

cleared was full of all kinds of foreign material. The change of climate and way of life also had an effect, but it was especially the water that was so dangerous. This illness withstood almost every kind of treatment by the doctors, not only for as long as the patients remained in the hospital, but long after and under the most favorable conditions, so many died from this illness even long after they had come home.

At the end of March some of the sick were moved to Northern hospitals, and some along with the Regiment, which then pitched camp on the Missouri bank where tents for the sick were set up as well.

When the Rebels surrendered the Island, the 15th pitched camp here with their sick, and the sick as well as the healthy lived in tents, some on the Island itself and some on the bank of the closest mainland. Communication between the them was maintained with the help of a little steamship. But after a while the Regiment took over two roomy Rebel houses, a mile east of the camp, and these were set up as the Regimental Hospital under Dr. Hansen. The patients thereby enjoyed more favorable conditions; a couple of good milk cows were bought for the hospital, and the illness diminished somewhat. There were now 80 men here, but some of the sick were also in the camp. The mortality rate was significant: 10 percent of the patients. Not a few were discharged, and others were taken to various other hospitals in the North, especially to St. Louis, Mound City, and Cincinnati.

In June, when the Regiment left Island Number 10, the sick were left behind under the care of Dr. Hansen, while Himo accompanied the Regiment through Kentucky and Tennessee to Mississippi, where they pitched camp four miles south of Corinth.

Doctor Newel had now left the Regiment, and when the sick who remained on Island Number 10 were sent to regular hospitals, some were discharged and some recovered. The Regimental Hospital on the Island was closed and Dr. Hansen left with the rest of the patients for Corinth, where they all lived in tents.

At the end of July the Regiment, including the sick, moved farther south into the vicinity of Jacinto, then in August east to Iuka, near Alabama. Immediately after this, the

Regiment went northeast through Tennessee and Kentucky, but the patients were left in the local general hospital. Dr. Hansen stayed behind here as an auxiliary doctor, while Dr. Himo and a new third doctor, who had now been appointed in place of Newel, accompanied the Regiment.

In three week's time the hospital in Iuka was closed and the patients were moved to the general hospitals in Corinth and Jackson. In accordance with orders from General Rosecrans, Dr. Hansen proceeded to the first of these accompanied by four hundred of the sick from the various regiments. He was now to serve as auxiliary doctor.

After the Regiment moved away from the pernicious water of the Mississippi, the sickness abated, but those who had come down with diarrhea still suffered from it to a greater or lesser degree; it was chronic. Dr. Hansen and the new third doctor were also infected. Because of this, both were given leave in December for a time so they could recuperate at home. But their sickness persisted just as severely there; they applied for discharges and these were granted.

Dr. Himo became the brigade doctor, and Dr. St. Sure, Swedish-born, became the Regimental doctor. After Colonel Heg died Himo resigned, while St. Sure accompanied the Regiment on its marches in Kentucky and Tennessee, as well as east of the Allegheny Mountains.

At Iuka the Regiment's worst hardships began, with difficult marches and frequent battles and skirmishes; naturally, the wounded began to show up on the sick lists. But when possible they were sent to regular hospitals as quickly as possible.

(according to Dr. Hansen)

Letter from the Hospital Steward

The following letter from A. G. Øyen was written to the Hon. J. A. Johnson on 14

February 1866.

...My name is Anthon Odin Øyen. I was born in Trondheim, Norway, on 8 October 1841. On 29 July 1860 I submitted to the so-called physical examination at Bodø Apothecary and emigrated to America in the summer of 1861. On 8 October the same year I was recruited in Chicago, Illinois, as an enlisted man in Captain Torkildson's Company called "St. Olaf's Rifles" (Company A), which was then being recruited for the 15th Wisconsin.

After our arrival in Madison I was accepted as a medic (hospital steward) in the Regiment, and on 18 January 1862 I got my actual appointment as such. This was dated 18 November 1861, the time I began my duties.

On 31 December 1862 in the Battle of Stones River, Tennessee, I was taken prisoner by the Rebel's cavalry along with many others, but luckily the imprisonment was short since we were taken back by our own troops.

In the Battle of Chickamauga, Georgia, on 20 September 1863, when our army had to retreat before a superior force, I was ordered by our division's medical director, against my will, to halt at our division general's field hospital, since I was the only medic who was left on that part of the battlefield (because all the other medics, as far as I know, had packed up their things early in the morning and retreated as quickly as possible back to Chattanooga). This hospital was filled with about six hundred men, sick and wounded. In the afternoon when our army had retreated from the battlefield, one of Rebel General Wheeler's Texas cavalry regiments came up to our hospital, which lay in Crawfish Springs, Georgia, and requested the hospital's medical director to surrender with all the sick, wounded, and subordinate men. We surrendered, which was obviously the only way out of the situation we were in. On 2 October I was marched off to

Ringgold, a pretty little town in northern Georgia some 13 miles from Crawfish Springs, along with 350 men of whom 50 were surgeons and assistant surgeons, and approximately 12 were medics, who were taken prisoner either at other hospitals or during the retreat. This town had been occupied by our troops just two days before the battle began. When we got there, our names were read out and written down by the provost marshal, and then we made our quarters where we thought it was best. We were, in fact, free on parole, and this release was in force until we got to Atlanta. In Ringgold we were ridiculed a lot by the town's citizens, especially by the women, who were very resentful toward us and called us thieves, robbers, etc. In the evening two of these southern ladies came on horseback and stopped in front of some of us who were standing in a group and talking together. Then one of the ladies began to sneer at us and abuse us as vile Yankees, whereupon one of us asked her, "Did you ever see a living Yankee with horns? If not, then take a good look at us now." They apparently hadn't expected to be spoken to in that way because they left us as quickly as possible. On 3 October we were packed together on some railway cars, which had previously been used to transport living animals, and the excrement now lay piled up to three inches deep on the floor, and we had no opportunity to clean it up. We were then transported to Atlanta, where we were quartered in a pig sty; we were there for two days. Then we were again packed together on railway cars and taken to Richmond, where we arrived on the 11th, very tired after the trip. Here we were quartered in Libby, our names registered again, and we had to hand over our money to a certain Major Turner. I was robbed of 25 dollars. Here we were fed for the first time at the Rebel's expense (up until that time we had actually lived on our own rations), which I must say was a rather dry refreshment, since one day's ration consisted of two shares of half rotten meat, half a loaf of bread (10 shares) and something that was called soup—it consisted primarily of lukewarm water and half-cooked black beans, best known by the name Negro beans. Each man got from a quarter to a half a pot. In a pot

of this soup one could sometimes find two dozen beans; at other times it was completely impossible to find even one. Immediately after dinner we were moved over to another prison, Castle Pemberton, which was assigned to us as our future quarters, as the Rebels said, "until further orders." Here some eleven hundred men were now locked up as prisoners, and all of the atrocities that were committed by both sides here are impossible for any pen to describe. I stayed here for six weeks and in that time was so exhausted by hunger that I could scarcely walk across the floor.

On 22 November we were moved from here and transported by railway to Danville, Virginia, where we arrived on the night of the 22nd. The rations we received when we left Richmond consisted of approximately two pounds of corn bread, which was devoured before we had gone 20 miles, and we did not get any more until the afternoon of the 23rd, by which time we were so hungry that we were ready to chew our fingers off. But then we received about one pound of meat and bread per man, and we really believed we would come to live like lords here; but the Rebels could not bear this generosity for long; three or four days later the fare was just as meager here as it had been at times in the Rebel capital.

On 26 November I was taken out of prison and sent to the hospital to take over a unit of our sick, and I stayed there until the middle of December, 1863, when I was attacked by smallpox and was confined to bed for a few weeks. Then I resumed my work at the hospital. In the middle of January, 1864, I was requested by the doctors to take over the smallpox hospital that lay a mile outside of town, which I did so that I could get a good opportunity to try my luck at escaping. While I was there I often got permission, as did several others, to go out in the country (with a Rebel soldier) in order to dig laurel root, from which we made many small things like tobacco pipes and finger rings which we sold to the Rebels for a good profit. I did not let this opportunity escape me, and I discovered rather precisely where all the sentries were posted (a picket line actually surrounded the hospital) because I was determined to escape from

the Rebels as soon as the weather allowed it. On 22 February I packed up my things—an overcoat and a blanket that I rolled together and threw on my back along with a ration bag that held about seven pounds of hard bread and one pound of sugar. These things were naturally stolen from the Rebels, since the rations at that time were very poor. There were also two others who wanted to try to escape, and we were going to stick together. At nine o'clock in the evening we began the march and successfully got through the picket line nearest the hospital without being arrested, but when we had gone about a mile from there, we were discovered by a sentry who was posted that day to catch deserters, both our soldiers and the Rebels'. The road we wanted to use went down to the coast, and I am certain that if we had not been captured that night we would have slipped safe and sound to our own lines. We intended to march at night and stay hidden during the day. We also intended to build ourselves a raft and travel down the Tur River in North Carolina; we had brought with us some ropes that we had stolen from the Rebels. But now we had to march under guard back to the town, where I was given lodging in Prison Number 5. On the evening of 28 February a tunnel, which had been under construction for three month's time, was opened in this prison. This tunnel was nearly 160 feet long and was dug with knives, tin plates, and other similar things; in short, with anything that could be used. Some 70 men escaped through here before it was discovered. Half of these got through to various points, but the rest were snapped up and sent back to prison.

We stayed in Danville until 13 April; then we were sent by train to Andersonville, where we arrived on the 19th and were quartered in Camp Sumter. This prison was under Rebel Captain Henry Wirtz's command. He is best known as "the German sergeant." The Rebels here displayed their barbarity to the highest degree, and anyone who got out of there with a spark of life—despite being almost starved to death—had to consider himself lucky. On 26 May 1864 I was taken out of prison on parole to work in the infirmary, if I must refer to the prison hospital in that way. Here I did fairly well

through the summer; I almost always had enough to eat, and I often smuggled food in to the boys of my Regiment who lay sick in the hospital—flour, beans, and other things when I had the chance. I was certainly in danger of being discovered by the Rebel soldiers, who in the event of discovery would have confiscated everything I had. When some of my friends in the Regiment were well enough to do some work, I usually got them out of prison on parole. I can name three of these: Sergeant Major Martin A. Erickson, who later died in Sparta, Wisconsin, was appointed as a clerk in the Doctor's office, and Sergeant Bernt J. Madson from Company B was appointed as assistant medic in a ward of the hospital, as were Private Ole C. Brandstad from Company A and many others from other regiments.

I remained a prisoner in Andersonville until 18 March 1865; then our names were read out and we were sent by train through Georgia and Alabama to Jackson, Mississippi. From there we had to march some 36 miles to Black River, where we were exchanged on parole and went to Camp Fisk, near Vicksburg.

This was on the evening of 27 March, and after an imprisonment of 18 months and seven days I stood again under the dear banner of freedom—the Stars and Stripes—which I had once sworn to live and die for.

On 10 May I came to the home I had left in the fall of 1861, in order to fight for freedom and the suppression of slavery.

Most respectfully,
Anthon Odin Øyen
late Hospital Steward, 15th Regiment
Wisconsin Volunteers

The Regiment's Religious and Moral Condition
(by Army Chaplain Clausen)

When I first took over my position in the Regiment, at that time still at Camp Randall, I soon saw the truth of what Colonel Heg had said in a letter in which he earnestly requested me to accept the post as the Regiment's chaplain.

I found many, both officers and enlisted men, who did not seem to concern themselves in the least with God's word or spiritual matters, and they showed not just indifference to religion, but open contempt for it. I almost despaired of being able to accomplish anything among such a flock of men, but after I became better acquainted with them I gladly discovered an undercurrent of religious feeling that I had not seen at first; it brought to mind the fact that froth always rises to the surface, while a clear current runs unseen beneath it.

A false modesty prevailed among some of them that prevented their religious feelings from showing, since they were afraid that their comrades would make fun of them, but wherever I found such fear I did my best to fight it by showing them how little courage and manliness were revealed by such feelings, and I soon had the satisfaction of seeing that my work was not completely in vain.

As long as the Regiment remained in Camp Randall, the men were exposed to the worst kinds of temptations. There were, in fact, several other regiments in the camp at the same time; discipline was very poor and many of the soldiers got permission to roam about town.

Under such circumstances one cannot be surprised that some members of the Scandinavian Regiment also went astray, went to drinking houses, got drunk, etc., but this was certainly the exception; most of the Regiment's men were respectable and sober.

After the Regiment had left Camp Randall, and especially after some of the less-sober among the officers were forced to leave, its condition in this regard became significantly better and could now equal, if not exceed, any other regiment in the service.

An army chaplain soon finds that his position is plagued by many difficulties.

The order and regularity of the duties of the office, to which he is accustomed in his congregation, naturally cannot be achieved here, and he is forced to take those opportunities which present themselves now and then to preach God's word to his flock.

While we were in Madison we had our services in the Courthouse, but after our departure from there we had to hold them in the shadow of one or another tree. Besides our regular Sunday meetings, we also had prayer meetings in the evenings when the circumstances allowed. Attendance at services was completely voluntary for both the officers and soldiers, except on certain occasions such as when the whole army unit was ordered out, and a few times when the Regiment was drawn up in formation.#

If attendance had been forced, we naturally could not have drawn any conclusions about the moral and religious state of the Regiment from the numbers attending, but as it was, since each could follow his own desire in this regard and it was evident that most of the Regiment attended services and followed them with deep interest, one can be led to draw the most favorable conclusion. Certainly there were many among both officers and enlisted men who seldom or never attended the religious services, but this is without doubt the case in all regiments in all armies throughout the world.

