VETERAN MISSIONARY

Rev. Hong Neok Woo, a Soldier of the Civil War.

Special correspondence to THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE.
Shanghai, China.

Your correspondent has been fortunate enough to secure some very unique war news, but not related to the present war in China. It is a bit of the echo of the American civil war. The hero is the Rev. Hoong Niok Woo, or, as he then spelled his name, Ung Hong Neok, a native of Shanghai, but a naturalized American citizen. He was a student at the boarding school of the American Church Mission, then under the charge of the first Bishop Boone, and one of the first converts. At that time Commodore Perry was in the East on his expedition, and

REV. HONG NEOK WOO.

the U. S. frigate Susquehanna came to Shanghai.

The Surgeon on board, Dr. J. S. Messersmith, was interested in young Woo, and invited him to join the naval service, and thus go to the States, which he did. This was in 1854. On that same expedition Commodore Perry made the first treaty with the Japanese, opening some of the Mikado's ports to the merchants and missionaries of the west.

Soon after the frigate returned to San Francisco, and Mr. Woo went on to the Navy Yard at Philadelphia in March, 1855. He was then honorably discharged from the frigate, and Dr. Messersmith, having become much attached to the young Chinese, the latter went to Lancaster with him. He remained in that Pennsylvania town and entered the Lancaster Examiner-Herald office to learn the art of printing.

In 1863, I believe, soon after the battle of Gettysburg, there was a call for volunteers for three months' service, and Mr. Woo promptly responded. He was fortunate or unfortunate enough not to see any actual fighting, but the company went to Maryland and remained in the neighborhood of Hagerstown on guard duty for almost the whole period. He was honorably discharged at the expiration of service.

Mr. Woo is an enthusiastic Union man, and while talking with him the other day on his war experience, and regretting in a way that he did not see any active service, he said: "But we were ready to fight, though."

"You were, anyway, on the winning side," I remarked.

"Yes," he replied, quick as a flash, and a glow of the old fire played around his eyes, "and on the right side, too."

Since his return, Mr. Woo has been with the American Church Mission, and was connected for many years with the Mission Hospital, St. Luke's, as well as having charge of a church in a flourishing village near Shanghai. He has great reputation among the Chinese for his healing powers, though he never took any regular course in a medical college. He acquired his art through many years of observation and experience.

His discharge paper from the United States army reads as follows:

"To All Whom It May Concern: Know ye, that Ung Hong Neok, a private of Captain Druckenmiller's Company I, 50th Regiment of Penn. Militia, who was enrolled on the 29th day of June, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three to serve ninety days, is hereby discharged from the service of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, this fifteenth day of August, 1863, at Lancaster, by reason of expiration of service. No objection to his being re-enlisted is known to exist.

"Said Ung Hong Neok was born in Shanghai, China, is twenty-four years of age, five feet four inches high, dark complexion, dark eyes, black hair, and, by occupation, when enrolled, a printer. Given at Lancaster, this fifteenth day of August, 1863. Signed, John H. Druckenmiller, Capt., Co. I, 50th Reg't, Pa. M.

"John C. Harvey, M. O., Pa. M."

Across the paper is written: "Paid in full by Major T. E. Franklin, P. M."

By the way, Mr. Woo desires to ask a question of your people in the States. As I said before, he is a naturalized American citizen. He had fulfilled the conditions required of aliens before naturalization, and his papers from the authorities are in proper order.

On his return to China he was duly registered at the U. S. Consulate as an American subject, and has been connected with an American mission ever since his return. Now, he was naturalized before the Exclusion Act was passed, and even before the amendments to the Constitution. The query is, Is he an American citizen? Does the recent ruling of the U. S. Supreme Court declaring that no Chinese were ever or could be naturalized according to the Constitution apply in his case? Another thing in his favor is the fact that he has served in the U. S. army. I wish some of your learned readers would enlighten him on the subject. Y.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

Two Girls on the Scout for Hospital Supplies.

BY MRS. M. A. ROBINSON, WEST SUPERIOR, WIS.

Do you remember Antietam and the bitter days that followed, when our brave soldiers lay wounded and suffering and dying?

"There was lack of woman's nursing,
There was dearth of woman's tears,"

and there was a lack, too, of medicines, of bandages and lint, and a dearth of jellies and home dainties and other things to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded.

Calls were immediately issued to our Aid Societies to forward hospital supplies as quickly as possible. The President of the local society of which I was a member at once issued a call for a special meeting, and sent out her scouts in the persons of young girls to secure beforehand the necessary articles with which to work.

Ours was a country place, where good farms and comfortable homes abounded, and we found it a delightful day's work, my friend and I, driving from house to house, carrying the news of the terrible battle to those who had not heard it (not all country folk had daily papers in those days), and asking for and receiving everywhere something to help in this hour of need.

