

the nation, and his intimate connections with the early history of Iowa, makes it a matter of interest to give a short notice of his biography.

(To be continued.)

INCIDENTS OF PRISON LIFE IN 1862.

BY E. M. VAN DUZEE.

LATE MAJOR TWELFTH IOWA INFANTRY.

[Continued from page 64.]

We arrived in Mobile, Ala., early Sabbath morning, April 13th, and were immediately transferred to the steamer "James Battle," lying at the wharf ready for our reception. We here passed under charge of a company of "home guards," commanded by a rich young sprig of the chivalry. Col. John Forsyth was at this time commander of the post of Mobile. He came on board the steamer and engaged in conversation with Gen. Prentiss and other officers. He claimed a victory for the rebels at "Shiloh," but our faith could not be shaken by anything short of the best evidence to the contrary, that the final victory and all its glorious results were for the Union.

As the steamer left the wharf and turned her prow up the river, the prisoners crowded her guards and hurricane deck, and cast longing glances down over the calm bosom of the blue bay that opened its arms towards the gulf. Our vision was too feeble to pierce the intervening distance, but we knew that just beyond the horizon lay the federal blockading squadron, manned by brave and vigilant friends, whose hearts beat in loyal unison with our own; that however hate, malice and cruelty might hedge us in and do their desire upon us, there was an outer circle of loyal breasts extending along our whole gulf and Atlantic coast, and stretching across mountain and valley, along the coast line of that surging sea of battle, whose red waves, advancing and receding, marked the tide boundaries of war,—a circle of strength that could not be broken, from whose circumference, sooner or later, conquering cohorts would go forth, closing upon its centre with inexorable cer-

tainty, and brushing away the cobwebs of rebellion in the resistless energy of their onward march. Without such faith in the final triumph of the nation over its rebellious sons, our lot would have been dismal indeed; and although future movements and successes were not quite so orderly and concentric as our fancy—and the fancy of the nation at that time—pictured, in a crushed rebellion and a vindicated national sovereignty, we have now the justification of that faith which reposed with unwavering confidence upon “God and the right.”

Trusting thus in the ultimate triumph of our cause, we had but few fears for ourselves. None supposed that indignities or cruelty would be visited upon us with official premeditation. We did not expect to live on the fat of the land, to be clothed in fine linen, or to repose on downy couches. We knew not to what extent fanatical hatred of the “Yankee” would influence our enemies in their treatment of us, for Montgomery and Macon (where many of our own number afterwards suffered untold miseries,) Libby, Belle Isle, Saulsbury and Andersonville, had not at this early period of the war, amazed the civilized world with those horrible tragedies, unrivalled, unapproached by any recital of savage barbarism which later characterized the studied policy of the rebel authorities in their treatment of loyal soldiers who were prisoners in their hands.

The scenery along the Alabama river is monotonous, and possesses few charms for those who have enjoyed the delightful scenery of the upper Mississippi. The sombre forests that stretch back from the river and crown the few low elevations that relieve the dead level of the bottom lands, were draped in a fitting garb of Spanish moss—harmonizing the scene with our own spirits. To say that we enjoyed the trip, would be to exaggerate our feelings. We were susceptible to the beauties of nature, and did not close our senses or our hearts to her tender influences, and the balmy air, the soft breezes, the shimmering waters, the quiet thoughtfulness inspired by

all the harmonious surroundings, softened the obdurate mood of our minds, and did us good.

Just before reaching Selma it was announced to us, that all officers above the rank of 1st Lieutenant would disembark at that place, and the rest would proceed to Montgomery. The writer at that time held the rank of Captain, and with about sixty others made ready to leave the steamer. What sad emotions filled our breasts, as we assembled in the cabin to interchange words of encouragement and hope with comrades from whom we were about to be separated, who had been sharers with us in the varied experiences of a common service, and were now our partners in a common misfortune! The moist eye and clasping hand gave token of feelings that language was powerless to express.

The steamer rounded to the levee, our little party was hurried ashore, and she resumed her course up the river. Many of those who crowded her guards waving their last farewells, we never saw again. They sleep in unmarked graves, within soil then alienated, but, thank God! never severed from the grand family estate of the nation.

