EDMONDS SARAH EVELYN

NURSE AND SPY IN THE UNION ARMY

Sarah Edmonds
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Nurse and Spy in the Union Army / The Adventures and Experiences of a Woman in Hospitals, Camps, and Battle-Fields:

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S. Emma E. Edmonds Nurse and Spy in the Union Army / The Adventures and Experiences of a Woman in Hospitals, Camps, and Battle-Fields

PUBLISHERS' NOTICE

No apology is necessary for adding one more to the numerous "War Books" which already fill a large space in American Literature; for, to the general reader, nothing connected with the Rebellion can be more interesting than the personal experiences of those who have been intimately associated with the different phases of military life, in Camp, Field, and Hospital.

The "Nurse and Spy" is simply a record of events which have transpired in the experience and under the observation of one who has been on the field and participated in numerous battles – among which are the first and second Bull Run, Williamsburg, Fair Oaks, the Seven days in front of Richmond, Antietam, and

Fredericksburg – serving in the capacity of "Spy" and as "Field Nurse" for over two years.

While in the "Secret Service" as a "Spy," which is one of the most hazardous positions in the army – she penetrated the enemy's lines, in various disguises, no less than eleven times; always with complete success and without detection.

Her efficient labors in the different Hospitals as well as her arduous duties as "Field Nurse," embrace many thrilling and touching incidents, which are here most graphically described.

Should any of her readers object to some of her disguises, it may be sufficient to remind them it was from the purest motives and most praiseworthy patriotism, that she laid aside, for a time, her own costume, and assumed that of the opposite sex, enduring hardships, suffering untold privations, and hazarding her life for her adopted country, in its trying hour of need.

In the opinion of many, it is the privilege of woman to minister to the sick and soothe the sorrowing – and in the present crisis of our country's history, to aid our brothers to the extent of her capacity – and whether duty leads her to the couch of luxury, the abode of poverty, the crowded hospital, or the terrible battle field – it makes but little difference what costume she assumes while in the discharge of her duties. – Perhaps she should have the privilege of choosing for herself whatever may be the surest protection from insult and inconvenience in her blessed, self-sacrificing work.

The moral character of the work, – being true to

virtue, patriotism, and philanthropy – together with the fine embellishments and neat mechanical execution – will, we trust, render it an interesting and welcome visitor at every fireside.

CHAPTER I

COMMENCEMENT OF THE WAR – MY HOME AND MY DUTY – I ENLIST IN THE CAUSE – EXCITEMENT AT THE WEST – TROOPS ON THE MARCH – MOBS AT BALTIMORE – TEMPORARY HOSPITALS – UNAVOIDABLE EVILS – BEGGING FOR COMFORTS – SUPPLIES FOR THE SICK – CAMP HOSPITALS – THUNDERS STORMS IN CAMP – A DYING OFFICER – SOLDIERS IN THE PUBLIC BUILDINGS – PREPARATIONS FOR THE ADVANCE.

Early in the spring of 1861, I was returning from the far West, and as I sat waiting for the train which was to bear me to my adopted home in New England, and was meditating upon the events which had transpired during the past few months, the record of which was destined to blacken the fair pages of American history, I was aroused from my reverie by a voice in the street crying "New York Herald – Fall of Fort Sumter – President's Proclamation – Call for seventy-five thousand men!" This announcement startled me, while my imagination portrayed the coming struggle in all its fearful magnitude. War, civil war, with all its horrors seemed inevitable, and even then was ready to burst like a volcano upon the most happy and prosperous nation the sun ever shone upon. The contemplation of this sad picture filled my eyes with tears and my heart with sorrow.

It is true, I was not an American – I was not obliged to remain here during this terrible strife – I could return to my native land where my parents would welcome me to the home of my childhood, and my brothers and sisters would rejoice at my coming. But these were not the thoughts which occupied my mind. It was not my intention, or desire, to seek my own personal ease and comfort while so much sorrow and distress filled the land. But the great question to be decided, was, what can I do? What part am I to act in this great drama? I was not able to decide for myself – so I carried this question to the Throne of Grace, and found a satisfactory answer there.

Five years previous to the time of which I write, I left my rural home, not far from the banks of the St. John's River, in the Province of New Brunswick, and made my way to the United States. An insatiable thirst for education led me to do this, for I believed then, as now, that the "Foreign Missionary" field was the one in which I must labor, sooner or later. I came here a stranger, with but little to recommend me to the favorable notice of the good people, except a letter from the Pastor of the church to which I belonged, and one from my class-leader – notwithstanding, I found kind friends to help me in all my undertakings, and whether in business, education, or spiritual advancement, I have been assisted beyond my highest expectation. I thank God that I am permitted in this hour of my adopted country's need to express a tithe of the gratitude which I feel toward the people of the Northern States.

Ten days after the President's proclamation was issued, I was ready to start for Washington, having been employed by the Government, and furnished with all the necessary equipments. I was not merely to go to Washington and remain there until a battle had been fought and the wounded brought in, and then in some comfortable hospital sit quietly and fan the patients, after the Surgeon had dressed their wounds; but I was to go to the front and participate in all the excitement of the battle scenes, or in other words, be a "Field Nurse."

The great West was stirred to its center, and began to look like a vast military camp. Recruiting offices were filled with men eager to enroll their names as defenders of their country – and women were busily engaged in preparing all the comforts that love and patriotism could suggest, for those who were so soon to go forth to victory or to death, while the clash of arms and strains of martial music almost drowned the hum of industry, and war became the theme of every tongue.

About this time I witnessed the departure of the first western troops which started for Washington. The regiments were drawn up in line – fully equipped for their journey – with their bright bayonets flashing in the morning sunlight. It was on the principal street of a pleasant little village of about a thousand inhabitants, where there was scarcely a family who had not a father, husband, son, or brother in that little band of soldiers who stood there ready to bid them farewell, perhaps for years – perhaps forever. A farewell address was delivered by the village Pastor, and a

new Testament presented to each soldier, with the following inscription: "Put your trust in God – and keep your powder dry." Then came the leave-taking – but it is too painful to dwell upon – the last fond word was spoken, the last embrace given, then came the order "march" – and amid the cheers of the citizens – with banners proudly floating, and the bands playing "The Star Spangled Banner," they moved forward on their way to the Capital. On looking back now upon the scenes of that morning, notwithstanding I have looked upon others much more thrilling since then, yet I cannot recall that hour without feelings of deep emotion. While I stood there and beheld those manly forms convulsed with emotion, and heard the sobs of those whom they were leaving behind, I could only thank God that I was free and could go forward and work, and was not obliged to stay at home and weep. A few hours more, and I, too, was on my way to Washington.

When I reached Baltimore I found the city in an uproar – mobs were gathered in the streets and the utmost excitement prevailed: and as the crowded cars moved through the city toward the depot, the infuriated mob threw showers of stones, brickbats, and other missiles, breaking the windows and wounding some of the soldiers. Some of the men could not forbear firing into the crowd – notwithstanding their orders were to the contrary – however, it had a good effect, for the mob soon dispersed; they probably had not forgotten the Sixth Massachusetts and the Pennsylvania troops which had passed through a short time

before. The cars soon reached the depot, and started immediately for Washington – where we arrived in due time – weary, and in great need of food and sleep.

Soon after reaching Washington I commenced visiting the temporary hospitals which were prepared to receive the soldiers who arrived there sick. The troops came pouring in so fast, and the weather being extremely warm, all the general hospitals were soon filled, and it seemed impossible to prepare suitable, or comfortable, accommodations for all who required medical attention.

There are many things in connection with this war that we are disposed to find fault with, and we think the blame rests upon such and such individuals – but after investigating the matter, we find that they are all owing to a combination of circumstances entirely beyond the control of those individuals – and it requires time to bring about the desired results. This has been my experience with regard to the hospital department. After walking through the streets for hours on a sultry southern day in search of one of those temporary hospitals, I would find a number of men there delirious with fever – others had been sun-struck and carried there – but no physician to be found in attendance. Then, I would naturally come to the conclusion that the surgeons were all slack concerning their duty – but upon going to the office of the Surgeon in charge of that department, would find that a certain number of surgeons were detailed every morning to visit those hospitals, and were faithfully performing

their duty; but that the number of hospitals and patients were increasing so fast that it required all day to make the tour. Consequently the last ones visited were obliged to wait and suffer – without any blame attaching to the surgeons.

Then another great evil was to be remedied – there were thousands of sick men to be taken care of – but for these the Government had made no provision as regards more delicate kinds of food – nothing but hard bread, coffee and pork, for sick and well, alike. The Sanitary Commission had not yet come into operation and the consequence was our poor sick soldiers suffered unspeakably from want of proper nourishment. I was speaking upon this subject one day to Chaplain B. and his wife – my constant companions in hospital labor – when Mrs. B. suggested that she and I should appeal to the sympathies of the ladies of Washington and Georgetown, and try our hand at begging. I agreed to the proposal at once, and wondered why I had not thought of it myself – among all my schemes for alleviating the sufferings of these men, it had never entered into my head to *beg* for them. We decided to go to Georgetown first and if we succeeded there, to canvass Washington. So we started, and commenced operations by calling first upon a clergyman's wife. We made inquiry there with regard to our prospects of success, and the sentiments of the ladies generally upon the war question, and finding that the majority were in our favor, we started again quite hopefully – but not until the lady above mentioned had given us an order on her grocer to the amount of

five dollars. I gave Sister B. the credit of that, for I had introduced her as the wife of the Rev. Mr. B., chaplain of the 7th. Then I suggested that we should separate for a few hours – she to take one street and I another, so that we might sooner get through the city. My next call was at a doctor's mansion, but I did not find the lady at home; however, I learned that the doctor in question kept a drug-store near by; she might be there; went, but found no lady; thought fit to make my business known to the doctor, and the consequence was, half a dozen bottles of blackberry wine and two of lemon syrup, with a cordial invitation to call again. So prospered our mission throughout the day, and at the close of it we had a sufficient supply of groceries, brandy, ice, jellies, etc., to fill our little ambulance; and oh, what a change those little delicacies wrought upon our poor sick boys. We were encouraged by that day's work, to continue our efforts in that direction, and finally made Dr. W.'s store a depot for the donations of those kind friends who wished to assist us in restoring to health the defenders of our beloved country.

Typhoid fever began to make its appearance in camp, as the burning sun of June came pouring down upon us, and the hospitals were soon crowded with its victims. It was then that my labors began in earnest, and as I went from tent to tent, ministering to the wants of those delirious, helpless men, I wondered if there ever was a "Missionary Field" which promised a richer harvest, than the one in which I was already engaged; and oh, how thankful I was that it was my privilege to take some

small part in so great a work.

I shall notice, briefly, the manner in which the hospitals are conducted in camp. There are large tents furnished for hospital purposes, which will accommodate from twenty to twenty-five men. These tents are usually put up in the most pleasant and shady part of the camp; the inside is nicely leveled, and board floors laid, if boards can be procured, if not, rubber blankets are laid down instead. Sometimes there are straw ticks and cot bedsteads furnished, but not in sufficient quantity to supply all the hospitals. Along each side of the tent the sick are laid, on blankets or cots, leaving room to pass between the beds. In the center of the tent stands a temporary board table, on which are kept books, medicines, et cetera. The hospital corps consists of a surgeon, an assistant surgeon, a hospital steward, a ward-master, four nurses, two cooks, and a man of all work to carry water, cut wood, and make himself generally useful. The immediate care of the sick devolves upon those four nurses, who are generally detailed from the ranks, each one being on duty six hours without intermission. The surgeons visit the patients twice every day, oftener if required; the prescriptions are filled by the hospital steward, and the medicine is administered by the nurses. The nurses are usually very kind to the sick, and when off duty in the hospital, spend much of their time in digging drains around the tents, planting evergreens, and putting up awnings, all of which add much to the coolness and comfort of the hospital. Draining the grounds is a very important part of hospital duty, for when

those terrible thunder-storms come, which are so frequent in the south, it is morally impossible to keep the tent floors from being flooded, unless there are drains all around the tents. Great excitement prevails in camp during those tempests – the rain comes down in torrents, while the wind blows a hurricane – lifting the tents from the ground, and throwing everything into wild confusion. I have seen a dozen men stand for hours around one hospital, holding down the ropes and tent poles to prevent the sick from being exposed to the raging elements.

