THE BATTLE CRY OF FREEDOM

How the First Regiments of Colored Troops Were Raised.

AN INTERESTING REMINISCENCE.

Why President Lincoln Hesitated About Equipping the Slaves of Loyal States—Secretary Stanton's Position.

Helped Break Their Chains.

II.

The preliminary process to becoming a soldier was not always relished. The carbolic soap bath in the river, with the after clipping and and shampooing, being in many cases a first experience, was not submitted to in every instance without grumbling. A facetious sergeant, detailed to supervise the scrubbing, originated an argument which proved most effective.

"Look at you now," he was heard to say, "you ignorant nigger! You don't know nothin'. Don't you see your ole close a burnin' up on de sho', and don't you know when you gits inter dat ribber and scrubs wid de guvment soap you washes all de slavery out ob you? Go 'long wid you!"

And the subject, aided by a touch of the sergeant's foot, would make no farther resistance.

But when, the bath and barbering over, comfortable under-clothing was given them, and they were then arrayed in bright new uniforms and a glittering musket was put into their hands, surely Solomon in all his glory never experienced the glow of satisfaction that warmed the hearts of these ex-slaves as they viewed each other, and each man knew that he looked just like his fellows. For the first time in their lives they were men, not "boys"—not chattels to be disposed of at the will of a master, but owning themselves, treated with respect, and considered worthy to take part with white men in defending the union. In many of them the almost immediate change in look and bearing from cringing humility or unmeaning levity to earnest willingness and self-confidence was strikingly apparent; in others the change came gradually, as though time was needed to make them realize the revolution that had taken place. But it was surprising how quickly the vast majority learned well what was required of them and how few rascals there were. Intemperance and profanity were exceedingly rare among them, and the guard house opened its doors to a much less number than was usual in white regiments.

Of course there was general dissatisfaction among the abandoned masters and mistresses, many of whom were left without a single field-hand or house-servant. Scarcely a day passed without bringing one or two of these owners or their agents to inquire for some Sam or Tom or Dick. They were always invited up to headquarters to present their claims, and the records were examined for their satisfaction. If the names of their slaves were among the enlisted men, the ex-owners were required to produce a certificate of loyalty from the provost marshal of their district; and, if this was satisfactory, they were referred to the board of claims, to be organized in Baltimore for the purpose of deciding upon such cases. If they could show no proper certificate, they were summarily dismissed. Very often a man would change his name when he enlisted, thus making it very difficult for his master to trace him, besides causing confusion and a good deal of merriment among the young officers, as those who took new names invariably forgot them.

"Andy Smith!" the sergeant would cry at roll-call; but no Andy Smith would answer until, the name having been repeated several times, some comrade would nudge the fellow who had assumed it, saying:

"You is Andy Smith; don't you 'member you is?"

And then there would be a start and an exclamation of:

"So I is—I done forgot!" followed by a loud "Here!"

Amusing and sometimes pathetic scenes between masters and servants were of frequent occurrence. It was surprising in how short a time a poor, crying, slovenly slave became a bright, neat, self-asserting man.

One morning a tall, ungainly fellow, who had tramped several days to get to us, was brought to headquarters. He looked as though he had been driven and hunted all his life; but he was strongly built, and his ebony countenance, though showing a good deal of anxiety, expressed fearlessness and resolution. The officer who accompanied him reported him sound in every way except that he stuttered badly. Before the colonel could speak to him, the fellow managed, with much difficulty, to get out an earnest request that he should not be "jected."

"But you could not give the countersign if challenged," said the colonel.

"Jes try me, please, mars colonel," the poor man stuttered. He was tried with the regular drill orders, and the proof of the man's pluck was that, though surrounded by a crowd that laughed at his ridiculous efforts, he made an heroic stagger at every order, and with a certain air of dignity that had its effect. At any rate, the colonel, pleased with his manly, bearing, told him that if he would come up the next morning and give those orders without stuttering he should be mustered into the service. Whether what his comrades asserted, that he spent the night practising in the grove back of the barracks, was true or not, it is a fact that the next morning he appeared bright and cheery, and in a voice that resounded over the campus he repeated every order promptly and intelligibly. He was accepted and a few days afterwards put on guard at the foot of the hill. As he was quietly pacing up and down his beat, a man rode by, sprang to the ground, and saying, "Look after my horse, fellow," started to walk up the hill. He failed to recognize in the neat, fine-looking soldier whom he had addressed his runaway slave. But the slave knew his late master, and with the sense of security inspired by his uniform and his loaded musket, he stepped forward. He could now say "Halt!" without stuttering, and he said it in a very decided tone. And then the master, looking sharply at him, exclaimed with an oath:

"Sam, you stuttering idiot! what are you doing here?"

