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SERVICES WITH COLORED TROOPS

IN

BURNSIDE'S CORPS.

BY

JAMES H. RICKARD,

[Late Captain 19th U. S. Colored Troops.]

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[Edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies.]
SERVICE WITH COLORED TROOPS IN BURNSIDE'S CORPS.

Perhaps the most important event that hastened the success of the Union cause was the decision to use the negroes as soldiers. It was an experiment that caused the most sagacious statesmen to hesitate long before agreeing to it. The idea of arming negro slaves, who had long been servile beings to our enemies in the field, was an untried thing, and might overwhelm us with disaster should they prove unmanageable while occupying an important position in our lines. One great obstacle to overcome would be the prejudice of our soldiers against serving on equal footing with black soldiers; this was so deep seated as to be dangerous to the experiment. Then the hatred of the South would be doubly embittered against us.
The first experiment was to use them as secondary—to do fatigue duty at less pay, the law reading "that such persons (slaves) of suitable condition will be received into the armed service of the United States, to garrison forts, position stations and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service."

General Hunter declared the slaves free in Fort Pulaski, and on Cockspur Island, Ga., April 12, 1862, and on May 9th the slaves in Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina, which action was annulled by President Lincoln ten days later. Neither he, nor Grant, nor Sherman, nor Stanton, nor Adjutant-General Thomas were favorable to their use except as hirelings. The exigencies of the war, however, forced the enlistment of negro troops on the government, and the first to be enlisted was the First South Carolina Regiment, the last part of May, 1862.

It will be surprising, even to many old soldiers, to know that at least 186,097 black soldiers, mostly ex-slaves, fought for the United States government, and that 36,847 of this number (nearly twenty
per cent.) were either killed or died in United States hospitals. That they took part in 449 engagements, and for soldierly bearing and heroism challenge comparison with their more fortunate white comrades.

The old soldiers of the Army of the Potomac and the politicians were slow to endorse them and to accept them as comrades and soldiers, but the report of Gen. W. F. Smith on the fighting of General Hineks's division of colored troops, in the assault on the defences of Petersburg, Va., June 15, 1864, shows that was now accorded them. He says: "This day's work is one of the grandest of the war. It will make the old Army of the Potomac open wide its eyes. The earthworks, so successfully carried, are regarded as the most formidable the army has encountered so far during the present campaign. The success has a peculiar value and significance from the thorough test it has given of the efficiency of negro troops. Their losses were heavy. In the thickest of the fight and under the most trying circumstances, they never flinched. The old Army of the Potomac, so long prejudiced
and so obstinately heretical on this subject, stands amazed as they look at the works captured by negroes, and are loud and unreserved in their praise."

At the breaking out of the civil war I had just engaged in business for myself. I was very patriotic, and had talked a great deal and very strongly to those in the community where I lived, and many of the young men were hanging back for me. I could not enter the army without making a great sacrifice, still I was anxious to take a part. I could have had commissions in two different regiments, but declined, as I could not see my way clear to leave my business. I was in Providence when General Burnside left for the front with the First Rhode Island Regiment, and the impulse was strong to go with him. After waiting until August, 1862, without making any arrangements or notifying my family, I drove to Thompson, Conn., where Munroe C. Nichols, the principal of the academy, was recruiting a company, and enlisted. This company, and in fact nearly the whole regiment (the Eighteenth Connecticut) were young men, graduates of the
academies of the eastern part of the State, and a large proportion of them school teachers.

After serving nearly two years in this regiment, I made application to be examined for a position with colored troops, which were now being organized, and was ordered to Washington, before the board of which General Casey was chairman, for examination, and was commissioned by President Abraham Lincoln captain in the Nineteenth Regiment United States Colored Troops, March 12, 1864, and was ordered to report to Colonel Bowman at Baltimore, Md., for muster. The regiment, which had been recruited mostly from the eastern shore of Maryland, and composed entirely of slaves, was rendezvoused there and making final preparations to take the field. The officers had been assigned and rapid progress had been made in drill and discipline.

Soon after joining my regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel Perkins, in command, obtained permission to take the regiment up the Shenandoah Valley recruiting. Arrived at Harper's Ferry, with much difficulty we obtained a four-mule baggage wagon and started up the Valley for Winchester.
Col. Perkins was a peculiar individual, and seemed bent on making some kind of a demonstration with his regiment of colored men. When about half way from Berryville to Winchester our advance guard were fired upon, and returned the fire; for a moment some confusion prevailed, as it was expected we were intercepted by a rebel force. After forming line to the left of the road in a rocky piece of woods, an officer was sent forward to ascertain the cause of the firing. It was found that a company of our scouts, dressed in grey, had opened fire on our men to see how they would stand. Our men returned the fire and did not flinch. One colored man was struck on the forehead by a minie ball, and a piece of his skull as large as a silver half dollar knocked out, but it did not knock him down. He was assisted by his comrades, and when the wagon came up he was put in, and when after several days we returned, he was sent to the hospital, and came back healed, and did good service afterward. Our expedition continued to Winchester, where the colonel intended to pass the night, but having served in this valley previously and knowing
the danger of remaining there, I prevailed upon him to move on to Bunker Hill, where we might be within supporting distance from Martinsburg should we be attacked; and I had information that a superior mounted force of the enemy were near.

On the way to Bunker Hill that night we met about eight hundred of our cavalry passing up the valley from Martinsburg; they were attacked the next morning and entirely routed, proving the wisdom of my insisting that we move on and not stop over night there with our small force of less than 750 men, untrained and untried.

From Martinsburg we passed over into Maryland to Shepardstown and back to Harper’s Ferry. I was then ordered to proceed with my company to Charlestown with three days rations, and “recruit vigorously.” My men had only five rounds of ammunition. I asked for forty and was refused. I went under protest, as I knew that with less than one hundred colored men, ten miles away from any assistance, with only five rounds of ammunition, it was a foolhardy adventure, as Mosby with his guerrillas was scouring that country continually, and
there were probably more Confederate soldiers in Charlestown at that time, well armed, than my company numbered. It was a cold stormy night, about the first of April, when I arrived there. I quartered my men in a church, situated on the south of a square, the country to the south of the church being open toward a knoll where John Brown was hung. After seeing that the men were comfortably cared for, I found quarters near by in a cottage. The woman, whose husband was in the rebel army, was violently loyal to the Confederate cause. After much bantering and my offer to pay, I got a good supper, and a feather bed on the floor in front of a good fire. I was very anxious, and placed four or five pickets out and a sentinel in front of my door, with orders to report to me immediately any noise like the tramp of cavalry. I was just getting into a doze, between one and two o’clock. The sentinel knocked on the door and said, “I hear cavalry.” Having removed only my sword and boots, I was outside in an instant. I could hear the heavy tramp of a large force of horsemen apparently entering the place from the northwest. I had the men quietly
aroused, and knapsacks packed without lights, and held a hasty consultation with my lieutenant (Raymore) and decided that "discretion was the better part of valor." It was raining and intensely dark. I moved down the macadamized pike towards Harper's Ferry, where if attacked I might be within reach of assistance if necessary. We continued our march about four miles, when we reached a cavalry vidette, thrown out from Harper's Ferry. I ascertained from him that a force of cavalry of our own troops had gone up the valley on a reconnoitering expedition, and on account of the muddy condition of the roads had gone up the road to the north, and entered the place from the northwest. Knowing now that there were troops between me and the enemy I was relieved of my anxiety, retraced my steps, and went back to the same quarters and slept soundly.

The negroes had become scared and kept out of sight, as the report had spread that we were pressing them into the service. In a few days the regiment returned to Baltimore without any recruits.

About the 20th day of April, 1864, we were ordered to embark on boats and proceed to Annapolis,
The impression made by these troops was voiced as follows by the *Baltimore American* the day of our departure: "The three regiments of colored troops recruited in this city and State, nearly three thousand men, under the auspices of Colonel Bowman, made a dress parade through our streets this morning previous to their departure for the scene of—it is to be hoped—active operations. No man desiring the speedy overthrow of the rebellion, and its proper termination, could have looked upon the spectacle with other than feelings of satisfaction. Only one of the regiments was armed (the Nine-teeth), the other two were fully equipped except arms. A splendid brass band was on the right of the line, and a full drum corps accompanied each regiment. The men all marched proudly and soldierly, and nothing could have been more perfect than their movement, evidencing a great deal of care in their management and drill. Magnificent working and fighting material was in that column. Sturdy, stalwart, able-bodied and healthy men, well disciplined by careful training, proud of their new and novel position, they looked every inch the sol-
dier. A few years ago the man who would have said that the negro would have marched through the streets of Baltimore in military equipments and unarmed without being assaulted, would have been considered a fit candidate for a lunatic asylum. But such is the case, and during their march this morning it was pleasant to see, as the head of the column passed the Maryland Institute, where the arrangements for the fair are in progress, that they were lustily cheered. In many places along the route of march, flags were waved from the stateliest or from the humblest dwellings. Several of the men were accompanied to the point of embarkation, the foot of Long Dock, by their wives and sisters, and many were the leave-takings there witnessed. Some of the more rabid of the rebels in our midst gave vent to their spleen in silent murmurs and 'curses not loud but deep.' One female, who was standing at the Institute as the procession turned down the market space, thought it had come to a pretty pass when she had to stand to allow 'niggers' to pass, and that they were a nice crowd to send to fight white men. But notwithstanding the grievances of the
fair secesh, the troops passed quietly by, amid the congratulations of those who think the United States government can rightly use the colored man for a soldier or a laborer, as well as the rebel oligarchy at Richmond. May we have many more such regiments to credit to the quota of Maryland, as those that passed the American office this morning."

From Annapolis we marched to Washington. When we arrived at the outskirts of the city we halted, and after an hour of busy work, had removed most of the mud, brasses were polished and shoes blacked, so that notwithstanding it had rained hard most of the way from Annapolis, we made quite a presentable appearance.

We now passed through the city in column, and were reviewed by President Lincoln and General Burnside from the steps of Willard's Hotel. Accoutered, as we were, with a full complement of clothing, etc., and the day being very warm, the march from outside the city until across Long Bridge, without a stop and with cadenced step, was very trying, but not a man left the ranks until the bridge was passed. We now found we were to join the Ninth
Corps, which was marching to join the Army of the Potomac. We arrived at the Rapidan River on the morning of the first day's fight in the Wilderness. We immediately crossed a pontoon bridge and relieved a part of the Sixth Corps, who had been heavily engaged. Our position was now on the extreme right of the Army of the Potomac, just above Germania Ford, where we and all the army crossed, and that night our regiment was on the picket line with the rebs in sight in our front. About two o'clock the next morning the Ninth Corps was ordered to fall back and move to the left; the aide, with the orders for our division, either lost his way or for some other reason, did not reach us until after the time we were to move; orders then had to be sent to the different brigades and by them to the regiments, and the pickets withdrawn, which took some time. Before we could move the three other divisions had fallen back and moved to the left, leaving us entirely cut off. It was a race for life as we moved down that plank road through the thick pine forest, and the enemy trying to cut us off, but we passed behind the right of our army, which was being thrown back to the river much lower down.
Our division was now assigned as rear guard of the whole army. I had charge of a portion of our rear picket line one night as we were passing from the Wilderness to the James river, and had my headquarters near a house of considerable pretensions, surrounded by numerous outbuildings, some with straw-thatched roofs. There were several ladies, inmates of the house. The boys in hunting about the premises discovered a trunk filled with the ladies' effects; they were on the watch, and came rushing to me to save it for them. I had it carried to the house, and by this time another was discovered in some bushes by a fence. I told them if they had got anything else hidden they better point it out, and I would have it carried in for them; they went with me and pointed out several trunks and boxes. They said they supposed we would ransack their house and had taken this precaution to save their valuables. I told them we did not molest non-combatants, and they and their house would be perfectly secure as long as they behaved.

Just as we were packing to move in the morning, fire broke out in a straw stack near some of the
buildings with thatched roofs, and was soon communicated to them. The fire no doubt caught from fire used by the men in getting their breakfast. Although the army had moved and we were risking not only ourselves but the safety of the train, we stopped and saved the house from destruction. The next day I saw a Richmond paper, and the most scathing language possible was used, heaping abuse on the heads of ourselves (the colored troops) for destroying private property and assaulting defenseless females, reciting not one word of truth, except that there was a fire. Of course this was for a purpose, to embitter the feeling against us, which was now about as violent as could be.

During our march from the Rapidan and through the various battles until we crossed the James River and commenced the siege of Petersburg and Richmond, our division acted as a rear guard and especial guard of our trains. There were in the Wilderness campaign probably not less than four thousand army wagons, which, extended in a straight line, would have reached from Washington to Richmond, a distance of one hundred and thirty miles. Besides the
three days rations in haversack, the fresh beef was taken along on the hoof to last till reaching our new base of supplies at White House Landing, supposed to last for sixteen days, and driven in corps herds.

I shall never forget a sight I beheld the next morning. The cattle for the Ninth Corps were herded in a valley a mile or two in diameter, and they completely filled it, and at sunrise it was a magnificent sight as I beheld them from an eminence near by. Before crossing the James they were all eaten. This gives something of an idea what it took to supply provisions for such an army.

We had several attacks, one in the night at Spottsylvania, when the enemy's cavalry made a dash into our regiment, and for a time it looked as though we might lose some of our supplies.

The day after the battle of Cold Harbor my regiment went to White Horse Landing as a guard to the train of ambulances, wagons and teams of all descriptions, carrying the wounded there to be shipped north on steamers. It was thirteen miles from the battlefield to the Landing, and all day and all night a continuous line of teams loaded with wounded
made a procession probably never equalled. In almost every wagon some died before reaching the river. The number wounded was so great no care could be bestowed upon them until they could be taken to some place where they could be treated. There were not ambulances enough for the emergency, and the baggage wagons had to be used.

The roads were very rough; it was a most pitiful situation, the shrieks and groans of the men, as the wheels would strike stumps or sink suddenly into holes in the deep ruts which had been formed. It was necessary to have a strong guard all the way with the teams, to prevent surprise and capture of the trains.

We were the last to cross the James River, and were attacked by cavalry with a light battery as the last regiments were crossing the pontoon bridge; but a battery from our side was quickly run into position, and they skedaddled double quick.

A delay here of Hancock’s Corps for provisions gave General Beauregard time to cross the Appomattox and retake the strong works captured that day by General Hineck’s division of colored troops in front of Petersburg.
The firing in our front now grew louder and more severe. As we pressed on through the pine woods aides were riding fast with orders to keep ranks well closed up, no straggling, etc., etc., as we expected in a few moments to become engaged, but when we arrived it was too late, as the works were retaken and held by a strong force.

As an illustration of the severe discipline of these troops, I will relate an incident that occurred at this time, when a terrible engagement seemed imminent. A major of one of our regiments was taken suddenly sick, and got off his horse and into an ambulance. Gen. H. G. Thomas, who commanded a brigade, heard of the occurrence and suspected it was cowardice, and sent his surgeon to examine him; he reported that he was perfectly well. The general then had him examined by several surgeons, who failed to find him suffering from any illness. He immediately assembled a drumhead court-martial, had charges preferred against him for cowardice in presence of the enemy; he was found guilty, and sentenced to be dishonorably dismissed the service of the United States, to forfeit all pay and allowance.
then due or that might become due him; to have his insignia of rank and his buttons torn from his clothes; his sword broken in presence of the division, and be drummed out of camp, and be imprisoned at the Dry Tortugas at hard labor during the remainder of his term of service. He was placed on an old cart, drawn by a mule, the division formed in hollow square, and to the tune of the "Rogue's March" he was drummed out of camp, and I understood the sentence was carried out in full. He learned it was an unfortunate time to be taken sick, at the opening of a battle.

Arrived in front of Petersburg, we took our position in line with the other troops of the Army of the Potomac. The service there was very severe, especially so for the officers, many being absent sick or on detached service, so that those present had to do double duty. A considerable part of the line was under fire continuously, day and night. The pickets kept up a constant fire, which at times would increase to a roar, then a cannon would open on one side or the other, to be followed by others, until all the artillery on both sides would be engaged. The
line was so close that mortars could be used, making havoc behind our breastworks, so that at the most advanced positions bomb-proofs were necessary for protection. During such an engagement a mortar shell fell nearly in front of a little bomb-proof I occupied and rolled into it; there wasn’t room for us both, I thought, so I seized it and threw it over the breastworks before it exploded.

Perhaps the most trying place for a soldier is on such a picket line as extended in front of our army at Petersburg and Richmond during 1864 and 1865, which was almost an intrenched position itself, the pits being within a few feet of each other and containing three men each, with, in many places, quite a stretch of slashed timber between them and our breastworks, and this line was to be held, if possible, against any force intended to capture it. Add to these conditions that the men were constantly under fire, day and night, and one can see that it required as much nerve to go on the picket line for twenty-four hours as to go into a general engagement, and in fact I have seen as hard battles there as when whole armies were engaged, which were never re-
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corded. Perhaps an attempt was made to capture our picket line; the firing would increase from a steady desultory firing to a continued roar, then the artillery from both sides would open fire, each side thinking that the enemy was coming in force, making the position almost untenable. And these places were now occupied in turn by black and white soldiers, even the most critical and dangerous ones, showing the confidence now felt in these troops. I have many times seen these men in such situations, and never saw them flinch or fail to do their whole duty as soldiers.

General Burnside presented a plan to break the enemy's lines by mining a fort in front of Petersburg in their line of intrenchments and blowing it up, which met the approval of General Meade and General Grant. The plan was that when the explosion took place the assault was to be led by the colored division, who were to press through the breach and through the enemy's second line of works on to Cemetery Hill, to be followed by another division of the Ninth Corps, who were to wheel to the right and carry a formidable fort in the rear; the next division
following to wheel to left and take a similar fort a short distance in that direction, the whole army to follow through the opening, and the battle then fought in the rear of their works with their army cut in two. Had the plan been followed no doubt the war would have been ended on that day.

During the night of July 29, 1864, we were massed in a valley immediately in rear of the position to be assaulted, together with a large part of the army, and cannon were placed in every position possible to play upon their works at this part of the line. The order had been changed in the night, putting General Ledlie's First Division in front. We were terribly disappointed. We had expected we were to lead the assault, and had been for several weeks drilling our men with this idea in view, particular attention being paid to charging. Only the day before, our regiment was drilled by Major Rockwood in forming double column and charging, which was witnessed by many officers and men of the army. Major Rockwood was killed the next day while charging their second line of works. Both our officers and men were much disappointed,
as it was an opportunity to show what they could do, and there was not an officer but would have staked everything that we would break through their lines and go on to Cemetery Hill, as proposed.

