

# REMINISCENCES OF A VETERAN

BY

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M.M.

Although this book is mostly of the Civil War, when I got it in 1977, Fredericksburg, Va., it was for the Mormon War of Platte River Route. Maybe this can go in your 2nd Edition of Platte River Narratives.

Fellow Westerner

John M. Hutchins

## CHAPTER XII.



ABOUT the first of May orders were issued to prepare immediately to start to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to join an expedition which was fitting out for Salt Lake City, Utah, as escort to Governor Cumming, who was to supersede Gov. Brigham Young, which was very much in opposition to the latter gentleman's wishes, who did not propose to relinquish without a struggle.

We embarked at the fort on board of a steamboat, and were taken to St. Paul, and, after changing steamers, proceeded down the Mississippi to St. Louis, where another change of boats was made, and we then proceeded up the Missouri river to Fort Leavenworth. Here was stationed a portion of the Second Cavalry, commanded by Col. Robert E. Lee, who a few years later became commander-in-chief of the Confederate forces in the War of the Rebellion. We remained here much longer than we anticipated, owing to the disturbed condition of the Territory. Joe Lane, John Brown, Atchinson, Montgomery, and others were raiding it. Elections were held in different places, and the soldiers, notwithstanding their

foreign birth, did valiant service for the cause of freedom, voting early and often.

It was not until July 18, 1857, that we started, some four weeks later than was intended. We found that valuable time had been thus wasted, for our sufferings and loss of animals and supplies through that terrible winter can be attributed to no other cause than this unnecessary delay.

A few days previous to starting, one of our orderly-sergeants, named Wade, deserted, taking away considerable money, which had been intrusted to him by his company for the purpose of purchasing light hats, tin plates and cups, and other necessary things for the march we were about starting upon. It caused a great deal of feeling throughout the regiment. Four years later, in the War of the Rebellion, at Port Royal, South Carolina, while playing down the line at brigade dress parade, I saw this same man, who was then a lieutenant in the Forty-Seventh New York. After the parade was dismissed I hurried down the line and accosted him with, "How are you, Wade?" He pretended not to know me, and said, in a very important way, that I was greatly mistaken, and intimated that any further conversation would be objectionable. I told him it was no use to attempt to disguise the fact, as I could bring others who could identify him. He finally acknowledged it, but begged me not to betray him. I made him no promise, for I considered him a very mean rascal to steal from the

small earnings of the poor privates of his company. I informed Lieutenant Maxwell, who had served in the Tenth regulars, and well remembered the circumstance, who declared he would have him punished. A short time after, he was arrested, cashiered, and returned to the ranks.

Prior to starting, the following orders were promulgated: That we were to march, on an average, fifteen miles a day (this order was not strictly observed, as we marched some days over thirty, and never less than ten miles; the latter distance not more than three or four times during the summer); that we were to rest three days at Fort Kearney, and the same at Fort Laramie; and that saluting of officers and observance of Sundays would be dispensed with.

The march at first was very trying, and the ambulances were well filled when we reached camp. It was a noticeable fact, that the small, light men endured the long marches the best. We had a very large man in the band, by the name of Josephus Stark, a descendant of Gen. John Stark of Revolutionary fame, who weighed over two hundred pounds, and measured six feet in height, and was, in every sense, our big drummer. He gave out almost every day and generally came into camp two or three hours after the rest. On one occasion he became so tired and worn out, that he declared he could go no farther, and bade us all good-by, saying that he was going to lie down, and was sure he should die before morning. The ambu-

lance took him in, as we knew it would. He afterwards got accustomed to it, and did his marching quite well, but he was frequently reminded of his dying farewell, which very much annoyed him.

Stark was the only Yankee in the band, and New England's name and fame always had a stanch champion in him. He was strictly honest, generous to a fault, and respected by all who knew him. Whatever we had or saw never compared with what he had seen in Concord, New Hampshire (that place being his home), and we heard it so often, that he went thereafter by the name of "Concord, New Hampshire."