"Defendin' de country, mas—sa," Sam stuttered.

His master burst out laughing; and with another oath ordered Sam to stand aside and let him pass, as he had come to take his man back home, and intended to do it. But Sam was not alarmed. He lowered his musket significantly, and managed to say:

"I aint nobody's slave no more, massa. I's under the orders of de United States guvement, and dem orders is to let nobody pass here what can't gib de countersign. If you kin do that, you kin pass; if not—not!"

The master raved and stormed in vain. Sam stood firm, until the officer of the day who, unobserved, had witnessed the scene from a clump of trees, thought best to interfere. He escorted the irate Marylander to the colonel's office, but it is hardly necessary to say he was obliged to return home alone, as he came.*

A very similar incident occurred shortly afterwards, which I believe found its way into the papers; but it will bear repitition.

A new recruit, feeling to an exaggerated extent the dignity and the importance with which his uniform invested him, and realizing also, perhaps, the solemn obligations of his oath, was approached while on guard by his former master, and, with the usual oaths, ordered him to get out of the way. This the sentinel declined to do, and the master began to abuse him for "a coward," "a black scoundrel," "a sneaking thief," etc., all of which the soldier bore unmoved. But when the white man, still more infuriated by this indifference, damned the union army and even the uniform the black men wore, the latter becoming excited, and facing his angry master, said in a very forcible manner:

"Massa, you kin 'buse dis nigger as a nigger as much as you please, dat don't hurt nobody. But when you damn dese buttons, you damns de goviment, sar, and dat am treason, and I'se pledged to stop it. Now scoot!"

And he charged on the astonished master, driving him down the slope and into the road, and kept his musket levelled at him until he saw him get on a street car and ride away.

After a time, curiosity brought many people from the city every afternoon to see the troops drill, and before the end of the summer it became the fashionable thing for ladies and gentlemen driving out to stop below the hill on which the barracks stood and remain during the whole parade. Many even descended from their carriages and came up the slope to get a better view. As to the colored population, the barracks, and all that took place there, were full of interest to them. It seemed as though each one felt that he or she gained something in importance by belonging to a class that was attracting so much attention. Those especially who had sons or brothers among the troops rose at once in their own estimation and in their social scale. I coul cited a number of amusing illustrations of this vainglorious sentiment, but one will suffice.

The respectable matron who did my washing came to me one morning to say that she would be obliged to give up my patronage, as her son had just enlisted, and she could not think of disgracing him by continuing her business. Remonstrance was in vain; she retired from the suds, and lived on her importance and, presumably, on her son's pay.

One afternoon in the early fall two ladies came to headquarters. They were dressed in fashionable mourning, were gentle of speech and manner, and evidently belonged to the best society. They stated that they owned a large farm in Calvert county, had been visiting in Philadelphia, and had just learned that two "valuable boys" belonging to them had run away and enlisted in Baltimore. The "boys" had been brought up in the family, had always been kindly treated, were perfectly contented, and must have been worked upon in some subtle manner to have been induced to leave. They felt sure that if they could see them they could persuade them to return, as they could not bear the thought of the hardships the "boys" must undergo in army life.

The colonel looked over the roll and found the names of the "boys" who had enlisted two weeks before. He informed the ladies that, even if willing, these soldiers could not be remanded to slavery; but if they would like to see them, he would send for them. The ladies requested that this be done, and an orderly was dispatched to bring the fugitives.

Few worse specimens as regarded raggedness and general evidences of hard usage, than these two men had come up from the western shore. When they now made their appearance in the office, tall, good-looking fellows, in their clean uniforms and new shoes, and their countenances beaming with satisfaction, it was no wonder that their mistresses did not at first recognize them, and were embarrassed in addressing them. A short conversation ensued, during which the men, though perfectly respectful, let the ladies understand that they were neither ashamed nor sorry for having left their old home. As the visitors, evidently much chagrined, at last arose to go, one of them, extending her hand to the younger one, said:

"Well, John, good-bye; I am going home to-morrow. What shall I tell the people for you?"

"Give 'em my love, marm," said John; "an' tell em I's mighty glad I's here, an' I wish dey was all here, too."

The other lady had taken out her pocket-book, and now said to the other:

"And you, Will, what shall I say for you?"

"Tell 'em all, marm," he earnestly replied, "dat de Lord hab broke my yoke an' made me free. Tell em I's happier den I ever 'spected to be in dis world—an' I blesses 'em all."

