

CHAPTER VI.

COVERS THE TIME DURING WHICH I REMAINED AT THE POST OF BENTON BARRACKS, NEAR ST. LOUIS, MO., AND EMERGES FROM APRIL 10, 1863, TO DECEMBER 29, 1863, THE LATEST DATE BEING THAT OF MY DISCHARGE FROM THE SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES AS PRIVATE OF COMPANY "B" EIGHTY-EIGHTH REGIMENT OF INFANTRY ILLINOIS VOLUNTEERS.

1. AT the first thought I concluded that an account of my life at Benton Barracks would necessarily include a lengthy dissertation upon the "technique" of army life—the peculiar arrangements existing there, treating of the various officers and their separate duties, and methods of performing them; but I have since amended my plan so that I will only give in this place a general account of my experiences at the post, and when I am bound to mention anything beyond the legitimate limits of such a project I will endeavor to be as brief as possible. My nominal office, as I have already stated at the conclusion of the preceding chapter, was that of "Post Bugler," but upon

the day of my arrival I was set to work in the office of the Post Adjutant, and assisted in the preparation and making out of what was called a "Tri-Monthly Post Return." That document comprised an official statistical account and history of the post for the previous ten days; the number of officers and men, their several names, ranks, companies, and regiments, and the nature of the details of those who were on special duty; also the names, rank, and regiment of all who had died or been transferred during that period; and much other information prescribed by the rules of the Adjutant General's Office. I was not long in becoming familiar with the requirements of that branch of the business, but I was altogether relieved of it within a few days, and installed at a separate desk, having in my charge the issue of passes to go in or out of the camp lines. I soon began to recruit my health, and in about a month I had procured a small sharp-toned bugle, and one morning I surprised the Post Band by sounding the "first call," with a number of variations possible on that instrument. The post of Benton Barracks was situated on what was called Grand Avenue, and included the Fair Grounds belonging to the Agricultural Society of St. Louis and a large tract of land adjoining on the west. The whole of the Fair Grounds, with the numerous buildings, large and small, belonging to it, were monopolized, and used as a sort of General Hospital. This General Hospital was almost entirely independent of the post, and was carried on under the direction of Surgeon Ira Russell, U. S. V. Colonel B. L. R. Bonneville was, as I have said, our post commander.

He was a short, fat old gentleman of French-Canadian extraction. He had been in the military service of the United States for forty or fifty years, and had already been retired, and was now restored to the active list, and doing duty as Chief Commissary of Musters for the Department of the Missouri besides being Commander of the post. The Colonel had seen service in all of the various wars the country had been engaged in during the many years of his career, but what he appeared to be most particularly proud of was the fact that when comparatively a youth, and only a Captain in the army, he had explored the Rocky mountains and gone through ever so many adventures and hair-breadth escapes, and had been given up as lost for a time; his account of which had been edited or written by no less a personage in literature than Washington Irving. I saw the book. It was about the size of this of mine; and although it would be presumptuous in me to criticise so august a writer, still I cannot forbear saying that I have seen many works of the Prince of American authors in which he displayed his genius to a degree immeasurably beyond that which he appears to have employed in editing or writing the Colonel's narrative. The Post Commander had for his Acting Assistant Adjutant General a handsome, dashing, and young Lieutenant, A. J. Newby, who belonged to some Iowa regiment. Lieutenant Newby not only had a handsome face and a fine carriage to recommend him, but he was besides a very good, kind, and gentlemanly officer. Above all he was a master of the "Spencerian" system of hand-writing, and his penmanship was as handsome

as his face. His signature was a model for all to copy. Our Post Adjutant, however, sadly interfered with Lieutenant Newby's designs, if he had any, on the affections of the Post Commandant's pretty niece. Lieutenant N. Brosseau was from Kankakee, Illinois, and was not only of the same extraction as the Colonel, but he was withal a handsome, modest young fellow, and, what capped his qualifications, he was a devout Roman Catholic in religion; so that, no matter how often the lady went out riding under the escort of the ponderous Acting Assistant Adjutant General, it was Lieutenant Brosseau who invariably got the honor of gallanting her to and from church. Iowa men, or men belonging to regiments from that State, were in the great majority around Headquarters. In the Post Adjutant's office besides myself was ——— McHenry, a little red-complexioned, shrivelled up old man from the north of Ireland. Mac was a patient, reliable, and steady man with his figures and pen, and lived entirely contented if he had the uninterrupted enjoyment of two privileges, as he was pleased to term them. The first was immunity from "botheration" when at work at his "reports," and the second was the exercise of unrestrained liberty in the queer notions he had of the laws of health. He would rather pay twenty-five cents at any time than indulge in a "square meal," being content with bread and water, provided the former contained a proper proportion of phosphorus or other alleged brain food; and he liked to sit under the flow of a water pipe and allow the cold fluid to run down his naked back for an hour at a time. The post headquarters

