

The **P**ALIMPSEST

JULY 1929

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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THE PALIMPSEST

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The Rockdale Flood

About two miles south of Dubuque lay the straggling village of Rockdale beside Catfish Creek. The little settlement consisted of eight frame buildings situated on each side of the Old Military Road which transected the narrow valley over a causway several feet high. A stone bridge spanned the creek. Below the highway was a flour mill and dam, while just beyond the Illinois Central Railroad rounded a bluff at the left, crossed the creek with a long steel bridge, and continued up the valley along the stream. Catfish Creek and the railroad formed the legs of a capital A, with the mill near the apex and the highway serving as the cross-bar.

In this secluded little community the centennial Fourth of July, 1876, came and ended with its customary noise and gayety, and by ten o'clock most of the inhabitants had retired for the night, save a few who had gathered in the saloon for further talk and

refreshment. Some one suggested that there was a feeling of rain in the air. Sure enough, the sultry evening soon grew perceptibly cooler and a few big drops splashed into the dust. Sharp flashes of lightning tore the sky, and deep ominous thunder rolled across the heavens. The darkness became opaque and the rain began in earnest.

By eleven o'clock the rain had settled into a steady downpour which continued for hours without abating. Lightning continually slashed the intense darkness of the night, while thunder reverberated almost incessantly. Peal after peal seemed to "leap from hilltop to hilltop", and the earth continually trembled under the onslaught.

Charles Thimmesch, a bar-keeper in the saloon, was the first person to realize that there might be actual danger in the heavy rain. Upon opening the door to see the effects of the storm, about one o'clock, he noticed that the creek had swollen until the water was crawling up the sides of the elevated roadway. Alarmed at this discovery, he ran upstairs to notify the family of his employer. By the time he returned, a flash of lightning showed that a channel had been torn between the saloon and the right bank of the stream, through which the water was rushing with fury. Escape toward Dubuque was also cut off, for the water had raised above the road in that direction.

Every one in the saloon was aroused, and frantically they sought some means of escape. The

twelve or fifteen persons there, however, could only await with stricken hearts and blanched faces the progress of the flood. "With one despairing cry for help, one prayer to the Infinite Father for mercy, they waited the coming of the avalanche, which all too well knew must engulf them in its folds." The heavy waters, freighted with "debris torn from the hillsides", snapped the steel of the railroad bridge as if it had been the merest web, and sent the loosened structure careening down the angry stream. "Wave after wave of water, many feet high, came in succession, as with the weight of molten iron and the erectness of a wall, and house after house went whirling and spinning, and tumbling and crashing, on the mad avalanches of water which tossed them like things of air, onward and downward."

The first building to go was the Rockdale House, a large frame tavern. It was nearest to the stream on the west side of the road. Soon after the railroad bridge went out the tavern was swept from its foundation and tossed by the torrent until there was nothing left but fragments and splinters. The wife of the tavern keeper and Mr. and Mrs. Peter Kapp and four of their seven children were drowned. Three of the Kapp boys miraculously escaped a similar fate. The oldest, a lad of fourteen, clung to a piece of roof when the house went to pieces. Another boy, eleven years old, swam for a time in the water, holding on to his little five-year-old brother. Finally he managed to clamber on a bit of

roof and pull his brother after him by the hair. When their crude raft drifted against a tree, they climbed into that, where, in precarious safety, the larger boy held the smaller in his arms until morning.

The Kapp residence, which stood next door to the tavern, was the only building in town left in an upright position, though it too was moved from its foundation. When the flood threatened, the family had left this place of safety for what they supposed was the more secure shelter of the larger building.

As soon as one building had succumbed, the rest followed in rapid, crazy procession. The dwelling next door to the Kapp house was struck by a wall of water which uprooted it and laid it over on its side as "completely as if it had been lifted into the heavens, turned and dropped sideways."

The Carey residence went next. Martin C. Carey, who was one of the anxious watchers in the saloon, saw his house totter, saw the lights go out, and watched it start on its mad journey downstream, carrying with it the precious lives of his wife and two children.

A few moments later the saloon itself was struck, and as it toppled, took with it eleven terror-stricken people. Among the number was a man and wife and their two children who were on their way to their farm not far distant, but had stopped for shelter from the storm. Only four persons in the saloon escaped with their lives, three of these being saved

by clinging to trees into which they chanced to be thrown.

Charles Thimmesch was the fourth survivor. As the building began to sway he ran to the upper story and broke through a window, jumping to the roof of the adjoining store which appeared to be more substantial. It was but a moment, however, until that began to move also, so he stripped off his clothes, put some money between his teeth, plunged into the raging waters, and struck out for the opposite shore. The battle was long and gruelling, but he was an excellent swimmer and finally gained the land.

The blacksmith shop was the next to go, and then Peter Becker's house was crushed in a whirlpool with himself, his five children, his housekeeper, and her two little girls within. His brother and family had been wiped out when the saloon fell.

