

## BOOK THREE—age 1

Mother said that I must not talk that way about Miss Isabell because she is so happy she can not help shouting. I said, yes Mother I hope that we all will be happy too. I hope this meeting will do every one lots of good. I went into the kitchen and told Margie all about it and she said that she would take me and any of the other girls that wanted to go. They will start Sunday. We will have dinner on the ground and have two sermons, morning and afternoon like they did at Shiloh last summer. So Sunday morning we were all ready to go all dressed up in our Sunday best. There were crowds of people there. The Devil had better watch our or Tom Walker will kill him this time for sure. This time every one seems to be more gospel hungry. The songs and the sermons came from thankful hearts

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I wish I could fly away with my snowy wings to that beautiful land of love where the Angels stand waiting for me at the gates that stand ajar for ALL who wish to enter there. Where the weary are at rest, and the wicked cease to trouble. Where all is peace,—love,—and happiness reigns ever more.....

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that God had given us peace and will and given us his richest blessings. Our hearts are full of joy and peace and happiness as we gather here to serve the Lord whose hand has led us through the dark and stormy days and nights of the dreadful war that we have passed through. Our hearts will always be sad when we think of the dear loved ones that did not come through. Brother Walter preached some powerful fine sermons which sank deep into our souls and brightened our lives. Brother George Atkins was a young preacher. He got so happy he shouted in the pulpit and he said to Brother Walter—you are older than I am. You will die first and when you get to Heaven tell them that I am coming too. (alas we never know,—Brother Atkins went first) Brother Covey in his long line coat preached some fine sermons too. My Father preached some stirring sermons. He would make you laugh and then he would make you want to weep. The last time that I heard him preach was about the

Probably "Old Ship of Zion."

sheep and the goats. He was a Chaplin all through the Civil War. I never will forget the singing. It was grand,—even the birds in the trees joined in. Everyone was so happy. We had dinner,—everyone was talking and laughing. We were so happy and our hearts were fitted with a love stronger than death. The love of God our Savior that makes us want to love everything that is good and beautiful that will last beyond the grave into eternity. It is like a great ship tossed by the angry waves of a mighty sea as it plows its way through storm and stress of weather.

A ship is a symbol of safety,—the sea is the pathway of life like the old ship of Zain as it sails through the sea of life as the shout goes up. It has landed many thousand and will land as many more. That is the way I feel about Brother Walter. That grand old man lived to be old and helpless. He never gave up the fight and yet the Devil is not whipped and never will be until that last battle between God and the Devil. I don't think God will kill him then,—he will put him in the bottomless pit and seal him up. We had a grand meeting and everyone feels refreshed and happy as we went home. I told Margie that I did not see how anything bad could happen any more if that Sherrif would let Jim and Noah alone,—they did not do anything to be arrested for. The court won't believe anything we tell them. Noah did throw the Sheriff in the swimming hole. Even Pappy laughed about that even if he was an officer,—they could not hang him for that.

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James K.P. Duncan, b. Nov. 1847,  
Noah Gideon Pillow Duncan, b. 1849.

Those officers haven't any manners anyway. "Mother, why is it that all of the officers are Tories or on the union side?" Why is it that they don't bother any one except those that were in the rebel army?" They said the Sheriff was still hunting for Jim. They said that they would get him yet. That Sheriff was a Tory Captain. Brother Burke is going to teach school at the old Tanyard place. It is more in the center. Mother said we did hear a lot of news. We will have to fix up for school. I am sure glad that we will not have to cross the creek this time. I never will forget the time Pappy put Sam and I on old Fanny and said go home Fanny. She threw up her head and started off and Pappy telling me to be sure to go

Most likely Nathan McDonald Kemp, Captain, Company C, of the Union army's Sixth Tennessee Cavalry, also known as "Hurst's Wurst."

Do you know the location of "the old Tanyard place"? The only one I know of is in McNairy County, just south of Adamsville.

