

JOHN WESLEY POWELL.

BY MRS. M. D. LINCOLN (BESSIE BEECH).

[CONTINUED.]

II. THE SOLDIER.

IN the winter of 1860-1861, our devoted and successful young scientist was teaching school for the second year at Hennepin. Of fine physique, commanding respect everywhere by virtue of his mental acquirements and natural endowments, a sound, earnest thinker, it is not strange that when Abraham Lincoln issued his call for 75,000 troops, this stanch abolitionist should immediately organise a company of soldiers. Some days later a company at Granville was accepted by the Governor as one of the companies to constitute the twentieth regiment of Illinois Infantry. With the small party assembled at Hennepin John Powell went to Granville and joined the Granville Company as a private soldier.

Vividly the days of childhood came back to him, and the anti-slavery sentiments which he had inherited and which were fostered by his father's teaching and daring example, made him enlist for a purpose higher and greater than the glory of martial triumph. He enlisted with the avowed purpose of doing his part in the extinction of slavery in this country; and from the first day after the call was made for troops, he felt thoroughly convinced that American slavery was doomed. He found reasons later in life for enlarging his opinions regarding the importance of the issue at stake; for he says in a letter to a friend:

"It was a great thing to destroy slavery, but the integrity of the Union was of no less importance: and on and beyond it all, was to be counted the result of the war as an influence which should extend far into the history of the future, not only establishing in North America a great predominating nation, with a popular and powerful government; but also as securing the ascendancy of the Anglo-Saxon branch of the Aryan family, and the ultimate spread of Anglo-Saxon civilisation over the globe. Perhaps it is only a dreamer's vision wherein I see the English

language become the language of the world ; of the science, the institutions, and the arts of the world ; and the nations integrated as a congeries of republican states."

The eradication of slavery and the preservation of the Union, were, he believed, the important epochs in the course of history which would lead to these results ; and he carried the musket to help as best he could to secure the fruition of what he saw in prophetic vision. And thousands more saw the shadow of fulfilment as the scathing fire mowed them down.

When the Twentieth Illinois was organised at Joliet, our hero was made the Sergeant-Major of the regiment. At the end of the month, when it was mustered into the United States service, he was commissioned as Second Lieutenant. Before the regiment was mustered, and while he was still Sergeant-Major, he obtained permission of its Colonel to go to Chicago, which was only sixty miles distant, on a plea that he desired to purchase a uniform. His main object, however, was a desire to obtain some books on military science, and while in Chicago he obtained Mahan's and Vauhan's works on military engineering. He returned to Joliet, where the regiment was still stationed. These books, together with a small volume of Tactics and the Army Regulations, furnished study for some weeks, and whenever possible he went some distance away from camp for the purpose of looking over and studying topographical features and planning military works for the defense. The Lieutenant-Colonel of the regiment, who was subsequently killed at Donaldsonville, finding the Lieutenant studying military science, would sometimes join him, and they often had discussions about military works, such as entrenchments, fortifications, and bridges. Civil engineering and the construction of bridges had been previously studied by Lieutenant Powell.

When finally the regiment was ordered into the field at Cape Girardeau, Missouri, the Colonel of the regiment directed Lieutenant Powell to look over the ground, select a camp, and prepare plan for the entrenchment of the camp ; and his orders were satisfactorily carried out. At Cape Girardeau there were four regiments commanded by C. C. Marsh, the Colonel of the Twentieth Illinois Infantry, to which Lieutenant Powell belonged. During the first week of the occupation of Cape Girardeau, he carefully studied the country about the camp and made a map of it, and prepared a plan of works for the defense of the town, should it be necessary ; but no work was done in the field to carry out this plan, until one day General Fremont arrived at Cape Girardeau with a

large retinue of foreign officers, and informed Colonel Marsh that he desired to have the city fortified. Colonel Marsh sent for Lieutenant Powell and asked him to submit the map and his plan to General Fremont and his staff. They approved his plan and Colonel Marsh was ordered to prosecute the work with the greatest possible vigor.

The summer, fall, and winter were occupied in carrying out his order. At one time a Prussian officer was sent by General Fremont to take charge of the work, but as he could not speak English and was a very old man, he occupied himself in the construction of a small fort which could perhaps cover three or four hundred men at most, and Lieutenant Powell went on with the construction of a system of works inclosing the city.

After a time, Captain (afterwards Colonel) Fladd, who had been engaged on the works at St. Louis, and was an accomplished engineer, came down and took charge, and he made Lieutenant Powell his assistant, a good school of engineering for the young lieutenant. Altogether the works were on an extensive scale, and many thousand men were employed. When General Grant took command, some time in the early winter, the operations of this character were limited to the completion of a part of the work already under way; and the entire plan was never fully executed.