In one of those storms, I saw a tent blown down, in which one of our officers lay suffering from typhoid fever. We did our best to keep him dry until a stretcher could be procured, but all in vain. Notwithstanding we wrapped him in rubber blankets and shawls, yet the rain penetrated them all, and by the time he was carried to a house, a quarter of a mile distant, he was completely drenched. He was a noble fellow and I love to speak of him. Mrs. B. and I remained with him alternately until he died, which was five days from that time. We sent for his wife, who arrived just in time to see him die. He was unconscious when she came, and we were standing around his cot watching every shadow which the sable wing of advancing death cast upon his features, and eagerly looking for a single ray of returning reason. He looked up suddenly, and seeing his wife standing weeping, he beckoned her to come to him. Kneeling beside him, she bent her ear close to the lips of the dying man. He whispered distinctly, "I am going – the way is bright, don't weep – farewell!" A little later he was asked,

"What is the foundation of your hope of Heaven?" His face was calm and beautiful in its expression, and his splendid dark eyes lit up with holy confidence and trust, as he replied, "Christ – Christ!" These were his last words. Glorious words for a dying soldier. He lingered a few hours, and then quietly and peacefully breathed out his life. So passed away one of the most exemplary men it has ever been my lot to meet, either in the army or elsewhere. The same day, the sorrowing widow, with the remains of her beloved and noble husband, started for her northern home; and that christian patriot now sleeps in a beautiful little cemetery near the city of Detroit, Michigan, having rendered up his life a willing sacrifice for his country.

Mrs. B. was desirous of visiting some of the public buildings in Washington and wished me to accompany her. I did so, but found that it was almost impossible to get along through the crowded streets. The gallant troops were coming in by thousands from every loyal State in the Union. The Capitol and White House were common places of resort for soldiers. Arms were stacked in the rotunda of the one and the lobbies of the other, while our "noble boys in blue" lounged in the cushioned seats of members of Congress, or reclined in easy chairs in the President's Mansion.

Camps of instruction were prepared near the city, while every hillside and valley for miles around was thickly dotted with snow white tents. Soldiers drilling, fatigue parties building forts, artillery practicing, and the supply trains moving to and from the various headquarters, presented a picture deeply interesting.

As I rode from camp to camp and contemplated that immense army concentrating its force on the banks of the Potomac, and saw with what zeal and enthusiasm the soldiers entered upon their duties, I could but feel assured of the speedy termination of the conflict, and look forward with eager anticipation to the day when that mighty host would advance upon the enemy, and like an overwhelming torrent sweep rebellion from the land.

CHAPTER II

MARCHING ORDERS – REMOVAL OF THE SICK – A YOUNG PATIENT – VISIT FROM HIS MOTHER – MARCH TOWARD MANASSAS – COLLECTING SUPPLIES – FATIGUES OF THE MARCH – PREPARATIONS FOR BATTLE – A CAMP PRAYER MEETING – DIVISIONS DETAILED – MY PLACE ON THE FIELD – "RATHER CLOSE QUARTERS" – A BATTLE SUNDAY – SKULKING FROM THE FIELD.

Marching orders received to-day – two days more, and the Army of the Potomac will be on its way to Bull Run. I find this registered in my journal July 15th, 1861, without any comment whatever. But I do not require a journal to refresh my memory with regard to the events of those two days of preparation which followed their announcement. The Army of the Potomac was soon to meet the enemy for the first time – a great battle was to be fought. Oh, what excitement and enthusiasm that order produced – nothing could be heard but the wild cheering of the men, as regiment after regiment received their orders. The possibility of a defeat never seemed to enter the mind of any. All the sick in camp now were to be sent to Washington, clothes changed, knapsacks packed, letters written home, packages sent to the express office, etc. After all was done, everything in readiness, and the sick men tenderly laid in the ambulances, Mrs. B. said:

"Now let us go to every ambulance and bid the boys good-bye." As we passed along from one ambulance to another, speaking words of encouragement to each soldier, many a tear would start from grateful eyes, and many a feeble voice uttered an earnest "God bless you," while others would draw from their bosoms some cherished relic, and give as a token of remembrance. Oh how hard it was to part with those men, with whom we had watched so many weary days and nights – we felt that they had, truly, "become endeared to us through suffering."

There was one patient, however, we did not put into an ambulance, and who was a great source of anxiety to us. He lay there upon a stretcher close by, waiting to be carried to a house not far distant. He was young, not seventeen, with clear blue eyes, curly auburn hair, and a broad, white brow; his mother's pride, and an only son. Two weeks previously he had been attacked with typhoid fever. The surgeon said, "You may do all you can for him, but it is a hopeless case." Mrs. B. had devoted most of her time to him and I was often called to assist her. He was delirious and became quite unmanageable at times, and it required all the strength we possessed to keep him in bed; but now the delirium of fever had passed away and he was helpless as an infant. We had written for his mother to come if possible, and had just received a letter from her, stating that she was on her way to Washington; but would she come before we were obliged to leave? Oh, we hoped so, and were anxiously looking for her.

The ambulances started with their freight of emaciated,

suffering men. Slowly that long train wound its way toward the city looking like a great funeral procession, and sadly we turned to our remaining patient, who was deeply affected at the removal of his comrades. He was then carried to the house above mentioned and a nurse left to take care of him, while we were obliged to prepare for our own comfort on the long weary march which was so near at hand. We had just commenced to pack our saddle-bags, when we heard an unusual noise, as of some one crying piteously, and going out to learn the cause of the excitement, whom should we find but the mother of our handsome blue-eyed patient. She had called at the surgeon's tent to inquire for her son, and he had told her that all the sick had been sent to Washington, he having forgotten for the moment, the exception with regard to her son. The first words I heard were spoken in the most touching manner – "Oh, why did you send away my boy? I wrote you I was coming; Oh, why did you send him away!"

I shall never forget the expression of that mother's face as she stood there wringing her hands and repeating the question. We very soon rectified the mistake which the surgeon had made, and in a few moments she was kneeling by the bedside of her darling boy, and we returned rejoicing that it had been our privilege to "deliver him to his mother." Oh, how many, who come to Washington in search of loved ones, are caused unnecessary pain, yes, weeks of torturing suspense and fruitless search, in consequence of some little mistake on the part of a surgeon, a

nurse, or some person who is supposed to know just where the sought for are to be found.

The 17th of July dawned bright and clear, and everything being in readiness, the Army of the Potomac took up its line of march for Manassas. In gay spirits the army moved forward, the air resounding with the music of the regimental bands, and patriotic songs of the soldiers. No gloomy forebodings seemed to damp the spirits of the men, for a moment, but "On to Richmond," was echoed and re-echoed, as that vast army moved rapidly over the country. I felt strangely out of harmony with the wild, joyous spirit which pervaded the troops. As I rode slowly along, watching those long lines of bayonets as they gleamed and flashed in the sunlight, I thought that many, very many, of those enthusiastic men who appeared so eager to meet the enemy, would never return to relate the success or defeat of that splendid army. Even if victory should perch upon their banners, and I had no doubt it would, yet many noble lives must be sacrificed ere it could be obtained.

The main column reached Fairfax toward evening and encamped for the night. Col. R.'s wife of the Second – , Mrs. B. and myself were, I think, the only three females who reached Fairfax that night. The day had been extremely hot, and not being accustomed to ride all day beneath a burning sun, we felt its effects very sensibly, and consequently, hailed with joy the order to encamp for the night. Notwithstanding the heat and fatigue of the day's march, the troops were in high spirits, and immediately

began preparing supper. Some built fires while others went in search of, and appropriated, every available article which might in any way add to the comfort of hungry and fatigued men.

The whole neighborhood was ransacked for milk, butter, eggs, poultry, etc. which were found insufficient in quantity to supply the wants of such a multitude. There might have been heard some stray shots fired in the direction of a field where a drove of cattle were quietly grazing; and soon after the odor of fresh steak was issuing from every part of the camp. I wish to state, however, that all "raids" made upon hen-coops, etc. were contrary to the orders of the General in command, for during the day I had seen men put under arrest for shooting chickens by the roadside.

I was amused to hear the answer of a hopeful young darkey cook, when interrogated with regard to the broiled chickens and beef steak which he brought on for supper. Col. R. demanded, in a very stern voice, "Jack, where did you get that beef steak and those chickens?" "Massa, I'se carried dem cl'ar from Washington; thought I'd cook 'em 'fore dey sp'il'd"; and then added, with a broad grin, "I aint no thief, I aint." Col. R. replied: "That will do, Jack, you can go now." Then the Colonel told us how he had seen Jack running out of a house, as he rode along, and a woman ran out calling after him with all her might, but Jack never looked behind him, but escaped as fast as he could, and was soon out of sight. Said he, "I thought the young rascal had been up to some mischief, so I rode up and asked the woman what was the matter, and found he had stolen all her chickens; I

asked her how much they were worth; she "reckoned" about two dollars. I think she made a pretty good hit, for after I paid her, she told me she had had only two chickens." Supper being over, pickets posted, and camp guards detailed, all became quiet for the night.

Early the next morning the reveille beat, the whole camp was soon in motion, and after a slight breakfast from our haversacks the march was resumed. The day was very hot, and we found great difficulty in obtaining water, the want of which caused the troops much suffering. Many of the men were sun-struck, and others began to drop out of the ranks from exhaustion. All such as were not able to march were put into ambulances and sent back to Washington. Toward noon, the tedium of the march began to be enlivened by sharp volleys of musketry, in the direction of the advance guard; but those alarms were only occasioned by our skirmishers, pouring a volley into everything which looked as if it might contain a masked battery, or a band of the enemy's sharpshooters.

Considerable excitement prevailed throughout the day, as we were every hour in expectation of meeting the enemy. Carefully feeling its way, however, the army moved steadily on, investigating every field, building, and ravine, for miles in front and to the right and left, until it reached Centerville, where we halted for the night.

The troops now began to feel the effects of the march, and there was evidently a lack of that pic-nic hilarity which

had characterized them the day before. Several regiments had been supplied with new shoes the day before leaving camp, and they found by sad experience, that they were not the most comfortable things to march in, as their poor blistered feet testified; in many cases their feet were literally raw, the thick woolen stockings having chafed the skin off. Mrs. B. and I, having provided ourselves before leaving camp, with a quantity of linen, bandages, lint, ointment, etc. found it very convenient now, even before a shot had been fired by the enemy.

Our surgeons began to prepare for the coming battle, by appropriating several buildings and fitting them up for the wounded – among others the stone church at Centerville – a church which many a soldier will remember, as long as memory lasts. Late that evening as I was returning from this church, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. B., I proposed that we should walk through the entire camp to see how the boys were employed, on this, the eve of their first battle. We found many engaged in writing by the glimmering light of the camp-fire – soldiers always carry writing materials on a march; some were reading their bibles, perhaps with more than usual interest; while others sat in groups, conversing in low earnest tones; but the great mass were stretched upon the ground, wrapped in their blankets, fast asleep, and all unconscious of the dangers of the morrow.

We were about to return to our quarters in a log cabin built by the rebel soldiers, and which had been evacuated only a few days previous, when we heard several voices singing in a little grove

not far from camp. We turned and walked toward the grove, until we could hear distinctly, the words of the following beautiful hymn:

"O, for a faith that will not shrink,
Though press'd by every foe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe;

That will not murmur or complain
Beneath the chastening rod,
But, in the hour of grief and pain,
Will lean upon its God;

A faith that shines more bright and clear
When tempests rage without;
That, when in danger, knows no fear,
In darkness knows no doubt."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. B., "I recognize Willie L.'s voice there. I understand now; this is Willie's prayer meeting night, and notwithstanding the fatigue of the march and blistered feet, he has not forgotten it." We drew nearer to listen to and enjoy the exercises unperceived, for no sooner had the last words of the hymn died away on the still midnight air, than Willie's clear voice rose in prayer, filling the grove with its rich, pathetic tones. He

prayed for victory on the morrow, for his comrades, for loved ones at home, and his voice grew tremulous with emotion, as he plead with the Saviour to comfort and support his widowed mother, if he should fall in battle.