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by the bridge that the creek was up. But Fanny would not mind me when she got to the "nigh cut". She threw her head up and plunged into the creek. I told Sam to hold onto the straps on the back of the saddle and when her feet left the bottom I thought we were going down stream but I was not scared. I knew Pappy would take his hat off and bow his head. Mother said that when Pappy got through with us we would not be afraid of anything and she was about right too. Anyway we will not have to cross the creek any more. Then Margie came in and said you got back early. I said that Fanny came fast. She would not come by the bridge. Margie said that she was in a hurry to get to her baby. We will have to get busy and get ready for school. There is one bad

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thing about it. We will have to fix our school dinner. She said that would be all right. She would not have to bother with us at dinner time. We had a nice school and everything was quiet and very peaceful. We did not hear anymore about trouble coming to us again and I hope we never will have any more. But there is a little feeling of doubt that everything is not over yet. Margie, "do you think that there is a little weak place in our faith?" I have an uneasy feeling that some unseen trouble is yet coming to us. Margie told me that I must not worry what will be for we don't know. We will get through early and then we will go over to see Miss Milbery. She will tell us how she feels about everything. She is always happy. Mother said that

Milberry Harriet Duncan Blevins, Elsie's half sister, usually referred to as "Middie" in the diary..

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we are going to move back to Shiloh and things will be all right then. Mother looks tired and worried, she knows something that she is not telling us. Pappy is going down to Shiloh to see how things are down there. He said that he would not be back tonight. I think Mother wants to go back there but I like it best up here. You know there are not many folks around there like there was before the battle. The houses and everything are all gone. Some folks are fixing up some of their houses so they can live in them again. So many of them have left for good. They had lost

Do you know more about which families left and which ones stayed?

everything except the land. Pappy came home. He looked pale and sick. Mother was crying. Some one had burned down the house after taking everything that they could use. So we would

Joseph Riddell  
Duncan, b. 1836.

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have to get rid of everything we had and go away. Soon after that Pappy came in and told us that he had sol Rock Hill. That was the place where we were living. He said that we would not have to leave right away. Well that was some consolation, as it would take sometime to wind up things there. We did not have to move until the first of the year. We were uneasy,—there was some talk about the Sheriff making Margie tell where Jim was and Mother asked how he could make her tell when she doesn't know. He took Margie up, the mills and left her with Brother Joe and his folks. Joe was foreman there. Mother and Margie were through with our clothes. There was not much more to do anyway and Susie was sick and needed her.

R. Who are Joe's "folks"? I see no evidence that he was married at this time.

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Do you know anything about "the mills"?

Pappy came in and said that he had to go to the mills for a few days and he asked me how I would like to go to Aunt Ann and stay a while with Alice. She was always asking him to bring me to see her. Mother said that I could go but she did not know how she could do without me. I told her that she could get Jane to stay with her. So everything was fixed up all right. I stayed there a month. We had a nice time playing around. Alice had a party for me and some of the other girls had parties too. I got homesick and my cousin brought me home. I did not come too soon either. Mother looked dreadful sick and so tired. She had not had any help except the two little boys. Pappy had the other boys helping him with the out door work. I made Mother go to bed and I put all those boys to work helping do

Evan Floyd Duncan, b. 1861 and  
Napoleon Bonaparte Duncan, b. 1858

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Who are "Aunt Ann" and "Alice"? "Jane" could be Milberry's daughter.

whatever there was to do. I did not slight Pappy either. He could do things as well as we could when he had a boss to make him do it. So we got along fine until Mother got rested up. Pappy came in and told Mother that he was going over the river and he was taking Johnny with him. Sister Nan was living over there. He told me to stay close around home and take care of Mother while he was away. Samie was

John Russell Bean Duncan, b. 1851

"Sister Nan" could be Elsie's half-sister  
Nancy Jane H. Parrish, b. 1831.

Samuel Buchanan  
Duncan, b. 1855.

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getting to be a big boy now and we did not need Johnny any way. I stayed in the house with Mother and let the boys do all the outside work. I knew why Pappy took Johnny with him. I was afraid too but I did not let Mother know that I was. If she was she did not say anything about it. I still had that uneasy feeling of fear,--that some unseen trouble was coming to us.

