" sure enough, and the only thing I could think of that could be spared from our belongings was Townsley's tobacco box; so I slipped it out of the pocket of his old coat, which lay at the head of our bed, took it down stairs to the guard and traded it off for two plugs of tobacco; big black fellows that weighed a pound apiece, and after helping myself to a big chew, I placed them under my vest, and on going back to our room called Townsley into a corner and showed him what I had. His eyes glistened with delight when he saw the treasure and learned that there was a plug for each of us. He wanted to know at once where I got it, but I hesitated to tell and would not until after he had taken a big chew and began to "spit yaller," and then I ventured to tell him that I had traded off *our* tobacco box. He was furious at first, but later on was forced to admit that my heroism and forethought had saved his life.

The question: "How did they treat you?" which was propounded by all we met after our release from prison will be suggested by any who read this article, and I must say that the sufferings endured by our men at Andersonville, Columbia, Belle Isle, and other prisons, during the later years

of the war, so far exceeded anything that we were subjected to, that it seems almost absurd for one of us to make complaint, and furthermore I find that with the lapse of years the unhappy and disagreeable features of my army and prison life are continually lessening in importance, while the ludicrous and heroic phases grow correspondingly. Yet, as I look back I can recall many privations we were made to suffer that might have been spared us with loss to no one.

One of our greatest trials when first confined was the order to keep from us the news of the day, but we soon had our plans perfected by which we managed to secure copies of the daily papers, and there was scarcely a time but that we had an arrangement made with either the chaplain, the cook, or some member of the guard to keep us supplied with papers. One copy a day was as much as we could afford, and the news as a rule was passed by word of mouth. Yet, scarcely an hour passed but that the paper was being read by some favored one, and to do this it was necessary for the party to get into an obscure corner and be covered by a blanket or other screen. At Selma the Commandant, Col. Kent, exerted himself to the utmost in his efforts to discover the source from which we secured the news, and amongst other stories we told him that we had friends on the outside who gave us the news by signal. To test this he instructed the guard to keep close watch on all our movements. The following day Gen. Prentiss stationed himself near enough the window for the guard to get a glimpse of his motions and began working his hands after the fashion of one using the deaf and dumb alphabet and apparently communicating with some one on the outside. The guard detected the movement in an instant, and stepping from his beat to where he could get a clear view he roared out the challenge: "Halt them fingers!" After the order came to move us from Selma, Gen. Prentiss promised Col. Kent that before leaving he would tell him the secret of our news getting. The day before our departure Col. Geddes [James L. Geddes of Vinton] of the 8th Iowa drew a most excellent likeness of Col. Kent on our prison wall, representing him as dressed in his long linen duster with a newspaper folded and stuck in the outer pocket, and on the following morning he copied onto the paper the head lines as they appeared in the morning's paper. When Col. Kent came in he was led up to the picture, and all hands declared we had gotten the news by reading the papers carried in his pocket as represented or by stealing the paper from his pocket.

The order in relation to looking out of windows, that was enforced at

Tuscaloosa and other places, was applied strictly in our case. The guards as a rule were raw recruits who were over anxious to obey orders, and it was not uncommon to have some one of our party halted while promenading for exercise at a distance of 5 or 6 feet from the window, and in this way we were kept in constant dread of being shot down by some fool guard, no matter how careful we were in the observance of the rules.

The solid food furnished us was sufficient at all times, I think, to have kept us strong and well if it had been properly cooked and served, but we were not permitted to take any part in the preparation of our meals, and many times the truck that was brought into us was such a horrible mess that we could not eat the half of it, and yet were half starved at the time. At Selma the rations were fairly good, but we had not been long enough in the pen at that time to appreciate a good thing, and there was no end to the complaints on the part of some of our fastidious comrades. Many a discussion was held there by certain ones who pretended to be versed in anatomy over sundry small bones that were fished from the soup kettle. Whether it was beef or not that we were eating did not enter into the discussion, but the question we gravely considered was whether it was dog or jackass? Four or five months later, when the systems of a majority had become reduced by disease and starvation, it was no unusual thing to hear some poor fellow long for the flesh pots of Selma. At Madison our bread was made of flour and water, stirred to a batter, and baked in an unusually large Dutch oven. The cakes were just about the size and shape of an elephant's ear, and nearly as tough. When warm the outer edges were palatable, but the inside was invariably raw, and when left to cool and harden for two or three days, it could be worked into trinkets and ornaments of various kinds, and would bear a polish equal to a piece of granite. Is it a wonder that men did not care to fill their stomachs with such food? In my own case I found as the rations grew scarce my stomach grew smaller, and my experience in that respect was not unlike that of many others with whom I subsequently compared notes. It was a common thing with me during the later months of my imprisonment to lie awake at night and arrange in my mind the bills of fare of certain meals I proposed to have when I got home, and when I finally did reach the old hearth stone, my good parents were ready to kill the "fatted calf" and do their part towards gratifying all the whims of my appetite, but I was then horrified to find that my stomach had become so shrunken that it would not hold a square meal.

