

Joseph Van Hatten Letters

73 Illinois Volunteers

April 1st and 5th 1863

Camp on Stone [sic] River near Murfreesboro

God Worcks [sic] and none can hinder.

God worcks [sic] by means, and he works over and above means.

There is accrding [sic] to the opinion of most wise and good men about to take place a great Revolution in this nation if not in all probability all over the world.

And If god [sic] in his providence has so ordered it all that man can do will amount to nothing [sic] only to prolong the wor [sic] and make [crossed out] make it more certain [sic] and more powerful perfect and complete In the end. There is no doubt in my mind but this war will make an end of Slavery Slave Aristocracy is the cause of the wor, [sic] and the Slave party begun it themselves, So the blame of the wor [sic] cannot be laid on us through future history nor by future generations.

If we had bin [sic] successfull [sic] at Bulls [sic] run and should have overcome and a crushed the rebellion [sic] at that time, Slavery wood [sic] have gon [sic] on as it had Always done and in all probability and [crossed out] we should have the same thing to do over in a few years that we are a doing not and be nothing [sic] better off for having won a great battel [sic] at Bulls [sic] run

After we had all most gaind [sic] the victory at Bulls [sic] run god [sic] so ordered it in his providence that our Army met with a reverse and so put back the wor [sic] for at least one year the best that could be done Our government and leading men began to think there was something to do so they redoubled there [sic] energieyes [sic] and wer [sic] successful in a good many battels [sic] forts Henry Fort Dondelson [sic] ...Columbus Pitsburg [sic] landing Peridge [sic] Neworleans [sic] and many places by which our Commanders and our army won for themselves great fame, but at length they began to meet with reverses and the president had to call for severel [sic] hundred thousand more men, If we had bin [sic] successful and whipt [sic] them every time the wor [sic] wood [sic] bin [sic] over and slavery would still exist as it did before but such was not the case it required more men more legislation greater determation [sic] less regard for rebels and rebel property finely [sic] Lincoln issued his proclimation [sic] freeing the slaves in surtain [sic] rebelious [sic] states and districks [sic], nor would that ammount [sic] to much if the rebels would lay down there [sic] arms and return to there [sic] allegience [sic] but they will not but resist to the last as did phario [sic] King of Egipt [sic] and to there [sic] own destruction for we have got the Bull by the horns at last and the

rebellion [sic] has got to be put down at last and down goes [sic] Slavery with it as a consequence [sic]

As natural as any cause will produce an affect We are not fighting to free the negrows [sic] we are fighting for the government and the Constitution and the uniun. [sic] The Negrows [sic] will fight for there [sic] own freedom and they are at it all redy [sic] and they fight like devels [sic] at that, you need not be uneasy about there [sic] fighting if they guit [sic] under good hed [sic] way and in large bodies where they will feel there [sic] strength there are thousands free all redy [sic] there is one in each company in this army and they express a willingness to join a black Regiment

I do not believe that [crossed out] that they will all be freed now or at the turmination [sic] of the wor [sic] but I do believe it will be in such a shape that it will be abollished [sic] as soon as will be good for the Country or the Slaves themselves and as fast as we can cend [sic] them off.

Our Horses are in splended [sic] shape for operations At the presant [sic] time Vixburg [sic] will have to yield or surrender [sic] to grant [sic] or evacuate, If Hoocker [sic] dont [sic] take Richmond I will all ways think he oughtto [sic], and there will be a big fight at Charleston, and if we whip them at all theas [sic] places it is likely they will concentrate all there [sic] Horses to gather and try old Rosa [sic] a pop and he will be [illegible] I think very very [sic] sertain [sic] to nock [sic] the Brat in the hed [sic]

Some thinks they will evacuate Vixburg [sic] and Richmond and fall on old Rose at onse [sic] and drive him out of Tennesee [sic] or come in on our rear and cut off our surplies [sic] but they cant [sic] do either for Rosecrans has a large army well fed and clothed well drild [sic] and in good Spirits and anktious [sic] for a fight and would rather fight here than to run after a fight they cant [sic] cut of [sic] our surplies [sic] for Burnside will attend to that, and if they come on us at once that will only end the wor [sic] the sooner and that is what we wont [sic].

