

***JOHN AZOR  
KELLOGG***



***CAPTURE  
AND ESCAPE***

**John Azor Kellogg**

# **Capture and Escape**

**A Narrative of Army and Prison Life**

EAN 8596547213352

DigiCat, 2022

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# **PREFACE**

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John Azor Kellogg, author of the Commission's Original Narrative No. 2, was born on the 16th of March, 1828, at Bethany, in Wayne County, Pennsylvania, the son of Nathan and Sarah (Quidor) Kellogg. Nathan's father was an American soldier in the Revolutionary War; he himself a tavern-keeper, stage proprietor, and general contractor. The Kelloggs moved to Wisconsin Territory about 1840, settling at Prairie du Chien.

John's early youth was spent in farm work, his education being confined to three winters at a private school. When eighteen years of age, he began reading law; at first taking a correspondence course with George W. Woodward, later chief justice of Pennsylvania, but completing his studies with S. S. Wilkinson of Prairie du Sac. Mr. Kellogg was one of the founders of the Republican Party, being a member of the Madison convention of September 5, 1855.

Admitted to the bar in 1857, in his twenty-ninth year, he opened an office at Mauston. In November, 1860, he was elected district attorney of Juneau County, but resigned in April, 1861, to enlist in the Union Army. His earliest military experience was as First Lieutenant of the Lemonweir Minute Men, an organization that became Company K of the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry—his commission being dated May 3. The several companies composing this regiment were mustered into Federal service at Camp Randall, in Madison, on the 16th of July, and twelve days later left for the front. On December 18 following, Lieutenant Kellogg

was promoted to be Captain of Company I. He served actively with his company until January, 1863; but was then appointed adjutant-general of the famous Iron Brigade (of which the Sixth Wisconsin was a member), holding that position until the following January, when he returned to duty with his regiment.

Captain Kellogg participated in the battles of Gainesville, Second Bull Run, South Mountain, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Rappahannock Station, Mine Run, and Gettysburg. It was during the great Fight in the Wilderness, while the Iron Brigade was of the Army of the Potomac, that our author was captured (May 5, 1864) by Confederates, while he was doing skirmish duty on special detail. Imprisoned successively at Lynchburg and Danville (Virginia), Macon (Georgia), and Charleston (South Carolina), he escaped on October 5 by jumping from a rapidly-moving railroad train while he and his fellow prisoners were being transported to Columbia.

The story of his depressing experiences in Confederate prisons, and of his curious adventures while a fugitive after the escape, is told in the present volume. A man of acute intellect, resourceful, and courageous in an unusual degree, Captain Kellogg's narrative is a document of great human interest. His literary style is as vivid as his experiences were thrilling, and the modest tale is certain to hold the attention of the most jaded reader of war-time reminiscences. The Commission considers itself fortunate in being able to include in this series so admirable a paper.

While Captain Kellogg was absent in captivity, or before his safe return to the Union lines at Calhoun, Georgia

(October 26), he was twice promoted—September 1, to be Major of his regiment; October 19, to be its Lieutenant-Colonel. Soon after assuming the last-named office (November), he was made Colonel of the regiment. Being assigned to the command of the Iron Brigade in February, 1865, he led that redoubtable organization in the battles of Hatcher's Run, Boydon Plank Road, Gravel Run, Five Forks, High Bridge, and Appomattox. On the 9th of April he was deservedly brevetted brigadier-general, "for highly meritorious service during the campaign terminating with the surrender of the insurgent army under General Robert E. Lee," and on July 14 following was mustered out.

Being appointed United States Pension Agent at La Crosse, General Kellogg removed to that city in the spring of 1866, remaining there until July, 1875, having resigned his position in April of that year. He now settled in Wausau, successfully resuming the practice of his profession, and in 1879-80 represented his district in the State Senate. His death occurred at Wausau, February 10, 1883, in the fifty-fifth year of his age. Married on October 5, 1852, to Miss Adelaide Worthington of Prairie du Sac, he left three children of the five born unto them.

General Kellogg published a narrative of the adventures herein related, in a series of articles in the *La Crosse Leader*, between September 25, 1869, and January 15, 1870. In its present amplified and improved form, the story appears, from internal evidence, to have been written in 1882, a year before his death. We are indebted for our manuscript copy to his widow, now living in Faribault, Minnesota. The portrait of the author, given as our frontispiece, is from a

photograph taken in Madison while he was Colonel of his regiment—probably quite soon after his return from captivity.

