

# ARMY LIFE IN A BLACK REGIMENT.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

THESE pages record some of the adventures of the First South Carolina Volunteers,—the first slave regiment mustered into the service of the United States during the late civil war. It was, indeed, the first colored regiment of any kind so mustered, except a portion of the troops raised by Major-General Butler at New Orleans. These scarcely belonged to the same class, however, being recruited from the free colored population of that city, a comparatively self-reliant and educated race. “The darkest of them,” said General Butler, “were about the complexion of the late Mr. Webster.”

The First South Carolina, on the other hand, contained scarcely a freeman, had not one mulatto in ten, and a far smaller proportion who could read or write when enlisted. The only contemporary regiment of a similar character was the “First Kansas Colored,” which began recruiting a little earlier, though it was not mustered in—the usual basis of military seniority—till later.\* These were the only colored regiments recruited during the year 1862. The Second South Carolina and the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts followed early in 1863.

\* See Appendix.

*INTRODUCTORY.*

This is the way in which I came to the command of this regiment. One day in November, 1862, I was sitting at dinner with my lieutenants, John Goodell and Luther Bigelow, in the barracks of the Fifty-First Massachusetts, Colonel Sprague, when the following letter was put into my hands:—

BEAUFORT, S. C., November 5, 1862.

MY DEAR SIR, — I am organizing the First Regiment of South Carolina Volunteers, with every prospect of success. Your name has been spoken of, in connection with the command of this regiment, by some friends in whose judgment I have confidence. I take great pleasure in offering you the position of Colonel in it, and hope that you may be induced to accept. I shall not fill the place until I hear from you, or sufficient time shall have passed for me to receive your reply. Should you accept, I enclose a pass for Port Royal, of which I trust you will feel disposed to avail yourself at once.

I am, with sincere regard, yours truly,

R. SAXTON,  
*Brig.-Genl., Mil. Gov.*

Had an invitation reached me to take command of a regiment of Kalmuck Tartars, it could hardly have been more unexpected. I had always looked for the arming of the blacks, and had always felt a wish to be associated with them; had read the scanty accounts of General Hunter's abortive regiment, and had heard rumors of General Saxton's renewed efforts. But the prevalent tone of public sentiment was still opposed to any such attempts; the government kept very shy of the experiment, and it did not seem possible that the time had come when it could be fairly tried.

For myself, I was at the head of a fine company of my own raising, and in a regiment to which I was already much attached. It did not seem desirable to

exchange a certainty for an uncertainty; for who knew but General Saxton might yet be thwarted in his efforts by the pro-slavery influence that had still so much weight at head-quarters? It would be intolerable to go out to South Carolina, and find myself, after all, at the head of a mere plantation-guard or a day-school in uniform.

I therefore obtained from the War Department, through Governor Andrew, permission to go and report to General Saxton, without at once resigning my captaincy. Fortunately it took but a few days in South Carolina to make it clear that all was, right, and the return steamer took back a resignation of a Massachusetts commission. Thenceforth my lot was cast altogether with the black troops, except when regiments or detachments of white soldiers were also under my command, during the two years following.

These details would not be worth mentioning except as they show this fact: that I did not seek the command of colored troops, but it sought me. And this fact again is only important to my story for this reason, that under these circumstances I naturally viewed the new recruits rather as subjects for discipline than for philanthropy. I had been expecting a war for six years, ever since the Kansas troubles, and my mind had dwelt on military matters more or less during all that time. The best Massachusetts regiments already exhibited a high standard of drill and discipline, and unless these men could be brought tolerably near that standard, the fact of their extreme blackness would afford me, even as a philanthropist, no satisfaction. Fortunately, I felt perfect confidence that they could be so trained,—having happily known, by experience, the qualities of their race, and knowing also that they had home and household and

*INTRODUCTORY.*

freedom to fight for, besides that abstraction of "the Union." Trouble might perhaps be expected from white officials, though this turned out far less than might have been feared; but there was no trouble to come from the men, I thought, and none ever came. On the other hand, it was a vast experiment of indirect philanthropy, and one on which the result of the war and the destiny of the negro race might rest; and this was enough to tax all one's powers. I had been an abolitionist too long, and had known and loved John Brown too well, not to feel a thrill of joy at last on finding myself in the position where he only wished to be.

In view of all this, it was clear that good discipline must come first; after that, of course, the men must be helped and elevated in all ways as much as possible.

Of discipline there was great need,—that is, of order and regular instruction. Some of the men had already been under fire, but they were very ignorant of drill and camp duty. The officers, being appointed from a dozen different States, and more than as many regiments,—infantry, cavalry, artillery, and engineers,—had all that diversity of methods which so confused our army in those early days. The first need, therefore, was of an unbroken interval of training. During this period, which fortunately lasted nearly two months, I rarely left the camp, and got occasional leisure moments for a fragmentary journal, to send home, recording the many odd or novel aspects of the new experience. Camp-life was a wonderfully strange sensation to almost all volunteer officers, and mine lay among eight hundred men suddenly transformed from slaves into soldiers, and representing a race affectionate, enthusiastic, grotesque, and dramatic beyond all others. Being such, they naturally

gave material for description. There is nothing like a diary for freshness,—at least so I think,—and I shall keep to the diary through the days of camp-life, and throw the later experience into another form. Indeed, that matter takes care of itself; diaries and letter-writing stop when field-service begins.

I am under pretty heavy bonds to tell the truth, and only the truth; for those who look back to the newspaper correspondence of that period will see that this particular regiment lived for months in a glare of publicity, such as tests any regiment severely, and certainly prevents all subsequent romancing in its historian. As the scene of the only effort on the Atlantic coast to arm the negro, our camp attracted a continuous stream of visitors, military and civil. A battalion of black soldiers, a spectacle since so common, seemed then the most daring of innovations, and the whole demeanor of this particular regiment was watched with microscopic scrutiny by friends and foes. I felt sometimes as if we were a plant trying to take root, but constantly pulled up to see if we were growing. The slightest camp incidents sometimes came back to us, magnified and distorted, in letters of anxious inquiry from remote parts of the Union. It was no pleasant thing to live under such constant surveillance; but it guaranteed the honesty of any success, while fearfully multiplying the penalties had there been a failure. A single mutiny,—such as has happened in the infancy of a hundred regiments,—a single miniature Bull Run, a stampede of desertions, and it would have been all over with us; the party of distrust would have got the upper hand, and there might not have been, during the whole contest, another effort to arm the negro.

I may now proceed, without farther preparation, to the Diary.

## CHAPTER II.

## CAMP DIARY.

CAMP SAXTON, near Beaufort, S. C.,  
November 24, 1862.

YESTERDAY afternoon we were steaming over a summer sea, the deck level as a parlor-floor, no land in sight, no sail, until at last appeared one light-house, said to be Cape Romaine, and then a line of trees and two distant vessels and nothing more. The sun set, a great illuminated bubble, submerged in one vast bank of rosy suffusion; it grew dark; after tea all were on deck, the people sang hymns; then the moon set, a moon two days old, a curved pencil of light, reclining backwards on a radiant couch which seemed to rise from the waves to receive it; it sank slowly, and the last tip wavered and went down like the mast of a vessel of the skies. Towards morning the boat stopped, and when I came on deck, before six,—

“The watch-lights glittered on the land,  
The ship-lights on the sea.”

Hilton Head lay on one side, the gunboats on the other; all that was raw and bare in the low buildings of the new settlement was softened into picturesqueness by the early light. Stars were still overhead, gulls wheeled and shrieked, and the broad river rippled duskily towards Beaufort.

The shores were low and wooded, like any New England shore; there were a few gunboats, twenty schooners, and some steamers, among them the famous “Planter,”

which Robert Small, the slave, presented to the nation. The river-banks were soft and graceful, though low, and as we steamed up to Beaufort on the flood-tide this morning, it seemed almost as fair as the smooth and lovely canals which Stedman traversed to meet his negro soldiers in Surinam. The air was cool as at home, yet the foliage seemed green, glimpses of stiff tropical vegetation appeared along the banks, with great clumps of shrubs, whose pale seed-vessels looked like tardy blossoms. Then we saw on a picturesque point an old plantation, with stately magnolia avenue, decaying house, and tiny church amid the woods, reminding me of Virginia; behind it stood a neat encampment of white tents, "and there," said my companion, "is your future regiment."

Three miles farther brought us to the pretty town of Beaufort, with its stately houses amid Southern foliage. Reporting to General Saxton, I had the luck to encounter a company of my destined command, marched in to be mustered into the United States service. They were unarmed, and all looked as thoroughly black as the most faithful philanthropist could desire; there did not seem to be so much as a mulatto among them. Their coloring suited me, all but the legs, which were clad in a lively scarlet, as intolerable to my eyes as if I had been a turkey. I saw them mustered; General Saxton talked to them a little, in his direct, manly way; they gave close attention, though their faces looked impenetrable. Then I conversed with some of them. The first to whom I spoke had been wounded in a small expedition after lumber, from which a party had just returned, and in which they had been under fire and had done very well. I said, pointing to his lame arm,—

“Did you think that was more than you bargained for, my man?”

His answer came promptly and stoutly,—

“I been a-tinking, Mas’r, *dat’s jess what I went for.*”

I thought this did well enough for my very first interchange of dialogue with my recruits.

November 27, 1862.

Thanksgiving-Day; it is the first moment I have had for writing during these three days, which have installed me into a new mode of life so thoroughly that they seem three years. Scarcely pausing in New York or in Beaufort, there seems to have been for me but one step from the camp of a Massachusetts regiment to this, and that step over leagues of waves.

It is a holiday wherever General Saxton’s proclamation reaches. The chilly sunshine and the pale blue river seem like New England, but those alone. The air is full of noisy drumming, and of gunshots; for the prize-shooting is our great celebration of the day, and the drumming is chronic. My young barbarians are all at play. I look out from the broken windows of this forlorn plantation-house, through avenues of great live-oaks, with their hard, shining leaves, and their branches hung with a universal drapery of soft, long moss, like fringe-trees struck with grayness. Below, the sandy soil, scanty covered with coarse grass, bristles with sharp palmettoes and aloes; all the vegetation is stiff, shining, semi-tropical, with nothing soft or delicate in its texture. Numerous plantation-buildings totter around, all slovenly and unattractive, while the interspaces are filled with all manner of wreck and refuse, pigs, fowls, dogs, and omnipresent Ethiopian infancy. All this is the



universal Southern panorama; but five minutes' walk beyond the hovels and the live-oaks will bring one to something so un-Southern that the whole Southern coast at this moment trembles at the suggestion of such a thing,—the camp of a regiment of freed slaves.