The rebels is in a vary [sic] bad condition know [sic] and gutting [sic] worse daily they come in to our lines conscrips [sic] some barefootted [sic] and in some instansas [sic] bare heded [sic] and Nearly Naked and the worst of all they are nearly starved and they ougt [sic] to be for they could a done better and from what I can lern [sic] therys [sic] nuthing [sic] but wont [sic] and dessolation [sic] stering [sic] the Suthern [sic] Confedersy [sic] in the face, and they are a trying to console themselves that the north western states will brake [sic] of [sic] and join them a very wild calculation and if they have no better than that they are whipt [sic] alreddy [sic] but it is just like all the calculations they have always made, first king cotten [sic] second help from the north third Foren [sic] intervention all has faild [sic] and they consider themsves [sic] [illegible] now

This is the best government that ever has existed since the world began and no doubt in my mind was according to gods [sic] own appointment for the hastening on of light and knowledge the down fall of empires and kings the spred [sic] of the Cristian [sic] religion

and the bringing around the days when the Nations of the earth shall cease to learn any more, and we shall have peace on the earth and Christ shall reign spiritually a thousand year.

It is the opinion of some that the crown of the old country may at some day make war upon and try to brake down this government and if they do we never could have been engaged in a war with any foreign nation that would prepare us for a powerful war or that we would have been able to get as many men into the field as the war we now have of one half a fighting the other, and if this is God's plan for giving us a great military schooling preparatory for a great war with Europe and of revolutionising the old world and of establishing Republican forms of Government on the earth as well as chastising this nation for the curse of slavery and the freeing of the Negro race as well as us in some degree of Christianising Africa, surely God has put very great responsibilities upon us for the blessings we have enjoyed and it is all right the way for us to do is to stand up to it as good soldiers for our Country and for the Cross of Christ and all will be right

When we put down the rebellion and the South becomes subject to the north we could contend against the world, and there is no danger but the south will become reconciled for a great part of their army is conscripted and is kept under worse than negroes if they stand picket they have to have volunteers with them to guard them and keep them from running off and joining us and they are coming in every day and sometimes a good many at that God's dealings with his creatures is very mysterious and his ways past finding out Africa is very far gone in the depths of Barbarism and can hardly be Christianised by Missionary operations, Now it is a well known fact that God makes use of very small means to accomplish great ends in first settling America God permitted the Negroes to be brought here as slaves and there is no doubt but he for the good of the African race in the end and of the spread of the gospel in Africa, if nine millions of Christian people could be sent to Africa All the Missionaries that could be sent there would not Christianise them as fast but this does not justify the whites for carrying on slavery in the way they have done of keeping them in ignorance and buying and selling men Women and Children

If the bringing of a few hundred Negroes to America is the cause of a great Revolution in America the spread of the gospel in Africa the final overthrow of Kings and Emperors. the spread of Political and Religious Liberty all over Our world, surely it was a very small affair in appearance at the commencement to bring about the greatest events that transpired or ever will transpire in all coming time except the ushering in of the great Millennium I believe this war will make this nation come out like gold tried in the furnace brighter and purer than it ever was and that we will be in possession of all North America from North as far as far as far is crossed out as the British dominion, to

the British [crossed out] Ismus [sic] of darian and we will be the greatest and the freeist [sic] and the most powerful Nation on the erth. [sic]

Some peopel [sic] think [crossed out] think that we are [illegible] all reddy [sic], that we are involved in a national debt that will hang over us through all future time That is a grand mistake and common sense would teach better the presant [sic] arrangement would pay the debt before Lincolns [sic] time would run out if the wor [sic] was to close know [sic] and suppose it would not, the increase of the population would naturely [sic] pay it in ten fifteen or twenty years the debt of this wor [sic] is no greater than the debt of the debt of the old wor [sic] according to the number of inhabitance [sic] and the welth [sic] of the country and there [sic] currency was in bad faith while ours is as good as gold. Some think the south will always have a spite at the north I will tell you what will cure that all they lack now is information and to understand the north and they are a lernin [sic] very fast and when peace is made there will be Military posts established all over the south composed of Northern regulars and they will become more intimate and mary [sic] more through other and become habbituated [sic] to each others [sic] customs and manner of life and thinking

The South is in a mighty strate [sic] just at this time and I think they are a straining there [sic] last nerve and you may be shure [sic] the nortern [sic] Army holds them to it with a vengeance [sic] it is not our intention to give back an inch I think starvation will soon bring them to it, and I am certain [sic] we can stand it as long as they can I may be mistakend [sic] but my opion [sic] is that when pease [sic] does come it will be as unexpcted [sic] if it was to come to morrow [sic]

Camp On Stone [sic] River near Murfreesboro

April 1st and 5th A D 1863 by Joseph Van Hatten to his Family [illegible] and the Children

Undated Letter

It is hard to fight against God It always was hrd [sic] for one nation to hold another Race of Peopel [sic] in bondage for a great number of years, And in fact so hard was it that the oppresed [sic] was in many instances sot [sic] free by there [sic] oppressors.