Then followed a practical talk about being faithful soldiers of Jesus, as well as of their beloved country; of the necessity of being prepared at any moment, to lay down the cross and take up the crown. One after another prayed and spoke, until about a dozen – and that included the whole number present – had addressed the Throne of Grace, and testified to the power of the Gospel of Christ in the salvation of sinners. No one was called upon to pray or speak, no one said he had nothing to say and then talked long enough to prove it, no one excused his inability to interest his brethren, and no time was lost by delay, but every one did his duty, and did it promptly. We retired feeling refreshed and encouraged.

After ascertaining the position of the enemy, Gen. McDowell ordered forward three divisions, commanded by Heintzelman, Hunter and Tyler, Miles being left in reserve at Centerville. Sunday morning before dawn, those three divisions moved forward, presenting a magnificent spectacle, as column after column wound its way over the green hills and through the hazy valleys, with the soft moonlight falling on the long lines of shining steel. Not a drum or bugle was heard during the march, and the deep silence was only broken by the rumbling of artillery, the muffled tread of infantry, or the low hum of thousands of

subdued voices.

The divisions separated where three roads branch off toward Bull Run, each taking the road leading to its respective position. Soon the morning broke bright and clear, bringing the two contending armies in plain sight of each other. The enemy was posted on heights that rose in regular slopes from the shore crowned here and there by earthworks. The woods that interfered with his cannon ranges had all been cut away, and his guns had a clean sweep of every approach. On our side the descent was more gradual, and covered with a dense forest. The roar of artillery soon announced that the battle had actually commenced.

Mrs. B. and myself took our position on the field, according to orders, in connection with Gen. Heintzelman's division, having delivered our horses to Jack for safe keeping, with strict orders to remain where he was, for we might require them at any moment. I imagine now, I see Mrs. B., as she stood there, looking as brave as possible, with her narrow brimmed leghorn hat, black cloth riding habit, shortened to walking length by the use of a page, a silver-mounted seven-shooter in her belt, a canteen of water swung over one shoulder and a flask of brandy over the other, and a haversack with provision, lint, bandages, adhesive plaster, etc. hanging by her side. She was tall and slender, with dark brown hair, pale face, and blue eyes.

Chaplain B. sat upon his horse looking as solemn as if standing face to face with the angel of death. The first man I saw killed was a gunner belonging to Col. R.'s command. A shell had burst

in the midst of the battery, killing one and wounding three men and two horses. Mr. B. jumped from his horse, hitched it to a tree, and ran forward to the battery; Mrs. B. and I following his example as fast as we could. I stooped over one of the wounded, who lay upon his face weltering in his blood; I raised his head, and who should it be but Willie L. He was mortally wounded in the breast, and the tide of life was fast ebbing away; the stretchers were soon brought, and he was carried from the field.

Seeing the disaster from a distance, Col. R. rode up to the battery, and as he was engaged in giving orders, a solid shot came whizzing by in such close proximity to his head, that it stunned him for a moment; but soon recovering, he turned up the side of his head and shrugged his shoulders, a peculiarity of his, and in his usual nasal twang, said, "rather close quarters," and rode away, apparently as unconcerned as if it had been a humming bird which crossed his path. But not content with admonishing the Colonel, the same shot struck my poor little flask of brandy which lay near me on a drum-head, shattering it as spitefully as if sent by the combined force of the Order of "Good Templars."

Now the battle began to rage with terrible fury. Nothing could be heard save the thunder of artillery, the clash of steel, and the continuous roar of musketry. Oh, what a scene for the bright sun of a holy Sabbath morning to shine upon! Instead of the sweet influences which we associate with the Sabbath – the chiming of church bells calling us to the house of prayer, the Sabbath school, and all the solemn duties of the sanctuary, there was

confusion, destruction and death. There was no place of safety for miles around; the safest place was the post of duty. Many that day who turned their backs upon the enemy and sought refuge in the woods some two miles distant, were found torn to pieces by shell, or mangled by cannon ball – a proper reward for those who, insensible to shame, duty, or patriotism, desert their cause and comrades in the trying hour of battle, and skulk away cringing under the fear of death.

CHAPTER III

WATER FOR THE WOUNDED – COL. CAMERON KILLED – SCENES ON THE BATTLE-FIELD – BURNSIDE'S BRIGADE – CAPTURE OF GRIFFIN'S AND RICKETT'S BATTERIES – REBELS REINFORCED – THE PANIC AND RETREAT – THE WOUNDED AT CENTERVILLE – MY RECONNOISSANCE – AN INSANE WOMAN ON THE FIELD – HIDING FROM THE ENEMY – RETURN TO THE WOUNDED – EXPECTATION OF CAPTURE – ESCAPE FROM THE REBELS – MY WALK TO ALEXANDRIA – FOOTSORE AND WEARY – ARRIVAL IN WASHINGTON – LETTERS FROM DEAD SOLDIERS' FRIENDS.

I was hurried off to Centerville, a distance of seven miles, for a fresh supply of brandy, lint, etc. When I returned, the field was literally strewn with wounded, dead and dying. Mrs. B. was nowhere to be found. Had she been killed or wounded? A few moments of torturing suspense and then I saw her coming toward me, running her horse with all possible speed, with about fifty canteens hanging from the pommel of her saddle. To all my inquiries there was but one answer: "Don't stay to care for the wounded now; the troops are famishing with thirst and are beginning to fall back." Mr. B. then rode up with the same order, and we three started for a spring a mile distant, having gathered

up the empty canteens which lay strewn on the field. This was the nearest spring; the enemy knew it, and consequently had posted sharpshooters within rifle range to prevent the troops being supplied with water. Notwithstanding this, we filled our canteens, while the Minnie balls fell thick and fast around us, and returned in safety to distribute the fruits of our labor among the exhausted men.

We spent three hours in this manner, while the tide of battle rolled on more fiercely than before, until the enemy made a desperate charge on our troops driving them back and taking full possession of the spring. Chaplain B.'s horse was shot through the neck and bled to death in a few moments. Then Mrs. B. and I dismounted and went to work again among the wounded.

Not long afterwards Col. Cameron, brother of the Secretary of War, came dashing along the line, shouting, "Come on boys, the rebels are in full retreat." The words had scarcely been uttered when he fell, pierced to the heart by a bullet. Surgeon P. was on the ground in an instant, but nothing could be done for him; his wound was mortal, and he soon ceased to breathe. There was no time to carry off the dead; we folded his arms across his breast, closed his eyes, and left him in the cold embrace of death.

Still the battle continues without cessation; the grape and canister fill the air as they go screaming on their fearful errand; the sight of that field is perfectly appalling; men tossing their arms wildly calling for help; there they lie bleeding, torn and mangled; legs, arms and bodies are crushed and broken as if

smitten by thunder-bolts; the ground is crimson with blood; it is terrible to witness. Burnside's brigade is being mown down like grass by the rebel batteries; the men are not able to stand that terrible storm of shot and shell; they begin to waver and fall back slowly, but just at the right moment Capt. Sykes comes up to their relief with his command of regulars. They sweep up the hill where Burnside's exhausted, shattered brigade still lingers, and are greeted with a shout of joy, such as none but soldiers, who are almost overpowered by a fierce enemy, and are reinforced by their brave comrades, can give.

Onward they go, close up to the cloud of flame and smoke rolling from the hill upon which the rebel batteries are placed – their muskets are leveled – there is a click, click – a sheet of flame – a deep roll like that of thunder, and the rebel gunners are seen to stagger and fall. The guns become silent, and in a few moments are abandoned. This seems to occasion great confusion in the rebel ranks. Regiments were scattered, and officers were seen riding furiously and shouting their orders, which were heard above the roar and din of battle.

Captain Griffin's and Rickett's batteries are ordered forward to an eminence from which the rebels have been driven. They come into position and open a most destructive fire which completely routs the enemy. The battle seems almost won and the enemy is retreating in confusion. Hear what rebel Gen. Johnson says of his prospects at that time, in his official report: "The long contest against a powerful enemy, and heavy losses, especially

of field officers, had greatly discouraged the troops of Gen. Bee and Col. Evans. The aspect of affairs was critical." Another writes: "Fighting for hours under a burning sun, without a drop of water, the conduct of our men could not be excelled; but human endurance has its bounds, and all seemed about to be lost." This goes to prove that it was a desperately hard fought battle on both sides, and if no fresh troops had been brought into the field, the victory would assuredly have been ours.

But just as our army is confident of success, and is following up the advantage which it has gained, rebel reinforcements arrive and turn the tide of battle. Two rebel regiments of fresh troops are sent to make a flank movement in order to capture Griffin's and Rickett's batteries. They march through the woods, reach the top of the hill, and form a line so completely in our rear as to fire almost upon the backs of the gunners. Griffin sees them approach, but supposes them to be his supports sent by Major Barry. However looking more intently at them, he thinks they are rebels, and turns his guns upon them. Just as he is about to give the order to fire, Major B. rides up shouting, "They are your supports, don't fire." "No, sir, they are rebels," replied Capt. Griffin. "I tell you, sir, they are your supports," said Major B. In obedience to orders the guns were turned again, and while in the act of doing so, the supposed supports fired a volley upon the gunners. Men and horses went down in an instant. A moment more and those famous batteries were in the hands of the enemy.

The news of this disaster spread along our lines like wildfire;

officers and men were alike confounded; regiment after regiment broke and ran, and almost immediately the panic commenced. Companies of cavalry were drawn up in line across the road, with drawn sabers, but all was not sufficient to stop the refluent tide of fugitives. Then came the artillery thundering along, drivers lashing their horses furiously, which greatly added to the terror of the panic stricken thousands crowded together en masse. In this manner we reached Centerville where order was in some measure restored.

Mrs. B. and I made our way to the stone church around which we saw stacks of dead bodies piled up, and arms and legs were thrown together in heaps. But how shall I describe the scene within the church at that hour. Oh, there was suffering there which no pen can ever describe. One case I can never forget. It was that of a poor fellow whose legs were both broken above the knees, and from the knees to the thighs they were literally smashed to fragments. He was dying; but oh, what a death was that. He was insane, perfectly wild, and required two persons to hold him. Inflammation had set in, and was rapidly doing its work; death soon released him, and it was a relief to all present as well as to the poor sufferer.

I went to another dying one who was bearing patiently all his sufferings. Oh, poor pale face! I see it now, with its white lips and beseeching eyes; and then the touching inquiry, "Do you think I'll die before morning?" I told him I thought he would, and asked: "Has death any terrors for you?" He smiled that beautiful trusting

smile which we sometimes see on the lips of the dying saint, as he replied: “Oh no, I shall soon be asleep in Jesus”; and then in a low plaintive voice he repeated the verse commencing,

> Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep.

While I stood beside him thus, someone tapped me on the shoulder. On turning round I was beckoned to the side of one who was laid in a corner, on the floor, with his face toward the wall. I knelt beside him and asked: “What can I do for you, my friend?” He opened his eyes, with an effort, and said, “I wish you to take that,” pointing to a small package which lay beside him, “keep it until you get to Washington, and then, if it is not too much trouble, I want you to write to mother and tell her how I was wounded, and that I died trusting in Jesus.” Then I knew that I was kneeling beside Willie L. He was almost gone – just ready “to lay down the cross and take up the crown.” He signed to me to come nearer; and as I did so, he put his hand to his head and tried to separate a lock of hair with his fingers, but his strength failed; however, I understood that he wished me to cut off a lock to send to his mother with the package. When he saw that I understood him he seemed pleased that his last request was complied with.

Chaplain B. came and prayed with him, and while he was praying, the happy spirit of Willie returned to Him who gave it. Heaven gained in this instance another soul, but there was mourning in that widowed mother’s heart. I thought, oh, how

appropriate were the words of the poet to that lonely mother:

Not on the tented field,
O terror-fronted War!
Not on the battle-field,
All thy bleeding victims are;

But in the lowly homes
Where sorrow broods like death,
And fast the mother's sobs
Rise with each quick-drawn breath.

That dimmed eye, fainting close —
And she may not be nigh!
'Tis mothers die – O God!
'Tis but we mothers die.

Our hearts and hands being fully occupied with such scenes as these, we thought of nothing else. We knew nothing of the true state of affairs outside, nor could we believe it possible when we learned that the whole army had retreated toward Washington, leaving the wounded in the hands of the enemy, and us, too, in rather an unpleasant situation. I could not believe the stern truth, and was determined to find out for myself. Consequently I went back to the heights, where I had seen the troops stack their guns and throw themselves upon the ground at night-fall, but no troops

were there. I thought then that they had merely changed their position, and that by going over the field I should certainly find them. I had not gone far before I saw a camp fire in the distance. Supposing that I had found a clue to the secret, I made all haste toward the fire; but as I drew near I saw but one solitary figure sitting by it, and that was the form of a female.

