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It was a gray morning in June. Ominous clouds hung low. Heaven's artillery was in action and there were heavy peals of thunder and vivid flashes of lightning but the little gray man in gray jacket, he who for four long years had worn the gray, and who had helped heal the wounds of war, talked on undisturbed. The next day he remembered, was the anniversary of the battle of Boonville, in which he participated, and in the course of the conversation he digressed to tell of this, but let us begin at the beginning.

The pleasant mission which took us to Otterville was to see Dr. R.E. Howlett, one of Cooper county's eldest and most beloved citizens, one whose life has covered almost ninety years. During these nine decades the forces that have made for the greatest changes in rural life have come into being. Especially is this true of means and methods of transportation and communication.

It so happened that in going to see Dr. Howlett we were a passenger on the first motor driven coach installed by the Missouri-Pacific as part of its increased service between Jefferson City and Sedalia. Furthermore, by a strange coincidence this coach, without warning, came to a stop immediately in front of the farm on which Dr. Howlett makes his home with his son, R.E. Howlett, just east of Otterville. So by a slight accident to the car we were accommodated, and had but a short distance to walk, being enabled to reach the Howlett home in advance of the approaching storm.

As we neared the house, which from a slight elevation overlooks the Southern Highway and the Missouri-Pacific Railroad, modern systems of transportation, we saw, seated on the wide, inviting porch, the venerable doctor. As we drew near he recognized us and came forward to meet us with outstretched hand and with a welcome typical of his kind. It was good to see him, to look into his kindly eyes, which, despite his age, are still bright and clear.

"Yes, I was born in Chesterfield county, Virginia, within seven miles of Richmond, March 19, 1836," said Dr. Howlett in response to our inquiry as to his age and birthplace. Then he went on to tell us how his mother had died when he was six years old, the father moving to Missouri a year later. There were trails and bridle paths in those days, but in this western country there were no modern highways such as we now know. The doctor commented upon the changes, and as he did so, automobiles passed in front of

the farm, steam and gasoline propelled trains were conveying passengers over the railroad, and in a far field a tractor was drawing a binder through the wheat.

"Yes, I enjoy the changes," remarked Dr. Howlett. "You have no idea how many automobiles pass along that road." Then he told of how, on the day of the big barbecue at Eastwood, Dr. A.W. Nelson's farm, he had in two hours, from 8:30 to 10:30, counted 615 cars.

When the elder Howlett came to Missouri he camped for a year where old Walnut Grove church now stands, not far from the present town of Otterville, and soon permanently located in the same neighborhood.

"The first school I attended," said Dr. Howlett, "was taught by James A. Reed, no, not our present Senator. I was eight years old when I started to school. I owe much of my early education to my step-mother, who was a college graduate and a school teacher. After a few terms in subscription schools, or neighborhood schools, I boarded at Dr. George C. Hart's and went to school to James B. Harris, who married a Cockrell. I then went to Professor Mode, a Presbyterian preacher. Soon I turned teacher. I got up a subscription school and taught for three months and at the end of that time the board employed me for five months at \$35 a month. The secretary of the board was Uncle Dryden Stark. He paid me in full at the end of three weeks, remarking that he knew I would teach the school if I lived, and added that he had no place to keep the money and didn't want to be bothered with it."

"In 1857, after school was out, I took a horseback trip, a sort of wild goose chase, through Texas. I came home almost sick, and started studying medicine in the office of Dr. George C. Hart. I stayed there until the fall of 1859. In October I entered the St. Louis Medical College, of which Charles A. Pope was dean. I graduated in the spring of '61, being one of forty graduates. My next move was to go to Cole Camp and pick out a location, where I planned to practice medicine. I had made arrangements to get all my medicine from Dr. Robert Miller, formerly of Tipton but then of Sedalia." Here the doctor shifted in his chair. A changed expression came over his face and there was added fire in his voice.

