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VOLUME X.

LENOIR, N. C., MARCH 3, 1908.

NO. 33.

OLD SOLDIERS EXPERIENCES.

Incidents Recorded From 1861 to 1865.

The Soldiers' Home.

Raleigh, Jan. 9.—There is hardly a more pathetic place to visit in all North Carolina than the hospital at the Soldiers' Home here. It stands some sixty feet from the main building and is near the office of Superintendent Brooks, and is but a few feet from Newbern avenue, one of the most important city thoroughfares, along which life flows, vivid and intense, day and night. Within the one-story building, which is fivepointed, like a star, there is quite another scene. The two white-capped and gowned nurses flit about. In the centre of the star are the medicines and each nurse has two wards to look after. There are besides a sunparlor and a lounging-room, through the latter the building being entered. Outside, in the walks and in the porticoes of the other buildings, the veterans are walking and chatting. Within the lounging-room of the hospital there is always a group of feeble men, hovering about the good fire of logs which blazes there from the time when the first chill of autumn fastens upon the air until spring gives its kiss of warmth and makes the porches a delight. These old men who sit around the fire are in a transition state so to speak, being either on their way from the other buildings to one of the wards, unless they rally and pick up strength again or else have been in a ward and are on their way to join their comrades in the other buildings, after a little period of rest. It is sad to see them, as with cheery politeness they rise from their chairs, but it is far sadder to go into the wards, and see the men lying on the cots to hear the smothered cough, to see a nurse moving some one too feeble to be of any help to self; to see the wasted frames upon the beds, hulks of once grand men and to see others able to sit in the chairs, or to totter along the aisles between the beds. Over the doors are tablets which tell that such and such a chapter of Daughters of the Confederacy has furnished certain things to the hospital. Such tablets are found on the doors of other buildings, too, and tell the story of woman's devotion and loving care.

Sunday the writer, who so frequently visits the Home, went there in company with a party of ladies, and after first visiting the main building, went into the dining hall and thence to the hospital. In the main building the veterans were asked to gather and then a bouquet of big chrysanthemums was presented by the writer to Comrade Drake who had done the quite unusual thing of writing a poem, which had been printed that day in the morning paper. He was urged to repeat the experiment, and other veterans, some of them alert and showing that they knew how to write, were asked to see if they could not contribute something now and then in the way of a war story. Some said they would try; that they could talk a lot about the war, but had never written anything about it. There are some very smart men in the Home and some of their talk is very entertaining. In the dining hall the comrades took their seats very quietly and methodically and with bowed heads heard a blessing asked upon them and their food, this being done by a veteran who stood in the centre of the room. Usually the superintendent performs this duty, but on this oc-

casional he was absent. As we stood at the entrance, looking down the line at the tables at which some 125 men were seated, one of the veterans who stood by remarked that the oldest man was nearest us, and that he was going into his 97th year. He has been in two wars, and was also a soldier who participated in the very unpleasant duty of moving the 15,000 Cherokee Indians who were literally driven from their North Carolina and Tennessee mountains to the far away Indian Territory, just a little after the first quarter of the last century had ended; a trip of over a thousand miles, attended with not a few horrors, and yet remembered now as almost a legend by the Cherokees in North Carolina who form the "Eastern Band" and who yet cling to their beloved mountain land, those "Over-Hills of Ottolay," which were theirs before the white man was dreamed of in this part of the world. The old fellow talks very brightly and is sprightly still. He says he likes Home and his comrades seem to like him. There is but little talk at table and as the men finish they file out, at will, some walking about the grounds, for tea is taken very early, a little after 5 o'clock at this time of the year. Others return to the dormitories and sit about the big log fires, chat or read the numerous books and papers which are so liberally provided for them.

But it is to the hospital that we gave our very special attention on this visit. The nurses, bright-eyed, neat, quick and thoughtful of their patients, and greatly loved by the letter, took us into the neat new dining-room which the State has this year provided for the hospital, and then we shook hands with the men in the lounging room and passed into the wards. In a chair sat an old fellow whose light of life was flickering very low indeed. His voice was faint and he could barely move, but even his eye brightened when there was talk about Christmas, so near at hand. With a smile which was sadness itself, he said: "I love to hear you talk about Christmas, and our nurses are going to give us a Christmas tree, but I don't know whether I'll be here to see it or not. I'm so weak, I feel like I'm going fast and I don't know when the time will come." The ladies like ministering angels, hovered over him and with the softness of their furs and their bright faces seemed to set him about as if within a frame. He was very responsive to their gentle words and ministrations and talked about himself and about the little circle of life within the Home, which to him meant now just a room, a ward, that is: a good fire, of the wood he loves to see flaming, a sort of remembrance of his days on the old farm; a bed, covered with snowy drapery, and the faithful nurse, who came and went, bringing him what he ought to have. That was his world; circumscribed it is true, but yet a world to him. In a way he clung to life and in another he repelled it. He said he was quite ready to go; had never feared anything and had no fear or distrust about the summons of the angel in black who he well knew was beckoning him to come on. For years he had followed many a leader and never turned back and in the quieter life in civil effort he had not been a flincher either. He was not going to break his good record. His motto was, one can be very sure, "Nulla Vestigium Retrorsum," which the old Roman so proudly used and which in our harsher tongue means "No sign of turning back." So this old follower of "Marso Bob" sat there in his chair,

waiting, waiting. The nurse spoke about Christmas, and how the tree was going to look and what the old boys would like best—some bright little things handkerchiefs or what not, and to be sure some candy, which they prefer soft and fresh. They were going back to childhood, these old men. Some had drifted all the way back to that dear old stage, who knows what they were seeing with those bleared old eyes of theirs? Who can tell the thoughts that were running races in those minds; what echoes of the long-gone past came to them? On one bed lay an old fellow almost blind. He told us this with a short of quiver of the voice: "I can hear you but I can't see you. Give me your hand." Next to him, sitting on the side of his bed, very erect, with a fine face crowned with snowy white hair, sat a fine figure of a man, utterly deaf. This he said was his chief complaint.