One day General Grant came up from Cairo to inspect the works, and Lieutenant Powell rode with him two or three hours; and after the ride was over he invited the young soldier to take supper with him on his boat. After supper, Lieutenant Powell said to the General that he desired a leave of absence for one week, and frankly told him that he had been engaged to a young lady in Detroit for a long time, and that he wished to go home to get married, and would return in a week. The General gave him the leave of absence; he went to Detroit, arrived there about six o'clock in the evening, was immediately married to Miss Emma Dean of that city, and started on the train at eight o'clock with his bride on the return to Girardeau.

Their wedding journey was to the Seat of War in the southwest, a moveable grand division, with its "headquarters" as apt to be in the saddle as in the fields of Kentucky or Tennessee; it then being under the leadership of that great Captain of the culminating victory who in taking Fort Donaldson, introduced to the world the leaders of the waiting hosts east and west.

Not a very delightful situation this for a "honey-moon"—but Mrs. Powell had heroic blood in her veins, and she followed the

army without hesitation, bearing the inevitable inconveniences and privations of camp-life with womanly fortitude; one of the ways in which the sex stimulated the other half of the world to do their duty as men, and show their own valor through privations and waiting—sometimes harder to endure than being in the midst of the battle.

Lieutenant Powell was on General McPherson's staff; within a month after his marriage he lost his right arm at the battle of Pittsburgh Landing or Shiloh.

General Grant was again at Cape Girardeau and Lieutenant Powell, who then was on General McPherson's staff, begged that he might be relieved from duty at that point as engineer, and ordered back to his regiment, which was then at Bird's Point. To this the General would not consent, but shortly after sent him a commission as Captain of Artillery. It seems the General had written to Governor Yates, telling him he did not wish Lieutenant Powell to return to his regiment, and that as the State of Illinois was organising batteries of Artillery, he thought Lieutenant Powell could make up a battery with some Missouri soldiers that were there, and who had been enlisted without authority from Washington, under instructions from General Fremont, and that if Governor Yates could send a few men from Illinois, they would be put together in this battery.

When Lieutenant Powell received this commission, he was instructed to take the Missouri soldiers who were camped outside of the city of Cape Girardeau, together with some men sent by Governor Yates, and with them organise under his command as their captain the company which was afterwards known as "Battery F, Second Illinois Light Artillery."

While stationed at Cape Girardeau, the troops on two occasions were sent into the interior of Missouri to operate against Jeff. Thompson. On two occasions Captain Powell went with them as staff-officer, his principal duty being to study the country and give information of routes and to construct maps of the region to be travelled.

In the latter part of the month of March, 1862, he was ordered to the Tennessee River.

In his six weeks' experience with the Twentieth Illinois Infantry he paid close attention to the study of tactics, and as the Lieutenant of Company H of that regiment he became a good drill-master. When the battery was organised he manifested great interest in artillery tactics, and became proud of the performance of

his battery on drill and parade. Full of activity, with zeal not always characterised by the wisdom which more deliberate men would have advised, he was a severe and almost unreasonable disciplinarian, drilling his men on every possible opportunity. When the battery went up the Tennessee, it had 156 stalwart men; and a finer lot of horses was never, perhaps, attached to a battery. Although this company had been organised but a few weeks, it went into park on the bluffs above Pittsburgh Landing, a grand body of men, well drilled, and with an equipment complete and in the best possible condition.

A week later everything was sadly changed. It was within a month of the young captain's marriage that the battle of Shiloh or Pittsburgh Landing took place, and in it his battery played an important and heroic part. Most of the horses were lost, many of the men were killed, still more wounded, and Captain Powell had his right arm shot off.

[Capt. Powell was crippled for life, and the stump of his right arm was subject to incessant pain until in his advanced years, I believe in 1898, a successful operation on the terminating nerves gave him relief; and henceforth he felt as if he had been regenerated and had received back his original vigor.

In connection with the loss of his right arm, I wish to record an incident which is typical of American conditions. In the same battle of Shiloh, a Southern officer, Col. Charles E. Hooker, afterwards Member of Congress from Mississippi, lost his left arm, and after the war the warriors met and became friends. It happened that their hands were of the same size, and henceforward whenever either purchased a pair of gloves he sent the unnecessary one to his enemy; the two veterans ever after remained friends.]¹

The officer left in command probably could not muster more than half of the number that had gone up to Pittsburgh Landing. His [Captain Powell's] young wife was on the field—at headquarters—when he was wounded, and she then and there enlisted for the war, General Grant giving her a "perpetual pass" to follow the army and thus enable her to act as right arm for her husband. Otherwise he would have had to leave the service, and that would have been a great loss, as his skill as an engineer and artilleryman ranked high; and General McPherson relied upon his knowledge most implicitly; placing him always—with his dogs of war—in the most responsible positions.