When all preparations were made, we lay down for a little sleep, and were awakened shortly after daylight by the explosion and the terrible discharge of cannon, that made the ground tremble as by an earthquake.

The First Division only went as far as the "crater" and stopped, and it was nearly an hour before the colored troops were ordered in, having been standing crowded in the covered ways leading up to the breastworks; but it was now too late, as their second line of works was full of men, brought up from each flank, and our men were not only exposed to the terrible musketry fire in front, but to an enfilading fire of shell, grape and canister that no troops could withstand, and the charge was made through a line of white troops going to the rear. The slaughter was terrible. Out of fifty-three men of my company reported for duty that morning, ten were killed and many wounded, some of whom died
in a few days. There were very few general officers on the field beyond our breastworks, and I saw only one, General Hartranft, and I assisted him in getting one of the rebel cannon, which was loaded but dismounted, up on a ridge of earth at the "crater," and fired it at them. This seemed for the instant to concentrate their fire, if possible, at this point more intensely, and men fell by hundreds in the "crater."

About two o'clock in the afternoon they charged in on our flank at the "crater," and there was a rush of what was left alive for our breastworks, and I think I made good time. A short time before this several officers of my regiment stood partly sheltered by a huge lump of earth that had been rolled out by the explosion, as large as a small room, when a ten-inch mortar shell fell and buried itself in the sand in close proximity, exploded, covering us with dirt and sand. Captain Blakeley said to Captain Fletcher, a very tall Yankee from New Hampshire, who was spitting the sand out of his mouth and wiping it from his eyes, "What's the matter, Fletcher?" "Don't you like it?" "Yes," he said, "I like it well enough, and it tastes well enough, but I don't know
how long I am going to live, and I don't want to wear my teeth all out chewing sand.” This was at a time when shot and shell were concentrated on this place, and men were being torn and mangled by the hundred every moment. He was a brave and cool man in action, and a very good officer at all times. My second lieutenant, Raymor, was reported killed, but was captured, as we found out several weeks afterward. Lieutenant Dobbs of our regiment was also captured. When the captured officers were taken to the rear they were formed in line, and their names and regiments were taken down. None gave their regiment as one of the colored regiments, but from some of the white ones known to have been in the engagement, as it had been supposed that they would be executed according to an order issued by the Confederate government, if it was known who they were. Dobbs was indignant, and when they came to him he said, “Lemuel D. Dobbs, Nineteenth Niggers, by ——.” They took him by the hand, and said they honored him for his frankness, and showed him more consideration than those whom they thought had lied. No man dodged his position after that.
We attempted under a flag of truce to remove the wounded and bury the dead immediately after the failure to break through their lines, but they would not recognize a flag of truce, and all the rest of that day and night and the next day the wounded lay on the field in the fierce blazing sun, screaming for relief which we could not render, and most of them died. On the second day arrangements were made for a cessation of firing and the burying of the dead, who by this time had become a swollen and putrifying mass, unrecognizable. Long, deep trenches were dug, and by rolling them in blankets the dead were laid in these trenches, several bodies deep. The stench was almost unendurable even after burial, as so much blood covered the ground.

Our brigade commander, General Thomas, got too far on the rebel side during the truce, and they held him and took him blindfolded to Petersburg, but returned him the next day, as they had overstepped in making a capture during a truce.

Of the fighting of these troops at Petersburg, Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, the great secretary of war, wrote: "The hardest fighting was done by the
black troops. The forts they stormed were the worst of all."

The world's standard of heroism is the "Spartan Greeks at Thermopalae," but the assault of colored troops at the "crater," and the assault and capture of Fort Harrison at New Market Heights without firing a gun (the caps having been taken from the guns) using bayonets only, where General Butler says he counted five hundred and forty-three black heroes dead in a space not three hundred yards long, challenge Greek, Roman, or any other heroism. These regiments of blacks, fighting with bayonets on the ramparts of the fort at Milliken's Bend and successfully bayonetting back Gen. Henry McCullough's rebel division, is a record that cannot be smirched with sneers or prejudiced injustice.

The charge of Ferrero's division at the "crater" at Petersburg, Va., through a broken and demoralized division of white troops, then forming line inside the enemy's works, and temporary capture of their interior works, with awful losses in killed, wounded and murdered, is a record to win back the previously prejudiced judgment of the president,
cabinet, generals, and officers of the Army of the Potomac, who up to this time had thought negroes all right for service in a menial capacity, but from henceforth to take responsible places, like the right flank of the army at Deep Bottom, Va., and the storming of strong works like forts Alexander and Gregg.

Gen. H. G. Thomas, who commanded a brigade of colored troops at Petersburg says: "I lost in all thirty-six officers and eight hundred seventy-seven men; total, nine hundred and thirteen. The Twenty-third Regiment entered at the charge with eighteen officers, it came out with seven. The Twenty-eighth entered with eleven officers, it came out with four. The Thirty-first had but two officers for duty that night. Confederate Gen. Bushrod Johnson says that the troops that met this charge were the first brigade of Mahone's Division, with the Twenty-fifth and Forty-ninth North Carolina, and the Twenty-sixth and part of the Seventeenth South Carolina Regiments. It was no discredit to what was left of these regiments that they were repulsed by a force like that.
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"Finally, about 7.30 A.M. we got the order for the colored division to charge. My brigade followed Siegfried's at the double-quick. Arrived at the "crater," a part of the first brigade entered; the "crater" was already too full, that I could easily see. I swung my column to the right. The pits were different from any in our own lines—a labyrinth of bomb-proofs and magazines, with passages between. My brigade moved gallantly on right over the bomb-proofs and over the men of the first division. As we mounted the pits, a deadly enfilade from eight guns on our right and a deadly cross-fire decimated us. Among the officers the first to fall was the gallant Fessenden of the Twenty-third Regiment. Ayres and Woodruff of the Thirty-first dropped, killed within a few yards of Fessenden. Liscomb of the Twenty-third fell to rise no more, and then Hackiser of the Twenty-eighth, and Flint and Aiken of the Twenty-ninth. Major Rockwood of the Nineteenth then mounted the crest, and fell back dead with a cheer on his lips. Nor were these all, for at this time hundreds of heroes "carved in ebony" fell. These black men commanded the admiration of
every beholder on that day. The most advantageous point for the purpose having been reached, we leaped from the works and endeavored to make a rush for the crest."

He says of the death of his aide, Lieutenant Pennell of the Nineteenth Regiment: "Capt. Marshal L. Dempsey and Lieut. Christopher Pennell of my staff, and four white orderlies with the brigade guidon, accompanied me, closely followed by Lieut.-Col. Ross leading the Thirty-first Regiment. At the instant of reaching the works, Ross was shot down, the next officer in rank, Captain Wright, was shot as he stooped over him. The men were largely without leaders, and their organization was destroyed. Two of my four orderlies were wounded, one flag in hand, the remaining two sought shelter, when, Lieutenant Pennell, rescuing the guidon, hastened down the line outside the pits, with his sword uplifted in his right hand and the banner in his left, he sought to call out the men along the whole line of the parapet. In a moment a musketry fire was focussed upon him individually, whirling him round several times before he fell. Of commanding figure,
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his bravery was so conspicuous, that according to Colonel Weld's testimony a number of his (Weld's) men were shot, because, spell-bound, they forgot their own shelter in watching the superb boy, who was the only son of an old Massachusetts clergyman, and to me was as Jonathan was to David. Two days later with a flag of truce I searched in vain for his body. He was doubtless shot literally to pieces, for the leaden hail poured incessantly for a long time about that spot, and he probably sleeps among the unknown whom we buried in the long deep trenches we dug that day."

The changing of the arrangements during the night before the charge at Petersburg whereby General Ledlie's division was substituted for the colored division to lead the assault, no doubt was the cause of the failure of the Union forces to cut the rebel army in two and have ended the war at that time.

General Grant said in his evidence before the committee on the conduct of the war, "General Burnside wanted to put his colored division in front, and I believe if he had done so it would have been
a success. Still I agreed with General Meade as to his objection to that plan. General Meade said, 'If we put the colored troops in front (we had only one division) and it should prove a failure, it would then be said, and very properly, that we were shoving these people ahead to get killed, because we did not care anything about them. But that cannot be said if we put white troops in front.'"

Had the colored troops led the assault, their subsequent attack proved they would have led the way clear through the enemy's entire line, on to Cemetery Hill, and the other troops would have followed, and the awful slaughter by an enfilading fire at the "crater" been prevented, and the fight would have been in the rear of the enemy's works, with their army cut in twain.

The rebel General Forrest unwittingly contributed, perhaps, to the successes of colored troops, but hereafter let no man say that black troops, led by graduates of Harvard and Yale, and the sons of the first families of the North, will not fight.

One night our regiment was detailed for picket duty, and relieved some troops nearly in front of
“Fort Hell.” The ground between the two armies at this place was covered with slashed timber, which made it almost impassable. I had been on duty the day before as brigade officer of the day, and therefore did not accompany the regiment. About eleven o'clock Captain Fletcher, the senior captain on duty, who had charge of that portion of the picket line, sent word to General Ferrero that he needed more officers, as at many places the lines were very close, and the firing had increased since he went on the line. I was ordered, together with Captain Pitts, and a young lieutenant who had reported for duty but the day before (being the only officers left in the regiment) to report immediately to Captain Fletcher on the picket line. He sent Captain Pitts to an exposed place on the line at an angle. There was a house a few yards in front, from which sharpshooters picked off our men. The lieutenant was very anxious to be sent where he could see some fighting, and was sent in with Captain Pitts. I was sent to take charge of the left half of the line occupied by our regiment. About noon the next day I moved down to the centre of the line where Captain
Fletcher was. We had only been in conversation a moment when the little lieutenant came rushing from the post, saying, "Captain Pitts is killed! Captain Pitts is killed!" He was engaged in firing at the sharpshooters in the house. The men would load and he would fire, and he had been doing so for some time. A sharpshooter had climbed a tree a little distance from the line, and the angle brought the captain's head in view from his position in the tree, and he shot him through the head. His body was brought out, and the lieutenant who was so anxious the night previous to get into a dangerous place was entirely satisfied.

For deeds of personal daring and heroism that came under my observation, I saw none that excelled what I saw among colored troops.

In the line of works in front of Petersburg during the siege, the picket line in front of a certain fort was crowded back so close to our works by the rebel picket line that it was very uncomfortable and dangerous for the gunners in the fort. A colored sergeant conceived the project of extending our picket line farther to the front, by capturing a portion of
IN BURNSIDE'S CORPS.

their picket line. Accordingly, one dark night, with the detail in his charge, he dashed through their line, doubled them up for a considerable distance, capturing many prisoners, and establishing our line much more advanced than before, and maintained his ground. The line thus established was held until the capture of Petersburg and Richmond. This bold undertaking resulted in making life in the fort and along the line at that place much more safe and less arduous, a feat a general officer might have been proud to have planned and executed.

The last of December, 1864, we left our quarters, which were the sixth we had erected for the winter, and marched to join the Twenty-fifth Corps in the Army of the James, General Weitzel commanding. After a long march through rain and snow, plodding along all day in deep slush and mud, from a position on the extreme left of our army near Hatcher's Run, being thoroughly soaked and besmeared with mud to above the knees, we arrived at a place in our lines at Bermuda Hundred after dark. The weather had changed to extreme cold, so that our clothing became frozen stiff. Our regiment was detailed for
picket, and relieved some white troops, who had a tacit understanding with the enemy not to fire on each other's relief when changing. This was in the night, and at daylight we stood facing the rebels, only a few rods apart. They were evidently angry at being confronted by negroes, and to some of the conversation of the officers replies were made that boded trouble. There was no firing at this part of the line by the pickets, but I anticipated there would be. Suddenly, at the sound of a trumpet, the firing commenced with a yell and a charge. Taken by surprise so suddenly, the first impulse was to seek shelter in the slashed timber in our rear, but in a moment the officers rallied them and drove back the rebels, who were of Pickett's division (made memorable by their charge at Gettysburg), in strong force, and held our position during the day under an incessant fire. Many were killed by the first volley, as they were standing without cover, not expecting such a cowardly attack, and to my mind showed that they were good material for soldiers, and had perfect confidence in their officers. As is well known, it is hard to control men when brought unexpectedly
under fire. Men become used to danger gradually, and can control themselves much easier after being some time under fire.

General Butler commanded the Army of the James at this time, and all appointments in the colored troops were mustered at his headquarters. All the officers who obtained commissions in these troops had to pass a thorough examination by a board organized for that purpose.

A young man went before the board, was examined, and given a second lieutenancy, and was ordered to report to General Butler for muster. He had been a good soldier in the ranks, but was green as to the etiquette existing among officers. General Butler was exacting in this respect, and much of an autocrat. His headquarters were laid out with precision, his tent flanked on either side by his staff, according to rank. Instead of reporting to his adjutant general or commissary of musters, he inquired which General Butler's tent was, and walked in without knocking. Butler sat reading. On hearing some one enter, he cocked that eye up toward him, but said nothing. The soldier said he had been
ordered to report to him to be mustered, but before he was mustered he wanted to ask a few questions, and proceeded to do so, Butler meanwhile remaining silent. When he got through Butler said, "Young man, when you die and go to heaven, I hope you won't mistake the throne of grace for an intelligence office."

The last charge at Appomattox was by the black brigades of Generals Doubleday and William Birney, and the last man killed was Captain Falconer, of the Forty-first United States colored troops.

Although General Forrest coldly murdered three-fourths of the garrison at Fort Pillow, making "Fort Pillow" the war cry of the colored troops, there is no record to show that the murders at Petersburg and Fort Pillow were retaliated by the negro soldiers. General Hincks's division of colored troops captured over three hundred prisoners in one assault, and many of these rebels are still alive through the magnanimity of their former slaves. Gen. James B. Steadman, in reporting his action at the battle of Nashville, says: "The largest part of the losses, amounting to fully twenty-five per cent. of the men
of my command who went into the action, fell on my colored troops, and I was unable to discover that color made any difference in the fighting of my command.

One chivalric southern captain gave as a reason for the rebels fleeing before the colored troops, "that we could not expect the sons of southern gentlemen to fight 'niggers.'" After such fighting of 186,097 men they earned free American citizenship for themselves and their race forever.
PERSONAL NARRATIVES
OF EVENTS IN THE
War of the Rebellion,
BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE
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KEARSARGE

AND

ALABAMA.

BY

WILLIAM H. BADLAM,

[Late Engineer Corps, U. S. Navy.]

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KEARSARGE AND ALABAMA.

On the 5th day of February, 1862, the sloop-of-war *Kearsarge*, a new vessel of about one thousand tons, commanded by Capt. Charles W. Pickering, sailed from Portsmouth Navy Yard down the Piscataqua river, past the Isles of Shoals, out to sea. The course was set to the southward and eastward, and in a short time we ran into the Gulf Stream and came into rough weather, which lasted for three days, making things wet and uncomfortable. Our hatch combings were low and the seas that came aboard would strike them and pour down the hatches until it became necessary to batten down and put on the storm hoods. The captain's gig was taken out of the davits by a large sea and lost overboard.

We proceeded on our way to Madeira, and had fairly good weather. We lay at anchor at Funchal
two or three days and then proceeded to Cadiz, Spain, where on our arrival we learned that the Confederate Steamer Sumter was anchored under the guns of Gibraltar, guarded by the United States Steamer Tuscarora, which was lying at anchor in the port of Algeziras, a Spanish town across the bay from Gibraltar.

We relieved the Tuscarora and kept a sharp lookout on the Sumter for some months, ready to go out in case she made a move. By laying in Spanish waters we were free to go out without waiting for twenty-four hours after she had departed, which we should have been obliged to do if we lay at Gibraltar in English waters.

We varied the monotony a little by steaming to the town of San Roque, which was nearer Gibraltar, or by taking a little run into the Mediterranean, or in going to Tarifa and sometimes across to Ceuta and Tangiers in Morocco. These were all short runs and scarcely out of sight of the Sumter.

On Sunday, June 13, 1862, while lying at Algeziras, most of the officers having gone to San Roque to the bull fight, all of our boats except the
dingy were sent ashore to bring them aboard. At half-past six in the afternoon a large fish was seen coming in the bay from the Mediterranean, with its fin projecting some sixteen or eighteen inches above the water. This fish which we all supposed to be a sunfish, came in slowly, and when about a half mile away from the ship on the starboard side, the executive officer who had the deck at the time, called away the dingy, and sent some men with a harpoon after the fish; just as the dingy cleared the side, the fish dove and came up again a little farther from the ship and then showed his flukes and dived deeper.

The dingy had reached the place where the fish went down and the men were laying on their oars waiting for it to come up again. While the boat was pulling away from the ship the men were piped in bathing.

One of the men dived from the bow and commenced swimming towards the boat, but was ordered to return by the officer of the deck. He swam around the bow to the port side where the rest of the men were, some fifty or sixty being in the water at that time.
Soon all hands commenced yelling and shouting that a shark was among them. Going to the port side and looking over, we saw a large shark which had attacked one of the men and had struck him with such force that he was thrown up out of the water. This was the same man that swam out after the dingy.

The shark losing his chance for him, made for another man named Tibbetts, and after quite a struggle missed him, the man swimming for dear life toward the ship, all the others making frantic efforts to reach the side or to get hold of the rope ladders hanging from the boom.

But the shark made another dash for Tibbetts and turning on his side took him under, coming up again not more then twenty feet from the side of the ship, the men threw lines and boards out, but it was too late, poor Tibbetts' head hung limp and lifeless. Just at this time the dingy came round the bow and the shark went down taking the man in his mouth with him, about four fathoms under water. The water was so clear that they could be seen distinctly, and Tibbetts' body was trailing along
side of the shark with his right arm extended up over its shoulder. The men in the dingy could do nothing to save the body or capture the shark at such a distance under water. The shark would have measured from eighteen to twenty feet in length, and belonged to the species commonly known as "Ground Shark."

In the latter part of the summer and in the fall of 1862 we spent considerable time in the Atlantic waters looking out for suspicious vessels and blockade runners which put in at the Azore Islands and Madeira.