itself was a large, substantial mansion, situated in the centre of the parade ground, and the Post Adjutant's office was in a building of more modest pretensions near by. Next door to our office, but in the same building, was the U. S. Military Telegraph Office, and that was presided over by Mr. and Mrs. Marean. They were a childless couple, she fat, curly-headed, and jolly, he thin and straight-faced. The headquarters men used to make of the telegraph office a sort of rendezvous; that is, such of them as were specially musically inclined. There were in it guitars, flutes, and I believe a piano, and we always got the air of the latest patriotic song or hymn for the first time at Marean's. In the main building there were Captain Guerin, a citizen, Chief Clerk to the Commissary of Musters, and Jones, Windsor, and Wadsworth, clerks. The latter had also the duties of Postmaster added to his share. Amos M. Currier was on the other side of the hall, as Chief Clerk to the A. A. A. General. A. M. Currier was a nice little, intellectual looking man, and as honest and kind as his appearance betokened him. He wore long silky brown whiskers and full beard and moustache, and on the whole was such a person as goody-goody boys like to have for a school-master. There were some other clerks there—a Zach King and a King No. 2, but I have forgotten the names of the rest. They were all men of Iowa regiments, and Mount Pleasant, McGregor's Landing, Washington, or Des Moines, Iowa, invariably marked the letters they received. My duty was now confined to the issuing of passes not only to officers and men who desired to leave the camp for business or pleasure,

but also to such other persons (civilians) whose business or curiosity required that they should come into or go out of the lines of the post. Most of the latter were male and female peddlers of fruit, fancy goods, etc.

2. As the fine weather came on I found my situation quite comfortable and easy. The routine of my labor was light, and I found at my disposal considerable leisure time to go and come. I frequently visited the city and what places of interest there were there and in the surrounding country. Before the summer was much advanced I had purchased a fleet pony of the mustang breed, and on its back I often rode for miles around and through the adjacent country. I prescribed for my health's benefit frequent and furious conrings along the "King's Highway," a road that ran from the river above the city to the river a long way beyond it below, often going as far as Carondelet without turning. I visited the scene of an early triumph for the Union cause—Camp Jackson—just outside the city, where a military camp of Rebels was surprised in 1861, the men captured, and the State assured to remain in the Union. During the summer we used to go past the La Cede Iron Works, and thence on to an ancient ferry on the Mississippi river to bathe. The place was none of the best, owing to the treachery of the current, and tradition was plentiful that catfish thereabout were as large as porpoises, and when caught invariably had within each one of them from a quarter to a half of a human body. I remember that I used to look upon the whole ferry and the scene as the same as that memorable one described in "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

About this time the Government found itself with a large number of men on its hands who had been rendered unfit for field service by reason of wounds and amputations, and the order authorizing and directing the formation of the "Invalid Corps" was promulgated. On general principles the objects of the order were applauded by all, as it was considered no more than right and just that the General Government should retain in its service and pay as many of its disabled veterans as it needed and who were capable of performing clerical and other duties akin to them. Men with but a single leg or arm, instead of being thrown back upon the friends and communities which they had left behind them, in the receipt merely of a paltry pension, were suitably placed in positions where the Government could utilize their talents and at the same time well afford to pay the ordinary wages. Under these arrangements there was a good regiment organized in St. Louis by Colonel Alexander, an old veteran of the Regular Army. There never was a word uttered that I heard in any manner derogatory to the organization until the authorities in Washington decided that other than those who were wounded and maimed might be received into the corps; but now it was that many great and notorious cowards, men who were full of fear of the dangers incident to an active career in the field, officers as well as soldiers, made a grand rush for admission to membership in the "Invalid Corps." Certificates of Disability were almost dignified with a market value, and the prices soon ascended to a high figure, and because "Chronic Diarrhoea" was the prevailing complaint

alleged by such dishonorable men in their applications for transfer, the whole corps fell into disrepute; and although the designation of it was officially changed from "The Invalid Corps" to "The Veteran Reserve Corps," still it rarely got that name save on paper and in very polite society. In all other places it was stigmatized as "The Diarrhoea Corps." In my position and by my associations I was enabled to see a great deal of the inside workings of the organization, and I can truly say that it was really disgusting when not amusing to hear the stories of some applicants for transfer. Dr. Ira Russell used to tell us some of their stories: how one officer offered three hundred dollars for the necessary certificate; another tendered a mortgage on his farm; others begged and prayed to the medical authorities for their assistance. All this time there was no difficulty in a proper person being transferred. Poor George Rodney of my company wanted a certificate very badly, but he succeeded only in becoming an inmate as a convalescent of the General Hospital. There one day he proved himself entitled to some indulgence, for he succumbed to the effects of disease contracted in the service, and died and was buried. It was Rodney against whom the Colonel, on that memorable night before Thanksgiving, the previous year, had especially directed his denunciations because George had his musket with him, and from that it was to be inferred that he intended to use his weapon against defenceless people. The climax of interest in the "Diarrhoea Corps" was reached when, not long afterward, a law was proposed in the National Legislature having for its object the