As chaplain I naturally had the frequent opportunity to converse with the soldiers about their spiritual well-being, and I always found men who gladly seized these opportunities to open their hearts; yes, I found rather more here than in our settlements in this country. That their changed situation and the new surroundings served to bring them to serious contemplation is undoubted, and it can be hoped that these thoughts may have had a lasting influence on them.

I always found my most fertile ground in the hospital, and I often felt strengthened by the conversations I had with the sick. Many times I found great ignorance of and a lack of interest in those things that do not belong to this life, but in no case, as far as I remember,

Translator's note: The phrase used in the original is "undtagen ved enkelte Leiligheder, som hele Armeafdelingen var kommanderet ud, og et Par Gange, som Regimentet blev trukket op i Firkant." (page 198)

did I find open ungodliness or hardness. On the contrary, the sick received me with joy shining on their faces and listened with eagerness when I explained God's word to them.

The dead were buried in the best possible manner, considering the circumstances. The corpse was laid in a simple coffin and accompanied to the grave with music and a fitting procession. After prayers were said by the pastor, the coffin was lowered, the grave filled, and a farewell salute fired over it. Then a simple grave marker was raised, which consisted of a piece of wood on which the deceased's name was carved, along with his company and regiment and the time he died. On behalf of the deceased's relatives the pastor now thanked his comrades for this last proof of their friendship, whereupon the procession returned to the camp with muted drums.

Camp Life

For the general reader it might be of interest to get a rather detailed report on how the soldiers pass the time in camp.

In the morning, at five o'clock, reveille is sounded. The soldier has to get up and go to roll call, which is conducted by the orderly sergeant. Breakfast is usually eaten around seven o'clock. Then comes the regular camp work, cleaning the quarters and barracks, brushing clothes, cleaning weapons, etc. Then there are company or squadron exercises, after dinner battalion or regimental exercises, at nine o'clock in the evening another roll call, and a half-hour later taps are sounded; at that time all lights have to be extinguished.

This was the general rule in the camp, but in the field these rules naturally cannot be followed because there the duties might consist of marching or fighting, depending on the circumstances; drilling and other such duties are then discontinued.

Guard and picket duty are often difficult for the soldier. In the camp the guard was usually relieved at nine o'clock in the morning. Smaller units from each company meet at an

agreed-upon place, where they are inspected by the officers of the watch and the Regiment's adjutant. They are to inspect the soldiers' appearance, weapons, and equipment. Then the men are marched to the guardhouse, where there are three shifts, each of which has two hours of guard duty at a stretch. The other units, who accordingly are not on duty, still have to remain in the guardhouse in order to be ready whenever it might be necessary.

It is the duty of the one watch officer to stay with the watch in the guardhouse, and he is responsible for his watch's condition and watchfulness.

The other officer on duty has a higher rank than the first and is usually a captain (the first is usually a lieutenant). This officer visits the guardhouse and the guards on duty now and then in order to see that everything is in order.

There are also corporals and sergeants in the watch who help the officer with the details of his duties.

Picket duty is carried out in the same way as guard duty, except that there is less emphasis on the formalities and more emphasis on alertness in order to protect the army from a surprise attack by the enemy. Here the higher-ranking watch officer is usually a field officer who rides around the picket line once a day and once a night in order to assure himself that the guards have the correct instructions and that both officers and enlisted men are carrying out their respective duties with the necessary vigilance.

According to the regulations, neither an officer nor an enlisted man is allowed to leave the camp during the day without presenting a proper leave pass, or during the night without the password.

If a sentry discovers during the night that a person is approaching, he calls, "Who goes there?" That person has to answer "Friend with the password," if he has it, or "Friend without the password," if does not have it. The guard then orders him to come and give the password, which must be done in a whisper. If it is correct, he is allowed to pass; if it is an unknown individual who does not have the password or has an incorrect password, then he is

arrested and the next day sent to the commander along with a report about the specific circumstances.

Obviously great emphasis is placed on the guard's vigilance; negligence on their part can result in the army being surprised and forced to fight under the worst of conditions. Sometimes the guard can also cause great alarm unnecessarily and the whole army can be called out and lined up in battle formation. In the dark a soldier with an excited imagination can easily mistake a cow, a horse, or a mule deer for a person, and after he has called three times without receiving an answer—as the regulations command—he will fire and thereby warn the whole line. In most cases he does not hit his target, since at such moments he is much too excited. A cool-headed, calm man never shoots before he sees something to shoot at, and this something must be a person who is wandering about in a place where he does not have permission to be. A cool-headed man always knows whether a sound was made by an animal or a person, and the guard who shoots at a cow or a pig won't be thought to be good for much by his comrades.

As far as is known, the camp was not alerted without reason more than once by the sentries from the 15th, and that was on Island Number 10 immediately after their arrival there. The night was dark and stormy. Some of the sentries seemed rather frightened by exaggerated rumors about large numbers of Rebel troops who were supposed to have come into the area and were now right in the vicinity. A couple of shots fell into the picket line early in the evening, but the reason for these could not be discovered, although the sentries claimed that they had heard "something," which is quite likely; they had without doubt heard the leaves rustling in the wind. The watch officer on duty also seemed to be a little detached from reality and ordered the guards to fire their rifles in unison and to withdraw to the camp in the event that they still heard shooting. Everything was peaceful for awhile; everyone who was not on duty had gone to bed, then ... "bang!" A shot rang out and was followed immediately by two more; then the whole line fired a terrible volley and withdrew to the camp—and not in the most orderly fashion.

Now there was confusion and alarm everywhere. It was so dark that one could not have seen a ghost, and the wind was blowing up a storm. The reason for the alarm was soon explained. Some of the neighbors wanted to go to Cairo with the first steamship and came into the camp to await its arrival. They carried a lamp with them, and the sentries had fired at the sight of it without waiting to see who they were, friend or foe. They probably didn't doubt that the Rebel army had come to take them prisoner.

It was a big blunder, but it was a lesson that was not forgotten during the following campaign. It was seldom one heard a shot from the picket line when the 15th was posted there; its pickets never again raised any unnecessary alarms.

Colonel Ole C. Johnson Skipnes' Experiences as a Prisoner of War
(from his own papers)

After having described the Battle of Chickamauga—a description that cannot be included here—he tells about his capture, about his experiences in Libby Prison, about his escape and dangerous flight until he stood once again under the Stars and Stripes, the banner of freedom, the Union flag!

He himself wrote in the English language, and a slavish translation is unnecessary here; the thought, the tone and the local color are retained, while longer reflections of lesser interest are not followed exactly, partly because they cannot be said to be historic, partly because the piece in its entirety would take too much space, and also partly because a translation would not be the original anyway.

A mere exercise in translation from the Mother tongue,
Cannot impart the true depth of the author's passion.#

Translator's note: This is a rather uncertain translation of the following verse:

Eit Skulemaal i Mor sin Mund,
Det slær 'kje Eld 'ti djupe Grund.

I suspect from the context that Buslett is trying to say that it is futile to try to translate Johnson's original text in its entirety because a translation cannot convey the true feelings and passions of the author.

As you remember, the 15th was almost surrounded on the second day when the battle raged at its worst; many were taken prisoner. Before he knew it, Lieutenant Colonel O. C. Johnson was ordered in a coarse manner to surrender, and it was with indescribable feelings that he surrendered himself into the hands of the enemy; his desire to live was minimal at that moment, and since he did not have any family to take care of, it was only the hope that he could defeat his enemy on the battlefield once again that made him prefer life over death.

A soldier demanded his sword in a discourteous tone, but Johnson was quite determined to resist handing it over to the anyone but the correct person. The soldier became angry, cocked his gun, and threatened to put a bullet through his head on the spot, but Johnson asked coolly why the soldier didn't go to the front and do his shooting there since his comrades undoubtedly needed his services; but it was naturally less dangerous to shoot at an unarmed prisoner. Now an officer came and ordered the soldier to leave. Johnson was then accompanied to General Hindman's staff officer, where he handed over his sword like an officer.

When he came to the rear, he found Captain Gustavson and many other members of the Regiment who had fallen into the hands of the Rebels just like him, and a number of others from other regiments and brigades.

The Rebels were naturally celebrating their success and boasted terribly; now they would soon have the whole Yankee army. Johnson asked them to listen to the constant rifle fire and thunder of cannon toward the north and told them that the Union still had it main force there for them to worry about. In tense expectation and with great attention, the prisoners followed the course of the battle. From the sound of the cannon they could hear that their army was holding its ground.

Towards evening they were marched 12 miles to Ringgold; footsore and heartsick they lay down, when at 11 o'clock they were driven into a pen like animals. Johnson usually slept well; whatever the troubles, worries, and disappointments of the day, they were never so heavy that they weren't always forgotten in sleep's blessed peace, and new strength and new courage with which to meet the coming day's tribulations were the certain consequences of

sleep. But now this ability had deserted him for once and his thoughts whirled everywhere: How were things going on the battlefield? Would the army have to bend in the end to the superior force of the enemy? How were things going with the 15th? How many of them had fallen? These questions were repeated again and again. Once in a while his thoughts flew home to the North where Father and Mother, Sister and Brother, were anxious to know he was safe; one brother had already fallen on the field of battle, to their heart's sorrow. Then his thoughts flew back to his youth when he had read about war, but never once dreamed that he himself would see the day when he was taking part in one, and even less had he dreamed of finding himself a prisoner in the enemy's power. All these thoughts and many more tumbled though his brain willy-nilly, until the outside world disappeared in the peace of his dreams; sleep again came to his aid. It did not last long, but it gave him strength anyway. When he woke up, he was stiff with cold because the nights in the South are cold even when it is midsummer, so to be comfortable one must have a blanket over one, and in September the night cold is penetrating. Johnson, like most prisoners, had neither blanket nor cloak, and naturally was very cold. Here and there a small fire was lit, and he tried to hold a little warmth in his body by one of these until dawn came.

The rations were very small; there was just some coarse corn bread that was divided among the prisoners. Johnson had no desire for anything.

That day they marched to a railway, were put on board a train, and started on the way to Atlanta. Here their names were registered, along with their respective regiments' numbers, states, rank, etc. As a rule the citizens were very courteous, and so were the soldiers, except for the so-called "home guards" who had never smelled gunpowder; they now thought that it was proof of their patriotism to show their barbarity toward the unarmed prisoners they had in their power.

At first the citizens got permission to associate with the prisoners as much as they wanted, and they brought with them a great deal of food and let their humanity show in many ways; many of them were from the North themselves or had friends and relatives there and

were now eager to hear from them. But the officers clearly thought that there was too much familiarity and forbade the citizens to come inside the guard line or to bring food. But the citizens did not let themselves be scared off so easily; they hung around outside the guard line and, when the officers were a little to the side, they had a little chat and passed in their food, and if they couldn't come close enough because of the guards, they threw the food into the flock that eagerly devoured anything edible. To the credit of the guards it can be said that they were quite deaf and nearsighted and noticed almost nothing of what was happening, except when the officers were nearby, and even the officers seemed to be unusually slow to realize what was going on around them.

The prisoners remained here for a day and two nights.

Early in the morning they were ordered out and marched to the station to take the train to Richmond. It was barely dawn when they marched through the streets of the town. Some began to sing the well-known song, *Rally Round the Flag, Boys*, and the refrain was taken up by the whole column with such intensity by each of them that it could not easily be forgotten; every single man in the column sang the refrain "Down with the traitors, up with the stars!" with such voice that they actually shouted it out right in the teeth of the Rebels, one might say; and it also seemed to have an effect on them. The guards went to the side of the column, embarrassed, but not a threat or a word of reproof was uttered. The windows along the street were thrown open, and men, women, and children jumped out of their beds to see what on earth was going on and to stare at the Yankee prisoners being dragged away. But not once was a sound heard from them either for or against; they showed only their embarrassed faces as if they were afraid that what the soldiers sang about could come to pass. When they got to Richmond they saw in the newspapers there that they were the most stubborn, contemptible, and discourteous prisoners the citizens had seen.

The trip from Atlanta to Richmond took several days, and nothing of interest happened. The prisoners were packed into regular baggage cars so tightly that it was almost impossible to lie down, and the cars went shaking and bumping night and day. Such things take

a toll on one's strength, and the prisoners became lethargic and indifferent to everything. The only variation in this shaking and bumping around was when the train stopped at one station or another, and they had a chat with the citizens who showed that their hearts were in the struggle; the women were especially free in their expressions and sometimes the prisoners weren't so particular about saying that the war was only started in the interests of the rich slave owners and that the poor had to fight for the rich.

At Raleigh, North Carolina's capital, where the train stopped for almost a whole day, they saw for the first time how greedily the Federals' money was sought after; many pushed themselves forward to sell the prisoners anything they could for this money, and when this wasn't possible they wanted at least to exchange money, yes, from two to ten Confederate dollars were given in exchange for one Federal dollar. Johnson's attention was led to a distinctive Jew who was very assiduous in this money business. The Jew's face actually glowed whenever he got hold of a greenback bill, which rather proved that he was earning a high percentage. This kind of trade was certainly quickly forbidden, but the Jew hung around anyway and was on the lookout for the opportunity to add one green bill to the next. The guard drove him away a couple of times after he had turned in his money and still had not received the equivalent Yankee bills, but he accepted the loss with Jewish resignation; he could expect to bear such a burden now and then. At last the officers gave orders to arrest him when he showed himself again, which naturally happened soon, but when the guards approached him with drawn rifles, he took to his heels and no threat could stop the Jew; he just ran so much faster until he disappeared behind a house and was gone. A Jew is a Jew until Judgment Day!

