

Dr. J. N. Howell to his Wife

Andersonville, Ga., July 29, 1864

My Dear Wife: You can see where I am, and, if you got my last letter, can guess when I came. However, I might as well tell you I came yesterday -- leaving Macon at 8 and getting here about 1 o'clock. So yesterday I first "set eyes on" this celebrated Yankee prison. Even while I write, I have nothing to do but raise my eyes from the paper on which I am engaged to see hundreds of the blue coats making their way through two lines of guards to the prison gate. They march leisurely along -- some with coats, some without; some with shoes on, others barefoot. So they go as thousands before them have gone. They know it, as thousands before them knew it, to the most uninviting place of which a Yankee knows anything about.

On arriving yesterday I asked for Dr. White's headquarters. To this I came and found the Dr. out. His clerk, a Yankee, told me the Surg. Gen was about depot and to see him I must go back to the place from which I had but just come. I went back and enquired again and was told that he was at Gen'l Winder's Hd. qts. I went immediately to there and found the Dr. about leaving. I halted him and handed my papers. He told me to employ the balance of the day in getting quarters for the night, and report at his office the next day at 9 o'clock. I spent the night with Jack Moore

and applied at the Surgeons quarters for assignment to duty. I went at the appointed time but the Dr. was absent. I met up with Dr. Credille, raised in Greene, who asked me to walk with him to the Yankee hospital. I did so, and such objects in the way of men I never saw before. Sick and emaciated, naked, ragged and dirty -- some on straw with a blanket under them -- some without either -- some that will die tomorrow, some today -- some dying with another whose face is turned toward him breathing his last. I saw too some awful cases of gangrene -- cases where the flesh had been destroyed to the bone. But before you can imagine such pictures, you must first see some sufferings like these. I can give you no idea of them. In comparison an ordinary death is pleasant to contemplate.

I returned from the hospital to the Surgeon's office, and waiting still awhile he came in. He gave me a paper as examining Surgeon at the prison. I shall have to attend at that place at 8 o'clock, decide what cases shall go [to] the hospital and prescribe for others. I presume the duties will be light as I am to have a clerk -- a Yankee one. I am to begin in the morning, and the next time I write can ^{all} tell you/about them.

I need not attempt to tell you anything about the stockade. You have seen a good account of it in the news-paper. From the Surgeon's headquarters (which is on an eminence) one gets a good view of the prisoners. Judging from this view,

you would think them too closely crowded to move much. But you can see them employing themselves all the while. They escape from the prison very often by burrowing holes under the posts which form the enclosure. We keep here some negro dogs which are also good for running Yankees. When they escape the dogs are put after them. I heard the dogs after one this morning. But perhaps I had better stop writing about the prison and its concerns. I have written more about it to mother. If you wish to see it you can get it from her.

I had a great notion to applying this morning for a few days leave of absence, making a plea of my scant supply of clothing and telling the Surgeon that when I left home I expected to be engaged in the field. But on reflection I concluded that it would cost more than it would come to -- the distance home being too great, the fare so high by R.R. and the time allowed me at home so short. I should be glad to see you -- so glad -- but then the coming away! 'Tis hard -- I've tried it. But I think about you a great deal, you and the boys -- and wonder what you are doing and how you are getting on. I hope you enjoy yourself and that none of you are sick. Percy, I am sure, if he is well, has a good, jolly time -- riding horses and sticks for horses and eating apples. Johnny also enjoys himself. He can crawl so fast. Bless his little heart -- does he know who you mean when you ask him about father? I know he does. Has he

any more words yet? Bless my wife and two little boys. You must write me about you all. I haven't got a letter since leaving home, owing to my move from Macon and not going to Atlanta. You have written I know. Just direct simply to me at this place. Let Dr. Moore get the detail if he can. Tell the boys about me, and write me about what Percy says and does.

Your loving husband

J. M. H.

Haven't had on clean clothes since leaving.

How is the school? [a note at the top of the page]