"Very well," she said coldly, and dropped something into his hands. Both ladies bowed and departed.

The man Will stood looking reflectively at what his mistress had given him. As the door closed on her, he turned to the colonel and, showing a silver quarter, said:

"I'se worked fur dat woman mor'n twenty years, an' dis is de fust bit ob money she ever gib me!"

Towards the last of September Secretary Chase, being in Baltimore, was invited by Judge Bond to drive out to the barracks and witness the parade of the colored troops. His appearance was a pleasant surprise to Colonel Birney, who, up to that time, had failed to elicit from him any expression of interest in his work; though, on account of old friendship and political sympathies, the secretary was the first person from whom the colonel had expected support. But Mr. Chase had not as yet gone beyond the president in his views concerning the enlistment of ex-slaves. He, however, expressed himself greatly pleased as well as surprised at the fine display the troops made, and the next week he repeated his visit accompanied by Secretary Stanton.

As it happened, one of the recruiting boats arrived that very day, bringing over two hundred of the usual miserable crowd. Instead of having the men among them inspected at once, the colonel saved them for his afternoon programme.

The expected visit of the distinguished men became known in the city, and long before the time for the parade the road in front of the barracks was blocked with open carriages filled with ladies and gentlemen. The two secretaries in a landau, were so placed that they had an uninterrupted view of everything.

The bugle sounded, and the different companies with bayonets and every accoutrement glistening, marched in splendid order to their respective positions. As the last company wheeled into line, and while the spectators were enthusiastically expressing their admiration of its soldiery bearing, the raw recruits who had arrived in the morning filed up and, each one grasping his little bundle, was placed in line with the others. Their tattered garments, shoeless feet and disreputable appearance generally, afforded a striking and painful contrast to their uniformed brethren. The suggestiveness of the spectacle could not but strike every beholder. Mr. Chase declared it was the most impressive sight he had ever witnessed. Mr. Stanton warmly congratulated Colonel Birney, and expressed his satisfaction and his thanks that so much had been accomplished without embarrassing him.

The vigor with which recruiting had been pushed had taken the Maryland slave-holders by surprise. For some weeks they made no appeal to the government. Then, recovering their self-possession, they set to work to procure a revocation of Colonel Birney's authority.

Their first applications were made singly or by delegations to General Schenck or, in his absence, to his adjutant general, Donn Piatt, both of whom had steadily and cordially given their official aid and support to Colonel Birney's operations, though, from the nature of his orders, he was not subject to their command. The general, with quiet dignity, referred the envoys to Secretary Stanton, but held no hope of change; but the adjutant gave them deep offence by his sturdy patriotism, expressed with the wit and humor for which he has always been celebrated.

Secretary Stanton was deaf to remonstrance. But it was not long before Reverdy Johnson and Governor Swann discovered that the president was not aware of the enlistment of slaves. Petitions, letters of complaint and charges against Colonel Birney were now poured in on Mr. Lincoln. Finally, Reverdy Johnson and the governor, at the head of a Maryland delegation of slave holders called on him and presented the grievance with all the eloquence they could command.

The president was much disturbed, and supposing General Schenck to be the responsible party, wrote to him inmating a purpose to disavow his acts. Thereupon the general went to Washington and explaining his position in the matter, protested against censure or disavowal, and tendered his resignation as commandant in Maryland if such a step against him were intended. Mr. Lincoln listened patiently. Then, after a short pause, he said:

"Schenck, do you know what a galled prairie is?"

The general knew every kind of prairie except that.

"The galled prairie," resumed Mr. Lincoln, "lies on the slope back from the narrow river bottoms, and is so called because waters from higher levels cut gulches in it. But it is rich land. On it grow oak trees of a peculiar species. Their wood is almost as hard as iron and their roots grow deep down. You can't cut them or dig them up. Now, general, how do you suppose the farmers treat them?"

This was a poser.

"Well," said Mr. Lincoln, "they just let them alone and plough around them."

With this the president arose and shook hands, and General Schenck returned to Baltimore, pondering over the parable of the "galled prairies."

Nothing further was said about censure, but Mr. Lincoln was troubled on the score of his "pledge," and did not let the matter drop.

Colonel Birney was very busy one day issuing the final orders for despatching three boats to a point where, from information received, several hundred good recruits were waiting. He was interrupted by a telegram direct from the white house, as follows:

How many slaves have you enlisted?

(Signed) ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

The answer reached the president while Governor Swann and his friends were making another call on him.