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I wish Margie were here to help us out. She always knew what to say,--"she poured oil on the troubled waters," and that helped a lot. I am sorry to leave this beautiful place with all its flowers and all the things that I love so well. Even the grave on the hill side. Yet I will be glad to leave it all if we can have peace and happiness. Pappy came home and left Johnny over there. He said that Sister Nan would bring him home. Sis came with her two children and that helped brighten things up. She stayed a week. We enjoyed having them very much. Not long after that we were all out in the yard playing when I saw a man on a horse coming fast. I ran into the house and told Mother. She went out there and she came back in the house and said they had gotten Jim. The man saddled her horse

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while she got ready. Then they went to Hamburg. The Sherrif had Jim. They were taking him to Purdy to put him in jail. Mother came back. He told her that someone had seen him in a town over in Arkansas. Then they arrested him over there. Pappy ~~wanted~~ ~~Mother~~ and Mother were all broken up over it. I was so upset, it seemed that I ~~can~~ could'nt stand any more trouble. On the next day they went to Purdy to see about him. They found him in a cell chained to the floor by his ankles. Mother took him a blanket and she and the other boy put an old cot that was in there close by so they could sleep together for the weather was getting cooler. Mother went to see him every day but it was wearing her out. She was not allowed to go to see him or to take anything to eat. The jailor was the son of an old friend of our.....

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family. Mother could take anything she wanted Jim to have and he would get it. ~~That~~ kept the two boys in good condition and she could slip in the same way. Outside of being chained to the floor he was faring very well. In spite of all the trouble and hardships and sufferings we had to go through with, there was always something to be thankful for. Although my poor brother was condemned to be hanged, he was cheerful and his old witty self, and I believe that was the very thing that saved our Beautiful mother's life. Otherwise, she could not have gone through with it as well as she did. I had a lettle ray of hope. It was like my litle ray of uneasy feeling that always stayed with me, and I still hope that the light will shine for us. We must pray for more faith and strenth to keep more in touch.....

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with our loving Saviour who has led us up through the dark and stormy days of the past, and still stands ready to lead us through this; our greatest trouble. We are trusting in our faith to be ~~strong~~ strong enough to lead us out of this darkness of despair into the bright and shining light of hope. We will leave our dear brother in the hands of God and trust in Him to lead him our into the sunshine of freedom. Blessing be upon our dear Father and Mother who are standing up under this darkest hour of their sad lives. And now with sak hearts we are fixing to leave our home and our native land, N where we had lived in peace and happiness until the Shiloh battle.

Ever since then we have lived in fear and uneasiness, never knowing what is going to happen or when. We still don't what is in the future .....

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for us. We were dividing everything between Sister Nan, Middle, and Six except a few things that we will need ourselves. We had two covered wagons that held all that we(?) carry in them. We were leaving the old home where we should have lived among our friends and neighbors who had suffered together through adversity and warfare. We did not know where we were going, trying to get away from trouble and heart aches. Pappy came in and told Mother that he was going to keep the bed where nineteen children had been born that he did not care for anything else. There was plenty of room in the wagons for all of her beds and bed cloths and pillows and what ever she needed. We will stay here another month. He wanted to get everything fixed so there .....

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would not be anything more to do. I don't think we will fix up for my Christmas. We have plenty to. We can fix up Jim something for Mother to take to him, but she said that we could fix us all something to eat and a little thanksgiving(?) offering, too. But we will not have any one else with us this time. Pappy will ask the blessing and ask God to lead us out of the darkness into the light. I believe He will too, if we trust Him and have faith enough. Mother and I want to go to see some of the girls and have them come to see us. Don't you think we could have a little party at the Smith house? There is nobody living there now. Then we could see all of them before we leave. We won't have to leave the first of January--as there is only two folks going to live here. I wish we could have Margie back with us again.

