

**RECOLLECTIONS OF THE REBEL
INVASION: AND ONE
WOMAN'S EXPERIENCE DURING
THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG**

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Recollections of the Rebel Invasion: And One Woman's Experience During the Battle of
Gettysburg by Fannie J. Buehler

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—OF THE—
REBEL INVASION
—AND—
ONE WOMAN'S EXPERIENCE
—DURING THE—
BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG.

BY FANNIE J. BUEHLER.

(WRITTEN IN ORDER OF HER CHILDREN.)

1896.

Thirty-three years have passed since the events, which I shall now relate, took place. Most of the actors in our late Civil War have passed into the "Shadowy Land." A few more years and not one of all the "great hosts" who then went up to battle; not one of "all the many" who participated in the events which I am about to relate, will be living to tell the story.

We all have the experiences of our life time. I had mine before, during and after the great battle which was fought on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of July, 1863, and of these I am now going to write.

I do not do this for self gratification, but to please my children, my grand-children, possibly my great-grand-children, and many friends whom I dearly love. We all know, as the years go by, the story of this great battle, so often told in our days, will grow in interest, to those who may come after us, and that my experience may not die with me, I will endeavor to tell what I know, what I saw, and of the little help I was enabled to give to the wounded and dying in that momentous struggle.

ONE WOMAN'S EXPERIENCE.

At the time of the Battle of Gettysburg, Mr. Buehler and I were living on Baltimore street almost opposite the Court house, which was then a new building, of which we were all very proud, for we had anxiously awaited its coming. I mention this fact because it figured conspicuously before, during, and after the battle. My husband by profession was a lawyer; he also edited a Republican paper, was a prominent politician, was well known throughout the town, county and state as a staunch Republican, "a Leader among the Leaders." Business was at a stand still; everything was demoralized, times were depressed, and as we had a family of six children to provide for, my husband very gladly accepted the offer of Postmaster of our little town, and filled that office at the time of the memorable battle, although he was not present during the conflict. Postmasters, especially prominent "black Republicans," were marked men by the Confederates, and wherever they could be seized, were hurried to Libby and other prisons where they soon died, or suffered untold miseries worse than death. That my dear husband might not fall into the hands of the Rebels, early in June I persuaded him, much against his will, to prepare for flight should the enemy make an invasion into Pennsylvania, as they so often threatened to do. I promised to do the best I could, and if I could but be assured of his safety, I knew the Lord would take care of us. The Rebels came--Gens. Early and Gordon in command. My husband fled with the mails, so he was not in Gettysburg during the fight in that memorable June and July, 1863. I am not writing a history of War, nor of the Battle; I am only telling what I saw, what I did, what I know about it, for those who in future years may read or listen to the story, sitting around the fireside, as I, when a child, loved to sit and listen to the story of the Revolutionary War, as it fell from my grandfather's lips, who served in that war.

It is a sad story. Had I been asked on that first day of June whether I would be equal to all the experiences of that eventful month I should have answered in the negative. Having been able through Divine help, to pass through all that I shall relate in this simple story, I can now say, I would not part with my experience for anything the world can offer. I am proud that I was able to do and to suffer, even so little, during this fearful struggle, "that this Nation," in the words of our beloved Lincoln, "might have a new birth, that the Government of the people, for the people, by the people, shall not perish from the earth."

It was in the early month of June, 1863. How well do I remember the year and the month. I was then in my thirty-seventh year. I am now in my seventy-first; but in looking back it seems but as yesterday, so well do I recall the coming and the going of "the Rebels" whom we had so long expected. All through May and June, there were daily, almost hourly reports of raids into Penn'a, and once or twice some Cavalry came as far as Cashtown and then retreated. At first we were very much frightened by the thought of Rebel soldiers invading our town, taking possession of our new Court house and other buildings, and doing all kinds of bad things, such as we read of in the papers. As day by day passed, and they did not come, we lost faith in their coming, and it grew to be an old story. We tried to make ourselves believe they would never come, and we made merry over the reports which continued to be circulated until they really came. When we saw them, we believed.

