

Dr. J. H. Howell to his wife

July 31 /1864/

My Dearest Emma: 'Tis Sunday, the last day of the month, and I date from Andersonville again -- the place from which my last letter came. I hope you got, or will get, that letter by regular course of mail. But I am by no means assured of it, as the Yankee raiders were yesterday at Macon, shelling the city. The damage they did is yet to be told here, as is also their whereabouts; but we are informed that they have disappeared, and, strange to say, nobody knows which way they have gone. It is a singular affair taken together. -- The first news we got here was that the Yankees were shelling Macon; next we hear that they have destroyed a very considerable amount of property in Jones County and have burned Griswoldville -- coming in this direction and doing the above damage by way of Griffin. But for all they did so much burning and laying waste, we hear nothing of them till they get to Macon. They leave Macon it seems leisurely enough and that's the last we hear of them. Though you are a great deal further from this raid, you will I reckon get fuller accounts than I can now give you.

Just a few moments ago an old man rode up in front of my tent and asked me if I objected to his tying his horse there. He told me he would like for me to watch him and let no one steal him -- that he had a son here to whom he was bringing

some clean clothes and that he was first [to] go to [the] post office to get his mail and inquire the news. I gave him my name and for my watching his horse get him to ask if there is a letter for me and the news from the raiders. He promised to ask for the letter and said I might depend on his getting the news. I hope he may get me a letter, and should he get any additional news, as he will be back soon, I will write the particulars in this letter.

Today I have no duty at all to perform. There is no sick call at prison -- reason assigned no medicine. 'Tis true there is a very poor assortment and a very limited supply of the latter but that is not the reason, the whole reason. In my opinion [illegible] to the fact that they -- the authorities -- wish to keep from the prisoners the account of the raiders above this place. It could and would soon get current among them, as each physician is supplied with a Yankee clerk -- a man who has taken the parole of honor, and [is] allowed to go anywhere around the post he chooses. These paroled men have heard it, and would take great delight in telling the prisoners. This they could easily do at sick call, but at no other time.

I promised in my last to tell you about the duty I am required to do. I have been initiated, and here's the way I have to proceed. Each morning about 8 o'clock the sick are brought into an enclosure which joins and communicates with the stockade by a large gate. This enclosure is about

twelve or fifteen yards wide and some hundred yards long. In it at regular intervals are fifteen little shelters, for the physician and his clerk. Now when the prisoners are brought here to prison they are divided into divisions of about ninety men, and for each division the officer of the post appoints a sergt. whose duty it is to draw rations for his men and also report his sick at the regular hour each morning. These divisions are numbered and the sergt. is to recollect his members. Each Surgeon has his regular divisions which he is to see and prescribe for every day about 8. The usual number for each surgeon is about four or five hundred. To prescribe for this number he is assisted by formulas and has only to repeat the number of the formula and diagnosis. The clerk does the balance. Multiply five hundred -- the usual number of sick for each surgeon by 15, the number of physicians, and you have an approximation of the

A few more days and I shall be 31 -- a middle aged man.

[a note at the top of the page]