While cruising about the Azores and looking in at the different ports we found some people at Santa Cruz, on the island of Flores, who had been set ashore by the Alabama only a short time previous.

The winter of 1862-1863 was spent at La Carraca, Spain, at the Spanish Navy Yard, repairing our stern bearing, which had worn down to such an extent that it was not safe to continue our cruising under steam. It took from the first of December, 1862, until the middle of March, 1863, to have the work finished, a job that ought not to have taken
more than three weeks at the longest, if done in the United States.

About April 1, 1863, Captain Pickering and our executive officer were relieved by Capt. John A. Winslow and Lieut.-Commander James S. Thornton. Soon after this change of officers and while lying at anchor in the bay of Horta, Fayal, the plan of protecting the engines and boilers with the spare cables hung in bights over the sides, as suggested by Lieut.-Commander Thornton, was decided upon; the engineer's department making the iron work and the ship's carpenter putting them on. After the chain was hung the whole surface was covered with inch boards to prevent the sea from washing it adrift, some parts only being lashed together with marline, the ends and bottom being finished with beveled pieces so as not to reduce our speed. After three days work we had the job completed, and after painting the new wood covering, it was scarcely distinguishable at a short distance.

We sighted a large two smoke pipe steamer off Terceira one noon, and gave chase until about 10 o'clock at night, when we lost sight of her in the
dark, having gained about three miles on her during that time, but never ascertained what vessel it was.

On May 12th, we arrived at the town of Ribiera Quinte, on the Island of St. Michael. This is the island that has the appearance of a truncated cone at a distance, which is caused by the volcanic mountains and its crater. On our arrival here the captain and four other officers took donkeys with drivers to go to the interior of the island to the crater, about ten miles from shore. We spent two hours in reaching the crater, where we stopped over night.

During the ascent we passed over the edges of precipices in foot paths not wide enough for two to pass, and could sit on our donkeys' backs and look to a depth which appeared to be straight down the mouth of the crater thousands of feet. We arrived in the latter part of the afternoon, had our supper and retired early to bed. In the morning we were up at day break, took our hot sulphur baths and then had breakfast. Our hotel or stopping place was in the crater, and there were boiling springs issuing from the crevices of the pumice rock in
every direction, throwing out clouds of vapor and steam which were visible for miles.

Later, while lying at Fayal, an English blockade runner, the *Juno*, came into port for coal, but not having proper clearance papers was not allowed to take any aboard, whereupon she started for the Island of Terceira, about ninety miles distant. As soon as she was underway we hoisted anchor; and when it was clear of the bottom started after her at full speed, that is, at as full speed as we could make, with the anchor and five fathoms of chain dragging after us, which we did not stop to heave in. We fired a shot at her but it fell short and she drew out of sight at night. We found her lying at anchor in the harbor of Terceira on our arrival there in the morning, when her captain came on board our ship, and demanded why we had chased and fired a shot at his vessel. Captain Winslow informed him that it was for him to heave to, and that he should follow him out when he departed.

Captain Taylor of the *Juno* said he should go out in broad daylight and we might catch him if we could. He evidently was not aware of our dragging
the anchor. We arranged our cable with a buoy ready to slip anchor at a moment's notice, and lay under steam for two days, when at about noon time we saw that preparations were being made for her to depart, and it was not long before she got under-way and kicked up a tremendous fuss with her paddle wheels. We slipped our cable and started after her. Everything was so completely ready in the engine and fire rooms that the boilers were making steam rapidly, a vacuum had been formed in the condenser; the engines had been moved by hand and the steam used in every possible way to prevent it from blowing off at the escape pipe. We had been under way but a few minutes when Thornton came to the engine room hatch and gave the order to slow down, saying we should run over her before she got out of the harbor. She dodged in and out among the rocks, when finally she went between two large ones, making a short cut around the island, where there was just room enough for her to pass, but not enough for us.

As she went through the captain of the Juno bid us good-bye, and waved his hat at us as a farewell.
We kept outside, and about five o'clock came up with her clear of the island. We fired a shot for her to heave to; she stopped, and we sent an officer aboard to examine her papers which were not satisfactory, then a crew was sent aboard to take possession of and to search her; remaining all night; but being unable to find anything contraband, as we had no way of getting the freight and coal out of her in mid ocean, we took her to off the port of Fayal, and after consultation with the American Consul she was allowed to depart.

You never saw an angrier man than Captain Taylor, when we boarded his vessel. He looked as if he would explode. His face was quite flushed, probably owing to the brandy he had aboard. We afterwards heard of her capture going out of Wilmington, North Carolina.

The *Kearsarge* was a fast steamer for those days, and had made an average of thirteen and a half knots with moderate head wind and sea from daylight until 10 o'clock at night during a chase.

On Sept. 7, 1863, we left Madeira for the English channel, touching at Lisbon, Portugal, and
Ferrol, Spain. Here we head that the Confederate Steamer *Florida* was at Brest, France. We immediately proceeded there looking in at Bordeaux, where two iron clad rams were being built for the Confederates.

We found the *Florida* at Brest, where we remained off and on for about five months. The *Florida* was a two smoke pipe steamer, a little smaller than the *Alabama*, and carried eight rifled guns.

October 30th we heard that the *Georgia* was off the coast of Ireland. We proceeded to Queenstown in a very severe gale, but found that she had gone to Cherbourg. Back again we went to Brest to continue our watch on the *Florida*.

December 5th we started for Queenstown again, this time to land some stowaways that had come aboard when there before.

These stowaways were the cause of considerable diplomatic correspondence, and we returned them to their native soil as soon as we dared to leave the *Florida*.

In the last part of January, 1864, being out of
coals and stores, we were obliged to go to Cadiz to replenish, and returned on the 18th of February to find that the Florida had departed in our absence. Rather a difficult task for one vessel to blockade four or five of the enemy's cruisers, from one to six hundred miles apart.

In the English Channel we performed considerable police duty visiting ports in England, Ireland, France, Belgium and Holland, looking after the Rappahannock, Georgia, and other vessels fitting out for the Confederate Government as fast as we heard of their whereabouts.

When going into the port of Ostend, Belgium, under the charge of a pilot, through his stupidity, we were run on the pier, a massive granite structure, and there we hung for twelve hours before we could get off. We at first thought it premeditated, but finally came to the conclusion that it was through his ignorance. We came off with only the loss of a few sheets of copper from our bottom. After laying at Ostend a few days we proceeded to Flushing, Holland, and went into the dry dock and made repairs.
In order to realize what a scourge the *Alabama* was to American commerce, I will proceed to follow her destructive course from her departure from England.

In October, 1861, the Confederate agents in England made a contract with the Lairds of Liverpool to build a war vessel. In May, 1862, the vessel was launched and called the 290, this being the 290th vessel built by that firm. She cost $255,000.00.

On July 28th, 1862, the 290 was finished and sailed from Birkenhead out of the Mersey river, ostensibly for a trial trip, with a large party of ladies and gentlemen aboard.

After getting out into the Channel a tug met her, took off the guests and landed them on shore, while the 290 proceeded on her voyage, passing around the North coast of Ireland and then set her course for the Island of Terceira, one of the Azores, where she arrived on the 10th of August. On the 18th of August the English barque *Agrippina* arrived, having on board guns, ammunition, coal, stores, etc., for her, which were transferred aboard. On the 28th the English steamer *Bahama* arrived with
Capt. Raphael Semmes and other officers of the Confederate Navy. More guns and stores were transferred from her to the 290. On Sunday, August 24th, the 290 was put into commission and named the Alabama by the authority of the so-called Confederate States Government.

About eighty men were shipped from the three vessels and formed the nucleus of the crew until others could be found that were willing to ship and sign the articles. The Alabama was built for great speed and had a hoisting propeller, so that under sail alone she could cruise about, thus economizing fuel, which was a very important item with her.

On September 5th, the eleventh day after going into commission, the Alabama captured her first prize, the Ocmulgee, a whaling ship, which she burned.

Cruising about the Azores for some days, her course was shaped towards New York, capturing twenty vessels, the Starlight, Ocean Rover, Alert, Weather Gage, Altamaha, Benjamin Tucker, Courser, Virginia, Elisha Dunbar, Brilliant, Emily Farnham, Dunkirk, Wave Crest, Tona-
wanda, Manchester, Lamplighter, Lafayette, Crenshaw, Lauretta, and Baron de Castine. Then steering in a southerly direction towards Martinique, she captured the *Levi Starbuck* and the *T. B. Wales*, arriving there November 18th.

She was here blockaded by the U. S. Steamer *San Jacinto*, but escaped out of the harbor at night of the 19th, the next day. She went from Martinique to the southward to the island of Blanquilla, arriving on the 21st, where she met her store ship the *Aggrippina*, and took coal and stores from her.

After coaling and taking stores she headed northward, going through the Mona Passage to the north of Hayti, capturing two more vessels, the *Parker Cook* and the *Union*. Passing through the Windward Passage, she captured and ransomed the Pacific Mail Steamer *Ariel* from New York to Aspinwall.

Then after laying in the track of the mail steamers for a few days she went to the Arcas Rocks where she took more coal from the *Aggrippina*, which was there waiting for her—finished taking coal on January 5, 1863, and hoisted anchor.

From the mails captured on the *Ariel* Semmes got
the information that an expedition was to leave New York to make an attack on Galveston, Texas. Semmes had calculated the time for the arrival of the fleet at Galveston and was intending to surprise them in the night while laying at anchor, and steam through the fleet pouring in shot and shell from both batteries as he went. But on Sunday, January 11th, when he approached the anchorage, instead of finding the transports there, five vessels of war were made out. Soon one of them was reported to be standing out towards the Alabama, and after dark came up with her. Answering her hail, the Alabama replied, "Her Britannic Majesty's Steamer, Petrel. What vessel is that?" And the answer came back, "The United States Steamer Hatteras." At the same moment Semmes replied, "This is the Confederate Steamer Alabama," and before the Hatteras had fully heard, a broadside from the Alabama's starboard battery was given her at a distance of only fifty or sixty yards.

After twelve or fifteen minutes rapid firing from both vessels, the Hatteras was reported to be sink-
ing, and the firing ceased. Semmes lowered his boats, and soon after the Hatteras went down stern first.

Semmes took the officers and crew aboard the Alabama and paroled them at Port Royal, Jamaica.

The Hatteras, commanded by Lieut.-Commander Blake, was a small, iron side-wheel gunboat, formerly a merchant vessel, and carried a very light battery.

After repairing and coaling ship at Port Royal, the Alabama proceeded to the eastward in the track of vessels bound to and from the East Indies and the Pacific, and the United States, capturing seven vessels, the Golden Rule, Chatelaine, Palmetto, Olive Jane, Golden Eagle, Washington and Bethia Thayer.

She then headed in a southerly direction and along the coast of Brazil, touching at Fernando de Noronha, capturing the John A. Parks, Punjauib, Morning Star, Kingfisher, Charles Hill, Nora, and the Louisa Hatch, which was loaded with 1,000 ton of coal. This was a very fortunate capture for the Alabama, as she was short of fuel.
Semmes had ordered the *Aggrippina* to meet him here so that he might fill up with coal and stores, but he decided to hold on to the *Hatch* until he made sure that the *Aggrippina* had arrived. On entering the harbor he did not find the *Aggrippina* and had the *Hatch* brought in, hauled alongside, and filled his bunkers from her.

Just after finishing taking coal, two American vessels were sighted in the offing. The *Alabama* got up steam and went out to them. They proved to be two whalers, the *Lafayette* and the *Kate Corey*. The *Lafayette* was burned and the *Kate Corey* brought into anchor.

Semmes waited a few days longer for the *Aggrippina*, but not arriving, he went out taking the *Hatch* and *Corey* with him, and burnt them off the island.

On her way from here to Bahia, she captured the *Nye, Dorcas-Prince, Union Jack* and *Sea Lark*.

After leaving Bahia, she proceeded in a northeasterly direction, capturing the *Gildersleeve*, then headed south to a little south of Rio de Janeiro, capturing the *Justina, Jabez Snow, Amazonian, Talisman* and the barque *Conrad*, (which they
commissioned Tuscaloosa, and officered as a tender to the Alabama) and the Anna F. Schmidt.

From here her course was set to the eastward for the Cape of Good Hope, capturing the Express. On July 29th, she anchored in Saldanha Bay, after remaining here one week, put to sea, and captured the bark Sea Bride.

She next went to Table Bay, and then to Simons Bay, where she captured in sight of the town as she went in a bark named the Martha Wenzell, it was finally decided this prize was inside the three mile line and she was released.

On the 28th of August, anchored at Angra Piquina, where the prize Sea Bride was sold. It was about September 25th when the Alabama left the cape for a cruise still farther to the eastward.

After steering south for a short distance her course was set for the Straits of Sunda, by the way of St. Paul's Island. At the entrance of the straits she captured the Amanda, and after passing through captured the Winged Racer and Contest. She sailed as far as the Island of Pulo Condor in Siam, and arrived at Singapore on Dec. 21, 1863. In
going through the Straits of Malacca she captured the *Martaban*, *Highlander* and *Sonora*, and off the coast of India the *Emma Jane*.

Passing westward toward the coast of Africa she passed through the Mozambique Channel to the Cape of Good Hope, thence up towards St Helena, west, to off the coast of Brazil, then northerly, capturing the *Rockingham* April 23rd, and the *Tycoon* on April 27th. She continued her course to the northward, passed the Azores, then to the northeast for the English Channel, and on the 11th day of June, 1864, arrived at Cherbourg, France, having cruised less then two years.

Of the sixty-six vessels captured by the *Alabama*, fifty-two were burned, ten released on bond, the *Hatteras* sunk in action, the *Conrad*, named the *Tuscaloosa*, and commissioned a Confederate cruiser, or tender to the *Alabama*; one sold and one released as an unlawful capture.

The damage inflicted on American shipping by the Confederate cruisers, which were allowed to be fitted out in England, cost the English Government fifteen million, five hundred thousand dollars.
($15,500,000.00,) which was paid to the United States in settlement of the so-called Alabama claims.

On Sunday afternoon, June 12, 1864, while the Kearsarge was at anchor in the Scheldt, off Flushing, Holland, a gun was fired from aboard, and the signal for everybody belonging to the ship to return was hoisted, orders were given to spread the fires and get up steam preparatory to getting under way. The anchor was hoisted and we proceeded to sea, when the captain called all hands to muster on the quarter deck, and informed them that he had received a telegram from Mr. Dayton, the American Minister at Paris, that the Alabama was in the harbor of Cherbourg, where we were going, and he hoped to have the opportunity of meeting her and be able to capture or destroy her.

This information was received with three rousing cheers from the crew, and the men's eyes glistened with excitement and animation at the prospect of having an opportunity to show what they were made of. They were all eager for the fray.

On the way to Cherbourg the crew were occupied
in getting swords and cutlasses sharp, and ready for action. The grind-stones were in constant use. On the 14th of June we steamed into the harbor of Cherbourg at the eastern entrance, taking a good look at the *Alabama* as she lay at anchor. We then proceeded out at the western passage without anchoring, laying off and on outside the breakwater, keeping a sharp lookout, and waiting for her to come out. This was kept up for five days, drilling at guns and seeing that everything was in working order. On Sunday, June 19th, at 10.20 A.M., all hands being at muster on the quarter deck, the captain reading the church service; the lookout on the foretopsail yard reported to the officer of the deck that the *Alabama* was coming out. The captain took the trumpet and called all hands to quarters, and ordered the ship cleared for action.

Orders came to the engine room to start all the fires (we had been running under half steam) and to be prepared for action. Our bow was turned away from the shore and we steamed out toward the middle of the English Channel, so that the engagement should take place outside of the three mile
KEARSARGE AND ALABAMA.

limit, and also that the Alabama might not be able to run in shore in case she attempted to get away.

The Alabama was convoyed to the distance of three miles from shore by the French iron clad frigate, La Couronne. The Alabama continued her course out, and the French frigate returned in shore.

After Winslow was satisfied that the Alabama was well outside of French waters, the Kearsarge was put about and headed straight for her.

At a very long range the Alabama commenced firing, thinking that she might do us some damage by raking shot, but they mostly fell short or went clear of us, some passing over.

As we approached her we sheared off, giving her a broadside from our starboard battery at a distance of about one thousand yards, intending to run under her stern and rake her, but perceiving our intention, Semmes wisely kept his broadside to us, using his starboard battery. The tide was setting to the westward and our maneuvering commencing a little to the eastward of the harbor on a circle, each vessel being on opposite sides, the engagement took place in panoramic form, directly
in front of Cherbourg, about six miles distant, in plain view of thousands of people that had come to witness the fight; it having been reported in Paris Saturday evening that we were to meet on Sunday morning. The engagement lasted one hour and two minutes, each vessel using their starboard battery and moving in a circle, both around a common centre.

During the early part of the fight it did not seem to Captain Winslow that our shot or shell were doing much damage, and he decided to fight her at closer quarters. We shortened the distance between us, and could see by the confusion on her deck that we had not wasted our ammunition.

After an hour's fighting the Alabama attempted to set sail and run in shore, the order of four bells (ahead fast) was given to the engine room; we forged ahead, and were in a position to rake her fore and aft, but she was too far gone, and had commenced to settle when she hauled down her colors and soon showed a white flag over her stern, and sent a boat alongside of us and surrendered. She was now about five miles from shore.
When we brought her port side in view, we saw that where our shell had made only small holes in entering, that on exploding within they had opened large gaps in her side. Then the Alabama sank, going down stern first, with her bow high in the air, leaving the crew struggling in the water. The Deerhound, an English steam yacht, which had been lying at a safe distance in shore, steamed under our stern, and Captain Winslow requested her commander to assist him in saving the crew, as most of our boats were disabled; we had only two boats that would float, and they were sent to pick up the men. While they were thus engaged it was observed by the officers of our vessel that the Deerhound was steaming towards the English coast, and evidently going away with our prisoners. Permission was asked by some of the officers to heave her to, but the captain refused, saying that the commander of an English yacht would not do such a thing as to carry the men away, but was only steaming about and would return with the prisoners to our ship; but it was not so. She went off with Semmes and
a number of the officers and crew, and landed them in Southampton, England.

I will say that our boat's crews were out, and that it might have been possible that the rescued men would have overpowered them; and it would certainly have been a very grave error to have followed the yacht and left the men under such circumstances.