Johnson says that on this trip he became more convinced than ever that the Rebels' case was completely hopeless, but he had to admire their courage and energy; they were holding out until the end, even under such unfavorable circumstances. Their railways were almost destroyed, the cars were old and rickety, just like the locomotives, and even the railroad tracks were heavily damaged and worn. Every single branch line which could possibly be done without had been broken up and used to repair the main lines. When one also considers the fact

that their forts were blockaded, their money was almost worthless, they now had no navigation on the Mississippi, they had suffered defeat at Gettysburg, the Union army held Chattanooga—the gateway to the supply depots in East Tennessee, the salt camps in West Virginia, the coal camps and iron mines in Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee—then it seems an act of desperation to continue the war. But the Rebel authorities had the power in the South, and on their orders thousands upon thousands of volunteers went to the slaughter. These soldiers' energy and willingness to sacrifice deserved a better cause; if they had fought for humanity's freedom and progress, history would have raised pyramids over the bones of the heroes. But those who throw themselves under the wheels of the advancing train of freedom will be left lying hidden and forgotten in the dust. Such is the course of history.

The prisoners arrived in Richmond after dark, and because of numerous stops they did not reach their future "headquarters," Libby Prison, before midnight. Here they were searched and all their money was taken from them and put into their accounts so that each of the prisoners who had anything could receive a certain amount each week; they were supposed to get seven dollars of the Confederate money for one dollar of Federal. This promise was kept for a time, but later the money was confiscated.

Johnson's loss was not large, only 20 to 30 dollars; he had had the chance to send his money home, but there were those who lost up to two thousand dollars.

Libby was a storehouse that lay on the bank of the James River, and the sign "Libby and Son" still swung from the corner where they had had their office. This was now used by those who had command over the prisoners. The prison was a three-story brick building over a cellar and each floor was divided into three rooms; the upper floors, six rooms, were for the imprisoned officers. There were about eight hundred of them there already when these prisoners came, so now there were a thousand.

The news that the Chickamauga prisoners had come passed like wildfire through the rooms; the old prisoners, eager to see relatives, friends, and acquaintances again and to hear about the actual conditions on the battlefield, now pressed forward and squeezed around the

stairway to look every man in the face as he came up and to ask questions. Some had taken the trouble to put trousers on, but most were dressed only in shirts, and those who could not get close to the stairs positioned themselves on the laths and rafters under the roof just like small boys in the trees when a circus passes by. These figures with the naked legs, illuminated by the flickering candlelight, are better imagined than described; it was a strange display, and the most unnatural sounds could be heard everywhere. "Fresh fish!" was the first greeting the newcomers received from their imprisoned comrades, and this greeting was repeated throughout the whole building, while those who sat very high up in the roost crowed like roosters or cackled like turkeys while still others applauded and barked like dogs. This sight and these voices in the light of the faint, flickering candlelight gave the impression of having come into the entrance to Hell, quite literally.

The new prisoners, the "fresh fish," had to find spots for themselves wherever they could; they were told that they had to send home for food and clothing and that it would certainly be delivered to the right person. They also quickly discovered that they would need both, because the prospects of regaining their liberty were not bright. Therefore, most sent home for a blanket or two, and some food such as ham, butter, flour, coffee, tea, sugar, etc. Six weeks passed before they came; in the meantime the provisions were rather meager: a small piece of cornbread, a small piece of wheat bread—the latter ceased completely after a short time—and rarely a small piece of beef, and rye coffee, and pea soup once a day. This "pea soup" was boiled with a little salted meat; the peas were old and so full of dirt that it floated like scum on the small tin dish it was brought in. When the dirt was skimmed off, the soup was eaten; but anyone who could like it couldn't be very picky; hunger seasons the food. After six weeks the crates of provisions began to arrive, and they were welcome! The prisoners had already starved and shivered with cold for many nights. After this they did not suffer from any real need in Libby Prison—not Johnson, in any case.

The only thing he now used of the Rebel rations was cornbread; the beef and wheat bread had stopped long before and the cornbread was so dense that it took only a very small

piece to weigh a pound. He grated it on a brass box that he had punched holes in, mixed it with flour and water and added a little butter or lard, if he could afford it—and baked cakes. And to his dying day, no one—with the exception of his wife—was his equal in the art of baking cakes.

If it had not been for the crates of food from home, there would have been little nourishment because those who were unlucky enough to have to live on those rations the Rebels provided became terribly thin in a short time.

Captain Gustavson from the 15th, Lieutenant G. W. Bussum from the 1st Wisconsin Regiment, and Johnson made their own mess hall; Bussum and Johnson provided the food and Gustavson washed the dishes. In a corner behind the stairs there was just enough room for these three, and in their opinion they had the best spot in the whole building, because they were well protected by the walls on two sides, and by the stairs on the third, so they could only be attacked from one side. They nailed the crates that the provisions came in to the wall, and immediately they had cupboards and shelves, and it began to be comfortable for a prison. Nevertheless, it was Libby Prison; much, much better to be under the blue sky where the Stars and Stripes flew over the thundering, groaning battlefield in the cool autumn air! There was no advantage in sitting here.

Their daily chores in prison can be imagined: first thing in the morning one would yawn a little, then get up and make a little something for breakfast. But those who wanted to have food in good time had to be up early because 350 men had to cook their food in three ovens. What groups gathered when morning came! In order to avoid this pressure Johnson was one of the first, and since he—as he himself says—had always been something of a cook, he found not a little enjoyment in this work. There were some pots and pans for each oven, but he preferred to use his own cups, empty fruit and oyster tins, like the soldiers in the army.

When the crates with the provisions arrived and were to be opened there were many amusing scenes. The boat with the white flag came from City Point once a week, and with it came the crates and the letters. The crates were brought into the office and the owner called

down. Every name that was called was followed with eager attention, and when the list was finished, there were many disappointed faces. Every crate was opened and examined in the presence of the owner, and if prohibited goods were found in it, it was confiscated. Liquor also fell under the rubric "forbidden goods," and it was amusing to see the attempts that were made to smuggle these wares through. At first they came in regular bottles, but friends at home were made aware of the fact that this did not work. Then the liquor came in fruit crates under the name of canned peaches, pears, etc. This also worked for a while, but the trick was discovered and the crates were punctured so the smell revealed their contents. Some went so far as to import on speculation, and a Wisconsin colonel once had three dozen boxes of "canned peaches," which were confiscated, and no one sympathized with him, either. Another Wisconsin colonel had himself sent a crate from a less-than-clever friend in Washington. As soon as the lid was removed, the colonel saw the light shine in on the bottles through a little opening between them and the rest of the contents. His cleverness now helped him to the "blessed" ware; he simply lifted up some packages while he took care to cover the crack that the bottles gleamed through and drew the officer's attention to the fact the crate contained only a few delicacies from a friend, and he got permission to take his crate and go.

It is doubtful that this colonel had ever done anything in his life that made him happier than this. He was one of those who had enjoyed "the spirit" to excess and now that he was locked away from this he went into a constant stupor. But for the following three or four days—as long as "the spirit" lasted—he was a new man, lively, witty, and clever, he put new life into everyone around him, and he certainly told them a hundred times how he had "cheated these Rebels." He slept next to Johnson and when everything was quiet Johnson was awakened by someone shaking him and whispering, "Colonel, here, take a swallow; it is very good, but I couldn't give you any until the rest had fallen asleep, otherwise I would have had to pour some for everyone, and I must be careful to make it last as long as possible." Johnson tried to make him understand that a thing that was so splendid to one person was not equally desired by others, and that Johnson himself did not want any. But the other was determined and did

not give up until Johnson had taken a swig. Soon the liquor was gone, and then the man fell back into the same stupor and did not worry about anything; without his "spirit" he wasn't good for anything.

The arrival of the letters was of as much interest as the crates. The prisoners had permission to write one letter a week. At first they could fill a whole page of large paper, and when they wrote small they could say quite a lot. All the letters were read by the office and it was soon decided there that the letters had to be shortened to six lines; it took much too much time to read through these long letters, said the clerks, who naturally had to have some excuse. But with the help of soda dissolved in water, the prisoners could write a great deal in invisible writing on the back of the page, and when soda was unavailable they used onion juice. When this writing was held over heat, it became quite visible. But how would they get the people at home to understand this? Johnson wrote a few words in Norwegian to his brother and asked him to try the experiment on the next letter, and also got a prisoner who was exchanged to write to the same brother about it, in case the letter was confiscated. Family and friends were thus made aware of the invisible writing before it was used.

Letters from Libby were naturally something special, especially when they were written without pressure, and when the brother mentioned above received one, he heated it and read it in the evening for friends and neighbors who gathered to hear from the Rebel capital.

Some of these letters are still in existence, but most of them have been lost. They give an overview of prison life, perhaps better than anything else because the diaries that were kept don't say much, as is reasonable; the imprisoned officers were naturally worried about whether they would have too many strong opinions to answer for if these diaries should be confiscated.

Here follows an excerpt from these letters:

Libby Prison, Richmond, Georgia [sic], 7 December 1863.

Dear Brother! I will again send you a few lines. I am healthy. I haven't received a letter from you yet. Our Congress is meeting today and I would think it will do something

to get us exchanged. Many have now been here since May and many more since June and July, and they are naturally eager to get out. We have had the most beautiful weather that can be imagined for over a week—it is almost a Wisconsin May—but I presume King Winter is coming soon and will demand his due. We expected a battle in northern Virginia—judging by Meade's movements—but now it seems that he has given up on it and I assume that there won't be a battle in the winter.

I wish you could get several books on phonography[#] and some light German reading for me, in case I send home for another crate, which I will do if we remain here until after the New Year. My dearest greetings to Kaja, Caroline, Julia and Freddie and with great respect for all friends.

The above was written for inspection, the following in invisible writing on the back of the paper:

Dr. Hawley of the 35th Illinois Regiment promised me when he left here to let you know how this writing can be read. Therefore I will send you a few lines, although I don't have anything especially pressing to write about. I have sent you the Richmond newspaper twice, first with Lieutenant Clement and then with Dr. Hawley, which I hope you have received. I also sent a long letter with Lieutenant Clement, which I hope he was able to deliver. Yesterday I sent a letter to Caroline with one page written like this. For lack of anything else, I will tell you about some of my experiences since I have been in the hands of the Rebels. When we were taken prisoner, many of us were collected and taken back to the Chickamauga River by a captain in General Hindman's staff who, by the way, was a gentleman. He showed no desire for revenge and did not allow the soldiers to take the canteens and haversacks from the prisoners, as some attempted to do. I gave him my spyglass, which I knew I would not be allowed to keep anyway, and so I could

[#] Translator's note: A system of phonetic shorthand invented by Isaac Pitman in 1837 (*New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Thumb Index Edition, s.v. "phonography").

just as well give it to someone who had the courage to stand up and fight for what he thought was right as be robbed by one of the home officers, who are always found far from the field of danger and are especially vengeful towards the Yankees when they have them in their power and can insult and mistreat them without any danger to their own precious bodies. I think you will find that the general opinion of everyone who has been a prisoner is that they have only been mistreated by those who were left behind on the garrison towns and camps and don't know anything about the trials and dangers of a soldier's life, and by the home guard, which is thoroughly despised by every prisoner. If a prisoner is mistreated and robbed on the battlefield, then it is generally by the stragglers in the rear who, one way or another, slip out of the lines on the march to the front. The man who goes bravely into battle is never guilty of such a cowardly deed.

From the Chickamauga River we were taken some two or three miles farther toward the rear troops, where we found those who had been captured on Saturday, and at four o'clock we were started on the road to Ringgold, a distance of 12 miles, where—we were told—we would stop overnight and get something to eat. A captain from an East Tennessee regiment had command over us, and he was in no way a kindly-looking man and didn't seem to hesitate in the least over stealing from or robbing his prisoners or anyone he happened to have under his power. The two lieutenants he had with him were good-natured, gentlemanly officers and treated us with respect. At nine o'clock in the evening we came to Ringgold, tired and hungry, and got the news that we had to go four more miles before we could get rations and start on the train to Atlanta. At 11 o'clock we arrived at a railway station, which I have forgotten the name of, and got permission to light a fire, but the night was cold, and we got only a little rest and less sleep. The next morning we were given the unwelcome news that we had to go another four miles on foot before we could get something to eat. We started at eight o'clock and arrived at Tunnel Hill at 10 o'clock, and one unit was immediately put to work baking some cornbread. But before it was ready we were put on board a train and set out for Atlanta. We were

thereby disappointed for the third time in getting something to eat, and our only hope now was Atlanta. If it hadn't been for the fact that some of the prisoners had some rations with them when they were captured, which they willing to share with me, I would certainly have starved, and I know there were many who suffered from the pangs of hunger. I am forced to stop here, since I cannot see my writing. I will write again in a few days. Write to me in the same way—with onion juice or soda dissolved in water—and let me know how things are going in Wisconsin. I certainly hope that we will be exchanged before an answer can reach me. There might be many mistakes in this, but I cannot correct them.

Libby Prison, Richmond, 10 December 1863.

Dear Brother! I have been waiting for a letter from you, but it seems that I am doomed to disappointment. Naturally, it is impossible for me to say whether you have not written or the letters have gone astray, although I am inclined toward the former because in general letters sent here do get through. Captain Rollins of the 2nd Wisconsin received a box here today which contained many newspapers from the North; I have borrowed these, but there isn't much news in them. I have read some "journals" and have seen the list of the men from Dane County who have been discharged. I had hoped that we would be exchanged before Christmas, but that is coming soon, and I can't see that the prospects are any better now than before. Certainly the Congress should do something. We wait impatiently to hear about its negotiations and to find out whether we have been completely forgotten or if something will be attempted to get us exchanged. Pathos and sympathetic words cannot help us. Action is what is needed. I am healthy. Love to everyone. The weather is beautiful. Don't forget to write.