consolidation of the corps into compact regiments, and the incorporation of the whole with the Regular Army. Under the pressure of the intense spirit of patriotism or super-patriotism then prevailing, and amid the confusion and turmoil incident to the state of war the country was then in, the act was passed, and the eminent promoters of the measure had performed services that entitle them to be vividly remembered, perhaps differently by different people. Under this law the grossest injustice and unfairness was enacted, for while thousands upon thousands of good men were wounded or otherwise disabled, they did not care for or seek to fasten themselves upon the Government for life, but were content to return to their homes as patriotic citizen soldiers, on the contrary, with the incorporation into the Regular Army of the Veteran Reserve Corps, the officers belonging to that organization became equal in the tenure of their commissions to those who had devoted their lives, from extreme youth to old age, to the service of their country. The result was that on the conclusion of the war the country found upon its hands a batch of officers whom it could not get rid of except on half pay. It may be interesting in the near future to see Colonel Bonneville, U. S. A., and others of his class and services, on a social and official equality with "Colonel Swashbuckler, U. S. A.," erstwhile a corner lounge in some country town in the far North. Many persons like the last-named gentleman (?) will secretly thank the luck that deprived them of a limb apiece when they complacently draw half pay, while the more unfortunate comrade, of equal rank and ser-

vices, turns the crank of his hand-organ on the corner of the street and receives the pitifully small pension awarded to him by his grateful country.

3. There was no complaint possible to be made in relation to our domestic economy. Here occurs a break in the almost constant talk of matters in relation to what was for our eating; there is not now much solicitude about rations, and we had no longer to think of the wherewithal for dinner before we had disposed of our breakfast. "Our mess" was composed of most of the clerks engaged in and about the Post Headquarters, and we had a cook all to ourselves. Sam Fry was office-orderly to the Colonel commanding and general purveyor for the mess. He was in every respect a first-class "gobbler." Sam was besides a jolly fellow, of great experience and always full of fun. In his career he had been an auctioneer, a clown in Dan Rice's circus; he had driven a stage-coach for years, and when he enlisted he had just dropped the handles of his plough, Cincinnatus like, on a farm up in Iowa. There were also three or four men from the General Hospital—apothecaries, hospital stewards, etc.—in the complement. We occupied a separate house, and altogether were very comfortable. Sam Fry drew regular rations for all of us except Jones. Jones got commutation money instead, and paid a stated sum for his board. The rest were taxed about one dollar a week, and with the fund thus collected Sam Fry provided such seasonable articles of diet as were not included in the legal ration. How the cook got her pay I have forgotten, but I have an indistinct recollection of there having been an un-

derstanding all around that she was expected to steal enough to compensate her for her services. The troops stationed at Benton Barracks at the time I am writing about were almost entirely composed of unexchanged paroled men, with a small force of others acting as a provost-guard; but other troops made of the post a sort of temporary stopping place on the journey going south. When any such did favor us with their company there was great excitement at headquarters. On ordinary occasions it was the merest matter of form to mount the guard. The work was often done by either McHenry or myself, each in our turn acting as Adjutant and Sergeant-Major all in one, and the Post Band often outnumbered by two to one the whole detail for guard duty. When it happened that a battalion or regiment of men came to be our guests, the first thing that usually occurred to McHenry was to make a detail for the ensuing day, taking care to draw a requisition for sufficient men and officers to make the ceremony imposing. One such occasion was on the 12th of October, 1863, when, about noon-tide, we were startled by the strong and measured sounds of many bugles, and by a great amount of drumming and fifeing. McHenry was in ecstasies, and none of us were very sorry for the promise of an enlivening of the routine of duty. We had not long to wait before we were cheered by the sight of a sturdy column of infantry en route. This proved to be the Tenth Minnesota Infantry Volunteers. It had just returned from General Sibley's expedition against the Dakota or Sioux Indians. The forces of the expedition had pursued the red-skins to and beyond the

Missouri River, and although the men had seen very hard service, still the whole brigade of which this regiment formed a part had lost only eight men. The officers and men of the regiment were as a rule tall, fine, able-bodied men, rough in exterior and bronzed by exposure, and to a dot they filled the requirements of a good picture of the ideal pioneers of our Western country. The regiment was well armed with the latest improved pattern of the Springfield rifled musket. Friend McHenry did not wait long, but sent a requisition for the attendance on the morrow of a most respectable sized detail, and during the afternoon, when the Ninth regiment from the same State arrived in camp, it only caused McHenry to make out another detail to augment the number to report. During the whole of that evening nothing was talked about in our set save the grand guard-mounting there was to be on the next morning. There were to be eighty privates, a quota of non-commissioned officers, and three shoulder-strapped gentlemen to boot. Early next morning we were astir. McHenry had conned his part as Sergeant Major well, and was waiting. But alas for his hopes of distinction! the Post Band had not yet concluded its morning salutation of reveille when the band of the Ninth Minnesota struck up the "General Assembly." Soon afterward the regiment was in line, column formed, and the command, "Forward" given. Then they left us as they came, without a word of explanation, not even submitting their reports to post headquarters. When the time came for Guard-mounting we were compelled to be content with the usual beggarly detail of Provost Guardsmen for duty.