Thomas Blenkiron, the proprietor of one of the stores, had early in the evening taken his wife and cousin out of any possible danger and started them on their way to Dubuque, carrying the account books of the establishment. After they had reached high ground he waded back along the road in the water, expecting to follow them if the flood increased, but he and his son were caught in the building. Their bodies were pulled out of the mud the next day.

The last building left was Gustave Horn's store. It swayed for a moment as the surging water closed around it, "and then went down with a crash, careening sideways and crushing down until its roof

was nearly upon a level with the water." By super-human effort Horn succeeded in getting his wife and four children upon the roof, where they clung until after daylight.

Thus in the short space of half an hour, between one and two o'clock, all but the mill and one of the dwellings in Rockdale were swept away "like so many cockle shells", and whirled by the surging torrent until they were smashed into fragments. Only the mill was left wholly intact. The stream which swallowed the village was fully twenty feet deep and two thousand feet wide. Like the victims themselves, the piercing shrieks of men, women, and children were drowned amidst the roaring of the water, the crashing of the buildings, and the reverberation of the thunder which was accompanied by terrible lightning and a steady downpour of rain.

After several hours the storm ceased and the day dawned bright and clear. The sun smiled and the birds sang, quite oblivious of the awful scene of destruction in the little valley. By six o'clock some fifty volunteers had arrived from Dubuque to feed and clothe the survivors and to search for the dead.

It was a gruesome business. For a mile along the creek the bodies of nearly two score of people were strewn. Some of the heads were crushed almost beyond recognition. Some of the children were asleep with a smile upon their lips. They were found in the ruins of houses, in the water, and in the mud and brush along the bank. Often only an arm,

a foot, or a bit of clothing was exposed in the mud and debris. The loss of many little children between three and twelve years old made the calamity more pitiful. One small boy was in a tree-top clinging desperately to the branches. The rescuers called to him to come down, but he made no move to obey. He was dead.

The number of victims mounted up and up until it totaled thirty-nine. By six o'clock on the day following the flood thirty-one of the bodies had been located, and the next day the others were recovered.

Neighboring houses sheltered the dead. They were laid in rows, and often by families. The Klas-sens, a father, mother, eighteen-year-old son, and three daughters, one a round-faced child of five, were ranged side by side in death. The only one of the entire family to be saved was a little boy who floated on a board for over a mile and was rescued in the morning, still on the plank.

Dubuque suffered also. While the storm was at its height streets and lawns became part of a swirling river, with the tops of picket fences gleaming here and there in the lightning. The vast sheet of rapidly moving water, "covered with fences, sidewalks, pig-pens, outbuildings (some overturned and partly demolished, some carried off as complete as they had stood on the ground), uprooted shade trees, tree-boxes, wagon-boxes, cordwood, garden vegetables, cistern tops, with an occasional sawhorse, cellar-door or croquet mallet, went rushing and

whirling by, while the squealing of drowning porkers, the clamor of perishing chickens, the lowing of terror-stricken cattle trying to make their way to safer ground, filled up the rare intervals between the rattling of heaven's dreadful artillery."

All the low parts of the city along the creek were flooded and considerable losses resulted therefrom. The stone wall in front of the German Theological Seminary was completely torn away and in place of it yawned a chasm fifteen feet below the street level. Street car tracks, on the other hand, were buried beneath two or three feet of dirt and sand. High board fences were twisted and flattened. Trees were uprooted and plots of green grass or flower beds were either buried under a cake of mud or swept completely away. One man whose garden had been destroyed by previous floods had built a solid stone wall around his place which was a foot above the highest flood mark recorded. But the wall that "God Almighty couldn't wash out" was scattered stone by stone for a distance of half a mile, and fragments of glass from his greenhouse were strewn to the four winds.

One man was partly "compensated" for his misfortunes by the arrival upon his premises of a large hay stack which had lost little of its symmetry of form in transit. Another citizen became the possessor of an unidentified horse, which when found was still hitched to its feeding box.

Inside the homes there was great confusion,

caused for the most part by the sudden flooding of cellars. Grocery stores were particularly susceptible to damage in this respect, for the reserve stock of vegetables, kerosene, sugar, flour, and other staples was kept in the basement and consequently ruined. Many barrels of vinegar floated out of a lower window of the vinegar factory.

In one house the owner became alarmed at the ferocity of the storm and started down cellar to see what damage was being done. Suddenly the steps, loosened by the water, gave way and precipitated him into the murky pool. His son, hearing the commotion and receiving no answer to his frantic calls, immediately plunged into the water, for he knew that his father could not swim. Again and again he dived to the bottom and searched in vain. A few moments later, worn as he was with exertion and despair, he hardly knew whether to be glad or angry when he heard his father's voice calling his name. The older man had plunged through to the other side of the cellar, succeeded in reaching the outside door, and thus escaped drowning.