On the other side of this paper the letter continues as follows:

We arrived in Atlanta Tuesday evening at sundown and were marched through the streets of the city to its eastern side—as I believe. In the evening we received a half a loaf of bread each, but there wasn't enough to go around, and my people and I were among those who got nothing. Wednesday morning one loaf of bread was passed out per man, and for the first time I got something to eat from the Rebel authorities. Wednesday afternoon we were marched into some barracks and examined, and the enlisted men had their blankets and overcoats taken away, as well as pocket knives and other small things.

The nights were cold and there was much suffering. The officers had permission to keep their blankets, but I didn't have one so I had to manage as best I could. We understood that there were Union people in Atlanta and on Wednesday a lady came to the guard line with a basket of provisions in order to give some to our prisoners, but she was ordered to leave by the guard. As she turned and went, the tears ran down her cheeks. Perhaps her only son was forced into the Rebel army and she was now doing what she hoped others would do for him if he was a prisoner. Thursday morning we were marched through the city to the station, and we sang, so it rang in the streets: The Star Spangled Banner, The Red, White and Blue, and The Battle Cry of Freedom, especially stressing "Down with the traitors, and up with the stars." The citizens got out of their beds and came to their windows, but never said a word. Later we had the pleasure of seeing ourselves described in the Atlanta newspapers as "the most objectionable, the filthiest and the most God-forsaken prisoners" they had ever seen. Thursday morning in Atlanta we received a day's ration of bread and five-days' ration of smoked bacon. The next rations we received were in Radleigh, North Carolina—a day's ration of crackers—and a further day's ration of crackers at Weldon on Monday morning. We saw demonstrable signs of sympathy for the Union almost everywhere along this route, but especially in North Carolina. We stopped at a station in Georgia to let another train pass the day we left Atlanta. There were a good many citizens gathered around, among them a lady who

explained that she didn't care when the Yankees beat them; they would certainly do it one day anyway. Another lady told her that she must be more careful in her speech. "I don't care," answered the first one, "everyone around here is thinking exactly the same thing, and I say exactly what I think, and if anyone wants to arrest me for it, then let them." The officers and the guards heard this, but didn't say a word. She said that they had drafted her only son, and it had almost broken her heart. In Radleigh [sic] a number of arrests were made for talking and trading with the prisoners. Everyone was crazy for "greenbacks." North Carolina will be all right as soon as the opportunity arises and our government can defend the state while it reassumes all its rights. In some places the citizens seemed disposed to ridicule and insult us, but in general we were treated with respect. Some ladies showed us their enthusiasm for the Rebel cause by shaking their fists at us and making other fighting gestures, but these were only the exceptions. The majority watched us in silence and spoke to us with respect. Only a few men spoke to us in an impolite manner, and these always got the worst of it because we had permission to use our tongues in self-defense, and the guards chuckled when they heard how we ridiculed them for their courage in staying at home. They always left us sadder and, it can be hoped, wiser men. Thursday evening, the 29th, we arrived at Libby. You will hear about how things have gone here in my next letter. Here there is some talk of stopping all supplies from the North. This morning an order was read to us according to which no more money can be sent to us from home. This order is, it is said, in reprisal for an order our government has issued, which does not allow Rebel officers in our prisons to receive money from home. I cannot understand why our government has issued such an order.

Note! It will be observed that I was captured on Sunday, 20 September, and arrived at Libby Prison on Tuesday evening, the 29th; that is, 10 days on the road. I received one loaf of bread from the Rebels (should have been a pound) in Atlanta; one loaf and six rations of bacon when I left this place; one ration of crackers in Radleigh [sic]; and one at Weldon. All together, four rations of bread and crackers and five of bacon for 10 days. The

intention was that one ration would last for one day, but without anything besides bread and bacon, there was barely enough for a meal.

Libby Prison, Richmond, 26 January 1864.

I received your letter of the fourth of this month with the last boat, and I can assure you that I was happy to hear from you. I had expected one from sister Caroline, too, but nothing came. I am happy to see that volunteers are quickly rallying to the flag, although you don't say anything about whether the 15th is recruiting or not; but I hope that the 15th gets at least some. The weather has been beautiful the last few days; if only we could be outside and enjoy it! Our hope to be exchanged seems no closer to becoming reality than when we first came here, that I can say. I presume we will get used to it in a year or two, so it won't worry us too much. I make my life as easy as possible under the circumstances. I haven't made much progress in phonography and German for the simple reason that I don't study anymore. I go back to it in fits and starts, but soon become tired and, when I don't have any variety or exercise, I get very lethargic and have to have something that can occupy me without too much mental exertion on my part. I have read many of the books you sent me, although not all. I now have a promise to get Hume's History of England, which will occupy me for a while. When you write could you please send me all the news you can about the Regiment? It is seldom I hear anything about it. My dearest greetings to Kaja and the little ones. I hope to see you all again. Please write as soon as possible.

On the back side the following was written with invisible ink:

First I will tell you before I forget that it is unnecessary for you to write short letters to me. The letters that are sent from here are examined carefully, and we often hear grumbling that they are too long, but I have reason to believe that they are not so careful with letters that are sent here, so you can write as much as you please. Things

are not as good here as before; the authorities are withholding our crates on the pretext, I believe, that they want to find out if their officers are getting their crates. Why this pretext I don't know. I have never heard that our government has refused to provide the prisoners with anything they have been sent from friends or relatives. If the truce boat comes soon, perhaps we will get our crates; if not, we will have to live without them. All we have now, besides the Rebel rations, is coffee, so we are beginning to get interested. For the last two days fresh meat has been passed out, but for the ten days before that we got no meat of any kind; the only thing we got was cornbread and a little rice. The meat will soon stop completely, that is certain, because they cannot get hold of enough now for their own army. If we receive our crates we won't ask them for anything, but the poor enlisted men, who don't receive anything except for Rebel rations, must truly be suffering. I am told that they haven't even received porridge lately, so now a piece of dry cornbread is all they get. You can imagine how they have declined under these circumstances; nevertheless, our government shows no inclination to exchange prisoners. In truth, it seems to have turned its back on these men without any desire to come to their aid. I do not like to believe such a thing about our government, but things seem to point in that direction. Why was Butler named as the Commissioner of Prisoner Exchanges? It really seems that he was appointed just to hinder exchanges. The administration was afraid that they wouldn't be able to withstand the pressure of the people in the North, who have friends here, and thought—by getting around it in a way—that they could quiet this feeling and get public opinion on their side. It remains to be seen whether this was successful. Mark my words: I don't say that this is so, but I say it seems so, to judge from everything I have been in a position to experience concerning this. There could be circumstances I don't know about, and I could therefore be wrong in what I say. But we are quite sure about one thing, and that is that the Rebels would very much like to have an exchange, and they will certainly do it if they get any realistic compensation. If our government has undertaken not to exchange prisoners during the war, why don't they

come right out and say so and be finished with it? Even those who are in favor of this system would squirm at making this known to the country. How many, do you think, of those here now will ever get to see their homes again if this system is adopted? How much will the men who have suffered as these have this winter be able to stand when the warm weather comes? They will fall like rotten leaves. Contagious diseases have already broken out among them. I will give you just one example: of 89 men from the 11th Kentucky who came here last November, 40 are dead. How many of the 49 survivors will be able to hold out for the next six months? This is something which demands immediate attention from the people of the North. If these men are not to be sacrifices to indifference, they must be set free, and the only way to free them is to exchange them. No boastful Congressional Resolution calling for one million men can do that, and I am surprised to see that such an unreasonable step has been taken. This cause should be laid before our legislature, and it should admonish the Congress and demand an exchange. I am not seeking anything for myself, but when I came here I had some 40 or 50 men, and I would like to save at least a few of them. You can put this case before the authorities in Madison and stress its importance. I am not writing any names or using any expressions which might identify me if this letter should be discovered by the Rebels here, because I don't have any particular desire to be put in irons and locked in a dark cell for the rest of my imprisonment.

Libby Prison, 5 December 1864.

Dear Sister! I will again write you a few lines. I presume that school has begun now and that you use your time to gather that golden possession, learning, which is everything that makes this life worth living. Since I received the books I have been able to pass the time somewhat enjoyably; of course, sometimes I cannot reasonably study as if I were at

school, although I am making some progress every day with German and phonography. There is now plenty of variety in our reading material here, which increases our enjoyment. Yesterday I received Clement's crate with 30 pounds of butter, 16 pounds of cheese, 5 pounds of coffee, 10 pounds of sugar, 5 pounds of candles, and a thick blanket, so now there is no danger that I will either freeze or starve. The weather has been beautiful the last few days, but now it is clouding up and it will probably rain soon. My dearest greetings to all.

Your devoted brother
Ole

On the back was the following:

Since I presume you have received the necessary information about how you can make this writing visible, I will also fill this side. You asked me in your last letter whether the Rebels are starving us here. We get 12 ounces of bread, eight ounces of meat, and enough rice for soup along with whatever salt and vinegar we need. At first the bread was good, but after a few weeks we got nothing but cornbread, and it was often inedible, and sometimes a portion could weigh three pounds instead of three-quarters of a pound, which is what it should weigh (it was so heavy). Now we only get meat once in a while, but since our government sent rations here we have gotten salted meat every day. The Rebel government can't get a hold of that for love or money, and only a little fresh meat. We're not afraid of starvation now, as long as they let us get things from the North. We have received so much happy news in the last while that we could live on almost nothing. It does one good to see the long faces on the prison officers these days. First came the news about Bragg's defeat, which the newspapers here tried to gloss over as much as possible in order to get their people to believe that the terrible wasn't so bad after all. But now they have been forced to admit that they have suffered a terrible defeat and that Grant would have completely destroyed Bragg and his army if he hadn't been forced to turn his attention to Longstreet. For a number of days the newspapers have tried

to keep up people's spirits with rumors saying that Burnside was captured with his army, and some of us began to feel a bit worried; but every cloud was driven away this morning by the happy news that Longstreet had attacked Knoxville, was beaten, and fled for his safety into the mountains of North Carolina.

Naturally, the newspapers here say that "his loss is minor," and he "realized that it was wisest to fall back," etc., etc. We understand all these phrases very well. If you could have seen the officers here this morning, you would hardly have taken them for prisoners, incarcerated like thieves and robbers, what with all the smiling and high spirits. Everyone feels that the Rebellion will soon meet its end, and the thought of this makes them forget their current situation for a while. We all hope against hope that Father Abraham (Abraham Lincoln) will soon get us out of here. The soldiers, who at first suffered severely from the lack of food and clothing, are now provisioned by "Uncle Sam." My dearest greeting to Kaja and Julia. I will write to John in a few days. This is written with onion juice and I hope that you will be able to manage to read the contents. You must excuse the mistakes; since it is invisible I cannot read it over and correct it. I wrote to you yesterday, too. Write often. Send my dearest greetings to Mother and Father.

The next letter, also written with onion juice, is as follows:

Although I don't have anything special to report, the day is so beautiful that I am strongly reminded of home and all the loved ones there, so it is a relief for me to write.

Today is like a warm March or April day in Wisconsin. The prison lies on the bank of the James River, and from my corner I have a beautiful view of the river. On the south side an unending landscape stretches out that is so beautiful to look at. The plains and hills in the distance were green when we came here, and it seems that we have a good chance of being here until it turns green again. In spite of all the turmoil, battles, and bloodshed, which goes on constantly within the realm of humanity, Nature remains in its quiet and eternal path, as if to mock man's meaningless exertions. Even here there seems

to be a joy of life on a day like this, and one is reminded that life is not completely bleak. Richmond is certainly a pretty place, to judge from what I have been able to see, and it was a pleasant city once, but now everything is quiet. Now and then we see the small steamboats that travel between this city and places to the south, but all the big warehouses are either empty or used as prisons.

I don't know if I have given you a description of Libby. It is a building of 100 x 120 feet, three floors besides the cellar. The building is divided into nine rooms, of which six—the two upper floors—are occupied by some eleven hundred of our officers; there are therefore not quite two hundred men in each room, each one measuring 40 x 100 feet. We have a room in the lower floor where we cook, and eight ovens are provided for the eleven hundred prisoners. Until now there weren't bars on the windows, but now a grille is being installed—so we won't be exposed to any danger, I assume. The rooms are so poorly lit in many places that candles have to be burned throughout the day when the weather is dark, and one can scarcely see to read on the brightest day. The rooms are also miserably ventilated and with so many people in them that the air naturally becomes foul except where one can get a breath of fresh air from outside, which we are lucky enough to get in our corner. If we are still going to be in such over-filled rooms when the heat comes, then illness will be widespread. There has been some talk here of sending us to Salisbury, North Carolina, but the Rebels understand very well that they couldn't find a more secure place for us than this, and it may be our fate to stay here until our government decides it is appropriate to exchange us. To my sorrow, I must report that the prisoners over on Belle Isle are suffering terribly from hunger and exposure to wind and weather through the winter, and they are dying in great numbers. I understand that they are now being moved farther south. Many a poor fellow will never see home and friends

again. It seems to me that if our government's officials had a crumb of humanity left, then they would get these men out of the enemy's claws; the Rebels delight in what they are doing here. A few days ago I wrote a letter to John. I was not aware of the secret writing in his last two letters before I had sent mine. I will write to him as soon as I get the mail that arrived with the last boat, which could be in two or three days. Ask John to write to the following people, so they will know how this writing can be made visible and so that from now on they can read the writing in the letters they get from Libby: Oran Rogers, Cascade, Sheboygan County, Wisconsin; Fred West, conductor on the Milwaukee & St. P. railroad, Milwaukee; Dr. William Howe, Palestine, Crawford County, Illinois.

