

## Recollections of War Times

David Palmer

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RECOLLECTIONS OF WAR TIMES.<sup>1</sup>

BY COL. DAVID PALMER.

I enlisted in Company C, 8th Iowa Infantry, commanded by Capt. Wm. B. Bell, afterwards Colonel of the regiment. On the 10th of July, 1861, in the organization of the company I was made 3d Corporal and went into camp with the company August 10, 1861, at Camp McClellan, Davenport, Iowa, there taking part in the drills and maneuvers of the company and regiment as it was then organized, with Gen. Fred Steele as its Colonel. Soon after we were put on board a transport and sent south to St. Louis, Mo. Disembarked there, we were placed in Benton Barracks, where we were drilled and disciplined thoroughly, to prepare us for the front. From there we went by railroad west through Jefferson City, Mo., and into the interior of the State to Syracuse; there we became a part of the army under Gen. McKinstry whose purpose it was to attack the forces of the Confederate General Price. We took up our line of march towards Springfield, Mo., following Price's troops in hot pursuit. We were then ordered back to Sedalia, Mo., to go into winter quarters, where we remained until about the month of March, 1862, when we were directed to return to St. Louis, where we were put on board a transport, sent down the river to Cairo and up the Tennessee river to Pittsburg Landing. We disembarked there and went into camp in the timber about three-fourths of a mile from the landing. While remaining there we were effectually drilled and inspected preparatory to the impending battle of Shiloh. On the morning of the 6th of April, 1862, a beautiful Sabbath morning, about daylight, we heard cannonading and musket firing on the out-posts away out beyond the Shiloh church. In a very little while; before we scarcely had time to eat our breakfast, the long roll sounded in our camp and we were marched to the front, and, as I recollect it, about nine o'clock we were put upon the firing line near what is now known as

<sup>1</sup>Address given by Col. Palmer before the Y. M. C. A. in Des Moines, February, 1896.

the Hornet's Nest. This name was given it by the Confederates. There we were put in support of a battery which, in a short time, lost every horse and man in it. A detail of men was made from our regiment to rush out and pull the cannon and caissons to the rear to save them from capture by the enemy. During the time we occupied that position, we received and repulsed several distinctive bayonet charges made by the Confederates, holding our ground with persistency until, later in the day, the left wing of our army was driven back, compelling our regiment to make a change of front to the left. In the meantime our commanding officer, Col. James L. Géddes, had his horse shot from under him and was slightly wounded in the knee, but very soon, procuring another horse, he was mounted and we held our position.

Along toward the middle of the afternoon, the left wing of our army, being sorely pressed, was compelled to withdraw a little more, again requiring our regiment to change front to comply with this change in the left of our army. About four or five o'clock in the afternoon, the left wing of our army, still giving way, compelled us to change front and move to our left; and as near as I can remember now, about an hour and a half before sundown, I received a gunshot wound in the left breast that brought me to my knees. Two of my comrades seized me, walked me back a couple of hundred feet and laid me in behind the root of a large oak tree that had been overturned by the wind, there ministering to my wants as best they could. The blood flowed freely from the wound, and I soon became unconscious. By this time, as I was told afterwards, our troops were compelled to retreat, and I was left in the hands of the enemy for dead. As reported to me afterwards, the regiment retreated nearly a fourth of a mile and, in connection with the 12th and 14th Iowa regiments and some other troops, were surrounded by the enemy and compelled to surrender. Apparently not very long after the regiment had retreated and left me, I became conscious and realized that I was alone. Hearing a rustling among the leaves, I turned my head and saw the Confederate line of skirmishers advancing close to me. Having heard fre-