But the flood was not confined to basements. A man and his wife awoke to see the "bureau afloat and tumbling about the room, and the bed held down only by their own weight." In another house a woman was startled out of her sleep by the feeling of "something cold". She and her husband had considerable difficulty in wading out.

Only one fatality occurred in Dubuque. Mr. and

Mrs. Ulrich who lived on the flats were awakened by the feel of water; instinctively Mrs. Ulrich reached out for the cradle which was sitting beside the bed. But it had been tipped over and the tiny occupant drowned while the parents were still asleep.

The morning of July 5th revealed strange sights. There was land where there had never been land, and water where there had never been water. Houses had been torn apart, and great piles of debris littered the neatest lawns. Hundreds of dollars worth of property had suffered destruction within a few hours. But the residents of Dubuque counted their losses small when they heard about the catastrophe which had befallen the little town of Rockdale. Their hearts were stirred with a terrible, shuddering awe when they thought of their neighboring village — the eight houses which, on the fourth of July, had been the happy homes of unsuspecting parents and children — and of which on the fifth nothing was left but the “heart-piercing wreck of what had been.”

PAULINE GRAHAME

Captives in Dixie

Company I of the Fourteenth Iowa Volunteer Infantry was mustered into United States service at Davenport on November 5, 1861. Three weeks later the regiment was sent to Jefferson Barracks as a part of the general concentration of troops for intensive training. Mobilization for the aggressive campaign of 1862 began early in February, and the Fourteenth Iowa arrived at the front in time to participate in the capture of Fort Donelson and the battle of Shiloh.

On the morning of April 6th, which was Sunday, we were wakened by the sound of firing, remembered Sergeant Milton Rhodes of Company I, Fourteenth Iowa, in relating his military adventures to his daughter many years later.

As a part of the First Brigade of the Second Division under Brigadier General W. H. L. Wallace we held the left center of the battle line, repulsed four separate attempts to drive us from our position, and fought until we were entirely surrounded and our ammunition exhausted. A flank movement in the direction of the river was attempted, but after going about a quarter of a mile Colonel William T. Shaw was compelled to surrender what was left of our regiment. This was between five and six o'clock in the evening.

We were marched to the rear between two lines of bayonets and searched. All arms and ammunition were taken from us, including the swords of the officers, and in many cases their money and watches also. Our wounded were given no attention whatever. We were guarded for the night in an old corn-field where we found that about two hundred and forty of the Fourteenth Iowa were prisoners. At daylight we were started in the direction of Corinth. A few crackers had been given us the night before and early that morning but that was all the food we had. During the night a heavy rain had washed and cooled the wounds of the injured, who were all required to march as long as they could stand.

Just as we were starting on this march to Corinth we heard firing on a long line and knew the second day of the battle of Shiloh had begun. For about fifteen miles we met a constant stream of people going toward the battle. They had heard the news of a great Confederate victory. But by noon they were beginning to turn around, and by three o'clock it was plain to be seen they were all hurrying in the other direction. An hour later the guards pressed us over to the side of the road and along came General Beauregard and his staff in a great hurry. They were closely followed by batteries of artillery and then the whole rebel army in full retreat. In spite of the threats of the guards we cheered and cheered and asked them why they were leaving the fighting. We fully expected to be recaptured by our

own men but they managed to keep us a little too far ahead for that. About nine o'clock at night we arrived at Corinth, and at midnight were loaded into box cars and rushed off to Memphis where we were kept in a tobacco warehouse on the bank of the river for about a week.

From Memphis we were shipped by freight to Mobile, Alabama. Everywhere along the way people flocked to see us as curiosities, some evidently expecting to be confirmed in the opinion that the Yankees had horns. Our rations consisted of crackers and sugar, though at Mobile they gave us meat which was so foul we could scarcely eat it.

About six hundred of the enlisted men were taken by steamer up the Alabama River to Cahaba, while the officers and the rest of the men were sent on to Selma and Montgomery. I was among those unloaded at Cahaba, as a sergeant was not classed as an officer. Our quarters were in a cotton warehouse on the bank of the river. They turned the water from an artesian well into an open ditch running near us, which gave us a chance to wash ourselves and our clothes for the first time since being taken prisoners. Our condition by this time can scarcely be described. Some barrels of what they called pickled beef were unloaded for us, but as we did not like the smell of it we just gave the barrels a kick and rolled them into the river. When we got nothing in place of the meat, however, our trick did not seem so smart.

From Cahaba we were taken by steamer to Montgomery and thence by train to Macon, Georgia, where we arrived on Sunday, May 3, 1862, and were at once marched to the fair-ground which had been converted into a prison by a solid board stockade ten feet high. We were assigned about one third of this area in the southwest corner, where several wooden buildings were located in a beautiful grove. A continuous guard of soldiers was kept to see that we stayed where we belonged. During the day we were allowed out in the grove, but at night we were confined in the buildings.