Write often. My greetings to everyone, especially to Father and Mother.

The preceding letters are all that remain of those Johnson wrote in Libby, and they have been translated in their entirety because they give a great deal of information about things as they really were and insight into the thoughts that fermented among the prisoners in the circumstances they were in.

It is hardly necessary to say that the arrival of each post was an event almost as important as the arrival of the crates, and it was painful to see how disappointment affected many of the prisoners.

In one of his letters he had asked his brother to send some money glued onto a photograph. In the answering letter he read, "I am sending a photograph of your sister Caroline, which I know you will be very happy to receive." Johnson probably thought that his sister had changed a lot for the worse because it was one of the ugliest pictures he had seen. But outer appearances are often disappointing. That he was happy to receive this portrait is certain, because he knew that behind this plain face with the sharp features, there was ... a greenback. The picture was soon destroyed, and a ten dollar bill came into sight; now he could

buy many things that he couldn't easily get from home, and get himself the daily paper which, although miserable, kept him abreast of the course of events.

The prisoners had permission to buy what they wanted, and it was easy to exchange greenbacks for the Rebels' money, either with the guard or by sending it with the Negroes who swept the rooms every day. This was naturally not allowed, but everyone seemed to be eager to get their hands on the green bills, so there was no difficulty in getting them exchanged.

In a place like this, where so many had been collected, they "killed" time in every conceivable way, and Johnson got his first chess lesson here. Such a game could last for several days and nights in a row, especially when different teams played against each other. It happened that one "room" played the other one, and then it might take two hours to make a single move. Every "room" had its own board, and when a move was made a message was sent to the next "room," and then they put their heads together, studied all the possible consequences of a particular move on the game, and then finally moved and sent a message back. A single game once lasted several weeks. Card games were played a lot by those who found pleasure in that sort of pastime. Johnson didn't play cards, but it amused him to watch when Colonel H. and Colonel W., who were both from Wisconsin and had settled near his house, played "seven up." They never played anything else, and the fun lay in the fact that in all their games—certainly many hundreds—Colonel H. only won once; his fun lay in seeing how much he could annoy Colonel W., and after each time he lost, he usually reasoned that "if it hadn't been for such and such, then I would have won." He could make Colonel W. angry by doing this and then he could laugh until Colonel W. chuckled, and suggest one more game. But if he really wanted to press his opponent, he called one of the closest spectators over and told him how "beautifully he had beaten Colonel W. this time," and then he would describe exactly the circumstances of the game he had been lucky enough to win. Colonel W. would then become so angry that he would tear up the cards and refuse to play anymore; and then Colonel H.'s cup of happiness ran over!

Sometimes there were also dances, if there were enough good musicians, and fiddles were borrowed from outside. Amateur plays—primarily Negro minstrel shows—received not a little attention, and they were usually rather good. For these the prison personnel might also come in and share the enjoyment; admission was free.

Shortly after Grant had driven the Rebels from Chattanooga, one of these plays was presented on the stage. Rebel General Bragg had sent a telegram to the Secretary of War, and this was made public in the Richmond newspapers. Bragg said he was attacked and added "and my left center failed in considerable confusion."

The prisoners knew from this that Bragg's defeat was serious.

The minstrel show went on in the evening. The entire prison staff was present and everything went without a hitch. One of the men playing a Negro came forward and showed visible signs of great pain; he held both hands over his left side, twisted his body in every way, and every twitch in his face was marked by intolerable pain. His fellow players hurried to find out the reason for this, but he answered only with indescribable groans, grimaces, and contortions of his body. At last his fellow players' worry became unbearable and he managed to groan: "Oh! My left center has failed!"

Everyone saw immediately what the point was, and the shouts of applause that followed threatened to lift the prison off the ground. The prison personnel smiled rather "sickly smiles" and immediately went back to their offices. They did not seem to find any further pleasure in these Yankee minstrel shows.

There was another incident which is too good to withhold. Johnson was the butt in this one. One day he had a conversation with a New York officer. During the conversation the New Yorker remarked, "The lieutenant who is here with you (pointing at Bussum) is your son, I believe." When it was explained that Bussum was both bigger and taller and one year older than Johnson, it was clear what the point was. After a while, while the audience was about to break out in laughter, Johnson answered, "Yes, he is my eldest son."

"I can imagine that," was the innocent answer. Johnson then kept the thread going by saying it was rather difficult for a man of his age to have to endure such an imprisonment. As if to strengthen his courage, the New Yorker answered, "Oh, you aren't a really old man yet." But Johnson said he was quite well along in years (he was then 26), and the other still thought that he couldn't be called an old man—not over 45, maybe not even that.

Forever after that Bussum called him "Father" and Johnson reciprocated rather affectionately with "my son."

General Neal Dow, the well-known temperance reformer, was also in Libby for some time. Now and then he would ride his hobby horse and deliver really good temperance lectures. Once he was blamed for having stolen some wooden framing material[#] and was sent to Mobile to be subjected to an interrogation by the civil court. But the general was acquitted, even before a Rebel judge, and came back to Libby in triumph. Everyone was eager to hear how things had gone with him, and he climbed up on an empty crate and told about what he had heard and seen and the impressions he had had. His speeches were definitely not flattering to the Rebels, nor were his conclusions supportive of their cause or future success. At such times a guard was posted at the stairs to give a signal when anyone from the prison personnel appeared. As soon as the signal was given, the general would jump into the temperance question and continue in the same vein, so his speech was thoroughly edifying. But as soon as the wardens were gone again, he took up the thread where he had dropped it when they came. They understood very well that he was speaking about something besides temperance, but they couldn't catch him at it although they were very curious to find out what it was. Sometimes a joker might stand on guard and give a false alarm; the general immediately became enthusiastic about the temperance question, until a general outcry from the crowd convinced him that he was being fooled. But he was good-natured and laughed just as heartily over the joker's trick as the others.

[#] Translator's note: The Norwegian word used here is *rammer*, which means frames. It is unclear what sort of frames he could have stolen. Perhaps he was suspected of stealing some wood to use for building shelves or cupboards.

If Dow wasn't the greatest general in the world, he was still a fine, genial, good-hearted gentleman who won many friends.

At first there were no grilles on the prison windows, and it was really delightful to breathe the fresh air on a beautiful day and enjoy the view of the river and the beautiful landscape in the distance. The Rebels evidently thought that this was too enjoyable, and they installed iron bars and gave orders that no one should come close to the windows. From the beginning this order was not strictly obeyed, not because the prisoners were stubborn, but because they were so accustomed to looking out the windows. But then two men were shot so their brains spattered over the floor; after that the prisoners were more careful. One of the men who was shot was standing and watching the guards mounting their horses outside the prison, and he got hit by a bullet that went through his left eye and out his neck. The authorities claimed that it was an accidental shot—so said the Richmond newspapers—but those who saw the shooting claimed that the guard took careful aim.

The commander of Libby was a Major Turner, but the one who had more to do with the prisoners was a young man named Ross. Among other things it was his duty to count the prisoners every morning; they were lined up in four rows, one behind another. Ross was an insignificant little squirt, and it was said that he was a deserter from New York state, so he wasn't the least bit popular and every joker in the prison had fun aggravating and angering him as much as possible. One way they could do this was during the counting; then a man could crouch down in the back row so he couldn't be seen by Ross, who always went to the front and counted by fours. When he came to the end he was two or three short and had to start over again. Then the jokers in the back row might hold their hats up in the air instead of crouching down, so the hats were counted as men—even though there was nothing under them. In this way Ross came up with a bigger number than he should have. They could keep this going until both he and the prisoners were tired and the count came out correctly. One day he was reprimanded in the office because he did not keep better order in the prison, so he was in an extremely bad mood. Someone asked him what was wrong, and he answered that Major Turner

had demanded that he keep strict order and discipline over the thousand men, each of whom was sharper than he was himself. "It isn't possible," he said emphatically, "and if Major Turner thinks he can, let him try."

The old saying "An idle mind is the Devil's workshop" was evident here in many other ways, because some devilry was always going on.

Several proposals for escape were made frequently, but these were difficult to execute because not everyone can keep a secret. Some simple, rather uncomplicated escapes certainly happened, of which a few are of interest. Once some carpenters were repairing something in the building, and they naturally had the freedom to go in and out as they needed to; it was assumed that the guards knew them. One of the prisoners grabbed his chance: he dressed up and behaved as much like a laborer as possible, taking a hammer and a few other small tools in his hand and walking—rather unworried—past the guard and up into town. He was not questioned later, either. Another had seen a sign a little way from the prison. Sometimes the prisoners got permission to step out the door and walk on the inside of the guard line to the office. The guards did not pay much attention to this when no one came near the line. The prisoners did not wear uniforms, since they had been captured in battle and therefore in their working clothes, and many had also received civilian clothing from home, so their clothing did not betray them. Besides, the Rebel soldiers wore blue clothing, in part, and that was especially the case with the residents of the town. One day one of the prisoners walked out the door from the "kitchen" room and walked inside the guard line into the office, where he asked whether this was the office of Mr. So and So—he gave the name on the sign he had seen from the prison, but which wasn't visible from the office. No, it wasn't, and one of the clerks showed him to the door and said in the hearing of the guards that he had to go up a certain street and turn at a certain corner, and then he would see the name he was looking for. The man thanked him politely and went off in the direction indicated. The guards, who saw that he had come from the office, took it for granted that everything was as it should be, and paid no more attention. This man did not return to Libby either.

A prisoner in a neighboring prison also escaped in a unique way. There were only a few men in the prison at that time and only one guard was posted on each side of the building, and consequently each had a long distance to patrol. The prisoner had gotten hold of some old clothing, which he stuffed with old straw and bedding, and after dark when the guard was at one end of the building, he let the straw man down through the window. The guard naturally thought that it was an escapee and "brought him down" with his never-failing rifle. But at the moment the shot went off, the prisoner followed the straw man out through the window, and before the guard had time to load his rifle the man had disappeared into the dark. We can imagine what an annoyance it was for the guard to find a straw man instead of a dead prisoner.

But the most difficult and dangerous escape that happened during the war happened through the much-discussed tunnel, through which 110 prisoners disappeared. About half of them were recaptured and taken back, but the other half reached the Union lines with their hides intact.

The "idea" for this tunnel was conceived by Colonel Rose from Pennsylvania. He was an engineer by profession, and after he had pondered and examined the surroundings for some time, he let a couple of others in on his secret. They decided to try.

As previously reported, there was a cellar under Libby. None of these cellar rooms was used much; this was especially the case under the building's eastern end. This room could hardly be called a cellar—it was really just a hole, dark and seldom, if ever, used by people. The room over this hole was not used by the prisoners, so it was difficult to get to, and one can believe that there could be some danger. The plan was to start the tunnel in this cellar hole, where there was room for the extra dirt, and then to dig under the prison walls and past the guard line to an empty backyard; a high fence blocked the guards' view here. There was also a building here where the prisoners' crates of provisions were stored; the Rebels had refused to deliver them to their owners. It will become evident that this circumstance was of great benefit to the fugitives.

A hole was made behind the ovens in the "kitchen." This hole ran down so it ended inside the cellar wall; when the bricks were put back in their place and the pots and pans put on top of them, it wasn't easy to discover.

In the evening, when everything was quiet, these men went down in the "rat hell" and began their work. One man dug with a pocket knife and an empty fruit basket, another carried the dirt in a wooden spittoon; he had fastened two ropes to it so each man held his end and could pull it in and out. They were often on the verge of being discovered, and once they stumbled upon water, so the one who was doing the digging almost drowned, and it was only with the utmost efforts that they got the hole stopped up so the cellar did not flood. But they did not give up; they opened a new tunnel and worked on it for several weeks. The air in this one became so oppressive that they had to circulate the air with an old gutta percha mat. Little by little they dug upwards and found that they were right next to the guard line. Luckily they were not discovered this time, either, because the one who was digging immediately tore off his jacket, soiled it with dirt, and stopped up the opening. From the window they could see the jacket, and now they also saw that they had to dig in another direction. One night the air became too oppressive, and Colonel Rose was about to suffocate inside the tunnel; in his anxiety he punched his fists with all his strength against the earthen wall above him and, like one of God's miracles, the dirt poured down and the fresh air came streaming in. He jumped up; above him was the clear, blue, star-filled sky, and right next to him the high fence and the empty lot next door.

He dragged himself back through his narrow tunnel (it was the size of a Norwegian chimney, but about 60 feet long), and told his confidantes about his luck.

The escape was postponed until the following night because of the fact that the men who had been digging were now so exhausted that they needed to rest. The next evening, when the candles were extinguished, they climbed carefully down into the "rat hell" and began to sneak through the tunnel, one by one, until 109 or 110 had gotten through. Two circumstances made this escape possible. First was the fact that that evening a new guard had been

appointed, and second was the storage house where the prisoners' crates of provisions were kept, crates that had not been distributed lately. When the guards saw the fugitives, one by one, beginning to skulk around this building, they were a little surprised, but the guards probably thought that it was some of the Rebels' own men who were going to make off with the crates during the night. And soon was heard the usual "it's 10:30 and all's well! It's 11 o'clock and all's well!" and so on every half hour through the night. The remaining prisoners, who stood and watched their comrades escape, thought "If everything is well with the Rebels, we can certainly live with that."

