

On my seventy-fifth birthday, my children requested me to write the story of my life, and especially my war experience. My life seems to me hardly worth a written record, for it has been only a commonplace life, marked by many errors and missed opportunities; yet, on the whole, it has been a happy life, and I hope not wholly useless.

It began, so I have been told, for I do not recollect the beginning, at the old Smalley house in New Britain, Conn., on the 14th day of May, 1821. I was a weak, puny child; my mother was in feeble health, and I was cared for largely by my sister Sarah.

The first thing I can remember was being taken out of bed by my father and dipped in a tub of cold rain water which stood by the kitchen door. This dipping was not a "baptism", for I had been duly sprinkled before in church in orthodox form.

The next thing I recall was the infant school which I began to attend when three or four years old. Infant schools were the fashion of that day--precursors of the modern kindergarten. We were taught to sew and knit, and I suppose to read--I cannot remember when I began to read. When five years old, I was taken to the regimental training or muster on the fields at Plainfield. That was a great even^t, and I can still see the long line of infantry and the company of cavalry making a dashing charge, with my brother-

in-law, Dan Clark, in command, and leading the onslaught. I thought all the poor men on foot must be trodden to death, or be beheaded by those flashing sabres. But when the horsemen had rushed on and the dust blew away, there stood the infantry in line, unharmed.

My boyhood was like that of all farm boys. I became healthy and strong, and from seven or eight years of age, worked all summer with the men on the farm. Farm life is about the best training a boy can have. He learns to do all sorts of things; to handle tools, to milk cows, drive oxen and horses, and becomes self-reliant and manly. In winter I attended the Academy, and began early to fit for college. My farm life was like that of other boys in those days. In summer, up often at four, milked the cows, carried milk around the village before breakfast, then at work all day, milking again at night and in bed before nine. But we had our pleasures, picnics and berrying, in summer, corn-husking in the great barn, and apple pearings--all the boys and girls of the neighborhood helping, and closing with a game of blindman's bluff in the old kitchen.

College life at Yale had in it nothing remarkable. I took a fair standing and was graduated with honors. After that I taught an Academy in Schoharie County, New York, one term, and then was invited by my classmate, Julius Pratt, to join him in teaching a

Classical school at Greensboro, Ala., where I stayed about three years, mingling in all the doings of southern society, and learning much of slavery in the black belt.

The only very exciting incident of those days was my delivering a 4th of July oration at a great open air barbecue, and nearly getting mobbed for too much spread eagle talk about "liberty and Union forever."

In 1846 I returned to New Haven and entered the Theological Seminary with George Howard as my room-mate. There we learned a little Hebrew under Dr. Gibbs, and discussed "Moral Government" with Dr. Taylor. But after a year, cash failing, I went to Mobile, Ala., and taught in Madame De Felhous' French school for young ladies. After about a year and a half, I returned to New Haven, finished my theological course, and then went to Andover for one year.

In April, 1851, I was invited to preach two Sundays in Bath, Me., and soon received a call to the Central Church, over which I was ordained Pastor, October 1st. The day after, on an excursion down the river, I became acquainted with an attractive girl, who, three years later, became my wife, and forty-two years of wedded life have brought no regret for the choice then made.

In Bath I remained ten years, and did some hard work, with,

I hope, some useful fruits.

October 1st, 1861, Bowdoin College invited me to the Professorship of Rhetoric and Oratory, which position was accepted; but the war of the rebellion had begun, students enlisted, and I did but little for the College.

In August, 1862, asking leave of absence for six months, I was mustered into the United States service as Chaplain of the 19th Regiment, Maine Volunteers. We soon left for Washington, were welcomed and feasted at Philadelphia and Baltimore, and landed at Washington the day of the second battle of Bull Run. Our Regiment was ordered across the Potomac, and we went into camp about a mile northwest of Long Bridge. Then came an order to turn back and march to Fort Baker across the Eastern Branch. The oppressive heat and the long march overcame some of our men, and one died that night. So my first service as Chaplain was a night funeral service.

In a few days, much to my surprise, an appointment came as Assistant Adjutant General, with the rank of Captain, and orders to report at once to Gen. O. O. Howard for duty. Buying a horse and saddle in Washington, I rode out through Georgetown and found Gen. Howard in camp near Tenallytown. We went forward through Hagerstown to Frederick and thence over South Mountain to Keedysville near Antietam Creek. On the 17th of September, about sunrise,

our corps, the Second, commanded by Gen. Sumner, was ordered into action. We crossed the Antietam, marched about two miles, and by eight encountered the enemy in force. Our army advanced in three lines, the third, the 2nd Brigade under Howard, in the rear. We drove back the rebels through a cornfield into a wood and down a ravine. I was near the General, and looking to the left saw our line doubled up and falling back. I called to Gen. Howard, "They have turned our left flank." He ordered a retreat, and for awhile all seemed to me confusion, but we were soon at the edge of the wood and out of fire. The rest of the day was spent in collecting our scattered forces. At night we lay down among the dead, having had no food since daylight, our supply wagon not having found us. However, a soldier gave to each of us a cake of hard tack. About midnight a scout reported that the enemy were retreating, and Gen. Howard and I, on foot (it was very dark) went to Gen. McLellan's headquarters, and though I was not present at the interview, I was told that Gen. Howard urged a vigorous pursuit of the rebels at daylight. McLellan hesitated, and Lee, with his army, was suffered to cross the Potomac and get safe back to Virginia. So ended the battle of Antietam. It was a victory, but it might have been a much greater victory. This was my first experience of battle. Bullets and shells flew thick about us, but I was too much interested to think of personal danger. Some days, two or three, were

spent burying the dead and collecting the wounded in field hospitals, and we were marched for Harper's Ferry. Howard had been put in command of the Second Division, and I went with him, having been promoted to the rank of Major. On our way, report was brought to Gen Sumner that Surgeon Revere of Massachusetts had been killed in the fight, and the General said "His body must be found and sent home." Turning to me (I was riding near), he said, "Major, find Revere's body and arrange for sending it home," and hailing an ambulance, he ordered the driver to go with me. So back I went to the battle field, where men were still busy digging trenches for burial. Without much delay I found the body, had it placed in the ambulance and taken to a hospital and committed to the officer in charge. Then as fast as my horse could go, I rode to head off the column, reaching it just before it forded the Potomac at Harper's Ferry. At that place we lay in camp some weeks, where President Lincoln visited and reviewed the army. In his company, and that of many officers, I rode up Maryland Heights, and while stopping near the old Engine House on our way I heard Lincoln tell the story of the "Flat boat and the skeered Virginians." Bad air and bad water at Harper's Ferry prostrated many with malarial fever, among them Gen. Howard and myself. The General went to Maine, and I to Philadelphia to the house of W. Tappan. Under the care of Dr. Mitchell and my good wife (who met me there) in two or three weeks

I recovered, and Gen. Howard returning, I joined him and went back to Harper's Ferry. The army had moved and we followed to Salem, Va. There we lay some days. McLellan was relieved and Burnside put in command of the army of the Potomac.

Our next move was to Falmouth opposite to Fredericksburg. Weeks of recruiting and drilling followed, then December 11, 1862, orders came to cross the Rappahannock and attack the enemy strongly posted back of the town. Our division was the first to cross. Men rowed over, drove back the rebel pickets, a pontoon bridge was quickly laid and our column on the march. Reaching the bridge, Gen. Howard directed me to wait and push forward the troops without clogging, and then follow. It was a ticklish position. Rebel batteries were sending shells thick and fast. A young man, correspondent of the N. Y. Herald, came riding down to the bank where I stood and said, "Major, can I cross?" "Yes", I said, "after the column gets over." Just then a shell came screaming over our heads. "Why," he exclaimed, "they are firing on you." "Yes," I replied, "they have been firing on us all the time." "Well," said he, "I don't believe I will stay here." "I wouldn't" I said, "if I were not ordered to stay", and he was off as fast as his horse could go. We got over, took possession of the town, and the next day was spent disposing of positions, and on the 13th was fought the disastrous battle of Fredericksburg. Our division went into battle in front of Mary's heights about 11 A. M.

badly cut to pieces. I was with Gen. Howard not far back of the assaulting lines, and twice my horse was slightly wounded, but no bullet touched me. At night we drew back into the town. In the darkness, Gen. Howard and I walked cautiously over the field, and did what we could for the poor fellows lying there wounded.

The next day was quiet except some artillery firing, and at night we had orders to retreat. In a dense fog we got safely across the Rappahamock to our old camp at Falmouth. There we lay doing little till about the last of April, 1863. In the meantime Burnside had been relieved and Hooker placed in command.

Our next move was up the river about 15 miles where we crossed again and marched southeast to ^{Charlottesville} ~~Charlottesville~~. Lee came out from Fredericksburg to meet us, and May 2nd began the battle. Howard was in command of the 11th Corps and posted on the extreme right with no support. The next morning it was reported that the enemy were retreating toward Richmond and Howard's best brigade was detached to join Sickles' command in pursuit. That afternoon about 3 o'clock I rode along our front picket line and found all quiet. Then I was sent back across the river to bring up the commissary train so that rations might be issued in time for joining in the pursuit early next morning. I was in the saddle all night and got back to the river at 4 A. M. with my wagon train of supplies. I was told that Howard's corps had been attacked by Jackson and cut to

pieces, and that no one was allowed to cross the river. I showed my orders from Hooker and got over with my train. Parking it near the river, I went in search of Gen. Howard, whom I found at the head of his column marching back to a new position. The rations were given out and we lay quiet all day, though fighting was going on. At night a cold rain came on and we lay on the ground. Gen. Howard and I had a rubber blanket over us. All the next day--Monday--the rain poured down, and at night we were ordered to retreat. I went ahead with an artillery train. We waited at the swollen river till the pontoon bridge was repaired, got safely over and through mud knee deep, plowed our way back to the old Falmouth camp.

Seeing no prospect of immediate active operations, and my college leave having expired, I asked leave of absence for two months to prepare the senior class for commencement. Leave being refused, I with regret, resigned, and returned to Brunswick, where I remained on duty as college professor till September 1, 1864, when I received appointment as Judge Advocate of the Army of the Tennessee and was ordered to report to Gen. Howard in command at Atlanta, Ga. I donned my uniform, started at once and traveled via Louisville, Ky., to Nashville, Tenn., without delay. There I learned that the railroad south had been torn up by Forrest's raiders, and no trains could move. In a few days repairs were made

right wing, Slocum the left, and Sherman sometimes with one, sometimes with the other. I was by Gen. Howard's side much of the time, but often made excursions right or left in search of passable roads through forests and swamps, often riding 40 or 50 miles in a day, and getting back to camp late at night. We had no great battle, only skirmishing to drive off guards posted at river crossings, until we came near Savannah, Ga. That city was held by a strong force under Bragg, and the fortifications blocked our way several days. Our provisions were exhausted, though we had swept the country clean of everything eatable, and we lived some days on rice stored in the rice mills. But we were not long delayed. Fort McAllister was taken by assault, and our columns approached the city on all sides. One day Gen. Howard with all his staff rode across a narrow dike between rice swamps, and when about the middle, a rebel battery opened upon us. But the balls went over our heads, and we got safely across. Not finding Gen. Sherman, whom we were seeking, Gen. Howard was about to re-cross, but I advised him not to expose his whole staff to that battery again, and offered to return along and meet Sherman, if he had gone round. This I did, and having a good horse I went across that half mile of dike in less than two minutes.

Another day I was riding with Gen. Frank P. Blair who commanded the 17th Corps. We were on an open road to the city with

swampy woods each side. Suddenly a rebel battery opened upon us and a round of shot whizzed over our heads and cut down two officers behind us. Gen. Blair ordered a scattering into the woods, and one of our batteries coming up soon silenced the rebel guns. At noon Gen. Sherman appeared and we had lunch. Then I said "I must report to Gen. Howard where Blair's column is." Sherman said, "All right, but you are not going alone--too many rebel bushwhackers about these swamps." So he ordered for me an escort of twenty mounted men. It was a long ride through swamps, tangled woods and canals, but I found my way and reported to Howard about dark. The rebel force in Savannah finding resistance fruitless, retreated, and we entered the city December 24th. Sherman telegraphed to President Lincoln "I present Savannah as a Christmas gift." Communications were now opened, and we could send letters home and receive news after six weeks' silence.

We remained in Savannah some days, supplying the army with clothing, shoes and rations, and then took our march northward. I went by steamer early in January, 1865, to Beaufort, S. C. From that place we went forward through mud and water to Fayetteville, N. C., and thence on towards Goldsboro. At Bentonville we had a sharp fight with Johnston and defeated him. From Goldsboro I went to Newbern to attend to some court martial cases. I then rejoined Gen. Howard at Raleigh. There I had a serious attack of dysentery

and then we heard of the assassination of President Lincoln. Johnston surrendered, war was over, and we marched on through Richmond, Va., to Washington. There in May we had the grand review of the whole army, the greatest show Washington has ever seen. I received the Brevet of Lieutenant Colonel, and was appointed Colonel of the ⁴26th U. S. Colored Regiment. But my Regiment being in Texas, and about to be mustered out, I never saw it. I was breveted Brigadier General, and again ordered to duty with Gen. Howard who had been appointed Commissioner of the Freedmens' Bureau. He assigned me to North Carolina, and I went to Raleigh, and for a year was busy reducing chaos to order. In 1866, on account of something I had written, I incurred the wrath of President Andrew Johnson, and was subjected to a trial by court martial. I was acquitted, and after some months delay, which I spent at home, I was ordered back to Washington and served there as Adjutant General of the Freedman's Bureau till it was closed up, July 1, 1872. While in that office I visited the Freedmen's schools in all the southern states; selected the site of Howard University, helped in organizing it, and served as one of the professors.

In 1873 I resigned the professorship and was appointed member of a Commission to treat with the Crow Indians in Montana. That was the beginning of my Indian work, and in June, 1874, I went into the office of the Board of Indian Commissioners, first as chief

clerk, then assistant Secretary, then as Secretary, and have continued in charge of that office to this day. During these last years I have visited nearly all the Indian Reservations and Indian schools, traveling in every State and Territory except Nevada. These 22 years of Indian service have been full of interesting work. It has given me acquaintance with many men of high official position and I have been permitted to witness the steady progress of our red brothers towards civilization and a higher life. My work for them is nearly done. Others will take it up and carry it on to completion.

I have made a long story of a life not very important, but varied with incidents, some narrow escapes and many blessings. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gifts.

C. Whittelsey

October 5th, 1896.

The following lines were written by Rev. Chas. W. Camp, D. D., and read at my 75th birthday anniversary.