Upon going up to her I recognised her as one of the washerwomen of our army, I asked her what she was doing there and where the army had gone. Said she: "I don't know anything about the army; I am cooking my husband's supper, and am expecting him home every minute; see what a lot of things I have got for him," pointing to a huge pile of blankets, haversacks and canteens which she had gathered up, and over which she had constituted herself sentinel. I soon found out that the poor creature had become insane. The excitement of battle had proved too much for her, and all my endeavors to persuade her to come with me were unavailing. I had no time to spare, for I was convinced that the army had really decamped.

Once more I started in the direction of Centerville. I had not gone more than a few rods before I heard the clatter of horses' hoofs. I stopped, and looking in the direction of the fire I had just quitted, I saw a squad of cavalry ride up to the woman who still sat there. Fortunately I had no horse to make a noise or attract attention, having left mine at the hospital with the intention of returning immediately. It was evident to my mind that those were the enemy's cavalry, and that it was necessary for me to keep

out of sight if possible until they were gone. Then the thought came to me that the woman at the fire knew no better than to tell them that I had been there a few minutes before. Happily, however, I was near a fence, against which there were great piles of brush, and as the night was becoming very dark and it was beginning to rain, I thought I could remain undetected, at least until morning. My suspicions proved to be correct. They were coming toward me, and compelling the woman to come and show them the direction I had taken; I decided to crawl under one of those brush heaps, which I did, and had scarcely done so, when up they came and stopped over against the identical pile in which I was concealed.

One of the men said "See here old woman, are you sure that she can tell us if we find her?" "Oh, yes, she can tell you, I know she can," was the woman's reply. They would go away a little distance and then come back again; by and by they began to accuse the woman of playing a false game; then they swore, threatened to shoot her, and she began to cry. All this was an interesting performance I admit; but I did not enjoy it quite so much, in consequence of being rather uncomfortably near the performers. At last they gave it up as a hopeless case and rode away taking the woman with them, and I was left in blissful ignorance of the mystery which they wished me to unravel, and for once in my life I rejoiced at not having my "curiosity" gratified.

I remained there until the last echo of their retreating

footsteps had died away in the distance; then I came forth very cautiously and made my way to Centerville, where the interesting intelligence awaited me that Mr. and Mrs. B. had gone, and had taken my horse, supposing that I had been taken prisoner.

The village of Centerville was not yet occupied by the rebels, so that I might have made my escape without any further trouble; but how could I go and leave those hospitals full of dying men, without a soul to give them a drink of water? I must go into that Stone Church once more, even at the risk of being taken prisoner. I did so – and the cry of "Water," "water," was heard above the groans of the dying. Chaplain B. had told them before leaving that they would soon be in the hands of the enemy – that the army had retreated to Washington, and that there was no possibility of removing the wounded. There they lay, calmly awaiting the approach of their cruel captors, and apparently prepared to accept with resignation any fate which their cruelty might suggest. Oh, how brave those men were! What moral courage they possessed! Nothing but the grace of God and a right appreciation of the great cause in which they had nobly fought, and bled, could reconcile them to such suffering and humiliation.

They all urged me to leave them, and not subject myself to the barbarous treatment which I would be likely to receive if I should be taken prisoner, adding – "If you do stay the rebels will not let you do anything for us." One of the men said: "Dr. E. has only been gone a little while – he extracted three balls from my leg and arm, and that, too, with his pen-knife. I saw twenty-one

balls which he had taken from the limbs of men in this hospital. He was determined to remain with us, but we would not consent, for we knew he would not be allowed to do any more for us after the rebels came; and you must go too, and go very soon or they will be here."

After placing water within the reach of as many as could use their arms, and giving some to those who could not – I turned to leave them, with feelings that I cannot describe; but ere I reached the door a feeble voice called me back – it was that of a young officer from Massachusetts; he held in his hand a gold locket, and as he handed it to me he said – "Will you please to open it?" I did so, and then held it for him to take a last look at the picture which it contained. He grasped it eagerly and pressed it to his lips again and again. The picture was that of a lady of rare beauty, with an infant in her arms. She seemed scarcely more than a child herself; on the opposite side was printed her name and address. While he still gazed upon it with quivering lip, and I stood there waiting for some tender message for the loved ones, the unmistakable tramp of cavalry was heard in the street – a moment more, and I had snatched the locket from the hands of the dying man and was gone.

The streets were full of cavalry, but not near enough to discover me, as the night was exceedingly dark and the rain came down in torrents. One glance was sufficient to convince me that I could not escape by either street. The only way was to climb a fence and go across lots, which I immediately did, and came

out on the Fairfax road about a mile from the village, and then started for Washington on the "double quick." I did not reach Alexandria until noon the next day – almost exhausted, and my shoes literally worn off my feet. Having walked all the way from Centerville in the rain, without food, together with want of sleep and the fatigue of the past week, caused me to present rather an interesting appearance. I remained there two days before I could persuade my limbs to bear the weight of my body. I then made my way to Washington, where I found my friends quite anxious lest I had fallen into the hands of the enemy. A number of men from whom I had received packages, money, etc., before going into battle, and who reached Washington two days before I did, had come to the conclusion that they had taken a pretty sure way of sending those precious things to Richmond, and therefore my arrival was rather an important event, and I was greeted with a hearty welcome.

My first duty was to attend to those dying soldiers' requests, which I did immediately by writing to their friends and inclosing the articles which I had received from the hands of those loved ones who were now cold in death. The answers to many of those letters lie before me while I write, and are full of gratitude and kind wishes. One in particular I cannot read without weeping. It is from Willie's Mother. The following are a few extracts: "Oh, can it be that my Willie will return to me no more? Shall I never see my darling boy again, until I see him clothed in the righteousness of Christ – thank God I shall see him then – I shall

see him then."

> Now with all the mother's heart
> Torn and quivering with the smart,
> I yield him, 'neath the chastening rod,
> To my country and my God.

"Oh, how I want to kiss those hands that closed my darling's eyes, and those lips which spoke words of comfort to him in a dying hour. The love and prayers of a bereaved mother will follow you all through the journey of life." Yes, he is gone to return to her no more on earth, but her loss is his eternal gain.

> Servant of God well done!
> Rest from thy loved employ;
> The battle fought, the victory won,
> Enter thy Master's joy.

He at least had won a victory – notwithstanding the defeat of the federal army. Yes, a glorious victory.

CHAPTER IV

WASHINGTON AFTER BULL RUN – DEMORALIZATION OF THE ARMY – SICK SOLDIERS – HOSPITAL SCENES – EXTRACTS FROM MY JOURNAL – SYMPATHY OF SOLDIERS – FISHING FOR THE SICK – A FISH-LOVING DUTCHMAN – REORGANIZATION OF THE ARMY – A VISIT TO THE PICKETS – PICKET DUTIES AND DANGERS – THE ARMY INACTIVE – MCCLELLAN'S ADDRESS – MARCHING ORDERS AGAIN – EMBARKATION OF THE ARMY FOR FORTRESS MONROE – THE CROWDED TRANSPORTS – DESCRIPTIONS OF THE MONITOR – HER BUILD AND ARMAMENT – HER TURRET AND ENGINES.

Washington at that time presented a picture strikingly illustrative of military life in its most depressing form. To use the words of Captain Noyes – "There were stragglers sneaking along through the mud inquiring for their regiments, wanderers driven in by the pickets, some with guns and some without, while every one you met had a sleepy, downcast appearance, and looked as if he would like to hide his head from all the world." Every bar-room and groggery seemed filled to overflowing with officers and men, and military discipline was nearly, or quite, forgotten for a time in the army of the Potomac. While Washington was in this chaotic condition, the rebel flag was floating over Munson's

Hill, in plain sight of the Federal Capital.

When General McClellan took command of the army of the Potomac, he found it in a most lamentable condition, and the task of reorganizing and disciplining such a mass of demoralized men was a Herculean one. However, he proved himself equal to the task, and I think, that even his enemies are willing to admit, that there is no parallel case in history where there has been more tact, energy and skill displayed in transforming a disorganized mob into an efficient and effective army; in fact, of bringing order out of confusion.

The hospitals in Washington, Alexandria and Georgetown were crowded with wounded, sick, discouraged soldiers. That extraordinary march from Bull Run, through rain, mud, and chagrin, did more toward filling the hospitals than did the battle itself. I found Mrs. B. in a hospital, suffering from typhoid fever, while Chaplain B. was looking after the temporal and spiritual wants of the men with his usual energy and sympathy. He had many apologies to offer "for running away with my horse," as he termed it. There were many familiar faces missing, and it required considerable time to ascertain the fate of my friends. Many a weary walk I had from one hospital to another to find some missing one who was reported to have been sent to such and such a hospital; but after reading the register from top to bottom I would find no such name there. Perhaps on my way out, in passing the open door of one of the wards, who should I see, laid upon a cot, but the very object of my search, and upon returning

to the office to inform the steward of the fact, I would find that it was a slight mistake; in registering the name; instead of being Josiah Phelps, it was Joseph Philips; only a slight mistake, but such mistakes cause a great deal of trouble sometimes.

Measels, dysentery and typhoid fever were the prevailing diseases after the retreat. After spending several days in visiting the different hospitals, looking after personal friends, and writing letters for the soldiers who were not able to write for themselves, I was regularly installed in one of the general hospitals. I will here insert an extract from my journal: "Aug. 3d, 1861. Georgetown, D. C. Have been on duty all day. John C. is perfectly wild with delirium, and keeps shouting at the top of his voice some military command, or, when vivid recollections of the battle-field come to his mind, he enacts a pantomime of the terrible strife – he goes through the whole manual of arms as correctly as if he were in the ranks; and as he, in imagination, loads and fires in quick succession, the flashing of his dying eye and the nervous vigor of his trembling hands give fearful interest to the supposed encounter with the enemy. When we tell him the enemy has retreated, he persists in pursuing; and throwing his arms wildly around him he shouts to his men – 'Come on and fight while there is a rebel left in Virginia!' My friend Lieut. M. is extremely weak and nervous, and the wild ravings of J. C. disturb him exceedingly. I requested Surgeon P. to have him removed to a more quiet ward, and received in reply – 'This is the most quiet ward in the whole building.' There are five hundred patients here

who require constant attention, and not half enough nurses to take care of them.

"Oh, what an amount of suffering I am called to witness every hour and every moment. There is no cessation, and yet it is strange that the sight of all this suffering and death does not affect me more. I am simply eyes, ears, hands and feet. It does seem as if there is a sort of stoicism granted for such occasions. There are great, strong men dying all around me, and while I write there are three being carried past the window to the dead room. This is an excellent hospital – everything is kept in good order, and the medical officers are skillful, kind and attentive."

The weary weeks went slowly by, while disease and death preyed upon the men, and the "Soldiers' Cemetery" was being quickly filled with new made graves. The kindness of the soldiers toward each other is proverbial, and is manifested in various ways. It is a common thing to see soldiers stand guard night after night for sick comrades – and when off duty try, to the utmost of their skill, to prepare their food in such a way as to tempt the appetite of those poor fellows whom the surgeons "do not consider sufficiently ill to excuse from duty;" but their comrades do, and do not hesitate to perform their duty and their own also. And when brought to camp hospital, helpless, worn down by disease, and fever preying upon their vitals – those brave and faithful comrades do not forsake them, but come several times every day to inquire how they are, and if there is anything they can do for them. And it is touching to see those men, with faces

bronzed and stern, tenderly bending over the dying, while the tears course down their sunburnt cheeks.

There is scarcely a soldier's grave where there is not to be seen some marks of this noble characteristic of the soldier – the tastefully cut sod, the planted evergreen, the carefully carved head-board, all tell of the affectionate remembrance of the loved comrade. You will scarcely find such strong and enduring friendship – such a spirit of self-sacrifice, and such noble and grateful hearts, as among the soldiers. I think this is one reason why the nurses do not feel the fatigue of hospital duty more than they do; the gratitude of the men seems to act as a stimulant, and the patient, uncomplaining faces of those suffering men almost invariably greet you with a smile. I used to think that it was a disgrace for any one, under ordinary circumstances, to be heard complaining, when those mutilated, pain-racked ones bore everything with such heroic fortitude.

