

SKEDADDLE

NINETEENTH CENTURY ANECDOTES, POETRY, AND INCIDENTS OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

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A view into the war that is unfettered by the filters of the 20th and 21st centuries and not blurred by revisionist history. For more information about this e-journal, please see “Questions and Answers,” on page 22.

THE YANKEE WOUNDED

By B. Estvan (1863)

I TOOK a great interest in the fate of the poor wounded prisoners in the hospitals at Richmond, firstly, because, owing to the animosity which prevailed against the Yankees, I fancied they would not be much cared for; and, secondly, because I was aware, that, even with the best intentions, the Government could not do much for so many as thirty thousand wounded men. Richmond, at that time, had the appearance of a great hospital. Every public building was filled with the sick and wounded. Many of the patients had never been in action. Bad food, insufficient clothing, and want of proper attention had brought them into a state of disease. Two surgeons to attend upon six hundred patients were all I found in one hospital; happily, among the prisoners there were a few medical men, who did what they could to alleviate the suffering of their comrades. I shuddered at the spectacle I had to witness; the wounds of many had not been attended to, and their clothing was stiff from clotted blood. I did what I could to improve their condition, I went from bed to bed, promising to exert all my influence in their favor, and many a poor fellow looked me his silent thanks. *(continued on page 2)*



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THE YANKEE WOUNDED (continued from page 1)

I called upon General Winder to represent the case of these unfortunate men. Whilst every attention was paid to our own wounded and sick by the inhabitants, the unfortunate prisoners were allowed to rot and die. General Winder could not withstand my appeal, and promised me his assistance. I then appealed to the German and Irish population to come forward and do something for the poor prisoners, and in a few hours that appeal was responded to. I myself sent everything I could spare from my wardrobe. Many a bottle of wine and parcel of lint, prepared by German ladies, now found their way to the hospitals, and the Irish population, with their natural good nature, brought all the linen they could spare to the surgeons of the prisoners.

When it is considered that the persons who did this ran the risk of being arrested by the secret police, the very smallest gifts rank as great sacrifices, for even a glance of pity at a poor sick enemy would have brought them under the suspicion of being traitors to their country. In a few days some sort of system was introduced into the prisoners' hospital. The sick were attended to and waited upon, received changes of linen, and were cheered with the hope of recovery. Many a tear rolled down their pale cheeks, and many a blessing was bestowed on me on the day when I took leave of them, and I left with the conviction that I had preserved the life of many a brave fellow.

After the seven days' fight before Richmond, hundreds of wounded, friend and foe, were brought into Richmond, where for a long time they were left exposed to a broiling sun upon the platform of the railway station. I went with a friend of mine, Captain Travers, son of an admiral in the Confederate fleet, to the station, to render help. Owing to the destruction of the Merrimac, Captain Travers was out of employment, and was in plain clothes. Captain Travers was a fine-looking man, had travelled far, and was a perfect gentleman. When we reached the station, the greatest confusion prevailed; groups of wounded lay in all directions, a number of benevolent ladies, with their black servants, were distributing tea, coffee, chocolate, and broth, to the wounded.

However, I soon observed that they took no notice of many of the sufferers. Some one touched my spur, and on looking down, I beheld one of those ghastly faces which can never be forgotten. It was that of a stately-looking soldier of the enemy, in full uniform.

"You are a German officer," he said. "Yes, comrade," I replied; and his eye brightened. "Then I beg of you, most earnestly," he said, "to get me a cup of coffee." Both Travers and myself immediately went up to a lady who belongs to one of the best families of the South, and who had just passed the poor fellow by, without taking any notice of him. "Madam St. Clair," I said, "will you give me a cup of coffee for a wounded man?" "Oh, certainly," she said, and her servant handed me a cup. I hastened back, but whilst I was stooping down to give it to the wounded man, some one pulled me by the sleeve, and to my astonishment, it was Mrs. St. Clair, who, in a harsh voice, asked me if I was aware I was helping a miserable Yankee. "No, madam," I replied, "I do not know that, but I know that he is a brave soldier, as is proved by his wounds." At the same time I gave this prejudiced woman a look of scorn, which made her beat a hasty retreat, and I then gave the coffee to the wounded man. Tears ran down his furrowed, sunburnt cheeks, and having somewhat recovered himself, he whispered to me, "I am a Swiss; I served for ten years in the

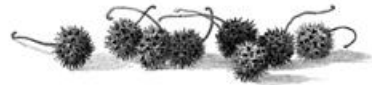


A Yankee Private

Kabermatter regiment at Naples, but never thought I should die in such a hole as this." I endeavored to console him as best I could.