After partaking of refreshments provided for us at the principal hotel in Selma, we were placed on board cars on the Selma and Jacksonville Railroad, and taken to Talladega, Ala., where we arrived just at evening, on Tuesday, April 15th. We were escorted to our quarters in the Baptist Female College building by the citizens of the town *en masse*. As we passed along the principal street leading from the depot to the college, an incident transpired which illustrated one of the exaggerated conceptions current among the lower classes at the south relative to their northern brethren. A little urchin, apparently just entering his teens, who was intent upon having a good look at the "elephant," came dodging through the crowd up to the head of the column, and seeming not to have found what he was looking after, with an air of disappointment inquired of one of the guards, "Where are the Yankees?" The guard replied, pointing to the human-looking beings marching between the files, "There they are—

don't you see them?" With an expression in which indignation and triumph were blended, the boy retorted, "Oh, you don't fool me—where are their horns?" The lad had evidently heard and believed that the "Yanks" were a kind of beast allied to the devil himself. I have since seen southern men and women, who really believed our late Vice President Hamlin was a negro, and President Lincoln a mulatto; but such mistakes are slight indeed compared with that which traces the Yankee's pedigree to a hotter country than Africa.

The college building was a fine brick structure, situated upon a commanding site, overlooking a charming landscape of upland and valley, well cultivated plantations and fine mansion houses, with the old town in the foreground. The battle field whereon what is known in history as the "Battle of Talladega" was fought, between the forces under General Jackson and the Creek Indians, on the 8th of November, 1813, was in plain view from the portico.

We were while here under the guardianship of a company of raw recruits, armed with double-barrelled shot guns, a supremely ignorant set of men, and dangerous as ignorant. Their minds seemed to be disordered by the unwonted strain to which they were subjected, and, filled with the surpassing solemnity and importance of the duty imposed upon them, they had a morbid fancy that each prisoner constantly meditated some plan of escape. They watched with unflagging vigilance to detect the initiatory movement, and with their shot guns ever at a "ready," a mis-step on the part of one of the prisoners might cost him his life.

A case in which mental disorder of some kind on the part of a private soldier, and a brutal disregard of human life by a Confederate officer, were fully and fatally illustrated, occurred during the week we were at this place. One dark and rainy evening, the sentinel on post No. 8, immediately in rear of the college, heard a noise about the premises which awakened in his mind the fancy that an attempt was being made by some prisoner, under cover of the darkness and storm, to make his escape, and he gave the call, "Corporal of the guard—post

No. 8." The corporal quickly answered the summons; but the sentinel not recognising him as the proper person to communicate with, and perhaps imagining that some test of his fidelity might be purposed, continued the call, "Corporal of the guard—post No. 8." The corporal endeavored to explain matters to him, but the sentinel, with the muzzle of his fowling piece presented at the corporal's breast, was neither to be "fooled" with nor enlightend. The sergeant who posted the relief was summoned, and he tried to make the sentinel understand the instructions he had received when posted; but by this time the poor fellow was so bewildered, that the sergeant could make no impression upon him—and still the call went up, "Corporal of the guard—post No. 8." Finally the sergeant and corporal held a "council of war," and determined to send into town for the lieutenant, who came highly exasperated at the stupidity of the sentinel. But the lieutenant's success was no better than that of the others had been; and at length, finding commands, argument and entreaty alike of no avail, the lieutenant told him that he would have him shot down if he did not abandon his post; but, now thoroughly beside himself with bewildering terror, the sentinel's only response was the doleful cry, "Corporal of the guard—post No. 8."

The lieutenant gave the fatal order, and the sentinel fell pierced with several balls and near a score of buckshot. He was removed into one of the rooms in the lower story of the college, and one of the prisoners, Capt. Gregg, of the 58th Illinois Infantry, a physician, was summoned to him; but medical skill could not avail in his case. His mind was now unclouded, and he said to the lieutenant, with a simple, earnest and reproachful look that entered the hearts of all the bystanders, "Lieutenant, I thought I was doing my duty."

We had free range of the second story of the building, and our quarters were certainly spacious enough. Our meals were prepared outside the building, and consisted chiefly of "corn pone" and commissary molasses. I believe we had meat once or twice while here. Of leisure we had an abundance; and

we employed it in fighting our battles—especially that of “Shiloh”—over and over again. We looked the realities of our situation straight in the face, and determined upon a style of intercourse which, I have no doubt, had a very important influence upon our physical well-being through all the term of our imprisonment. Moping and melancholy affect not only the spirits; but, if yielded to, they impair the tone and vigor of the physical constitution, and open the way for the insidious inroads of disease. We were sensible enough to recognise this fact, and act with reference to it; and we resolved unanimously to tax our ingenuity to devise means of diversion, and to reject none though they might savor of the silly or childish. “How to raise a laugh,” was the grand problem which employed the mind of each. Tribute was exacted with impartial rigor, and he was under ban who would not contribute his mite towards the accomplishment of this truly philosophical object.