After we had picked up all the men we could find in the water, and had taken them from one of the French pilot boats that had brought them alongside, making in all seventy men and officers, we steamed into the harbor of Cherbourg and came to anchor.

The captain sent an officer ashore to visit the admiral of the port, to obtain permission to land the prisoners on parole, and also to be permitted to send the wounded of both vessels to the Marine Hospital, which was granted.

Virtually, the Alabama was an English ship, with English guns, manned by an English crew, sunk in the English Channel, and Semmes and other officers were run away with by an English yacht.

During the engagement a one hundred and ten-
pound rifle shell entered the bulwarks and exploded, wounding three of our after pivot gun’s crew; but everybody was working with such coolness and precision that no more notice was taken of the casualty than to have them taken below to the surgeon on the berth deck for medical attendance.

We were struck twenty-eight times in hull and rigging, which caused the following damages: A one hundred and ten-pound rifle shell struck the roof of the engine house, cutting it completely through and across, knocking the splinters and glass in all directions into the engine room below, and it became necessary to set the men to sweeping them up to prevent them from getting into the machinery.

A shell entered the smoke pipe and exploded inside, tearing out a space on the port side about three feet in diameter, cutting a boat hanging on the davits full of small holes with the fragments.

Another one hundred and ten-pound shell struck a glancing blow under the counter and deflecting, entered the rudder post and remained there, but did not explode; nor did it jam the rudder so that
it could not be used; situated as this shell was, it would have done us very serious damage had it exploded.

One shot carried away the starboard life buoy.

Three thirty-two-pound shot went through the port bulwarks forward of mizzen mast.

A shell exploded at after end of after pivot gun port. Another shell exploded at after end of chain plating. Two shot struck below plank sheer, abreast of boiler room hatch, one in plank sheer of forward pivot gun port, one forward of fore rigging, two through port quarter boat, and also a number striking in the shrouds and rigging doing more or less damage.

Before we went into the fight an American flag was sent to the main truck in a stop; towards the end of the fight one of the Alabama's shot struck the halyards, and breaking the stop let the flag loose to the breeze; this was considered a very good omen by our old salts.

The crew of each vessel was as follows: Kearsarge, one hundred and sixty-three, all told; the Alabama, about the same number, as near as could be ascer-
tained at the time, although her crew had numbered as high as one hundred and seventy a short time before.

The *Alabama* had been in Cherbourg a week preparing, and had taken aboard three hundred and fifty tons of coal, which brought her down in the water; while the *Kearsarge* had only one hundred and seventy tons aboard, making her very high out of water.

The size of the two vessels was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alabama</th>
<th>Kearsarge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length of keel</td>
<td>210 ft.</td>
<td>199 ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beam</td>
<td>32 &quot;</td>
<td>33 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth</td>
<td>17 &quot;</td>
<td>16 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonnage</td>
<td>1040</td>
<td>1031</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Armament—

**Kearsarge**

- 4 short 32s.
- 2 11-inch smooth bores.
- 1 30-pound rifle.

**Total**

7 guns.

**Alabama**

- 1 7-inch Blakely rifle, 110 pounds.
- 1 8-inch smooth bore.
- 6 long 32s.

**Total**

8 guns.
The total number of shot and shell fired by the *Kearsarge* was one hundred and seventy-three, while it was stated that the *Alabama* fired about three hundred and seventy.

The repairs were all made by our own men, and we continued cruising in the English Channel.

During the war the services performed by the navy were of the greatest value. Thirty five hundred miles of sea coast were effectually blockaded, besides the patroliing of the rivers, bayous and other inland waters.

Its engagements with Confederate vessels, forts and coast defences were many and successful.

In the Mississippi, Tennessee, Red, Cumberland and other rivers, the navy was continually performing active service, encountering batteries, sharp shooters, torpedoes and obstructions of all sorts, requiring constant vigilance, and causing great hardships night and day. The value of the assistance rendered the army by the navy was incalculable, and its presence was a necessity in most of the important movements, the enemy always keeping a respectful distance on the approach of a gunboat.
Thousands of heroic deeds were performed, and hundreds of brave men lost their lives in the performance of their perilous duties aboard ship and on shore.

The decisive work of the navy during the war of the Rebellion made the success of the North possible; and while a nation is bestowing encomiums upon the soldier, the sailor should certainly receive his full share.

Life aboard ship is rather monotonous. The officers and crew, each and all, have their regular routine duty when at sea and when in port. At sea the deck officers and the engineers have their four hours on duty and eight hours off. While the crew have watch and watch, or four hours on and four hours off. Night and day, stormy or pleasant, hot or cold, it makes no difference, except in very severe storms, when all hands are on duty until it abates.

At anchor things are different; then an anchor watch is set of only a few men, while the rest are turned in. The officers have day's duty, that is from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. every third day and one watch of four hours each night. This is the time the officers
have a round of gaiety, receiving invitations to receptions, balls, dinners, theatres, bull fights, etc., according to the country they may be in. Then entertainments in return are given aboard ship, such as dinners, dances, minstrel shows, etc., which the guests seem to enjoy very much.

The officers also make journeys into the interior, often for a week or more at a time, this depending of course on the duty the ship is performing. For instance while the Kearsarge was undergoing repairs at La Carracca Navy Yard, in Spain, I visited Jerez (or Sherry as we call it), where the famous Sherry wine is made, Sevilla, Madrid, Santa Maria, Cadiz, Gibraltar and other interesting places. I also visited Paris and London when our ship was in France and England, and Bruges, Middleburg, Antwerp and Cologne while in Belgium and Holland.

This is the pleasant side and quite different from blockading the Sumter at Gibraltar, chasing blockade runners at the Azores, or watching the Florida at Brest, Rappahannock at Calais, and cruising in the English Channel and Bay of Biscay all winter on the qui vive for anything that may occur either night or
day, with steam up when at anchor, and everything kept in readiness to get under way and go at a moment’s notice whenever our presence was required, encountering terrific gales, lasting some times two or three days, and liable at any moment to mishaps while cruising near shore.

In the latter part of August we started on our way home, stopping at Fayal. Then running due south to the St. Paul rocks, which are situated about two degrees north and almost in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, without any light or beacon, in fact nothing to mark their location.

We landed here with a boat while the Kearsarge lay off at a short distance, and found that they were comprised of two or three perfectly barren rocks of a few acres in extent and about twenty or thirty feet high, inhabited only by sea fowl, which were on their nests attending to their parental duties.

We proceeded to the southward to the Island of Fernando de Noronha, a penal settlement belonging to Brazil and then to off Pernambuco, northwest to Barbadoes. While laying here two steamers were sighted in the offing showing the American colors.
We proceeded out of the harbor and found the United States Steamer *Wachusett* on her way to the United States with the Confederate Steamer *Florida*, which she had captured by boarding, and taken out of the harbor of Bahia, we relieved her of part of the *Florida's* crew and brought them home with us.

From there we went to St. Thomas, our last port before reaching Boston, where we arrived on Nov. 7, 1864, at about 1 a. m. We were given a reception and banquet by the city government in Faneuil Hall, it being the second time its doors had been thrown open for a like occasion. The first was in 1812, when Captain Hull commanding the frigate *Constitution* came into Boston harbor with the crew captured from the English frigate *Guerriere*, which she had destroyed in an engagement on the high seas.

We were banquetted at the Revere House by the merchants of Boston, receiving a most enthusiastic welcome from all. In a few days the crew were discharged, and the officers were detached, finishing the cruise of one of the most famous of American naval steamers.
NOTE.

On Feb. 2, 1894, at about 7 o'clock p. m., the Kearsarge, while on her way from Port au Prince to Bluefields, Nicaragua, to protect American interests, was run on to Roncador-reef, situated in the Caribbean Sea, Lat. N. 13° 34' 30'', Long. 80° 5' 39'' W., a very low and treacherous coral formation in almost a direct line between the two ports. The Court of Inquiry has convened, and in a short time the cause of her sad fate will be known.

W. H. B.

Feb. 26, 1894.
PERSONAL NARRATIVES
OF EVENTS IN THE
War of the Rebellion,
BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE
RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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FROM

ANDERSONVILLE

to

FREEDOM.

BY

CHARLES M. SMITH.

[Late of Company E, First Massachusetts Cavalry.]

PROVIDENCE:
PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.
1894.
[Edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies.]
FROM ANDERSONVILLE TO FREEDOM.

We have a great many war lectures, magazine articles and histories of the war, but this evening I wish to tell you the simple story of my personal experience—of no great historical value, perhaps, and yet I may bring to your attention one feature of the war a little out of the ordinary, and which may not be altogether uninteresting.

It is but natural that the vastness of operations on land and sea, during the war of 1861 to 1865 should overshadow all minor events; and when we think of the war, our thought is likely to be of the two million two hundred thousand enlistments in the Northern Army alone; of the four hundred thousand deaths in the same army on battle-field and by disease; of the three millions of dollars used daily for war expenses, of Shiloh, of Vicksburg, of Gettysburg, the Wilderness, or Cold Harbor. But, during
the last years of the war, while thousands were fighting and falling on the field of battle, other thousands were spending lingering weeks and months under circumstances more trying and fatal than those of the battlefield. And those men who waited and starved, and wasted away in foul and loathsome prison pens while the war was brought to a close, did valiant service for the country, and displayed fortitude, courage and heroism which should never be forgotten.

On the 17th of September, 1861, at the age of nineteen, I enlisted in Company E, First Massachusetts Cavalry, and served three years and three months. Leaving the State in 1861, we spent the time until August, 1862, on the "Sunny Isles of the Sea" in the vicinity of Port Royal harbor, South Carolina. The regiment then joined the Army of the Potomac, in the battles of which we engaged, and whose fortunes and fate we shared, being identified with its history from the first Maryland campaign until the close of the war.

Late in November, 1863, General Meade, with the Army of the Potomac, crossed the Rapidan River and
advanced as far as Mine Run. Finding the enemy strongly fortified, our army withdrew, and no great battle was fought. At this time, Nov. 29, 1863, a part of our regiment was doing picket duty along the Orange plank road, near Parker's store. (This is south of the Rapidan River, near the scene of the battle of the Wilderness fought by Grant and Lee early in May, 1864, in Spottsylvania County, Va.) We were surprised by Wade Hampton's division of Gen. J. E. B. Stuart's cavalry, and without the least warning, they were at once upon us.

I was off duty, dozing by a small camp fire, when I was suddenly aroused by a comrade vigorously shaking me and exclaiming, "Wake up, Charley! Wake up, Charley! They are right here! They are right here!" and the next sound that greeted my ears was: Ping! ping! zip! zip! It seemed as if the thicket all around was full of whistling bullets. As we were under cover of wood, we held the enemy at bay some moments, but soon they bore down upon us at a charge, and we were swept along as by a storm. I was run down on the plank road by a Confederate officer, who eagerly demanded my surrender; and, as
he held his revolver within a foot of my face and had a large force at his back, there was no alternative. He called me a "Yankee" with a-prefix. I was obliged to dismount, and was marched away to a place where I found ten members of my company, and others, also prisoners. Next day we were marched to Orange Court House, placed on cars and sent to Richmond. We went on to Belle Isle at ten o'clock at night, Dec. 1st, 1863. The island is on the James River, nearly opposite Richmond, a little farther up the stream. At that time the prison enclosure on the lower extremity of the island comprised three or four acres, surrounded by a ditch six feet wide and two and one-half feet deep, the earth from the ditch having been thrown outside and formed into an embankment, just beyond which sentinels were stationed.

Our condition during the winter was deplorable beyond description. We suffered from cold. There were about four thousand prisoners on the island. The ground was nearly covered with condemned Confederate tents; these were crowded with occupants. New comers lived in the ditch, and there
some of them slept their last sleep, and were found frozen to death in the morning. Wood was issued at long intervals, but in very limited quantity. This we cut into pieces the size of a match, and digging a hole in the earth we would build a fire in it to economize the heat. Over this fire we could place a little cup of water, toast a piece of corn bread, put it in the water and call it "James River coffee." But we had no fire by which to warm ourselves, even when anchor ice floated in the river and snow was on the ground.

At first our party, eleven, all from Company E, lived in the ditch; then we got a tent large enough to cover all. But, when lying in the tent, five on one side, six on the other, with heads along the outside and feet toward the centre, we lapped by each other the entire length of our lower limbs, and were packed so closely that when one turned over all on that side of the tent must turn. The signal would be given, "Let's turn over;" five turn, or six turn. But we were fortunate to get a tent and remain together. We suffered from hunger. Our rations were chiefly corn bread, made of coarse meal; the
boys always declared the cob was ground with the corn, and some said they found pieces of stalk in their bread. Occasionally meat was given us, also boiled rice, and sometimes from a gill to a half-pint of pea soup. For nineteen consecutive days we received each day only two pieces of this coarse bread, each piece the size of a two and one-half inch cube. And this when we were in a starving condition. As our stay continued, hunger increased.

The first day I was on the island I had a small piece of bacon which had rolled around in my haversack, and was covered with dust and crumbs. I commenced paring it, and throwing the outside on the ground. I noticed a crowd collecting, the pieces were eagerly gathered from the ground, and with bony arms and skinny hands upstretched the starving fellows cried, "Don't throw that on the ground, give it to me, give it to me!" Tossing the piece among the crowd, I exclaimed, "Take it all, if you want it!" Later I would have been glad to have picked it from the ground and eaten it. I saw one new comer, when dry boiled rice was issued to him, look upon it with contempt, and say, as he threw it
indignantly on the ground, "Do you suppose I am going to eat that stuff without sugar on it." Later, he would have been glad to have picked that rice, kernel by kernel, from the dirt and eaten it.

That there might be some system in the camp in regard to counting us and issuing rations, we were divided into squads of one hundred men each; the squads into five messes of twenty men each. The bread was issued to the squad sergeants, twenty-five loaves to each, at ten o'clock in the morning and four o'clock in the afternoon. Each squad sergeant laid his loaves in five piles of five loaves each. Then, as he touched each pile, and asked "Who shall have this?" some one, with back toward the bread, would designate "Mess No. 1," — Mess No. 3;" and so particular were the prisoners, and so jealous lest they might not get their exact share of this very indifferent food, that the phraseology of the question must not be changed, else there would be suspicion of collusion and fraud, and a row started at once. It would not do to say, "Who shall have this?" "Who shall have this?" "And this." There must not be the variation of a word, or any change in
tone or emphasis. Then the mess sergeant divided each loaf into four equal parts, and these were "touched off" in the same manner to the individuals of the mess. And if, in cutting this coarse bread, a piece of the crust broke across the line, that piece of crust must be divided and each part placed where it belonged, else there might have been a fight. It was my duty to cut the bread for our mess, and this is the knife I used; an ordinary table knife, worth five or ten cents; but I would not sell it for fifteen cents. It was not sharp at the point then; later on I will tell why it is so now.

Our ranks were constantly being thinned by death, and hence it was claimed from time to time that we were drawing too many rations—drawing one hundred rations when there were but seventy or eighty men in a squad—therefore we were occasionally counted. This was called "squading off." We were all turned out of the enclosure; often in the cold, piercing wind that swept along the James River during the winter, and as we passed back in single file were counted. Each squad was filled up to the full number of one hundred men. This would
occupy nearly the whole day. On such days no rations were issued. Though we were starving, no food was given us from four o'clock in the afternoon until ten o'clock in the forenoon of the second day following, in all forty-two hours.

We also suffered from lack of sanitary regulations and from filth. Though allowed to go down a narrow lane to the river in the day time, at night the camp was closed, and in the morning was in appearance worse than a cattle-yard. Filth breeds vermin—of one syllable. There were millions of them. They were fond of a warm lodging place at night. So in the morning we would find wrinkles in our clothing level full. They would also get into our hair. I have here a comb which I used on the island. Taking this in the morning, drawing it through my hair, holding my soldier cap on my hand, I have counted thirty or forty, caught on the top of it at one pull. You need not feel uneasy; I think there are none there now, nor in the comb. This experience may seem amusing as it is told now, but it was a fight for life against the vermin then.

It was our task once or twice each day to look over
every article of clothing and skirmish up and destroy the enemy, else the life blood would have been sapped out of us. Worst of all that we endured was mental suffering. Thoughts of home and anxious ones there were ever in our minds. Thoughts of "something to eat." This was the topic of talk night and day. What we would like to eat. What we once had to eat. Dreams of tables spread with luxuries would haunt our sleep, and waking we would feel the gnawing pain of hunger like a coal of fire in the stomach, which would keep us awake until morning. The thought was ever in mind,—I am actually starving to death.

Every day of the winter we could see the Stars and Bars waving over the Confederate capitol in Richmond, and the residence of Jefferson Davis was in full view.

Ten cents in money, or a dollar Confed., was the price asked for certain articles on the island. Ten cents in United States money was worth one dollar Confederate money. When I heard this, I felt that the Confederacy was doomed. Its money was next to worthless. You cannot carry on war without the
sinews of war. This depreciation of the Confederate currency went on until a soldier paid a darkey two hundred dollars to hold his horse while the soldier ate his dinner.

We left Belle Island March 15, 1864, and went out of Richmond March 16th. The time of my stay on the island was three and one-half months, from Dec. 1, 1863, to March 15, 1864. In our transportation from Richmond we were placed in box freight cars, from seventy to eighty men in a car. After such a winter, in a half-starved condition, covered with filth and vermin, we were jammed into freight cars without seats and jolted over the worst roads three days and two nights. We then spent one night on the ground in the woods at Charlotte, N. C., and I think I never experienced sweeter rest than I did that night, with the privilege of stretching my limbs and lying flat upon the ground. For in the cars we could not lie down, and when sitting had to draw our knees nearly to our chins, else some would rest upon the limbs of others. We then rode four days and three nights in the same cramped condition; seven days and six nights in the cars with a rest of only one night at Charlotte.
At about four o'clock in the afternoon of the 22d of March, 1864, the train stopped at a small station in southwestern Georgia, and we were removed from the cars and marched away under guard. I asked one of the guards the name of the place. "Camp Winder, where we wind up the Yankees at the rate of forty or fifty a day." There was truth in his grim pun; they did wind up the Yankees, sometimes at the rate of one hundred and fifty a day at that place, which was Andersonville.

We soon reached the stockade and were turned inside. What a picture is presented to my mind and soul as I pronounce this word stockade! Had I the mighty intellect and genius of Dante, or the wierd and fertile imagination of Doré, I could not reproduce the picture. It never can be done. Andersonville will never be known nor understood except by those who were there.