I should think that Bancroft found that the way of the trans gressor [sic] hard if not when he brought the First ship lode [sic] of Negrows [sic] to America that he has found out before know [sic] that the way of trans gressors [sic] is hard.

It has bin [sic] hard to cary [sic] on the African slave trade ever since.

It was hard to establish slavery over the thirteen Colonies, and in fact they could not for one of the old thirteen was free. And for [illegible] all it was admitted to be no very great sin yet there was some that held out the ide [sic] that it was an evil and that that [crossed out] it would not do to spred [sic] it all over America, And some of them was

our leading Men, Washington not excepted [sic] Although [sic] he was a slave holder he was opposed to the spread [sic] of slavery.

It was hard to increase the number of slave states althou [sic] they have ruled this government for 80 years, but the old states has dropt [sic] off from There [sic] number and they got a share of the new slave states by intriuege [sic] and thretning [sic] to dissolv [sic] the union and so held there [sic] own tolerbly [sic] well for for [sic] a number of years but they found it very hard. They connived a wor [sic] in Florida with the Indians on some minor pretext which was none other than a Negro hunt and it cost the government Forty Milion [sic] Dollars and it was hard to keep the north in ignorance as to that. They found it hard to guit [sic] Missouris [sic] and with a with a [sic] compromise at that. they tried to guit [sic] Illinois but they could not guit [sic] her.

They turned there [sic] attention towards Texas and got her by the hardest and got a long wor [sic] with Mexico.

Last of all the [y is crossed off the] south tryed [sic] to jay hawk in Kansas but they found that to [sic] hard for all there [sic] skill as well as force

The next thing I shall notice is the unfaremeans [sic] to nock [sic] Dugless [sic] out of his nomination when he should have had it by all the rules and useages [sic] of free governments but a minority caryed [sic] the sway and they ceceded [sic] and called another convention and Nomenated [sic] Mr [sic] [illegible], but they squabeld [sic] over the cecesh [sic] prinsypel [sic] till they defeted [sic] themselves and Mr [sic] Lincoln got the Presidency by [illegible] election

They thought that was to [sic] hard for to submit to be ruled or governd [sic] by a Republican President, he would free all the nigers [sic] shure [sic] nor would they believe a word to the contrary clearly proving that a guilty contience [sic] needed no condeming [sic] they toock [sic] shadows for bodies and appearences [sic] for substance and they have had a hard time of it ever since

When the southern states had bin [sic] defeted [sic] [illegible] choice of a president they concluded that they would go out of the union they thought it would be an eas [sic] matter just to walkout [sic] of the union and to take about 15 states with them. They thought it would not be hard they did not believe that they would bring wor [sic] upon them themselves but that the north would just let them go out with out making any fus [sic] a bout it they flaterd [sic] themselves that the Northern Yankyes [sic] lacked pluck that they would not fight the south couldent [sic] do it they said one southern man could whip three northern men, They said they would winter an army in Newyork [sic] or in the north quicker than the North would winter one in the south The leading men of the south told the peopel [sic] that Cotton was king that the north was devided [sic] that England and France would acknowledge there [sic] Independence.

And that they would make an easy thing of braking [sic] down this government and of establishing there [sic] southern slave arristocratic [sic] government, but they met with

disappointment [sic] on every hand. They found it hard to take fort Sumtner [sic]. And they found it hard when the blockading [sic] of the southern ports took place They found the way of transgressors [sic] heard [sic] at the Battle [sic] of Bull Run if they did gain the day with all advantages, hard at Fort Donelson hard at Fort Henry Harder [sic] still at Pittsburg [sic] landing, Iland [sic] No 10 the cesh [sic] in Missouri [sic] has found out that the way of the transgressor [sic] was hard. The rebels in Kentucky [sic] has [sic] found it hard. Tennessee has found out the joke and so has Virginia with a part of her taken off and a free state made of it. When King Cotton failed [sic] and England and France failed [sic] to acknowledge [sic] there [sic] Independence and [sic] the Democrats in the north failed [sic] to take up arms and help them as they expected [sic] and our forces [sic] was driving them round over there [sic] own country eating up everything [sic] and leaving the country desolate [sic] surely [sic] Must have thought that the way of the transgressor [sic] was hard. When a whole brigade [sic] fought the 73d Illinois at Perryville for 1 hour and 50 minutes [sic] and went off with 150 men not hurt they [crossed out] them got a hint, and at Stone [sic] River they found out that we could whip them 2 to one