There were two openings to this fair-ground, one on the west side near the northwest corner and the other on the east side opening out into a woods. Between these two entrances ran a road over which citizens and soldiers were allowed to pass. The portion of the fair-ground north of this road was used for drill purposes by the rebel soldiers. An imaginary line, called the dead line, was established north and east of our part of the ground, and in the southeast corner of the enclosure a battery was kept trained upon our quarters.

The commander of the prison camp, Major J. E. Rilander of the Tenth Georgia Battalion, read to us his orders to his guards, and gave us instructions for our personal conduct as prisoners. The guards were required always to carry loaded guns with fixed bayonets, and in case of any attempt to escape they were to fire at once. The commissary de-

partment issued rations to us once a week. These consisted mostly of corn meal, dried apples, rice, and a small piece of pickled beef and smoked shoulder. The meat was usually filled with skippers, and the whole amount was so small we had to be very careful to make it last a whole week.

Many of the boys had been wounded, and we had to dress their wounds as best we could with pieces of our clothes and water from the spring in the grove. We had no soap. Many died from the effects of their wounds, and many others from sickness and practical starvation. Five and six funerals a day were not unusual.

Many prisoners attempted to escape, but they were always recaptured and brought back, or killed in resisting capture. Some had managed to stay out three or four days, but never succeeded in reaching the Union lines. They were hunted down by bloodhounds, and when returned to prison were severely punished. A common means of punishment was to tie them up by the thumbs for hours at a time. As an instance of the cruelty of the guards, one of the men started down to the spring for water one evening just as we were being shut into the buildings for the night. The guard called him to halt, but he either did not hear or did not know he was the one spoken to and kept on going toward the spring. Without another word the guard shot him. He died the next day.

About the twentieth of May an order came to

parole all the enlisted men who were able to walk. My brother and I supposed of course that meant us, but the rebel commandant classed the sergeants and corporals as officers, so we were kept in the prison. This separated us from most of the men of our own regiment and reduced the prison population to about one hundred and twenty-five. A week later, however, our numbers were augmented by three hundred officers and men from Selma and Montgomery. Among these were Lieutenant John S. Agey of Company D and Lieutenant George H. Logan of our own company.

By this time our situation had become so desperate that we felt we should surely die if we were kept there much longer. So four of us, Lieutenant Agey, Lieutenant Logan, my brother (I. N. Rhodes), and myself, sergeants of Company I, all of the Fourteenth Iowa Infantry, made a plan for escape.

Since we were three hundred miles south of the Union lines at Nashville we concluded it would be impossible to get through the enemy's country for that distance. Our only chance seemed to be to get a boat and go down the Ocmulgee River to the ocean and thence up the coast to Fort Pulaski at the mouth of the Savannah River. Our plan was to secure some "butternut" clothing, which was worn by both soldiers and citizens, walk past the guard two at a time in daylight, wander leisurely down to the river and hide until dark. Daniel Matson, Smith Thompson, and Elliot Rogers agreed to answer to our

names at roll call any morning we were not there. Some southern men were being kept in the prison for a time because they were thought to be northern sympathizers. They wore butternut clothing and looked just like the soldiers except for the guns. From them we managed to secure suits of this clothing by trading them little trinkets such as rings and watch charms which we had made from bones.

I was chosen to try to get out of the prison and go down to the river, about a mile away, to see if any boats were there and what chance we might have of getting away if we could all get outside. I decided to risk the butternut clothing as a disguise and try to get out for this investigating trip on the fifteenth of June, which was Sunday. As a final precaution Daniel Matson prepared the following forged pass for me to use if challenged.

Macon, Camp Oglethorpe, June 15th.

Guard will please pass bearer through the lines.

J. E. Rilander, Maj.

Comdy Post.

My brother was the only one who knew the exact time and way I was going to try to get out. I think he realized perhaps more than I did what a desperate chance it was, but we felt it meant death anyhow if we stayed in that awful prison much longer.

To find a place to make the change of clothing was not easy, but I finally managed it and hid my blue clothes under a board in a secluded part of a

building. Then I went out to try my luck first among the men in the camp. No one seemed to pay any attention to me, and there were many citizens walking around in the camp. I went up and talked to a group of our own men who were playing cards and told them they ought to be ashamed to play cards on Sunday. One of them looked up at me and said, "O hell, what do you know about it?" and went on playing. This convinced me that they did not recognize me at all.

By this time it was about nine o'clock, and I walked over to the front entrance, to see if I could pass the guard there. I had in my pocket the forged pass signed by Major Rilander to use if challenged. As I neared the gate I saw two guards on duty there, and Major Rilander sitting in a chair near them. I concluded that was not a very good time to try to use this pass, so changed my mind and sauntered over toward the other gate.

