

Civil War Stories

"I wonder," said one of Bragg's men, "what became of Lieutenant Wagstaff of the Eightieth Ohio Infantry. I often think of Wagstaff. I was taken prisoner by Captain Botham of the Third Michigan Cavalry on the 28th day of April, just three weeks after the battle of Shiloh, down the ridge toward Hamburg. I was taken to General Pope's headquarters, and, after being thoroughly interviewed by that commander, I was forwarded to Hamburg and turned over to the provost guard, the commander of which was Wagstaff. That night Wagstaff came around to look over his new recruits and I had a talk with him. In that first meeting I formed a friendship which has never died out so far as I am concerned. Wagstaff came around to see me every day, and often brought along cigars or other things which were not dealt out to the prisoners promiscuously.

There was a sutler at Hamburg whom the Eightieth Ohio boys thoroughly detested, but they could not talk back to him as they wished on account of regulations. One evening early Wagstaff came to me and laid the case before me, and said, "Now, you are a pretty good talker. I want you to go with me. I'll introduce you to the sutler. He has never seen a live rebel, and he'll jump right on to you. I'll have a lot of the boys in his tent, and we want you to give him the devil. We'll stand by you, and if you go at him the right way you can scare the hat off his head. Come on, now, and give it to him."

"I didn't want to go, but Wagstaff insisted. We went to the tent, where about a dozen of the Eightieth's boys were waiting for the show, and I was introduced to the sutler as one of the worst of the whole lot of Bragg's outlaws. The sutler was a man from Vermont, a weasen-faced skulflint, as Wagstaff called him. He edged away from me about six feet and sized me up from head to foot. He slowly looked around the group, drew a long breath, and opened up all the valves of his linguistic battery. He denounced me as a traitor, a thief, a murderer, a horse thief, and flung at me every bad name contained in the vocabulary of wickedness. All this time Wagstaff sat behind the sutler, motioning for me to talk back to him.

"By this time I was pretty mad, and taking that advantage of him that a soldier always has over a sutler when talking war, I denounced him as a monkey shark, a leech, robbing the men for whom he professed friendship, and then, when the battle was fought, talking about what 'we' did. In all my life I never saw so mad a man. He seemed paralyzed for a moment, but I think he was preparing to spring upon me when Wagstaff stepped between us and pushed me out of the tent. After we got away Wagstaff lay down in the grass and roared until his sides ached.

"The story spread, and for several days the boys were coming down to shake hands with the reb who had downed the sutler. The next morning I was taken down to camp by Wagstaff. I was a reb and Wagstaff was a Yank, but he was as kind, as jolly, and as wholesouled a fellow as ever Ohio produced. I wonder if he is alive. How I would like to hear that jolly laugh again! And yet there are people who will not believe that friendship can exist between men who were opposed to each other in two different armies."

"I never could make people understand," said the major, "how it was possible for men who were fighting against each other furiously one hour to fellowship with each other the next hour. In one of the charges at Stone River the first line of the Confederates and the first line of Union troops struck each other, with such force that full one-half of the Confederate regiment came over our first line and turned back to mingle in a fierce hand-to-hand struggle. Just then our second line caught them and they were compelled to surrender. When they realized the situation and when they heard the order to drop their guns they were in the very act of striking with clubbed muskets or with bayonets."

"I can see now the change in the expressions of those faces as the men comprehended that they were helpless and must surrender. They lowered their guns, turned toward the men who had the drop on them, and with an air that was the very opposite of desperate, threw down their guns, took off their cartridge boxes, and in five minutes were chatting easily with the men who had captured them. Among the prisoners was one man who was very pale and very quiet, and I judged from his appearance that he had been wounded. In answer to my question he said he had been struck two or three times, but it didn't matter. I looked at the wounds myself, and, improvising bandages, managed to stop the bleeding, and when the prisoners were turned over to the guard to be taken to the rear I explained to the officer in charge that some consideration ought to be shown the wounded man. I thought I would remember that face, but I didn't. Years later the man did me a great favor, and, in explaining his action, recalled to my mind the incident of that day."