There were the same varieties of temperament, disposition and character in our little party, that may be observed in the same number, composed of several nationalities, and coming from diverse social grades, gathered together upon any occasion in any part of the land. Music, humor, drawing, the mechanic and dramatic arts, skill in originating and practicing games—each had some one or more special adept. The tastes of some were studious, and every opportunity that offered was seized to get possession of a book; and a number were obtained in various ways. The discussion of various subjects—especially military and political—afforded much diversion;—old friendships were cemented, and new ones formed. No interdict was placed upon our various diversions and employments, and at all times our interior intercourse was wholly unrestrained—with an exception or two which occurred during a later period of our imprisonment. I make mention of the latitude allowed us in these particulars, thus specifically, as showing the prevalence of a different spirit actuating our enemies thus early in the war, from that inhuman policy which presided at Andersonville and other places at a later period.

At the end of about a week we were very unexpectedly taken back to Selma, and quartered in a building that had formerly been occupied as a hotel. The building was owned by a man of northern birth and sympathies, who was at this time—as were many others of like sentiments during the rebellion—an officer in the rebel army, having his commission as Captain in the 44th Alabama Infantry, then in rendezvous for organization at Selma. The building had been appropriated by the rebel authorities not at all against the will of our friend (whose name I regret that I have forgotten,) and directly through his instrumentality, as we afterwards learned, much of the furniture of the sleeping apartments, as bedsteads, mattresses, bureaus, tables and chairs was left for our use. Our quarters here were very comfortable, there being a sufficient number of rooms to accommodate all without crowding. We were divided up into congenial groups—the weather was mild—the building well ventilated—the guards being stationed at the entrance, seldom appeared in the halls—quiet and privacy could be enjoyed without external molestation or disturbance. Our meals—two each day—were served with considerable regularity in the dining room on the ground floor. We were allowed to purchase milk, fruit and any other article of food we chose to send out for. A colored cook presided over the cuisine. Beef graced the tables once a day—corn-pone, rice and molasses (with such articles as we had been permitted to order,) made up the meal. Our rations, in quantity, quality or variety, were scarcely such as we desired, and we thought our lot severe at the time; but in view of what thousands of loyal soldiers afterwards suffered, and many of those captured with us were at this time suffering at Montgomery, our life at Selma was a continual “feast of fat things.”

In the intervals between eating and sleeping, here, as at Talladega, we resorted to such means as could be devised for “killing time.” Many who were novices in the use of cards when they were captured, soon became adepts in all the games which can be played with them; and I am happy to

be able to say from personal knowledge, that when the circumstances which induced a resort to such expedients had passed away, many who had thus yielded to the seeming necessities of the case, abandoned the use of cards wholly and without reserve. Mock trials upon grave charges and elaborate specifications, would sometimes be had before a court martial detailed by "Comd'g. General" Prentiss; the "spirits" would be invoked to play their pranks with tables and chairs; the daily paper would be read in the General's room, to the assembled prisoners, when the officer of the day was not around to prevent, or circulated from room to room and read on the "sly." This was a sly proceeding from the first. Much speculation was excited on the part of Col. Kent, commander of the post, and his officers, relative to our means of keeping so thoroughly posted in the current news. We could generally discuss McClellan's movements on the peninsula, with the officer of the day, with as much accuracy of detail as he himself possessed. A trusty assistant of our colored cook was our staunch friend; and notwithstanding orders were issued denouncing severe penalties for furnishing us with the newspapers, and at one time the alertness of our guards was stimulated by the offer of a large reward to any one who would discover the manner in which we obtained them, our colored friend, at great personal risk, supplied us with the "Selma Reporter" nearly every morning. It usually passed the guard concealed in the quart of milk ordered by the General. After much drying, the telegraphic dispatches could be read with sufficient clearness.