A little further along was a man suffering from a tumor. In very truth he was suffering, but he was as brave as a lion through it all: held out his hand and said with a wan smile, but yet a real one: "It might be a lot worse. Others are worse off than I am." He added and then his voice rose as he said the words, "God bless you!" When we told him how brave he was he said it always paid to be brave. I told him a story about his adventure with a North Carolina ex-Confederate, near Fayetteville, a couple of years after the war, when Foraker was getting the names of persons whose stock and other property had been taken by the Federal troops. A lot of people Foraker met told him they were "Union men," thinking this would get his sympathy, but this particular man said he was not a Union man and not a secessionist, but a "rebel." Foraker shook hands with him and said he respected him.

The old soldier laughed as he lay in his cot at this story and said it reminded him of what happened the year of the surrender, that is in 1865, when in Moore Square here in Raleigh the United States lent great numbers of army horses and to people for use in cultivating their farms, etc., with the simple provision that the animals should be returned in the fall, after the crops had been made, and properly cared for mean-while, but if they happened to die that fact must be duly sworn to before some officer of the army. The old soldier said as he walked up near the horse corral. A very handsome United States officer was talking to a mean looking fellow, known deserter, who was applying for a horse. The officer was questioning the fellow closely and when he asked him if he had been in the army the fellow replied, "Little while, not much. I didn't stay in long; I deserted." The officer, standing very erect, looked the fellow square in the eye and said with a cold sneer, "You look like a deserter. You are really not entitled to the use of anything. You have no sympathy from me and I know you have none from the men in your army." He then turned on his heel and told a soldier to give the fellow an old worn-out horse which was standing near, and told the man to be sure and bring that horse back in the fall. The fellow took the horse and walked away, man and animal being a good match for each other as they slouched along. The real soldier, who had been in the war from start to finish, at this point walked up and saluted in his handsomest style. The United States officer returned his salute, looked at him attentively and then began to question him. The soldier told him he had gone in the

war at the very beginning and had fought all the way through. The army officer was evidently very much impressed by his manner and words and calling to a soldier, told him to bring up a fine mule, the best he could pick. Up came the man with a splendid mule, worth \$200 if a cent, and it was turned over to the ex-Confederate who hadn't deserted but who had fought all the way through. The officer gave him a kind word and he departed. When the ex-Confederate returned in the fall with the mule he met the very officer who had thus lent it to him. The mule was even in finer condition. The officer questioned him again and then fixed things so that he could buy the mule for \$75, which he gladly paid, and then the two shook hands, and parted forever, foes once but friends then. The old soldier in talking about this said that he had forgotten to mention one little incident, which happened an hour or two after the issue of the old plug horse to the deserter and of the fine mule to himself, this being that as he was on his way home he overtook the deserter, who was astride his old saw-bones of a nag. The deserter was swearing mad and said he wished he had twenty sons, in order that he might put every one of them in the army and "kill all the D—n Yankees." The real soldier, as the fellow said these words, cursed him heartily and told him that he would never go into the army and take a chance of being shot at, even if he did have twenty sons and sent them all to the front.

On another bed lay the big bulk of a once powerful man, who was literally grasping his life out and will probably be the next to go. Death has claimed 32 of these hospital inmates this year: a tremendous toll to take out of 147. When one thinks that the average age of these men is 72 years it is not surprising that their ranks are thinning so fast. One man who tottered as he spoke talked about death as very near him and said, "I don't know how long it will be before they carry me over there," by this meaning to the Soldiers' Home section of the Confederate cemetery, which is within sight of the hospital itself. Infinitely pathetic are the burials there, with a straggling company of veterans as an escort and with eight of them beside the casket in which are the remains of their dead comrade. No salute is fired: no bugle blows "taps," but the veteran is laid in his last bed, to sleep the sleep that has no waking until the final day. Sad it is to know that so few Raleigh people attend these funerals. They go out to the Home Sunday afternoons and make music there in the little Memorial Chapel, but they ought to pay more attention to the dead. It is a duty the Memorial Association of Women owes, it would seem.

This is what Hon. Jake Moore, State Warden of Georgia, says of Kodol For Dyspepsia: "E. C. DeWitt & Co., Chicago, Ill.—Dear Sirs—I have suffered more than twenty years from indigestion. About eighteen months ago I had grown so much worse that I could not digest a crust of corn bread and could not retain anything on my stomach. I lost 25 lbs.; in fact I made up my mind that I could not live but a short time, when a friend of mine recommended Kodol. I consented to try it to please him and I was better in one day. I now weigh more than I ever did in my life and am in better health than for many years. Kodol did it. I keep a bottle constantly, and write this hoping that humanity will be benefited. Yours very truly, Jake C. Moore, Atlanta, Aug. 10, 1904." Sold by J. E. Shell, Dr. Kent and Granite Falls Drug Co.

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