Well do I remember a tiny house we found, standing by itself on a crossroad. As we entered three shy little children clung to their mother's dress. The mother's eyes were full of anxiety, and we saw the tears fall on the worn tablecloth she placed in our hands in response to our appeal for something to make into lint for the wounded soldiers. Our own tears dropped in sympathy—tears were very near all eyes in those sad days—and a little unspoken prayer was in our hearts for the safety of her soldier husband. It was only a few days later that we saw his name in the list of "mortally wounded." I never saw the young mother again, nor knew what became of her, but have always retained a vivid remembrance of her sad and anxious face that day. The children, if living, are now middle-aged people, and perhaps some of them remember our little visit, which was to me one of the most pathetic personal incidents of Aid Society work.

In another home we found an old lady with her chest of home-made linen. There were table-cloths woven in dainty birds-eye and snow-drop pattern, and sheets and pillow-cases, fine and soft and white as snow. Some she spun and wove with her own hands when a young girl, twisting into each thread sweet thoughts and bright hopes, and weaving into all happy dreams and fancies, wherein were no hints of wartime sorrow; some, her mother, long since dead, gave her on her wedding day; some were the work of a dear sister, and all lovingly cherished as precious mementoes of the past. "But," said she, laying aside two well-worn sheets, after giving us the history of each, and there was a pathetic little catch in her voice as she said it, "There is nothing too good to give for the comfort of our soldiers."

She had two grandsons in the army. And next day that old linen, that would now be worth almost its weight in gold to relic lovers, was torn into bandages or scraped into lint; and some poor wounded lad was made more comfortable, let us hope, by its dainty softness.

In another home the busy housewife, when appealed to, exclaimed, "O, the poor boys; how I wish they had some nice jelly this hot day. I will go at once and make some to send them," and all the rest of that September day she spent gathering fruit and making and canning jelly, that our boys, parched with fever in Southern hospitals, might have a taste of the refreshing dainty.

We found sympathy and kindness everywhere. "Were there no copperhead families in our town?" you ask. There may have been; but there were tender mother-hearts there, too, which ached for the suffering boys. Said one woman, "I hate this old Lincoln war, but I feel sorry for the poor, deluded boys enticed from their homes to fight for they know not what. Yes, I will send something over to the Society tomorrow, or, maybe, come myself, if there is anything I can do;" and, sure enough, she was there with an armful of gifts, including a 25-cent "shin-plaster," working away as busily as anybody. She wore a grim little frown at first, which gradually melted away, as the talk around her drifted from the needs and sufferings of the men in the field to the commonplace incidents of home life and back again, not once touching upon the political animosities that were at the bottom of it all, just keeping in view our love for the dear old flag and our sympathy for its defenders. And as long as there was need of such work she was an earnest helper, and by her side was often seen her sweet young daughter, whose wistful eyes told the tale of a heart full of anxiety for a certain loyal boy in blue.

From my own home I carried a large bundle of "supplies," and I noticed, a few days later, that, in place of the pretty white table linen we had always been accustomed to, we were using a tablecloth made of unbleached cotton, edged with coarse cotton fringe. We all refrained from commenting upon it, for we saw a little troubled look creeping between the dear mother's eyes, if she caught us even looking at it too closely. There was one of "our own" somewhere in the far Southland, and what to us were these minor discomforts when we thought of that? But, O, how those old cotton tablecloths did last. We children thought they never would wear out.

Some laughable as well as pathetic incidents occurred that day. In one farmhouse we found the family at dinner, and by the side of the oldest daughter, in all the glory and glitter of a bran new uniform, was seated a recruiting officer. A recruiting officer in a home where there were no boys to recruit! His presence quite overawed us. How could we talk of our poor, suffering soldier boys before such a glittering specimen of the military gentleman? But if we were embarrassed, he was not, and at once came to the rescue with such a burst of eloquence that we received twice as many gifts as we had hoped for, he himself adding a generous sum of money.

A few days later we were all startled by hearing that Nellie, the pretty oldest daughter, referred to, had married the recruiting officer.

A TALK WITH MR. EVANS.

The Commissioner Discusses Various Matters of Interest to Pensioners.

The Operation of the Remarried Widows' Bill—The Condition of the Work of the Office—Gossip of the Bureau.

A representative of The National Tribune called upon Commissioner Evans two days ago to ask him some questions relating to the general progress of the work in the Department, as will appear below:

"Are there a large number of claims filed under the act restoring pensions to remarried widows?" was asked.

The Commissioner replied: "There are less than you would suppose. I had nothing to do with the passage of the act, but we got up the instructions under it very carefully, and I think I have construed it as liberally as possible. The fact is, however, that there are so many restrictions in it and so many conditions in its language, that the number of applicants is limited. In fact, we have only had, up to this time, 783 applications filed. Of course, others have come in, but when we receive a case that is barred by some of the conditions of the law we return it at once, so that they may not be anxious about it and uncertain as to the result for any length of time. Neither of the recent widows' acts have produced the number of cases that were expected. The act of last year raising the limit of widows' income to $250 did not bring in nearly so many as those in Congress thought it would. I expected myself that it would be disappointing in that respect, because we have always administered the widows' cases very liberally indeed."