Reader, if you have never been inside the walls of a prison, may you never find yourself there! When one lies twisting and turning on the prison floor, thinking about freedom at home and the loved ones left behind there, what foolery it is to hear the guard's piercing "All's well!" But on this night it was sweet music to the ears of the Libby prisoners, because as long as "All's well!" sounded from the guards they knew that their comrades were continuing the escape and were approaching their own lines. Every moment was valuable, and the ones left behind were anxious for their comrades; at that time they couldn't understand why the guards did not give the alarm, but the guards stuck with their "All's well!"

If the Rebel authorities had distributed the crates, the escape would have been impossible; likewise, it would have failed if the new guards hadn't been appointed that evening. After all the strenuous work and all the caution, everything hung on the thread of fate. By chance, this was strong enough to carry the venture through the night.

In the morning Mr. Ross came and began to count as usual, and when he was finished, he went to the office to settle up. He soon came back; his expressionless face was marked this time by great agitation, and the prisoners were quickly ordered into lines again. All of them naturally wanted to know what it was all about, and asked all kinds of questions. He then explained that 10 men had escaped, and he added that according to his count 110 were gone, but that had to be a mistake. The recount convinced him that this was not the case, and now the prisoners had really disrupted the prison routine to good purpose! Every crack and corner in the

whole building was searched with a fine tooth comb; no opening was found. The search was long and tiresome, and it was finally accepted that there must have been an underground passage. Then the search continued outside the prison; first they went around the building near the walls and then widened the circle until they found the end of the tunnel. In the meantime scouts were sent out in every direction and the escaped prisoners began to come back, and kept coming back for a couple of days, until half of them again found themselves within Libby's pressing walls.

Suggestions such as attacking and overpowering the prison personnel were often discussed, but they were all so haphazard that none were accepted.

When General Kilpatrick and his riders attacked in order to set the prisoners free, and that brave and gallant Colonel Dahlgren fell, the prisoners had a regular organization, troops and officers, as in the field. And if the attack had succeeded, or if the attackers really had attacked the defenses, then the prisoners would also seized use of the opportunity. They heard the thunder of Dahlgren's cannon the whole night, but the sounds became more and more distant, and the prisoners understood that he had been unsuccessful.

Libby's commander had a group of Negro prisoners who had been drivers, cooks, etc., in the Union army to clean up in the prison. They said that when this attack was expected, many kegs of gunpowder were rolled down into the prison cellar, and the guards had been given strict orders to blow the whole thing to pieces if the prisoners tried to break out. The kegs were there, certainly, and there wasn't so little fear of them, but many of the prisoners clearly believed there was something strange about this gunpowder because the Rebels went to too much trouble to make it known that there was a mine of gunpowder in the cellar.

With the permission of the Rebel authorities, the Union government sent both provisions and clothing to the prisoners on Belle Isle; but oh! the poor, hungry, freezing creatures didn't get them. The prisoners in Libby saw cargo after cargo of the warm, comfortable, blue uniforms, meant for the suffering men on Belle Isle, being unloaded by the Rebels, and soon the whole Rebel guard wore blue uniforms.

It has been made into a mitigating circumstance for the Rebels that they were not in a position to provide the Union prisoners with the necessities of life; but what mitigation can be found in the fact that they stole the food and the clothing they had promised the government in Washington to deliver to their suffering prisoners in captivity? The thing that will brand the South's cause for all eternity is the duplicity the authorities used instead of military stratagems, and the unheard-of cruelty with which they allowed the prisoners of war to be treated.

As expected, the prisoners could not stand to watch their enemies strutting about in the blue uniforms, and sometimes they let some biting remark fall about it, but the Rebels were very sensitive in this area and they did not let any expression regarding this subject go unpunished. Here is an example: a new shipment of uniforms had just arrived; the day was cold, and the guards marched back and forth, comfortably clothed in the uniforms that had been sent to the prisoners. There were a hundred or so of them in the lower room, where they cooked their rations, and one yelled out through the window to the guards, "Get out of that Yankee overcoat!" Soon a row of soldiers came marching in, a guard was posted at the stairs, and the prisoners were ordered in line. While they formed the line, the man on Johnson's side whispered, "I am certainly caught in the trap now," because he was the one who had yelled out the window. Quickly, and without being discovered, they swapped hats and coats and, when they came in line, the man wore an innocent expression, as you can imagine. The guard came down the line to point out the "criminal," but he had to give up. Major Turner then gave a little speech and said he knew that the offender was in the room, and that someone must know who he was and could point him out; they should now do so, so the guilty one could be punished, or they would remain standing in line for three hours. He waited for an answer, but none was forthcoming, and when he left them he posted a guard to make sure that they stood there for the entire three hours.

The prisoners bore the punishment patiently, and the Rebels never found out who it was who had "insulted" them.

When spring came in 1864, it was unusually lively in Richmond. The prisoners over on Belle Isle had been held there the whole winter without shelter and almost without enough sustenance to keep body and soul together, and now that the warm weather had come, they had to be moved eight hundred miles south to Andersonville to rot and die.

Why did they keep the prisoners through the winter in the cold climate just to move them to a hot one when the warm weather came—to the hot, unhealthy swamp so far south? That is a question the Rebels ought to answer, because it really appears that they wanted to kill their prisoners of war in this way; they had to know that the Northerners couldn't survive there for any length of time. Johnson says:

I can forget many things, but I can never forget how our people looked when they marched past Libby on the way to the train to be sent south. The strongest ones naturally came first, then those who weren't as strong and could not keep up with their comrades, and they continued in this way until the column became more and more like a row of ghosts, until finally the last ones came, supported by their comrades and looking around with empty, wild glances, like skeletons who neither knew nor cared where they were going. This sight will follow me until my dying day, and now—after many years—I almost become sick when I think about it. I consider this bitter, cruel, inhuman treatment of our prisoners to be an unforgivable crime by the Rebel government, the blackest of all the black marks on its escutcheon. It would not have cost the Rebels anything to distribute to the prisoners what the government had sent, but instead of doing this, in accordance with the agreement, they stole the food and clothing from the prisoners who were starving and freezing to death.

When I was home on leave after I had escaped, I was asked whether a piece in Harper's Weekly depicting our exchanged prisoners' emaciated forms was correct. I had not seen this piece, but answered that it was really beyond any description and could scarcely be exaggerated.

After the enlisted men were sent away, it was the officers' turn. They dreaded the move because under the circumstances they were better off in Libby than they could expect to be in any other place. The hope of being exchanged was also crushed by this move, and on Saturday morning, 7 May, as soon as the train began moving to the south, many of the prisoners began to make saws out of their pocketknives and saw holes in the floor of the car with the intention of escaping. Whether they had a concrete plan is impossible to know, but so many men were at the same task that they were discovered and accordingly stopped.

Sunday, the 8th, they arrived in Danville and were delivered to Prison No. 3. Here everything was miserable enough. Only five prisoners at a time had permission to visit the privy, and the result of this was that there was always a crowd of 40 or 50 men waiting to use it, and one can imagine the unnecessary misery this caused. There was almost no water to be had, and the little that could be found was not usable, it was so dirty.

In his memoirs Johnson says that he had one happy night in Danville [*sic*]. He had a pleasant dream: he was home again with Father and Mother, sister and brother, and there was no war and no prison with bolts and bars on it. But when he awakened he was melancholy, and this morbid state of mind didn't seem to want to pass.

Naturally the prisoners tried to get news about Grant's and Lee's operations, and were happy that Grant seemed to have the upper hand, and the fact that the movement of the prisoners was hastened without any prior warning also seemed to strengthen them in that belief. Johnson met Sergeant Major, later Lieutenant Erickson, here. He escaped once, but was brought back. He, like many others, contracted a disease which sent him to his grave within a few years.

In Danville the prisoners got one good thing, and that was a bath; they were sent down to the river in squadrons accompanied by a strong guard—approximately two men as guards for every prisoner. This was truly a blessing, because the filth was about to gain the upper hand.

Early in the morning on 12 May they were again started on the way, and now they had to march seven miles because the railroad was damaged. It had rained hard during the night,

and it was still grey and drizzling in the morning. The prisoners couldn't manage very well, and it was muddy so they had almost kicked the bucket by the time they got to the railroad. But the news from the front kept their spirits up.

The captain and the guards who had command over the prisoners on this trip were extremely dominating and crude; they did not allow even the smallest exception to the strict rules, and they spoke to the prisoners only in the most ugly language. Water was almost impossible to get, and the resulting suffering was great. This is how they were transported to the south: On the morning of the 13th they arrived in Charlotte, North Carolina, where they rested until about four o'clock in the afternoon. It was here that Lieutenant Colonel Johnson decided to escape, whether it resulted in death or freedom. His health had been good until now, but the campaign had been difficult the whole time—the march from Murfreesboro to Louisville in the summer of 1862, since it was a race against General Bragg, was more than human mere strength could endure. It continued night and day with little food and less water clean enough to drink, because they had to lie down and quench their thirst in the worst mud puddles that can be imagined. After the Battle of Perryville they were out in the incessant rain and several inches of snow in the fierce autumn wind without anything to crawl under; the Battles of Murfreesboro and Chickamauga with their exertions and suffering, the trip to Richmond and prison life—all this together now began to take its toll, so his health deteriorated more and more with each passing day. Johnson also had been injured in a fall down the stairs while he was in Libby; this had never healed properly. Under these circumstances this last trip affected him severely, so he now suffered from a very common illness that soldiers know well. He now wanted to walk a little to the side, and when the guard was sent after him he asked politely if he would be allowed to continue. But the answer was a terrible oath followed by an order to get back in the ranks.

His blood began to boil now, so he shook with emotion, and he says that if he had had a weapon he would have shot the man down, although he knew that the punishment would have been immediate death. It was then that he made the solemn promise to himself that he

would escape. He lay down on the hill and began to meditate: How long would this last? Was such a life worth living? No real man would treat an animal in the way he was now being treated. If he were to put up with this any longer, his manhood and self-respect would be destroyed. True enough, he had parents and siblings who would mourn his death—they already mourned the loss of a son and brother—but he himself had no family to support or abandon. He decided to escape the next night or die trying. He had become acquainted with Captain Hunnicutt and Lieutenant Hodges of the 2nd East Tennessee Regiment, and it seemed to him that these two might be good company. They were also good, reliable men and knew something of the landscape and the people and their customs, so their speech and manners would not betray them, which Johnson's undoubtedly would do. He told them of his decision, and they were quite willing to join him.

Naturally they were not traveling in sleeping cars, but in quite dilapidated baggage cars. The one door was locked, and three guards stood in the other, while the rest of the guards were up on the roof.

As soon as the train stopped, these guards were sent down patrol the area around the train until it started again.

The three prisoners' plan was to get into the rear-most car and, when darkness fell, to take their chances and jump off while the train was moving, if they didn't find any other alternative.

When the prisoners were commanded to fall in line again and march to the train, they took their places near the back end of the column, and when they reached the cars they saw an old, decrepit crate of a car, and they made up their minds that this was the right one, and they stationed themselves right by the door so they were first to slip in when the door was opened.

In fact, there was a large hole in the floor, big enough so that a man could crawl through it. They immediately threw their blankets over it and sat down, so that not even the other prisoners—much less the guards—would know anything about the hole. They were also lucky enough to have good-natured people as guards this time; they were just youths and liked

to talk about girls. The three prisoners went along with this and consequently became good friends with the guards. They were allowed to get off a few times, and then they carefully examined whether it was possible to let the cars roll over them when they lay down flat on the tracks; 10 or 12 cars had been hitched to the back after they had gone on board. They came to the conclusion that this plan would not work because the brake apparatus was too close to the ground. Now the plan was to get off at some station or other and lie quietly under the car until the train started to move; then the guards would have enough to do with getting on board, and then in all stillness they could sneak out and lie under the edge of the cars as close to the tracks as possible. They got one of their comrades to sit between the closest guard and the hole, and there was just enough room for one man. Johnson made an arrangement with his "son," Lieutenant Bussum; he would write home to Johnson's relatives and tell what he knew about the outcome of this venture. After having helped themselves to about a half pound of cornbread and a pound of dried apples, they waited patiently for their chance.

Between sunset and dark the train stopped at a little station near Chester, South Carolina, probably to take on wood and water. Although they wished it had been darker—objects could still be seen at some distances—they thought that the time had come because there were no houses sight, the landscape was wild and swampy, and the woods stretched right up to the train tracks.

They had no time to waste. Johnson gave the signal to Lieutenant Hodges and Captain Hunnicutt to begin, and they quickly slipped down through the floor. But now the escape seemed to be over before it started: Captain H. was the most talkative and therefore the most intimate with the guards. When he had gotten through and Johnson was in the process of following him down through the hole, one of the guards turned halfway around and asked the captain a question. Johnson naturally couldn't answer for him, because then the game would be up, but the man who was sitting between the hole and the guard was quick-witted enough to say that the captain was trying to get a little rest because he was very tired, and perhaps the guard wouldn't want to disturb him. This had the desired effect, and Johnson disappeared

down through the hole. Immediately the whistle blew, the wheels began to slow down, and the fugitives began to jump out. Lieutenant Hodges was the first, and the other two heard a startled, rough "Watch out!" at the same moment he jumped off, as if he had run right into someone. The men left behind naturally believed that it was one of the Rebels, and that if they slipped after him they would surely be captured. They saw that there was some space between the ties that wasn't filled with gravel, so they lay down there and took their chances under the brake apparatus rather than among the Rebels. Later it was evident that the lieutenant had run into one of the train men, a Negro, who was probably a little scared—and probably also had a suspicion about what was going on, and climbed up on the roof without making any commotion. The lieutenant felt a terrible anxiety for his two comrades while he lay there next to the tracks and the train passed over them; he expected to find them torn to pieces. It was indeed so narrow, and the brakes were so close, that one of them turned Johnson over and tore the buttons off his soldier's shirt.