This gate was open and had only one guard. I turned my head away from him and was very much interested in the battery that was stationed just south of the road. They were having trouble getting their horses hitched, which gave me a good excuse to watch them. I walked straight on in the direction of the gate, and would have run square into the sentinel, apparently without seeing him, but fortunately he turned and marched back up his beat without saying a word. I caught my breath, swallowed my heart, and went on toward the gate. Just beyond

the stockade I was surprised to find a camp of rebel soldiers with tents on each side of the road. Some of them spoke to me as I passed but paid no particular attention to me, and I went on until I came to a lane that led to the river.

Down this lane about a hundred yards I ran into a picket post, some of the men armed and some not. My plan of walking right up had worked so well I decided to use the same tactics again. We talked a little while and then one of the men suggested we go out and get mulberries. Now I had started out to hunt a boat instead of mulberries, but deemed it best to change my quest temporarily, especially since the mulberries were in the direction I wanted to go anyhow. Although I did not start out after those berries, they tasted the best of anything I ever ate in my life.

After feasting we started back toward camp. Then I said I believed I would go down to the river for a while. My new friend protested that it was nearly dinner time, but if I wanted to go to the river he would go too. I pretended it was all right and so we wandered off toward the river. What I was looking for was a place to reach the river from this road, and we soon came to a little path that led down to where a fisherman's boat was securely tied to a small tree. After looking around a little while I suggested that we go back to camp. Several times the man with me complained of being hungry, so when we reached the mulberry tree I told him to go

on and get his dinner and I would eat some more berries as I was very fond of them. Much to my relief he did this, and when he was out of sight around the bend I hastily returned to the river.

Alone for the first time since coming out, I spent the rest of the time until late afternoon exploring the river bank. A place to hide until dark would be very necessary when we got out, and I found just what we should need close to the road. After marking the place by breaking some branches I started back toward camp as it was getting late and I well knew my brother's anxiety.

As I passed through the rebel camp I noticed that most of the tents were empty, and as I neared the fair-ground gate I saw that the soldiers were having dress parade just north of the road. The sentinel at this gate came half way to me, watched me a minute, and turned back. I passed on down in front of the line toward a crowd of citizens who were watching the parade and from there proceeded to my own quarters. No one seemed to pay any attention to me, but I saw my brother and could tell that he recognized me, so I quickly changed my clothes and was again a prisoner.

As soon as our party could get together out of hearing I told them all I had learned, and we completed our plans for escape at once. Tuesday, June 17th, was the day we fixed to try for freedom. That afternoon we all contrived to put on our butternut suits and filled bags, which we hung around our

waists, with all the food we could obtain. My brother managed to conceal a small dishpan in his clothing, which was to serve as our cooking equipment. We also had two files, a large knife which had been converted into a saw on one edge, and a revolver with four cartridges.

How in the world did we get a revolver? After the surrender at Shiloh and before we were searched, Lieutenant Logan, with remarkable foresight took his revolver all apart and divided the pieces among many of the men. These pieces passed for junk and were not taken away when the men were searched. After Logan joined us he managed to find all of the men who had pieces of his revolver, even the four cartridges.

In case of being challenged we were prepared to show a forged pass detailing "Sergeant H. Haynes, with privates Jackson Smith, Newton Long, Milton Johnson of Captain Bell's and Parker's companies, Tenth Georgia Battalion," on special service through the lines that would be of "vast importance to our holy and just cause". Lieutenant Agey was to carry one copy of this special order and Lieutenant Logan another.

We planned to go out two at a time, about two hours apart. Lieutenant Agey and I went first, walked straight to the east gate, passed the guard without being spoken to, and were free men. We went directly to the mulberry tree, feasted ourselves, thence to the river, found the boat as I had left it,

and finally crawled into the hiding place I had selected. It seemed a long time until we heard footsteps, which proved to be those of my brother and Lieutenant Logan. We whistled to them as arranged, they slipped into the brush, and we remained hidden until dark.

Just at dusk it began to rain, which we thought lucky for us. But just as we were ready to start for the boat we heard some men coming along the road above us. They passed very close, went down to the river, unlocked the boat, and went off in it. What was to be done? Our well-laid plans seemed about to be frustrated at the very beginning. But while we were quietly considering our quandry, we heard the men returning.

When we finally went down to the river we found we could not break the chain or lock with any tools we had. With the saw knife, however, we cut down a tree about eight inches in diameter and freed the boat. While two of us were doing this the other two found fish lines set and cut off all the lines and hooks we wanted. Having adjusted ourselves very carefully in this boat, two in the middle seat and one in each end, we struck out and kept the boat spinning down the river until sunrise.

About daylight we saw a little bayou on the south side of the river where we could be entirely hidden. During the night my brother had killed a fish with his paddle and another had jumped into our boat. They were hardly fit to eat when cooked in river

water, however, so we made a sort of mush out of rice and meal and dried apples, ate our breakfast, and then tried to sleep. But the flies and mosquitoes were so bad we could not sleep much.