But the "Selma Reporter"—whose columns were usually as vapid and meagre as the minimum intellect that presided in its sanctum—was not the only newspaper to which we had access; we published one of our own; an illustrated paper, not quite so elaborate in its "make up" as "Harper's Weekly," but affording quite as much amusement to its readers. It was under the editorial management of Capt. W. C. Jones of the 14th Iowa Infantry, who was assisted by an efficient corps of artists, chief among whom was Col. J. L. Geddes of the

8th Iowa Infantry. The paper was printed by hand upon the wall of the General's room. Its vignette combined King Cotton, the irrepressible "Sambo," the chivalrous Southron, and a choice selection of venomous reptiles, in an allegorical rendering of the actual and historic "Southern idea," which was conceived with excellent point, and executed with fine artistic taste. Each issue of the paper contained at least one illustration, generally embodying some phase of military movements, as indicated by recent dispatches, or "hitting off" some feature of our own experiences, with appreciative and appreciated effect. The "leaders" were spicy—the advertisements characteristic. This innocent out-cropping of the humorous element was tolerated with very good grace by Col. Kent, who was really quite a genial fellow for a "last ditch" rebel—which he professed to be without discount.

But among all the diversions that formed so large a part of our daily life, there was one from which we derived more of rational enjoyment and real benefit than from all the others. In that twilight season so fitted for contemplation, and so promotive of those moods that wear upon the cheerfulness of the most heroic heart, impatience and care were charmed away by the sweet and subduing power of music. Among our leading singers were Capt. Stubbs of the 8th Iowa Infantry, and Capts. Stibbs and Townsley of the 12th. Songs grave and gay, sacred, patriotic and comic, filled the programme. These entertainments, though not intended for outsiders, generally drew together upon the opposite street corner, a large audience of the citizens, from whom there would occasionally come a response to our patriotic songs, in the shape of something more to their "secesh" tastes. It is a well known fact, that the South has but few songs of her own. Her people have generally been indebted to the North for their music, as for their school-books and general literature. "Dixie," their adopted national air, is no exception—the music and words having been composed by a citizen of the Keystone State. It was quite consistent that along with mints, arsenals, navy-yards and forts, the rebels should steal their

martial airs. The latter, I presume, were not embraced in the terms upon which the rebellion finally surrendered; and in the glorious uncertainty that prevails, regarding the rights of vanquished rebels—reconstructed or unreconstructed—I insist, the privilege of whistling “Dixie,” or any other favorite northern air, shall be magnanimously conceded to them.

Seeing that the habit of appropriating the productions of northern musical taste has been so largely indulged by our southern brethren, one instance of the kind on our part will perhaps be excused. “The Bonnie Flag with the Stripes and Stars,” a song that became quite popular through the North during the war, had its origin in the following incident: One evening a lad in the assemblage opposite our prison, sang “The Bonnie Blue Flag,” in response to “The Star Spangled Banner.” It was the first time we had heard the song—the air was simple, and we easily learned it. On the following day Col. J. L. Geddes composed the words of the song mentioned above, and in the evening it was sung for the first time, to the air of “The Bonnie Blue Flag.” The citizens seemed to be very much astonished at having their music thrown back at them in such a style, and we heard some murmurs among them, supposed by us to be prompted by the unpalatable sentiments of the composition; but no open demonstration of disapproval occurred. To show that in the nature of things our auditors could not have been expected to applaud our new song very heartily, I here give a few verses as afterwards published with the music—in which a few words have been changed from the original version, as sung at Selma, in order to adapt it more fully to popular use; but the spirit and tone of the composition remain the same:—

“We treated you as brothers, until you drew the sword;
 With impious hands at Sumter you cut the silver cord;
 So now you hear our bugles—we come the sons of Mars,
 We rally around that brave old flag which bears the Stripes and Stars.

We do not want your cotton, we care not for your slaves,
 But rather than divide this land, we'll fill your southern graves;
 With Lincoln for our chieftain we'll wear our country's scars,
 We'll rally around that brave old flag which bears the Stripes and Stars.

We deem our cause most holy, we know we're in the right,
And twenty millions of freemen stand ready for the fight ;
Our bride is fair Columbia, no stain her beauty mars,
O'er her we'll raise that brave old flag which bears the Stripes and Stars."

Not very mild, I think all will agree with me in saying, when it is considered that these sentiments were shouted into the ears of a city full of rebels, enthusiastic in their devotion to a "Cause" that was "Lost," not for any lack of disposition to shoot down defenseless Yankee prisoners on the slightest provocation.