I was not in the habit of going among the patients with a long, doleful face, nor intimating by word or look that their case was a hopeless one, unless a man was actually dying, and I felt it to be my duty to tell him so. Cheerfulness was my motto, and a wonderful effect it had sometimes on the despondent, gloomy feelings of discouraged and homesick sufferers. I noticed that whenever I failed to arouse a man from such a state of feeling, it generally proved a hopeless case. They were very likely not to recover if they made up their minds that they must die, and persisted in believing that there was no alternative.

There were a great many pleasant things in connection with our camp hospital duties. I really enjoyed gratifying some of the whims and strange fancies of our poor convalescent boys, with whom I had become quite a favorite. As I would pass along through the hospital in the morning, I would generally have plenty of assistants in helping to make out my programme for the day. For one I had to write letters, read some particular book to another, and for a third I must catch some fish. I remember on one occasion of an old Dutchman, a typhoid convalescent, declaring that he could eat nothing until he could get some fresh fish, and of course I must procure them for him. "But," said I, "the doctor must be consulted; perhaps he will not think it best for you to have any fish yet, until you are stronger." "Vell, I dusn't care for te toctor – he dusn't know vat mine appetite ish – te feesh I must have. Oh, mine Cot! I must have some feesh." And the old man wept like a child at the thought of being disappointed. "Hunter's Creek" was about a mile and a half from camp, where Mr. and Mrs. B. and I had spent many an hour fishing and shooting at the flocks of wild ducks which frequented it; so, after providing myself with hook, line and bait, I made my way to the creek. Soon after I commenced operations I drew up a monstrous eel, which defied all my efforts to release the hook from its jaws. At last I was obliged to draw it into camp by means of the line – and I was amply repaid for my trouble on seeing the delight of the convalescents, and especially of my old Dutchman, who continued to slap his hands together and say –

"Dhat ish coot – dhat ish coot." The eel was handed over to the cook to be prepared for dinner, and to the great satisfaction of the Dutchman he was permitted to enjoy a portion of it.

The army under McClellan began to assume a warlike aspect – perfect order and military discipline were observed everywhere among the soldiers. It was a splendid sight to see those well drilled troops on dress-parade – or being reviewed by their gallant young commander, upon whose shoulders the "stars" sat with so much grace and dignity.

The monotony of camp life began to be broken up by armed reconnoissances and skirmishing between the pickets. Our lines were pushed forward to Lewinsville on the right, and to Munson's Hill in front. The pickets of both armies were posted in plain sight of each other, only separated by the beautiful corn-fields and peach-orchards. Picket firing was kept up all along the lines on both sides, notwithstanding that flags of truce had been sent in by both parties, several times, requesting that this barbarous practice might cease.

As soon as Mrs. B. was so far recovered as to be able to ride, we started one day, accompanied by Mr. B. and Dr. E., for Munson's Hill, to see the pickets on duty. We rode along until we came within a short distance of the rifle pits where our men were, when the rebels fired upon us. We turned and rode back until we came to a clump of trees, where we dismounted, hitched our horses, and proceeded the rest of the way on foot – part of the way having to crouch along on our hands and knees, in order

to escape the bullets which were whistling above us. We reached the rifle pits in safety, which were close to a rail fence, the rails of which were perfectly riddled with Minnie balls. While we sat there looking through an opera-glass, whiz! came a ball and struck the rail against which my head rested; glancing, it passed through Dr. E.'s cap and lodged in the shoulder of one of the men. We remained there until the firing ceased, then returned to camp, carrying with us the wounded man.

Picket duty is one of the most perilous and trying duties connected with the service. A clergyman-soldier writing upon this subject, briefly describes it: "Picket duty at all times is arbitrary, but at night it is trebly so. No monarch on a throne, with absolute power, is more independent, or exercises greater sway for the time being, than a private soldier stationed on his beat with an enemy in front. Darkness veils all distinctions. He is not obliged to know his own officers or comrades, or the commanding general, only through the means of the countersign. With musket loaded and capped he walks his rounds, having to do with matters only of life and death, and at the same time clothed with absolute power. It is a position of fearful importance and responsibility, one that makes a man feel solemn and terribly in earnest. Often, too, these posts are in thick woods, where the soldier stands alone, cut off from camp, cut off from his fellows, subject only to the harrassings of his own imagination and sense of danger. The shadows deepen into inky night; all objects around him, even the little birds that were his companions during the

day, are gathered within the curtains of a hushed repose; but the soldier, with every nerve and faculty of his mind strained to the utmost tension of keenness and sensibility, speaks only in whispers; his fingers tighten round the stock of his musket as he leans forward to catch the sound of approaching footsteps, or, in absence of danger, looks longingly up to the cold, grey sky, with its wealth of shining stars."

Yes, the picket is exposed to danger constantly, and to various kinds of danger. He knows not what moment a lurking foe may spring upon him from the darkness, or a bullet from a scout or sharpshooter may reach him at any time. Then, too, he is exposed to the raging elements – heat and cold, rain and snow; no matter whether in the depths of the forest, or in the open plain, or in the rifle-pit standing in water knee deep, the poor picket must not heed the storm, but keep both eyes and ears open to catch the slightest sound. After severe marches, when the men are greatly fatigued, and it seems almost impossible to perform any more duty without rest and sleep, some, of course, are sent on picket duty, while the rest are permitted to sleep. Oh, how my heart has ached for those men; and it seemed to me that the persons and regiments in which I was most interested always had the most picket duty to perform.

On the 14th of March General McClellan issued an address to the army of the Potomac, announcing the reasons why they had been so long unemployed. The battle of Bull Run was fought in July, 1861. It was now March, 1862, and during

this interval the army of the Potomac, numbering some two hundred and fifty thousand men, had been inactive, excepting their daily drills behind their entrenchments. The flags of the enemy were in sight. Washington was in a state of siege, and not a transport could ascend the river without running the gauntlet of the rebel batteries. In his address General McClellan announced the reasons for their inactivity as follows:

"Soldiers of the Army of the Potomac: For a long time I have kept you inactive, but not without a purpose. You were to be disciplined, armed and instructed. The formidable artillery you now have had to be created. Other armies were to move and accomplish certain results. I have held you back that you might give the death-blow to the rebellion that has distracted our once happy country. The patience you have shown, and your confidence in your General, are worth a dozen victories. These preliminary results are now accomplished. I feel that the patient labors of many months have produced their fruit. The army of the Potomac is now a real army, magnificent in material, admirable in discipline and instruction, excellently equipped and armed. Your commanders are all that I could wish. The moment for action has arrived, and I know that I can trust in you to save our country. The period of inaction has passed. I will bring you now face to face with the rebels, and only pray that God may defend the right."

Marching orders were issued once more to the army of the Potomac. The sick were sent off, camps broken up, and all

stood prepared for another encounter with the enemy. The bitter remembrance of the defeat at Bull Run still rankled in the minds of the men, and now they were anxious for an opportunity to retaliate upon the foe, and win back the laurels they had so ingloriously lost upon that disastrous field. Various speculations were indulged in with regard to their destination. One prophesied that they were going to Richmond by way of Fredericksburg, another was positive that they were to go by the way of Manassas, and a third declared that it was down the Shenandoah valley to take Richmond on the flank and rear; but, to the utter astonishment of all, they were ordered to Alexandria to embark for Fortress Monroe. Regiment after regiment was huddled together on board until every foot of room was occupied, and there remained but little prospect of comfort for either officers or men.

As soon as each transport received its cargo of men, horses and provisions, it floated out into the stream, while another steamed up to the wharf in its place, until the whole fleet lay side by side, freighted with over a hundred thousand human lives, and awaiting the signal to weigh anchor. The troops were eager for a campaign; they had lain inactive so long, while "victory" thundered all around them, that they were becoming impatient to strike another blow at rebellion, and blot out the remembrance of the past. Roanoke, Pea Ridge, Newbern, Winchester and Donelson – were a succession of victories which had been achieved, and the army of the Potomac had not participated in

them. The men felt this, and were prepared for anything but inactivity. Everything being in readiness, the signal was given, and the whole fleet was soon moving in the direction of Fortress Monroe, with the stars and stripes floating from every mast-head, and the music of national airs awakening the slumbering echoes as we swiftly glided over the quiet waters of the Potomac.

The first real object of interest which presented itself was the "Monitor" lying off Fortress Monroe. It reminded me of what I once heard a man say to his neighbor about his wife; said he, "Neighbor, you might worship your wife without breaking either of the ten commandments." "How is that?" asked the man; "Because she is not the likeness of anything in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth." So thought I of the Monitor.

There she sat upon the water a glorious impregnable battery, the wonder of the age, the terror of rebels, and the pride of the North. The Monitor is so novel in structure that a minute description will be necessary to convey an accurate idea of her character. "She has two hulls. The lower one is of iron, five-eighths of an inch thick. The bottom is flat, and six feet six inches in depth – sharp at both ends, the cut-water retreating at an angle of about thirty degrees. The sides, instead of having the ordinary bulge, incline at an angle of about fifty-one degrees. This hull is one hundred and twenty-four feet long, and thirty-four feet broad at the top. Resting on this is the upper hull, flat-bottomed, and both longer and wider than the lower hull, so that it projects

over in every direction, like the guards of a steamboat. It is one hundred and seventy-four feet long, forty-one feet four inches wide, and five feet deep. These sides constitute the armor of the vessel. In the first place is an inner guard of iron, half an inch thick. To this is fastened a wall of white oak, placed endways, and thirty inches thick, to which are bolted six plates of iron, each an inch thick, thus making a solid wall of thirty-six and a half inches of wood and iron. This hull is fastened upon the lower hull, so that the latter is entirely submerged, and the upper one sinks down three feet into the water. Thus but two feet of hull are exposed to a shot. The under hull is so guarded by the projecting upper hull, that a ball, to strike it, would have to pass through twenty-five feet of water. The upper hull is also pointed at both ends. The deck comes flush with the top of the hull, and is made bomb-proof. No railing or bulwark rises above the deck. The projecting ends serve as a protection to the propeller, rudder and anchor, which cannot be struck. Neither the anchor or chain is ever exposed. The anchor is peculiar, being very short, but heavy. It is hoisted into a place fitted for it, outside of the lower hull, but within the impenetrable shield of the upper one. On the deck are but two structures rising above the surface, the pilot-house and turret. The pilot-house is forward, made of plates of iron, the whole about ten inches in thickness, and shot-proof. Small slits and holes are cut through, to enable the pilot to see his course. The turret, which is apparently the main feature of the battery, is a round cylinder, twenty feet in interior diameter, and nine feet

high. It is built entirely of iron plates, one inch in thickness, eight of them securely bolted together, one over another. Within this is a lining of one-inch iron, acting as a damper to deaden the effects of a concussion when struck by a ball – thus there is a shield of nine inches of iron. The turret rests on a bed-plate, or ring, of composition, which is fastened to the deck. To help support the weight, which is about a hundred tons, a vertical shaft, ten inches in diameter, is attached and fastened to the bulk-head. The top is made shot-proof by huge iron beams, and perforated to allow of ventilation. It has two circular port-holes, both on one side of the turret, three feet above the deck, and just large enough for the muzzle of the gun to be run out. The turret is made to revolve, being turned by a special engine. The operator within, by a rod connected with the engine, is enabled to turn it at pleasure. It can be made to revolve at the rate of sixty revolutions a minute, and can be regulated to stop within half a degree of a given point. When the guns are drawn in to load, the port-hole is stopped by a huge iron pendulum, which falls to its place, and makes that part as secure as any, and can be quickly hoisted to one side. The armament consists of two eleven-inch Dahlgren guns. Various improvements in the gun-carriage enable the gunner to secure almost perfect aim.

"The engine is not of great power, as the vessel was designed as a battery, and not for swift sailing. It being almost entirely under water, the ventilation is secured by blowers, drawing the air in forward, and discharging it aft. A separate engine moves

the blowers and fans the fires. There is no chimney, so the draft must be entirely artificial. The smoke passes out of gratings in the deck. Many suppose the Monitor to be merely an iron-clad vessel, with a turret; but there are, in fact, between thirty and forty patentable inventions upon her, and the turret is by no means the most important one. Very properly, what these inventions are is not proclaimed to the public."