Midnight Thoughts

God send [sic] how soon this war [sic] may end of all the wars [sic] that ever has bin [sic] or ever will be I think this war [sic] is the most heinous [sic] the most fiendish the most destructive [sic] of life and property of any other and I might add [sic] of [more] also, Fiendish because it has bin [sic] a deep laid plot by a southern [sic] secret order for 30 years that was determined [sic] to rule or ruin this government and to spread [sic] slavery all over the southern part of North America and at the expense [sic] of the government and come very near bringing there [sic] purposes to an end. The most destructive [sic] because they the south will have no peace [sic] only on their [sic] own terms and have got all their [sic] force out and we are obliged [sic] to beat them clear out before they will give it up and the consequence is we are obliged [sic] to lose [sic] a great many men from Disease as well as bullets. Destructive [sic] of property is a natural consequence [sic] where such a large army goes [sic]. Demoralising [sic] in its effects is also Natural where there is so many men to gather

When the war [sic] will end God only knows I am sure [sic] I don't [sic] but I am in hopes it will not be long I am as keen for it to end as any man can be but I don't [sic] want it Till an honorable [sic] peace [sic] can be obtained and the Union [sic] restored the whole [sic] Union [sic] as it was and the glorious old Stars and Stripes shall float [sic] from every Dome and Steeple [sic] in the old Federal [sic] Union [sic] and we shall have peace [sic] and harmony through out [sic] our land, This is the sentiment throughout the army, Officers [sic] and men this war [sic] is of such a nature that nothing [sic] else can ever be, As much talk as there is in the north about peace [sic] and compromise they talk as did the foolish women spoken of in Scripture they don't [sic] no [sic] what they are a harping over for there can never be a compromise [sic] but for them to lay down there

[sic] arms and retire from the field and frame a State Constitution and apply for admittance into the union [sic], if they are out. We have got the south know [sic] where they cant [sic] help it themselves we can hold what we have got and they are a starving out very fast and they have more conscripts [sic] than anything else and the most of them are union [sic] men and run of [sic] to our lines as fast as they can quit [sic] a way and the rebels hang or shoot some every Saturday and you no [sic] such hellish work as that will not do that it can not prosper, and if the littel [sic] slimy sore eyed cripeld [sic] nock [sic] need [sic] short sited [sic] copperheded [sic] dragons would only stay In there [sic] dens a littel [sic] while and not give false light to there [sic] Father Davis or the Devil the Father of Devils and so incourage [sic] the south this wor [sic] would end inside of 3 months and for all the good any help will do them from the north I wish they had them all in there [sic] ranks now and we would soon clean them out for they are apitiful [sic] ignorant short sited [sic] set of pusilanimous [sic] pups that will never fight much any place and [illegible] Jef [sic] Davis leans on a broken staf [sic] if that is the best he has, Our ranks is filling up every day our men is well fed and clothed the helth [sic] is good and the army is in good Spirits and if our army could take Viksburg [sic] Richmond and Charleston the fighting would be over, and we return to arms not of iron and steel but to the arms of our friends the arms of wives and parents sweethearts and loved ones that will make our harts [sic] glad in in [crossed out] deed The south from what I can lern [sic] is on very short rations and peopel [sic] that ought to be in very good sircumstances [sic] is beging [sic] on the streets of Richmond for Bred [sic] and I dont [sic] no [sic] how citizens will help comeing [sic] to the same fate in our littel [sic] Town of Murfreesboro

Well I think that old dragon is a laying in his last licks about know [sic] and has bin [sic] for a long time and when he got up the rebellion [sic] then he showed his remareable [sic] hed [sic] or heds [sic] and 10 horns and if the wine press was fought at Murfreesboro I hope it was for I dont [sic] want to ce [sic] another battel [sic] worse Jef [sic] Davis has bin [sic] the ring leader of a Southern conspiracy and he a sworn [illegible] of the united states of America and it was cold [sic] States Rights Club and then it was changeed [sic] to Rights of the golden Circle, So when you here [sic] peopel [sic] talking about state wrights [sic] state sovrenty [sic] squatter sovrenity [sic] and all this kind of thing you may no [sic] what is the matter they are under bad influence or they be long [sic] to the order, and when the wor [sic] ends they will have to render an account to the thousands that will return from the field of battel [sic]

I wrought [sic] you a letter the day you wrought [sic] yours

Joseph Van Hatten to his Family