"At Lookout Mountain," said the captain, "our regiment was among the climbers. We were not in the first line that surprised the Confederate regiments in the intrenchments, but we came up in time to see the prisoners as they were giving up their guns. Our boys chaffed them a good deal about

their impregnable position, and they answered good-humoredly to the effect that their officers had assured them that nobody could climb up the precipitous sides, and here they were. After the battle of Missionary Ridge one battalion of our regiment was sent with those prisoners down to Bridgeport. The prisoners outnumbered us four to one, but we went jogging along with no thought of trouble, and became well acquainted. The prisoners were formed in four ranks, with one rank of men blue on either side, and a guard in front and rear.

"Rests were ordered to suit the prisoners. They did not march well; every few minutes they complained of fatigue, and the officer, in command at first thought this was an excuse for delay or for making trouble. He spoke impatiently and imperiously to some of the men who were complaining, when one of the sergeants looked up and said, 'You must remember, colonel, that we have not been eating much lately.' Instantly the haversacks of the guard were at the service of the prisoners, and that night, when they went into camp, full rations were issued to every man, and our boys loaned them coffee buckets and tin cups, that they might have their fill of really good coffee. I will never forget the eagerness with which these Confederate prisoners formed in line for rations. I can never forget the good comradeship that prevailed over their first taste of old government Java coffee."

"On the second day's march there was no complaint about fatigue, but some of the men had become stubborn and ugly. Their shoes were not fit for marching, they were sore-footed and discouraged and dismal, and the rear guard had great trouble in keeping them afoot. At one time several men declined to move. As we had no ambulance and no instructions to parole them, there was considerable excitement. The case was stated to a group of the Confederates in front and three sergeants went hurrying to the rear. Each one took hold of a straggler and hustled him forward. From that to the end of the march the prisoners themselves looked after the insubordinate men of their own companies. I have met in business life a half dozen of the men who made that trip with us as prisoners. We date our acquaintance from that time, and we take great comfort in reviving the memories of the trip from Lookout Mountain to Bridgeport."—Chicago Inter-Ocean.

Negroes in the Army.

"It is not necessary to revert to the civil war to prove that American negroes are faithful, devoted wearers of uniforms," says a man who has seen service in both the army and the navy. "There are at the present time four regiments of negro soldiers in the regular army of the United States—two outposts of cavalry and two of infantry. All four of these regiments have been under fire in important Indian campaigns, and there is yet to be recorded a single instance of a man in any of the four regiments showing the white feather—and the two cavalry regiments of negroes have on several occasions found themselves in very serious situations. While the fact is well known out on the frontier, I don't remember ever having seen it mentioned in the East that an American Indian has a deadly fear of an American negro. The most utterly reckless, dare-devil savage of the copper hue stands literally in awe of a negro, and the blakker the negro the more the Indian quails. I can't understand why this should be, for the Indians decline to give their reasons for fearing the black men—but the fact remains that even a very bad Indian will give the mildest mannered negro imaginable all the room he wants, and to spare, as an old regular army soldier who has frontiered will tell you. The Indians, I fancy, attribute uncanny and eerie qualities to the blacks."

"The Sioux will hand down to their children's children the story of a charge that a couple of the negro cavalry troops made during the Pine Ridge troubles. It was at the height of the fracas, and the bad Indians were regularly lined up for battle. These two black troops were ordered to make the initial swoop upon them. You know the noise one black man can make when he gets right down to the business of yelling. Well, these two troops of blacks started their terrific whoop in unison when they were a mile away from the waiting Sioux, and they got warmed up and in better practice with every jump their horses made. I give you my solemn word that in the ears of us of the white outfit the yelps those two negro troops of cavalry gave sounded like the carnival whooping of 10,000 devils. The Sioux weren't scared a little bit by the approaching clouds of alkali dust, but all the same, when the two black troops were more than a quarter of a mile away the Indians broke and ran as if the old boy himself were after them, and it was then an easy matter to round them up and disarm them. The chiefs afterward confessed that they were scared out by the awful howling if the black soldiers."

