Reminiscences of the life of a nurse in field, hospital and camp, during the Civil War

Erving Annie Priscilla
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BY MRS. A. P. ERVING.
The good work of our Army Nurse, Mrs. Erving, and what she did in her girlhood in camp, field and hospital as she carried hope and cheer to many a broken hearted mother’s son. May the blessings of heaven follow her in her declining years and this booklet of women’s work meet with hearty success.

CHARLES W. VALENTINE,
Pastor of Lutheran Church.

Newburgh, N. Y.

The Manse, First Presbyterian Church.
September 15, 1904.

The many friends and acquaintances of Mrs. Annie Priscilla Erving, Army Nurse in the Civil War, deeply interested in her personal experiences, have often urged her to have printed in some permanent form her memories of the war. She has finally yielded to this request and now offers to the public this booklet, in the hope that it may be a profit and pleasure to many and, particularly, that the young who read it may have a stronger love of country and a larger appreciation of those who suffered, fought and died to preserve it.

WILLIAM K. HALL.

The child who was born the year the Civil War closed has long since grown to manhood, and the experiences of those dreadful years are fast fading into forgetfulness. Those who have come upon the stage of life since, have no adequate conception of the nature and cost of the conflict. Mrs. Erving’s narrative of personal experiences as an Army Nurse in camp and field and hospital will do much to enlighten those who read it as to their obligations to the citizen soldiers of the republic. It will prompt them to love their country more, to value it’s dearly purchased institutions more, to prize its manifold blessings more, and to do all that in them lies to advance it’s true greatness and glory.

GEO. W. HUNTINGTON.
Rector Church of the Corner Stone.
Newburgh, N. Y., Sept. 16th, 1904.
MISS CILLA ZERBE,
MEDICAL DEPARTMENT, U. S. VOLUNTEERS,
1862-1864.
PREFACE.

This little book of woman's work and what she can do if she makes up her mind to do it, should be placed in the hands of every school child. It will teach them loyalty to themselves and their country, and they will grow up to respect the heroes of our wars. To-day, the heads of the soldiers of North and South are carrying the same color, the gray, while the nimble footsteps are growing weary and soon taps will be sounded for them all. May it be well with them when the time comes.

My ancestors were the early settlers of Pennsylvania, Dutch on one side, Huguenot on the other. I was born in one of the finest valleys of the United States, the Cumberland, but I lived and was educated in the city of Harrisburg. How many people of to-day can recall the Omen of War just before it broke out. I was coming home, with a party, from Camp Meeting, and such an awe-stricken party as it was. I confess here, for once in my life I was afraid. We
thought the Judgement day was at hand. The sky seemed to be covered as with one mass of blood. It would, and did, make the stoutest heart quail. The next day, Sunday, our minister preached to the people that it was an Omen of War, which indeed it proved to be. Being born a patriotic girl, when the Civil War broke out, I was ready for work.

In writing this, it is not overdrawn, but simply as it occurred. I have tried to make it so plain that any child can read it, also with hopes that in my declining years, it may bring me some reward financially.

MRS. ANNIE PRISCILLA ERVING.
REMINISCENCES.

The days of the 60s were stirring times. Our city was under martial law. Men would go to their work in the morning as usual, and when word would come that the enemy were advancing, a fife and drum would give the signal. Steam would be shut off in the mills and shops, the men fall in line and march away to defend the city. To these men we looked for home protection. Night and day they worked to box and remove the books and valuable documents from our State capitol. The object of the Confederates was to burn the bridges that cross the Susquehanna River and to shell the city.

My first service was among refugees, people who had to leave the valley, being driven out by the enemy, and taking with them only what they could carry. Those people were given protection and shelter in and outside of the city—in churches, the Court
House and in camp. The greater part of them had to be fed by the citizens. There was much sickness among them, and they had to be cared for, but there were plenty of willing hands to do. Our girls did noble work among them. Death came to a poor woman whose husband was to the front. Kind motherly women took charge of her five children, hoping some time to hear from the father. But still more serious times were to come. A call was issued by President Lincoln for more troops, and camps and hospitals formed. The call was answered when cattle cars, freight cars and coach- es came rolling into the city laden with young men, the cream of the country, singing, "We are coming Father Abraham, six hundred thousand strong." Here now was time for more active service. I offered my services to A. G. Curtin, our war governor, as I wanted to go to the front. He told me to hold myself in readiness and he would send for me at the proper time. One week later I received word to come to the Executive Chamber of the State Capitol, and was then, and by him, assigned to Camp Curtin,
United States Recruiting Camp and Hospital. The work and scenes of my two years' service are still photographed on my brain.

I will here relate an incident which I have often recalled with pleasure. On the occasion of a visit to my old home, after an absence of eighteen years, I met a young man who recognized me and called me by the name by which he had known me in former years. He was delighted to see me, and said how glad his wife would be to meet me. This seemed rather strange as I did not know he had a wife. "She has heard me speak of you so often," he explained, "that she knows you by that." I told him how long I was going to remain there, after which I was going to Gettysburg.

This young man, Tommy—I still call him Tommy, when a lad came to me to get a pass for him to go into camp to sell pies. I told him if his mother made good pies and did not put the shortening in the pie crust the "long" way, but in "crossways," I would
get him the pass. I suggested to him that his mother make apple fritters too.

Well, Tommy got the pass; his mother made the pies and fritters—and good ones, too—and he sold several hundred daily. I never asked him how much money he was making, but was satisfied he was doing well.

In a few days I received an invitation to call at Tommy's house on a certain evening. I said nothing to anyone as to where I was going, but started out to find the address. After a short walk I came to a fine residence, surrounded by ample grounds, beautifully lighted and decorated with Chinese lanterns, etc., and the word "Welcome" over the main entrance. I looked at the No., and said "Yes, this is the place." I rang the bell; a colored man servant opened the door, when some one said, "Come right in." There was Tommy in full evening dress. I thought he must be the head servant—in fact I hardly knew how to size up the situation. He then called his wife and after an introduction he said, "I bid you welcome to all that is here; it is mine, and I got my first start in selling pies in Camp through your help in getting me the pass."