quently during my service that wounded men were bayoneted by the Confederates when found alive, I closed my eyes and feigned myself dead and the skirmishers passed on, paying no attention whatever to me. Shortly after this, two comrades of my own company, Cousin S. R. Palmer, now of Dexter, Iowa, and Corporal R. M. Kilgore, knowing the condition in which I was left, got permission from a Confederate lieutenant, who had them in charge, to pass by the place where I was left, on their way to the prison pen, the Confederate lieutenant and three soldiers accompanying them. Much to their surprise they found me still alive and able to speak, having regained consciousness, but not able to get up. They asked permission of the lieutenant to carry me over into a little field near a log cabin, a little to the right of the position the regiment occupied during the day. There they left me on the ground, the Confederate officer refusing them permission to remain with me. Giving me a canteen of water, my two comrades went off to the prison pen, expecting never to see me again. I was full of regret as I thought they were taken prisoners because they had spent too much time with me on the field. I did not know then that the entire regiment and many others were captured. At the time when they first ministered to my wants, immediately after I was wounded, the Confederates had stripped me of my coat and cap, leaving nothing but my shirt, trousers, shoes and stockings. The little field in which I was left by my comrades was well filled with Confederate soldiers who had stacked their arms and who were exulting over the capture of prisoners. By this time it was nearly dark and the dampness of the evening was making me chilly.

One very large Confederate Irishman came to me and asked, "Are ye cowld?" I answered "Yes," and he said, "Here taak this blanket and poot it over ye," and he stooped down and gently tucked around me a good U. S. blanket that he had captured from one of our camps during the day. Very soon another Confederate soldier, a young fellow about my own age, came along and noticing my condition, asked, "Would you like to have a drink?" I answered in the affirmative, and

he handed me a bottle from which I took several good swallows of what I thought then, about the best liquor I had ever drunk. By this time it was getting about dark and I began to think of where I would spend the night. Seeing a wedge tent standing close to the old cabin, about one hundred feet from me, I resolved to try and reach it. Stimulated by the liquor, I felt I could do so. I could not stand so I managed to get on my hands and knees and crawl to the tent, at a snail's pace, dragging my blanket and canteen with me. On entering the tent I found it occupied by a wounded Confederate soldier. Having no one to care for him just then, I proceeded at once to pull some of the straw from under him to make a pallet for myself. He tried to give the alarm by yelling as loud as he could, but I insisted that I must have some of that straw and continued until I made a fair division between us and lay down for the night, covering myself with the blanket. Evidently I must have been unconscious a good part of the night, for I only remember two or three incidents that occurred; one was the shelling of the field by our gunboats, when the shells exploded so near that it made everything light in the tent. Another was the rain that fell at one time in the night, and the third was, I missed my companion. Soldiers had evidently come along and taken him out, leaving me for dead, or considering I was a "Yank" thought I didn't need any attention.

When morning came it gave promise of a beautiful day. The rain was over, the Confederates gone out of the field and not a soul near. About sunrise, however, there came out of the timber south of the little field, a very fine looking General Officer, Confederate, accompanied by two or three staff officers and perhaps a half dozen mounted men as bodyguard. They rode immediately past the tent where I could see them, but they did not see me. Riding out to the north of the cabin in plain view of the position we had occupied the day before, they halted, took out their field-glasses and proceeded to view the situation. Scarcely had they gotten a good look through their glasses, when one of our pieces of artillery dropped a shell among them. They disappeared, some going around one side of the tent and some the other. A couple of empty saddles

went back; whether the riders were wounded or killed I know not, but the General and his staff and bodyguard retreated into the woods out of sight. This, to me, was great encouragement. I felt about as much stimulated as I did the night before after drinking out of the Confederate boy's bottle.

I had not long to wait, however, until the battle recommenced, and such terrific firing I never heard, unless it was what I had heard the day before. I needn't say that I kept my entire body very close along the ground in that tent. I had no curiosity to get up and go out and see how the battle was raging. Not having any timepiece, I can only guess that the battle raged the entire forenoon, and I was between the fires nearly all of that time. As I guessed at it, about noon or a very little thereafter, the firing ceased on our end of the line, the Confederates dropped back into the timber on the south side of the field and our troops into the timber on the north side. I could still hear musketry and cannonading away down the river, which I supposed afterwards was Buell's command going into position.