Mrs. Powell nursed her husband back to life in the hospital;

¹ The passage in brackets was inserted by the editor, on the authority of Major Powell.

and he did not hesitate to say that he believed he "owed his life to his wife's presence, fortitude, and unwearied devotion, united to her skilful nursing."

In the summer of 1862 the captain returned to the command of his battery at Corinth, Mississippi. During the fall and early winter nothing of importance occurred at that point in the theatre of war in which his battery was engaged. Some short expeditions were made, each proving fruitless; they remained in camp during the greater part of the time until early in February, when they were ordered to Lake Providence. On arriving there with his command, the battery was parked in the lawn of one of those great southern mansions, and the house was occupied by the commander and his officers. For nearly a month he was principally occupied in drilling his battery and putting it in order for the spring campaign.

The ground on which the battery were parked was very beautiful. The roomy old mansion had probably been abandoned for a year or two. On every side rose-bushes had grown up and there were acres of them. In the early spring these burst forth into bloom, and the trees and shrubs were filled with mocking-birds, and here in this garden of loveliness, where one could almost forget the calamities of war, a month passed, remembered by Captain Powell as one of the most delightful periods of his life.

In the meantime General Grant's army had been attempting to make a cut-off across the peninsula opposite Vicksburg. This having failed, the army took up its line of march across the peninsula to Grand Gulf, encountering deep mud. Captain Powell was then acting as Chief of Artillery under General Ransom, who commanded the Fourth Division of the Seventeenth Corps. One or two regiments of the division were away at the time. Three batteries were under Capt. Powell's command, and to get these across the peninsula, through the mud and over bayous, was a somewhat difficult task. He had to build many bridges and corduroy many miles of road, a work necessary not only for the battery but for the whole division, and for trains that followed in the line of the troops. At last, when the division had reached Grand Gulf and pushed back into the interior of the State of Mississippi to Jackson, Johnson's army having been driven eastward from Jackson, General Grant turned back toward Vicksburg in order to meet General Pemberton. On the march toward Vicksburg, Captain Powell took part in the battle of Champion Hill and that of Black River Bridge.

An incident worthy of note occurred at the battle of Champion Hill. When Captain Powell enlisted in Company H of the Twentieth Illinois Infantry, he took with him some of the men who had agreed to join his company at Hennepin, to fill out the company organised at Granville. One of these men was a tall Scotchman by the name of Morgrave, brave and trustworthy as a soldier as he had been respected and valued as a private citizen. At the battle of Champion Hill, Morgrave who was then a non-commissioned officer in the Twentieth Illinois, was sent to the right of the Twentieth to reconnoiter. There was a body of troops on the right, and the colonel of the regiment was uncertain whether they were Union or Confederate soldiers. Morgrave went out and fell into the hands of the enemy. Fighting soon began. The soldier in whose charge Morgrave was placed told him to lie down under a log, and the guard lay down by him. Soon the enemy gave way, and the Union troops passed over the ground, driving the Confederates back. As they lay behind the fallen tree, the movements of the troops were uncertain to the hiding party; but finally Morgrave concluded that he had as much right to the position as his guard. Laying his hand upon the gun, he called upon the guard to surrender; and the guard surrendered. Neither party yet knew who were victorious, the Confederates or the Union troops. A few moments after this, Captain Powell chanced to be riding over the ground for the purpose of bringing up the battery that was in the rear, and he saw Morgrave and his man. They called to him, and Morgrave in great earnestness asked which of the two should be considered the prisoner. When informed of the result of the battle, he was much delighted.

After the battle of Champion Hill, General Pemberton's army was driven across Black River, and the bank of the river was occupied by the Union troops. About two o'clock in the afternoon the railroad bridge was burned by the enemy, and bridges had to be built immediately. During that afternoon and night they were constructed across the river, and by daylight two divisions had crossed on this bridge, including the batteries which he commanded.

For two days they fought their way toward Vicksburg and on the 21st of June invested the works that sheltered General Pemberton. During the night of the 21st Captain Powell was occupied in arranging the lines of the division to which he belonged (Ransom's division), and in getting the batteries into position under cover of rude and hastily constructed earthworks. On the 22nd a severe en-

gagement occurred; and on the 23rd the siege operations fairly commenced, and he was engaged in them, day and night, from that time until the fourth of July. In no other forty days of his life had he ever worked so hard. It was his custom to lay out the works at night, and to direct the digging by the troops; and during the day he was engaged in preparing materials.