The performance of my duties as Pass Clerk brought me in contact with many queer and interesting characters. About the middle of August, 1863, a man who said he belonged to a certain regiment of Illinois Infantry became very familiar; and as he was a sort of engaging person, he rarely failed to secure a pass from me when the favor was in my discretion. I do not now remember what it was that particularly aroused my suspicions that all was not right with him, but they were aroused about the time mentioned. He always had plenty of money, and apparently wanted for nothing but complete liberty. Finally I hit upon a plan that was immediately successful, and I declined to issue a pass to him. I pleaded as my excuse the standing order in relation to the amount issuable and the risk I ran in overstepping the limit prescribed. This was an obstacle to his going to St. Louis, and forced his secret. He used his occupation of a soldier as a cloak or cover for the business he was really engaged in. That was the "shoving" or passing of counterfeit money. He then got the required pass. As soon as he was gone I consulted with my superior, and proper measures were concocted to meet the emergency. Under instructions from Mr. Carrier, I went with the soldier into the city, among his companions there and through their haunts. By some means or ~~other~~ the head of the gang (for there was quite a number of them) succeeded in eluding the officers of the law set upon his track. It was said at the time that the detectives in the service of the Government, or at least some of them, were in collusion with the forger. However, the business was broken up for a

time. I mention this circumstance more particularly because during the time I played amateur detective I saw more devilment than I had during my whole previous life.

4. On the 1st of September I received a furlough or leave of absence for fifteen days, and upon that I proceeded to Loda, Illinois, and there passed the ensuing two weeks. It was a remarkably pleasant season of the year, and I remember to this time that day succeeded day in a round of interest. Up to that time the farmers of that section had been kept comparatively poor. Corn was dirt cheap, and in some instances actually used as fuel; but during that year the people had sown flax seed and had realized enormous profits, owing to the great demand and price paid for the product for hospital purposes. The farmers had also cultivated sorghum or Chinese sugar cane, and that had yielded immensely—so much so that the resources of the country were taxed to their utmost for casks to put the syrup in, and still it fetched a high price per gallon. In this way the country folk were paid for the two or three previous years of hard times, and they were all cheerful and happy in so far as material prosperity was concerned. All this contributed in a great degree to enable me to accomplish my object, which was to have a pleasant time and relaxation from the routine of my duties at Benton Barracks.

During the early autumn of 1863 the political affairs of the State of Missouri were, to put it mildly, in a very bad way. Governor Gamble presided at Jefferson City, the capital of the State, and he was thoroughly hated and despised by what was designated

the "loyal" element of the people of the State, while he was upheld or defended by those who were of contrary affiliations. There was an election approaching, and great excitement ensued. Politics engrossed the attention of the citizens to the exclusion of almost every other topic. Street corners, churches, public halls, markets, and even our military camps were the scenes of wordy warfare. The severe measures of General Curtis early in the year had taught the would-be outspoken sympathizers with the South a lesson that they had not forgotten. Alton Penitentiary was not far away, Gratiot street Prison was at hand, confiscation laws were in force, and above all it was easy for declared rebels to be transported into the Southern lines. So far as the opposition dared to go, they went. I remember listening to a speech of the celebrated patriot and Union man, General "Jim Lane," of "Kansas Jayhawker" fame. He was a Radical of the Radicals. He breathed death, confiscation, banishment for Rebels in every sentence, and he was not left without support—his words were received with tumultuous applause. He was replied to by General Frank P. Blair, Jr., who even at that time had so changed his views from what they had been during the earlier stages of the war, as to be called a "Copperhead." Jefferson City was at that time in part protected by a regiment of the Missouri State Militia (the First Regiment). There were two kinds of militia in the State—the Missouri State Militia and the Enrolled Missouri Militia—and the greatest confusion was caused by that circumstance. The prime distinction between the two sorts was found in the na-

ture of the sentiments they held toward the Federal Government and the ideas they entertained in regard to States rights, especially the rights of the State of Missouri. The first mentioned were intensely loyal to the Union of the States. What the others were may be inferred, but I cannot undertake to describe them any further than by saying that each sort was at the throats of the other on the slightest provocation. When "Jim Lane's" speech reached the capital the loyal M. S. M.'s became wildly enthusiastic, and the men of it there only ceased to cheer and roar over it when they had denounced the Governor at his own door. On this many of the militiamen were thrown into prison, but the rest of them rallied, carried the prison house by storm, and released their comrades. "This was altogether too radical," said Captain Barnes to me, "and the consequence is that the regiment has been scattered—two companies on the Iron Mountain Railroad, two on the Pacific Railroad, and two more here." Several of the officers of the regiment were even then under arrest for aiding and abetting the men in the commission of whatever the offence was that was laid to them.

About the last of October we received news that went to confirm previous rumors to the effect that a soldier named Roberts, of the First Nebraska Volunteer Infantry, was to be executed at our post for desertion and felony. The anticipation of the event gave rise to a great deal of speculation, but it never came off, at least during my time, although the sentence had been regularly approved by the highest authority. When I first arrived at Benton Barracks the place con-

tained a large number of men, and these we organized into companies and battalions. Under the rules and regulations governing the army, each company was entitled to a certain quota of women as laundresses. In times of tranquillity these women are wives of soldiers, but in our camp it was otherwise, except in a very few instances. Whether or no, when men were exchanged and ordered to the field it was altogether out of the question to think of sending the women with them, so that when the camp was depleted of soldiers there remained a large number of these women, and their presence within the lines soon developed into a nuisance. Being attached to no regularly mustered company, they could draw no rations, and therefore it is easy to see that no matter how they obtained the means of living, it was certainly acquired in an irregular manner. They retained their old quarters, and from thence the unfortunate creatures sallied forth as foragers. Nothing was safe from depredation: the commissary depot was robbed, the wood piles were raided upon, and the stores of the "village" were burglarized. It required a strong effort, but finally they were all extirpated, almost literally at the point of the bayonet. Captain Fillebrown, the commander of our Provost Guard, did the work in a very "gallant" but at the same time effectual manner. Then the women swarmed into the buildings attached to the General Hospital. They were not allowed to rest long, however, before the Hospital folks chased them from one building to another until what were left of the unlucky women were all congregated in a shanty adjoining the dead-house. The enemy were finally