To amuse ourselves we engaged in games of all kinds; organized courts and held mock trials, discussed the leading questions of the day, and on every day we fought the battle of Shiloh over again. Nearly every man in the party engaged to a greater or less extent in the manufacture of bone trinkets, and at Madison where the building was finished with yellow pine having a beautiful grain, a majority of the party provided themselves with canes, some of which were very handsome. Soon after reaching there the owner of the building where we were confined came in one day and after taking a survey of our room exclaimed: "Well, you d——d yankees are the worst vandals I ever saw, and if you stay here long enough you will ruin my building, sure. The first thing you did was to take down the doors to make mess tables, then you tore out the window casings to make bunks, and now, d—n you, you are tearing up the stair steps in make walking sticks." One who has not been confined in such a place cannot appreciate the necessity for amusement, and would scarcely believe it possible that intelligent gentlemen would engage in some of the practices which we thought very proper fun in those days. It was not all fun by any means, for we indulged in many a grave discussion, but no one was sorry when something was done, no matter how ridiculous, to create a laugh and a hurrah.

We had some racing men in the party, but horse races there were out of the question, and the the only animal we could utilize there was the "gray-back."[15] Just imagine a dozen or twenty Captains, Majors, and Colonels, squatting down in a circle watching a louse race. To be interesting, some betting had to be done, and when our party had funds there was always some one ready to bet a quarter that he could put his hand inside his shirt and bring out a louse that could out-trot anything in the room. The "modus operandi" was this: A tin cup having been provided those who wished to enter for the race deposited their money in the cup, then with a piece of wall plaster, which answered the purpose of chalk, a circle the size of a silver dollar was drawn on the floor, and around this a second circle the size of a tin cup was drawn. When the arrangements were complete each contestant opened his shirt and selected a "gray-back" that in his judgment gave promise of more than ordinary speed, and at a given signal the animals were dropped into the inner circle. Then the excitement began; each

[15] "Graybacks," the Union soldiers' name for the Confederate soldiers, was also given to the body lice with which the men became infested while in prison.

man had to keep track of his own louse, and in the end the "gray-back" that crossed the outer ring first won the pot.

While on this subject, which has always been an irritating one to me, I must say that at Madison, Georgia, we had more than our share of gray-backs. The political prisoners had planted them there before our arrival, and they ripened faster than we could gather them. They were a most prolific and hardy variety; each seemed armed with a coat of mail and had a "W" on its back, which the boys said stood for "war." We had our regular hour for lousing, and destroyed myriads of them while there, but nevertheless we were loaded with the pesky things when we started for home, and carried with us an army great enough in numbers to have conquered the world. We believed that if proper facilities had been granted us, we could have kept the pests within bounds, but Capt. Calhoun would not permit us to cleanse our room, our persons, and our clothes as we desired, and this so exasperated Capt. Billy Stubbs [William Stubbs of Iowa County, Captain of Co. G] of the 8th Iowa, that he determined to give Capt. Calhoun a dose of "gray-backs." He accordingly procured from the hospital room a wide mouthed vial, and having called for supplies he succeeded within three or four days in getting enough of the critters to fill the bottle. Then he watched his opportunity, and when Capt. Calhoun came in again a crowd gathered about him and while they insisted upon his doing some necessary thing for the welfare of our party, Stubbs poured the contents of his bottle into the Captain's pockets and down the back of his neck. From our prison windows we could see Capt. Calhoun in his office, which stood about 100 yards outside the prison enclosure, and I have often thought in the years that have elapsed since the war that one of the most pleasant recollections of my prison life was the picture presented by Capt. Calhoun that day as he skirmished about his room in his shirt tail, trying to destroy the gray-backs with which Stubbs had loaded him.

The question of escape was discussed daily by some members of the party, and repeated efforts were made to get away, but none of our party were fortunate enough to get beyond the rebel lines. At Selma, Captains Earl and Warner [Willard C. Earl of Makee, Captain of Co. B; William W. Warner of Clermont, Captain of Co. C] of our regiment succeeded in getting out of the prison one night and, during the twelve hours or more that they were at liberty, made good time in the direction of the North Star, but walking was too slow for them and they ventured to take a ride in the

cars, where they were identified by a John "Reb," who was going home on furlough. He did not know the faces of either, but Earl's mustache settled the business. He had seen it in the prison at Selma and could not be mistaken, as none other like it had ever been seen or heard of in that section of the country. They were a crest-fallen couple when marched into the pen the following day. . . .

In this article I have been compelled to give my recollections of events applied to our party collectively, but I feel it a duty to refer particularly to one man in Company D, our orderly Sergeant "Bob" Hilton.[16] He was as brave and loyal a man as we had in the company, and under ordinary circumstances would have given his life for the Union as cheerfully and heroically as any amongst us, but while attempting to escape during the first month of his imprisonment he became sick, through hardships and exposure, and after reaching Macon, Georgia, he was reduced to a point where recovery seemed impossible. There it was he was found by his father, who was employed there in Macon. The old man was a cotton spinner, and by reason of his trade was exempt from military duty. "Bob," too, was master of the same trade, and his father secured an offer from the authorities there that if he would take the oath to support the confederate government, they would release him, and when his health was restored he would be given employment in the mill there and would not be called out to bear arms against the United States. To remain in prison meant certain death for him, while by going out he could receive care and attention in his own father's house, and had before him the hopes of recovery and a return at some time to his wife and little ones. These circumstances coupled with the appeals of his old father proved more than he could withstand in his extremely weak and debilitated condition, and he was finally induced to turn his back on his comrades, and [he] took the rebel oath. Two weeks later he was dead, and laid away in the grave of a deserter. When strong and well no man in the company would have denounced more strongly than he the course he followed, but disease had weakened him physically and mentally, and the circumstances surrounding him were very unusual. Let only those who have passed triumphantly through a similar ordeal condemn his weakness. I think Company D will all join with me in saying: "Dear old Bob, peace to his ashes."

[16] See note 9.