

[Kemper, John H.]

JOHN KEMPER

John H. Kemper, late major 2d Battalion, 10th N.Y. Cavalry, and later captain of Co. K of the same regiment, died at his home on Vienna street, Saturday morning last, aged 62 years, after an illness which has lasted since the war.

Deceased was born in Hudson, N.Y., the son of [Bethia Van Valkenburgh] and Daniel Kemper, who died in October last year, aged 93 years. After living in Hudson several years, where the father was engaged in the manufacture of morocco, the family moved to Westport, Conn., where Mr. Daniel Kemper took charge of a large morocco factory for Mr. Haight, who built the Fifth Avenue Hotel in New York. In 1842 the family moved to Newark into a large farm purchased by Daniel Kemper just east of Newark. Eight years later they moved into town, into the house where Theo. Horton now lives. A few years later, Mr. Kemper, Sr., bought the large house farther south on Vienna street, which has been the family home ever since. The subject of this obituary lived with his parents till the [civil] war broke out. He enlisted, and served until '64, when he was discharged for physical disability. Since that time he has been ill, gradually declining until death relieved him from his sufferings. Deceased is survived by a brother, Morton Kemper, of Louisville, Kas. His father died, as stated, a year ago, and his mother died in the same year he left the service—1864. No other relatives survive except a niece, Mrs. Pell, of Lyons.

Major Kemper was a man beloved by everybody who knew him. He was a noble, gentlemanly, courteous man; friendly and neighborly, he always had a pleasant smile for everyone he met, no matter how much he was suffering physically. He served his country bravely during the war, making a gallant record; his life since the war has been one continued round of bravery, and suffering gallantly endured. If ever a martyr to one's country's cause suffered, it was John H. Kemper. He contracted a disease in the service of his country from which he never recovered, and came home in '64 after months spent in a southern hospital, to die a slow death. He has since that time never seen one hour when he was free from illness, and by it he has been debarred from engaging in any profession. He has never married, but has lived in the old home, doing his duty day by day, caring tenderly for his father in his old age, and setting an example of patience and cheerfulness in suffering which all may profit by. He was a Christian man, and has now gone to a Christian's and hero's reward. We all have lost a personal friend in his departure, but all his friends rejoice that one who has suffered for so long and with so cheerful a smile, has at last found peace.

The funeral was held Monday, Rev. Dr. Tomlinson [Universalist] officiating. Vosburg Post, G.A.R., attended the burial services of their beloved comrade, in a body.

Some men win glory by dying a sudden and tragic death. Major Kemper won a double measure of glory by dying daily for more than a quarter of a century,

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and we feel that our readers may like to know the military history of such a man. In 1893 Major Kemper wrote a narrative of his military career for the *Gazette*, and this was published in a series of nine exceedingly interesting articles. From those papers we extract the following brief sketch:

While working in the harvest field with Joh Bockoven, Mr. Kemper's father came up with a Rochester paper containing a report of the first battle of Bull Run. After reading it, John H. made up his mind to raise a company and go to the front. He went to Rochester, got some circulars printed, went to Wolcott, made a speech in a school house north of there, with Thaddeus W. Collins, and enlisted nineteen young men in one night. In four days he recruited forty-six men. He brought the company to Newark, boarded them for a while, and took them to Buffalo, where they were mustered into Uncle Sam's service. Early in December the regiment which they joined was ordered to Gettysburgh. While told with extreme modesty, this story of the Major's is a recital of gallant deeds of daring, of dashing charges, and dramatic incidents; of hardships; of days spent in swamps, with swamp water to drink; of lying, extremely ill, in a hospital, without a visit from a physician. Finally he received attention and was sent by steamer to Washington to recuperate. After a time he got better, and was able to do light work, but his military career was ended. Several times he tried to do campaign work for the Republican campaign committee, but was always obliged to desist, although he did good work in taking a canvass of the soldiers' vote. He was assigned a military post on Hart's Island, New York, but could not remain there; he was appointed to an important office in Albany, but was not able to keep it; and so he came home to spend his life in quiet, and with as much of comfort as he could get.

The closing paragraph in the articles Major Kemper wrote for the *Gazette* was eloquent and impressive, doubly so now, and gives some insight into the noble character of the man who is gone. The Major wrote:

"I can truthfully say that I have never known an absolutely well hour since the fall of '64. The disease has gradually but surely eaten its way into my vitals until I resemble nothing so much in constitution as one of those pine trees I have seen out in Michigan, which looks fair and sturdy to the eye while standing; but suddenly a heavy wind comes along, it topples and falls, and then you examine it, you discover that the worms have eaten through bark and wood into the heart and vitals, but nothing remains but shell and dust. Thus am I apparently situated—left upon the shore of the vast unknown, with the shining waters encircling the feet, waiting, simply waiting."

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