Thirty-one thousand men in a pen, on the bare earth, exposed to the fierce rays of the southern sun, the drenching showers, the cold night dews, covered with vermin and sores; hundreds unable to rise, and many dying every hour of the day and night, writh-
ing in death until half buried like struggling animals
in the sand. These are tame words, and give but a
faint impression of the situation. The horrors of
Andersonville can never be described. The stockade
was built of yellow pine timber, cut on the ground
and hewn into sticks ten to twelve inches square,
twenty-six feet long; these were placed on end side
by side around the enclosure, eight feet in the earth,
eighteen feet above the surface. This was Anderson-
ville stockade, sometimes called by the Confederates
“Camp Winder,” because Captain Winder, son of
General Winder, laid out the camp.

At the top of the stockade were sentry boxes,
reached by stairs from the outside, from which
the sentinels could look down upon the camp.
Extending around the prison, inside the stockade and
twenty feet from it, was the dead line, designated by
a light rail on stakes, about three feet high. To pass
this line was to be shot by the sentinel from his box.
Neither shade nor shelter was afforded us, nor cloth-
ing issued, though some were nearly naked. Some
had been in prison many months, and were reduced
by starvation and wasted by disease.
As the weeks went by, and the hot summer days came and our numbers rapidly increased, our suffering was most intense and pitiable. For some time rations of dry meal were given us. Though a limited quantity of wood was issued, all were not supplied, and many had neither dish nor cup. At that time a half canteen or an old tin can such as one sees kicked about the street would sell for a ten dollar greenback. Prisoners were constantly coming in, and some were fortunate enough to bring money. So, for lack of cooking facilities many wet the meal and ate it as a paste, and some ate it dry.

Crowding and filth were nearly as fatal to the prisoners as starvation. The original enclosure was ten hundred and ten feet long north and south, seven hundred and seventy-nine feet wide east and west, with ground sloping from north and south towards the centre. Through the centre from west to east ran a filthy sluggish stream, four or five feet wide and six inches deep. Along this stream was a swampy quagmire three hundred feet wide containing more than five acres. This stream, which was the receptacle of the offal and filth of our camp, a Confederate camp,
and the prison cook-house, was our water supply. Such a stench arose from this place during the summer that the planters in the vicinity thought they would be obliged to move away.

The original inclosure contained—deducting swamp, and land cut off by dead line—about twelve acres; and this, when the number of prisoners was greatest (thirty-one thousand) gave to each man about seventeen square feet. Not seventeen feet square, but seventeen square feet. The number of square feet required for an ordinary adult's grave is about the same. The stockade was afterward extended to inclose twenty-seven acres. Medical attendance and supplies were very meagre. Hundreds of men were lying about unable to walk, and many of them unable to sit up. The first twenty-two days of June it rained some every day, part of the time very hard, and these helpless ones were exposed to all this, night and day.

The most shocking scenes of prison life it would not be proper for me to relate. And I forbear, for I could break your hearts. After an investigation by the Confederate physicians, Dr. G. S. Hopkins and
Surgeon H. E. Watkins they reported the general causes of disease and mortality to be:

First. The large number of prisoners crowded together.

Second. The entire absence of all vegetables as diet, so necessary as a preventive of scurvy.

Third. The want of barracks to shelter the prisoners from sun and rain.

Fourth. The inadequate supply of wood and good water.

Fifth. Badly cooked food.

Sixth. The filthy condition of the prisoners and prison generally.

Seventh. The morbific emanations from the branch or ravine passing through the prison,—the condition of which cannot be better explained than by naming it a morass of human excrement and mud.

This is Confederate testimony. I said at the time, and I believe it now, if a person had been taken from a home of culture and refinement, and placed in the midst of the thirty-one thousand occupants of Andersonville, his reason would have departed, he would have gone mad. One man of my own com-
pany upon entering the stockade, was shocked at the sight of his surroundings; a look of despair settled upon his features; in three weeks he died.

I must here testify that the purest loyalty and patriotism I ever witnessed was in the prison at Andersonville. Often overtures were made to us to enlist in the Confederate service. These were received with derisive jeers, and though the prisoners were surrounded by the horrors I have described, and the lingering tortures of starvation and even death stared them in the face, they would strike up the "Star Spangled Banner," "Yankee Doodle," "John Brown," and other Union army airs. If the temptation was too great for some weak fellow, and he yielded, to get rations, he had to be run out under guard, to save his head from being broken by his comrades in the prison. I know one doctor who would not go out in the country to live in order to let a southern physician go into the Confederate service.

In November, 1864, Colonel O'Neil of the Tenth Tennessee Confederate Infantry came to the general hospital at Andersonville, and asked the privilege of
addressing the Irish hospital attendants. They were marched outside the hospital inclosure, surrounded by a circle of guards, and Colonel O’Neil addressed them. He told them it was evident there was no hope of exchange, they could see the fate that awaited them. If they would enlist in the Confederate service they would receive food, clothing and comfortable quarters. They would not be required to go to the front and be exposed to death and capture by the northern army, but would be used to do camp, guard and garrison duty, to relieve Confederate troops which would be sent to the front. The Irish Union soldiers listened—turned and went back to the misery and wretchedness of prison life. Every man went back.

I will relate one amusing incident connected with prison life. I know a Connecticut man, John Chapman, Company B, Sixteenth Connecticut Volunteers. His home was in Suffield, Conn., and since the war, while on a visit to my uncle in that town, Chapman told me the story, so I did not get it second-hand. Chapman took into Andersonville a little dog, which had been with him since his enlistment,
two years before, with him at the battles of South Mountain and Antietam, and which was with him when he was captured at Plymouth, N. C. From Andersonville, Chapman with his dog, went to Charleston, then to Florence, S. C., all the time guarding jealously his dog, but one morning, at Florence, the dog was not. Chapman barely lived to reach home. One day, after the war, at a dining-room in Hartford, he overheard a man say, "The sweetest morsel I ever tasted was a little yellow dog I stole, and cooked and ate in Florence prison." Chapman at once said to the man, "Friend, that was my dog."

I can tell you more about Chapman. When he arrived from prison at Camp Parole, Annapolis, Md., where his wife met him, and he was pointed out to her, she exclaimed, "No, that is not my husband! There is nothing about him I can recognize." He was a mere skeleton and wreck. His comrades, who had been with him every day, had to tell her they had been with him all the time, and knew he was the man. And with their earnestness, which amounted almost to indignation, she was persuaded to accept the man on faith, but she had to nurse him
and care for him days before she could discover the man who left her and went forth to serve his country.

I was getting very much reduced when, April 28th, it was discovered that I had the small-pox, and I was sent to the small-pox hospital. This was in a pleasant wood some distance east of south from the prison, where we had room and air, and an opportunity to wash if we survived the disease. The wash for both clothing and person I prized, for I had worn every article of clothing eight months without change or washing. And when I had bathed in the nice clear waters of the creek which ran near the small-pox hospital, and had washed my clothing with soap and water, and boiled it, when I put it on clean, and sweet, and fresh, I was in no mood to dispute the old saying, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness."

The small-pox is a much dreaded disease, but it, no doubt, saved my life. I was so much reduced at the time that the disease was very light in my case. It seems to be most violent with fleshy or corpulent people, and I cannot recommend it to such. We were not guarded at the small-pox hospital, nor did the citizens come near. They did not wish to spread the
disease among their own people. But the swine ran at large, and the young porkers came into the camp. I have called attention to the sharp point of the knife. A tall Tennessean, looking down one day, saw a glistening stone, and he said to me, "Charley, I believe I could rub your knife down to a point on that stone so we could stick some of these pigs with it." So the knife was made into this form that we might stick pigs at the small-pox hospital at Andersonville. Finally pigs were missed. The Confederate steward told our Yankee steward, "The boys must stop killing pigs." The Yankee steward said to us, "Steward says, 'you must not kill any more pigs,' and I say so; but if you find any dead ones, cook and eat them." We found some dead ones after that. The small-pox is a cold weather disease. It died out in the summer. In July the small-pox hospital was abandoned, and on the 19th of that month I was sent to the general hospital as attendant. The most shocking scenes of prison life were witnessed at the general hospital. It was a short distance from the southeast corner of the stockade and consisted of three or four acres surrounded by a high board fence
with one main entrance about fifteen feet wide, with sentinels on either side. Tents were furnished, but many of them were only flys, or simply cloth drawn over a ridge pole and down to the ground on either side, without ends. There were no beds. The patients lay upon the bare earth, or a blanket if fortunate enough to own one.

Only the worst cases were sent from the stockade to the hospital, for it could accommodate only two thousand. It was little more than a halting place between the stockade and the burying-ground. All who died at Andersonville were registered at the hospital, then a number was placed on the book opposite each man's name, and a corresponding number branded on a board was placed at his grave. This, and all the prison labor, was performed by our own men. The number of deaths in August was 2,993, nearly one hundred per day during the month. In September 2,700; during the summer 12,000—a whole city. Two six-mule teams were kept busy drawing the dead to the burying-ground, and in August, when the death rate was so great, three hundred bodies were lying unburied at the dead-
house. It was necessary to employ the whole team-force of the prison, including bread and wood teams, to draw them away.

At one time an inspecting officer came from Richmond, and, shocked by what he saw in the stockade, he ordered a thousand of the poor fellows sent to the hospital. Five hundred were sent out in one day. But there was no room for them, and many were laid on the ground outside the hospital. All day and until after dark the teams were busy drawing them out. After dark, with a comrade, I was taking the men from the wagons. The last two taken from one wagon were dead. We stepped to the next wagon, and as we took hold of a man my comrade said, "Are you dead, too?" He was, also six others on that wagon.

We laid them on the earth in line, nine men. As I looked upon their upturned faces, cold and still in death, under the dim light of the stars, I thought, "these men have waited weeks, months, longing, hoping for exchange, but they will never see it." And I thought, "they all had friends at home who would gladly have cared for them, but will never
greet them again, perhaps never learn their fate.” These men were probably alive when they left the stockade; and this was the condition of many, hovering between life and death.

At the hospital I made the acquaintance of Dr. A. W. Barrows, of Amherst, Mass., a member of the Twenty-seventh Massachusetts Infantry, and A. A. Crandall, of Ulysses, Penn., member of the Fifty-third Pennsylvania Infantry. We planned an escape. It required great caution, study and preparation. We were six weeks in perfecting the plan, during which time we were liable to be detected by spies, or perhaps, betrayed by some one who might gain a knowledge of our plan. The greatest secrecy had to be observed, for had the fact become known to any, it would have occasioned great excitement in camp, and we would at once have become objects of such interest as would have led to our discovery.

The great hope and desire of life with the prisoners was to get out of prison. To get back to America, to “God’s country,” as we used to express it. I wish we might all be as earnest in our desire to reach Heaven as were the prisoners to see once more the
land of home and freedom and plenty and the old flag. So had our purpose been made known, even the friendly interest which would have been manifested in watching the development of our plans might have betrayed us. Then we would probably have been put in the chain gang. Men, sometimes a dozen, chained together at the neck, wrists and ankles. The men were placed in two ranks, and three continuous iron chains, forged together, connected them. Several heavy iron balls were attached to the gang, which they had to swing along if they moved about. If one sat or lay down all must do so.

We had one of Colton's small outline pocket maps. We decided to go west to the Chattahoochee River, cross into Alabama, find the headwaters of the Choctawhatchee River and follow it south through Alabama and Western Florida to its mouth, where it flows into the Choctawhatchee Bay, and where we expected to find the United States gunboats. We collected medicine, matches, salt and food, the latter consisting of biscuit and bacon. The most important article to be obtained was turpentine, for with this applied to our shoes we could baffle the bloodhounds. It counteracts the scent of the man, and prevents the
hounds from following the track. Barrows had access to the medical supplies, and from time to time abstracted small quantities both of turpentine and medicines.

The Yankee steward gave us flour and two pieces of bacon. We had made biscuit in the hospital. By using soda, which could be obtained for ten dollars per pound, (greenback) letting them rise in the sun, and then baking in a cast-iron oven, they would be quite light and nice. But those we wished to carry we pressed as hard as possible to get the most nutriment into the smallest bulk. These supplies we must carry out of the hospital on our persons. This was attended with danger, for smuggling was carried on between the guard and the prisoners, though strictly forbidden by the Confederate authorities, and always punished when detected.

We decided to go out at the main entrance in the daytime when persons were going and coming. The guard and Confederate officers, the Confederate surgeons, the wagons which brought supplies to the hospital were passing in and out during the day. Some of the Yankee hospital attendants held passes from Captain Wirz, which allowed them to go out and
come in between the hours of six in the morning and six in the evening. Dr. Barrows had a pass. Cran-dall was willing to take the chance of being challenged. I was to go out with the doctor, relying upon his influence and prestige, as it was known that he had a pass. It was all a bold stroke and required nerve. The few who attempted to escape tried to go in the night and at some point away from the main entrance, when they were sure to be detected. The best cloak for guilt is an air of innocence. Josh Billings used to say, "People like tu be cheated, but they want tu hav it done by an honest man."

Oct. 9, 1864 was the day decided upon. Crandall took such supplies as he could well conceal and went out first. Barrows wore a Yankee soldier's overcoat, under which were hidden many contraband goods. He also wore boots with trousers legs tucked in, the trousers legs were filled with biscuits. I had neither overcoat nor boots, only a blouse and shoes. I filled my bosom with biscuit.

Then there was a piece of bacon. I was studying what to do with it, when it occurred to me that it would fit the small of my back. It was wrapped in
a thick cloth. I passed it under my suspenders, and let the ends rest on the top of my trousers. It was a fit, but I had to study position. If I stooped to conceal the biscuit in front, the bacon would show at my back. If I stood erect, the biscuit would show in front. Buttoning my blouse at the top and putting my hands in my pockets that it might fall carelessly over the bacon, I practised in the doctor's tent until it was thought I would pass without exciting suspicion.

At two o'clock in the afternoon of the 9th of October, 1864, the doctor and I went out between the two sentinels at the main entrance of the general hospital at Andersonville. Outwardly we were cool and calm, but my heart was in my mouth. We were not challenged, and passed the guard-house where arms were stacked, where were the officers of the guard and guards; went about a mile across a plain, open country by the stockade and Captain Wirz's headquarters to the burying-ground, where we met Cran dall, and bidding good-bye to Andersonville, went into the wood, and started for the north by going west and south. In fifteen minutes after we entered
the wood we heard the sound of voices. We all fell to the ground at once. A party in a wagon passed along a road which crossed our path.

At the South many roads lead through the woods and are not fenced nor indicated in any way, and are worn below the surface so that they would not be noticed by any one traveling at a right angle with the road until close upon it. Fortunately bushes concealed us from this party, and afterward we were very much on the alert not to get caught in the same way. We soon came to the railroad, which we were obliged to cross almost within sight of the Andersonville station. Safely across, we arranged our baggage and started on our perilous and untried experiment.

I wish to say that I realized on that afternoon the meaning of the words freedom, liberty. Though filled with nervous fear and apprehension, for we had not yet tested the efficacy of the turpentine, and knew not at what moment we might hear the baying of the bloodhounds, nature never appeared so beautiful to me as on that never to be forgotten day. It was a delightful Southern October afternoon. The
grass and foliage on the trees appeared so bright and fresh and green, the air so soft and filled with sweet odors and the songs of birds, I felt as if I could leave the earth and walk right up on the atmosphere. I thought of Paradise, and wondered if Adam and Eve were more happy, even while sin was a stranger; of Heaven, and wondered if it could afford more rapture. I felt that I would willingly be shot or torn by the dogs for the privilege of one hour of such enjoyment. This may seem extravagant language, but let no one criticise it who has not had a similar experience.

We traveled all night, walking very fast, sometimes running, taking the precaution to keep the soles of our shoes well wet with turpentine. During the first day out we lay hidden away under the top of a fallen tree, not rising to our feet once, living upon the food we had with us, but with nothing to drink.

Second night, after going a few rods we came to a stream of nice clear water, where we drank heartily and bathed our hands and faces. Later in the night we got into a great swamp, and out of that into
brambles and briers, and finally into a pine forest, where we came near being surrounded by a party hunting coons. Turning out of our course to avoid this party, we came to a road. We decided to walk in it, and afterward traveled in the roads which led in the direction we wished to go. We could walk faster and easier, and three of us on the alert for danger could see it, and conceal ourselves.

One night we walked twenty miles according to the mile posts on the Eufala turnpike, and at least five miles in the fields.

On this first road, going around a curve, we came suddenly to a house close beside the road. The door was open and a brilliant light shining within. We dropped into the bushes, and overheard distinctly the conversation at the house. A woman’s voice said: “You think they will have to go?” A man replied: “Yes, I suppose so, I have been ordered to report at Buena Vista to-morrow, I don’t want to go, don’t see how I can leave the folks at home. I shall go and report, and try to get off a few days.”

Sherman was then at Atlanta. Governor Brown, of Georgia, had ordered out the state militia. This
man was no doubt a member. The reward for capturing a runaway, Yankee prisoner, Confederate deserter, or negro, was thirty dollars or thirty days’ furlough. Three of us caught by the man whose words we could hear, would have given him ninety days’ furlough.

Soon some one came out of the house to draw water at a noisy, rickety well-curb. Under cover of the noise we skulked back into the field and away from the house.

We estimated when we left the prison that in four days we would reach the Chattahoochee, which forms the state line between Georgia and Alabama. The fourth night we came to a stream of some size and importance, but could hardly satisfy ourselves that it was the Chattahoochee. We crossed on a carriage bridge and saw a house near by. O, if we could only go there and ask, not for food, though our own was exhausted, not for shelter and lodging, for we were willing to accept the earth as our bed, but simply where we were, whether in Georgia or Alabama. We dared not venture.

After this our chief article of food was sweet pota-
toes, which we dug from the fields at night, carried to some secluded place, built a fire and roasted them in the ashes. We also obtained dry corn, squashes, pumpkins, watermelons, persimmons, and in Alabama sugar-cane.

We had no difficulty in keeping the points of compass, and going directly in our course. We used the seven stars, Pleiades, as our guide. Crandall was a deer hunter and woodsman at his home in Pennsylvania, and understood woodcraft perfectly. We could readily keep our direction, but not locality. How many miles we had traveled, where we were, and whether we had crossed the Chattahoochee, were questions we could not answer.