"About three thousand," it said.*

A short and, according to the report of the committee, a pretty sharp discussion followed the reading of this answer, ending in the despatch of another telegram to the colonel:

Hold on and care for what you have; enlist no more until further orders.

(Signed) ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Colonel Birney's disappointment can be imagined. In another hour his boats would have been off and out of reach of telegrams. Now, all orders had to be countermanded and the boats tied up.

The next day the colonel went to Washington and had an interview with Mr. Stanton, always his friend, and ready to do for him all that his position towards the president permitted him to do.

The latter Colonel Birney did not see, but the encouragement protection, and aid he received from the great war secretary, with whose patriotism mingled no selfish ambition, enabled him, after a few weeks, to recognize his plans and continue the work which led to emancipation in the state of Maryland.

A new order was issued, by consent of the president, authorizing the enlistment of slaves of rebels and of consenting loyal masters.

*A much larger number of slaves had been received at the barracks, but the great majority being non-combatants, had been transferred to other points.

*Sam was a member of the Seventh regiment, and in battle was distinguished for his bravery. He was killed October 29, 1864, in the battle near "Kill House," Va.

Doubt Brightening Into Hope,

And hope into certainty, is the pleasing transition through which the mind of the nervous, dyspeptic invalid passes who tries a course of Hostetter's Stomach Bitters, which is alike incomparable and inimitable. Increased vitality, a gain in weight, tranquillity of the nerves, sound appetite and sleep are among the blessings which it is within the beneficient power of this medicine to confer, and it is not surprising that after acquiring this new dowry of health the grt eful sick should sometimes utter their praises of the Bitters in terms bordering on extravagance. "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the proprietors of Hostetter's Stomach Bitters have sometimes been obliged to suppress these eulogiums least they should be accused of blowing their own trumpet too loudly. For constipation, billiousness, kidney complaint and incipient rheumatism the Bitters is also a deservedly popular remedy.

Not a Free Agent.

New York World: Judge—"I thought I told you not to come before me again?"

Prisoner—"Well, Judge, I did'nt want to come. My friend in brass buttons made me."

Judge—"Ten days."

Due to His Diet.

New York World: "Mr. Johnsin, yer mule's got er fine voice; he kin mos' turn er chune when he bray."

Mr. Johnsin—Well, he oughter be able to sing, 'cause he libs on de air mostly, Mr. Smif.

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OLD JIM WOOD.

A Kentucky Sheriff Whose Courage Was the Admiration of the State.

The late James Wood, ex-sheriff of Nelson county, was a quiet, unassuming man, never thrusting himself into prominence, and singularly exact in the performance of his duties, says the Louisville Courier-Journal. He seldom carried arms, and did not seem to know what fear meant. I have known him at various times to tackle some of the hardest cases in Bardstown when no other man would dare to go near them. In those days, 1858 to 1865, and for that matter, long before, there were a number of tough fellows, young and old, in Bardstown and vicinity. They were personally clever men, but were given to using too much red liquor. They had all the extreme southern idea of insult, honor, reparation, and all that, for which the southern students at St. Joseph's college were largely responsible, and, despite their manner of getting on sprees and terrorizing the town, were as chivalric a lot of young men generally as you could find. It was with these that Old Jim had to deal occasionally, and he never failed to capture his man and that without trouble.

Among those who lived near town were several who were considered desperate characters. One of these was John Robinson, who, in a street fight, killed Bill Hardin, a grandson, I believe, of old Ben Hardin, and was himself so badly cut that one of his arms was crippled ever after. Robinson used to come to town and get drunk, and when in that condition always wanted to kill somebody. Nobody cared to interfere with him. I never saw but one man, aside from old Jim Wood, who had nerve enough to stand up to Robinson, and that was Bill Rowan, son of Senator Rowan. I have seen him defy Robinson to do his worst, but John wouldn't try anything but cursing. He knew that Bill was as game as he was. On one occasion, when John had been unusually drunk and had remained in town longer than usual, the good people became seriously alarmed lest he should kill somebody before he left. They wanted to have him put in jail, but no one could be found who would attempt the job. Old Jim Wood happened to be in town and some one appealed to him. The old fellow—he was then about forty-five, but gray-haired, and was called old—agreed to capture him. He found him on the street—a street on which a score of mortal combats had taken place—walked up to the desperado and said: "John, come with me." John didn't want to do it, but Wood notified him that he had to go to jail, and John gave up and marched along as quietly as a lamb.