White beans contributed largely to the soldiers' rations, and they were used only in soup—a diet so steady that we hated the sight of it; consequently large quantities were thrown away. Our big Yankee suggested a change, and proposed to have some beans baked; he extolled their excellence, and mentioned the fact that they were eaten largely in New Hampshire. As we were all ignorant of such a dish, it being peculiar to New England, we told him that if he could get up any improvement on our regular method we should be rejoiced. He readily consented, and went diligently to work and prepared a meal for us of New Hampshire's favorite dish. Such a meal I had never sat down to before, even in my days of poverty. He had taken the beans, without either soaking or parboiling, and, with a generous piece of pork, with the rind all sliced in pieces of exact size, baked

them several hours. He said they required a deal of baking. When they came out, and we took them on our plates, they rattled like shot, and were almost as hard. Each one would take a mouthful and endeavor to chew them, though in every instance the attempt proved a failure. Out of respect to the feelings of our cook, who had endeavored to provide us with something nice, we refrained from ridiculing it, until at last we could hold out no longer, and then one incessant roar went around the group. One suggested that they be put into the coffee-mill and ground and eaten as porridge; another, that we use them for shot in hunting; while one old Dutchman thought it would be a good idea to use them as a mode of punishment in the guard-house, by making each prisoner eat a certain quantity each day. It was finally settled, that to make them an article of diet for the army it would be necessary for a quartz-crushing machine to accompany each regiment. Stark apologized for the unsavory mess, saying that they were not like those he had so often eaten at home in Concord, New Hampshire.

On another occasion we had considerable fun at his expense. He always persisted in carrying his drum himself, strapping it in front of him and marching along, feeling almost as important as the drum-major. This was a rifle regiment, and most of the manoeuvring, both drilling and marching, was executed in double quick, and the adjutant conceived the idea of having the band run and play, which we frequently did. One evening several

officers from another regiment were visiting, and after the evening's parade the adjutant, wishing to exhibit the excellence of his band, asked the band-master to play from the parade ground to the quarters in double-quick time. We started, playing "Pop goes the Weasel;" after we had gone a short distance, we heard the greatest uproar; the whole regiment seemed to be convulsed with laughter. It was something we could not understand, so we halted, and, on looking around, saw our big drummer, with his legs in the air, struggling to get in position. He had stumbled and fallen, rolling over his drum, and Micky, the tenor drummer, had tumbled over him. The visitors laughed at the adjutant; though admitting he had a good band, still they doubted its superiority over some others of the line; but as contortionists, there was no question but that he had something superior to anything they had ever seen in the army.

## CHAPTER XIII.

**A**FTER a few days' marching we came to the Big Blue river. It had quite a belt of timber along its banks, and, strange to say, was alive with pigs and hogs of every size; in fact, the "woods were full of them." Some of us determined upon a change of diet, by substituting fresh pork for salt. After pitching the tents, we sallied forth in quest of the porkers. Very soon the air resounded with the din of small arms, and from every direction the men could be seen issuing from the woods and hurrying to camp with little pigs and big pigs on their backs and under their arms. I fortunately secured three small "Berkshires," which I skinned, also cutting off their heads and feet, before bringing them in; while Carl Myers, a German member of the band, brought in two just as he shot them. Now it so happened that an old squatter, who lived some distance away, upon hearing the noise of our revolvers came running to camp and claimed that the pigs were his, which was much doubted, as they were as wild as buffalo; but he went straight to headquarters and complained to the colonel of this wanton destruction of his property. He made the

commanding officer believe his story, and even accompany him in his search among the tents. Everywhere that pigs were found, the men were made to pay two dollars apiece for them. When they came to our tent, Carl's pigs and mine were lying side by side. Poor Carl had to pay for his pork, because he had not skinned it, as by that the old squatter swore to the swine as his; but mine being divested of skin, head, and legs, neither the old fellow nor the colonel could, by the closest examination, come to any definite conclusion in regard to them, so they finally asked me what they were. "Oh," said I, "they are rabbits; I shot them on the march this morning." They looked at me dubiously, and passed along, with deep disgust depicted on the countenance of the old fellow, which seemed to express great doubt in my statement. It was not the pigs which he cared about, but the five or six dollars out of which he had been bluffed.

At Fort Kearney we rested three days, and struck the Platte river. We had now come about four hundred miles. Our marches were very hard on these desolate prairies, there being neither tree nor shrub to shelter us from the sun. Not a stick of wood could we get to burn for at least two hundred miles, and our only fuel for cooking purposes was buffalo chips, which on wet days were worthless, and in windy weather very unpleasant, scattering the ashes over everybody and everything, not even sparing our soup kettles. Each day on getting to camp the men would start in all directions for fuel, two

men to a blanket, and in a short time a sufficient supply would be collected for the day.