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She could help us so much. No! We can not have her. We are going there when we leave her. We are going to rent a house there and she will stay there. I am going to stay with Middle until we see what is going to happen to Jim. I am afraid to leave him yet we can not do anything to help him. O K Mother, what are we going to do? I can not stand to think of him all chained to the floor and we are leaving him there. Oh Mother! You know that Jim is praying for himself and he has more faith than we have. That is why he is so cheerful. I believe he is going to be saved yet. I know there must be

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someone that knows that he is innocent. Do you know what he said when he came back from Atlanta, shot up all to pieces? He said that he would never fire another gun at any man. His arm is not well yet and that bullet in his breast where he was shot from .....

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ambush still hurts him yet. Pappy came in. He had been over the river to tell Sister Nan and the children all good-bye.. It was a sad time from then on with no Dick, and Middie helped us get ready. Everything was done except to pack up. I loved Middie with her sweet smile. She was such a help in more ways than just work. The folks were moving in there were plenty of room. They insisted that we stay over another week which we gladly did. I was glad to stay as long as we could. The saddest of all sad words that ever were ever spoken(?) is good-bye, when we did not ever expect to see or meet each other again. I wanted to stay with Mother but she said that I had better go with Pappy and help take care of the little boys. I thought so too, although I knew Margie would be there to take care of all of us that ....

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would make it easier for Mother, too. Our dear storm tossed, grief stricken, beautiful Mother, we never knew how much we loved her until we stood at the parting of the ways. We loaded up the two wagons with the things that we needed most. We were a sad and silent, grief stricken family that left that dear old home where we had been so happy until this new sorrow came upon us and yet I still see that little ray of light that is shining behind the clouds. I went back into the kitchen. It was clean and empty and so silent. Mother had slipped away. I knew then that she had stood all that she bear. I knew that Dick and Sister Middie would take good care of her. Dick went with us that first day and night. On the next day we ran up on some army friends of Pappy's. We stayed all night with them. We had a very nice trip. Everyone was kind to us and ...

Richard & Milberry  
Harriet Duncan Blevins.

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that helped a lot (?). You know that kindness, when one is in trouble it is the greatest thing in the world. We got to Bro Jas's (?). The next day found them all well. Pappy rented a house by the month(?) and we moved into it to live there to wait for whatever was coming to us. I told Margie all that had happened after she left.

## Page 21 (con't)

She said that Mother had gone through enough to kill her and we must pray harder than we ever did before. Mother will stay with Middle over at the sea place. Mother went to see Jim as long as they would let her. The jailor fixed it so she could tell him good-bye. He forgot to lock the cell door ~~and~~ on purpose so she went in and at last told him good-bye and she was heart broken. Pappy did not get to see him. He brought Mother back with him. It seemed that we were ....

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wading in deep waters. The harder we tried to get out, the deeper we went in. My poor, tired Mother, she was in the darkest despair. She did not say much. It seems that there was not anything more that we could do except wait for whatever was going to be, and yet there was my little ray of light. (Margie, you know I had those little uneasy spells, they all came true you know. We had plenty of trouble and more of it after that, and we are still in it deeper than ever before, and there was no help that we get. I was not going to loose all hope. So I pray for that little ray of light to lead us out of darkness into the light of hope and faith in God's help. He has led us through the darkest hours of that dreadful war when everything seemed dark and hopeless. So we renewed our faith and .....

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~~begin for more earnestly than ever before to pray for help. Margie, I believe Mother has given up all hope. Pappy was so quiet. I think he was praying in silence. I started to go out into the yard when I saw Brother Joe standing there and Mother had her arms around him. She was crying and Pappy was standing there looking down. I ran back into the house and told Margie that they had hung Jim. We ran out there. No, they had not hung him, but Joe was telling them that he was going to break into that jail and take Jim out. Pappy and Mother were begging him not to try to do that. It would cause them to loose two sons instead of one. But they did not change his mind. He said that he did not want to live if he did not try to save his young brother from such a dreadful death. For we all knew .....~~

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