"How are you coming out this year with your appropriation?" was asked.

"I cannot tell exactly," replied the Commissioner. "There may not be much left; there may possibly be a deficit, although I think not; I think we will just about use it up."

"Do you keep close watch of the appropriation?" was asked.

The Commissioner replied: "We go right ahead with our work, adjudicating claims according to law, without any reference whatever to the appropriation. I make an estimate a year in advance as to what it will be, but of course I cannot tell how it will come out. I could not tell how many cases there would be under the Spanish War, for example, nor what the operations in the Philippines might result in. Of course, no one can tell, especially when hostilities are actually in progress at the time the estimate is made. An appropriation is only a letter of credit. If the results of the year's work require more money than is appropriated, there is a deficit; if less, the money is simply never drawn from the Treasury. With the exception of myself and two or three other people, of the Finance Division, I do not think an employee in the office ever thinks of the appropriation or knows anything about it. In fact, it is not their business to know. It is their business to handle the evidence and prepare the cases; whether the grand total of the pension roll will be more or less never occurs to them, and does not influence them. With the exception of the year 1897 I have never paid any attention to the appropriation bill. That year I saw I was running very close, and I did not want a deficit for particular reasons, so while I did not stop the work, nor stop allowances, the cases were simply held up in the Mail Division for two or three weeks at the end of the fiscal year until July 1, when our new appropriation was available. Aside from this instance I never have paid any attention to the question whether I would have too much money or too little in the appropriation bill. Neither has the Secretary or the President ever mentioned the subject to me."

"How will this year's allowances compare with last year's?" was asked.

"I think we will run ahead. I believe we will go considerably over the 100,000 mark. We have already issued over 83,000 certificates for the first 10 months of the fiscal year, nearly 36,000 of which are originals. In most of the divisions, as you will see by the reports of the Chiefs, the work is practically up to date."

"The Commissioner exhibited the reports to which he alluded, which showed the condition of work in the several divisions. In the Middle Division, Southern Division, and some others, the work was either marked "current" or "one month" behind to "two and one-half months" behind. In one division, in case of widows, the work was "nine months" behind, and the Commissioner explained that he had last week transferred 10 clerks from the division where the work was cleared up, to the division in question, in order to bring it up also. It may be explained in passing that the divisions are geographically arranged, being divided into Eastern, Western, Southern, etc., the various sections including the States in the part of the Union thus designated.

It having been stated that some attorneys maintain that the section of the act restoring pension to remarried widows, which prohibited any payment of fee to an agent or attorney, would be held to mean simply that the Government would not pay the attorney's fee by draft as in other cases, taking the amount from the accrued pension of the claimant does not prevent a private contract between the claimant and her agent, the Commissioner was asked his views on this subject.

"The matter has not been brought to my attention,' replied the Commissioner; "but should it be brought up, I think I should rule against it; then, of course, it would be appealed to the Interior Department and final ruling would be secured."

An allusion was made to the report current some time ago, to the effect that the Commissioner might be made Minister to Japan. Mr. Evans was very frank about the matter, and explained that there was nothing in the rumor. His daughters had gone on a visit to Japan with some friends, and the report had resulted from this circumstance.

By the way, in this connection, it may be stated on excellent authority that Col. Buck, the present Minister to Japan, now at home and in ill health, will be reappointed Minister to the Island Empire.

While Mr. Evans did not say so, the impression is current in the Pension Bureau that the present Commissioner of Pensions will retain his position, at least until the end of the current fiscal year, and make his report covering that period.

He Gave Andrew Carnegie His Start.

James D. Reid, the veteran telegrapher who had the distinction of giving Andrew Carnegie his first job as a messenger boy, is still living. In "Success," Mr. Reid recalls the incident which occurred 50 years ago, in the Atlantic and Ohio Telegraph office in Pittsburg, as follows:

"He was so determined that I became interested in him at once. He seemed to have determination written on his face. His eagerness to work and learn were very noticeable. Before he had been with me a month, he asked to be taught telegraphy. When I consented, he spent all his spare time in practice, transmitting and receiving by sound, and not by tape. He was the third operator in the United States to read the Morse signals by sound."

This, in Mr. Carnegie's mind, was his best move. After long successful years, Mr. Carnegie wrote of this change:

"My entrance into the telegraph office was a transition from darkness to light, from firing a small engine in a dirty cellar, to a clean office there were books and papers. That was paradise to me, and I bless the stars that sent me to be a messenger in a telegraph office."

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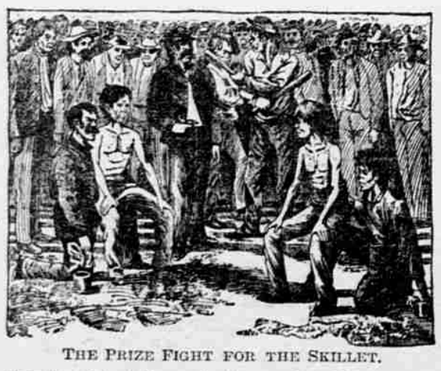

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