"Ever since the war the United States navy has had a fair representation of negro bluejackets, and they make first-class naval tars. There is not a ship in the navy to-day that hasn't from six to a dozen, anyhow, of negroes on its muster rolls. The negro sailors names very rarely get enrolled on the bad conduct lists. They are obedient, sober men and good seamen. There are many petty officers among them."

"Some men will pay ten cents for one cigar and then kick because they have to pay the same amount for a basket of kindling wood."

BOYHOOD TOWN.

Kind God, look down on Boyhood Town and keep it green forever, The long main street, with shade trees sweet, the wharf and the dreaming river!

Oh, lead is there when bowed with care to hear its childhood story, Its song and speech of love that teach the light of love and glory! Ah, lead us down to Boyhood Town, when we are old and weary, To taste and know the golden glow of spirits fresh and cheery!

Look down, we pray, on all that play in childhood's bloomy valley; Keep sweet the street where little feet of youth and gladness rally; Keep fair the place, with pristine grace, that in our gray December We may be led with blithesome tread to love's undying ember! Kind God, look down on Boyhood Town and keep its soft lights gleaming In gardens fair that blossoms there along loved paths of dreaming!

Look down, look down, on Boyhood Town—for we are fain to follow The homeward way some well-a-day when all the world grows hollow! Guard, thou, and keep its yards that sleep along the old main highway, Its lanes that went where meadows end in Bloom-o'-Childhood byway!

With all its gleams, its joyful dreams, keep it, dear God, forever, Its shade trees sweet that line the street, the wharf and dreaming river!



As Mr. Vance entered the drawing room he caught sight of Enid Strangeways peeping out at him from amid an enormous shower of pink and white roses.

"Good-morning, 'Mr. Matchmaker,'" she said, shaking two or three roses apart, and holding them up critically. "Aren't they lovely? Alfred has just known this minute gone. If I had only known you were coming I would have got him to wait. We have had no end of talk."

"And everything is decided?" inquired Denzil Vance, stooping to recover a fallen rose.

"Yes. Everything. We wanted you on a host of things. You know how undecided Alfred is."

"On most points, yes. But on this one—"

"He was of two minds about everything, and his indecision became quite infectious, until I began to realize that—"

"That—"

"Well," looking up at Denzil and laughing, "that unless I took everything into my own hands our engagement would drift on and on until it became as permanent as a national institution. And everybody would point to us and say, 'Look, this is the Engaged Couple,' just as people go to the Metropolitan museum and say, 'Look, those are the Japanese Gods!'

"And so you put the matter to Alfred—"

"Quite practically? Yes, and he fully agreed with everything I said. So now everything is arranged and nothing will be altered."

"But I suppose your people will have the opportunity of modifying any little arrangement should they wish it?"

"No," said Enid deliberately.

"I mean," explained Vance, "you consulted—"

"We didn't consult anybody. You see, Denzil, in this one instance Alfred and I are determined to be independent, and we solemnly vowed that nobody should have any power to upset our plans. Up to the present, everybody has been arranging our affairs, and—and—we haven't had a chance. We both agreed that we hadn't a chance to do as we like, and we decided that the time had come to put both feet down, as papa says."

"And what does the process of putting both feet down involve?" asked Denzil, inhaling the perfume of a rose.

"Well," a little pause; "we thought it best to put the matter in writing. In that note on the writing table Alfred has told you everything we propose to do."

Denzil went towards the table and found the letter among a number of cuttings from fashionable papers announcing the marriage between Alfred Callaby and Enid Strangeways. In some it gave the additional information that "the marriage will shortly take place." He took up the note and passed it between his fingers. His face was rather solemn.

"But before you open it," said Enid, tugging resolutely at a refractory fern stalk; "I want to thank you for all you have done."

Vance looked abashed.

"For all I have done?"

"Yes. Don't you remember that it was you who brought us together. It was exactly this time last year—"

"Oh, of course; on this very day—"

"In this very room—"

"Yes," nodded Denzil, gaining a little more assurance.

"That you were called in and consulted on a most important question. Nothing less than—" and the girl broke off with a laugh.

"Then the future of Miss Enid Strangeways. Yes, I recollect. But why do you recall the fact so pointedly? I hoped—" and here the voice became lower and more deliberate; "that you had forgotten about that."