CHAPTER V

ARRIVAL AT FORTRESS MONROE – THE VILLAGE OF HAMPTON – VISITING THE CONTRABANDS – ARRIVAL OF FUGITIVES – A REAL "CAMP MEETING" – FEEDING THE NEGROES – CAMP MISERIES – MULES – MISS PERIWINKLE'S MULES – THE COQUETTISH, THE MORAL, THE HISTRIONIC, AND THE PATHETIC MULE – OUR JACK – LINES OF LOVE – MY BOX AND PRESENTS – A THREE-STORY CAKE – A SERENADE AND SURPRISE PARTY – GOOD AND BAD CHAPLAINS – THE MORALS OF THE ARMY – SLANDERS ABOUT SOLDIERS.

We arrived at Fortress Monroe in a drenching rain, immediately disembarked, and proceeded at once to Hampton – formerly a beautiful little village containing about five hundred houses, many of them elegant brick buildings, but which now lay a blackened mass of ruins, having been burned a few months previous by order of rebel General Magruder. The village was about three miles from Fortress Monroe, and situated on the west side of a creek, or arm of the sea, called Hampton river, the Yorktown road passing directly through its center. It was a great relief to the troops to disembark from the filthy, crowded transports, notwithstanding they had to march through the mud and rain, and then pitch their tents on the wet ground. Fires were

soon built, coffee made, and nice fresh bread served out, which was brought to us by the commissary department at the fort.

As Mrs. B. and I had a little respite at this particular juncture, we set about visiting the contrabands. They occupied a long row of board buildings near the fort. The men were employed in loading and unloading Government vessels, and the women were busily engaged in cooking and washing. No language can describe the joy of these men and women at being liberated from bondage. As the Jews of old were looking for the promised Messiah, so the slaves universally regarded the advent of the northern army as the harbinger of their deliverance.

Mr. A. relates the following anecdote, illustrative of this fact, which took place at the battle of Newbern: "A slaveholder, breathless with terror, spurred his horse to his utmost speed past his own house, not venturing to stop. Just then a shell, with its terrific, unearthly shriek, rushed through the air over his head. A poor slave, a man of unfeigned piety and fervent prayer, in uncontrollable emotions of joy, ran into his humble cabin, shouting: 'Wife, he is running, he is running, and the wrath of God is after him. Glory hallelujah! the appointed time has come; we are free, we are free!'"

With regard to my own visit to the contraband quarters, I give the following extract from my journal: "Visited the contrabands to-day, and was much pleased with their cheerful, happy appearance. They are exceedingly ignorant, yet there is one subject upon which they can converse freely and intelligibly,

and that is – Christ – the way of salvation. Almost all with whom I conversed to-day were praying men and women. Oh, how I should like to teach these people! They seem so anxious for instruction, I know they would learn quickly. Some of them are whiter and prettier than most of our northern ladies. There is a family here, all of whom have blue eyes, light hair, fair skin and rosy cheeks; yet they are contrabands, and have been slaves. But why should blue eyes and golden hair be the distinction between bond and free?"

One bitter, stormy night, about eleven o'clock, a band of these poor fugitives, numbering over forty, presented themselves at the picket line, for admittance to the federal camp, imploring protection. The officer of the picket guard being called, and the case presented, the contrabands were permitted to pass through. But no sooner had their poor torn and bleeding feet touched the federal soil, than they fell upon their knees, and returned thanks to God and to the soldiers for their deliverance. They came into camp about one o'clock in the morning, shouting "Glory! Glory to God!" Notwithstanding the early hour, and the stormy night, the whole camp was aroused; every one rushed out to find out the cause of the excitement. There they were, black as midnight, all huddled together in a little group – some praying, some singing, and others shouting. We had a real "camp meeting" time for a while. Soon the exercises changed, and they began to relate their experiences, not only religious experiences, but a brief history of their lives. Some were husbands and fathers. Their masters had

sold them down south, lest they should escape. In their terror they had escaped by night, and fled to the National banner for refuge, leaving all behind that was dear to them.

In conclusion, one old man, evidently their leader, stood up and said: "I tell you, my breddern, dat de good Lord has borne wid dis yere slav'ry long time wid great patience. But now he can't bore it no longer, no how; and he has said to de people ob de North – go and tell de slaveholders to let de people go, dat dey may sarve me." There were many there who had listened to the old colored man's speech and believed, as I did, that there was more truth than poetry in it. Many hearts were moved with sympathy towards them, as was soon proved by the actions of the soldiers.

An immense fire was built, around which these poor darkies eagerly gathered, as they were both wet, cold and hungry; then a large camp kettle of coffee was made and set before them, with plenty of bread and meat to satisfy their ravenous appetites – for ravenous they were, not having tasted food for more than two days. Then blankets were provided, and they soon became comfortable, and as happy as human beings could be under such circumstances. Mrs. B. and I returned to our tents feeling very much like indorsing the sentiment of "Will Jones' resolve:"

> Resolved, although my brother be a slave,
> And poor and black, he is my brother still;
> Can I, o'er trampled "institutions," save
> That brother from the chain and lash, I will.

A cold, drizzling rain continued to descend for several days, and our camp became a fair specimen of "Virginia mud." I began to feel the effects of the miasma which came floating on every breeze from the adjacent swamps and marshes, and fever and ague became my daily companions for a time. As I sat in my tent, roasting or shivering as the case might be, I took a strange pleasure in watching the long trains of six mule teams which were constantly passing and repassing within a few rods of my tent. As "Miss Periwinkle" remarks, there are several classes of mules. "The coquettish mule has small feet, a nicely trimmed tail, perked up ears, and seems much given to little tosses of the head, affected skips and prances, and, if he wears bells or streamers, puts on as many airs as any belle. The moral mule is a stout, hardworking creature, always tugging with all his might, often pulling away after the rest have stopped, laboring under the conscientious delusion that food for the entire army depends upon his individual exertions. The histrionic mule is a melo-dramatic sort of quadruped, prone to startle humanity by erratic leaps and wild plunges, much shaking of the stubborn head and lashing of his vicious heels; now and then falling flat, and apparently dying *a la* Forrest, a gasp, a groan, a shudder, etc., till the street is blocked up, the drivers all swearing like so many demons, and the chief actor's circulation becomes decidedly quickened by every variety of kick, cuff and jerk imaginable. When the last breath seems to have gone with the last kick, and

the harness has been taken off, then a sudden resurrection takes place. He springs to his feet, and proceeds to give himself two or three comfortable shakes, and if ever mule laughed in scornful triumph it is he, and as he calmly surveys the excited crowd, seems to say: 'A hit! a decided hit!' For once the most stupid of all animals has outwitted more than a dozen of the lords of creation. The pathetic mule is, perhaps, the most interesting of all; for although he always seems to be the smallest, thinnest, and weakest of the six, yet, in addition to his equal portion of the heavy load, he carries on his back a great postillion, with tremendous boots, long tailed coat, and heavy whip. This poor creature struggles feebly along, head down, coat muddy and rough, eye spiritless and sad, and his whole appearance a perfect picture of meek misery, fit to touch a heart of stone. Then there is another class of mules which always have a jolly, cheer-up sort of look about them – they take everything good naturedly, from cudgeling to carressing, and march along with a roguish twinkle in their eye which is very interesting."

One morning, as I was just recovering from fever and ague, Jack, our faithful colored boy, made his appearance at the door of my tent, touching his hat in the most approved military style, and handed me a letter bearing my address, saying, as he did so, "Dar's a box at de 'spress office for you. May I run and fotch it?" I said, "Oh, yes, Jack, you may bring it, but be careful and keep the cover on, there may be chickens in it." Jack knew the meaning of that allusion to chickens, and so ran off singing:

Massa run, ha, ha!
Darkies stay, ho, ho!
It must be now dat de kingdom's cumin
In de year ob jubilo.

In the meantime I opened my letter, from which I make the following extract: "Having learned your address through Mrs. L – , whose son was killed at the battle of Bull Run, we send you a donation in token of our respect and esteem, and of our gratitude for your faithfulness on the field and in the hospital." The following lines were also inclosed:

In the ranks of the sick and dying, in the chamber where death-dews fall,
Where the sleeper wakes from his trances to leap to the bugle-call,
Is there hope for the wounded soldier? Ah, no! for his heart-blood flows,
And the flickering flames of life must wane, to fail at the evening's close.

Oh, thou who goest, like a sunbeam, to lighten the darkness and gloom,
Make way for the path of glory through the dim and shadowy room;
Go speak to him words of comfort, and teach him the way

to die,
With his eyes upraised from the starry flag to the blessed cross on high.

And tell him brave hearts are beating with pulses as noble as thine;
That we count them at home by the thousands – thou sweetest sister of mine;
That they fail not and flinch not from duty while the vials of wrath are outpoured,
And tell him to call it not grievous, but joyous to fall by the sword.

When the hosts of the foe are outnumbered, and the day of the Lord is at hand,
Shall we halt in the heat of the battle, and fail at the word of command?
Oh, no! through the trouble and anguish, by the terrible pathway of blood,
We must bear up the flag of our freedom, on – on through the perilous flood.

And if one should be brought faint and bleeding, though wounded, yet not unto death,
Oh plead with the soft airs of heaven to favor his languishing breath;

Be faithful to heal and to save him, assuaging the fever and pains,
Till the pulse in his strong arm be strengthened and the blood courses free in his veins.

While Mrs. B. and I were speculating with regard to the contents of the box, Jack's woolly head reappeared in the doorway, and the subject of our curiosity was before us. "Dar it be, and mity heavy, too; guess it mus' be from – ." So saying, young hopeful disappeared. The box was soon opened, its contents examined and commented upon. First came a beautiful silk and rubber reversible cloak, which could be folded into such a small compass that it could be put into an ordinary sized pocket, and a pair of rubber boots.

Then came a splendid silver-mounted revolver, belt and miniature cartridge-box. But the greatest piece of perfection I ever saw came in the shape of a "housewife;" it was lined and covered with oil silk, and my name printed on it in gilt letters, above which was an eagle, and below was the following inscription: "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." Then came pocket-handkerchiefs, gloves, and other articles too numerous to mention. But last, not least, was found in the bottom, stowed away in one corner, two bottles of the best currant wine, a nice jar of jelly, and a large loaf of cake, frosted and mottoed in fine style. This cake was certainly a great curiosity. It was a three-story cake, with three doors made to slide back by gently pulling

a bell-handle which was made of rosettes of red, white and blue ribbon. To the first bell-cord was attached a splendid gold ring, to the second a ten dollar gold piece, and to the third and last a small sized hunting cased gold watch and chain. At such revelations I began to feel as if my humble tent had become an enchanted palace, and that all I should have to do in future would be to rub that mysterious ring, and the genii would appear, ready to supply all my wants. We then commenced to divide the spoil, Mrs. B. positively asserting that she had no right to any part of the donation, and I telling her that in all probability it was all intended for her, and through one of those "slight mistakes" it was directed to me.

The news of this wonderful box soon spread through camp, and the result was that we had a surprise party as soon as evening came, Chaplain B. taking the opportunity of making some very appropriate remarks on the occasion. Then came the band to serenade us, and the consequence was that our cake and wine disappeared with our numerous friends, for we found that all were willing to obey the scriptural injunction, "Take a little wine," etc. Chaplain B. is a very worthy, zealous, faithful minister, and I have spoken very highly of him, but perhaps in doing so I have given the impression that all chaplains are good and faithful. I am very sorry to state that it is not so. There are some who have no fitness for their work, and some a disgrace to their profession. I think I am safe in saying that one bad chaplain will do more harm in a regiment than a hundred good men can

counteract. If there is any place on earth where faithful ministers are needed more than another, it is in the army – it is in the hospital. But may God have mercy upon those who go there, whose object is dollars and cents – who neglect their duty, and fill the places which should be occupied by Christ-like heralds of the cross who love the souls of their fellow men. I think the words of the Saviour are particularly applicable to some of the chaplains of the army when He says: "Woe unto you hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men," etc. I have conversed with many in the army upon the subject of religion, who told me that the conduct of certain chaplains had more influence in keeping them away from the Saviour than all the combined forces of the evil one. Such chaplains are there through political influence, regardless of qualifications.