Captain Travers now arrived with a basket of strawberries, and pressing some between his fingers, put them into the poor fellow's mouth. Whilst thus occupied, a man seized him by the arm, and said, "I arrest you." It was one of the police agents. Captain Travers drew himself up to his full height, "On what ground?" he said. "Because you are helping the enemy," he replied, "and all the ladies here are talking about it." "If it is your intention to arrest me, you can do your vile work at the American Hotel, where I am staying. My name is Captain Travers." As if he had been bitten by a snake, the miserable wretch started back, pleaded duty and the instigation of the ladies as his excuse, and went away.

Estvan, B, "The Yankee Wounded," *The Romance of the Civil War*, New York: The McMillan Company, 1903



A MIDNIGHT FLIGHT

An account of the leaving of a plantation on the Mississippi River

By Eliza Ripley (1862)

THE only exact date I can remember, and that I never forget, was the 17th of December.

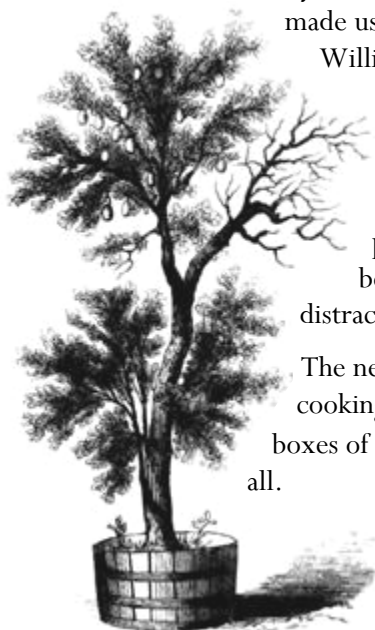
The weather was warm for the season, a thick fog hung over the river, obscuring objects only a few yards distant. As I stood by the window, in the early morning, completing my toilet, the white, misty curtain rolled up like a scroll, revealing a fleet of gunboats. Far as the eye could reach, up and down and around our point, the river was bristling with gayly flagged transports, anchored mid-stream, waiting for the dissipation of the mist to proceed. In a twinkling all was excitement with the hurry and bustle of our immediate departure.

A breakfast eaten "on the fly" as it were, a rushing here and there, and packing of necessaries for our journey, God only knew whither, we did not care where, so we escaped a repetition of scenes that had made us old before our time, and life a constant excitement that was burning us up.

William was despatched to the city on a tour of observation. He returned, to report ten thousand men and the most warlike demonstrations that the darky's genius could invent; pickets to be stationed away beyond Arlington, and all of us to be embraced within the lines and made to "toe de mark." "Mars Jim, and every white man what harbored a Confederate soldier de time of de fight, was to be tuk prisoner." The more William told, the more he remembered to tell; and, long before he was through with his recital, I was perplexed, bewildered, and almost distracted.

The negro men were summoned from their quarters to help load the wagon. We put in cooking utensils, some dishes and plates, bedding and a small mattress, a few kegs and boxes of necessary provisions, a trunk of clothing, some small bags and bundles—that was all.

The mules safely locked in the stable, the harnesses all ready to slip on, extra straps and ropes thrown into the wagon—too excited to sleep, we threw ourselves on our beds for the last time; too tired to talk, sore at heart; too worn



out to weep. There we lay in a fitful and uneasy slumber. In the dead stillness of the night there came a low tap at our chamber door. "Mars Jim!" My husband was on his feet with a bound. "Your niggers is all gone to de Yankees; de pickets is on our place, and dey done told your niggers you would be arrested at daylight." The speaker was head sugar maker on an adjoining plantation, himself a slave. "Call Dominick and tell him to get my buggy ready while I put on some clothes," was the only response. I lighted the candle and hurried my husband off—while he whispered directions for me to join him immediately after breakfast at the house of a neighbor, five miles back of us, which he could speedily reach by going through the woods, and to have one of the men drive the wagon, and one drive the ambulance through the longer but better wagon-road.

That was all—and he was gone. I did not lie down again, but wandered around in an aimless sort of way, too distracted to do a useful or sensible thing.

At the first appearance of dawn I aroused William to prepare breakfast, and Charlotte to get the table ready. Before the children were awake, I was down at the stable, having William and Willy hitch up the teams. I saw with half an eye that William was not in sympathy with our plans, and knew intuitively that my husband distrusted him. He who had been my husband's valet in his gay bachelor days and our confidential servant, our very aid and help in all my bright married life, had had his poor woolly head turned by that one trip to town, and asserted his independence at the first shadow of provocation. William failing me, I knew I must seek other help.