driven out of this last resort by a stratagem. Hospital Steward Ferris procured a couple of devil-may-care fellows, who allowed themselves to be publicly carried into the dead-house, and in such a manner as insured the fact that at least some of the obnoxious women could not fail to see them go in. At midnight the women were startled by the sounds of the supposed dead men groaning and raving as they reached their ears through the thin walls of the house. The frightened creatures lost no time in arriving at the conclusion that the devil was there in person, and they hastily quitted their last refuge, and left the precincts of the hospital for a less haunted neighborhood. From that time the whole post was comparatively clear of the unwelcome "laundresses."

During the late summer and early autumn the scourge of small-pox raged fearfully in the General Hospital, and a great many died before they could be transported to "Bloody Island," in the Mississippi river, where a sort of exclusively small-pox hospital had been established. All the people around us were in great fear of the contagion. What was most sad was the carelessness exhibited in providing against danger. There were many young women who had volunteered to serve, and were serving as nurses in the hospital. Before entering upon the service it was required, as a precautionary measure, that they, in common with all others, should submit to the operation of being vaccinated. On the face of it this was a very good and proper regulation, but unfortunately sufficient care was not exercised in the selection of the vaccine matter used, and many persons fell as victims. Those

who did not contract the dread disease were but little better off than those who did. I remember the case of one young woman who had been beautiful; she belonged, too, to a highly respectable family in the city of Saint Louis, and it was nothing but genuine patriotism that had impelled her to assume the duties of hospital nurse. They vaccinated her as they did the rest, but alas! the agent was indeed poisonous. It was charged with the seeds of the most horrible disease. In a short time she got to be a most pitiful object. Her breasts dropped off, and then death relieved her from a miserable existence. Others got off with no less than withered arms, and ugly scrofulous marks.

About the first of August there were at our camp five companies of the Eleventh Missouri Cavalry Volunteers, and three companies of the Eleventh Ohio Cavalry Volunteers, and a portion of the Second Regiment Missouri Heavy Artillery, besides a Provost Guard of one company of the Ninth Regiment Wisconsin Infantry Volunteers. The three companies of the Eleventh Ohio Cavalry were on the way to the Rocky mountains to do duty in that region in protecting emigrant trains from the depredations of the Indians. One company was almost entirely recruited from deserters from the free-lance John Morgan's forces, and the other two companies were composed mostly of boys. The regiment had participated in the run through Ohio after General Morgan, and the deserters had been glad to better their condition by taking service on our side. I became acquainted with Sergeant Sherlock, of Company "E" of this regiment, and also with Sergeant-Major Lewis. The latter had already seen

service, having been an officer at the battle of Stone river, and captured, as I was, at that battle. He was thereafter honorably discharged, and had now re-entered the service as a veteran. If my memory serves me well, he told me that he was of the immediate party that captured the guerilla General Morgan. At home the Sergeant was a lawyer, and as he expected to be stationed for a long time in some comfortable quarters at a frontier fort, he had provided himself with a well selected library. The companies departed for the West on the 10th of August. The Second Missouri Heavy Artillery was a very poor specimen of a regiment. There was no discipline whatever in it—no regularity at all, except indeed in the drawing of rations and in being irregular in almost everything else. The whole regiment was soon afterward mustered out of the service. The Eleventh Missouri Cavalry was also a sorry conditioned organization. It was commanded by Colonel W. D. Wood, who, it was represented, was a near relative of Governor Gamble. Many of the officers and men had figured on the wrong side at the capture of Camp Jackson in 1861, and although the regiment had existed as an organization for three quarters of a year, it had as yet seen no field service. Altogether the regiment was not liked by any of us, and it was often subjected to treatment as if it was not to be trusted. There must have been something radically wrong from the beginning with Missouri. It seems so singular that she should have had such good, brave, and gallant soldiers away from home on either side of the conflict; and such miserable defenders within her borders. It was a common

remark that the best men of Missouri were with "Pap Price," and the second best gone "to fight mit Siegel."

5. About the middle of August I received instructions to try my hand, or rather my tongue, at selling by auction. So many soldiers had died at the General Hospital, or deserted and left their effects behind them, that the latter had accumulated until several rooms were filled with an assortment of personal property. Whatever bore marks of identification were to be sent, if of value, to whoever might claim them; and one day the remainder was hauled out under the trees and got ready for disposal. Having mounted a wagon placed there for the purpose, I made a speech to the motley throng that had now gathered around me to the effect generally that, "by direction of a Council of Administration of the post of Benton Barracks, near Saint Louis, Missouri, duly appointed by competent authority, I would proceed to sell by public auction to the highest bidder, for cash," the miscellaneous stuff by which I was surrounded. The sale was prolonged for three or four hours, and still the auctioneer's voice was heard. The bidding was spirited, but the prices realized were anything but "war prices." In the lots were all sorts of pocket property, from portfolios to metallic match-boxes. All diaries, portfolios, and such like articles were reserved from the sale, and of such things I had a sackful when the auction was over. These, with the cash proceeds of the sale, were turned over to Lieutenant A. J. Newby, the President of the Post Council of Administration. We had several Courts Martial in