Some persons have tried very hard to get up the general belief that the army is terribly demoralized in its best estate, and all who go there must inevitably plunge into vice; but a greater slander was never propagated. There is, undoubtedly, vice in the army; but where is there a city or community throughout the North where vice is not to be found? notwithstanding the tide of moral and religious influence which is daily brought to bear against it. Although the outer man appears rough, and much drunkenness and other evils exist in the army, yet there is much that is pure, lovely, and of good report in the character of both officers and men. "I can speak of that I do know, and testify of that which I have seen," and I am free to say that I think the morals of the

majority of the men are quite as good, if not better than you will find among the same number at home, made up of all classes as we find them in the army.

It is true many have backslidden since they left home; but is equally true that *very* many have been reformed, and are now better men than when they enlisted. Every day's history proves that there are thousands of noble hearted, pure minded christians in our army, and none but traitors and infidels, the enemies of God and man, will deny this fact.

CHAPTER VI

THE MARCH TO YORKTOWN – SCARCITY OF SUPPLIES – CAMP COOKERY – DIFFERENT CHARACTERS IN THE ARMY – ARRIVAL OF TRAINS – CHANGE OF CAMP – TRYING TO SHELL US OUT – THE OLD SAW-MILL – A CONSTANT TARGET – ASSAULTS ON OUR OUTPOSTS – A REBEL APPEAL – YORKTOWN AND VICINITY – THE SITUATION – BALLOON RECONNOISSANCES – PROF. LOWE ON HIGH – REBEL VIXENS – A CURIOUS VISIT – A STRANGE HOSTESS – SHE TRIES TO KILL ME – I WOUND HER AND CAPTURE A PRISONER – A CONVERSION – THE SECESH WOMAN BECOMES A FEDERAL NURSE.

On to Richmond once more resounded through the camp, and the army was again in motion. The Yorktown road is one long to be remembered, especially by those who that day had to toil through its mud and mire, or, by making a mis-step, fall into one of the yawning chasms from which some unfortunate mule had been drawn. The rain had continued almost all the time we were encamped at Hampton, "saturating the clayey soil, which soon became a vast bed of mortar under the artillery trains." The distance from Hampton to Yorktown is about twenty-three miles, and it required all the determination and energy of veterans to

march half that distance in a day. With two days' rations in their haversacks, the men marched until they arrived in front of Yorktown, where they bivouacked on the ground, over which the water was running like a flood. We remained three days in that condition, and it was the first time I ever saw anything like scarcity of food in the army.

It was scarce indeed, for we were only supplied with two days' rations on starting from Hampton. The fifth day had arrived, but no provisions had yet appeared, and it seemed morally impossible to get a supply train over the road. Mile after mile of corduroy bridge had to be made before a team dare venture to approach. Our horses, too, were as badly off for forage as the men were for provisions. On the fifth day, with several others, I received permission to go out and buy what we could at the houses anywhere within three miles of our encampment.

After procuring a quantity of biscuit, pies, and corn bread, we returned to camp, and were quite surprised to find the boys engaged in cutting up and cooking fresh steak. We thought, of course, our provisions had arrived, but found that it was only a little dash they had just made upon the "chivalry's" cattle, appropriating them to their own use with a sort of earnestness which seemed to say, I firmly believe in the old proverb, *Aide toi, et le ciel t'aidera*.

Oh, what a place the army is for the study of human nature! As I looked around upon that mass of busy men, I thought I could discover almost every trait in the human character depicted upon

their countenances. There was the selfish man, only intent upon serving himself, and fearing there would not enough come to his share to satisfy his wants; then there was old churlish Nabal away by himself building a fire for his own especial benefit, and which "no man dare approach unto," no, not within baking, broiling, or roasting distance, not even to get a coal to kindle one for himself. But that class of character, thank heaven, was a very small minority. There, too, was the cheerful, happy man, who had been several hours engaged in cutting up and serving out to others, and had no lot or part in the broiled steaks which were smoking around him; yet he looked as good natured as if he had dined on roast beef and plum pudding. Then there was another phase of character – one who always made it the first duty, under all circumstances, to look after those who were not able to look after themselves.

While the little trials of camp life have a tendency to harden and sour the dispositions of some, they seem to bring to light and develop the cheerful, happy, unselfish spirit of others. One has truthfully said that "there is no other quality so diffusive of joy, both to him who possesses it and to those with whom he has friendly intercourse, as cheerfulness. It is the phase of a soul sitting in its own sunshine. There are luminous planets which are viewed by the aid of their own light, others there are which are seen through borrowed light. So it is with individuals. There seem to be some who have scarcely any light of their own, and who shine by the reflection of the light of others; while

others there are who possess an intrinsic and inexhaustible source of sunshine, which renders them not only self-illuminating, but capable of irradiating those around them. Many are cheerful when a sparkling rill of pleasure is gurgling in their hearts, or when prosperity encircles them, or looms up gorgeously in their prospective vision. But few are cheerful when adversity casts its gloomy shadows around them; when sorrow and disappointment dry up their fountains of pleasure and wither their hopes. In such crises cheerfulness is an independent virtue, and in others an accidental mood."

The despondency of the few was soon removed, and the patience and cheerfulness of the many rewarded by the arrival of the provision and baggage trains. We then exchanged our camp for one in a more pleasant locality, where there was more wood and not quite so much water, which added much to the comfort of the troops. The enemy soon found out our position, and did not fail to inform us of the fact by frequently saluting us with an immense shell, or thirty-two pound cannon ball, which would burst over our heads or fall within a few rods – often within a few feet – of our tents. We remained in that camp just one month, and, notwithstanding the enemy shelled us night and day, I never saw a man or beast injured by shot or shell in camp while we remained there.

I presume many of my readers will remember seeing or hearing of the old saw-mill which stood near a peach orchard, and which the soldiers persisted in running, to the great

annoyance of the rebels. That old saw-mill deserves to be immortalized in song as well as in history; and if it stood in any other than a christian land, it would undoubtedly become an object of idolatry. There it stood, in perfect range of the enemy's batteries, a target at which they never seemed tired of firing, while our brave soldiers risked their lives in sawing lumber for the purpose of laying board floors in the hospital tents, to secure some degree of comfort, for their poor sick comrades.

Time after time the mill was set on fire by the explosion of shells as they passed through it, but up would go some brave young hero, and stand in the very jaws of death while his companions would hand him bucket after bucket of water to quench the flames. As soon as the fire was extinguished the men resumed their labor, and the old mill steamed away with all its might, as if proud of the "stars and stripes" which waved from its summit, and of being permitted to show its patriotism and zeal for the glorious cause of freedom by working for good old "Uncle Sam" and his noble sons. Then it would give vent to its pent up wrath in hisses and shrieks, bidding proud defiance to Jeff. Davis and his minions, who were trying in vain to stop its humane and patriotic efforts. For more than three weeks those brave men kept the steam up in that mill, until their object was accomplished, having to stop almost every half hour to repair the ravages of shot and shell. Notwithstanding the constant fire of the rebel batteries, the dilapidated appearance of the mill from its effects, and the danger of the situation, yet not a man was

killed in or about it, and not one wounded, to my knowledge.

I remember one day of passing the mill in a great hurry – and it was well that I was in a hurry, for I had scarcely rode by it when I heard a terrific crash close at hand, which made my horse leap from the ground with terror. Upon turning round I saw that a part of the smoke stack had been carried away, and the mill was on fire. I rode up to the door and inquired if any one was killed or injured; no, not a man was hurt, and the fire was soon subdued by the vigorous efforts of those sturdy soldiers, who looked as jolly over the disaster as if it had really been a good joke.

The rebels were beginning to make some desperate assaults upon our outposts; they were driving in the advance pickets on our left wing, and making similar demonstrations along different parts of the line. They were evidently concentrating a large force behind their fortifications, and were determined to make a desperate resistance. Deserters came in bringing Richmond papers crowded with appeals to the Southern "chivalry," of which the following is a specimen:

"The next few days may decide the fate of Richmond. It is either to remain the Capital of the Confederacy, or to be turned over to the Federal Government as a Yankee conquest. The Capital is either to be secured or lost – it may be feared not temporarily, and with it Virginia. Then, if there is blood to be shed, let it be shed here; no soil of the Confederacy could drink it up more acceptably, and none would hold it more gratefully. Wife, family, and friends are nothing. Leave them all for one

glorious hour to be devoted to the Republic. Life, death, and wounds are nothing if we only be saved from the fate of a captured and humiliated Confederacy. Let the Government act; let the people act. There is time yet. If fate comes to its worst, let the ruins of Richmond be its most lasting monument."

General McClellan's despatch to the War Department will best describe the state of affairs at this time in Yorktown and vicinity; he says:

"The whole line of the Warwick, which really heads within a mile of Yorktown, is strongly defended by detached redoubts and other fortifications, armed with heavy and light guns. The approaches, except at Yorktown, are covered by the Warwick, over which there is but one, or at most, two passages, both of which are covered by strong batteries. All the prisoners state that General J. E. Johnson arrived at Yorktown yesterday, with strong reinforcements. It seems clear that I shall have the whole force of the enemy on my hands – probably not less than one hundred thousand men, and possibly more.

"Under the circumstances which have been developed since we arrived here, I feel fully impressed with the conviction that here is to be fought the great battle that is to decide the existing contest. I shall of course commence the attack as soon as I can get up my siege train, and shall do all in my power to carry the enemy's works; but to do this, with a reasonable degree of certainty, requires, in my judgment, that I should, if possible, have at least the whole of the first corps to land upon the Severn

river and attack Gloucester in the rear. My present strength will not admit of a detachment sufficient for this purpose without materially impairing the efficiency of this column."

While these preparations were going forward on both sides, Professor Lowe was making balloon reconnoissances, and transmitting the result of his observations to General McClellan by telegraph from his castle in the air, which seemed suspended from the clouds, reminding one of the fabled gods of old looking down from their ethereal abodes upon the conflicts of the inhabitants of this mundane sphere. One of the officers one day playfully remarked: "Professor, I am always sorry when I see you descend with your balloon." "Why are you sorry, Colonel? Would you wish to see me suspended between heaven and earth all the time?" "Oh, no, not that; but when I see you coming down I am afraid you will never get so near heaven again."

I was often sent out to procure supplies for the hospitals, butter, eggs, milk, chickens, etc., and in my rambles I used to meet with many interesting adventures. In some instances I met with narrow escapes with my life, which were not quite so interesting; and the timely appearance of my revolver often rescued me from the hands of the female rebels of the Peninsula. Persons dwelling in regions which slavery has not debased can hardly imagine the malice and ferocity manifested by the rebel vixens of the slave states. Upon this point the testimony from all parts of the South is invariable. The Louisville Journal says: "Thousands have read with astonishment the account which

historians give of the conduct of women in Paris during the Reign of Terror. The women are said to have been more fierce and bloodthirsty than even the fiercest and most bloodthirsty of the men. Many of our people have supposed that the accounts given of those things must surely be fictions or exaggerations. They have felt themselves unable to conceive that woman's nature could become a thing so utterly revolting. But if they will look and listen in this region, at the present time, they will find that they have no further reason for incredulity or scepticism. The bitter and ferocious spirit of thousands of rebel women in Kentucky, Tennessee, and other States, is scarcely, if at all, surpassed by the female monsters that shrieked and howled for victims in the French Revolution."

I will here relate a little incident illustrative of the peculiarity of my adventures while on this catering business: One morning I started, all alone, for a five mile ride to an isolated farm-house about three miles back from the Hampton road, and which report said was well supplied with all the articles of which I was in search. I cantered along briskly until I came to a gate which opened into a lane leading directly to the house. It was a large old fashioned two-story house, with immense chimneys built outside, Virginia style. The farm appeared to be in good condition, fences all up, a rare thing on the Peninsula, and corn-fields flourishing as if there were no such thing as war in the land.

I rode up to the house and dismounted, hitched my horse to a post at the door, and proceeded to ring the bell. A tall, stately

lady made her appearance, and invited me in with much apparent courtesy. She was dressed in deep mourning, which was very becoming to her pale, sad face. She seemed to be about thirty years of age, very prepossessing in appearance, and evidently belonged to one of the "F. F. V's." As soon as I was seated she inquired: "To what fortunate circumstance am I to attribute the pleasure of this unexpected call?" I told her in a few words the nature of my business. The intelligence seemed to cast a deep shadow over her pale features, which all her efforts could not control. She seemed nervous and excited, and something in her appearance aroused my suspicion, notwithstanding her blandness of manner and lady-like deportment.