On October 16th, eight nights from prison, these questions were still unanswered to our anxious minds. Usually the negroes at the south were, by instinct, friendly to the Union soldier, and many escaped prisoners were assisted by them, but, as we had heard of one instance of betrayal, we determined to take no chances. We would rely wholly upon ourselves, except in great emergency, when we would cautiously seek help.
The emergency was now upon us. We felt that we must get information in regard to our locality. We found a lone log hut in the wood; peering in between the logs, where the mud chinking was out, we saw that the only occupant was an old lady. We knocked at the door and the old lady made her appearance. Only a dim light from the fire on the hearth revealed her to us. I inquired, "What State do you live in?" She replied, "I don't know." It was evident she was telling the truth, and did not know much of anything. In various ways I tried to find out where we were. "Where do you live? What town is this? What's the name of this place?" were questions put in quick succession. An answer came at length. "I live in Stewart." I knew she meant Stewart County. That was of no use to us. The counties were not on our map, and we did not then know whether Stewart County was in Georgia or Alabama. I was about to turn away in despair, when suddenly a thought flashed through my mind, and turning short I exclaimed, "Don't you know whether you live in Georgia or Alabama?" "Oh," she replied, "we have to go to Florence to go to Alab-a-m."
My heart was in my mouth. I would not at that time have valued a bag of gold as I did those words. I knew we were still in Georgia, that Florence was not far away, and that we were near the borders of "Alab-a-m." We took our leave without gratifying a woman's curiosity, and that night found Florence, a small village in Georgia, on the bank of the Chattahoochee. We looked upon the river, a strong, majestic stream, and knew it must be the one we were so anxious to see. We could find no means of crossing that night. The next night, after a long search, behind an upturned stump on the river bank we found a nice skiff, borrowed it, and rowed across to "Alab-a-m."

Alabama is Indian for "Here we rest." And here we did rest with a feeling of greater security, now that we knew that the Chattahoochee rolled between us and Andersonville, and that we were really in Alabama, for we expected to find that State less thickly settled than Georgia, and our path consequently less beset with danger. In this we were correct. In Georgia we used the utmost caution, walking only nights, and keeping ourselves closely secreted
during the day. We walked in Indian file, always on the alert for danger, and when it seemed to appear in any form the one who saw it first gave the signal, "Hist!" and we all fell to the ground. Many times persons came very near us as we lay quietly on the ground. We did not speak a word above a whisper during the nine days and nights we were in Georgia except with the old lady who told us we had to go to Florence to get to "Alab-a-m."

We found some dwellers in Alabama, October 19th, two nights after crossing the Chattahoochee, we were walking along a road when, in a cornfield at a little distance, we saw a party with torches hunting coons. Soon after we came to a fork in the road. We followed the left, which proved to be a plantation road leading into a yard and up to a house. Before reaching the yard we heard persons coming toward us, and not wishing to meet them we stepped into the bushes and let them pass. As we went up to the yard and looked at the house all was dark and still. We thought it likely the party we had just met had gone to join the coon hunters and left the house unoccupied. We resolved to make a search for food. I
told my comrades that if they would remain by a large log lying near the edge of the clearing in which the house stood I would advance on the house. I did not propose to attack in front but by flank, going to the right, then tacking and approaching the house at the side.

Just as I was about to turn toward the house, "Bow-wow! bow-wow!" and out jumped two large house dogs. Well, thought I, I guess you did not go to the coon hunt. Of course I did not pursue my researches further in that direction, but merely waited for the canines to retire, when I would rejoin my comrades, and we would leave the place, but before I could act on my resolve another appeared on the scene.

A man came out of the house and urged on the dogs. Thus encouraged they started for me, and I for the wood. But I did not run; I knew it would be useless, as the dogs could run much faster than myself. I walked rapidly but coolly. The dogs came close to me just as I reached the wood. I thought they were about to seize me. The man closely followed his dogs. I looked over my shoulder
and was about to say, "Call off your dogs, I surrender," when he fired at me with a pistol, but missed his aim. The dogs did not touch me. The wood with growth of underbrush was close at hand, and I kept on, going into and among the bushes. The man did not follow, but with his dogs went back. As I have not seen him since, I do not know why he did not follow me, but I surmise he might have been an ignorant, superstitious overseer in charge of things, and as the dogs did not touch me and the pistol shot took no effect, he thought I was not composed of flesh and blood but was some hobgoblin of the wood come up to haunt his place.

The dogs had driven me directly away from my comrades. I made a circuit and went to the log where I had left them, and they were gone. I felt lonesome; they had the turpentine and supplies, and I was alone. I did not care to shout or call, or make much noise to have the dogs called out again on my account.

I called and whistled faintly, but gained no response. I knew from our former habit and method of reasoning, in regard to our way, that when my com-
rades had given up looking for me. They would go back to the main road and continue their journey along that. If I could get ahead of them, they would come up to me. I ran back to the fork and started out on the main road. Soon I came to where a little rivulet ran across the road and made a smooth sandy beach, which also extended across the road. Stooping down, I examined critically to see if I could find the doctor's track, for he wore Yankee calfskin boots, and I knew there was not another such pair in the State of Alabama. There was no track. They had not been along.

I went on a little further up an incline, and lay down beside the road where I could get a view of it for a little distance in the direction from which I had come. By and by I saw two men approaching. They came on slowly until nearly opposite me, when they stopped and looked back as if they had left some one. I spoke out to them sharply at first. They started. I rose up to their view. They ran up to me, clasped my hands and shook them as heartily as if we had been separated years instead of hours. The tears rolled down the doctor's cheeks, and he
said repeatedly, "This is the happiest hour of my life!" My comrades had heard the pistol shot, and supposed I was captured or killed.

The dogs came toward them after driving me away, and they were obliged to leave. If they had not met me, they did not intend to leave the vicinity until they had gone back and looked around the place by daylight. We decided then and there that in future our reconnoitering would be done in force and not by detail.

October 21st, four days after crossing the Chattahoochee, we came to a small stream which we thought might be the Choctawhatchee. The next day we followed it, for we now ventured in wild country to travel in the daytime. In the afternoon we went into the country back from the river to see if we could get some clue as to its name. Just at nightfall we came to a clearing where was a plantation house and yard. Keeping under cover of the wood, we commenced circling around the premises.

We soon saw an old lady with apron full of pine knots which she had gathered to make the fire for the evening meal. Intercepted her; she seemed a little
agitated, but we spoke in very gentle and polite tones (I think I called her grandmother), which seemed to soothe and allay her fears. "What place is this?" I asked. "Mr. Len owns the plantation, my husband, Mr. White, is the overseer. He is down to the river with the 'niggers' repairing the bridge that was washed away by the 'fresh,'" pointing as she spoke toward the stream we had just left.

"What river?" I asked.

"Choctawhatchee River."

Again my heart exulted. Again an old lady had given us just the information we wanted. From that day I have looked upon old ladies with great respect. After inquiring distances to places in all directions, we bade her good-bye, and started off in a direction directly opposite the one we pursued when we were well out of her sight.

After getting fairly away, we applied the turpentine, a precaution we had often resorted to since leaving Andersonville. This we did by pouring a little in the hand and rubbing it on the soles of our shoes and on such portions of our clothing as would come in contact with the bushes, for the bloodhounds
are very keen and will catch the scent of a man from the bushes, and sometimes will follow a track twenty-four hours after it is made.

We were now very much elated, thinking we had found our river and had only to follow it by using boats, and thus reach the gunboats at the mouth of the river. October 24th, two days after we learned from the old lady the name of the Choctawhatchee, just at nightfall we came to a guide-board. The board was old and weather beaten, and in the dim twilight I was unable to read the lettering. Crandall lifted me up that I might give it closer inspection, when I was enabled to read, Newton 15½ miles. Newton, in southern Alabama, was designated on our map. That night we passed through the town. This located us, and gave us our bearings. The following day, October 25th, a bright sunny day, we were strolling along the bank of the Choctawhatchee which we had now found, and could well identify, when we discovered a boat and waited for night that we might borrow it.

We used six boats in our trip, all borrowed. After dark we started out in this one and for a time
were in high spirits as we glided down with the current. But our enthusiasm and our clothing were eventually dampened, for twice we were swamped in the rapids, and the last time our boat filled and sunk and we were unable to raise it. We were only consoled by the thought that it would not dry up while the owner was looking for it, and if he continued the search long enough he would find it in good condition. We left it full of water on the bottom of the river. We reached the west bank, built a fire in the woods and dried our clothing. To keep our matches dry, we carried them in a bottle. October 26th, we came to the west branch of the Choctawhatchee, which flowed to the main stream directly across our path. We crossed the branch on a bridge, as quickly as possible, at midday, and concealed ourselves in some tall weeds near by. Soon after some one crossed the bridge with a wagon.

October 28th we came to the confluence of the west branch and the main stream, and in the afternoon of this day found another boat. The stream was now larger and seemed to flow through a country not much inhabited. We ventured to take this
boat in the afternoon. It was chained and locked to a tree. We wound the chain around a stout stick, and taking a pry across the bow, drew the staple from the boat. We took what we actually needed, and I told my comrades the man would only have to make a new boat for his lock and chain. It was a delightful afternoon and we made a pleasant passage until just at nightfall, when we heard sounds below us that led us to believe that we were nearing a ferry.

We waited along shore until after dark. Then starting out under cover of night, we drifted down, and as we reached the place whence the sounds had come, we were near the right bank trying to extricate our boat from a snag, when a call came to us from the left shore, "Who's that over there?" No answer. "Who's that over there in that skiff?" We did not think it wise to give in a list of the passengers, but paddled hurriedly down the stream.

We heard a chain thrown into a boat, the boat grate on the sandy beach, and soon the dip of oars in the water. I remarked that if the man was coming to capture us and had a better boat than ours, perhaps we would exchange with him. But we soon
learned that was not his purpose, but could hear him crossing the river. We knew he was going for help. We were near the right shore towards which he was pulling and where he would probably rally help. We dare not try to cross, for as we had only paddles and could propel our boat but slowly, we feared he would go ashore and shoot us on the river. We must land on the right bank as soon as possible and take our chances with the crowd.

Our boat touched land, we ran up the steep bank into the wood near at hand, and sat down to apply the turpentine. While doing this the man ran along the bank between us and the river. I could distinctly see him in his shirt sleeves. Evidently there was quite a settlement in that vicinity, for in five minutes there was a great uproar, and the night resounded with sounds of many voices, the blowing of horns, and the baying of blood-hounds. The night was starlight, but dark in the wood. The dogs came on with a yell which made the hair rise on our heads, ran down to the place where we left the river, up to the spot where we had used the turpentine and — stopped.
We knew by the howl that went up that they were baffled and confused. But they were savage for the chase and keen for the game. They ran through the woods in various directions, trying to catch the scent of the track, and one of them came so near that, standing in the dark shadow of the wood, I could hear him sniff the air. It was a time that required nerve and caution.

We proceeded slowly and stealthily away from and up the river. After a time we came to an open field, and soon saw the light of torches. We thought they were circling to find our track — that is, going to a point on the river bank above where we left it and describing a circle out into the country, sweeping around to a place on the river below where we left it. In this way they would hope to find our track if we had crossed the circle, and to find, if we had used anything on our shoes that it had worn off.

They were inclosing us in the circle. But as they came so near, we thought it best to lie down. Nearer and nearer they came, two of them with a dog, and we overheard one say, "It was strange that the dogs did not take the track, that they could
come up to that place and go no farther.’ ’ ‘Yes,’ replied the other, ‘I think they must have had something on their feet.’ ’ We did not deem it advisable to satisfy their curiosity by any explanation.

They passed on, and we crossed their track. They went to a house, then came back into the field where they found our tracks in the soft earth. Then they endeavored to make the dog follow our track. We had passed into the wood again, where we stopped and listened. They would run along our tracks toward us, urge on the dog, and try to make him lead out, but he would only advance as they did.

The doctor was of reckless disposition, and stood and laughed and shook his sides, and said: ‘I would like to halloo, and ask that man, ‘What’s the matter with your dog?’ ’ We now knew that turpentine was useful, and that we could defy the dogs. Leaving our pursuers to carry on the hunt as long as they chose, we kept on our way southward, through an extensive pine forest. We did not return to the river for two or three days, lest some one might be on the look out for us. We were again on the west side of the Choctawhatchee.
October 29th, came to the Pea River, which in its eastward course flows along the border line between Southern Alabama and Western Florida, and joins the Choctawhatchee at Geneva, a small town in Alabama. We followed the river until, standing in a thicket, we heard the sounds of domestic life and activity, which warned us that we were just at the border of the town of Geneva. We thought it wise to retire. It was nearly night. During the early afternoon, while coming down the river we had passed a crossing-place, and had seen boats on the opposite side. We now decided to retrace our steps to a point near this crossing-place, and there camp until early morning, when I would swim the river for one of the boats.

It must be remembered that in all this trip, extending over more than a month of time, we had neither shelter nor blanket. The doctor had an overcoat. Crandall and I were in very light clothing. It was now nearly the first of November. Though the days were usually sunny and fairly comfortable in that clime, the nights were cold and frosty. Morning came.
We were not so near the crossing as we had supposed, and when we reached it the sun was well up. The morning air was chilly, a mist was rising from the river, the water appeared dark, deep and forbidding.

I knew there were alligators and other reptiles in Southern waters. I realized I was liable to be discovered while swimming the river or taking the boat. But southward lay the course; the river intercepted our way; we must have the boat. I plunged in, swam across, selected a good boat with oars, rowed back to my comrades, then across with them, and taking my clothing, which they had held, ran up into the woods to dress. My comrades secured some fishing tackle from a raft.

With a great sense of relief, and hearts quite buoyant, we continued on our journey. We were in Western Florida pressing eagerly on to the coast. More than twenty-five times we came very near being discovered. I have attempted to relate only a few of the prominent adventures that beset us. October 31st we came back to the river, and late in the afternoon saw on the opposite shore what we thought to be a boat.
The stream was now broad, and objects were not readily discerned from one bank to the other. We decided to wait until night, when I would swim the river and bring the boat across. When it was quite dark, and I was about to cross we heard some one getting the boat ready to come to our side, and presently we heard the dip of the paddle, and the boat was brought to shore directly in front of us. A man stepped out, chained the boat to a stump, and walked off up a path along which we had recently come. We knew he must go some distance to reach a house, we thought he might be returning to his home from the work of the day. If so, how he went back in the morning I cannot say, for we at once slipped the chain, took the boat, and pushed out into the river.

The stream was broad, the current swift and strong, but to our great consternation we found the snags were numerous. There was a steamboat channel in the river, and doubtless we might have made good time by daylight. But the night was dark, and we were driven much at the mercy of the current.
Our boat was a log dug-out, a very good piece of handicraft, but perilous for a novice to ride in. An Indian can handle a canoe, a lumberman can ride a log, but to navigate a dug-out and stay in, one ought to be a tight-rope dancer. But in all seriousness, I think the time we spent in that little boat was the most perilous part of our trip. Hitherto it had been starlight or moonlight nearly every evening, but now the nights were very dark. This was as we wished, for we would be less likely to be discovered if there were dwellers along the shores. In places the river rolled and rushed like a mill-race between high cliffs, in others it would broaden out like a lake. But the snags and short bends gave us the most trouble. At these short bends, in the darkness of the night, it was difficult to tell which way the stream turned until we were midway of the stream at the bend. Then, many times the current was so swift and strong it required our greatest effort to avoid being dashed into the pile of driftwood which had collected in the sharp angle of the bend.

One would lie in the bow of the boat with ear intent to listen for the water rushing by a snag,
another would sit in the middle to help propel the boat, while the third sat at the stern to guide it. The one at the bow would send back in a whisper, "To the right! To the left!" and the boat would be brought to obey the command.

Sometimes the snag would be just under the water, and no rippling signal would be heard until the boat would rush upon it, and careen, and nearly pitch us out. We had at all times to keep the utmost presence of mind, and especially to take care to sit still and balance the boat.

The first night we made rapid progress, but worked very hard, and at daylight were much exhausted. We went ashore and spent the day in a cypress swamp. Excitement prevented much sleep. The second night we started out tired, and filled with dread. Our experience of the first night was repeated, though the latter part of the night we found the river deeper and broader. Second day not much sleep—too anxious to see the mouth of the river. Third night, started before dark. Before midnight it began to rain, and we were deluged by a Southern thunder shower. The rain came down in
sheets. It was so dark that I could not see my hand held close to my eyes.

Now and then a flash of lightning revealed the faces of my comrades as clearly as daylight. Towards morning we heard the roar of old ocean along the coast, and felt that we were nearing our journey's end. At daylight we came to where the river divided into three streams. Here, thought we, should be the gunboats, but they were not. We followed the left stream. I was now so exhausted that lying down in the boat I fell asleep.

When I awoke we were a mile from land, in a broad bay, where we could see the mouth of the river in the distance behind us, and in the dim distance ten miles away the blue outline of the shore of the bay. I asked why we were there. Crandall said they saw something they hoped were gunboats, and though he thought it hardly safe to go so far in the dug-out, the doctor thought it all right. I said, very decidedly, we had better go ashore. We paddled toward a clump of pines. The wind came up. Crandall said: "It's a pull for life, this time, boys!" We ran the boat among the canes. We
were just in time, for in a moment the white caps were on. We stepped out, I took the chain, dragged the boat up to a willow, tied it there, and have not seen it since.

We were at the mouth of the Choctawhatchee. Our plan was completed; our journey finished. When we left Andersonville, we expected to make the trip in twelve days, but obstacles and hinderances might extend it to sixteen days. We had been out twenty-five days, and what was now the situation? No gunboats. We could not go back up the river. It was impossible to go on the bay. The country appeared wild and uninhabited. It was raining. Our clothes were saturated with water. For forty-eight hours our only food had been two small catfish, caught with the hook and line which we had taken from the raft when we crossed Pea River. We were exhausted in body, and in spirit near the verge of despair. It appeared very much as if we had reached the mouth of the Choctawhatchee River to starve and perish, and our bones were to whiten on the beach. But we were Yankees still, and Yankee pluck and push must not fail. We examined our map and
found the town of La Grange about ten miles west of us on the coast. Perhaps we had land forces there. Could we reach the place? We started back into the country and soon came in sight of buildings. In our desperate condition we would go to them whether occupied or not. They were vacant. One was empty, one was a storehouse containing cotton, several large gourd shells, a nice iron baking kettle, two barrels of unshelled corn. The other building was a kitchen with ample fireplace, in which was soon a roaring fire. Plenty of pine knots in the surrounding wood. Soon a guinea hen came into the yard. We shelled corn, scattered it on the ground in front of the open kitchen door, and made a trail into the kitchen. The bird went into the snare and into the kitchen. Crandall crept cautiously in, closed the door, and the guinea was our game. We cleaned the kettle, (scouring it with sand at a little rivulet near by), brought water in the gourd shells, dressed the guinea, and soon it was in the kettle on the fire.