We had now reached the buffalo country, so that our living, so far as fresh meat was concerned, was excellent. It was amazing to see so many of those animals. The prairies were black with them. One day we were delayed by an immense herd rushing by the head of the column, which, for a time, gave us considerable uneasiness.

We little thought as we gazed upon that vast herd, peacefully grazing on the mountain sides, in the valleys, and on the open prairies, as far as the eye could reach in every direction, that in so short a time all that would be left of those noble animals would be their bleached bones.

We now came to a bridge over the Platte river, but such exorbitant rates were demanded for crossing the rude structure that our colonel decided to ford it. The water was quite deep, reaching to our waists, but, with the exception of wetting our blankets and rations in the wagons, we got safely across.

On the banks of this stream we came to a tribe of Pawnee Indians, and traded extensively with them, procuring buffalo robes, moccasins, etc., but after getting our goods to camp, it was ascertained that the small-pox was raging among them, so everything was taken from us and thrown into the river. We quickly left, and fortunately no one contracted the disease.

Slowly we traveled along day by day, stopping three

days at Fort Laramie, passing Laramie Peak, Independence Rock (at this rock the Mormons on their way to Utah celebrated Independence Day), Devil's Gate, Chimney and Court-House Rocks, Fremont's Peak, South Pass, etc. At Big Sandy we made our longest and hardest day's march, of thirty-five miles, across a sandy desert, with a scorching sun pouring down upon us all day, and with no chance of getting water during the entire march. When we came to the river, it seemed as if both men and animals were wild; they rushed pell-mell into the water, caring for neither orders nor threats.

Before reaching Utah many rumors reached us concerning the unfriendly disposition of the Mormons towards the government, and their determination to resist by force, if necessary, the entrance of troops into the territory, but we gave little credence to these reports until we received the following proclamation of Brigham Young:

PROCLAMATION BY THE GOVERNOR.

"*Citizens of Utah*.—We are invaded by a hostile force, who are evidently assailing us to accomplish our overthrow and destruction.

"For the last twenty-five years we have trusted officials of the government, from constables and justices to judges, governors, and presidents, only to be scorned, held in derision, insulted, and betrayed. Our houses have been plundered and then burned, our fields laid waste, our principal men butchered while under the pledged faith of the government for their safety, and our families driven from their homes to find that shelter in the barren wilderness, and that protection among hostile savages which were denied them in the boasted abodes of Christianity and civilization.

"The Constitution of our common country guarantees to us all that we do now, or have ever claimed.

"If the constitutional rights, which pertain unto us as American citizens, were extended to Utah according to the spirit and meaning thereof, and fairly and impartially administered, it is all we could ask, all that we ever asked.

"Our opponents have availed themselves of prejudice existing against us because of our religious faith, to send out a formidable host to accomplish our destruction. We have had no privilege, no opportunity of defending ourselves from the false, foul, and unjust aspersions against us before the nation.

"The government has not condescended to cause an investigating committee, or other person, to be sent to inquire into and ascertain the truth, as is customary in such cases.

"We know these aspersions to be false, but that avails us nothing. We are condemned unheard, and forced to an issue with an armed mercenary mob, which has been sent against us at the instigation of anonymous letter-writers, ashamed to father the base, slanderous falsehoods which they have given to the public; of corrupt officials, who have brought their false accusations against us to screen themselves in their own infamy; of hireling *priests* and *howling editors*, who prostitute the truth for filthy lucre's sake.

"The issue which has been forced upon us compels us to resort to the great first law of self-protection, and stand in our own defense, a right guaranteed to us by the genius of the institutions of our country, and upon which the government is based.

"Our duty to ourselves, to our families, requires us not tamely to be driven and slain, without an attempt to preserve ourselves. Our duty to our country, our holy religion, our God, to freedom and liberty, requires that we should not quietly stand still and see those fetters forging around which are calculated to enslave and bring us in subjection to an unlawful military despotism, such as can only emanate (in a country of constitutional law) from usurpation, tyranny, and oppression.