One adapts one's self so readily to new surroundings that already the full zest of the novelty seems passing away from my perceptions, and I write these lines in an eager effort to retain all I can. Already I am growing used to the experience, at first so novel, of living among five hundred men, and scarce a white face to be seen,—of seeing them go through all their daily processes, eating, frolicking, talking, just as if they were white. Each day at dress-parade I stand with the customary folding of the arms before a regimental line of countenances so black that I can hardly tell whether the men stand steadily or not; black is every hand which moves in ready cadence as I vociferate, "Battalion! Shoulder arms!" nor is it till the line of white officers moves forward, as parade is dismissed, that I am reminded that my own face is not the color of coal.

The first few days on duty with a new regiment must be devoted almost wholly to tightening reins; in this process one deals chiefly with the officers, and I have as yet had but little personal intercourse with the men. They concern me chiefly in bulk, as so many consumers of rations, wearers of uniforms, bearers of muskets. But as the machine comes into shape, I am beginning to decipher the individual parts. At first, of course, they all looked just alike; the variety comes afterwards, and they are just as distinguishable, the officers say, as so many whites. Most of them are wholly raw, but there are many who have already been for months in camp in

the abortive "Hunter Regiment," yet in that loose kind of way which, like average militia training, is a doubtful advantage. I notice that some companies, too, look darker than others, though all are purer African than I expected. This is said to be partly a geographical difference between the South Carolina and Florida men. When the Rebels evacuated this region they probably took with them the house-servants, including most of the mixed blood, so that the residuum seems very black. But the men brought from Fernandina the other day average lighter in complexion, and look more intelligent, and they certainly take wonderfully to the drill.

It needs but a few days to show the absurdity of distrusting the military availability of these people. They have quite as much average comprehension as whites of the need of the thing, as much courage (I doubt not), as much previous knowledge of the gun, and, above all, a readiness of ear and of imitation, which, for purposes of drill, counterbalances any defect of mental training. To learn the drill, one does not want a set of college professors; one wants a squad of eager, active, pliant school-boys; and the more childlike these pupils are the better. There is no trouble about the drill; they will surpass whites in that. As to camp-life, they have little to sacrifice; they are better fed, housed, and clothed than ever in their lives before, and they appear to have few inconvenient vices. They are simple, docile, and affectionate almost to the point of absurdity. The same men who stood fire in open field with perfect coolness, on the late expedition, have come to me blubbering in the most irresistibly ludicrous manner on being transferred from one company in the regiment to another.

In noticing the squad-drills I perceive that the men learn less laboriously than whites that "double, double, toil and trouble," which is the elementary vexation of the drill-master,—that they more rarely mistake their left for their right,—and are more grave and sedate while under instruction. The extremes of jollity and sobriety, being greater with them, are less liable to be intermingled; these companies can be driven with a looser rein than my former one, for they restrain themselves; but the moment they are dismissed from drill every tongue is relaxed and every ivory tooth visible. This morning I wandered about where the different companies were target-shooting, and their glee was contagious. Such exulting shouts of "Ki! ole man," when some steady old turkey-shooter brought his gun down for an instant's aim, and then unerringly hit the mark; and then, when some unwary youth fired his piece into the ground at half-cock, such infinite guffawing and delight, such rolling over and over on the grass, such dances of ecstasy, as made the "Ethiopian minstrelsy" of the stage appear a feeble imitation.

*Evening.*—Better still was a scene on which I stumbled to-night. Strolling in the cool moonlight, I was attracted by a brilliant light beneath the trees, and cautiously approached it. A circle of thirty or forty soldiers sat around a roaring fire, while one old uncle, Cato by name, was narrating an interminable tale, to the insatiable delight of his audience. I came up into the dusky background, perceived only by a few, and he still continued. It was a narrative, dramatized to the last degree, of his adventures in escaping from his master to the Union vessels; and even I, who have heard the stories of Harriet Tubman, and such wonderful slave-comedians,

never witnessed such a piece of acting. When I came upon the scene he had just come unexpectedly upon a plantation-house, and, putting a bold face upon it, had walked up to the door.

“Den I go up to de white man, berry humble, and say, would he please gib ole man a mouthful for eat?”

“He say he must hab de valeration ob half a dollar.

“Den I look berry sorry, and turn for go away.

“Den he say I might gib him dat hatchet I had.

“Den I say” (this in a tragic vein) “dat I must hab dat hatchet for defend myself *from de dogs!*”

[Immense applause, and one appreciating auditor says, chuckling, “Dat was your *arms*, ole man,” which brings down the house again.]

“Den he say de Yankee pickets was near by, and I must be very keerful.

“Den I say, ‘Good Lord, Mas’r, am dey?’”

Words cannot express the complete dissimulation with which these accents of terror were uttered,—this being precisely the piece of information he wished to obtain.

Then he narrated his devices to get into the house at night and obtain some food,—how a dog flew at him,—how the whole household, black and white, rose in pursuit,—how he scrambled under a hedge and over a high fence, etc.,—all in a style of which Gough alone among orators can give the faintest impression, so thoroughly dramatized was every syllable.

Then he described his reaching the river-side at last, and trying to decide whether certain vessels held friends or foes.

“Den I see guns on board, and sure sartin he Union boat, and I pop my head up. Den I been-a-tink [think] Seceshkey hab guns too, and my head go down again.

Den I hide in de bush till morning. Den I open my bundle, and take ole white shirt and tie him on ole pole and wave him, and ebry time de wind blow, I been-a-tremble, and drap down in de bushes,”—because, being between two fires, he doubted whether friend or foe would see his signal first. And so on, with a succession of tricks beyond Moliere, of acts of caution, foresight, patient cunning, which were listened to with infinite gusto and perfect comprehension by every listener.

And all this to a bivouac of negro soldiers, with the brilliant fire lighting up their red trousers and gleaming from their shining black faces,—eyes and teeth all white with tumultuous glee. Overhead, the mighty limbs of a great live-oak, with the weird moss swaying in the smoke, and the high moon gleaming faintly through.

Yet to-morrow strangers will remark on the hopeless, impenetrable stupidity in the daylight faces of many of these very men, the solid mask under which Nature has concealed all this wealth of mother-wit. This very comedian is one to whom one might point, as he hoed lazily in a cotton-field, as a being the light of whose brain had utterly gone out; and this scene seems like coming by night upon some conclave of black beetles, and finding them engaged, with green-room and foot-lights, in enacting “Poor Pillicoddy.” This is their university; every young Sambo before me, as he turned over the sweet potatoes and peanuts which were roasting in the ashes, listened with reverence to the wiles of the ancient Ulysses, and meditated the same. It is Nature’s compensation; oppression simply crushes the upper faculties of the head, and crowds everything into the perceptive organs. Cato, thou reasonest well! When I get into any serious scrape, in an enemy’s country, may I be

lucky enough to have you at my elbow, to pull me out of it!

The men seem to have enjoyed the novel event of Thanksgiving-Day; they have had company and regimental prize-shootings, a minimum of speeches and a maximum of dinner. Bill of fare: two beef-cattle and a thousand oranges. The oranges cost a cent apiece, and the cattle were Secesh, bestowed by General Saxby, as they all call him.

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December 1, 1862.

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How absurd is the impression bequeathed by Slavery in regard to these Southern blacks, that they are sluggish and inefficient in labor! Last night, after a hard day's work (our guns and the remainder of our tents being just issued), an order came from Beaufort that we should be ready in the evening to unload a steamboat's cargo of boards, being some of those captured by them a few weeks since, and now assigned for their use. I wondered if the men would grumble at the night-work; but the steamboat arrived by seven, and it was bright moonlight when they went at it. Never have I beheld such a jolly scene of labor. Tugging these wet and heavy boards over a bridge of boats ashore, then across the slimy beach at low tide, then up a steep bank, and all in one great uproar of merriment for two hours. Running most of the time, chattering all the time, snatching the boards from each other's backs as if they were some coveted treasure, getting up eager rivalries between different companies, pouring great choruses of ridicule on the heads of all shirkers, they made the whole scene so enlivening that I gladly stayed out in the moonlight for the whole time to watch it. And all this without any urging or any promised reward, but simply as the

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most natural way of doing the thing. The steamboat captain declared that they unloaded the ten thousand feet of boards quicker than any white gang could have done it; and they felt it so little, that, when, later in the night, I reproached one whom I found sitting by a camp-fire, cooking a surreptitious opossum, telling him that he ought to be asleep after such a job of work, he answered, with the broadest grin,—

“O no, Cunnel, da’s no work at all, Cunnel; dat only jess enough *for stretch we.*”

December 2, 1862.

I believe I have not yet enumerated the probable drawbacks to the success of this regiment, if any. We are exposed to no direct annoyance from the white regiments, being out of their way; and we have as yet no discomforts or privations which we do not share with them. I do not as yet see the slightest obstacle, in the nature of the blacks, to making them good soldiers, but rather the contrary. They take readily to drill, and do not object to discipline; they are not especially dull or inattentive; they seem fully to understand the importance of the contest, and of their share in it. They show no jealousy or suspicion towards their officers.

They do show these feelings, however, towards the Government itself; and no one can wonder. Here lies the drawback to rapid recruiting. Were this a wholly new regiment, it would have been full to overflowing, I am satisfied, ere now. The trouble is in the legacy of bitter distrust bequeathed by the abortive regiment of General Hunter,—into which they were driven like cattle, kept for several months in camp, and then turned off without a shilling, by order of the War Department. The formation of that regiment was, on the whole, a great

injury to this one; and the men who came from it, though the best soldiers we have in other respects, are the least sanguine and cheerful; while those who now refuse to enlist have a great influence in deterring others. Our soldiers are constantly twitted by their families and friends with their prospect of risking their lives in the service, and being paid nothing; and it is in vain that we read them the instructions of the Secretary of War to General Saxton, promising them the full pay of soldiers. They only half believe it.\*

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Another drawback is that some of the white soldiers delight in frightening the women on the plantations with doleful tales of plans for putting us in the front rank in all battles, and such silly talk,—the object being, perhaps, to prevent our being employed on active service at all. All these considerations they feel precisely as white men would,—no less, no more; and it is the comparative freedom from such unfavorable influences which makes the Florida men seem more bold and manly, as they undoubtedly do. To-day General Saxton has returned from Fernandina with seventy-six recruits, and the eagerness of the captains to secure them was a sight to see. Yet they cannot deny that some of the very best men in the regiment are South Carolinians.