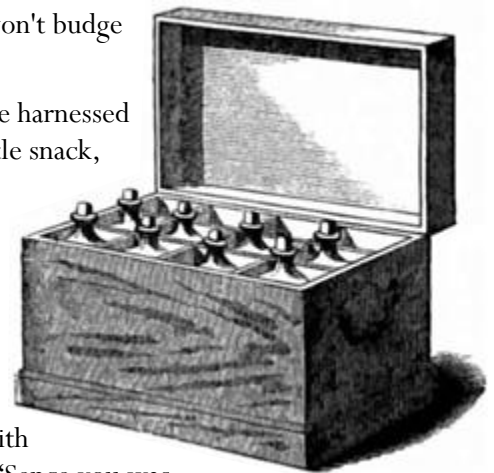
Being ready and eager to start, I immediately went down to the quarters, a half-mile distant; there I waited, going from cabin to cabin, and walked to the dwelling-house and back again. Willy stood by the hitched-up teams, and Sabe, near by, held the baby in her arms, while little Henry clung to her skirts. Then back to the quarters. This man "had a misery in his back —had had it ever since the crevasse;" that man "never druv in his life—didn't I know he was de engineer?" Another man "wouldn't drive old Sall—she was de balkiest mule on de place; you won't get a mile from here 'fore she takes de contraries, and won't budge a step."

I could have sat down and wept my very heart out. It was long past noon; the harnessed mules had to be fed, and William made out to say: "We had better take a little snack, and give it up; if we stayed home, Mars Jim would come back; the Yankees didn't have nothin' 'gin him."

At last old Dave said he "warn't no hand wid mules, but he 'lowed he could tackle old Sal till she balked." There was no time for bargaining for another driver now. I caught at Dave's offer before he knew it, only stopping long enough to bid all the deluded creatures a hasty goodbye.

Dave was hurried by my rapid steps back to the stable, and Sabe came out with the tired children. Just as I thought we were fairly off, William announced, "Sence you was gone a Yankee gunboat is cum down, and I see it's anchored 'tween us and Kernel Hickey's." A peep around the corner of the house confirmed the truth of his statement. Hastily grasping a carpet-bag, lying ready packed in the ambulance, I ascended to my bedroom, took from it two large pockets quilted thick with jewels which I secured about my person, while Charlotte put the breakfast forks and spoons in the bottom of the bag.

When I returned to the teams, everybody was standing about, apparently waiting to see what "Miss 'Lize" would do now. Summoning every effort to command a voice whose quaver must have betrayed my intense emotion, I directed Willy to mount the wagon, a few last baskets and packages were tossed into the ambulance, and Henry's little pony tied behind. I got in, then the little ones and Sabe; Dave shambled into his place in front; the curtain



cutting off the driver's seat was carefully rolled up, so I could have an unobstructed view, and Willy was told to lead the way.

So I rode away from Arlington, leaving the sugarhouse crowded to its utmost capacity with the entire crop of sugar and molasses of the previous year for which we had been unable to find a market within "our lines," leaving cattle grazing in the fields, sheep wandering over the levee, doors and windows flung wide open, furniture in the rooms, clothes too fine for me to wear now hanging in the armoires, china in the closets, pictures on the walls, beds unmade, table spread. It was late in the afternoon of that bright, clear, bracing day, December 18, 1862, that I bade Arlington adieu forever.

Ripley, Eliza "A Midnight Flight," *The Romance of the Civil War*, New York: The McMillan Company, 1903



A POOR WHITE'S OPINION OF SLAVERY

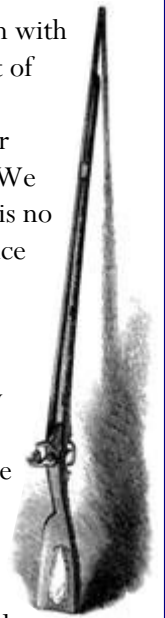
by Hinton Ravan* Helper (1857)

This extract is from a book called The Impending, Crisis, written by a Southern white man. It caused great excitement in Congress.