"But I didn't practice medicine in Cole Camp. After arranging for an office I didn't even go back. About that time (General) Lyons had captured Camp Jackson in St. Louis, so I just quit everything and volun-

teered in the army as a private in the company of Captain Wallace Williams, a merchant of Tipton."

"As I said a minute ago, I was at the Battle of Boonville. I fired one shot and was ordered to fall back. Our company went across the river and on into Lexington. At this time we were in the Missouri state service."

Just here Dr. Howlett paused to suggest that in his opinion, if the battle of Boonville had been differently managed the result would have been very different. He recalled having later met Marmaduke in Mississippi. "What state are you from?" inquired the intrepid Marmaduke. "Missouri," was the answer, "and I was in the Battle of Boonville."

"Well, don't say anything about it," was Marmaduke's only comment.

Early in his military experience Dr. Howlett found that he had had enough infantry. The company, then unattached, voted on the question whether to disband as squads and go to Versailles and get horses. "Right there I got busy 'lectioneering,'" said the Doctor, who, later upon many occasions in his more active life played a big part in politics, "and we carried our cause."

"We went to Versailles and got horses," he continued. "From that time on, as mounted infantry, we rode horseback but fought on foot. We met at Versailles on July 3, 1861. On the 4th we got into the swamps of the Osage, and on the 5th, the day of the Carthage fight, we were just in time to get into the rear of Seigle. We were now attached to Kelley's regiment. After the Battle of Carthage, Price's whole army went out on Coon Skin Prairie. Two days later I was detailed as one of the pickets to go out seven miles on horseback."

"About this time there came an accident which shaped my entire future course so far as the army was concerned. A man from Miller county, I do not now recall his name, was accidentally shot by the fire leader. His lower chin was practically shot away. I heard the report of the gun and, glancing up, saw what had happened. Then my medical training told me what to do. I jerked off my big gloves, grasped the arteries of the man who was about to bleed to death, and by torsion prevented further loss of blood. That was the beginning of my surgical career."

"The commanding officer, on learning what I had done, told me from that time on when I went into battle I was to go as a surgeon. I might add that in November of the same year the man from Miller county came to me and remarked that I had

saved his life. True, he was a 'parrot bill' sort of a fellow, minus a lower chin, and I helped him get a discharge."

Asked about the bloodiest battle he had ever witnessed, Dr. Howlett answered that it was Wilson's Creek. "There," said he, "I saw more wounded and dead men on the field of battle than I ever witnessed anywhere else. The slaughter was awful, and the lack of ambulance appalling. At a point in front of McBride's division, made up largely of Ozark hunters who were accustomed to using rifles in hunting game, I could have walked from here to the front road (indicating a distance of some 200 yards) without ever touching the ground. After this terrible battle sink holes were filled with human bodies, which were then covered with rock and earth."

"On the day referred to, August 10," continued Dr. Howlett, "I was twice taken prisoner, but released because of my surgeon's badge. I worked until midnight dressing wounds. At that time a provost marshal came with fifty Federal wounded, and asked me if I would help care for them. I answered that I would do the very best I could for the unfortunate wounded among the enemy. Of the fifty Federals brought in, and who had been before the withering fire of McBride's men, not one was shot below the belt, while twenty-five had been shot in their faces."

Just here we interrupted to ask Dr. Howlett as to the surgical treatment practiced on the battle fields of that time. "Our principle reliance in the way of an antiseptic," said he, "was in the use of cold water. We never had a case of hospital gangrene. We simply kept clear, cold water, with frequent changes of constant dripping, on the wounds."

At Springfield, Dr. Howlett, whose work had attracted the attention of superior officers, was named an assistant surgeon by Dr. Dorris, chief surgeon of General Monroe Parson's division. He continued in this position until January, 1862, at which time he resigned and went in as a private in the regular Confederate service. He was appointed assistant surgeon by Colonel "Bob" McCullough ("Black Head Bob") of Cooper county. Dr. Fountain Derrit of Saline county was senior surgeon.