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December 3, 1862. — 7 P. M.

What a life is this I lead! It is a dark, mild, drizzling evening, and as the foggy air breeds sand-flies, so it calls out melodies and strange antics from this mysterious race

\* With what utter humiliation were we, their officers, obliged to confess to them, eighteen months afterwards, that it was their distrust which was wise, and our faith in the pledges of the United States Government which was foolishness!

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of grown-up children with whom my lot is cast. All over the camp the lights glimmer in the tents, and as I sit at my desk in the open doorway, there come mingled sounds of stir and glee. Boys laugh and shout,—a feeble flute stirs somewhere in some tent, not an officer's,—a drum throbs far away in another,—wild kildeer-plover flit and wail above us, like the haunting souls of dead slave-masters,—and from a neighboring cook-fire comes the monotonous sound of that strange festival, half pow-wow, half prayer-meeting, which they know only as a “shout.” These fires are usually enclosed in a little booth, made neatly of palm-leaves and covered in at top, a regular native African hut, in short, such as is pictured in books, and such as I once got up from dried palm-leaves for a fair at home. This hut is now crammed with men, singing at the top of their voices, in one of their quaint, monotonous, endless, negro-Methodist chants, with obscure syllables recurring constantly, and slight variations interwoven, all accompanied with a regular drumming of the feet and clapping of the hands, like castanets. Then the excitement spreads: inside and outside the enclosure men begin to quiver and dance, others join, a circle forms, winding monotonously round some one in the centre; some “heel and toe” tumultuously, others merely tremble and stagger on, others stoop and rise, others whirl, others caper sideways, all keep steadily circling like dervishes; spectators applaud special strokes of skill; my approach only enlivens the scene; the circle enlarges, louder grows the singing, rousing shouts of encouragement come in, half bacchanalian, half devout, “Wake 'em, brudder!” “Stan' up to 'em, brudder!”—and still the ceaseless drumming and clapping, in perfect cadence, goes steadily

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on. Suddenly there comes a sort of *snap*, and the spell breaks, amid general sighing and laughter. And this not rarely and occasionally, but night after night, while in other parts of the camp the soberest prayers and exhortations are proceeding sedately.

A simple and lovable people, whose graces seem to come by nature, and whose vices by training. Some of the best superintendents confirm the first tales of innocence, and Dr. Zachos told me last night that on his plantation, a sequestered one, "they had absolutely no vices." Nor have these men of mine yet shown any worth mentioning; since I took command I have heard of no man intoxicated, and there has been but one small quarrel. I suppose that scarcely a white regiment in the army shows so little swearing. Take the "Progressive Friends" and put them in red trousers, and I verily believe they would fill a guard-house sooner than these men. If camp regulations are violated, it seems to be usually through heedlessness. They love passionately three things besides their spiritual incantations; namely, sugar, home, and tobacco. This last affection brings tears to their eyes, almost, when they speak of their urgent need of pay; they speak of their last-remembered quid as if it were some deceased relative, too early lost, and to be mourned forever. As for sugar, no white man can drink coffee after they have sweetened it to their liking.

I see that the pride which military life creates may cause the plantation trickeries to diminish. For instance, these men make the most admirable sentinels. It is far harder to pass the camp lines at night than in the camp from which I came; and I have seen none of that disposition to connive at the offences of members of one's own

company which is so troublesome among white soldiers. Nor are they lazy, either about work or drill; in all respects they seem better material for soldiers than I had dared to hope.

There is one company in particular, all Florida men, which I certainly think the finest-looking company I ever saw, white or black; they range admirably in size, have remarkable erectness and ease of carriage, and really march splendidly. Not a visitor but notices them; yet they have been under drill only a fortnight, and a part only two days. They have all been slaves, and very few are even mulattoes.

December 4, 1862.

“Dwelling in tents, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” This condition is certainly mine,—and with a multitude of patriarchs beside, not to mention Cæsar and Pompey, Hercules and Bacchus.

A moving life, tented at night, this experience has been mine in civil society, if society be civil before the luxurious forest fires of Maine and the Adirondack, or upon the lonely prairies of Kansas. But a stationary tent life, deliberately going to housekeeping under canvas, I have never had before, though in our barrack life at “Camp Wool” I often wished for it.

The accommodations here are about as liberal as my quarters there, two wall-tents being placed end to end, for office and bedroom, and separated at will by a “fly” of canvas. There is a good board floor and mop-board, effectually excluding dampness and draughts, and everything but sand, which on windy days penetrates everywhere. The office furniture consists of a good desk or secretary, a very clumsy and disastrous settee, and a remarkable chair. The desk is a bequest of the slave-

holders, and the settee of the slaves, being ecclesiastical in its origin, and appertaining to the little old church or "praise-house," now used for commissary purposes. The chair is a composite structure: I found a cane seat on a dust-heap, which a black sergeant combined with two legs from a broken bedstead and two more from an oak-bough. I sit on it with a pride of conscious invention, mitigated by profound insecurity. Bedroom furniture, a couch made of gun-boxes covered with condemned blankets, another settee, two pails, a tin cup, tin basin (we prize any tin or wooden ware as savages prize iron), and a valise, regulation size. Seriously considered, nothing more appears needful, unless ambition might crave another chair for company, and, perhaps, something for a wash-stand higher than a settee.

To-day it rains hard, and the wind quivers through the closed canvas, and makes one feel at sea. All the talk of the camp outside is fused into a cheerful and indistinguishable murmur, pierced through at every moment by the wail of the hovering plover. Sometimes a face, black or white, peers through the entrance with some message. Since the light readily penetrates, though the rain cannot, the tent conveys a feeling of charmed security, as if an invisible boundary checked the pattering drops and held the moaning wind. The front tent I share, as yet, with my adjutant; in the inner apartment I reign supreme, bounded in a nutshell, with no bad dreams.

In all pleasant weather the outer "fly" is open, and men pass and repass, a chattering throng. I think of Emerson's Saadi, "As thou sittest at thy door, on the desert's yellow floor,"—for these bare sand-plains, gray above, are always yellow when upturned, and there seems a tinge of Orientalism in all our life.

Thrice a day we go to the plantation-houses for our meals, camp-arrangements being yet very imperfect. The officers board in different messes, the adjutant and I still clinging to the household of William Washington,—William the quiet and the courteous, the pattern of house-servants, William the noiseless, the observing, the discriminating, who knows everything that can be got, and how to cook it. William and his tidy, lady-like little spouse Hetty—a pair of wedded lovers, if ever I saw one—set our table in their one room, half-way between an unglazed window and a large wood-fire, such as is often welcome. Thanks to the adjutant, we are provided with the social magnificence of napkins; while (lest pride take too high a flight) our table-cloth consists of two “New York Tribunes” and a “Leslie’s Pictorial.” Every steamer brings us a clean table-cloth. Here are we forever supplied with pork and oysters and sweet potatoes and rice and hominy and corn-bread and milk; also mysterious griddle-cakes of corn and pumpkin; also preserves made of pumpkin-chips, and other fanciful productions of Ethiop art. Mr. E. promised the plantation-superintendents who should come down here “all the luxuries of home,” and we certainly have much apparent, if little real variety. Once William produced with some palpitation something fricasseed, which he boldly termed chicken; it was very small, and seemed in some undeveloped condition of ante-natal toughness. After the meal he frankly avowed it for a squirrel.

December 5, 1862.

Give these people their tongues, their feet, and their leisure, and they are happy. At every twilight the air is full of singing, talking, and clapping of hands in unison.

One of their favorite songs is full of plaintive cadences; it is not, I think, a Methodist tune, and I wonder where they obtained a chant of such beauty.

“I can’t stay behind, my Lord, I can’t stay behind!  
 O, my father is gone, my father is gone,  
 My father is gone into heaven, my Lord!  
 I can’t stay behind!  
 Dere’s room enough, room enough,  
 Room enough in de heaven for de sojer:  
 Can’t stay behind!”

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It always excites them to have us looking on, yet they sing these songs at all times and seasons. I have heard this very song dimly droning on near midnight, and, tracing it into the recesses of a cook-house, have found an old fellow coiled away among the pots and provisions, chanting away with his “Can’t stay behind, sinner,” till I made him leave his song behind.

This evening, after working themselves up to the highest pitch, a party suddenly rushed off, got a barrel, and mounted some man upon it, who said, “Gib anoder song, boys, and I’s e gib you a speech.” After some hesitation and sundry shouts of “Rise de sing, somebody,” and “Stan’ up for Jesus, brudder,” irreverently put in by the juveniles, they got upon the John Brown song, always a favorite, adding a jubilant verse which I had never before heard,—“We ’ll beat Beauregard on de clare battle-field.” Then came the promised speech, and then no less than seven other speeches by as many men, on a variety of barrels, each orator being affectionately tugged to the pedestal and set on end by his special constituency. Every speech was good, without exception; with the queerest oddities of phrase and pronunciation, there was an invariable enthusiasm, a pungency of statement, and

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an understanding of the points at issue, which made them all rather thrilling. Those long-winded slaves in "Among the Pines" seemed rather fictitious and literary in comparison. The most eloquent, perhaps, was Corporal Prince Lambkin, just arrived from Fernandina, who evidently had a previous reputation among them. His historical references were very interesting. He reminded them that he had predicted this war ever since Fremont's time, to which some of the crowd assented; he gave a very intelligent account of that Presidential campaign, and then described most impressively the secret anxiety of the slaves in Florida to know all about President Lincoln's election, and told how they all refused to work on the fourth of March, expecting their freedom to date from that day. He finally brought out one of the few really impressive appeals for the American flag that I have ever heard. "Our mas'rs dey hab lib under de flag, dey got dere wealth under it, and ebryting beautiful for dere chilen. Under it dey hab grind us up, and put us in dere pocket for money. But de fus' minute dey tink dat ole flag mean freedom for we colored people, dey pull it right down, and run up de rag ob dere own." (Immense applause). "But we'll neber desert de ole flag, boys, neber; we hab lib under it for *eighteen hundred sixty-two years*, and we'll die for it now." With which overpowering discharge of chronology-at-long-range, this most effective of stump-speeches closed. I see already with relief that there will be small demand in this regiment for harangues from the officers; give the men an empty barrel for a stump, and they will do their own exhortation.