The purpose of the Commission is merely to select and publish such material bearing upon Wisconsin's part in the War of Secession as, from considerations of rarity or of general excellence, it is deemed desirable to disseminate. Opinions or errors of fact on the part of the respective authors have not been modified or corrected by the Commission—save as members may choose to append thereto individually-signed foot-notes. For all statements, of whatever character, the author alone is responsible, whether the publication be in the form of Original Narratives or of Reprints.

The Commission is indebted to Miss Annie A. Nunns, of the Wisconsin Historical Library staff, for supervising the reading of the proof.

R. G. T.

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## **The Iron Brigade in Camp**

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On the morning of the third of May, 1864, the Army of the Potomac confronted the Confederates on the banks of the Rapidan.

The consolidated First and Fifth Army Corps was commanded by Major-General George G. Warren.[1] To this corps was attached that part of the Army of the Potomac known as the Iron Brigade, then under the command of General Lysander Cutler, one of the ablest of our volunteer generals. To this brigade was attached the Sixth Wisconsin, commanded by Colonel (afterwards General) Edward S. Bragg. I commanded Company I in this regiment.[2]

Fearing a repetition of the long, cold winter of 1863-64, the army, under the immediate supervision of that thorough soldier, General George G. Meade, had been re-organized, completely equipped, and fitted for the stern duties of the next campaign.

The hills around Culpeper were dotted with the white tents and rude yet more comfortable cabins of the patriot soldiers. All along the banks of the Rapidan, at regular intervals, curled the smoke of the picket fires. Beyond them trod the weary sentinels, whose watchful eyes and stalwart arms had for twenty-four hours guarded their comrades in camp from surprise and consequent disaster. But now the allotted time for relief had come, and they stole an occasional impatient glance toward the long blue column winding its way along the turnpike toward the reserve post, knowing that it was the relief guard that was to take their place in the tedious, irksome, and sometimes dangerous outpost duty.

In camp, here and there, might have been seen a regiment executing the beautiful evolutions of battalion drill, and perhaps a camp guard being mounted, the air meanwhile resounding with the martial music so inspiring to the soldier. To the civilian all would have seemed confusion; but to the soldier the scene simply represented an army at rest; his eye could only see the monotonous details of camp life, the every-day life of the soldier. Such had been the daily routine through weary months of waiting, until all were eagerly anticipating the order to move.

As the sun disappeared that night, behind the western hills, its last beams shone upon an army whose banners floated from every hillside and valley as far as the eye could reach; and as the camp fires came out in the deepening twilight, they glimmered and sparkled like the lights of some great city.

The camp guards paced their well-trodden beats. The confused murmur of thousands of voices mingled together, conversing of home and friends; occasionally a merry laugh would arise, as some wag related a droll story, or, more frequently, perpetrated a practical joke upon a comrade, until "taps" sounded, and the lights went out as if by magic. Gradually all sounds died away, and the army was at rest. Dreams of wife, children, and home blessed the sleeping hours of the patient, waiting soldier, cheating him into a few minutes of bliss.

## **Footnote**

[1] Although General Warren never did and probably never will be able to arouse an army corps, in the middle of the night, from the deep sleep that follows the exhaustion of a battle, build a bridge thirty feet long over a brawling

stream swollen by a twelve hours' rain, and march five miles over muddy roads, in an hour from the time he receives the order, it is quite doubtful whether more than one general officer could be found in the United States who would require it or imagine it could be done; and I assert that no more efficient and patriotic officer than Warren ever wore a star.

[2] The Iron Brigade was at first composed of the Second, Sixth, and Seventh Wisconsin, and the Nineteenth Indiana. In October, 1862, was added the Twenty-fourth Michigan. The heaviest loss by brigades, in the entire Union army, fell to this command.—EDITOR.

## On the Skirmish Line

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Hark! a horse comes galloping up to the Colonel's quarters, a few hurried words are spoken, and then come the quick, sharp words of command: "Adjutant, go to the commanding officers of companies; tell them to have their commands under arms at once, and report them on the parade ground in heavy marching order. Make no noise; no drums will be beaten, nor alarms sounded."