The work consisted chiefly in running parallels, and in constructing batteries and defensive works for the artillery. The ground was covered with fallen trees through which a dense jungle of cane was growing. This cane was cut and used in making fascines and other materials used in the construction of gabions to be employed for revetment. On the evening of the 22nd, while engaged in laying out work of this kind, one of his soldiers suggested that the telegraph wire could be used for binding the fascines, and at night nearly three hundred men were set to work making fascines and tying them with wire, the rude machinery for this being devised upon the spot. The telegraph wire ran towards Jackson from a point which was occupied by Ransom's division, and gradually this wire for many miles back was brought in to be used for this purpose.

The hills about Vicksburg are composed of loess, and this material was of a character well adapted to their purposes. They ran long galleries in it without any support, and they soon had a system of galleries extending quite under the enemy's guns, and their own troops were gradually brought up by a system of parallels to the very ditches of the enemy's main works. All the enemy's salients were abandoned quite early in the siege, and the Union guns were so arranged that they would enfilade every rod of his breastworks; and for several days before the surrender no man could safely show himself above the works of the enemy.

During all this work, Generals Grant, McPherson, and Ransom daily watched the siege operations immediately controlled by Captain Powell, and it was here that he first comprehended the genius of the great Commander. Often at night the General came to inspect the work in the darkness, and they walked together while Captain Powell explained what he was doing, the position of the enemy's guns, the topographic features, and other conditions which determined his plans. To all of these explanations General Grant lent a most intelligent hearing, rarely making suggestions, but when made, they were always of the most important character. Then during the day the Captain would further explain the work in his charge, and would find that General Grant had carried in his

mind a complete conception of the situation, and remembered all the details of the work.

He would often listen to explanations in silence, but when he asked a question it was pertinent. Captain Powell declared that never in his life had he associated with a general who so thoroughly understood the principles and details of military engineering.

On the third of July, General McPherson rode up near where Captain Powell was at work and sent for him, and soon after General Ransom came up, and General McPherson asked General Ransom if he thought the works could be successfully stormed from his (Ransom's) front; Ransom believed they could, and the details of the movement along that route were then explained and agreed upon; but just when it should take place was left uncertain. General McPherson thought it would probably be at daybreak on the morning of the fifth, but that circumstances might demand that it should be made sooner, and expressed a desire that General Ransom should be prepared to move at any time. After consultation the generals went away. A few minutes later General McPherson returned, and taking pen and ink from an orderly he wrote an order for Captain Powell to have the batteries open upon the enemy's line, with a national salute at daybreak on the morning of the fourth. At daybreak, however, the enemy had surrendered, and instead of firing a national salute the Union troops moved forward a few yards over the enemy's works and took possession of his lines.

Two or three days after, McPherson was informed that the enemy was crossing a large body of horses and cattle over the Mississippi at Natchez, and General Ransom was ordered to take boats, descend the river, and capture the cattle if possible. Natchez was soon reached, and on landing Ransom's division was hurriedly run into the country, and a large district including the city of Natchez was surrounded with troops. The line was gradually concentrated as it moved toward Natchez, and within the circle some hundreds, perhaps thousands, of cattle were enclosed. Some of these cattle were speedily sent to Vicksburg, and orders were soon received to take others to New Orleans and supply General Banks's army.

Captain Powell went down with the troops to New Orleans, and on returning to Natchez he obtained a leave of absence. During the siege of Vicksburg the excessive work had greatly reduced him in flesh, and in addition to this his arm had given almost incessant pain. After a consultation of the surgeons it was decided that he should have a resection, and for that operation he preferred to go home. During all the campaign up to that time his wife had been

with him, and they went together to Detroit, where the operation was performed.

He soon recovered, and in the fall returned to Natchez, where he found General Crocker of Iowa in command, General Ransom having been ordered to report to General Banks. General Crocker remained in Natchez a few weeks after Captain Powell's return, and then was ordered to Vicksburg, and finally back of Vicksburg to a little place called Hebron, where winter quarters were established. Captain Powell had their batteries parked on a beautiful piece of ground, barracks were constructed for the men, and stables erected for the horses, and the weeks were spent in recruiting men and horses and preparing for more active operations.

Then the expedition to Meridian was made by General Sherman, and the division to which Captain Powell was attached took part. The movement was one of destruction, its purpose being to attack a small body of troops which had occupied the country not far from Jackson, drive them across the State of Mississippi and back into Georgia, and destroy all railroad communication with Vicksburg, in order that the captured city might be garrisoned with a small force, and the main body of the army withdrawn to take part in operations elsewhere.

