

**LOYALTY ON THE FRONTIER, OR
SKETCHES OF UNION MEN OF
THE SOUTH-WEST; WITH
INCIDENTS AND ADVENTURES IN
REBELLION ON THE BORDER**

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A. W. BISHOP

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BY A. W. BISHOP,

LIEUT. COL. FIRST ARKANSAS CAVALRY VOLUNTEERS.



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P R E F A C E .

WHILE on duty at Elkhorn Tavern, Arkansas, in November, 1862, the preparation of the following pages was begun. We had no particular object in view, certainly no thought of authorship, but, as facts accumulated, they suggested a project and a plan, and as our leisure would admit, we wrote away.

At Pea Ridge, our conveniences were limited. The only house at the Post was the old Elkhorn Tavern—two apartments and a “lean to” that served as a kitchen. Into this last we retreated, whenever we could, even for half an hour at a time, and taking position at one end of a table, while our contraband cook kneaded away at the other, endeavored to bring our thoughts into line. Our sanctum let in the light from above very freely, so much so that in rainy weather we were compelled to suspend operations altogether. At such a time, we would go into the camps or send for particular men, gathering thus the experiences that we have attempted to relate.

Ordered to Prairie Grove a few days after the battle, we endeavored to prosecute our plan there, and to some extent succeeded. Coming finally to Fayetteville, we took up our quarters at a private house. Having access now to a choice library, to which we are indebted for an occasional quotation, and to “Webster’s Unabridged,” to settle our orthography, we continued the sketches.

The President’s proclamation of January 1, 1863, declared Arkansas in rebellion. So far as a proclamation and a knot of rebel politicians who revolve around Little Rock, can make her rebellious,

she is. Practically, western Arkansas, even to the Louisiana line, and many counties in the eastern portion of the State, are not. The masses are loyal, and had the battle of Prairie Grove been fought three months earlier, the people of the western section of the State could have availed themselves of the proclamation of September 22, 1862, and might now be represented in the national legislature.

They nevertheless dare the rebel authorities at Little Rock, and are now rallying south of the Arkansas River, in the Magazine Mountains and elsewhere, as six months ago they fought Hindman's men on the White River Hills.

It is distressing beyond expression to witness the destitution and know of the sufferings of hundreds of the Union men of the southwest. As we write, we are just from an interview with a man and his wife, both past middle age, who have walked the entire way from Bastrop county, Texas, a distance of three hundred and thirty miles, to Fayetteville, and are here on the day typical of national grandeur, *with their lives alone.*

The Government knows but little of the sufferings of the loyal men of the Border. It is no easy thing to adhere to the Union in a seceded State, and when insult, outrage and beggary are the consequence, the unfortunate sufferer becomes the object of our warmest sympathy, and if help cometh not quickly, if hope is so long deferred that the heart sickens, we must not be surprised when the steadfast waver and the doubting rebel against the "Constitution and the laws."

It is therefore an object of serious concern, that army movements in a seceded State often look so little towards the re-creation of a healthy public sentiment, and that army officers should sometimes be inclined to treat those with whom they have an ancestry

in common, as the inhabitants of a conquered province. Many are brave enough in the field, but if so fortunate as to leave it victors, occasionally find themselves in the predicament of the man who caught the elephant.

Winning battles and holding territory will not alone bring American citizens back to their allegiance. The commonalty of the South must be informed why we fight, for on that point they have been fearfully misled. Remove the scales from their eyes, and they will do as certain Texan regiments have recently done, disband and go home, swearing never again to take up arms in defence of that miserable pretention, the Southern Confederacy. Many slaveholders also are at heart loyal, and are aiding in various ways the cause of the Government. Naturally enough they have sought to preserve their property, whether human or otherwise, and it is very much to be lamented that in the conduct of the war, such license should exist as is occasionally permitted the soldiery. Exasperation at the needless destruction of property begets the feeling, first, of indifference, then of hostility, and many loyal men are reluctant to put trust in a Government—generous, and they know it—the officers in whose army, through ignorance or design, have little or no regard for private rights. Still, the loyalty of the South-west continues to “crop out.” It endures the severest hardships, submits to the most trying privations; and if in the following pages their faint reflex is made to appear, as also that of the incidents and adventures that give to war its charm, we may not have written in vain.

FAYETTEVILLE, ARK.,

March 4, 1868.

INTRODUCTION.

In no section of the country has the Great Rebellion created such intense personal hate, or separated more widely friends and relations, than in the South-West. Early in the war the indications of a divided sentiment were apparent, and there were needed but a few cracks of the rifle—an occasional shot from the "brush"—to fan the flame of political discussion into the consuming fire of partisan strife. The "peculiar institution" came in, of course, for its share of obloquy and commendation. Advocates of secession—the lights of street corners and cross roads—found no subject so fertile of conversions among hard working farmers, as the absurd notion of negro equality. It was the burden of discourse not only, but of conversation, and was well calculated to alienate the poorer classes, who, though owning but few slaves themselves, or generally none at all, were yet born on Southern soil, and possessed that aversion of the negro, which, whatever else it might concede, could not brook for a moment the thought of his social or political equality.

The poison spread, and soon infused itself into the minds of hundreds of peaceable citizens, transforming them into bands of armed and headstrong men, ready at a moment's notice to fire the house, plunder the property, and take the life of an inoffending neighbor, if suspected, even, of sympathy with the "Lincoln Government." Nobody, in fact, could be so bad as a "Fed." "He's no better nor a nigger," said one; "He's a nigger thief," said another; "He wants to put niggers into office over us," would chime in a third; and so on through a long distribe of senseless and vindictive calumnies. Personal abuse was followed up by the shot gun, and a few weeks sufficed to fill the Border with roving bands of reckless men, fighting for a phantom. It was nothing else. The Federal Government still stood as from its beginning. The Army of the