

[Huson, Calvin Jr.]

The late Calvin Huson, jr. Esq.  
[abridged]

Our readers will remember the notice we [i.e. John Mather Austin, *Christian Ambassador* editor] gave some weeks since, of a pamphlet recently published in Rochester, N.Y., entitled, "Five Months in Rebeldom, or Notes from the Diary of a Bull Run Prisoner at Richmond, by Corporal W. H. Merrell, Color Guard, Co. E, 27th Reg., N.Y.S.V." The publication possessed a peculiar interest to us, in consequence of its account of the sickness and death of an old and esteemed friend.

Calvin Huson, jr., was a native of Yates co., N.Y., where his parents still reside. He graduated at Hobart College, Geneva, N.Y., and studied law with Hon. Wm. H. Seward in Auburn. We there formed his acquaintance, and entered on terms of friendship, which endured to the time of his melancholy capture and death. He was a young man of great natural abilities, which were highly cultivated by a thorough course of education, and by the most diligent application to the study, and at a later day, to the duties, of his profession. We cherished a high estimation of his moral integrity, his sense of justice, his patriotism and public spirit, and indulged large hopes as to his future career. From boyhood he was a decided and intelligent Universalist. During his residence in Auburn, he attended on our ministry, and took a deep interest in the prosperity of our Society and the cause at large. At the conclusion of his studies, and on being admitted to the Bar, he located in Rochester, N.Y. There by faithful application to business, he soon secured a lucrative practice, and rose to distinction as a lawyer and citizen. After a few years he was appointed District Attorney. In April or May, 1861, Mr. Huson was appointed Commissioner to settle the claims of American citizens on some South American government, and went to Washington to enter upon the duties of the office. At the battle of Bull's Run, Mr. Huson, in company with Mr. Ely and others, Members of Congress and citizens of Washington, went out to witness the scene, and to impart any assistance in their power. The sad results of that battle will never be forgotten. Mr. Ely, Mr. Huson and other civilians, together with hundreds of our troops, were taken prisoners, conveyed to Richmond and incarcerated in jail. The blow on Mr. Huson's condition and prospects was painful and prostrating. It undermined his health. He sickened, and pined, and died, far away from the endearments of home, and from the affectionate attentions of wife, and children, and parents... We copy from the pamphlet above referred to, an interesting narrative of the last days of Mr. Huson:—

Mr. Huson was at the time of his capture in feeble health. The fatigues of the day had so nearly exhausted his physical powers that he was obliged to

seek temporary rest and shelter at the farm house of Mr. Flagler, near Centerville. Had he been aware, as he afterward informed me, that it was a place of danger, he would have pushed forward at any cost, and could have easily effected his escape. He was taken prisoner on the morning of Tuesday, the 23d of July, the second day following the battle, and was instantaneously conveyed to Manassas, and after a few days detention, to Richmond, where he was placed in Prison No. 1. When I first saw him, seven weeks after his capture, he had very perceptibly changed. He had lost that healthful glow of countenance and the "judicial plumpness" of figure, which I had formerly observed, and his habitual expression was one of settled melancholy. It was plain to perceive that he was suffering from serious ill health, and though endeavoring to appear easy, pleasant and unconcerned in his social intercourse, this was evidently accomplished with much effort.

During my first conversation with him, he adverted with a feeling of deep anxiety to the probable distress of his family at his unexpected misfortune, and to the unsettled state of his private business affairs. He looked forward to his examination, however, with the utmost confidence, feeling satisfied he would not be unduly detained by the rebel government a moment after he had been offered a hearing. But in this he was sadly mistaken, and it was, perhaps, owing to the unchangeable conviction of his mind that he was soon to receive his discharge, that he was so overwhelmed by the announcement to the contrary.

His examination took place before C. S. Commissioner at Richmond on the 18th of September, as I find by reference to my Diary. He was then quite ill, though not confined to his bed. The decision of the Commissioner, which was for several days withheld, was announced to Mr. Huson by Gen Winder, and was briefly to the effect that he would be held as a prisoner of war. Though this was a severe blow to Mr. Huson, he bore it with unaffected dignity and resignation.

