



Blood Shed in This War: Civil War Illustrations by Captain Adolph Metzner, 32nd Indiana

Michael A. Peake

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Captain Adolph G. Metzner's stunning visual diary of sketches, > drawings, and watercolors depict his world during three years of > service with the First German, Thirty-second Regiment Indiana > Volunteer Infantry campaigning in the Western Theater during the Civil > War. Metzner chronicled the day-to-day life of a soldier's world, at > first with humor, and later, with a stark reality of life and death on the battlefield. > Metzner was born on August 16, 1834, in a village in the southwestern > corner of Baden-Württemberg, Germany. In 1856 he immigrated to the > United States, establishing himself as a druggist in Louisville, > Kentucky. Four months after the start of the Civil War, the young > druggist traveled to Indianapolis to assist in organizing a German regiment. > > Once encamped with the Thirty-second, Metzner immediately began to set > his impressions down on paper, recording the regiment's activity with > details as vividly descriptive as any written word and creating a > series of caricatures of his associates with a tinge of comical > exaggeration likely influenced by the subject. With the initial loss > of comrades at the battle of Rowlett's Station, Kentucky, on December > 17, 1861, Metzner's art changed. From that point on his work showed > the turmoil and struggle the men experienced through Shiloh and > General Braxton Bragg's invasion of Kentucky to Stones River, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, and culminating with the move on Atlanta. > > After being wounded at Chickamauga, Metzner returned to Indianapolis, > and his artwork went into storage with the remainder of his war gear. > He did, however, create one postwar oil painting, a beautiful 18 ½ x > 23 ¼ oil on canvas that appears to be a culmination of his study of > man, horse, and motion. The end result shows the depth of one who has > witnessed war, or who has "seen the elephant," as Civil War veterans called it. >

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