In the march to Meridian the army met with but little opposition; from day to day there was skirmishing, and some loss of life on both sides, but the railroads over a broad zone of country were torn up, and everything that could be utilised by an enemy in support of troops was destroyed. This destruction often involved the burning of farm-houses and barns, and many buildings were reduced to ashes. On the return a vast horde of negroes, men, women, and children, with horses, mules, and cattle, were brought back from Vicksburg, and once more General Crocker's division went into camp at Hebron.

Early in the spring his division was ordered to Chattanooga, but in the meantime a regiment of colored troops was partly organised at Vicksburg, and Captain Powell, upon the request of General Thomas, consented to take charge of them. He soon came to the conclusion that these troops were not likely to take an active part in the war, but would probably be held behind for garrison duty; so he determined not to be mustered in as colonel of the regiment, though a commission had been sent him, and he obtained permission to join the Fourth Division once more.

On his return to the Fourteenth Division he was made Chief of Artillery, of the Seventeenth Corps, having previously been com-

missioned as Major, and took part in the operations around Atlanta. Subsequently he was made Chief of Artillery of the Department of the Tennessee.

When General Hood turned back toward Nashville, Major Powell was with the pursuing army under Sherman, and was with him on Kenesaw mountain when General Corse was attacked at Altoona. Having driven Hood westward towards Rome, General Sherman turned back towards Atlanta once more, and went on beyond Jonesboro. A day or two before the railroad communication was broken with Nashville General Sherman concluded that the artillery could be moved across to Savannah. During the campaign there was great loss of horses, and the artillery was using old horses and mules to slowly drag the pieces over the country. Sherman deciding that all these animals were necessary for the quartermaster's train, Powell was ordered to take sixteen batteries of the Army of the Tennessee back to Nashville and ship them around to Savannah. He reached Nashville with the batteries just before the battle of Franklin was fought, and received instruction from Washington to report to General Thomas. Thus it happened that he participated in the battle of Nashville.

For some days before the battle, he was busily occupied in superintending the constructions of defense. On the morning of the battle, under General Thomas's instructions, he had the sixteen batteries under his command arranged in four divisions and distributed at as many different points along the rear of our army. From time to time, as the battle raged, these batteries were sent to the front under orders from General Thomas, and engaged in the conflict. Major Powell, riding from point to point, occasionally returning to General Thomas for further instructions, was for the first time during the war witness of an entire battle; that is, he was able to comprehend the operations on the various parts of the line, and to see the most important engagements on the first and second day.

When, on the morning of the first day, General Hatch's mounted infantry attacked the enemy on the extreme right with two of his batteries, the entire operation could be dimly seen in the mist from the hill where General Thomas stood, and by his side Major Powell watched the progress of the battle. When the Union troops fought their way to the top of the hill, and up to the enemy's works, for a few moments a cloud of mist obscured the scene; then the wind drove the clouds away, and with their glasses the two officers could see the stars and stripes waving over the enemy's

fort, four or five miles in the distance. When the facts were fully demonstrated, General Thomas expressed unmeasured delight, and affirmed that he had no more fear of the result; the only thing then necessary was to press General Hood so that he could not escape.

After the destruction of General Hood's army, Major Powell remained in Nashville some time until the sixteen batteries under his command were once more thoroughly equipped with horses and munitions.

Early in the spring of 1865 he asked for orders to report to the Commander of the Army of the Tennessee, General Howard, and receiving such orders, he was soon at his old post. In the meantime the Confederacy was gradually falling to pieces, and when Major Powell arrived at Louisville he was confident the end was near at hand. His term of enlistment had expired also, and general orders were issued permitting the troops to go home.

When the surrender finally came and the little white flags of capitulation began to flutter along the fortifications, such extravagant demonstrations of joy, such shouts, went like a wave through our lines and besiegers as "to have heard is never to be forgotten," says Mrs. Powell. To have been there and to have suffered some of the privations and anxieties of those days of "weary waiting" she considers to have been among her "greatest privileges."

Mrs. Powell had a hard life; her home was often a Sibley tent; her furniture of the rudest; her table service of tin; but her cheerful acceptance of the conditions so as to be able to serve the Major proved her soldiership; and she deserves a brevet of at least "ornamental aid" for having kept a most serviceable man at the front, when if she had been less heroic they would have made the circumstances an excuse for returning to the pursuits of private life.

They now went to Detroit to visit his wife's family for a few weeks, and then to Wheaton, Illinois, the home of his father.

(TO BE CONCLUDED.)