session during my stay at Benton Barracks. One was a "Field Officer's Court Martial," and was held by Lieutenant Colonel Graham, of the Twenty-second Regiment Iowa Volunteer Infantry. This court had little else to do but make a show of trying the paroled men who had failed to report in due time at Benton Barracks. The President's proclamation in regard to deserters had gone forth, and the grace of that document had expired, and, as the Colonel used to say with a very long face, "every soldier knows the penalty for desertion." It was very laughable and at times interesting to listen to the various excuses of the soldiers as they came up one after another to plead to the charge of "Absence without leave" preferred against them. One man, scarce twenty-three years of age, swore that he had a wife and six children; that his wife was sick of an ague, the two younger children down with the small-pox, the eldest insane, and the rest starving, and, perhaps the only grain of truth in his story, he had received no pay for twelve months. Another set every one in the room in a roar by alleging that he had made a bet with a comrade that he could go home and in ten days become the husband of that comrade's affianced bride. "And I did it too, Judge." This was enough, and even the Colonel lost his proper gravity, and was compelled to join in the roars of laughter that ensued. The dignity of judicial proceedings, however, was soon restored by the next case. It was that of a plain, common-looking man, who said substantially that he had received a letter informing him of the serious illness of his wife; that he had used every en-

deavor to obtain a furlough without success, and had only left the camp in a desperate mood, without realizing the enormity of his crime: that even then he had not arrived at his wretched home in time to be there at the death. The few days since he had been engaged in placing his orphaned children where they could be cared for. The poor fellow's weeping acted as a magnet, and when he was through with his story there were but few dry eyes in the Court room. A little Frenchman belonging to the Second Missouri Artillery Reserves pleaded that his regiment had been mustered out of service by order of the President. But he was mistaken, and his trial went on. There was great fun in this case, and in the absence of an interpreter Colonel Graham was kept busy in consulting a French and English Dictionary. There was great anxiety manifested by the paroled men to have their cases finally disposed of before the end of the month, which was a day for mustering for pay. Most of them had a year's pay due to them, and many had eighteen months' coming to them, and as the punishment was usually a fine of a greater or less amount, there were but few who could not afford the penalty. We also had a "General Court Martial" in session. This was a more imposing affair, a more august tribunal, having the jurisdiction of a Court of Oyer and Terminer when compared with that of a Field Officer's Court Martial, which latter may be likened to a Court of Special Sessions. The General Court Martial was made up of some half dozen Field Officers, and had a Captain (W. F. Dewey) for Judge Advocate or Prose-

cutor. The Court held its sessions in the room over our offices, and in which I and other of the clerks slept. I was a sort of scribe for this Court, and frequently took down the testimony in short hand. One of the most important cases tried by this Court was that of Private Mike O'Brien, of the First U. S. Infantry. Mike had already served one complete term of five years, and this his second term would expire on the 18th of August, 1863. He had been a sort of privileged character at the post. He and his wife lived in a neat little house all by themselves, and shared with the post sutler in a little monopoly. His regular duties consisted in acting as orderly and general factotum to the Colonel; at least that is all I ever knew him to do in the way of service. Mike was every inch a soldier, not excepting the bad qualities so often found in veterans. He would sometimes get drunk—very drunk—and then there was the devil to pay with him. For a comparatively long time he had manfully withstood all temptation that way, and had saved money in anticipation of his discharge. He had even opened negotiations with old man Stewart, on Salisbury street, for the purchase of a groggery, when, alas! in an unfortunate moment Mike fell in with a former comrade, who, having received a commission in the Volunteer service, was sporting his gold lace and broadcloth in the city. Mike was becoming envious, and when the two had talked over the matter, it was determined that Mike had not succeeded so well as his friend because he had been handicapped with a wife! He was full of this until he got drunk, when he began the work of remedying

the evil by trying to kill the heavy tail to his kite. But his wife got the better of him, and instead of doing with her as his mad passion prompted, she pitched her husband out of the wagon in which they were riding home, and left him sprawling in the gutter, a prey to the snares of the Provost Guard. She had not been long in camp, however, before her master arrived too, and he lost no time in undertaking to finish the job he had so inauspiciously begun. He would probably have succeeded this time had not the uproar attracted the attention of the Post Provost Guard. "Two men and a Corporal" came, but Mike displayed a huge navy revolver and gave out the direst threats against "the head of the galloot" who attempted to arrest him. The guard prudently procured reinforcements, and then the combined powers moved on the belligerent Mike, and finally, after almost a regular siege, succeeded in arresting him, but not before he had fired two shots, and made three missfires. All this occurred on the 19th of August, and when he had only a week or so more to serve. On the day upon which his term of service expired he was tried by General Court Martial and sentenced to perform six months' hard labor "in such place as the Commanding General of the Department should select." The sentence was approved by the District Commander on the 28th of August, but I do not remember whether O'Brien served out the term or the proceedings were disapproved by the Department Commander; the latter, I think, was most probably the case.