During the forenoon some negroes found us. They had seen our smoke and expected to find runaway negroes. From them we learned that we were about fifty miles from Macon. They also told us we were in great danger from snakes and alligators and that no negro could be tempted to go on the river in such a boat as ours. The alligator district lay just ahead of us, and the next few days we saw dozens of them from twelve to sixteen feet long lying on the banks as we passed, but they never tried to hurt us.

About three o'clock in the afternoon we headed for the sea again. As we rounded a sharp bend we were astonished to see a ferry-boat line stretched across the river and some houses on the bank. A man greeted us with a wave of his hat and a hurrah for Jeff Davis. We answered with a hurrah, but left off the Jeff Davis. He was very anxious for news, saying he had heard nothing since the capture of Grant's forces at Shiloh, and wanted to know if Lee had captured Washington yet. We gave him the encouraging news we had heard from the rebels, and told him we were going down to Darien.

"Are you going to make salt?" he asked.

We had not thought of that but replied, "Yes, that is just what we are going to do. What are you doing here?"

He replied that he was keeping store and tending the ferry. The only provisions he had to sell were bacon and whisky, so we bought three pounds of bacon and a quart of whisky. The whisky was particularly useful to rub on our hands which became very sore from rowing, and a little of it at night also helped us to stay awake so we could keep going as fast as possible.

During our negotiations with the ferryman, he said he believed some Yankees had passed there a few days before. He had ferried them almost across the river before he suspected and then was afraid to say anything. But he added, "They will never get past me again." As we went back to the boat we kept a close watch, but he did not seem to suspect us at all.

In getting into the boat, Logan happened to fall into the river, and our seven matches were in his pocket. That night we could not make a fire for supper, so we got back into the boat, ate what we had already cooked, and, being very tired, concluded to let the boat drift.

All at once we found ourselves stuck on a snag, apparently in deep water. While in this plight we heard paddles, and soon saw a boat with three men in it coming down the river almost upon us. Of course we thought they were rebel soldiers after us, but as we could not get away we hailed them and asked what they wanted. They veered away from us and said they were just going down around the bend

to get some fish lines. We felt sure they were trying to fool us and get some advantage. By this time we had our boat loose and told them to hold on and we would go along and help them. "All right," they said, "come ahead", but we could not overtake them and heard no answer to our calls.

This was about midnight. We were so puzzled over what it meant that we pulled as hard as we could until nearly morning, watching all the time for some sign of them but seeing or hearing nothing. Coming to a straight place in the river, Lieutenant Logan, who was in the stern, told us he would try to keep off the snags while we rested and let the boat drift.

After we had fallen asleep Logan heard paddles again and saw a boat with three men in it coming down almost abreast of us. He instantly pulled his revolver, jumped to his feet, and called out, "Now if you fellows are not looking for trouble you better not come an inch closer." They replied that they were not looking for trouble. "Why are you following us?" demanded Logan. "This is the second time you have nearly run into us." By this time we were all awake and had seized our clubs ready to fight it out. The strangers insisted that they were not following us, but Lieutenant Agey, who had not yet spoken, retorted, "Yes you are. I know you are the same fellows we saw up the river." Agey had a very peculiar high-pitched voice, and in the excitement had not disguised it at all. They did

not answer at once but we could hear them talking in low tones among themselves. Then one of them called out, "Isn't that Jack Agey in that boat?" On hearing this we knew they must be friends and called them to come alongside.

They were Lieutenant G. W. Brown and Lieutenant N. J. Camp of the Twenty-third Missouri and Lieutenant H. W. Mays of the Ninth Kentucky, who had escaped from prison the night before we did by running past the guard in the dark. After a brief conference we agreed to stick together and never go back to that prison alive. By putting commas between the first and last names of Jackson Smith and Newton Long and inserting "and" between Milton and Johnson, we made our bogus pass include seven men instead of four.

At daylight we pulled our boats into a bayou and went ashore. Brown, Camp, and Mays had no provisions except a chunk of corn bread they had obtained from some negroes the night before. They had no matches either, so we decided to build a fire by a shot from our revolver. Having prepared some dry stuff, the ball was picked out of the cartridge, but the revolver was held too close and blew our fuel away. The second trial was successful. After breakfast we slept until noon, and then fastened our boats together with poles across the tops. Having cooked all the provisions we had except the bacon, we embarked again and ran all night without interruption. At daylight we landed on the north

side of the river, ate our breakfast, and then went to sleep. We had decided it was safest to run only at night.

Here we set some fish hooks, and in the evening found we had caught two eels. At our next landing place, after we had cooked the eels, Lieutenant Brown, who was walking around in the woods, stirred up a possum. We all joined in the chase, ran it up a tree, and managed to kill it. While we were cooking the possum some one went down to look at the hooks and found we had caught a big turtle. That night we had the best supper of the whole trip.