Soon from out the darkness, upon the chill night, sounds again: "Orderly, see that the company is at arms at once, in heavy marching order!"

"Strike tents and pack knapsacks!" cries the orderly; and all along the line is heard the busy stir and bustle of striking tents and packing knapsacks, accompanied now and then by a suppressed yawn or muttered curse from the sleepy soldier thus rudely aroused from pleasant dreams and comfortable blankets to pack up his bed, tear down his house, and travel he knows not, and in many cases cares not, where. The sun next morning looked down upon a solitude where last evening a city stood. The army is crossing the Rapidan.

Surprised at the celerity of the movement, the enemy made but feeble resistance at the fords, and fell back to its retrenchments at Mine Run.

That night, weary and foot-sore, we lay waiting for the rising of the morning sun, whose beams were to be obscured by the sulphurous battle cloud.

Early on the morning of the 5th, we were aroused from our slumbers by the command: "Turn out! Ten minutes to cook coffee and prepare for marching!"

Staff officers and orderlies were galloping hither and thither, the ammunition wagons were ordered to the front, general officers could be seen inspecting the ground, and all those grim preparations were being made that to the soldier were recognized as the precursor of battle.

Soon our line was formed, and the old soldiers scarcely waited for the order to throw up breastworks. This done, we threw ourselves along the ground, waiting for the enemy to show themselves. But, so far as I was concerned, alas for human expectations! At this moment an excessively polite orderly came up to me, and, touching his hat, said: "Captain, Colonel Bragg directs that you report with your company to General Cutler, for skirmish duty."

Around Colonel Bragg there was a group of officers, who were evidently pleased that this unwelcome message should have come to some one besides themselves. Concealing my distaste for the duty assigned me, I sent them a cheerful "Good bye! I expect you fellows will all be wiped out before I get back."

"Good-by!" was returned. "Better 'shake' before you go, for it's the last we'll ever see of you."

"Shake them up lively, my boy!" said the Colonel.

"Never mind me," I replied. "Look out you don't get run over by the line of battle, when they follow me in." And so the badinage went on. Major Plummer and Captain Converse of that merry group were both destined to fight their last battle that day.

Upon reporting to General Cutler, I found him pacing up and down before his quarters, evidently laboring under some excitement. I had at one time served on his staff, and we were familiarly acquainted. He invited me into his tent, and extending his hand said: "Captain, your work this morning will not be play. Out in front—I do not know exactly how far, but probably within a mile—you will find the sharpshooters deployed as skirmishers. You will join them. Use your own company as you think best; take command of the line, and advance until you raise the enemy and bring on an engagement."

Just as I was leaving him, he added, "Take along plenty of orderlies, and report frequently."

Those of my readers who have had actual experience in skirmishing, can readily understand how distasteful it is to the soldier. It is a duty that furnishes the best opportunity in the world for getting "wiped out," with but slight chance of achieving military glory. It is a duty that requires your best efforts, all of which are sure to be overshadowed by the more momentous events to follow, and sure to be forgotten in the official reports.

Somewhat reluctantly, I will confess, I obeyed the order, found the line deployed, and immediately ordered an advance.

Our progress was necessarily slow, the ground being broken and heavily timbered with a kind of scrub pine. After advancing about a mile, I discovered a long line of "graybacks" moving slowly forward in line of battle, without the precaution of throwing forward a skirmish line. My men were immediately halted, and the command to commence firing given.

If ever a set of men were astonished, those Confederates were the men. The nature of the ground was such that neither party saw the other until within thirty-five or forty yards of each other. We had the advantage. They were in line of battle, while my men were deployed and behind trees, stumps, stones—anything that might afford concealment and protection.

The rattling, scattered firing from my line told fearfully upon the enemy, and they at once replied with a volley. Whew! How the bullets sung and whistled around us! The only thing I feared was, that they would discover our weakness and charge us, for my men were sheltered. But the Confederates simply held their ground, replying to our skirmish fire from line of battle.

Soon word reached headquarters of the position of the enemy, and a cracking and roar at the rear gave notice of the advance of our line of battle. Hurrah! Here they come on, double quick! "Cold steel, boys! Give 'em the bayonet!" I heard General Cutler say; and over us they came.

My own men caught the inspiration, and gladly obeyed the order to move forward with the line. At the first shock the enemy's line was broken. Two miles we drove them, and then the programme changed.