We had discovered a coffee mill attached to the side of the kitchen. We ground corn, pretty coarse, cooked it in the guinea broth, and placing all on the
table, took chairs and sat down to dine. Bill of Fare:—Guinea hen and hominy. "Help yourselves, comrades." We dried our clothing, spread cotton on the floor, and lay down to rest.

In the afternoon, goats came into the yard. But we could not capture one till night, when they all went into the empty building. We brought one into the yard and butchered it, and I soon had goat steak skewered on a stick over the fire. Then we put a roast into the kettle and when it was cooked I had another meal. I awoke at midnight, ate some goat meat. We had goat for breakfast. But, alas, for greediness! the guinea and goat were almost too much for me. Fortunately the doctor was at hand with his remedies, and I was saved from sickness. But an indescribable odor and flavor lingered about my nostrils and palate, which would revive at the sight of a goat any time during the next year, and I would not pay half price for goat meat today.

Next day we went down to the bay and westerly along the shore, came to a bayou, and learned that to travel in that country we must go in the roads. The bayous set inland sometimes for miles. We
went back to the house, ground corn in the coffee-
mill, cooked johnny-cake and meat, and the next
morning, having laid in a stock of provisions, we
started towards La Grange. We found that place,
but no troops and few people. We strolled about a
day or two without much purpose, waiting for some-
thing to turn up.

One morning we met a man on horseback. As he
saw us as soon as we saw him we held conversation
with him. He mistook us for Confederate soldiers,
—stragglers and deserters. Among other things he
told us the Yankee gunboats were thirty miles away
at East pass, which is a narrow channel connecting
Choctawhatchee bay with the Gulf of Mexico, at the
east end of Santa Rosa Island. The nearest land
forces of the Union were at Pensacola, at least one
hundred miles away. This we had studied out on
our map. But we well knew that we had not
strength to reach Pensacola. The man was going to
his field to dig sweet-potatoes, and his son, a lad of
fifteen, followed with cattle and cart.

The man went to his work and we held a council.
We resolved to tell the man our story and appeal to
him for help. Crandall went to him in the field, and after some conversation with him, said: "If I tell you our story, will you promise not to do us harm, if you do not choose to help us?" With some reluctance he said, "yes." Crandall briefly told the story. The man considered it the most remarkable experience he had ever heard. That three men had come so far through such a country, been out so long, and all remained well and come through together, was almost beyond belief.

He then told the main points of his own experience in the war. When the war broke out he owned ninety slaves, now not one. The Yankee blockaders had destroyed his sloop, worth $1,500. Four of his sons had been killed in the Confederate army. Naturally, he would not be inclined to help the Yankees. "But," said he, "I have a heart, and seeing your helpless condition will aid you."

He had a skiff secreted in one place, and oars in another, for the Yankees had destroyed everything they could find that would float. These were produced; we were rowed across Alaqua bayou and set down by a path which we were told would lead us to
the house of a Union man named Wright. The name of the man who rendered us this valuable aid was Thomas Reddick. I will only say: "He was a man." We followed the path and found Mr. Wright at work in his yard. We told him our story, informed him who had sent us, and that we understood he was a Union man.

Wright was very cool and non-committal. Said he knew nothing about us and could not help us. With much persuasion and entreaty we thawed him out. He was true to the Union, but, like all who lived on neutral ground where Yankees and Confederates were likely to appear in turn the same day, he had to be very discreet. His good wife had come out into the yard. She looked at us and said: "I have some genuine Yankee coffee in the house which my brother-in-law sent me from Pensacola. I'll make you some of that, and if you are rebels I hope it will kill every pesky one of you!" I had lain down on a pile of chips in the yard. I was ragged and haggard. Mrs. Wright urged me to come in and lie on the bed. My comrades advised me to go, and I did. It was the first time I had lain on a bed for three years.
Mr. Wright was very nervous about our being at the house, and hurried his wife to get supper. Genuine Yankee coffee, bacon, new biscuit and sweet-potatoes were better than goat. After supper, Wright provided us with bed-clothing, took us to a corn-crib at some distance from the house, and gave us a bed in the husks. He told us to go into the swamp near by and pass the days there, as he expected a sloop from the gunboat fleet to get produce for the officers, on the arrival of which he would summon us. But the sloop did not come. Three days, November 8th, 9th and 10th, we spent in waiting, nights in the crib, days in wood and swamp. Wright brought us food.

At length, on the night of the 10th, our new-found friend told us of a neighbor up in the woods, one Brown. He was rather "secesh" in sentiment and quite a desperado, always wearing belt with bowie-knife and revolver, and when he went abroad also carrying a rifle. He had passed through Wright's yard muttering, and Wright was afraid of him. A man named Thompson had formerly lived with Brown. The two had quarrelled regarding
their housekeeper, and Thompson had shot Brown in the left arm, causing it to partially perish. This much to show the character of Brown.

Brown owned a good boat, and was perfectly at home on the water. Wright loaned us a rifle and a musket, the latter loaded, as he said, with nine balls, and advised us to go up to Brown's and invite him to take us to the Pass. On the same night, at about midnight, Crandall and I called on Brown. A log house in the forest, a fire on the hearth, after Southern fashion, a blanket hung over the doorway. This we brushed aside, stepped in, and brought our guns to "order arms." Housekeeper and children scattered over the floor, and on a single cot in the corner reposed the veritable Brown. He came to a sitting posture at once, and seemed to regard us as a surprise party.

The belt, the bowie and the revolver were all in their places around his waist, but our guns were one too many for him. I said to Mr. Brown: "We want to go down to East Pass. We notice you have a nice boat down here on the bayou, and we thought you might like to go down with us and bring the
boat back." He said: "It is a pretty rough night, and I have been sick for a day or two. Couldn't you wait until morning?" I replied: "We have sympathy for the sick, but if you understood our business as well as we do ourselves you would see how important it is for us to go at once. Under the circumstances, we are obliged to ask you to hurry up." He responded promptly, and we were soon ready to start.

It was necessary for him to gather a few things to carry on the voyage. We were greatly interested, and followed him about closely while he was collecting his goods. On the way to the boat we came upon an oppossum, so suddenly that he played "possum" and feigned death, which we made real and carried him along with us. At the boat, Wright joined us. Brown stepped into the bushes, and, bringing forth his rifle, placed it in the boat. I stepped in and sat down beside it, so that it might not fall into the water. Crandall delivered to Wright his guns and came aboard. Wright's theory was that if Brown carried us down, that would implicate him, and then he could not complain of Wright because he appeared on the scene and took his guns.
At the mouth of the bayou the doctor joined us, and soon we were out on the broad surface of the bay. It was a rough night, and we did not venture a great distance from the shore. After going three or four miles we felt that we were safely away from the place where we had spent three days and nights and were beginning to fear that we might be detected and also expose Wright. So we told Brown he might run to shore.

We drew the boat up on the beach, gathered wood and built a fire. Brown had brought an iron kettle and sweet potatoes. He was an expert at dressing and cooking game, and soon the "possum" was roasting in the kettle and the potatoes in the ashes. When the viands were thoroughly cooked we all partook heartily, and Brown especially so for an invalid. We told him as he had been disturbed he could sleep and we would watch. So he rolled himself in his blanket, and soon did not know whether he was on the beach or in his cot at home.

This was our last halting place. Thirty-three days had elapsed since we left Andersonville. In all our tramping and boating we had probably traveled
four hundred miles. Can you imagine our emotions on this last night, when we knew that before the next noon, if everything was propitious, we would be on board the United States gunboats.

Here, I wish to mention a few things of interest connected with this story. I have here a bag, which was sent, filled with tea, to Crandall in the army, from his home in Pennsylvania. Crandall was in the Army of the Potomac, was severely wounded in the Battle of the Wilderness, under Grant, early in May, 1864, and was captured at that time, and taken at once to Andersonville. This bag was filled with salt when we left Andersonville. It now contains shells which we gathered on the Island of Key West, Thanksgiving Day, 1864, on our way home from New Orleans to New York.

Here I have a little soldier's hymn book, on the margins of which I wrote in Andersonville.

And here is my Bible, which, providentially, I was prompted to take out of my haversack at the side of my saddle, the day I was captured. I carried it with me through all the prison life. It was of great comfort to me. I read it through, portions of it many
times. I am a believer in Providence, and in "Special Providence," after my experience. "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps," applies to every day of life, but sometimes in such a marked way, that he who would not see it and acknowledge it, must be both blind and ungrateful.

Dr. Barrows was captured at Plymouth, N. C., April 20, 1864, (when that town surrendered to the Confederate forces), and reached Andersonville May 6th following. He died March 6, 1872, at his home in Amherst, Mass. He now rests in the cemetery in that town, and on Memorial Days I have laid the flowers on his grave.

Crandall passed from earth April 12, 1891, at his home in Friendship, Alleghany County, Western York State. I have been at his home twice, and he has visited me in the city of Worcester. The winter of 1884-85, I went to see him, and we met for the first time since our escape; twenty years had elapsed, and our meeting was something beyond description.

Shortly after this Crandall succeeded in opening communication with our Floridian friends who so
greatly aided us on the coast of Florida. Here are two letters which he received, and which will explain themselves:

EUCHEE ANNA, Fla., Aug. 16, 1885.

Mr. A. A. Crandall.

Dear Sir: Your letter at hand. I am the man you seen when you were down here and I live eight miles north of where I lived when you seen me. George Brown is dead. He was trying to murder a young man and he knocked him off the boat in the Gulf of Mexico and he drowned. Mr. Thomas Reddick is in Jackson County if he is still alive. I will inquire and see if I can find his Post Office. Please write me where the other two men are and how they are getting along. I would be glad to see you and them if you can come and see me I would be very glad. I am getting very old and have nearly lost my eyesight which makes it difficult for me to work. I will close

Yours Truly,

Eli Wright.

P. S. Brown has no children.
My wife says write her a long letter for she wants to know how the young man got after he left the house.

Polly Wright.

Send your letter in care of Walker Bowers."

Letter No. 2.

Freeport, Oct. 7, 1885.

Mr. A. A. Crandall.

Dear Sir: I seen a letter from you making inquiry of Reddick that seen 3 men here in 64. I can say to you that I set 3 men across alaquaw bayo the last of the war they said they had
got out of prison and wanted to get home one of them was a doctor I carried 2 of them over and came after the other for my boat was small an I could not take them all at once they gave me six dollars in Greenbacks an one of them said he wanted to give me more but would remember me as long as they lived they told me that they kep their money in a ball of thread my Father was with me we was working in some potatoes on the bayo Father stayed on the beech with one while I carried 2 over Father told them how to get to old man Eli Wrights an he would direct them how to get to east pass where the Yankees was they wrot our names down when I carried the last one over I was 15 years old then thats all I recollet about it now.

Respectfully yours,

George W. Reddick.

My post office Freeport Walton County Florida.

At daylight, Nov. 11, 1864, we again boarded the boat and went out on the bay. A stiff breeze was blowing, the waves ran high and the boat skinned over them like a bird. The boat was about five feet broad amidships and had one large sail which Brown set to the wind and, taking his seat at the stern, held the boat on her course. He was a splendid boatman. On we went over the bay, and just before noon we came in sight of the gunboat fleet and soon ran alongside the flag-ship, and the red, white and blue waved over us once more.
We were heartily and cordially received by the officers and crew, Captain Creasey commanding. Good and generous navy rations were given us.

As our clothing had been nearly torn off us by bushes and brambles, the men cheerfully gave us of their own; and our toilets, though plain, were made with a sense of comfort and refreshment never experienced by the most favored son of fortune or fashion.

From East Pass we were sent to Barancas, Pensacola Harbor. We went over to Fort Pickens, on Santa Rosa Island, and each drew a complete outfit of government clothing.

From Barancas we went to New Orleans, and from this city to New York by boat. We came up New York harbor Dec. 3, 1864. At New York we parted with Crandall, he going to Harrisburg, Penn., to be mustered out of service. Barrows and I came on to Boston, where we were mustered out Dec. 7, 1864.

That night I reached my home in Conway, Franklin County, Mass. I had been absent three years. The last year in Southern prisons. I was an only child; and when I went up to the little farm-house on the old hills of Conway, and awakened my parents
at midnight, there was such a meeting as is seldom witnessed on this earth.

I will only say, in closing, that no one, except an ex-prisoner of war can appreciate or understand my emotions as I looked upon the "old flag," swinging in the breeze and sunlight on that bright November day, from the flagship at East Pass. Its red never appeared so red, its white never so white, its blue, never so blue, and its stars never shone with such a lustre to my eyes as on that eleventh day of November, 1864. I looked upon it the first time for nearly a year.

I thought of the many times I had followed it as my leader on the march, of the many times I had rallied around it in battle to defend it, and I felt at that moment that I could go back and endure Andersonville and live all my experience over again rather than have that radiant banner dishonored or trailed in the dust.

And if this story has the least interest for any, or shall awaken a thought in any breast in regard to what it cost to uphold the old flag in the trying days of '61-'65, I shall feel that I have not spoken in vain.
Let us reverence the flag, let us ever be ready to defend it, and pass it on, with all its bright glories unsullied and undimmed to coming generations. More than fifty years ago the Young American in Paris, after hearing the lily, the rose, the thistle, and the shamrock extolled, responded:

"The lily shall fade and its leaves decay,
The rose from its stem shall sever,
The thistle and shamrock shall pass away,
But the stars shall shine forever."
PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF EVENTS IN THE

WAR OF THE REBELLION,

BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE

RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

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1895.
From Fredericksburg

to

Gettysburg.

BY

BENJAMIN H. CHILD,

[Late Sergeant Battery A, First Rhode Island
Light Artillery.]

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1895.
[Edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies.]
FROM FREDERICKSBURG TO GETTYSBURG.

The materials for my paper to-night are derived partially from my own experience and partially from facts that have passed into history. I had the good fortune, during the nearly four years of my service, to belong to a battery connected with the grand Old Second Corps, which had for its badge the trefoil or clover leaf, and which I think I can safely say did more hard fighting and lost more men than any other corps of the Army of the Potomac.

The fate of the invasion of Pennsylvania in July, 1863, was fully put at stake. Only a perfect infantry and artillery, educated in the midst of charges, could possibly have sustained the desperate assault of Longstreet, Ewell and Pickett.

The Second Corps, commanded by Maj.-Gen. Winfield S. Hancock, did sustain it, and covered itself with immortal honors by its constancy and courage. This corps will ever have the distinction
of breaking the pride and power of the rebels when they invaded Pennsylvania in the summer of 1863.

In all the four years of its existence the men of the Army of the Potomac never hailed an order with more delight than the one which withdrew us from before Fredericksburg and sent us North. On that lovely summer day in June, 1863, we looked for the last time on Marye’s Heights, and the monument of Washington’s mother, which had been shattered and broken by shells from both armies and stood out there on the plain back of the city, mute and sorrowful, as though weeping for the misfortunes of her children. All the men rejoiced to leave the scenes of the last six months.

We withdrew from the line of the river after sunset. We had been stationed there so long that we were beginning to be forgotten as the “Army of the Potomac,” and letters came to us directed to the “Army of the Rapahannock.” As we marched away in the darkness our joy was not unmingled with sorrow, for there was not a veteran in the ranks who did not leave behind him the graves of noble and beloved comrades who had fought side by side with him.
TO GETTYSBURG.

We did not march away with all our army. When our campfires, which on this night burned with unusual brightness, went out and left the Valley of the Rappahannock in darkness, the living army was gone to be sure, but twenty thousand of our members lay over on the other side of the river, heroes of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. Thoughts of sadness soon gave way to those of a more buoyant nature. We felt when the head of the column turned toward the Capital that the road we trod would lead to victory.

The march to Gettysburg was one of the longest and most severe we had yet experienced. In thinking of war we are apt to look only at battles; to hear the dread sound of strife; to see the deadly, gaping wounds; and we are ready to crown the survivors or give honors to those who fell. But the hardships of the march; the heat of summer—the cold of winter; the entire absence of every comfort and luxury in active service, is overlooked or forgotten by those who do not participate. Napoleon, when retreating from Moscow, lost most of his men through excessive cold, but our experience was directly the reverse on the way to Gettysburg.
One day, I think it was the second out from Falmouth, our corps, the Old Second, lost more than a dozen men from sunstroke. They fell dead by the wayside. On our march we crossed the battlefield of Bull Run, where, the year before, General Pope had met with disastrous defeat. No effort had been made to bury the dead properly. A little earth, which the rain had washed away, had been thrown over them where they fell and their skeletons lay exposed to view as we passed through.

The route of the Second Corps to Gettysburg was over 200 miles in length. Some days we marched fifteen, on other days eighteen miles were traversed, but on the 29th of June this corps completed the longest march made by any infantry during the war. Leaving Frederick City, Md., in the morning, we did not halt until 11 p. m. beyond Uniontown, a distance of thirty-four miles.

When I look back over the thirty-one years which have intervened since then, and my mind reverts to this march of the Second Corps, I think of the perfect discipline in the ranks, the cheerfulness with which the enlisted men with their load of fifty
pounds weight—musket and ammunition, knapsack and cartridge-box, shelter tent and blanket, canteen and rations—trudged along under the broiling sun in the hottest month in our year.

There is not a resident on all that line of march who can tell of a single act of vandalism by any of the men. In the rich and cultivated country through which we passed life and property were respected as much as though there had been no war and we were living in peaceful days. Old and young came to the roadside to see the army pass, and knew they were safe from insult or molestation of any kind. The fields of ripening grain waved untrampled on when the corps had gone by. The perfection of discipline in the ranks at this period was wonderful. The armies that fought in the war of 1861 differed very widely from the armies of other countries in this respect. And so we passed on to Thoroughfare Gap, Edward’s Ferry, Frederick, Md., to Uniontown and Taneytown, where, on the morning of July 1st, the Second Corps was massed and where General Meade’s headquarters had been established.
While the corps was filing into the fields to the right and left of the road, and settling down for a rest and to wait for orders, General Hancock rode over to General Meade and entered into conversation with him. As they were talking a mounted officer dashed up bringing the intelligence that fighting had begun at Gettysburg thirteen miles distant.