The empty cars that had been hitched on, however troublesome they were, now served as protection because there were no guards on them except for a single man on the last one, and the train had picked up good speed before the cars had passed over the fugitives and he caught sight of them. He probably thought that they had been run over, and began to shout for the train to stop, but the engineer didn't seem to hear. They now became somewhat overwrought, and when the train was some 25 to 30 yards away, Hunnicutt and Johnson jumped up and ran off, and Hodges, who saw that they hadn't been torn to pieces, followed suit. But then the guard fired and the bullets barely whizzed by, hurrying the fugitives on; they certainly didn't dwell on this kind of farewell salute, and the grass didn't grow under their feet. The shot was heard by the engineer and the train was stopped, but long before any pursuit could begin, the fugitives were a good distance away among the brush, climbed over a fence and ran with all their strength over a field, and then climbed over another fence. But then they were so out of breath that they had to throw themselves down on the ground and catch their breath. They thought that the Rebels must be able to hear every breath, so heavily were they breathing, and every

rustling leaf was a Rebel on their tracks. The train waited for about a half hour and squadrons were sent out, but by this time it had become so dark that they couldn't find them. The train went on for a short distance, signaled with its steam whistle, stopped again, and remained there for a while until it finally left and the fugitives could hear the steam whistle's screech at the next station.

Afterwards it was learned that the guard said that one of them lay dead in the bushes, because when he fired he saw one of them fall down, and that was certainly true because when Johnson crossed the tracks he tripped on one of the rails, and at the same time his cap fell off and he bent down at full speed to pick it up.

Once again they were free! But now they had just as many difficulties to overcome as before; they were well inside enemy territory without anything except what they walked and stood in. They intended to make their way through North Carolina and East Tennessee to Knoxville, but they were standing here in South Carolina, greenhouse for the poisonous flower that blossomed on the tree of time.

To reach their destination they had between two hundred and four hundred miles to wander through, first through swampy woods and then over high mountains, the whole time in danger, without anything to eat. It would do no good at all to lie down and brood over such things; they had to go forward and overcome everything, and when they had rested a while they began their journey.

The first night they were not completely successful; it was cloudy and dark so they couldn't maintain their direction with the help of the stars. The moon did appear now and then from behind the clouds, like a sign from above, and they followed it. In a while they heard the baying of dogs and, since they thought that the bloodhounds were on their tracks, they walked into a swamp where they waded in muddy water up to their waists. The baying of the hounds faded away after a while; the dogs had probably lost the scent there in the swamp since they were not heard anymore, and the fugitives were considerably relieved. But they didn't dare follow any roads, and wherever they had to cross one they walked backwards

so the trail would not lead to their discovery. The underbrush was very dense and it was showery weather, so their progress slow.

At one o'clock in the morning the moon set so they were forced to camp for the night in a dense group of bushes down by a river. The underbrush was wet, the ground was wet, and their clothes were wet through to the skin, but they slept anyway until the sun was high in the sky. They stayed in that hiding place the whole day without eating anything until evening, because it was necessary to save what little they had. That night the weather was showery again, and after a march of some eight miles the moon went down and they had to crawl into hiding. This night was worse than the first because now they suffered from the pangs of hunger; the next night was even worse, so they didn't go any farther than four miles before they had to "hibernate," wet to the skin. In the morning it was so cold that they were almost frozen stiff. That night they had snatched some ears of corn, which was now their only food, and they could eat only a little of it because they were afraid of unpleasant consequences. The two following nights they attempted to get close to the Negro cabins, but something always got in the way so they had to take to their heels immediately. Usually each plantation owner had a half dozen or more bloodhounds, which made a terrible spectacle when anyone approached, and after the people the dogs were the worst.

The following is taken from Johnson's memoirs:

Tuesday the 17th: Last night was good; but we only covered some six or seven miles because of fatigue. We are extremely exhausted; the eight months of imprisonment, exposure, and overexertion since our escape and four days practically without any kind of nourishment have made us incapable of managing anything. We have to get ourselves some food for the night, even if we are captured trying; we cannot continue the march without food. One thing is certain: at least they will not take me back to prison.

Yesterday and today the weather has been good, but it will soon start to rain again and that is very unlucky for us.

Last night we were almost discovered; they¹⁸ stood by a stream close by for a while, but they finally went on their way, and then we went our way, too. Some time ago I wrote my sister Caroline that I would like to spend this day at home. Ach! Instead I am here in the swamps of South Carolina, half starved to death and where I can be hunted at any time like a wild animal. But someday things will be better. Last night we saw a road sign that said "Shelby, 7 miles." It pointed almost north. Yorkville is therefore almost to our east. Our campground is now in a swamp with an excess of mosquitoes, but only stagnant water. We have positioned ourselves near a plantation, hoping to meet a Negro and then make an arrangement with him about getting something to eat, but so far without success. God grant us that we manage to get something for the night.

In the afternoon Captain Hunnicutt set out to reconnoiter and found a 14-year old Negro boy who was working alone. The captain explained who he was and that he had to have something to eat. The boy promised to bring something in the evening, and the captain promised him a gold ring if he kept his word. They waited for him until midnight, but he didn't come and they had to continue on their way—not very cheered. They didn't feel particularly hungry, but they were so weak that they had to sit down and rest after walking just a few steps. They had now decided that at the next house they would stop and take the consequences; but when they got there they saw something that wasn't especially safe—the Negro cabins either lay too close to the plantation owner's residence, or there were eight or ten dogs that began to bark and raise the alarm, and they shook the dust off their feet and walked on. Again they wanted to stop. They had gone about a couple of miles—they kept to the road that night for the first time—when they came to a house. It seemed that they would be successful here; there was just one house and so they knew that the inhabitants were either Negroes or "poor white trash," and although they hoped that they would be Negroes, they

¹⁸Johnson usually writes "they" when he means the Rebels.

would also dare to give it a try with the latter, they thought. But when it counted, their courage failed them; it was with the greatest caution that they approached the cabin and peeked in through the open cracks between the planks in the wall. By the light of the old-fashioned open fireplace they could see that there were black faces inside. Their happiness was great, and they immediately knocked on the door and were let in.

The first thing the fugitives did was to ask whether there were any whites in the area, and they were told that "Massa" was the closest and he lived two miles away. The strangers then explained that they were escaped Yankee prisoners who were almost dead from hunger and must have something to eat. The wife found some cornbread and milk that was greedily devoured, and she set herself to baking a potato cake and frying some bacon. In the meantime, the fugitives talked about the country's affairs and situation in a general way, but these blacks were very ignorant and stupid; they didn't seem to care about anything. They knew there was a war because "the young massa was there," but they didn't know what the war was about. The captain understood the Negroes' character and let them know that the war was to free the Negro slaves, that that was why they had fought on the battlefield, had been taken prisoner, and now had escaped, and if they could now reach the North they would tell the people the truth, large armies would be amassed, and the slaves' freedom would soon come.

This was naturally stretching the truth a bit, but the blacks understood this part of the story and their faces cleared considerably. Now the second course was ready: hot cornbread, fried eggs, smoked pork and milk! "Supper for a prince," as Johnson says, and they sampled this as well. They hadn't tasted eggs or milk for a long time, and "they would not have taken a thousand dollars for that supper, if such an offer had been made." The wife baked another corn cake and gave them the bacon she and her "nigger" should have had for the whole week. (The Negroes got their rations once a week, and if they ran out before the week was up they either had to starve or steal.) They demanded no payment, but Johnson gave the wife a small gold ring because she so willingly relinquished her stores of bread and meat to the hungry fugitives who skulked around in the woods and fields like criminals, and for what? Because they were

prisoners of war in the enemy's land; because they had fought and still wanted to fight for the Union's great cause.

One Negro accompanied them for a piece along the road and explained where they should cross the Broad River and which Negro cabin they should go to for a safe ferryman. The night would soon be over, but they continued for another five miles before they hid themselves in a dense thicket near an open field. In the afternoon someone came and started to work there, but luckily they didn't see the fugitives. At about 11 o'clock the following night they came to the Broad River, found the Negro cabin, and used the opportunity to ask for some bread and half a potato cake. Then they walked 10 more miles before they went into hiding. Johnson's boots were now so worn out that they couldn't be used anymore, and walking barefoot like small boys was impossible here in the poisonous swamps. But they say that necessity is the mother of invention, and Lieutenant Hodges, who had high boot legs, cut a piece off one of these and made him a pair of moccasins—like the Indians. They weren't any masterpieces as far as the craftsmanship went—one piece of leather tied together with a leather strap along with fine strings of hickory bark—but they were usable and "worth more than jewels." Indeed, this pair wore out before they reached their goal and the other boot leg went the same way. The next night passed without anything of interest happening: when the first blue streaks of daylight appeared in the east, they sat down by the side of the road to rest for a while before they began to look for a hiding place for the day. Before they could do anything, a man came right towards them so retreat was impossible. Luckily the man had black skin, and the blacks had the white man's devotion in those days; without the Negroes' help the fugitives would never have reached their own lines. "Massa must be careful," they said, "because there are also many evil blacks here who would sell you for money." Perhaps there were some like that among them, but no blacks attempted treachery against these fugitives; they now thought it safest to make a clean breast of things to this man, and he promised to lead them to a safe hiding place and bring them something to eat in the evening. This Negro had been on a nearby plantation overnight with his wife, because husbands and wives were often owned by different

masters. He had been on his way home when he suddenly came upon them. His "Massa's" neighbor was a white Union man. This seems somewhat unbelievable, but he claimed it was true and said he knew that fugitives had been housed there before. They gave him permission to mention their presence and to come back if he should get the opportunity. He didn't think that this would be possible unless he was sent by the "Massa" or the overseer; he himself was suspect and if he came back for no reason the others would think something was going on. The fugitives were anxious the whole day, because it was impossible to believe that there could be a white Union man at this time in this place. Evening came and the Negro, true to his word, indeed returned and said that he had seen the white man who had been mentioned and would now show them the way there. They followed and discovered that he himself and his wife and daughter were intelligent people. The man closed the window shades and they sat down and had an enjoyable chat until the meal was ready. They helped themselves and took enough with them for several meals. They were here until 11 o'clock and got several useful pieces of information about the area and which places were safest. In particular, they were warned about a stretch where they had intended to go: "it was actually swarming there with Rebel sympathizers and informers, who would consider it a sure ticket to future success if they were the reason why a Yankee fugitive was recaptured. That night the fugitives had a very difficult time keeping to the right road; there were many side roads and again they had to turn to their black friends, two of whom accompanied them for several miles. After they had turned back, the fugitives came once again to a crossroads where there was a road sign, but it was so tall that they couldn't read it in the moonlight. There was a house nearby, so they had to be on guard, and they carefully pulled the post out of the ground, read the names on the sign, put it back again, and went on quickly to find themselves a cave to hide in. That evening they took the same road. At first they thought that it turned too much to the south, but soon it turned in the right direction and was an exceptionally good road, and there were almost no houses to be seen for 15 miles. Later on there were many houses and the road again seemed to turn too far to the south. The dogs also kept up a miserable commotion and at one place, where a man came out

to quiet the dogs, they asked for directions, but he didn't know much about the road; first he "supposed" that it went to Hendersonville, then that it went to Ash[e]ville, some 52 miles away. They had been thirsty the whole day, and they had only found water once during the night in a small stream, and they went into hiding not far from here. They came out of hiding early the next evening and looked to see if they could "flank" a house in the vicinity, when they came to the Greenville and South Carolina road. It was still too light to dare to go out and walk there, and for a while they stayed in a thicket where some children came driving along a flock of animals. They didn't pay much attention to this because they assumed that the herd was following the road, but at once they realized that the herd might be driven into the pen right next to them, and they barely had time to get away without being seen. When it was really dark they took the main road, but they weren't sure which way they should go—whether they should march bravely up to the house and ask for directions or trust their own judgment. Then a man came walking along and he had the right color skin. He didn't answer their question immediately, but went into the house and came back with a couple loaves of bread and some meat. This was beyond their expectations. They now "flanked" the house, led by the Negro and one of his comrades. He explained that there were many Union-friendly people in the neighborhood, and the ones in this house had frequently housed fugitives, but they had sons in the Rebel army who had been prisoners of war in the North's prisons for a long time and were now home. Therefore, they thought it best not to expose themselves to any danger when there was no pressing need. Immediately after the escape, they had decided among themselves not to take any risks if it wasn't absolutely necessary; if one of them did something risky, the other two were to take him to task for it. Of those who escaped, only a very few reached their goal, because the majority of them were not cautious enough. But these men didn't want to expose themselves to something like that—if they were captured or killed, it would not be because they had been careless.

They now kept to a northwesterly direction through uneven country not far from the Blue Ridge Mountains. Many streams trickle down between the hills and down to the Broad

River, so there was no lack of water and they "set themselves up" for the day on a high hill. Here they found out that General Morgan, the enemy rider (the plunderer) had passed through with a small unit the week before, and it was generally assumed that he was preparing for a new charge into Ohio to settle old scores. The fugitives took this circumstance into consideration and now passed themselves off as some of Morgan's people who were hurrying after him as fast as they could so they wouldn't be left behind when the planned charge into Ohio took place; they pretended that they had been captured with him before and they were now eager to get the chance to avenge themselves on the Yankees for the degradation the Yankees had heaped on their brave commander and on themselves! Their great haste made it necessary to continue the march at night (the Rebels naturally thought that they were also marching during the day), and, since they had not been paid, they had no other choice but to beg for the necessities of life.