About the 28th of September his health began rapidly to decline, and from that time forward he was constantly confined to his bed. His disease was pronounced to be typhoid fever. Dr. E. G. Higginbotham was his physician, and was unremitting in professional attentions, but evidently—and as Mr. Huson himself assured me—"the Doctor did not understand his case." All in the officers' quarters deeply sympathized with him, and would have made any sacrifice in their power for his restoration.

Mr. Ely was likewise kindly attentive, and subsequently obtained his removal to the residence of Mrs. John Van Lew [a Universalist in Richmond, and mother of Elizabeth "Crazy Bet" Van Lew]. Had this transfer been effected at an earlier date, the unfortunate man would have been spared much needless suffering. The incessant noise and confusion upon the

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second floor was a source of constant disquiet to the patient, and rendered it impossible for him to sleep; yet Mr. Ely's request for his removal was disregarded until within five days of his death.

Prior to this I was frequently at the bedside of the sufferer, and watched with him three consecutive nights. He conversed a great deal, and to that end expressed a wish that he might constantly have a companion, saying that he wanted "to talk to some one, or to have some one talk to him." His mind usually reverted to his home, and often dwelt upon topics of public interest in Rochester...

Mr. Huson early confessed to an apprehension that he would not recover. He said there was something in the atmosphere of Rebeldom that poisoned his whole being. At a later period, and when quite low, he expressed the opinion that if he could but once more reach his home, or even once more stand under the flag of the United States, he would become a well man. Mr. Huson conversed much upon the subject of religion, and I believe he died in the Christian faith. I frequently approached his couch, under the supposition that he was asleep, and found him to be engaged in earnest and heartfelt prayer. During the latter part of his illness his mind frequently wandered, and he expressed to me a fear that should he recover his health, his mental faculties would remain impaired. In his lucid intervals he was always tranquil, for he had fortified himself against the worst event, and seemed only to grieve for his family...

I cannot forbear mentioning here, to the everlasting disgrace and infamy of Capt. Gibbs, the (Confederate) officer of the post, that on the day of Mr. Huson's removal to the house of Mrs. Van Lew, he was required to *sign a parole of honor* not to attempt an escape. Though suffering from extreme exhaustion, unable to sit up in bed, and regarded by his fellow prisoners as a dying man, he was yet compelled by the rebel officer to execute this parole. In order to do this, two of his fellow prisoners assisted to raise him up, and the paper was duly subscribed. It was happily the last "duty" which Mr. Huson was required to perform.

The sufferer was very kindly cared for in the family of Mrs. Van Lew, and Dr. Higginbotham was, as usual, faithful and untiring in his professional attentions. But deprived of the society of his familiar friends, and practically cut off from the sympathies which had buoyed him up during his prison confinement, the sufferer rapidly declined, and on the morning of the 14th of October, Mr. Ely received a brief note from Mrs. Van Lew, announcing that his friend was at the point of death. Mr. Ely repaired as speedily as possible to the house, but before his arrival Mr. Huson had expired.

The funeral was attended from the house of Mrs. Van Lew, by Rev. Dr. Mines, officiating clergyman, and Mr. Ely. The remains had, by order of Mr.

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Ely, been placed in a metallic burial case, and were interred in the Protestant Cemetery, near the General Hospital.

The only letter addressed to Mr. Huson, which ever reached Richmond, was delivered to Mr. Ely on the day following Mr. Huson's decease.

Soon after his death, a special meeting of the Prison Association was held, and suitable notice taken of the event. Addresses were made by Messrs. Ely, Flagler of Va., Mines of Maine, Church of Rhode Island, Taylor of Ohio, and others. The Masonic Fraternity, of which Mr. Huson was a member, was represented in the person of several prisoners.

The loss of Mr. Huson was unfeignedly mourned by all the prisoners, for as a community in misfortune they had fitly appreciated the companionship of one whose high personal worth commended him to the sincere affection of every member.

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[a Universalist newspaper]

Transcribed on 1 Mar 2013 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY