

PEA RIDGE AND PRAIRIE GROVE;

OR,

SCENES AND INCIDENTS

OF THE

WAR IN ARKANSAS.

BY

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CHAPTER XI.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

Arrival of the wounded—The hospitals—Fortitude of the wounded—Deserters—Change of opinion—Venus and Mars, or woman's wit.

THE joy of victory, however, was soon saddened by the usual attendants of success upon the battle-field. The ambulances, with their mangled and bleeding freight, began to arrive, and groans of agony extorted by every inequality of the road over which they passed were heard. Many of the slightly wounded, supported by a friendly stick, or the stout arm of a friend, began to come in, and ere long the town was one vast hospital. Reader, have you ever had your mind fired by glowing descriptions of military glory, the stern and high delights of war? Remember, that to every pic-

ture of this kind there is a dark and fearful background; the plain strewed with dead, the living in every form of mutilation and disfigurement; strong men writhing in speechless agony, the compressed lip, and the pain-drop on the brow, alone telling what words would be powerless to tell. Add to this the thought that the mangled and bleeding sufferers are hundreds of miles from home, among strangers and even enemies, no kind voice to console, no soft hand to soothe; the lip parched, the wound burning; or the life-blood, from wounds that skill can not stanch, ebbing slowly away, and you have before you, not the romance, but the reality of war.

I believe I was the first citizen to minister to these suffering ones; as soon as they began to arrive, I went to the Female Seminary, one of the receptacles of the wounded; there was then only one man, an officer, there. He was a large, fine-looking man; his wound was painful and dangerous, his eyes were closed, no com-

plaint or moan escaped him; hundreds of others, as yet without shelter, rendered any aid to him at present out of the question; I laid my hand upon his brow, and asked him the nature of his wound; he started in surprise at the sound of a strange, yet kind voice—answered my inquiries—told me he was from Indianapolis; and when he learned that many whom he knew there were friends of mine, he for the time being seemed to forget his pain in his joy.

I said he was the only occupant of that large building, but when I next visited it the entire floor was so thickly covered with mangled and bleeding men that it was difficult to thread my way among them; some were mortally wounded, the life fast escaping through a ghastly hole in the breast; the limbs of others were shattered and useless, the faces of others so disfigured as to seem scarcely human; the bloody bandages, hair clotted, and garments stained with blood, and all these with but little covering, and no other couch than the straw,

with which the floor was strewed, made up a scene more pitiable and horrible than I had ever conceived possible before. Nor was this the only place which presented so sad a spectacle; it was repeated in about twenty other buildings, including the various churches, all of which were thronged with the sad wrecks of humanity from that field which in song and story will long be remembered as Prairie Grove.

Sad, however, as was the scene in the hospital to which I have alluded, it was exceeded, perhaps, by the force of contrast in the church, in which I was accustomed to minister; the seats were removed, and the entire floor covered with bleeding and mangled men; and when I thought of the throngs which had often gathered there for worship, and looked upon the scene then presented, the contrast was most painful. The number of wounded was so great, and supplies so scanty, that for a few days the little I was able to furnish them seemed luxu-

rious when compared with the coarse fare with which they were served; but a few days made a great change for the better; supplies began to come in—the Sanitary Commission was well represented; and Gov. Morton, as soon as he heard that a regiment from his State had suffered severely in the fight, lost no time in sending such aid as was needed. Many and warm were the blessings upon his name by the wounded of the twenty-sixth Indiana, who to a man regarded him as the soldiers' friend, for to them, far away on the frontier, the evidences of his care were most grateful, and will be long remembered.

During the first few days after the battle many of the severely wounded died; and to me it was a sad sight when, for the first time, I saw a corpse, stark and cold, laid outside of the hospital upon the ground, with no covering but a blanket or overcoat, soon to be carried away by the dozen to nameless graves. Hitherto I had cherished great reverence for the human

body, even after the spirit had departed; and to see the bodies of men treated with as little ceremony as is wont to be bestowed upon brutes, was sad in the extreme. My heart sickened, too, when I saw, for the first time, the surgeons carving and sawing the limbs of men like butchers in the shambles; and yet I soon learned that their very coolness was a mercy; there was no time for weakness; that would unnerve the skillful hand when the lives of so many were depending upon their promptness and energy; and indeed it was not long before I could myself stand by the side of one undergoing amputation, and soothe him in the trying ordeal which at first to witness unmanned me.

Among those who had to pass the terrible ordeal of losing a limb was a rebel soldier, for the wounded, whether friends or foes, were all cared for in turn; he had a pleasing face, and an eye mild, soft, and tender as a woman's. I was attracted to him the moment I saw him,

and his voice and manner fully corresponded with his looks; his wound was a fearful one, and he scarcely expected to survive the necessary operation. I stood by him in his hour of trial; he bore it uncomplainingly, but the shock was too great, and he sunk from the loss of blood, and his friends to this hour perhaps are ignorant of his sad fate.

I must say, however, that the wounded bore their sufferings like the heroes that they were; no abandonment to grief or useless complaining, but on the contrary, many were calm, and some even cheerful. One noble fellow I well remember; a ball had passed laterally through his breast, a horrible wound, rendering his breathing difficult and painful; the bright red blood, which every feeble cough brought into his mouth, showed that his lungs had been pierced, and yet he was hopeful and cheerful. "I know," said he, "that it is an ugly wound, but I am not going to make a poor mouth about it; I will keep up a good heart, come what may."

And he did keep up a stout heart, and I had the pleasure of seeing him on his feet and able to march again. Indeed, among the hundreds that I saw almost daily, I heard no weak and unmanly complaints. The calm endurance of some, and the eagerness of others for another encounter with the foe as soon as fit for service, was a matter for wonder, and afforded quite a marked contrast to what I had witnessed, months before in the same place, on the part of sick and wounded Confederate soldiers, whose only language was that of complaint, their only longing, for home. Poor fellows! many of them were found in the ranks against their own will; hence their desire for the homes they had left so unwillingly.

It was not long, however, before the condition of those in the hospitals was greatly improved; no pains were spared to render them comfortable; abundant supplies of all kinds soon arrived, and all that skill and kindness could do was exerted for their comfort, and the poor sufferers