Having an abhorrence of being a prisoner of war, I felt that now, possibly, was the time to make my escape. Crawling to the tent door I managed, with the aid of the tent pole, to draw myself up on my feet and steadying myself by the pole, I stepped outside of the tent and commenced my observation of the situation both north and south of me. In an instant, everything disappeared from me, for how long I do not know; when I came to consciousness I was lying headlong out of the tent with my nose run into the ground. Never having fainted in my life before, I came to a full realization of what it was to faint. I crawled back into the tent much discouraged. After resting a little while, the feeling came to me again that I must not be a prisoner and I would try it again. Pulling myself up by the tent pole as before, I stood a few seconds to see how it operated, when I noticed that my eyesight was leaving me, and realizing what that meant, I dropped down on the ground and I could see again. I now began to realize that I could not stand or walk, and I resolved that I would, after the fashion of the snake, undertake to crawl. Proceeding on this theory I

was able to crawl fifteen or twenty feet, when my eyesight gave way again, and I dropped down, when it instantly returned. Persevering, however, I made another advance of about the same distance with the same result. I kept up that procedure of crawling and resting, moving as fast as I could in the direction where I thought our own troops were.

I presume it was about the middle of the afternoon when I reached the skirmish line. Getting behind the skirmish line I took quite a little rest and then proceeded to get behind the first main line. Finding a big oak tree behind this first main line, I crawled behind it, and feeling perfectly secure in the company of my friends, I concluded I would take a good long rest. By this time it was nearly night of Monday, the second day of the battle. While lying on the safe side of the root of this tree a very funny incident occurred in a regiment that occupied the second line. One of the rank and file of the regiment stepped forward some thirty feet behind a large tree and was standing there when the Confederates commenced artillery firing, undertaking to shell these troops out of the timber preparatory to a charge that was made afterwards. While this soldier was standing by that tree, a shell struck it above his head some eight or ten feet, knocking out a big piece from the tree and casting it with great force to the ground right by his side. Frightened by this, he dropped his gun, whirled to the rear, ran as fast as his legs would carry him through his own regiment, knocked out a file of men and proceeded to the rear, his officers yelling at him to halt. He paid no attention to them, but ran on out of sight, and so far as I know he may be running yet. I never heard of him again. It caused the entire regiment to break out in a roar of laughter.

Immediately after this the Confederates came across the field from which I had crawled, yelling at the top of their voices, their own artillery throwing shells in front of them amongst our men. They made a very violent charge, but failed to break through the first line, and were repulsed with great loss. You can imagine my feelings when this charge was going on. I felt as though they were going to break through and I would again be a prisoner, but our boys were on the alert and

gave them a warm reception, sending them back fully as fast as they came, with fewer numbers. After this charge I felt as though I was not as safe as I might be, and I proceeded to crawl through the second line. Here I came in contact with the ambulances that had been busy all day gathering up the wounded of the day before and taking them to the hospitals. I tried to persuade a driver to take me into his ambulance, but he said he did not know me and he was only hauling for his own regiment.

While I was lying at the root of the tree, the old Second Iowa, grand regiment as it was, came past on the double quick. When Company H, with whose members I was well acquainted, saw me they cried out, "There's Dave Palmer!" and two or three of them stopped with me. I pointed out the ambulance driver in the timber, who had refused to take me to the hospital in his ambulance. They immediately ordered him around with his ambulance and arbitrarily, and with force, put me into the ambulance, and I was taken direct to the camp of the 7th Iowa, where I was placed in a Sibley tent along with many other wounded men. Co. H of this 7th Iowa, having been organized in our county, I felt at liberty to send up to that company and ask for help. One of my intimate friends from my own town, Wm. Vanatta, who was left in camp sick that morning, came down, and when he found who it was, secured a towel, a bucket of water and a good light suit of clothes. I was stripped, bathed and dressed with the light suit and put to bed on a pallet of straw for the night, where I rested very comfortably. The next day I was taken to my own camp hospital in the 8th Iowa, and there received the attention of our Assistant Surgeon, Dr. A. W. Hoffmeister, who was a very good friend to the boys and was very attentive to their wants.