6. Early in the month of October, 1863, the Government established in our camp a depot of the West-

ern Cavalry Bureau, having Colonel Hatch (of the Second Michigan Cavalry Volunteers) as chief. It must be remembered that while the Government was anxious to purchase all the serviceable horses it could, it was at the same time equally desirous of getting rid of such as were past being of service; so that about the 1st of November several large recuperating hospitals for horses and mules were established. There was a very large one at the northerly side of our camp, and there was a very extensive one on or near to Franklin Avenue, nearer the city. To these hospitals the animals of Grierson and other raiders were conveyed after their hard ridings in the South. The Government sold at public auction every Friday such of the animals as had been condemned during the preceding week as unfit for further use, and bought new horses every day, so as to fill the requisitions constantly received from the field. This business presented a fine scope for plundering the Government, and it was taken advantage of to a great extent. The charge was openly made that the officers entrusted with the duty of inspection had condemned many good horses, which on the day of sale were sold at prices ranging from thirty-seven cents to five dollars a head. In a few days thereafter, the purchaser of such animals, in collusion with the purchasing officers of the Government, so it was said, again sold them to the public service, and at the immense prices prevailing at the time. I do not remember whether anything was ever done about the fraud, but I do know that it was the talk of the camp for some time. We did not have the gallant Lieutenant

Brosseau for our Post Adjutant for any great length of time. He was called to the field during the summer, where he received well merited promotion in his regiment. He was succeeded by Lieutenant Philander Lucas, a great, overgrown son of the fat prairies. He was from Jacksonville, Illinois, had been an under teacher in the institute of learning at that place, and was captured by the Rebel General Van Dorn, at Holly Springs, Mississippi. He was a lawyer by profession, and had with him quite a respectable library. It was said by those who did not like him that he was badgered back to the field by his fellow officers. At any rate, he went, and was succeeded by Lieutenant D. O. Reid, of Company "H" of the Forty-fifth regiment of Infantry Illinois Volunteers. Lieutenant Reid was a small but well formed and attractive man. He had an intellectual countenance, and was altogether a very clever, active officer. He had a dark, placid countenance, and that was made more striking by a heavy black moustache and chin whiskers. The Lieutenant had been in the service since June, 1861, was wounded in the second assault on the enemy's works in front of Vicksburg the summer before, had been taken prisoner and cruelly treated by his captors, and on his final parole became a guest of Benton Barracks. While with us he expected to receive promotion and join the Colored Troops, but my impression is that he got tired of waiting, or disgusted with that branch of the service, and went to his regiment in the field. He was a native of some part of Pennsylvania, but had emigrated many years before to Galesburg (I think), in Illinois.

Whatever may be said of the previous chapters of this my narrative by those who may read them, I can say of this last one that I find myself severely taxed to find incidents enough to make it seem interesting. There is no change of scene or battle to describe. This whole chapter is altogether different from what would reasonably be expected of a soldier. To me it reads rather of doings of a boy off for a holiday, and I am almost ashamed to place it beside the more stirring portion of my narrative. Of course we were all intensely interested in the events of the war as they happened, but anything I might say here would be at second hand and certainly out of place. My only excuse is that my life at Benton Barracks was included in my term of service as a private soldier, and therefore must be told in some way. We had many "sprees" while at the post, but they are hardly deemed worth mentioning except perhaps one as a sample. This was on the occasion of the marriage of a relative of Captain Guerin to a young man named Gostin. About the latter part of August we heard that the newly wedded pair were in the Captain's house on Salisbury street, just outside the Barracks. Along toward midnight the Post Band, with their regulation instruments of fifes and drums, and carrying besides a lot of other noise producers, such as gongs, bells, tin pans, and an array of bugles, filed out of the main gate. With the rest, I went to see the fun. When we reached the front of the house wherein the bride and bridegroom were, the Post Band performed a very creditable piece by way of serenade. This was succeeded by John Manson, our mail wagon driver,

giving the command something like this: "Attention, Calithumpians! Music by the Calithumpians! One—two—three!" And then there was such a din as never was heard. People in their night clothes threw up the neighboring windows and peered out on the scene; an army of dogs howled, and general pandemonium reigned. At a certain other signal the noise ceased, and the Post Band gave another respectable performance. By this time the folks within had become well acquainted with our presence, and the jolly Captain appeared and made a jolly speech. At his invitation we entered the house and were received by those we had intended to honor. Eating and drinking began immediately. There were root beer and soda water for the temperate and youthful, lager beer for the more experienced, and whiskey for the old stagers, and these were all indulged in, until before long the men were in fine condition and the best of humor for speeches, songs, and rough dancing. Each song was honored with at least one encore, and each sentence of a speech was uproariously applauded. So many speeches were made that at last there was a dearth of subjects. By and by, when the resources of the family had nearly ceased to supply the demand for food and drink, the landlord of the house, a man named Speckermann, came into the company and made a speech, the best part of which was the peroration. It consisted of an appeal to us that we would honor him with our company in his grocery store on the opposite side of the street. This honor was quickly conferred upon him, and all but the ladies went over to the place. There was more guzzling,

smoking, "speechifying" until three o'clock in the morning, when we left the scene for camp. The bridegroom afterward became the proprietor of the photograph gallery at our post.