* should be "Rowan"

IT is a fact well known to every intelligent Southerner that we are compelled to go to the North for almost every article of utility and adornment, from matches, shoepegs and paintings up to cotton-mills, steamships and statuary; that we have no foreign trade, no princely merchants, nor respectable artists; that, in comparison with the free states, we contribute nothing to the literature, polite arts and inventions of the age; that, for want of profitable employment at home, large numbers of our native population find themselves necessitated to emigrate to the West, whilst the free states retain not only the larger proportion of those born within their own limits, but induce annually, hundreds of thousands of foreigners to settle and remain amongst them. We know that almost everything produced at the North meets with ready sale, while, at the same time, there is no demand, even among our own citizens, for the productions of Southern industry; that, owing to the absence of a proper system of business amongst us, the North becomes, in one way or another, the proprietor and dispenser of all our floating wealth, and that we are dependent on Northern capitalists for the means necessary to build our railroads, canals and other public improvements; that if we want to visit a foreign country, even though it may lie directly South of us, we find no convenient way of getting there except by taking passage through a Northern port; and that nearly all the profits arising from the exchange of commodities, from insurance and shipping offices, and from the thousand and one industrial pursuits of the country, accrue to the North, and are there invested in the erection of those magnificent cities and stupendous works of art which dazzle the eyes of the South, and attest the superiority of free institutions.

The North is the Mecca of our merchants, and to it they must and do make two pilgrimages each year—one in the spring and one in the fall. All our commercial, mechanical, manufactural, and literary supplies come from there. We want Bibles, brooms, buckets and books, and we go to the North; we want pens, ink, paper, wafers, and envelopes, and we go to the North; we want shoes, bats, handkerchiefs, umbrellas and pocket knives, and we go to the North; we want furniture, crockery, glassware and pianos, and we go to the North; we want toys, primers, school books, fashionable apparel, machinery, medicines, tombstones, and a thousand other things, and we go to the North for them all. Instead of keeping our



money in circulation at home, by patronizing our own mechanics, manufacturers, and laborers, we send it all away to the North, and there it remains; it never falls into our hands again.

In one way or another we are more or less subservient to the North every day of our lives. In infancy we are swaddled in Northern muslin; in childhood we are humored with Northern gewgaws; in youth we are instructed out of Northern books; at the age of maturity we sow our "wild oats" on Northern soil; in middle-life we exhaust our wealth, energies and talents in the dishonorable vocation of entailing our dependence on our children and on our children's children, and, to the neglect of our own interests and the interests of those around us, in giving aid and succor to every department of Northern power; in the decline of life we remedy our eye-sight with Northern spectacles, and support our infirmities with Northern canes; in old age we are drugged with Northern physic; and, finally, when we die, our inanimate bodies, shrouded in Northern cambric, are stretched upon the bier, borne to the grave in a Northern carriage, entombed with a Northern spade, and memorized with a Northern slab.

When asked why the North has surpassed the South I feel no disposition to mince matters, but mean to speak plainly, and to the point. The son of a venerated parent, who, while he lived, was a considerate and merciful slaveholder, a native of the South, born and bred in North Carolina, of a family whose home has been in the valley of the Yadkin for nearly a century and a half, a Southerner by instinct and by all the influences of thought, habits, and kindred, and with the desire and fixed purpose to reside permanently within the limits of the South, and with the expectation of dying there also—I feel that I have the right to express my opinion, however humble or unimportant it may be, on any and every question that affects the public good.

In my opinion, the causes which have impeded the progress and prosperity of the South sunk a large majority of our people in galling poverty and ignorance; entailed upon us a humiliating dependence on the Free States; disgraced us in the recesses of our own souls; and brought us under reproach in the eyes of all civilized and enlightened nations—may all be traced to one common source, and there find solution in the most hateful and horrible word, that was ever incorporated into the vocabulary of human economy—slavery.

The first and most sacred duty of every Southerner, who has the honor and the interest of his country at heart, is to declare himself as an unqualified and uncompromising abolitionist. No conditional or half-way declaration will avail; no more threatening demonstration will succeed. With those who desire to be instrumental in bringing about the triumph of liberty over slavery, there should be neither evasion, vacillation, nor equivocation. We should listen to no modifying terms or compromises that may be proposed by the proprietors of the unprofitable and ungodly

institution. Nothing short of the complete abolition of slavery can save the South from falling into the vortex of utter ruin. Too long have we yielded a submissive obedience to the tyrannical domination of an inflated oligarchy; too long have we tolerated their arrogance and self-conceit; too long have we submitted to their unjust and savage exactions. Let us now wrest from them the sceptre of power, establish liberty and equal rights throughout the land, and henceforth and forever guard our legislative halls from the pollutions and usurpations of pro-slavery demagogues.

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