It will be recollected, that the rebel Gen. Buckner was taken prisoner at Fort Donelson, and that there was considerable talk at the time of his being tried for treason. The Confederates greatly desired to procure his release ; and soon after we arrived at Selma, Gen. Beauregard sent a telegram to the commandant of the post, inquiring if Gen. Prentiss would consent to go to Washington on parole, and negotiate his own exchange for Buckner. Gen. Prentiss, supposing our government had some special reasons for not desiring to release Buckner, promptly declined the proposal, preferring rather to remain a prisoner, until such time as the government should of its own pleasure accomplish his release, than receive his freedom on condition to use his personal influence to thwart desires supposed to be entertained by the authorities at Washington.

This request of Gen. Beauregard, however, suggested to our minds, that perhaps the rebel authorities would grant us permission to send some of our number to Washington, for the purpose of endeavoring to effect the exchange of all prisoners captured at Pittsburg Landing, and, as far as in their power, promoting the execution of a cartel for general exchange of all prisoners held upon both sides. Such permission was sought for three of our number, whom we styled commissioners, and granted. The commissioners selected by us were Col. Madison Miller, 18th Missouri Infantry ; Major Wm. M. Stone, 3rd Iowa Infantry ; and Capt. Gregg, 58th Illinois Infantry. They left us near the latter part of May, and pro-

ceeded to Richmond, where they were furnished with the necessary passes, and gave their parole to return and deliver themselves up as prisoners of war, if they were unsuccessful in their mission. I shall endeavor to give a short account of the efforts put forth by them to accomplish the objects of their mission, in a future number.

Near the close of our stay at Selma, Capts. W. C. Earle and W. W. Warner, of the 12th Iowa, effected their escape from the prison. The building was very favorably located for escape. The upper hall ran parallel with the main street, and at its end was a window that looked out upon the roof of a much smaller building adjoining. The plan was to get out of the window on to the roof, and thence to the ground by means of a rope they had made out of their bed clothing. A few fellow prisoners were in the secret, and afforded what assistance they could in covering the exit from the building, which was performed without difficulty. After reaching the ground, our fugitives cautiously made their way through the city to the railroad, along which they walked to the first station north of Selma, a distance of ten or eleven miles. Unaccustomed to exercise as they had been for several weeks, and stumbling along over a road entirely unknown to them, in the darkness of the night, their progress was slow and toilsome, and they did not reach the station referred to until about day dawn. They had determined to take the morning train north, relying upon some slight changes they had effected in their clothing, for protection against discovery, and thinking that suspicion would be warded off by traveling openly, and manifesting no uneasiness or desire for concealment. They went boldly to the ticket office and purchased their tickets for a station thirty or forty miles distant, intending to leave the train at that point, and push forward across the country towards Huntsville, which place was then occupied by the federal forces. When they were seated in the car, they looked about them with anxious scrutiny, and supposed they were secure from detection, as the passengers were mostly civilians. But before they had proceeded far, a con-

federate soldier, going home on furlough, entered the car, and was at once recognised by our fugitives as a sergeant whom they had seen on duty at the prison in Selma. Still they hoped he would not notice them; but Capt. Earle was unfortunately the possessor of a very long, sandy beard, which flowed down upon his breast—a peculiarity which, once seen, was not likely soon to be forgotten. The sergeant had seen it, and knew it—or thought he knew it—and at once communicated his suspicions to an officer on the train, who caused their arrest at the next station. Those of the prisoners who knew of the escape, had feared such a *denouement*, and anxious watchers were at the windows at the rear of our prison, from which the railroad depot was in plain view only a block away. The first objects we espied when the train stopped, were our friends, escorted by a sergeant and a file of confederate soldiers. The sober visages and disconsolate bearing they brought with them, excited sympathies in our hearts, which, I must confess, strongly contended with a decided tendency to smile; for the luckless beard had been the subject of discussion before the escape was effected; and when we heard the story of their recapture, we could hardly restrain the manifestation of that egotism characteristic of human nature, which is wont to assert itself in that most aggravating of all criticisms, “I told you so.”

Nothing discouraged by their failure, however, our friends “watched and waited,” not exactly over the border, but for an opportunity to get over the border, and at a latter period we shall find them making another effort to regain their liberty—with what success, I shall leave my readers to imagine until the story is told.

[To be continued.]

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