In 1862 Bardstown was full of federal soldiers. St. Joseph's college had been seized and converted into a hospital, as were other buildings. The town was under military rule. Captain Jonathan Green, the "reformed gambler," was in command, and his force consisted of a hundred or two convalescent soldiers from the hospitals. One of these soldiers, who was suffering from a wound in the head, which effected his mind in some degree came out in town one day and took a drink or two, which made him wild. He got hold of an Enfield rifle, loaded it, put a bayonet on it and defied everybody. Captain Green sent the provost guard after him, some eight or ten strong, under a sergeant. The crazy soldier had created a terrible excitement on Main street, and was flourishing his gun in every direction. Whichever way he turned its muzzle there was a scattering. The provost guard could not get near him. Every time it started towards him he levelled his rifle and threatened to shoot, which he would have done. There must have been nearly two hundred soldiers besides the town people on the street. No one knew what to do. Suddenly some one said: 'Here comes Old Jim Wood; he'll get him.' To the astonishment o' the guard, and, in fact, everybody elsef the sheriff coolly walked up to the infuriated man and laid hold of his rifle, saying: 'You'd better give me that,' took it away from him, and in less than two minutes he was a disarmed prisoner. Old Jim didn't do anything but look at him, either. That's the way he did everybody. There are dozens of just such cases to his credit. When Nelson county lost him she lost one of the best men in the county."

Pauline and Lily.

In the course of an interview in St. Louis, Miss Pauline Hall was asked what she thought of Lillian Russell's refusal to wear tights.

"Well," she responded, "I don't know that I ought to say anything about it. It's a delicate matter, you know."

"Do you think there is any great danger to health in wearing tights, as Miss Russel alleges?"

"Nonsense. I have worn tights for several years and I have never taken the slightest cold that could be attributed to them. Often ladies refuse to wear tights because their figures will not admit of it. I have heard it said by connoiseurs that Miss Russell's knees and ankles are exceedingly bad. Her excuse for not wearing tights is no excuse at all, I am frank to say. There is no reason for any healthy woman injuring herself by donning tights. If a part calls for tights, tights ought to be worn and I for one will wear them."

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BELLE HAD THE DROP.

How the Female Bandit Robbed an Old Indian of $32,000.

In a sombre-looking hut on the Ockmulgee road, not far from Eufaula, says a correspondent of the New York World, lived old Matt Grayson, an aged, miserly Creek Indian, whose acquaintance with Belle Starr began under auspices as frightful as they were uncongenial. It was on a cold, rainy night in '83, and Grayson had gone to bed, little dreaming that he had fondled his miser's gold for the last time, when, suddenly there was a knock at his door, followed by a man's voice asking shelter. The old fellow made no reply, being evidently badly frightened. In another instant his door was broken down and Belle Starr, dressed as a man, shoved a pair of coaxers into his face, with the startling assurance that the sooner he turned over his lucre the better. Old Grayson, according to Belle's own statement, was paralyzed with fear, and could only beckon to the spot in the wall where his money was secreted.

Just how much she took is not known, but Grayson claimed $32,000, and she was brought before the Indian courts on that charge. Belle shrewdly escaped the United States court at Fort Smith by claiming to be an Indian, and her trial at Ockmulgee resulted in her acquittal, because the court was afraid to harm a hair of her head. Belle's principal accessory in this enormous theft was Ed Reed, whom she had married while on a trip to her father's home in Texas, and by whom she had one son, Ed Eeed, jr. This man Reed was a murderer, desperado, thief, highwayman and brigand of the first water—just such a man as Belle Starr was capable of loving devotedly, because he called out all the fire and bravado of her nature. Reed would occasionally kill a man or two, then boast in public places that no officer on earth could take him alive. Belle always went with him and supplemented his bloodthirsty swagger by similarly disporting herself.

After the Grayson robbery they stole some horses and went down into Texas on a spree, out countless officers were awaiting Reed on every hand, and they started back by way of Paris. Here they were decoyed by a party of so-called travelers, who, when Reed's back was turned, cruelly shot him down in his tracks and secured upward of $2,000 rewards offered by the government and by the state of Texas.

Belle returned to Eufaula and in two months married a notorious thief named Sam Starr, from whom she took the well known name of Belle Starr. While her third husband possessed none of the blood thirstiness of her second, Belle found him sufficiently villainous to satisfy her rapacity and the pair lived very happily together. They figured time and again in the federal court at Fort Smith charged with horse-stealing, illegal whisky selling and assault, and upon one occasion they found themselves consigned to the government penitentiary at Detroit. This was a sad blow to Belle's boasted record of never having spent a day in jail, and the way in which it happennd only made her take it more sadly to heart.

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