They used this story for as long as they followed in Morgan's tracks.

The night of 23 May was quite troublesome from the evening on. First, there were some fishermen by a big fire near a river that they had to cross, but they sneaked ahead without being discovered and then met a couple of boys with torches and had to hide among the bushes, and when they had to pass a house, the dogs made a frightful spectacle, and finally they lost their way. If they went back to the house it would attract attention, and perhaps they would have to go all the way back to their starting point and risk all, what with the dogs, the boys, the fishermen, and everything. They decided it would be best to ask directions at the house. The lieutenant walked ahead and found an old woman outside. He came out with his Morgan story, got some bread, directions for the right way, and then they were off again. Soon they were at the foot of the blue mountains, which they crossed, and then they came to a densely populated region, and the day dawned before they could go any farther so they had to hide in a grove away from the road, but uncomfortably close to the houses. They thought that if they could avoid discovery that day they would consider themselves lucky. They were now some 25 miles from Asheville. The day passed without any significant danger, and they moved on

before it was completely dark. They had to pass a house where there were a half dozen angry dogs, but they stole past it so the dogs didn't know until it was too late and they didn't make much of a commotion. After a half mile they had to wade across a river, and the rain now poured down in torrents. They stood under a tree for a while, but the rain wouldn't stop and it was so dark that you couldn't even see your hands in front of your face. Now when they came to a house they wanted to find some shelter—they banked on their Morgan story—but the first one they came to looked too elegant and they didn't dare risk going in there. There weren't many Negroes in this part of the country either—they were now in the mountains of North Carolina—so they mostly had to depend on the poor whites. After a while they came to an outbuilding with some flax inside, and they dug themselves down into it. Around 12 o'clock the rain stopped, the moon shone clearly and they continued on their journey. At daybreak they built themselves a small hiding place out of bark and branches up on a steep slope and crawled inside. They were wet through and terribly cold. The "rations" were almost gone and they had to get something to eat in the near future. There was a magnificent view of the valley, which seemed to be rich and prosperous, and a beautiful plantation lay in sight; they could certainly get enough rations there if they could just get some information from the Negroes.

After dinner it began to rain again and the "shack" was not water tight, so it was a very raw and cold day. As soon as it was dark they went ahead to the first house they came to in order to get directions and something to eat. When they came close to it, they heard a small girl singing in a clear voice that sounded sweet and purifying in the evening air. Johnson's comrades became enthusiastic and declared that it was a Union song—the romantic spirit seemed to surge in them—but the realities of life became clear when they had spoken with the people; they found out that the Rebel cavalry had camped there and eaten everything, and nothing was left. They were still using the Morgan story, and if these people were Union-friendly then naturally they wouldn't give anything to Morgan's men; nevertheless, they thought it was wisest to continue with the lie for a while, even if they were talking to Union-friendly people, because if they told the truth then it might come out and they would be in an

even worse fix than they were now. They met a man in the next house who had been drafted, but who was then discharged because of a physical defect. The Rebel cavalry had also cleaned him out. He said he couldn't buy anything with the Confederate money, but he had put away a little silver which now could be put to good use. He gave them a little piece of bread to take with them on the journey. A little farther along they awakened another man to ask him the way to Asheville, and also to get a little food. He had only a small piece of bread, which he gave them. All the people they spoke with made no secret of the fact that they were thoroughly sick and tired of the war, and they also said that the population was about evenly divided between Union people and Rebels.

They were now approaching Asheville, but they didn't dare go through the town because troops were still there; most of them had recently been sent to Richmond, but some North Carolina Indians, who had enlisted with the Rebels, had stayed behind. The fugitives now wanted to "bypass" the town that night, and they sneaked through the woods, but it was later than they thought and when they were even with the town they heard the tower clock ring five o'clock, and it was broad daylight before they managed to get all the way around and find a hiding place. But this was much too close to town and they thought the Indian scouts might have seen them, so they thought that this was the most unsafe hiding place of the whole journey. The rain poured down most of the day, and although this was extremely uncomfortable, it was certainly reassuring. In the afternoon—the rain let up a little—they heard a great deal of shooting in the town and came to the conclusion that the Indians were target shooting. On this day Johnson wrote the following in his diary: "Wet to the skin the whole time, cold to the bone, little to eat, no sleep, this doesn't put a man in any reasonable condition for such a journey on foot; but if we can only reach our own lines, we will be fully repaid for our suffering." In the evening they started again, but they weren't sure which way they should go, and it was dangerous here to arouse the least suspicion. They couldn't ask for directions to Asheville anymore; it now lay behind them. They had to make Burnsville their destination. They also couldn't pretend to be Morgan's men anymore because they wanted to go

in a different direction and they hadn't come up with a new story; instead, they had to depend on inspiration, opportunity, and chance. The surroundings became more dangerous as they moved ahead: Rebel deserters, men who wanted to avoid the draft, and poachers, who sniffed out the others' tracks—all these poachers or "bushwhackers" were desperate and dangerous people who could pick off their enemies from their hiding places in the mountains, and there was a terrible fear of them. Even the cunning Indians were quite unwilling to search through the mountains for these men. Our fugitives were now in danger of being shot by these men sneaking in the bushes, who would undoubtedly assume they were scouts because they never took prisoners, and the scouts, in turn, would undoubtedly take them for bushwhackers or deserters.

When they had walked a couple of miles and come to a ridge, they saw a man come riding up from the other side. They hid in the thicket at the side of the road, but when the man came up, Captain Hunnicut[t] thought it was a Negro and greeted him. But when they came out of hiding, they saw he was white and wearing grey clothing. This was an emergency; rather nervously, they said that they belonged to the 2nd South Carolina Regiment and were on the way to Yancy County, where their families lived.

The man was clearly a little on edge and, to keep the conversation going, the captain asked if he didn't have something in his canteen to share with a thirsty comrade. Oh yes, he certainly had that. He had been somewhat cautious before, but now his tongue loosened and he was quite familiar with them. Finally he said without further ado, "Boys, I can maybe guess who you are." They laughed and asked him to try, but he wouldn't, "because it wouldn't do to say everything one thinks in this area," etc. When they had taken another swallow from the canteen, he seemed to feel safer, and Johnson said he wanted to agree to be open: if he would promise not to make use of the opportunity to get the better of them, then they would promise the same thing. They shook hands on this. "Well," he said, "I think you are escaped Yankees," and the answer came that he had guessed well. He then told them about his own experiences. Shortly after the outbreak of the war he had traveled to the North and enlisted

in the army there, and along with many others he was taken prisoner in Kentucky and brought back. Many of them were shamefully mistreated and all of them drafted and forced into the Rebel army. He had been stationed in Asheville the whole time, where his family lived and was in a position to take care of them, "but," as he himself said, "if I were to escape now, my family would be ruined, and as long as I am there I'm not helping or hurting the situation; but if I am sent to the Front, I will escape, as I stand before God in Heaven, because I will not shoot at my country's defenders."

It is understandable that they all became good friends, and he explained that they were on dangerous ground, that the mountains were full of scouts—he had met three of them that evening. The scouts were in a house, which he described, and he instructed them on how they could avoid it.

There was no time to spare, and so they said good-bye and he wished them "Godspeed" on the dangerous journey.

The night was dark so they successfully passed by the house in question, but later they lost their way and it was so dark that they couldn't find it again, even though they searched on their hands and knees, and they were forced to rest until the moon came up. Then they found a path that took them up to a house, where they awakened an old woman and asked for something to eat. She thought that would be possible and let them in. She was very talkative, and the fugitives naturally didn't discourage her. She was no bitter Rebel, although her husband was in the Rebel army, but he was so sick and tired of the war, she said, that he just wanted to come home. He had suffered terribly from the lack of food, and the Rebel government had promised that the food and clothing sent to the soldiers by their families and friends would get through to them with no problems. She had sent a box to her husband, but when he received it, it had been opened and most of the contents was gone, and he also had to pay 12 dollars for the shipping, so he had written that she must never send anything else, even if he was starving to death. She wanted to hear about them, and they said they belonged to the 2nd South Carolina Regiment and had been prisoners, but now had been exchanged and had

orders to return to their units immediately. But they wanted to look in on their families first—they were now living near Burnsville where they had moved during the war—and they explained what a risk they were taking, because if this were discovered, they would be shot as deserters. They were true to the South's cause and wanted to hold out until the end, but they hadn't seen their wives and children for over three years and now they would risk their lives just to see them. Her eyes shone and the expression on her face became livelier as they talked about their families and the risk they took in order to be in the bosom of their families for a while, and when they came to the end of their story, she said emphatically, "You are doing the right thing, and I hope you succeed!" She continued by telling about the big promises the rich people in Asheville had made when the war broke out; they wanted to be sure that the families of those who went into the service would not suffer from any need. "I'm telling you, this is the rich man's war, and the poor man's fight," she said. "The war should never have been started, but once it had started, and Lincoln offered such relatively good terms, they should have been accepted." The fugitives kept this thread going by saying that as prisoners they had seen a great deal of the Yankees' resources: plenty of money and plenty of people who were willing to hold out until the end, and so they would have to win in the end. "Yes," she interrupted in all seriousness, "and I think the sooner, the better!" They were very close to telling her who they were, but they were afraid it would come out—she had the gift of gab. She was very angry at a Methodist minister who went hunting deserters and collected supplies for the Rebel army; he had made inroads into East Tennessee and stolen everything he could get his hands on, even a silk dress for his wife and clothing for his children. Now he had sent his family to South Carolina for safety, but the Yankees had sent the message that it wouldn't do him any good because they would soon be coming down there, too. During this harangue she had baked biscuits and made a good meal, and they helped themselves as well as they could. Then a small, human incident occurred, which should be included: When they had eaten all they could manage, there was one biscuit left, and Hunnicutt tried with all kinds of gestures to make Hughes understand that he ought to put the biscuit in his shirt pocket, but he just shook his

head and stubbornly refused. Later he pointed out to Hunnicutt how unpleasant it was to be encouraged to do something like that after such hospitable treatment. Hunnicutt thought that under the circumstances it was acceptable. "Yes, but after she had treated us in that way it was contemptible, so contemptible, that you wouldn't debase yourself to do it, but tried to get me to do it," answered Hughes. Oh yes, it often happens that we want others to do our dirty work for us.

It was almost light when they left the house, and after a mile they had to find a hiding place. Some acorn hunters came a little too close to their "hotel." Otherwise nothing happened that day. In the evening they came to another house where they also found a woman "with a cabin full of children." There was nothing to eat there, so they couldn't get anything. The husband was a cripple, but had been able to look after his family. But a few weeks previously the manhunters had taken him away; he was fit enough for hospital service. The story about how they were on the way to their wives and children seemed to be the best choice, but after a while she became suspicious, and when they asked her if there were many "bushwhackers" in the mountains, she answered that there were lots of them on the other side of Burnsville. Was it dangerous to march through the night? Oh no, she didn't think it would be a problem "because I assume, to tell the truth, that you also are on the way there," she said. "Assuming that coarse insinuation is true, is there anyplace in the neighborhood where we could get something to eat?" The woman directed them to the next neighbor, but they had to be careful, because Parker and his "hunters" were always on the lookout for fellows just like them. They went to the neighbor and found a 76-year old man and his wife, who was about the same age. Here they explained who they were, and both stood up. The "old lady" immediately began to bake cornbread. He had "been there" in 1812 and in the Mexican-American War and was friendly to the Union. All the people in the area knew it, but he was very old now and didn't make a target of himself by jabbering, so they left him in peace. When they departed he told them to watch out for the "hunters": "[]They hang around like the plague and they are the terror of the people, especially Union people; they kill our dogs and at night they sneak

around the houses to see if any poor escaped prisoners have sneaked in to get something to eat.[] This illustrates the devilish character of this war; many bloody and guilty dark deeds are committed here by irresponsible people, deeds that the history of this conflict will never mention, that will never be known except by the perpetrators and the victims. But the day will come when these people, freed from this plague, will again breathe in the mountain air from their hills and valleys in peace; but the day of retribution will also come for the tyrants who oppress the people. May God make it come soon!" Johnson wrote in his diary. At two o'clock that night they passed a house where the inhabitants were up and came to the door; but they were not "hunters," as the fugitives had assumed in their fear, because they passed unchallenged. They now found themselves a safe hiding place up on a mountain slope some 20 miles from Burnsville. Captain Hunnicutt wrote a Confederate leave pass here for each of them; because of a lack of ink he used gunpowder dissolved in water. The following night they got lost and walked three miles back toward Asheville before they realized their mistake and asked for directions at a house where they took the opportunity to ask for some bread. They had a strict rule: if they had to ask for someone's help, they killed two birds with one stone, because it was uncertain when they would be able to get something later.

The captain had an uncle who lived near Burnsville, and he had visited him one in his boyhood, but since the war had broken out he hadn't heard from him. The uncle's name was Peter Hunnicutt, and it was now their greatest wish to find him, but they didn't dare ask anyone or mention his name. The captain knew that he lived by a river called Jack's Creek, some four or five miles from the town, but he didn't know in which direction and didn't even dare to mention the name of the river; it was so easy to arouse suspicion. Now the captain was terrified of getting lost again and asked the man who had given him bread in great detail about the road to Burnsville; he was now very tired and didn't want to lose the way yet again. The man answered that he couldn't go wrong if he just stuck to the road; it was well-used and straight ahead. But after a bit he continued, "Oh, I almost forgot that there is a road that branches off to the left four miles on this side of town, but you should just go straight ahead."