"I was to arrive home in three days from the convent of St. Cecile. The whole household was in a flutter of excitement. Everybody wondered what I should be like. Should I be frightfully prim and old-world-like, or lumpish, or what? I had been away so long that mamma was afraid I should be tremulously old-fashioned and stiff—

BOYHOOD TOWN.

"Oh, yes; I know I ought to be very grateful. After all, as you say, I might have done worse. He's a capital polo player, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"And a tolerable bridge partner. Perhaps his laugh is a little too strident, and his expression just a wee bit vacant, but we can't all be intellectual, and, as Uncle Herbert says, intellectual people are frightfully rapid eaters. And then, he's so rich he really doesn't need brains! And as you have arranged he is such a promiscuous—of course it doesn't matter—"

"Dale street child?"

"Well, I was so horribly ungrateful and unkindful. But I was going to say, I was Alfred had a little more sympathy and charm and one or two of those said to him little unnameable graces that attract a girl. And I suppose all men are selfish, and mamma is always saying plain men make much the best husbands in the long run. So I suppose, Vance, Alfred all round, any girl who marries him ought to feel very fortunate."

"I think so," acquiesced Vance, with a quaver.

"And to think that it was all your doing."

"Only the first part," in tones of eager denial.

"And then Alfred's presents. Look at these lovely roses! Aren't they perfect? Do you tell him to get me roses because you know I love them best of all flowers, or is it quite his own idea?"

"Well, I did suggest—"

"I knew it. And the operas. Always my favorite one. That was you, too. I must say, Denzil, you have thrown us together under the very best circumstances and if you should ever set up as a real matrimonial agent—"

"Denzil became alarmed."

"What, you, too, feel that—that—"

"I was never deeply, really deeply in love with him. Of course, he's nice—"

"Enid, if I had only known this before," said Denzil, coming closer and speaking with a quite surprising degree of emotion.

"You—you might have seen it. Other people did. I thought you knew, too, but that your professional pride prevented you recognizing any feelings that might endanger the carrying out of your idea. Because, of course, mamma's confidence in you will now be utterly shattered."

"I don't mind that," said Vance, heroically.

"That's all very well, but think of me," said Enid in injured tones. "I'm stranded, you know. You promised mamma you would marry me—I mean somebody."

"The little quiver of the lip was not lost upon Vance. He was so near he could hardly help seeing it. The morning sun broke out shedding a soft golden light across the room and on to the sofa, bathing the girl's brown head in a warm radiance.

"What are you going to do?" asked Denzil timidly. "Remember your reputation as a matchmaker is at stake. Mamma—and—and I shall expect something from you."

"Denzil became alarmed."

"What are you going to do?" asked Vance, with a little touch of chagrin.

"But I see what a dreadful predicament it places you in. You ought to be married."

"Yes, if—only to save your reputation."

"Then I see no other course open to me."

"Why, what do you mean to do?"

"Marry yourself."

"She laughed as she looked up into Denzil's face and gave him to understand that under the circumstances she would consent to sacrifice herself—to save his reputation, and he made a solemn promise to give up matchmaking."

"I think you had better, dear," said Vance.

"I know it's very horrid and unreasonable."

"But you are really convinced that Alfred returns your love?"

"I thought he was very fond of me until this morning. But now I know he doesn't care a rap for me. But there, what's the use of discussing it? Everything's settled."

"But it must be altered," protested Vance.

"No," said Enid, with imperturbable decision.

Vance bent over the arm of the sofa, and spoke with great fervor:

"It would be madness."

Denzil answered with an air of stoical resignation:

"We—we were thrown together. You ought to be the last person in the world to try and upset our plans. It was your idea from the first."

"Yes," admitted he, lamely. "But I thought Alfred—"

"If he slips through our fingers, it may be years before we can find an eligible substitute. And—and—I'm aging very rapidly."

Vance leaned forward and gazed into the fresh, glowing face.

"Enid, you are not serious."

"Oh, I don't know; but I am determined."

"What to do?"

"To carry out our plans to the letter."

"In the face of your—what you have found out about Alfred's real feelings towards you?"