A little less than a week later, while lying in this camp hospital, the sub-clavian artery burst about an inch and a half from the main artery of the heart, causing a flow of blood out through the wound that would have taken my life in a very few minutes. Neither myself nor anyone in the tent knew what to do, but Dr. Hoffmeister was fortunately in his

tent not twenty feet away. He was called at once and stopped the flow of blood instantly by pressing his fingers down behind the collar bone. He secured a man to take his place in turn, and kept up this compress continually until the next day when I was hauled to the hospital boat at Pittsburg Landing and there the operation of taking up the artery was performed by Dr. Azpell, of the regular army. This operation destroyed the section of this artery in my left arm, completely paralyzing it, so I had, of necessity, to carry it in a sling to keep it out of my way.

From there I was brought on this same hospital boat to Keokuk, Iowa, and transferred to the Soldiers' Hospital there, where I received the kind attention of the management. I shall never forget the kindness of good, loyal friends in Keokuk, more particularly the Smith-Hamil family who, during the six weeks I lay in that hospital, did not fail to send some one to minister to my wants each day. Through the kindness of the management of the hospital, my father was permitted to come in and be one of the nurses in my ward. About the middle of June it was thought I was able to be furloughed home. While not yet able to walk, I was carried on a cot to the river and brought to Muscatine by boat, from Muscatine to Washington by rail, and from Washington out to my home in the country by a lumber wagon with a box well filled with hay. By the first of July I was able to get up and walk around a little, and from that on I gained rapidly.

By the middle of July I received a commission from the Governor of the State to recruit a company under the 300,000 call then made by the President. I was elected Captain of the company that was filled up and organized, and went into Camp McKean, Mount Pleasant, Iowa, as Co. A, 25th Iowa Infantry, Sept. 1, 1862. My arm was still in a sling, perfectly useless, although otherwise I enjoyed good health and had gained almost my usual physical strength.

I owe a debt of gratitude to very many friends, of whom I had a legion, for their kindness to me both in hospital and at home, during the period I was disabled by my wound. I was more fortunate in my service in the 25th Iowa. I received only

two wounds during the entire three years, one a slight wound in the foot at Arkansas Post—where we captured 7,000 prisoners—the other, in the knee, at Taylor's Ridge, Georgia. Neither of these wounds kept me off duty. Having good health, I was not absent from the regiment twenty-four hours from the date of its muster into the service in 1862 until its muster out in June, 1865.

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### GOVERNOR KIRKWOOD AND THE SKUNK RIVER WAR.

BY HON. FRANK W. EICHELBERGER.

During the dark days of the summer of 1863, when Grant was investing Vicksburg and Lee marching on Pennsylvania, there existed in portions of Keokuk, Poweshiek and Wapello counties a large number of Southern sympathizers, who had from the outset of the war made a fierce opposition to its prosecution.

A man named Tally, living near Ioka, in Keokuk county, a Baptist preacher, made himself a leader among this element by his blatant, disloyal speeches in different parts of the country, rendering himself obnoxious to the union-loving portion of the community. He usually went armed with a couple of revolvers and a bowie knife and openly defied the authorities to arrest him. The fall of Vicksburg and defeat of Lee at Gettysburg seemed to embitter him and his harangue became more violent and threatening.

On the first of August, accompanied by seventy or eighty men in wagons, all armed, he went to South English in Keokuk county, and held a meeting in the outskirts of the village. Whilst this was in progress, a Republican meeting was organized in the street opposite the hotel, which was addressed by a man named Settler, from Mt. Pleasant, who happened to be at the hotel. During the progress of this meeting, Tally and his crowd in wagons drove through the meeting, exhibiting butternut and copperhead pins, which were the recognized badges of disloyalty in the North at that time.

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