She invited me into another room, while she prepared the articles which she proposed to let me have, but I declined, giving as an excuse that I preferred to sit where I could see whether my horse remained quiet. I watched all her movements narrowly, not daring to turn my eyes aside for a single moment. She walked round in her stately way for some time, without accomplishing much in the way of facilitating my departure, and she was evidently trying to detain me for some purpose or other. Could it be that she was meditating the best mode of attack, or was she expecting some one to come, and trying to detain me until their arrival? Thoughts like these passed through my mind in quick succession.

At last I rose up abruptly, and asked her if the things were ready. She answered me with an assumed smile of surprise, and

said: “Oh, I did not know that you were in a hurry: I was waiting for the boys to come and catch some chickens for you.” “And pray, madam, where are the boys?” I asked; “Oh, not far from here,” was her reply. “Well, I have decided not to wait; you will please not detain me longer,” said I, as I moved toward the door. She began to pack some butter and eggs both together in a small basket which I had brought with me, while another stood beside her without anything in it. I looked at her; she was trembling violently, and was as pale as death. In a moment more she handed me the basket, and I held out a greenback for her acceptance; “Oh, it was no consequence about the pay;” she did not wish anything for it. So I thanked her and went out.

In a few moments she came to the door, but did not offer to assist me, or to hold the basket, or anything, but stood looking at me most maliciously, I thought. I placed the basket on the top of the post to which my horse had been hitched, took my seat in the saddle, and then rode up and took my basket. Turning to her I bade her good morning, and thanking her again for her kindness, I turned to ride away.

I had scarcely gone a rod when she discharged a pistol at me; by some intuitive movement I threw myself forward on my horse’s neck and the ball passed over my head. I turned my horse in a twinkling, and grasped my revolver. She was in the act of firing the second time, but was so excited that the bullet went wide of its mark. I held my seven-shooter in my hand, considering where to aim. I did not wish to kill the wretch, but

did intend to wound her. When she saw that two could play at this game, she dropped her pistol and threw up her hands imploringly. I took deliberate aim at one of her hands, and sent the ball through the palm of her left hand. She fell to the ground in an instant with a loud shriek. I dismounted, and took the pistol which lay beside her, and placing it in my belt, proceeded to take care of her ladyship after the following manner: I unfastened the end of my halter-strap and tied it painfully tight around her right wrist, and remounting my horse, I started, and brought the lady to consciousness by dragging her by the wrist two or three rods along the ground. I stopped, and she rose to her feet, and with wild entreaties she begged me to release her, but, instead of doing so, I presented a pistol, and told her that if she uttered another word or scream she was a dead woman. In that way I succeeded in keeping her from alarming any one who might be within calling distance, and so made my way toward McClellan's headquarters.

After we had gone in that way about a mile and a half, I told her that she might ride if she wished to do so, for I saw she was becoming weak from loss of blood. She was glad to accept the offer, and I bound up her hand with my handkerchief, gave her my scarf to throw over her head, and assisted her to the saddle. I marched along beside her, holding tight to the bridle rein all the while. When we were about a mile from McClellan's headquarters she fainted, and I caught her as she was falling from the horse. I laid her by the roadside while I went for some water, which I brought in my hat, and after bathing her face for some

time she recovered.

For the first time since we started I entered into conversation with her, and found that within the last three weeks she had lost her father, husband, and two brothers in the rebel army. They had all belonged to a company of sharpshooters, and were the first to fall. She had been almost insane since the intelligence reached her. She said I was the first Yankee that she had seen since the death of her relatives, the evil one seemed to urge her on to the step she had taken, and if I would not deliver her up to the military powers, she would go with me and take care of the wounded. She even proposed to take the oath of allegiance, and seemed deeply penitent. "If thy brother (or sister) sin against thee, and repent, forgive him," are the words of the Saviour. I tried to follow their sacred teachings there and then, and told her that I forgave her fully if she was only truly penitent. Her answer was sobs and tears.

Soon after this conversation we started for camp, she weak and humbled, and I strong and rejoicing. None ever knew from that day to this the secret of that secesh woman becoming a nurse. Instead of being taken to General McClellan's headquarters, she went direct to the hospital, where Dr. P. dressed her hand, which was causing her extreme pain. The good old surgeon never could solve the mystery connected with her hand, for we both refused to answer any questions relating to the wound, except that she was shot by a "Yankee," which placed the surgeon under obligations to take care of the patient until she

recovered – that is to say as long as it was convenient for him to do so.

The next day she returned to her house in an ambulance, accompanied by a hospital steward, and brought away everything which could be made use of in the hospitals, and so took up her abode with us. Her name was Alice M., but we called her Nellie J. She soon proved the genuineness of her conversion to the Federal faith by her zeal for the cause which she had so recently espoused. As soon as she was well enough to act in the capacity of nurse she commenced in good earnest, and became one of the most faithful and efficient nurses in the army of the Potomac. But that was the first and the only instance of a female rebel changing her sentiments, or abating one iota in her cruelty or hatred toward the "Yankees;" and also the only real lady in personal appearance, education and refinement, that I ever met among the females of the Peninsula.

CHAPTER VII

A LOST FRIEND – DEATH OF LIEUTENANT JAMES V. – HIS BURIAL – THE GRAVE BY NIGHT – MY VOW – A SOLDIER-CHAPLAIN – RECOGNITIONS IN HEAVEN – DOUBTS AND DISSATISFACTION – CAPTURE OF A SPY – MY EXAMINATIONS AT HEADQUARTERS – MY DISGUISE AS A SPY – I AM METAMORPHOSED INTO A CONTRABAND – HIRED AS A COOK – BISCUIT MAKING – THE DOCTOR'S TEA.

Not long after these events, returning one day from an excursion, I found the camp almost deserted, and an unusual silence pervading all around. Upon looking to the right and left to discover the cause of so much quietness, I saw a procession of soldiers slowly winding their way from a peach orchard, where they had just deposited the remains of a comrade. Who could it have been? I did not dare to go and meet them to inquire, but I waited in painful suspense until the procession came up, with arms reversed. With sad faces and slow and measured tread they returned in order as they had gone. I stepped forward and inquired whom they had buried. Lieutenant James V. was the reply.

My friend! They had buried him, and I had not seen him! I went to my tent without uttering a word. I felt as if it could not be possible that what I heard was true. It must be some one else. I did

not inquire how, when or where he had been killed, but there I sat with tearless eyes. Mr. and Mrs. B. came in, she sobbing aloud, he calm and dignified, but with tears slowly rolling down his face. Lieutenant V. was thirty-two years of age; he was tall, had black wavy hair, and large black eyes. He was a sincere christian, active in all the duties devolving upon a christian soldier, and was greatly beloved both by officers and men. His loss was deeply felt. His heart, though brave, was tender as a woman's. He was noble and generous, and had the highest regard for truth and law. Although gentle and kind to all, yet he had an indomitable spirit and a peculiar courage and daring, which almost amounted to recklessness in time of danger. He was not an American, but was born of English parents, and was a native of St. John, New Brunswick. I had known him almost from childhood, and found him always a faithful friend.

When we met in the army we met as strangers. The changes which five years had wrought, and the costume which I wore, together with change of name, rendered it impossible for him to recognize me. I was glad that he did not, and took peculiar pleasure in remaining unrecognized. We became acquainted again, and a new friendship sprang up, on his part, for mine was not new, which was very pleasant, at least to me. At times my position became very embarrassing, for I was obliged to listen to a recapitulation of my own former conversations and correspondence with him, which made me feel very much like an eavesdropper. He had neither wife, mother nor sister, and, like

myself, was a wanderer from his native land. There was a strong bond of sympathy existing between us, for we both believed that duty called us there, and were willing to lay down even life itself, if need be, in this glorious cause. Now he was gone, and I was left alone with a deeper sorrow in my heart than I had ever known before.

Chaplain B. broke the painful silence by informing me how he had met his fate. He was acting in the capacity of aide-de-camp on General C.'s staff. He was sent to carry an order from headquarters to the officer in command of the outer picket line, and while riding along the line he was struck by a Minnie ball, which passed through the temple, killing him instantly. His remains were brought to camp and prepared for their last resting place. Without shroud or coffin, wrapped in his blanket, his body was committed to the cold ground. They made his grave under a beautiful pear tree, in full bloom, where he sleeps peacefully, notwithstanding the roar of cannon and the din of battle which peal forth their funeral notes over his dreamless bed.

One more buried
Beneath the sod,
One more standing
Before his God.

We should not weep
That he has gone;

With us 'tis night,
With him 'tis morn.

Night came at last with its friendly mantle, and our camp was again hushed in comparative repose. Twelve o'clock came, but I could not sleep. Visions of a pale face and a mass of black wavy hair, matted with gore which oozed from a dark purple spot on the temple, haunted me. I rose up quietly and passed out into the open air. The cool night breeze felt grateful to my burning brow, which glowed with feverish excitement. With a hasty word of explanation I passed the camp guard, and was soon beside the grave of Lieutenant V. The solemn grandeur of the heavens, the silent stars looking lovingly down upon that little heaped up mound of earth, the death-like stillness of the hour, only broken by the occasional booming of the enemy's cannon, all combined to make the scene awfully impressive. I felt that I was not alone. I was in the presence of that God who had summoned my friend to the eternal world, and the spirit of the departed one was hovering near, although my dim eyes could not penetrate the mysterious veil which hid him from my view. It was there, in that midnight hour, kneeling beside the grave of him who was very dear to me, that I vowed to avenge the death of that christian hero. I could now better understand the feelings of poor Nellie when she fired the pistol at me, because I was "one of the hated Yankees who was in sympathy with the murderers of her husband, father and brothers."

But I could not forgive his murderers as she had done. I did not enjoy taking care of the sick and wounded as I once did, but I longed to go forth and do, as a noble chaplain did at the battle of Pittsburg Landing. He picked up the musket and cartridge-box of a wounded soldier, stepped into the front rank, and took deliberate aim at one rebel after another until he had fired sixty rounds of cartridge; and as he sent a messenger of death to each heart he also sent up the following brief prayer: "May God have mercy upon your miserable soul."

From this time forward I became strangely interested in the fifteenth chapter of first Corinthians – the doctrine of the resurrection, and the hope of "recognition of friends in heaven" became very precious to me. For I believe with regard to our departed loved ones, that

> When safely landed on that heavenly shore
> Where sighings cease and sorrows come no more —
> With hearts no more by cruel anguish riven,
> As we have loved on earth we'll love in heaven.

And infinitely more than we are capable of loving here. "Few things connected with the great hereafter so deeply concern the heart as the question of personal recognition in heaven. Dear ones of earth, linked to our hearts by the most tender ties, have departed and gone away into the unknown realm. We have carefully and tearfully laid their bodies in the grave to slumber till the great awakening morning. If there is no personal

recognition in heaven, if we shall neither see nor know our friends there, so far as we are concerned they are annihilated, and heaven has no genuine antidote for the soul's agony in the hour of bereavement. All the precious memories of toil and trial, of conflict and victory, of gracious manifestations and of holy joy, shared with them in the time of our pilgrimage, will have perished forever. The anxiety of the soul with regard to the recognition of our friends in the future state is natural. It springs from the holiest sympathies of the human heart, and any inquiry that may solve our doubts or relieve our anxiety is equally rational and commendable.

"Tell me, ye who have seen the open tomb receive into its bosom the sacred trust committed to its keeping, in hope of the first resurrection – ye who have heard the sullen rumbling of the clods as they dropped upon the coffin lid, and told you that earth had gone back to earth; when the separation from the object of your love was realized in all the desolation of bereavement, next to the thought that you should ere long see Christ as he is and be like him, was not that consolation the strongest which assured you that the departed one, whom God has put from you into darkness, will run to meet you when you cross the threshold of immortality, and, with the holy rapture to which the redeemed alone can give utterance, lead you to the exalted Saviour, and with you bow at his feet and cast the conqueror's crown before him? And is this hope vain? Shall we not even know those dear ones in the spirit world? Was this light of hope that gilded so

beautifully the sad, dark hour of human woe, only a mocking *ignis fatuus*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.