My only sister who lived in Elizabeth, N. J., had two daughters about the same age as my two eldest girls. These children often exchanged visits; my daughters going to the city one summer, and sister's coming to the country the next. This was the summer for sister's children to come to the country, and all arrangement had been made early in the season for their coming, but as the summer drew near so many reports of Rebel invasions into the Northern states were afloat, my sister wrote "she thought the children had better postpone their visit," nevertheless, two of them came early in June.

My dear mother had been with us during the year on a visit. For a woman, she was a great politician, a red-hot Republican, and loyal to "her country and its flag to her heart's core"—in-

deed had she been a man, she would have been among the very first in the attempt to put down the Rebellion. But being a woman, she could only make known her sentiments of loyalty to the Stars and Stripes, by words which were not always wisely chosen. In writing thus of my dear mother, I mean no disrespect. She was a good Christian woman, one who represented a large class, both in the North and in the South—women of intense patriotism—in whom love of country "was bred in the bone"—women who fairly boiled over when they saw the flag trampled in the dust or torn in shreds—women who could not help saying bitter things of a father, brother, or a son, if either had fired a shot at the dear old flag wherever it floated. A woman of such intense feeling against those whom she felt were our country's enemies, ought not be brought in contact with them, unless by necessity. So Sister insisted upon our Mother's going to Elizabeth, to remain with her, taking with her three children of mine and her two, who had been with us. For, as the days went by, frightful rumors were afloat, many citizens were leaving the town, taking with them all their treasures. The banks sent away their money, stores were closed, merchandise was shipped away, individuals chartered cars in which were packed household goods and valuables of all kinds, and the cars sent to some distant part of the North for safety.

Mr. Buehler was one among the many who desired to save as much of our household accumulations as possible, so we had a car *somewhere*, with our possessions, from June until November. One day, to our joyful surprise, the car turned up with our table linen, our bedding, sheets, blankets pillow cases, towels, and many other articles, with our best clothes, all of which we could not have afforded to replace for a long time afterward. A year after the battle, muslin sold for seventy-five cents a yard, and a friend of mine paid a fabulous price for a flannel skirt. All dry goods were high, and luxuries were not to be thought of at that time, and the people in the South were reduced to narrower straits than were we of the North.

I sometimes meet with friends in the South and compare notes. Some whom I meet have been reconstructed and some have not, and it is amusing (in our day) to compare our different experiences, and to hear our friends' comments on the war. We must admit that while we in the North had hard times

and sad experiences, their lot was infinitely harder. Their's was a hopeless cause, although they had not yet realized it, for the North was in the right and had plenty of men and money to back it up. I have great admiration and sympathy for our Sisters of the South, I mean those who have accepted the inevitable, who have submitted to the general government, who are trying to do the best they can, with the little means left them, and who have little or no bitterness in their hearts. I know there are just such noble women today in the South, for I have met them. It is also true there are still many "unreconstructed" men and women in the Southern States—more women than men—and the women are more bitter than the men. But when we hear of what these people, who were Southern born, really suffered, endured, and were deprived of; when we realize what the giving up of home, possessions, of everything near and dear to them, meant to them, I wonder they can feel and talk as well as they do. But I will resume my story.

It was not easy for my mother to make up her mind to leave Gettysburg and go to Elizabeth with the children, and to leave me behind with the eldest and the youngest, but she finally went.

Late in the evening of June 20th, (I think it was on Saturday night,) the sky in the direction of Emmitsburg, ten miles away, was suddenly illuminated, as by a tremendous conflagration. People rushed out of their houses and the whole town was panic stricken. Very soon the cry was raised "the Rebels," "the Rebels have crossed the line and are burning Emmitsburg and are marching towards Gettysburg." The rumor was false, as we found out afterward. There was a large fire in the direction of Emmitsburg, with which the Rebels had nothing to do, for they had not as yet, in any large body, crossed Mason and Dixon's line. However we all believed the story, we were in a condition to believe anything, either good or bad, and the whole town was in the streets all night long discussing the probabilities and possibilities. Soon after midnight I learned that many of our citizens were preparing to leave their homes on the early morning train, and after some difficulty I persuaded my mother to go and take three of my children and two of sisters' who were with me, to Elizabeth, N. J., and leave me with my eldest and youngest child to take care of our home. Mr. Buehler and his assistant postmaster had already secreted themselves outside of