7. About the first week of November (on a Saturday) an incident happened in our camp the like of which I had not seen before. It was the formal dishonorable discharge of a soldier. The first intimation I got of the affair came from Colonel Wood, of the Eleventh Missouri Cavalry, who requested that the Post Band be placed at his disposal for one hour or so. The band was of course ordered to report for duty immediately, in full uniform and instruments, at the Colonel's headquarters. With the rest, I went to the regimental parade ground to see the sight. After some delay, the regiment was formed into line as for review, and the culprit conducted to the front and centre. Then the Adjutant read all the orders relating to the case, and handed the soldier his dishonorable discharge from the service. The prisoner was deprived of his hat, and a ready barber quickly mutilated his hair, and the same functionary also stripped the prisoner's clothes of all buttons and other ornaments. Thus prepared, the command received the order, "Draw sabres," and the unfortunate man was marched along the line in advance of the band, which all the while played the "Rogue's March." He was kept from going too fast by a sort of mock escort which accompanied him, but at the left of the line the duty of the guard ceased, and the prisoner now made a good start, and was off like a shot, in and out of the main gate. He did not wait to hear

the gibes and laughter of his late comrades. I was inclined to believe that the prisoner did not allow the disgrace to affect him very much, for when he passed me I thought I detected a sort of satisfied smile upon his face.

During the summer of 1863 the Government first began to utilize the recently emancipated slaves by making soldiers of them. The use of negroes for such a purpose was somewhat hastened by the difficulty experienced by some of the Eastern States in filling their several quotas of troops. Thus it came about that a New York regiment was recruited in Louisiana from the freedmen there; a Massachusetts regiment was built up in Missouri and Kansas, and a "good, likely negro" fetched a price as a substitute nearly equal to that he would have brought in antebellum times. General Lorenzo Thomas, the Adjutant General of the Army, had been to the South and South-west, and seemed to be possessed of great power in the premises. Boards of examination were appointed, and invitations sent out to both officers and men of the army, as well as to outsiders, to present themselves for examination and appointment to office in the new element. At Saint Louis there was such a Board, presided over by Colonel Daniel Huston, Seventh Cavalry Missouri Volunteers. Even before cold weather set in our barracks became a rendezvous for the organization of Colored Troops, and nearly every one of the minor officers and the staff clerks at Headquarters had made the proper application and obtained the necessary permission to appear before the Board for examination. Then Colonel William

A. Pile, who had succeeded Clinton B. Fiske as Colonel of the Thirty-third Missouri Volunteer Infantry, both of whom were known as "fighting parsons," appeared and took charge of the organization of the Colored Troops in and near Saint Louis, with headquarters at Benton Barracks. It was not until I was left almost entirely alone of my old fellow clerks that I made the necessary application and received the letter permitting me to appear before the Board for examination. On the 1st of December I presented myself, and at the conclusion of the medical and surgical examination I had reason to feel glad that I had done as I had, even if I failed to obtain the promotion. Ever since my release from captivity I had been tortured by the thought that perhaps my sufferings and the exposure had left something behind that might appear upon provocation, so I had been very careful not to expose myself unnecessarily to the vicissitudes of hard labor or the inclemency of the weather; but now the rough, thorough-going, typical "brute" of a surgeon, after making a searching investigation from toe nail to the top hair of my head, not only passed me as "approved," but complimented me somewhat on the soundness of my condition. In due time I passed into the dread presence of the Board. There had been many terrifying reports afloat in relation to this Board. It had been represented as especially severe and merciless, but of course no one could know what took place when others than himself were present. Stories were told of men of age and pretensions who had failed correctly to answer whether our Saviour lived before

or after Mahomet; others did not know the difference between a simple equation and the multiplication of common fractions. Whatever truth there may have been in these stories, it is nevertheless the fact that many applicants were disappointed. Field officers of volunteers were recommended for promotion (?) as Second Lieutenants in the new forces, and although there were three distinct classes of each grade, many failed to pass at all. Of my examination I can only say that, with the exception of that part requiring the possession of technical knowledge of military affairs, it was something like a very searching examination of advanced students in a good school of the lower academic class, and during which the best read of men would be apt to fail occasionally, unless aided by a good memory. Mine served me well throughout the whole ordeal, and in a few days I was gazetted as having passed and been recommended for appointment. Immediately after this I was ordered to report to Colonel Pile, and I assumed full under-charge of his office as his Acting Assistant Adjutant General. On the 29th day of December, 1863, I received an official copy of an extract from Special Orders from the Department of the Missouri, dated the day before, by which I was discharged the service of the United States as Private Company "B," Eighty-eighth Regiment Illinois Volunteers, and I thereupon ceased to be an enlisted man in the army. I had been a soldier in all only about seventeen months, and on looking back over my story I find that although it is not altogether devoid of incident, still I am sure it cannot possibly be so interesting as the story, if told, of

many a man whose service brought him into many more encounters, more difficulties, and during which he was exposed to many more dangers. It will be a pity if there are not many of such who will yet do as I have done, save my manifold sins of omission and commission, my faults in style and manner of expression, and thus hand down to their heirs that which will, as I said in my preface, enable them to have something beyond mere tradition to point to when discussing the experiences of a private soldier in the Great American Civil War.