

had acted as scout and guide for the United States Troops and wagon trains in West Texas and Mexico, and was highly esteemed by the people of both countries.

He had one weakness. At rare intervals, he would get very intoxicated, became wild, and riding his horse into stores and saloons of whatever village he happened to be in, Texas or Mexico, and order everybody to close up, as he wanted to run the town himself. After such a grandstand play he would go home and sleep it off then return and pay for whatever damage he had caused, and express deep regret for everything.

When the secession talk commenced, it was generally supposed that Skillman was inclined strongly to the Union side, though his associates were nearly all Confederates. But he finally went with his State, and in 1864, he, with a small band of Confederates, acted as a scout and kept up communication between San Antonio and the Confederate Colony at Juarez, Mexico.

General Carleton of the Union forces in New Mexico decided that this line of communication must be broken and Skillman and his party must be captured. For this service he selected Captain Albert H. French of the California Volunteer Cavalry. General Carleton was present at El Paso, when French left on his dangerous expedition and he undoubtedly gave French special instructions to bring in Skillman alive, if possible. French was a Bostonian, and in physique not unlike Skillman. Skillman, and his party, were near Presidio del Norte en route for Juarez, when Captain French (himself unseen) discovered them, and watched them go into camp, April 3, 1864. At midnight, French, with a few of his men and two citizens of San Elizario, El Paso County, crawled into Skillman's camp and suddenly rising up within three feet of the confederates, called for surrender. Skillman arose, armed, and refused; then French shot his dead. In the volley that followed, two more of Skillman's party were killed and two were wounded. The others surrendered, and were brought as prisoners to San Elizario."

Mr. Mills does not state which side of the river they were on, or what kind of a burial they were given, or if they were even buried. So ended the illustrious career of one of the most fearless characters of the old West.

At the end of the Civil War the Indians were in undisputed control of all of Presidio County, except the settlement at Presidio. Milton Faver had maintained his ranches, because all three ranch houses were fortified and able to resist the ordinary Indian attack.

#### WAR IS OVER

The war was over. Travel was resumed over the western trails. Immediately after

the Civil War, the secretary of War ordered that the Military Posts west of the Pecos be re-occupied, and that in locations where the buildings had been destroyed by the Indians during the civil strife, that they should be rebuilt.

To prove how thoroughly the Indians had carried on their work of destruction during the war, we give a report from the San Antonio Daily Herald, dated March 5, 1865: "We had the pleasure of meeting in our office recently Doctor Diffendoffer of El Paso. He left the above mentioned place on the 1st of February, and arrived in San Antonio about the 1st of March. He informs us that he came through with a train of wagons belonging to Webb & Company.

The party found the roads good, the grass exceedingly plentiful, and water plentiful, except at Van Horn Wells. They saw but few Indian signs, until they arrived at Eagle Springs, where they came suddenly upon a small band camped at the Springs. These Indians had a few cattle and some horses under herd. Some of the men with the wagon train were on horse back, and several miles in advance of the main party. When they saw the Indians they immediately charged upon them, capturing all the stock. The Indians were soon re-enforced by another small band, making twenty in all. They then became decidedly bold and annoying, trying to reclaim their stock. When the wagon train came up, they made a random attack from the surrounding hills, not coming up close enough, however, to do any harm. When night came, they undertook to accomplish by stealth and darkness what they lacked courage to do by daylight. They crept noiselessly up to the place of encampment, and opened a pretty brisk fire upon the camp. But the white men were prepared for them; therefore, they were unable to surprise the camp or do any great damage, beyond killing one horse and wounding another. None of the white men were wounded during the fight, and by coolness and courage, they soon succeeded in dispersing the Indians, and forced them to take a more respectful distance.

"The Doctor further stated that Forts Quitman, Davis, Stockton and Lancaster were completely destroyed, nothing but the walls of the buildings remained."

#### THE EXPERIENCES OF JOHN AND JAMES EDGAR

Freighting was resumed in 1866, and stage and mail contracts were renewed. There was need for supplies in the district west of the Pecos. John and James Edgar, who had served in the Mexican and Civil wars, organized two freight outfits in San Antonio. Each outfit had twenty wagons and two hundred head of mules. They were loaded with merchandise