December 11, 1862.

Haroun Alraschid, wandering in disguise through his

imperial streets, scarcely happened upon a greater variety of groups than I, in my evening strolls among our own camp-fires.

Beside some of these fires the men are cleaning their guns or rehearsing their drill,—beside others, smoking in silence their very scanty supply of the beloved tobacco,—beside others, telling stories and shouting with laughter over the broadest mimicry, in which they excel, and in which the officers come in for a full share. The everlasting “shout” is always within hearing, with its mixture of piety and polka, and its castanet-like clapping of the hands. Then there are quieter prayer-meetings, with pious invocations and slow psalms, “deaconed out” from memory by the leader, two lines at a time, in a sort of wailing chant. Else where, there are *conversazioni* around fires, with a woman for queen of the circle,—her Nubian face, gay headdress, gilt necklace, and white teeth, all resplendent in the glowing light. Sometimes the woman is spelling slow monosyllables out of a primer, a feat which always commands all ears,—they rightly recognizing a mighty spell, equal to the overthrowing of monarchs, in the magic assonance of *cat, hat, pat, bat*, and the rest of it. Elsewhere, it is some solitary old cook, some aged Uncle Tiff, with enormous spectacles, who is perusing a hymn-book by the light of a pine splinter, in his deserted cooking booth of palmetto leaves. By another fire there is an actual dance, red-legged soldiers doing right-and-left, and “now-lead-de-lady-ober,” to the music of a violin which is rather artistically played, and which may have guided the steps, in other days, of Barnwells and Hegers. And yonder is a stump-orator perched on his barrel, pouring out his exhortations to fidelity in war and in religion. To-night for the first time I have heard an



harangue in a different strain, quite saucy, sceptical, and defiant, appealing to them in a sort of French materialistic style, and claiming some personal experience of warfare. "You don't know notin' about it, boys. You tink you's brave enough; how you tink, if you stan' clar in de open field,—here you, and dar de Secesh? You's got to hab de right ting inside o' you. You must hab it 'served [preserved] in you, like dese yer sour plums dey 'serve in de barr'l; you's got to harden it down inside o' you, or it's notin'." Then he hit hard at the religionists: "When a man's got de sperit ob de Lord in him, it weakens him all out, can't hoe de corn." He had a great deal of broad sense in his speech; but presently some others began praying vociferously close by, as if to drown this free-thinker, when at last he exclaimed, "I mean to fight de war through, an' die a good sojer wid de last kick,—dat's *my* prayer!" and suddenly jumped off the barrel. I was quite interested at discovering this reverse side of the temperament, the devotional side preponderates so enormously, and the greatest scamps kneel and groan in their prayer-meetings with such entire zest. It shows that there is some individuality developed among them, and that they will not become too exclusively pietistic.

Their love of the spelling-book is perfectly inexhaustible,—they stumbling on by themselves, or the blind leading the blind, with the same pathetic patience which they carry into everything. The chaplain is getting up a schoolhouse, where he will soon teach them as regularly as he can. But the alphabet must always be a very incidental business in a camp.

December 14.

Passages from prayers in the camp:—

2

“Let me so lib dat when I die I shall *hab manners*, dat I shall know what to say when I see my Heabenly Lord.”

“Let me lib wid de musket in one hand an’ de Bible in de oder,—dat if I die at de muzzle ob de musket, die in de water, die on de land, I may know I hab de bressed Jesus in my hand, an’ hab no fear.”

“I hab lef’ my wife in de land o’ bondage; my little ones dey say eb’ry night, Whar is my fader? But when I die, when de bressed mornin’ rises, when I shall stan’ in de glory, wid one foot on de water an’ one foot on de land, den, O Lord, I shall see my wife an’ my little chil’en once more.”

These sentences I noted down, as best I could, beside the glimmering camp-fire last night. The same person was the hero of a singular little *contre-temps* at a funeral in the afternoon. It was our first funeral. The man had died in hospital, and we had chosen a picturesque burial-place above the river, near the old church, and beside a little nameless cemetery, used by generations of slaves. It was a regular military funeral, the coffin being draped with the American flag, the escort marching behind, and three volleys fired over the grave. During the services there was singing, the chaplain deaconing out the hymn in their favorite way. This ended, he announced his text,—“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his trouble.” Instantly, to my great amazement, the cracked voice of the chorister was uplifted, intoning the text, as if it were the first verse of another hymn. So calmly was it done, so imperturbable were all the black countenances, that I half began to conjecture that the chaplain himself intended it for a hymn, though I could imagine no prospective rhyme for *trouble*

unless it were approximated by *debbil*,— which is, indeed, a favorite reference, both with the men and with his Reverence. But the chaplain, peacefully awaiting, gently repeated his text after the chant, and to my great relief the old chorister waived all further recitative, and let the funeral discourse proceed.

Their memories are a vast bewildered chaos of Jewish history and biography; and most of the great events of the past, down to the period of the American Revolution, they instinctively attribute to Moses. There is a fine bold confidence in all their citations, however, and the record never loses piquancy in their hands, though strict accuracy may suffer. Thus, one of my captains, last Sunday, heard a colored exhorter at Beaufort proclaim, "Paul may plant, *and may polish wid water*, but it won't do," in which the sainted Apollos would hardly have recognized himself.

Just now one of the soldiers came to me to say that he was about to be married to a girl in Beaufort, and would I lend him a dollar and seventy-five cents to buy the wedding outfit? It seemed as if matrimony on such moderate terms ought to be encouraged in these days; and so I responded to the appeal.

December 16.

To-day a young recruit appeared here, who had been the slave of Colonel Sammis, one of the leading Florida refugees. Two white companions came with him, who also appeared to be retainers of the Colonel, and I asked them to dine. Being likewise refugees, they had stories to tell, and were quite agreeable: one was English born, the other Floridian, a dark, sallow Southerner, very well bred. After they had gone, the Colonel himself appeared,

I told him that I had been entertaining his white friends, and after a while he quietly let out the remark,—

“Yes, one of those white friends of whom you speak is a boy raised on one of my plantations; he has travelled with me to the North, and passed for white, and he always keeps away from the negroes.”

Certainly no such suspicion had ever crossed my mind.

I have noticed one man in the regiment who would easily pass for white,—a little sickly drummer, aged fifty at least, with brown eyes and reddish hair, who is said to be the son of one of our commodores. I have seen perhaps a dozen persons as fair, or fairer, among fugitive slaves, but they were usually young children. It touched me far more to see this man, who had spent more than half a lifetime in this low estate, and for whom it now seemed too late to be anything but a “nigger.” This offensive word, by the way, is almost as common with them as at the North, and far more common than with well-bred slaveholders. They have meekly accepted it. “Want to go out to de nigger houses, Sah,” is the universal impulse of sociability, when they wish to cross the lines. “He hab twenty house-servants, an’ two hundred head o’ nigger,” is a still more degrading form of phrase, in which the epithet is limited to the field-hands, and they estimated like so many cattle. This want of self-respect of course interferes with the authority of the non-commissioned officers, which is always difficult to sustain, even in white regiments. “He need n’t try to play de white man ober me,” was the protest of a soldier against his corporal the other day. To counteract this I have often to remind them that they do not obey their officers because they are white, but because they are their officers; and guard duty is an admirable school for this, because they

readily understand that the sergeant or corporal of the guard has for the time more authority than any commissioned officer who is not on duty. It is necessary also for their superiors to treat the non-commissioned officers with careful courtesy, and I often caution the line officers never to call them "Sam" or "Will," nor omit the proper handle to their names. The value of the habitual courtesies of the regular army is exceedingly apparent with these men: an officer of polished manners can wind them round his finger, while white soldiers seem rather to prefer a certain roughness. The demeanor of my men to each other is very courteous, and yet I see none of that sort of upstart conceit which is sometimes offensive among free negroes at the North, the dandy-barber strut. This is an agreeable surprise, for I feared that freedom and regimentals would produce precisely that.

They seem the world's perpetual children, docile, gay, and lovable, in the midst of this war for freedom on which they have intelligently entered. Last night, before "taps," there was the greatest noise in camp that I had ever heard, and I feared some riot. On going out, I found the most tumultuous sham-fight proceeding in total darkness, two companies playing like boys, beating tin cups for drums. When some of them saw me they seemed a little dismayed, and came and said, beseechingly,—“Cunnel, Sah, you hab no objection to we playin', Sah?”—which objection I disclaimed; but soon they all subsided, rather to my regret, and scattered merrily. Afterward I found that some other officer had told them that I considered the affair too noisy, so that I felt a mild self-reproach when one said, “Cunnel, wish you had let we play a little longer, Sah.” Still I was not sorry, on the whole; for these sham-fights between com-

panies would in some regiments lead to real ones, and there is a latent jealousy here between the Florida and South Carolina men, which sometimes makes me anxious.

The officers are more kind and patient with the men than I should expect, since the former are mostly young, and drilling tries the temper; but they are aided by hearty satisfaction in the results already attained. I have never yet heard a doubt expressed among the officers as to the *superiority* of these men to white troops in aptitude for drill and discipline, because of their imitiveness and docility, and the pride they take in the service. One captain said to me to-day, "I have this afternoon taught my men to load-in-nine-times, and they do it better than we did it in my former company in three months." I can personally testify that one of our best lieutenants, an Englishman, taught a part of his company the essential movements of the "school for skirmishers" in a single lesson of two hours, so that they did them very passably, though I feel bound to discourage such haste. However, I "formed square" on the third battalion drill. Three fourths of drill consist of attention, imitation, and a good ear for time; in the other fourth, which consists of the application of principles, as, for instance, performing by the left flank some movement before learned by the right, they are perhaps slower than better educated men. Having belonged to five different drill-clubs before entering the army, I certainly ought to know something of the resources of human awkwardness, and I can honestly say that they astonish me by the facility with which they do things. I expected much harder work in this respect.

The habit of carrying burdens on the head gives them erectness of figure, even where physically disabled. I have seen a woman, with a brimming water-pail balanced

on her head, or perhaps a cup, saucer, and spoon, stop suddenly, turn round, stoop to pick up a missile, rise again, fling it, light a pipe, and go through many evolutions with either hand or both, without spilling a drop. The pipe, by the way, gives an odd look to a well-dressed young girl on Sunday, but one often sees that spectacle. The passion for tobacco among our men continues quite absorbing, and I have piteous appeals for some arrangement by which they can buy it on credit, as we have yet no sutler. Their imploring, "Cunnel, we can't *lib* wid-out it, Sah," goes to my heart; and as they cannot read, I cannot even have the melancholy satisfaction of supplying them with the excellent anti-tobacco tracts of Mr. Trask.

December 19.

Last night the water froze in the adjutant's tent, but not in mine. To-day has been mild and beautiful. The blacks say they do not feel the cold so much as the white officers do, and perhaps it is so, though their health evidently suffers more from dampness. On the other hand, while drilling on very warm days, they have seemed to suffer more from the heat than their officers. But they dearly love fire, and at night will always have it, if possible, even on the minutest scale,—a mere handful of splinters, that seems hardly more efficacious than a friction-match. Probably this is a natural habit for the short-lived coolness of an out-door country; and then there is something delightful in this rich pine, which burns like a tar-barrel. It was, perhaps, encouraged by the masters, as the only cheap luxury the slaves had at hand.

As one grows more acquainted with the men, their individualities emerge; and I find, first their faces, then

their characters, to be as distinct as those of whites. It is very interesting the desire they show to do their duty, and to improve as soldiers; they evidently think about it, and see the importance of the thing; they say to me that we white men cannot stay and be their leaders always and that they must learn to depend on themselves, or else relapse into their former condition.

Beside the superb branch of uneatable bitter oranges which decks my tent-pole, I have to-day hung up a long bough of finger-sponge, which floated to the river-bank. As winter advances, butterflies gradually disappear: one species (a *Vanessa*) lingers; three others have vanished since I came. Mocking-birds are abundant, but rarely sing; once or twice they have reminded me of the red thrush, but are inferior, as I have always thought. The colored people all say that it will be much cooler; but my officers do not think so, perhaps because last winter was so unusually mild,—with only one frost, they say.

December 20.

Philoprogenitiveness is an important organ for an officer of colored troops; and I happen to be well provided with it. It seems to be the theory of all military usages, in fact, that soldiers are to be treated like children; and these singular persons, who never know their own age till they are past middle life, and then choose a birthday with such precision,—“Fifty year old, Sah, de fus’ last April,”—prolong the privilege of childhood.

I am perplexed nightly for countersigns,—their range of proper names is so distressingly limited, and they make such amazing work of every new one. At first, to be sure, they did not quite recognize the need of any variation: one night some officer asked a sentinel whether he



had the countersign yet, and was indignantly answered, "Should tink I hab 'em, hab 'em for a fortnight"; which seems a long epoch for that magic word to hold out. To-night I thought I would have "Fredericksburg," in honor of Burnside's reported victory, using the rumor quickly, for fear of a contradiction. Later, in comes a captain, gets the countersign for his own use, but presently returns, the sentinel having pronounced it incorrect. On inquiry, it appears that the sergeant of the guard, being weak in geography, thought best to substitute the more familiar word, "Crockery-ware"; which was, with perfect gravity, confided to all the sentinels, and accepted without question. O life! what is the fun of fiction beside thee?

I should think they would suffer and complain these cold nights; but they say nothing, though there is a good deal of coughing. I should fancy that the scarlet trousers must do something to keep them warm, and wonder that they dislike them so much, when they are so much like their beloved fires. They certainly multiply firelight in any case. I often notice that an infinitesimal flame, with one soldier standing by it, looks like quite a respectable conflagration, and it seems as if a group of them must dispel dampness.

December 21.

To a regimental commander no book can be so fascinating as the consolidated Morning Report, which is ready about nine, and tells how many in each company are sick, absent, on duty, and so on. It is one's newspaper and daily mail; I never grow tired of it. If a single recruit has come in, I am always eager to see how he looks on paper.

To-night the officers are rather depressed by rumors

of Burnside's being defeated, after all. I am fortunately equable and undepressible; and it is very convenient that the men know too little of the events of the war to feel excitement or fear. They know General Saxton and me,—"de General" and "de Cunnel,"—and seem to ask no further questions. We are the war. It saves a great deal of trouble, while it lasts, this childlike confidence; nevertheless, it is our business to educate them to manhood, and I see as yet no obstacle. As for the rumor, the world will no doubt roll round, whether Burnside is defeated or succeeds.

Christmas Day.

"We'll fight for liberty  
Till de Lord shall call us home;  
We'll soon be free  
Till de Lord shall call us home."

This is the hymn which the slaves at Georgetown, South Carolina, were whipped for singing when President Lincoln was elected. So said a little drummer-boy, as he sat at my tent's edge last night and told me his story; and he showed all his white teeth as he added, "Dey tink 'de Lord' meant for say de Yankees."

Last night, at dress-parade, the adjutant read General Saxton's Proclamation for the New Year's Celebration. I think they understood it, for there was cheering in all the company-streets afterwards. Christmas is the great festival of the year for this people; but, with New Year's coming after, we could have no adequate programme for to-day, and so celebrated Christmas Eve with pattern simplicity. We omitted, namely, the mystic curfew which we call "taps," and let them sit up and burn their fires, and have their little prayer-meetings as late as they desired; and all night, as I waked at inter-

vals, I could hear them praying and “shouting” and clattering with hands and heels. It seemed to make them very happy, and appeared to be at least an innocent Christmas dissipation, as compared with some of the convivialities of the “superior race” hereabouts.

December 26.

The day passed with no greater excitement for the men than target-shooting, which they enjoyed. I had the private delight of the arrival of our much-desired surgeon and his nephew, the captain, with letters and news from home. They also bring the good tidings that General Saxton is not to be removed, as had been reported.

Two different stands of colors have arrived for us, and will be presented at New Year's,—one from friends in New York, and the other from a lady in Connecticut. I see that “Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly” of December 20th has a highly imaginative picture of the muster-in of our first company, and also of a skirmish on the late expedition.

I must not forget the prayer overheard last night by one of the captains: “O Lord! when I tink ob dis Kismas and las' year de Kismas. Las' Kismas he in de Secesh, and notin' to eat but grits, and no salt in 'em. Dis year in de camp, and too much victual!” This “too much” is a favorite phrase out of their grateful hearts, and did not in this case denote an excess of dinner,—as might be supposed,—but of thanksgiving.

December 29.

Our new surgeon has begun his work most efficiently: he and the chaplain have converted an old gin-house into a comfortable hospital, with ten nice beds and straw pal-

lets. He is now, with a hearty professional faith, looking round for somebody to put into it. I am afraid the regiment will accommodate him; for, although he declares that these men do not sham sickness, as he expected, their catarrh is an unpleasant reality. They feel the dampness very much, and make such a coughing at dress-parade, that I have urged him to administer a dose of cough-mixture, all round, just before that pageant. Are the colored race *tough*? is my present anxiety; and it is odd that physical insufficiency, the only discouragement not thrown in our way by the newspapers, is the only discouragement which finds any place in our minds. They are used to sleeping indoors in winter, herded before fires, and so they feel the change. Still, the regiment is as healthy as the average, and experience will teach us something.\*

December 30.

On the first of January we are to have a slight collation, ten oxen or so, barbecued,—or not properly barbecued, but roasted whole. Touching the length of time required to “do” an ox, no two housekeepers appear to agree. Accounts vary from two hours to twenty-four. We shall happily have enough to try all gradations of roasting, and suit all tastes, from Miss A.’s to mine. But fancy me proffering a spare-rib, well done, to some fair lady! What ever are we to do for spoons and forks and plates? Each soldier has his own, and is sternly held responsible for it by “Army Regulations.” But how provide for the multitude? Is it customary, I ask you,

\* A second winter’s experience removed all this solicitude, for they learned to take care of themselves. During the first February the sick-list averaged about ninety, during the second about thirty,—this being the worst month in the year for blacks.

to help to tenderloin with one's fingers? Fortunately, the Major is to see to that department. Great are the advantages of military discipline: for anything perplexing, detail a subordinate.

New Year's Eve.

My housekeeping at home is not, perhaps, on any very extravagant scale. Buying beefsteak, I usually go to the extent of two or three pounds. Yet when, this morning at daybreak, the quartermaster called to inquire how many cattle I would have killed for roasting, I turned over in bed, and answered composedly, "Ten,—and keep three to be fatted."

Fatted, quotha! Not one of the beasts at present appears to possess an ounce of superfluous flesh. Never were seen such lean kine. As they swing on vast spits, composed of young trees, the firelight glimmers through their ribs, as if they were great lanterns. But no matter, they are cooking,—nay, they are cooked.

One at least is taken off to cool, and will be replaced to-morrow to warm up. It was roasted three hours, and well done, for I tasted it. It is so long since I tasted fresh beef that forgetfulness is possible; but I fancied this to be successful. I tried to imagine that I liked the Homeric repast, and certainly the whole thing has been far more agreeable than was to be expected. The doubt now is, whether I have made a sufficient provision for my household. I should have roughly guessed that ten beeves would feed as many million people, it has such a stupendous sound; but General Saxton predicts a small social party of five thousand, and we fear that meat will run short, unless they prefer bone. One of the cattle is so small, we are hoping it may turn out veal.

For drink we aim at the simple luxury of molasses-

and-water, a barrel per company, ten in all. Liberal housekeepers may like to know that for a barrel of water we allow three gallons of molasses, half a pound of ginger, and a quart of vinegar,—this last being a new ingredient for my untutored palate, though all the rest are amazed at my ignorance. Hard bread, with more molasses, and a dessert of tobacco, complete the festive repast, destined to cheer, but not inebriate.

On this last point, of inebriation, this is certainly a wonderful camp. For us it is absolutely omitted from the list of vices. I have never heard of a glass of liquor in the camp, nor of any effort either to bring it in or to keep it out. A total absence of the circulating medium might explain the abstinence,—not that it seems to have that effect with white soldiers,—but it would not explain the silence. The craving for tobacco is constant, and not to be allayed, like that of a mother for her children; but I have never heard whiskey even wished for, save on Christmas-Day, and then only by one man, and he spoke with a hopeless ideal sighing, as one alludes to the Golden Age. I am amazed at this total omission of the most inconvenient of all camp appetites. It certainly is not the result of exhortation, for there has been no occasion for any, and even the pledge would scarcely seem efficacious where hardly anybody can write.

I do not think there is a great visible eagerness for tomorrow's festival: it is not their way to be very jubilant over anything this side of the New Jerusalem. They know also that those in this Department are nominally free already, and that the practical freedom has to be maintained, in any event, by military success. But they will enjoy it greatly, and we shall have a multitude of people.

January 1, 1863 (evening).

A happy New Year to civilized people,—mere white folks. Our festival has come and gone, with perfect success, and our good General has been altogether satisfied. Last night the great fires were kept smouldering in the pit, and the beeves were cooked more or less, chiefly more,—during which time they had to be carefully watched, and the great spits turned by main force. Happy were the merry fellows who were permitted to sit up all night, and watch the glimmering flames that threw a thousand fantastic shadows among the great gnarled oaks. And such a chattering as I was sure to hear whenever I awoke that night!

My first greeting to-day was from one of the most stylish sergeants, who approached me with the following little speech, evidently the result of some elaboration:—

“I tink myself happy, dis New Year’s Day, for salute my own Cunnel. Dis day las’ year I was servant to a Cunnel ob Secesh; but now I hab de privilege for salute my own Cunnel.”

That officer, with the utmost sincerity, reciprocated the sentiment.

About ten o’clock the people began to collect by land, and also by water,—in steamers sent by General Saxton for the purpose; and from that time all the avenues of approach were thronged. The multitude were chiefly colored women, with gay handkerchiefs on their heads, and a sprinkling of men, with that peculiarly respectable look which these people always have on Sundays and holidays. There were many white visitors also,—ladies on horseback and in carriages, superintendents and teachers, officers, and cavalry-men. Our companies were marched to the neighborhood of the platform, and allowed

to sit or stand, as at the Sunday services; the platform was occupied by ladies and dignitaries, and by the band of the Eighth Maine, which kindly volunteered for the occasion; the colored people filled up all the vacant openings in the beautiful grove around, and there was a cordon of mounted visitors beyond. Above, the great live-oak branches and their trailing moss; beyond the people, a glimpse of the blue river.

The services began at half past eleven o'clock, with prayer by our chaplain, Mr. Fowler, who is always, on such occasions, simple, reverential, and impressive. Then the President's Proclamation was read by Dr. W. H. Brisbane, a thing infinitely appropriate, a South Carolinian addressing South Carolinians; for he was reared among these very islands, and here long since emancipated his own slaves. Then the colors were presented to us by the Rev. Mr. French, a chaplain who brought them from the donors in New York. All this was according to the programme. Then followed an incident so simple, so touching, so utterly unexpected and startling, that I can scarcely believe it on recalling, though it gave the key-note to the whole day. The very moment the speaker had ceased, and just as I took and waved the flag, which now for the first time meant anything to these poor people, there suddenly arose, close beside the platform, a strong male voice (but rather cracked and elderly), into which two women's voices instantly blended, singing, as if by an impulse that could no more be repressed than the morning note of the song-sparrow.—

“My Country, 't is of thee,  
Sweet land of liberty,  
Of thee I sing!”

People looked at each other, and then at us on the



platform, to see whence came this interruption, not set down in the bills. Firmly and irrepressibly the quavering voices sang on, verse after verse; others of the colored people joined in; some whites on the platform began, but I motioned them to silence. I never saw anything so electric; it made all other words cheap; it seemed the choked voice of a race at last unloosed. Nothing could be more wonderfully unconscious; art could not have dreamed of a tribute to the day of jubilee that should be so affecting; history will not believe it; and when I came to speak of it, after it was ended, tears were everywhere. If you could have heard how quaint and innocent it was! Old Tiff and his children might have sung it; and close before me was a little slave-boy, almost white, who seemed to belong to the party, and even he must join in. Just think of it!—the first day they had ever had a country, the first flag they had ever seen which promised anything to their people, and here, while mere spectators stood in silence, waiting for my stupid words, these simple souls burst out in their lay, as if they were by their own hearths at home! When they stopped, there was nothing to do for it but to speak, and I went on; but the life of the whole day was in those unknown people's song.

Receiving the flags, I gave them into the hands of two fine-looking men, jet black, as color-guard, and they also spoke, and very effectively,—Sergeant Prince Rivers and Corporal Robert Sutton. The regiment sang "Marching Along," and then General Saxton spoke, in his own simple, manly way, and Mrs. Francis D. Gage spoke very sensibly to the women, and Judge Stickney, from Florida, added something; then some gentlemen sang an ode, and the regiment the John Brown song, and then

they went to their beef and molasses. Everything was very orderly, and they seemed to have a very gay time. Most of the visitors had far to go, and so dispersed before dress-parade, though the band stayed to enliven it. In the evening we had letters from home, and General Saxton had a reception at his house, from which I excused myself; and so ended one of the most enthusiastic and happy gatherings I ever knew. The day was perfect, and there was nothing but success.

I forgot to say, that, in the midst of the services, it was announced that General Fremont was appointed Commander-in-chief,—an announcement which was received with immense cheering, as would have been almost anything else, I verily believe, at that moment of high tide. It was shouted across by the pickets above,—a way in which we often receive news, but not always trustworthy.

January 3, 1863.

Once, and once only, thus far, the water has frozen in my tent; and the next morning showed a dense white frost outside. We have still mocking-birds and crickets and rosebuds, and occasional noonday baths in the river, though the butterflies have vanished, as I remember to have observed in Fayal, after December. I have been here nearly six weeks without a rainy day; one or two slight showers there have been, once interrupting a drill, but never dress-parade. For climate, by day, we might be among the isles of Greece,—though it may be my constant familiarity with the names of her sages which suggests that impression. For instance, a voice just now called, near my tent,—“Cato, whar’s Plato?”

The men have somehow got the impression that it is essential to the validity of a marriage that they should

come to me for permission, just as they used to go to the master; and I rather encourage these little confidences, because it is so entertaining to hear them. "Now, Cunnel," said a faltering swain the other day, "I want for get me one good lady," which I approved, especially the limitation as to number. Afterwards I asked one of the bridegroom's friends whether he thought it a good match. "O yes, Gunnel," said he, in all the cordiality of friendship, "John's gwine for marry Venus." I trust the goddess will prove herself a better lady than she appeared during her previous career upon this planet. But this naturally suggests the isles of Greece again.

January 7.

On first arriving, I found a good deal of anxiety among the officers as to the increase of desertions, that being the rock on which the "Hunter Regiment" split. Now this evil is very nearly stopped, and we are every day recovering the older absentees. One of the very best things that have happened to us was the half-accidental shooting of a man who had escaped from the guard-house, and was wounded by a squad sent in pursuit. He has since died; and this very evening another man, who escaped with him, came and opened the door of my tent, after being five days in the woods, almost without food. His clothes were in rags, and he was nearly starved, poor foolish fellow, so that we can almost dispense with further punishment. Severe penalties would be wasted on these people, accustomed as they have been to the most violent passions on the part of white men; but a mild inexorableness tells on them, just as it does on any other children. It is something utterly new to them, and it is thus far perfectly efficacious. They have a great deal of pride

as soldiers, and a very little of severity goes a great way, if it be firm and consistent. This is very encouraging.

The single question which I asked of some of the plantation superintendents, on the voyage, was, "Do these people appreciate *justice*?" If they did it was evident that all the rest would be easy. When a race is degraded beyond that point it must be very hard to deal with them; they must mistake all kindness for indulgence, all strictness for cruelty. With these freed slaves there is no such trouble, not a particle: let an officer be only just and firm, with a cordial, kindly nature, and he has no sort of difficulty. The plantation superintendents and teachers have the same experience, they say; but we have an immense advantage in the military organization, which helps in two ways: it increases their self-respect, and it gives us an admirable machinery for discipline, thus improving both the fulcrum and the lever.

The wounded man died in the hospital, and the general verdict seemed to be, "Him brought it on heself." Another soldier died of pneumonia on the same day, and we had the funerals in the evening. It was very impressive. A dense mist came up, with a moon behind it, and we had only the light of pine-splinters, as the procession wound along beneath the mighty, moss-hung branches of the ancient grove. The groups around the grave, the dark faces, the red garments, the scattered lights, the misty boughs, were weird and strange. The men sang one of their own wild chants. Two crickets sang also, one on either side, and did not cease their little monotone, even when the three volleys were fired above the graves. Just before the coffins were lowered, an old man whispered to me that I must have their position altered,—the heads must be towards the west; so it was done,—

though they are in a place so veiled in woods that either rising or setting sun will find it hard to spy them.

We have now a good regimental hospital, admirably arranged in a deserted gin-house,—a fine well of our own digging, within the camp lines,—a full allowance of tents, all floored,—a wooden cook-house to every company, with sometimes a palmetto mess-house beside,—a substantial wooden guard-house, with a fireplace five feet “in de clar,” where the men off duty can dry themselves and sleep comfortably in bunks afterwards. We have also a great circular school-tent, made of condemned canvas, thirty feet in diameter, and looking like some of the Indian lodges I saw in Kansas. We now meditate a regimental bakery. Our aggregate has increased from four hundred and ninety to seven hundred and forty, besides a hundred recruits now waiting at St. Augustine, and we have practised through all the main movements in battalion drill.

Affairs being thus prosperous, and yesterday having been six weeks since my last and only visit to Beaufort, I rode in, glanced at several camps, and dined with the General. It seemed absolutely like re-entering the world; and I did not fully estimate my past seclusion till it occurred to me, as a strange and novel phenomenon, that the soldiers at the other camps were white.

January 8.

This morning I went to Beaufort again, on necessary business, and by good luck happened upon a review and drill of the white regiments. The thing that struck me most was that same absence of uniformity, in minor points, that I noticed at first in my own officers. The best regiments in the Department are represented among

my captains and lieutenants, and very well represented too; yet it has cost much labor to bring them to any uniformity in their drill. There is no need of this; for the prescribed "Tactics" approach perfection; it is never left discretionary in what place an officer shall stand, or in what words he shall give his order. All variation would seem to imply negligence. Yet even West Point occasionally varies from the "Tactics,"—as, for instance, in requiring the line officers to face down the line, when each is giving the order to his company. In our strictest Massachusetts regiments this is not done.

It needs an artist's eye to make a perfect drill-master. Yet the small points are not merely a matter of punctilio; for, the more perfectly a battalion is drilled on the parade-ground, the more quietly it can be handled in action. Moreover, the great need of uniformity is this: that, in the field, soldiers of different companies, and even of different regiments, are liable to be intermingled, and a diversity of orders may throw everything into confusion. Confusion means Bull Run.

I wished my men at the review to-day; for, amidst all the rattling and noise of artillery and the galloping of cavalry, there was only one infantry movement that we have not practised, and that was done by only one regiment, and apparently considered quite a novelty, though it is easily taught,—forming square by Casey's method: forward on centre.

It is really just as easy to drill a regiment as a company,—perhaps easier, because one has more time to think; but it is just as essential to be sharp and decisive, perfectly clear-headed, and to put life into the men. A regiment seems small when one has learned how to handle it, a mere handful of men; and I have no doubt

that a brigade or a division would soon appear equally small. But to handle either *judiciously*,— ah, that is another affair!

So of governing; it is as easy to govern a regiment as a school or a factory, and needs like qualities,—system, promptness, patience, tact; moreover, in a regiment one has the aid of the admirable machinery of the army, so that I see very ordinary men who succeed very tolerably.

Reports of a six months' armistice are rife here, and the thought is deplored by all. I cannot believe it; yet sometimes one feels very anxious about the ultimate fate of these poor people. After the experience of Hungary, one sees that revolutions may go backward; and the habit of injustice seems so deeply impressed upon the whites, that it is hard to believe in the possibility of anything better. I dare not yet hope that the promise of the President's Proclamation will be kept. For myself I can be indifferent, for the experience here has been its own daily and hourly reward; and the adaptedness of the freed slaves for drill and discipline is now thoroughly demonstrated, and must soon be universally acknowledged. But it would be terrible to see this regiment disbanded or defrauded.

January 12.

Many things glide by without time to narrate them. On Saturday we had a mail with the President's Second Message of Emancipation, and the next day it was read to the men. The words themselves did not stir them very much, because they have been often told that they were free, especially on New Year's Day, and, being unversed in politics, they do not understand, as well as we do, the importance of each additional guaranty. But the chaplain spoke to them afterwards very effectively,

as usual; and then I proposed to them to hold up their hands and pledge themselves to be faithful to those still in bondage. They entered heartily into this, and the scene was quite impressive, beneath the great oak-branches. I heard afterwards that only one man refused to raise his hand, saying bluntly that his wife was out of slavery with him, and he did not care to fight. The other soldiers of his company were very indignant, and shoved him about among them while marching back to their quarters, calling him "Coward." I was glad of their exhibition of feeling, though it is very possible that the one who had thus the moral courage to stand alone among his comrades might be more reliable, on a pinch, than some who yielded a more ready assent. But the whole response, on their part, was very hearty, and will be a good thing to which to hold them hereafter, at any time of discouragement or demoralization,—which was my chief reason for proposing it. With their simple natures it is a great thing to tie them to some definite committal; they never forget a marked occurrence, and never seem disposed to evade a pledge.

It is this capacity of honor and fidelity which gives me such entire faith in them as soldiers. Without it all their religious demonstration would be mere sentimentality. For instance, every one who visits the camp is struck with their bearing as sentinels. They exhibit, in this capacity, not an upstart conceit, but a steady, conscientious devotion to duty. They would stop their idolized General Saxton, if he attempted to cross their beat contrary to orders: I have seen them. No feeble or incompetent race could do this. The officers tell many amusing instances of this fidelity, but I think mine the best.



It was very dark the other night,—an unusual thing here,—and the rain fell in torrents; so I put on my India-rubber suit, and went the rounds of the sentinels, incognito, to test them. I can only say that I shall never try such an experiment again, and have cautioned my officers against it. 'T is a wonder I escaped with life and limb,—such a charging of bayonets and clicking of gun-locks. Sometimes I tempted them by refusing to give any countersign, but offering them a piece of tobacco, which they could not accept without allowing me nearer than the prescribed bayonet's distance. Tobacco is more than gold to them, and it was touching to watch the struggle in their minds; but they always did their duty at last, and I never could persuade them. One man, as if wishing to crush all his inward vacillations at one fell stroke, told me stoutly that he never used tobacco, though I found next day that he loved it as much as any one of them. It seemed wrong thus to tamper with their fidelity; yet it was a vital matter to me to know how far it could be trusted, out of my sight. It was so intensely dark that not more than one or two knew me, even after I had talked with the very next sentinel, especially as they had never seen me in India-rubber clothing, and I can always disguise my voice. It was easy to distinguish those who did make the discovery; they were always conscious and simpering when their turn came; while the others were stout and irreverent till I revealed myself, and then rather cowed and anxious, fearing to have offended.

It rained harder and harder, and when I had nearly made the rounds I had had enough of it, and, simply giving the countersign to the challenging sentinel, undertook to pass within the lines.

"Halt!" exclaimed this dusky man and brother, bringing down his bayonet, "de countersign not correck."

Now the magic word, in this case, was "Vicksburg," in honor of a rumored victory. But as I knew that these hard names became quite transformed upon their lips, "Carthage" being familiarized into Cartridge, and "Concord" into Corn-cob, how could I possibly tell what shade of pronunciation my friend might prefer for this particular proper name?

"Vicksburg," I repeated, blandly, but authoritatively, endeavoring, as zealously as one of Christy's Minstrels, to assimilate my speech to any supposed predilection of the Ethiop vocal organs.

"Halt dar! Countersign not correck," was the only answer.

The bayonet still maintained a position which, in a military point of view, was impressive.

I tried persuasion, orthography, threats, tobacco, all in vain. I could not pass in. Of course my pride was up; for was I to defer to an untutored African on a point of pronunciation? Classic shades of Harvard, forbid! Affecting scornful indifference, I tried to edge away, proposing to myself to enter the camp at some other point, where my elocution would be better appreciated. Not a step could I stir.

"Halt!" shouted my gentleman again, still holding me at his bayonet's point, and I wincing and halting.

I explained to him the extreme absurdity of this proceeding, called his attention to the state of the weather, which, indeed, spoke for itself so loudly that we could hardly hear each other speak, and requested permission to withdraw. The bayonet, with mute eloquence, refused the application.

There flashed into my mind, with more enjoyment in the retrospect than I had experienced at the time, an adventure on a lecturing tour in other years, when I had spent an hour in trying to scramble into a country tavern, after bed-time, on the coldest night of winter. On that occasion I ultimately found myself stuck midway in the window, with my head in a temperature of  $80^{\circ}$ , and my heels in a temperature of  $-10^{\circ}$ , with a heavy window-sash pinioning the small of my back. However, I had got safe out of that dilemma, and it was time to put an end to this one.

“Call the corporal of the guard,” said I, at last, with dignity, unwilling either to make a night of it or to yield my incognito.

“Corporal ob de guard!” he shouted, lustily,—“Post Number Two!” while I could hear another sentinel chuckling with laughter. This last was a special guard, placed over a tent, with a prisoner in charge. Presently he broke silence.

“Who am dat?” he asked, in a stage whisper. “Am he a buckra [white man]?”

“Dunno whether he been a buckra or not,” responded, doggedly, my Cerberus in uniform; “but I ’s bound to keep him here till de corporal ob de guard come.”

Yet, when that dignitary arrived, and I revealed myself, poor Number Two appeared utterly transfixed with terror, and seemed to look for nothing less than immediate execution. Of course I praised his fidelity, and the next day complimented him before the guard, and mentioned him to his captain; and the whole affair was very good for them all. Hereafter, if Satan himself should approach them in darkness and storm, they will take him for “de Cunnel,” and treat him with special severity.

January 13.

In many ways the childish nature of this people shows itself. I have just had to make a change of officers in a company which has constantly complained, and with good reason, of neglect and improper treatment. Two excellent officers have been assigned to them; and yet they sent a deputation to me in the evening, in a state of utter wretchedness. "We's bery grieved dis evening, Cunnel; 'pears like we couldn't bear it, to lose de Cap'n and de Lieutenant, all two togeder." Argument was useless; and I could only fall back on the general theory, that I knew what was best for them, which had much more effect; and I also could cite the instance of another company, which had been much improved by a new captain, as they readily admitted. So with the promise that the new officers should not be "savage to we," which was the one thing they deprecated, I assuaged their woes. Twenty-four hours have passed, and I hear them singing most merrily all down that company street.

I often notice how their griefs may be dispelled, like those of children, merely by permission to utter them: if they can tell their sorrows, they go away happy, even without asking to have anything done about them. I observe also a peculiar dislike of all *intermediate* control: they always wish to pass by the company officer, and deal with me personally for everything. General Saxton notices the same thing with the people on the plantations as regards himself. I suppose this proceeds partly from the old habit of appealing to the master against the overseer. Kind words would cost the master nothing, and he could easily put off any non-fulfilment upon the overseer. Moreover, the negroes have acquired such constitutional distrust of white people, that it is perhaps as

much as they can do to trust more than one person at a time. Meanwhile this constant personal intercourse is out of the question in a well-ordered regiment; and the remedy for it is to introduce by degrees more and more of system, so that their immediate officers will become all-sufficient for the daily routine.

It is perfectly true (as I find everybody takes for granted) that the first essential for an officer of colored troops is to gain their confidence. But it is equally true, though many persons do not appreciate it, that the admirable methods and proprieties of the regular army are equally available for all troops, and that the sublimest philanthropist, if he does not appreciate this, is unfit to command them.

Another childlike attribute in these men, which is less agreeable, is a sort of blunt insensibility to giving physical pain. If they are cruel to animals, for instance, it always reminds me of children pulling off flies' legs, in a sort of pitiless, untaught, experimental way. Yet I should not fear any wanton outrage from them. After all their wrongs, they are not really revengeful; and I would far rather enter a captured city with them than with white troops, for they would be more subordinate. But for mere physical suffering they would have no fine sympathies. The cruel things they have seen and undergone have helped to blunt them; and if I ordered them to put to death a dozen prisoners, I think they would do it without remonstrance.

Yet their religious spirit grows more beautiful to me in living longer with them; it is certainly far more so than at first, when it seemed rather a matter of phrase and habit. It influences them both on the negative and the positive side. That is, it cultivates the feminine vir-

tues first,—makes them patient, meek, resigned. This is very evident in the hospital; there is nothing of the restless, defiant habit of white invalids. Perhaps, if they had more of this, they would resist disease better. Imbued from childhood with the habit of submission, drinking in through every pore that other-world trust which is the one spirit of their songs, they can endure everything. This I expected; but I am relieved to find that their religion strengthens them on the positive side also,—gives zeal, energy, daring. They could easily be made fanatics, if I chose; but I do not choose. Their whole mood is essentially Mohammedan, perhaps, in its strength and its weakness; and I feel the same degree of sympathy that I should if I had a Turkish command,—that is, a sort of sympathetic admiration, not tending towards agreement, but towards co-operation. Their philosophizing is often the highest form of mysticism; and our dear surgeon declares that they are all natural transcendentalists. The white camps seem rough and secular, after this; and I hear our men talk about “a religious army,” “a Gospel army,” in their prayer-meetings. They are certainly evangelizing the chaplain, who was rather a heretic at the beginning; at least, this is his own admission. We have recruits on their way from St. Augustine, where the negroes are chiefly Roman Catholics; and it will be interesting to see how their type of character combines with that elder creed.

It is time for rest; and I have just looked out into the night, where the eternal stars shut down, in concave protection, over the yet glimmering camp, and Orion hangs above my tent-door, giving to me the sense of strength and assurance which these simple children obtain from their Moses and the Prophets. Yet external Nature does

its share in their training; witness that most poetic of all their songs, which always reminds me of the "Lyke-Wake Dirge" in the "Scottish Border Minstrelsy,"—

"I know moon-rise, I know star-rise;  
 Lay dis body down.  
 I walk in de moonlight, I walk in de starlight,  
 To lay dis body down.  
 I'll walk in de graveyard, I'll walk through de graveyard,  
 To lay dis body down.  
 I'll lie in de grave and stretch out my arms;  
 Lay dis body down.  
 I go to de Judgment in de evening ob de day  
 When I lay dis body down;  
 And my soul and your soul will meet in de day  
 When I lay dis body down."

January 14.

In speaking of the military qualities of the blacks, I should add, that the only point where I am disappointed is one I have never seen raised by the most incredulous newspaper critics,—namely, their physical condition. To be sure they often look magnificently to my gymnasium-trained eye; and I always like to observe them when bathing,—such splendid muscular development, set off by that smooth coating of adipose tissue which makes them, like the South-Sea Islanders, appear even more muscular than they are. Their skins are also of finer grain than those of whites, the surgeons say, and certainly are smoother and far more free from hair. But their weakness is pulmonary; pneumonia and pleurisy are their besetting ailments; they are easily made ill,—and easily cured, if promptly treated: childish organizations again. Guard-duty injures them more than whites, apparently; and double-quick movements, in choking dust, set them coughing badly. But then it is to be remem-

bered that this is their sickly season, from January to March, and that their healthy season will come in summer, when the whites break down. Still my conviction of the physical superiority of more highly civilized races is strengthened on the whole, not weakened, by observing them. As to availability for military drill and duty in other respects, the only question I ever hear debated among the officers is, whether they are equal or superior to whites. I have never heard it suggested that they were inferior, although I expected frequently to hear such complaints from hasty or unsuccessful officers.

Of one thing I am sure, that their best qualities will be wasted by merely keeping them for garrison duty. They seem peculiarly fitted for offensive operations, and especially for partisan warfare; they have so much dash and such abundant resources, combined with such an Indian-like knowledge of the country and its ways. These traits have been often illustrated in expeditions sent after deserters. For instance, I despatched one of my best lieutenants and my best sergeant with a squad of men to search a certain plantation, where there were two separate negro villages. They went by night, and the force was divided. The lieutenant took one set of huts, the sergeant the other. Before the lieutenant had reached his first house, every man in the village was in the woods, innocent and guilty alike. But the sergeant's mode of operation was thus described by a corporal from a white regiment who happened to be in one of the negro houses. He said that not a sound was heard until suddenly a red leg appeared in the open doorway, and a voice outside said, "Rally." Going to the door, he observed a similar pair of red legs before every hut, and not a person was allowed to go out, until the quarters had been thoroughly



searched, and the three deserters found. This was managed by Sergeant Prince Rivers, our color-sergeant, who is provost-sergeant also, and has entire charge of the prisoners and of the daily policing of the camp. He is a man of distinguished appearance, and in old times was the crack coachman of Beaufort, in which capacity he once drove Beauregard from this plantation to Charleston, I believe. They tell me that he was once allowed to present a petition to the Governor of South Carolina in behalf of slaves, for the redress of certain grievances; and that a placard, offering two thousand dollars for his recapture, is still to be seen by the wayside between here and Charleston. He was a sergeant in the old "Hunter Regiment," and was taken by General Hunter to New York last spring, where the *chevrons* on his arm brought a mob upon him in Broadway, whom he kept off till the police interfered. There is not a white officer in this regiment who has more administrative ability, or more absolute authority over the men; they do not love him, but his mere presence has controlling power over them. He writes well enough to prepare for me a daily report of his duties in the camp; if his education reached a higher point, I see no reason why he should not command the Army of the Potomac. He is jet-black, or rather, I should say, *wine-black*; his complexion, like that of others of my darkest men, having a sort of rich, clear depth, without a trace of sootiness, and to my eye very handsome. His features are tolerably regular, and full of command, and his figure superior to that of any of our white officers,—being six feet high, perfectly proportioned, and of apparently inexhaustible strength and activity. His gait is like a panther's; I never saw such a tread. No anti-slavery novel has described a man of

such marked ability. He makes Toussaint perfectly intelligible; and if there should ever be a black monarchy in South Carolina, he will be its king.

January 15.

This morning is like May. Yesterday I saw bluebirds and a butterfly; so this winter of a fortnight is over. I fancy there is a trifle less coughing in the camp. We hear of other stations in the Department where the mortality, chiefly from yellow fever, has been frightful. Dr. —— is rubbing his hands professionally over the fearful tales of the surgeon of a New York regiment, just from Key West, who has had two hundred cases of the fever. "I suppose he is a skilful, highly educated man," said I. "Yes," he responded with enthusiasm. "Why, he had seventy deaths!"—as if that proved his superiority past question.

January 19.

"And first, sitting proud as a king on his throne,  
At the head of them all rode Sir Richard Tyrone."

But I fancy that Sir Richard felt not much better satisfied with his following than I to-day. J. R. L. said once that nothing was quite so good as turtle-soup, except mock-turtle; and I have heard officers declare that nothing was so stirring as real war, except some exciting parade. To-day, for the first time, I marched the whole regiment through Beaufort and back,—the first appearance of such a novelty on any stage. They did march splendidly; this all admit. M——'s prediction was fulfilled: "Will not——be in bliss? A thousand men, every one as black as a coal!" I confess it. To look back on twenty broad double-ranks of men (for they marched by platoons),—every polished musket having

a black face beside it, and every face set steadily to the front,—a regiment of freed slaves marching on into the future,—it was something to remember; and when they returned through the same streets, marching by the flank, with guns at a “support,” and each man covering his file-leader handsomely, the effect on the eye was almost as fine. The band of the Eighth Maine joined us at the entrance of the town, and escorted us in. Sergeant Rivers said ecstatically afterwards, in describing the affair, “And when dat band wheel in before us, and march on,—my God! I quit dis world altogeder.” I wonder if he pictured to himself the many dusky regiments, now unformed, which I seemed to see marching up behind us, gathering shape out of the dim air.

I had cautioned the men, before leaving camp, not to be staring about them as they marched, but to look straight to the front, every man; and they did it with their accustomed fidelity, aided by the sort of spontaneous eye-for-effect which is in all their melodramatic natures. One of them was heard to say exultingly afterwards, “We did n’t look to de right nor to de leff. I did n’t see notin’ in Beaufort. Eb’ry step was worth a half a dollar.” And they all marched as if it were so. They knew well that they were marching through throngs of officers and soldiers who had drilled as many months as we had drilled weeks, and whose eyes would readily spy out every defect. And I must say, that, on the whole, with a few trivial exceptions, those spectators behaved in a manly and courteous manner, and I do not care to write down all the handsome things that were said. Whether said or not, they were deserved; and there is no danger that our men will not take sufficient satisfaction in their good appearance. I was especially amused at one of our

recruits, who did not march in the ranks, and who said, after watching the astonishment of some white soldiers, "De buckra sojers look like a man who been-a-steal a sheep,"—that is, I suppose, sheepish.

After passing and repassing through the town, we marched to the parade-ground, and went through an hour's drill, forming squares and reducing them, and doing other things which look hard on paper, and are perfectly easy in fact; and we were to have been reviewed by General Saxton, but he had been unexpectedly called to Ladies Island, and did not see us at all, which was the only thing to mar the men's enjoyment. Then we marched back to camp (three miles), the men singing the "John Brown Song," and all manner of things,—as happy creatures as one can well conceive.

It is worth mentioning, before I close, that we have just received an article about "Negro Troops," from the London Spectator, which is so admirably true to our experience that it seems as if written by one of us. I am confident that there never has been, in any American newspaper, a treatment of the subject so discriminating and so wise.

January 21.

To-day brought a visit from Major-General Hunter and his staff, by General Saxton's invitation,—the former having just arrived in the Department. I expected them at dress-parade, but they came during battalion drill, rather to my dismay, and we were caught in our old clothes. It was our first review, and I dare say we did tolerably; but of course it seemed to me that the men never appeared so ill before,—just as one always thinks a party at one's own house a failure, even if the guests seem to enjoy it, because one is so keenly sensitive to

every little thing that goes wrong. After review and drill, General Hunter made the men a little speech, at my request, and told them that he wished there were fifty thousand of them. General Saxton spoke to them afterwards, and said that fifty thousand muskets were on their way for colored troops. The men cheered both the generals lustily; and they were complimentary afterwards, though I knew that the regiment could not have appeared nearly so well as on its visit to Beaufort. I suppose I felt like some anxious mamma whose children have accidentally appeared at dancing-school in their old clothes.

General Hunter promises us all we want,—pay when the funds arrive, Springfield rifled muskets, and blue trousers. Moreover, he has graciously consented that we should go on an expedition along the coast, to pick up cotton, lumber, and, above all, recruits. I declined an offer like this just after my arrival, because the regiment was not drilled or disciplined, not even the officers; but it is all we wish for now.

“What care I how black I be?

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Forty pounds will marry me,”

quoth Mother Goose. Forty *rounds* will marry us to the American Army, past divorcing, if we can only use them well. Our success or failure may make or mar the prospects of colored troops. But it is well to remember in advance that military success is really less satisfactory than any other, because it may depend on a moment's turn of events, and that may be determined by some trivial thing, neither to be anticipated nor controlled. Napoleon ought to have won at Waterloo by all reasonable calculations; but who cares? All that one can expect is, to do one's best, and to take with equanimity the fortune of war.