After another all-night's run without adventure we landed again on the north side of the river. Here the negroes warned us to watch out for the dangerous alligators which had just killed a two-year-old heifer and eaten it all up in two days. Three of us went back in the woods and bought four young chickens at the plantation.

That night we made good progress. Shortly after daylight, as we rounded a sharp bend in the river, we suddenly came into plain sight of a railroad bridge and a number of steamboats tied up there. We lost no time in getting into hiding on the north side of the river, twisted the heads off our chickens, and decided to stay there until dark.

Not very far away was a camp of Confederate soldiers. We kept very quiet, wrapped our oar locks with moss, and after taps were beaten in the camp

we thought it safe to pass under the bridge. Keeping close to the north shore we hoped to pass between the first pier and the bank, but struck an obstruction. Our chain rattled, making what seemed to us a loud noise, and the stern swung around so that when we got the boat loose it was stern foremost in the current. For about two hundred yards we drifted this way, lying flat in the boat. We could see the guard on the bridge, but he did not seem to see us, and as it was very dark we were soon out of sight, pulling for dear life.

All at once we heard a challenge from the bank to halt and come ashore. We did not answer promptly, and immediately three or four shots struck the water near us. Then our Kentucky lieutenant, pretending to be a negro, answered, "What are you all doin' up dar? You'll hurt somebody if you don' look out. What you shootin' at us for?"

"Come ashore then," they replied. "We don't allow anybody to pass here in the night."

Lieutenant Mays explained that we could not come ashore back up there because we were in the swift current, but if they would not shoot any more we would land down below and they could come down where we were. They agreed and we saw them start a guard down the river to receive us. Meanwhile we were making all speed possible, and in a short time we discovered an island just below us. The guard being on the north side, we took the south side and that was the last of that adventure.

We pulled as hard as possible and at daylight found a landing place on the side opposite to the guard. Negroes brought us some fire and we cooked our chickens. From these negroes we learned that we were more than half way from the bridge to Darien, a distance of one hundred and fifty miles.

If our good luck continued during the night we could reach salt water before daylight. The river was about a mile wide, and we kept as near the center as we could all night. At last we saw lights ahead of us on both sides of the river. This proved to be Darien and a camp of soldiers on the opposite side. Fortunately we passed without attracting any attention.

Only the character of the country enabled us to make this trip without detection. Most of the way the river ran through almost impenetrable jungles. There were no farms near it, no roads coming down to it or bridges crossing it. The alligators and snakes made the vicinity of the stream unsafe. We saw no one but negroes, and they always supposed we were rebel soldiers.

Near Darien we first heard the roaring of the ocean. Soon the shore line on the south side disappeared entirely from sight and we found the water very salty and very much rougher. Off to the north we could still see a dark streak of land, so we turned our boats in that direction. After pulling hard for over an hour and being nearly swamped several times we reached Wolf Island, pulled our

boats up as far as we could, and went to sleep on the sand. The sun was shining brightly when we awoke. Although the buildings on this island were all abandoned, we did not feel safe and decided to go across to another piece of land we could see off to the northeast.

Before leaving we ate all the food we had. The ocean was very calm at first and we got along nicely until we were about half way across. Then the surface became rougher and rougher. Several times we shipped water, and finally a big wave swamped us. Lieutenant Mays could not swim so the rest of us jumped out and swam alongside as he bailed out the boat. In this way we managed to reach the shore which was about half a mile away.

This land, as we afterward learned, was Sapelo Island. On it were several abandoned buildings, including a lighthouse. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when we reached this island — wet, tired, and hungry. The only food we could find anywhere was a few inches of meal in an old barrel. This was covered with a crust and with broken plaster from the ceiling. But we took these off, poured the meal out on the floor, drove out hundreds of black bugs, made a fire with our last cartridge, and cooked mush. We also found some half ripe figs. None of us knew then what they were, but we cooked them in our meal and ate supper.

In looking around the island we found an old abandoned ship's yawl which appeared to be better

adapted than our boats for continuing our journey to Fort Pulaski. The next morning, however, some negroes, thinking we were rebel soldiers, told us the Yankees would get us if we stayed there. They told us that the Yankee gunboats came right in through this water and nearly always sent some soldiers over to this island. Being convinced that they were telling the truth, we decided to wait for the gunboats where we were instead of going to Fort Pulaski. The negroes were overjoyed to learn that we were Yankees and went to work to get us something to eat, promising to feed us as long as we stayed. They showed us where the ships usually anchored, so we watched closely, and sure enough, just before dark, two ships came in sight.

All our efforts to attract attention failed, however, and after dark we got so uneasy for fear the ships would leave during the night that we decided to go out and hail them. Getting a lantern from the old lighthouse, we set it in the bow of the old yawl and started out to the nearest ship. Suddenly, as we were pulling for dear life, some one called to us to throw up our hands and surrender.