In the battles which followed, Dr. Howlett made rounds of the sick, and was soon indispensable. At Middleburg, Tennessee, where the fighting was hot, he was notably conspicuous. "At one time I slapped spurs to my horse, cleared a fence six rails

high, and was soon dressing wounds as rapidly as I could," said Dr. Howlett. "Ambulances were greatly needed. I frankly told General Armstrong so. In his characteristic rough fashion he blurted out, 'What the h— are you telling me this for? You'd better obey orders and report to the proper officer,' was my answer."

"The next day while we were in camp, an orderly came, telling me to report to General Armstrong's headquarters. I wondered if I was to get another cussing. I went to Colonel McCullough, who was always to be relied upon, and asked him to go with me. We went, and to my astonishment, General Armstrong, instead of lambasting me, said: 'I want to promote you to full surgeon and put you in charge of the Second Arkansas regiment.' I answered saying: 'These boys that I am with are my pals and don't want to leave them.' I was backed by Colonel McCullough, who, in emphatic fashion blurted out, 'By G— I can't give the boy up,' referring to me."

"I automatically became regimental surgeon of the Second Missouri. I might add that as assistant surgeon I bore a commission from Jeff Davis. At the end of the war I ranked as a first lieutenant. About May 15, 1865, I went to Columbus, Mississippi, and was there paroled."

"My first practice as a civilian was at Bahalia, Mississippi, where I was located for three months, until I got enough money to bring me home. And let me tell you that home means something to a man who has been on the battle front for four years. I came right here to Otterville. Captain Zollinger, a man as true as steel had been writing to me and urging me to come, but the truth is I didn't need any urging. All I needed was the money necessary to make the return trip."

Through a strange happening Dr. Howlett's first patient after he located at Otterville for practice was a member of the Federal Home Guard. But the war was over, and the man who had worn the gray, and whose battle flag had been furled, bore no hatred in his heart which has ever loved the "lost cause."

Dr. Howlett continued in active practice until December, 1901, when he went to Higinville as physician for the Confederate Home. He remained there until July 1, 1903, when he returned to Otterville. Since that time he has not been in active practice, but has been frequently called in consultation.

When Dr. Howlett entered upon the practice of medicine,

conditions differed greatly from those of today. There were no automobiles or telephones and no hard surfaced roads. In case of an urgent call, a man on horseback came as fast as he could, perhaps a distance of many miles, to get a doctor, and the doctor in turn made as rapid progress as possible back to the home of the patient. At best, many hours frequently intervened. A good constitution on the part of the physician, and a good horse were important factors.

"Yes I have owned a lot of good horses," remarked Dr. Howlett.

"There was Old Joe, a Denmark, and a fox trotter and running walker that was hard to beat. Without pressure from the whip or spur, he would travel ten miles an hour. I used Old Joe in my practice for seventeen years, and in this time rode him 83,000 miles. Once I bought a two-wheeled cart and rode in it two or three times, but soon went back to the saddle." Those who knew Dr. Howlett in his younger days recall that he was a rider of unusual ability. Somewhat short and stocky, he was yet straight as an arrow, and was at home in the saddle.

"I covered a rather wide territory for those times," said Dr. Howlett, "going six or seven miles the other side of Florence in Morgan county to the south and to Pilot Grove on the north. I always made it a practice to answer every call that I could."

"Yes, I have had some narrow escapes for my life. Once, just after I had bought a new horse, I undertook to swim it across a swollen stream. That horse didn't know a thing about swimming. Instead, it reared up, fell back, and left me in the middle of the stream. I swam until the current caught me and took me to some drift, where I grabbed a log. But I was pretty well played out, and the wonder is that I didn't go down for good. I had a big gray shawl over my shoulders, and this was like a millstone about my neck. I was able to reach up and jerk out the safety pin and get rid of the shawl."

In explaining that he had probably never collected more than twenty-five percent of his fees, Dr. Howlett called attention to a large charity practice that has been his. "I've got a lot out of life," said he, "and I have always found that it pays to help folks."

