2012-05-15

Memoir: Dr. D. Willard Bliss

Sheldon, Elivra Bliss

http://hdl.handle.net/10456/27786

The copyright owner of this item is unknown. It is the responsibility of the researcher to identify and satisfy the holders of all copyrights.

All materials in the Allegheny College DSpace Repository are subject to college policies and Title 17 of the U.S. Code.
Memoir of Dr. D. Willard Bliss.

When the first gun was fired upon Sumpter Dr. D.W. Bliss, with his younger brother, the late Dr. Zenas Bliss, enlisted at Grand Rapids, Michigan, as surgeon and assistant surgeon in the Third Infantry Regiment for 3 months; and performed their baptismal work at the 1st Battle of Bull Run, battle-field, as many a brave veteran-still living-will remember and testify thereto.

Dr. D. Willard Bliss made Brigade Surgeon from that field bloody field, served in "Fighting Phil. Kearney's Division as staff surgeon. At the battle of Chantilla poor Kearney begged for Dr. Bliss (who was on another part of the field on duty), as in his own words with his last breath he said, "Boys, if I had Dr. Bliss here he could save me." Such was the faith of the brave "One armed General."

In 1862, President Lincoln called Dr. Bliss to Washington to aid in organizing a more perfect system of General Hospitals in and about the city; the patriot President personally supervising the same, and every third day in this constructive period all improvements and ingenious contrivances, or recommendations of such, for the relief of wounded soldiers received their most united and closest attention. Of these many appliances that Dr. Bliss turned his attention to none were patented-there was no time for thought of self-one was the water-bed, another the machine for body-lifting or rack, by which the shattered body, torn by shot and shell, could be raised evenly, slowly, and so far as possible painlessly, above, and his bed cleansed beneath him e'er the patient realized the condition. Never can one forget who saw that plain, honest, noble face, in a broad laugh when the President was at Armory Square hospital to witness the trial of the "harness" machine ordered and paid for from his own capacious pocket as he said "because I have faith that Dr. Bliss knows what he is talking about when he says this can be done". A great bond of sympathy laid between Abraham Lincoln and Dr. Bliss-the patriotism and humanity to man-and they thoroughly understood each other. No wonder, then, that the only surviving son of the Martyr President rallied to his father's friend in time of need; when the Guiteau bullet sought the head and heart of the Nation, it was natural that Secretary-Harrison-Robert Lincoln should fly to this friend in whom he had been taught from boyhood to have confidence. The effects of that bullet went beyond the poor body it sought and sapped the life of the faithful physician, who never left his distinguished patient but one night during the days of ceaseless watching, and upon return the next day, the stricken President said "I have missed you so much Bliss, don't leave me again, will you?"

"No", said the doctor, "I'll stand by you."

"Yes", said Garfield, "poor doctor, you look so weary. It will be but a little longer, stay by me to the end."

So he did, and to the sacrifice of his own life at last.

Elvira Bliss Sheldon.
Quick out of the smithy the minister fled,
As if a big bombshells had burst near his head;
And as he continued to haste on his way,
He was too much excited to sing or to pray;
But he thought now that some were elected by grace,
As heirs of the kingdom made sure of their place,
While others were doomed to the pains of hell-fire,
And if e'er there was one such, 'twas Peter McGuire.

That night when the storm-king was riding on high,
And the red shafts of the lightning gleamed bright through the sky,
The church of the village, the "Temple of God,"
Was struck for the want of a good lightning-rod;