They had seen our lighted lantern from the ship and sent out a large yawl with about twenty men in it to meet us. Half of these men had their muskets pointed at us and a voice demanded to know who we were. Right then I suppose we were nearer death than at any time since we had escaped from prison. In our excitement we all talked at once, trying to tell

them we were escaped prisoners. They thought we said "Contraband", and knowing from our voices that we were not negroes suspected treachery of some kind and were about to fire. But caution prevailed, and we finally made them understand that we had come from Macon and were trying to get out to the ship. Thereupon they came nearer, threw us a line, and towed us to the ship.

Before running alongside the captain called out to the officer, "What have you found?"

"I hardly know what, but they are the hardest looking outfit I ever saw", he replied. "They say they are out of ammunition."

The captain had us brought aboard and questioned us closely. One thing that made it hard for them to understand our story was the yawl we came out in. It happened to be an old one cast off from this very ship, the *Wamsutta*, so they knew we never came down from Macon in that. The next day they sent men over to the island to see the boats in which we made the trip. They told us there were scarcely six days in the year when a small boat could possibly cross from the mainland at all, and they would have called it impossible for the ones in which we came ever to do it. Nevertheless we had done it.

The next day the *Wamsutta* sailed back down the coast to St. Simon's Island and we were transferred to Commodore L. M. Goldsborough's flag ship, the *Florida*. On this ship we were treated as guests and shown every courtesy. There, on June 27th, I

celebrated my twenty-fourth birthday. They outfitted us with full suits of navy clothing, and kept us until the evening of the first of July, when we were transferred to the *Massachusetts*, a larger steamer bound north. On the third morning out on this trip north we came in sight of Fort Sumpter with its fleet of blockading ships and many vessels of all nations lying at anchor.

On the evening of July 5th we arrived at Fortress Monroe and reported to Major General John A. Dix who was in command there. A newspaper reporter interviewed Lieutenant Camp and an account of our adventure was published in the New York *Herald* on July 8, 1862. General Dix gave us a warm reception, kept us over night, and in the morning gave us transportation to Baltimore. There we reported to Major General John E. Wool, who was much interested in our story, and furnished us transportation and an order to report to the Adjutant General in Washington.

We arrived in Washington too late that night to report, so we hunted up our Senator, James Harlan, with whom we were personally acquainted. He kept us at his hotel that night, and the following day took us to call on President Lincoln. But to our very great regret he had left early that morning for the battlefield on the James River to look after the care of the wounded. We called upon Secretary Seward, and then reported to Secretary Stanton who was much interested and asked us many questions about

conditions in the South. He gave us leave of absence for thirty days and an order to the quartermaster for transportation and subsistence. At the Treasurer's office we drew our pay and allowance for the time we were in prison. That evening we started for our homes in Iowa, where we arrived about July 13th.

MILTON RHODES

Comment by the Editor

THE HORNETS' NEST

About half way between Pittsburg Landing and Shiloh Church, the Corinth highway was transected by an abandoned road so deeply weathered as to afford natural rifle-pits for Colonel Tuttle's brigade — the Second, Seventh, Twelfth, and Fourteenth Iowa Infantry. To the right and to the left of this position stretched the battle line of the Union army.

Early on Sunday morning the fighting began. Gradually the Confederates pressed back the flanks of their opponents until the center of the line along the sunken road formed the apex of a gigantic wedge. Twelve separate times the finest regiments of the Southern army were hurled against this "Hornets' Nest", and every time their well-formed ranks were paralyzed, then "shivered into fragments", and repulsed. From mid-forenoon till six o'clock, this inaccessible barrier "blazed with sheets of flame" and "poured forth a murderous storm of shot and shell and musket-fire which no living thing could quell". Not a foot of ground did the Iowans yield, though the enemy swept their "devoted spot" with field artillery from right and left. By four-thirty in the afternoon the Union batteries were driven from the field and the encircling gray line closed in. Still the "hornets" clung to their "nest".

Just before the artillery was withdrawn, the Second and Seventh Iowa regiments fought their way out of the *cul-de-sac*, but the order to retreat never reached the Eighth, Twelfth, and Fourteenth Iowa, the Fifty-eighth Illinois, and Prentiss's regiments. For an hour and a half they held the chief attention of the Confederate army; but at last, completely surrounded, their ranks depleted and their ammunition exhausted, they surrendered.

To what purpose was this sacrifice? For the captured men it meant months of terrible hardship, pestilence, and even death in Southern prison camps. If the order to retreat had been delivered they might have saved themselves. But if resistance had ceased at four o'clock, the overwhelming Confederate forces concentrated in the center might have had time to break through the Union line and "drive the enemy into the river". As it happened, the final desperate stand at the Hornets' Nest gave General Grant time to form a new line of battle; "time for Lew. Wallace, for Buell, and for Night to come". Who knows but that the last hopeless defense of that "altar of sacrifice" was the deciding factor in the Battle of Shiloh?

J. E. B.

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