The news was meagre—only that there was fighting. That was all. Yet it caused a great surprise, unaware as we were of the near proximity of the enemy. It was enough to send a thrill through the veteran ranks. The road leading to Gettysburg is scanned with anxious eyes, and soon away in the distance rises a cloud of dust. It comes nearer and nearer and another messenger from the front is with us. He tells us that Reynolds is killed or mortally wounded; that the First and Eleventh Corps are fighting, and that the battle is against us.

It is now 1 o’clock, too late for the Second Corps to reach the field that day and take part in stemming the tide of rebel victory. But not so thought their commander. General Meade orders Hancock to proceed to the front and take command
of all the troops. This order was issued at ten minutes past one P. M., and within twenty minutes Hancock with his staff was on the road to Gettysburg. The Second Corps promptly followed General Hancock, its commander, and it required no urging to keep the men up. Each regiment and battery moved forward solidly and rapidly. Not a straggler could be seen, and the thirteen miles were soon covered. But as they hurried along the crowded turnpike a halt was ordered, the ranks opened and an ambulance passed bearing the dead body of the heroic general, John F. Reynolds. The corps pushed on to within two miles of the battleground, and there we halted and camped that night. We arrived on the field early next morning.

As General Hancock proceeded to the front he rode part of the way in an ambulance so that he might examine the maps of the country. His aide, Major Mitchell, galloped ahead to announce his coming to General Howard, whom he found on Cemetery Hill, and to him he told his errand, giving him to understand that General Hancock was coming up to take command.
At 3:30 p. m. General Hancock rode up to General Howard, informed him that he had come to take command, and asked him if he wished to see his written orders. Howard answered: "No, no, Hancock; go ahead." At this moment our defeat seemed to be complete. Our troops were pouring through the streets of the town in great disorder, closely pursued by the Confederates. The retreat soon became a rout, and in a few minutes the enemy would have been in possession of Cemetery Hill—the key to the situation—and the Battle of Gettysburg would have gone into history as a rebel victory.

But what a change came over the scene during the next half hour! The presence of Hancock, like that of Sheridan, was magnetic. Order came out of chaos. The flying troops halt and again face the enemy. The battalions of Howard's corps that were retreating down the Baltimore Pike are called back, and with a cheer they go into position on the crest of Cemetery Hill, where the division of Steinwehr had already been stationed. Wadsworth's division and a battery are sent to hold Culp's Hill, and Geary, with the White Star division, goes on
the double quick to occupy the high grounds toward Round Top. Confidence is restored, the enemy checked, and, deceived by these dispositions, cease their attack.

General Hancock was fully aware that General Meade had determined to fight the battle on the line of Pike Creek, but, noting the topographical advantages of the ground around Gettysburg, he determined to advise General Meade to fight there. He knew that this line, the crest of Cemetery Ridge, with Culp's Hill on the right, Round Top on the left and Cemetery Hill in the centre, could not be bettered. So, when order had taken the place of confusion, and our lines were once more intact, he sent his senior aide, Major Mitchell, back to General Meade with the information that, in his judgment, Gettysburg was the place at which to fight the battle. Major Mitchell found General Meade in the evening at Taneytown and communicated these views. General Meade listened attentively, and on these representations he fortunately concluded to abandon his idea of fighting on the line of Pipe Creek, and fight the battle at Gettysburg. Turning
to Gen. Seth Williams, his adjutant-general, he said: "Order up all the troops; we will fight here."

The morning of July 2d, the second day of the battle, dawned clear and bright. It discovered Hancock pushing the Second Corps on Cemetery Ridge. As yet no one in that corps, with the exception of the general and his staff, had heard a shot fired. As we approached Gettysburg the day before, the sounds of the conflict, owing either to the direction of the wind or the formation of the country, were wholly inaudible. Those who came upon the field after nightfall had no idea of the whereabouts of the enemy. But, as daylight increased and objects became visible, we saw their lines nearly a mile distant on Seminary Ridge, and away to our left rose Little Round Top, and still further on Round Top. The day grew apace. Not a shot nor a hostile sound broke the stillness of the morning. It became evident that the enemy was not ready to renew the fight.

Our corps had got into position, and in a wood just back of our line the birds carolled and sang
loud and long. The horses quietly browsed in the rich grass, and the men lay in groups peacefully enjoying a rest after the rapid march of the day before. The troops, as they arrived on the field or changed their positions, did so leisurely and unmolested.

Sickles, with the Third Corps, came up and went into position on our left, and Geary took his division over to Culp's Hill. About 10 o'clock in the forenoon, picket firing was heard toward Little Round Top, which continued at intervals until long after noon, and at times became quite sharp. Three o'clock came, but with it came no sign of a general engagement. The boys had partly recovered from their fatigue and were actually beginning to enjoy life. Some of them indulged in quiet games of euchre, while others toasted their hard tack or fried a little bacon at the small fires in the rear of the lines.

Shortly after three o'clock a movement was apparent at our left. From the place where our division lay the whole country in front and far to our left, away to the Peach Orchard and to
the Little Round Top, was in full view. Our division stood in brigade columns, and when it became evident that something was going to take place the boys dropped their cards, regardless of what was the trump—even the men who held both bowers and the ace—and all gathered on the most favorable position to see the opening of the ball. Soon the long line of the Third Corps was seen advancing, and how splendidly they did march! On they went. Out toward the Peach Orchard. Not a shot is fired. A few minutes pass, and then some one calls out, “There!” and points to where a puff of smoke is seen rising against the dark green of the woods. Another and another cloud is seen until the whole face of the forest is enveloped and the dread sound of artillery comes loud and quick and shells are seen bursting in all directions. The bright colors of the regiments are conspicuous marks, and the shells burst around them in great numbers. The musketry begins. The infantry are engaged, and the battle extends along the whole front of Sickles’s Corps. Now sounds come from Little Round Top; smoke
TO GETTYSBURG.

rises among the trees and from all the high and wooded ground to the left of the Peach Orchard.

An hour passes slowly and our troops give way and are falling back, but slowly, very slowly. Every inch of the ground is hotly contested. The Third Corps is not in the habit of giving it up. They hold their own well. But the odds are against them and they are forced to retire. Now help is called for, and Hancock tells Caldwell to have his division ready. "Fall in," and the men run to their places. "Take arms," and the four brigades of Zook, Cross, Brook and Kelly are ready for the fray.

The Irish Brigade, which had been commanded formerly by Gen. Thomas F. Meagher, and whose green flag was unfurled in every battle in which the Army of the Potomac was engaged from the first Bull Run to Appomattox, was now commanded by Colonel Patrick Kelly, of the Eighty-eighth New-York Regiment, and it formed part of this division. The brigade stood in column of regiments closed in mass. As a large majority of its members were Catholic, the chaplain of the brigade,
the Rev. William Corley, proposed to give a general absolution to all the men before going into the fight. While this is customary in the armies of Catholic countries of Europe, it was perhaps the first time it was ever witnessed on this continent. Father Corley stood upon a large rock in front of the brigade, and, addressing his men, he explained what he was about to do, and said that each one could receive the benefit of the absolution by making a sincere act of contrition, and firmly resolving to embrace the first opportunity of confessing their sins. He urged them to do their duty well, and reminded them of the high and sacred nature of their trust as soldiers, and the noble objects for which they fought. He ended by saying that the Catholic Church refused Christian burial to the soldier who turned his back to his foe or deserted his flag. The scene was more than impressive. It was awespiring. Near by stood Hancock, surrounded by a brilliant throng of officers who had gathered to witness the unusual occurrence. While there was profound silence in the ranks of the Second Corps, yet, over to the left, out by the Peach Orchard and
Little 'Round Top, where Weed, Vincent and Hazlitt were dying, the roar of battle rose and swelled and re-echoed through the woods making music more sublime than ever sounded through cathedral aisle. The act seemed to be in harmony with the surroundings. I do not think there was a man in the brigade who did not offer up a heartfelt prayer. For some it was their last. They knelt there in their grave clothes. In less than a half an hour many of them were numbered with the dead of July 2d.

About 4 o'clock in the afternoon Caldwell's division of the Second Corps moved off by the left flank and marched rapidly. They had hardly got under way when the enemy's batteries opened. The ground on which this division faced the enemy that afternoon had already been fought over and over again, and the fields and woods were strewn with the killed and wounded.

Anderson and McLaws (Confederates) had driven our troops from the Peach Orchard and the line on which Sickles had placed the Third Corps. Arriving on the rising ground to the left of the Peach Orchard, General De Trobriand's Brigade had been
pushed back out of the woods and across the wheat field, after a gallant fight.

As this division advanced, many of the shattered regiments of the Third Corps passed to the rear through the intervals in our lines. They retired in good order and with colors flying. To the left of the wheat-field General Cross deployed his brigade. The Irish Brigade passed to the right and Brooks’s brigade to the left. These brigades were in column of regiments when they appeared in front of the enemy. Suddenly the columns deployed on the double-quick, and forming line advanced to find the enemy. As they approached the crest of the rugged hill, from behind huge boulders that were everywhere scattered around, the men of Longstreet’s Corps rose up and poured into our ranks a most destructive fire. This sudden reception somewhat astonished our boys. The Confederate lines were not more than thirty feet away when the firing opened. The astonishment did not last long, and our men promptly returned their fire, and for ten minutes the work of death went on. There was no cheering now; and no time
was lost in unnecessary movements. All the men, both in the Union and Rebel ranks, were veterans and knew just what to do. They stood face to face loading and firing, and so close that every shot told. In a short time the brigades of Cross and Brooks began forcing the enemy back, and then the Irish Brigade charged, the men rushing forward with a cheer, and were among the Johnnies in a few minutes. In an instant our men and their opponents had mingled together. In charging they had literally run in amongst them. Firing ceased. Officers and men for a brief space of time were bewildered. The firing had ceased, yet the "greybacks" still retained their arms and showed no disposition to surrender. But just at this juncture a Union officer called out in a loud voice: "The Confederate troops will lay down their arms and go to the rear," and thus ended a scene that was becoming embarrassing to our troops. The order was obeyed, and a large number of Kershaw's rebel brigade became our prisoners.

While General Caldwell's division had been, in a manner, victorious in checking the attack at this
point and had taken many prisoners, they were still in a position of great danger. A line of battle was in their rear and another in front, and both moved to attack at once. As they got ready to repel the attack in front, Woffard's Georgia troops attacked their rear.

The brigades of Cross and Brooks were more fortunate than those of Zook and Kelly. The Confederate lines in our rear did not extend far enough to cover the first two brigades, but Kelly and Zook were completely surrounded, and the only way out of the trap was to pass down between the two rebel lines. This was determined upon, and the two brigades started on the double-quick—firing as they ran—towards Little Round Top, the only opening through which they could escape. Passing through this alley of death, where the bullets came as thick as hail, the larger part of the division got away, but the loss was terrible. In the half hour they were under fire the division lost fourteen hundred men. Of the four brigade commanders two were killed, Gen. S. K. Zook and Col. E. E. Cross. Cross fell almost at the first fire and Zook a few
minutes afterwards. On the morning of that day General Hancock said to Colonel Cross: "This is the last day you fight as colonel; to-day will make you a brigadier-general." Cross answered, firmly and sadly, as though he felt a presentiment of what was in store for him: "No, it is too late, General; I shall never wear the star; to-day I shall be killed." Just after Zook fell, Col. Richard P. Roberts, who succeeded to the command of the brigade, was shot through the heart. He was a gallant and much beloved officer. He had left a sick bed when he heard of Lee's moving into Pennsylvania, and, weak and emaciated though he was, he joined his regiment only two days before he was killed. Some of the men who fell in the wheat field during the retreat of this division, and were forced to lie there between the two fires, fared badly.

It was now getting late. The sun was nearing the horizon, but the battle was not yet ended. The wheat field was to have more victims. As Caldwell retired, Gen. R. B. Ayres came up and went in with his regulars. Another effort was to be made to gain the wooded crest that extended from Little
Round Top toward the Peach Orchard. As he advanced, he struck the flanks of the Confederates that had a short time before poured destruction into Caldwell's division. Ayres doubled them up and drove everything before him. Then McCandless took up the fight, and with the Pennsylvania Reserves succeeded in gaining and holding some of the lost ground.

The fighting at this point, during the evening of July 2d, was of a most sanguinary character, as each side contested the other with a dreadful earnestness. Four out of five of our best divisions charged over the same spot and were met every time by the choice troops of the enemy, both determined to hold the ridge in front of the wheat field.

Until toward dark the fight had gone against us. The fighting had extended along the line to the right almost half way to the cemetery. The evening and our prospects grew dark together. The Third Corps had been driven back, broken and shattered, its commander, General Sickles, wounded and carried from the field. The troops that had gone to its support fared no better, and every man felt that
the situation was critical. However, all was not lost. General Meade had again thought of Hancock, and as on the first day of July he was sent to stop the rout of the First and Eleventh Corps, he was now ordered to take command of the left. Once more he is sought. A half hour of daylight yet remains. It is, however, long enough to enable him to rally some of the scattered Union troops, face them once more to the front, gather reinforcements, drive back the enemy and restore our broken lines.

As the fight was closing upon the left of the Union Army Ewell was striking a terrific and successful blow on his right. As our troops poured in on the Taneytown road there was some difficulty in getting things in shape after the rough handling they had received. To our right and rear could be heard the peculiar yell of the Louisiana Tigers as they rushed over our works at Culp's Hill. This was the most anxious hour in the whole great battle. We had been driven on the left and on the right. The "Rebs" had effected a lodgment in our works—in one of our strongest positions—and
were, in fact, in our rear. Another hour of daylight and, unless some miracle had intervened, we should most likely have left Gettysburg without waiting to bid the residents "Good evening."

But, fortunately for us, there was no Joshua around Lee's headquarters, so the sun went down on almanac time, utterly regardless of the little troubles that we were trying to settle. Darkness fell upon the scene and prevented the Johnnies from taking further advantage of their success, and gave us a chance to repair our disaster. Few of us slept that night. General Hancock labored all night long strengthening his line. The men gathered rocks and fence-rails for breastworks. During the whole night mounted officers galloped to and fro and troops were hurried to important points.

As the first rays of light were visible across the horizon on the morning of July 3d, the fight was resumed on Culp's Hill, where darkness had interrupted it the night before, and long before broad daylight the fire was heavy and incessant. We knew that Slocum was trying to drive the "Rebs" out of our works. They had entered the works
the night before without invitation, and had occupied them and slept in them during the night. Culp's Hill was about one mile distant from the place where we lay. We could plainly hear the cheers of Geary's men borne to us on the morning air, with now and then a stray bullet. As the day advanced the artillery mingled with the musketry. The men now held their breath from sheer anxiety. At nine o'clock in the morning the firing ceased suddenly and a tremendous cheer went up. Culp's Hill was once more in our possession. This was succeeded by a brief respite—a perfect calm.

About noon we could see considerable activity along Seminary Ridge. Battery after battery unlimbered, the horses were taken to the rear, and the guns placed at the edge of the woods. On our side officers sat around in groups and anxiously watched the movements in our front, knowing full well what it meant. Shortly after one o'clock we knew all about it. The headquarters wagon had just been driven up and General Gibbon had invited General Hancock and staff to partake of lunch. The bread was handed round. It was
eaten without butter, for as an orderly was passing the latter a shell from Seminary Ridge cut him in two.

Instantly the air was filled with bursting shells. The batteries that we had been watching for the last two hours go into position in our front did not open singly or spasmodically. The whole 120 guns that had begun to play upon us seemed to be discharged simultaneously, as if by electricity. For nearly two hours the storm of death went on.

I have read many accounts of this artillery duel, but the most graphic description penned by the most able writer falls far short of the reality. No tongue or pen can find language equal to convey an adequate idea of its awfulness. Streams of screaming shells poured through the hot air, falling and bursting everywhere. Men and horses were torn limb from limb. Caissons exploded one after another in rapid succession, blowing the gunners to pieces. No spot within our line was free from the rain of iron. The infantry hugged closely to the earth, and sought all the shelter that the earthworks afforded. It was in the most perfect sense a storm of shot and shell.
such as the oldest soldiers then—those who had taken part in almost every battle up to this time during the war—had not seen equalled. That awful, rushing sound of flying missiles, a sound that causes the firmest hearts to quail, was everywhere.

At this terrible moment a deed of heroism, such as we are apt to attribute only to the knights of olden time, took place. General Hancock, mounted and accompanied by his staff, with the Second Corps flag flying in the hands of a brave Irishman—a private, James Wells, of the Sixth New York Cavalry—started at the right of his line, near the Taneytown road. He slowly rode along to the extreme left of his position, while shot and shell roared and crashed around him and every moment tore great gaps in the ranks by his side.

"Stormed at with shot and shell,  
Boldly they rode and well."

It was a gallant deed and not a reckless exposure of life, for the presence and calm demeanor of the commander as he passed through the lines of his men was an example to them which an hour later bore good fruit and moved their stout hearts to win
the greatest and most decisive battle ever fought on this continent. For an hour after the fighting began our batteries replied vigorously and then ceased altogether. But the rebel shell came on as numerously as ever. Then, for nearly half an hour not a soul was seen stirring on our line. Suddenly the enemy stopped their fire, which had been continued for nearly two hours without intermission, and then a long line of infantry, 18,000 strong, emerged from the woods and began their advance.

At this moment silence was universal along our whole line "with arms at right shoulder shift." A division of Longstreet's corps moved forward with a precision that was wonderful in its perfection. It is our time, and the line that a few minutes before seemed so still, now teemed with animation. Eighty of our guns open their brazen mouths, and solid shot and shell are sent on their errand of destruction. In quick succession we see them fall in countless numbers among the advancing troops. The accuracy of our artillery fire could not be excelled. The missiles strike right in their ranks, tearing and rending them in all directions. The ground over
which they have passed is strewn with the dead and wounded. On they come, the gaps in their ranks are closed as soon as made. They have a half a mile to pass exposed to our fire; nearly half the distance has been traversed. Our gunners now load with double canister, and the effect is appalling in the extreme. But still they march on. Now they are within a hundred yards. Our infantry rise up and pour round after round into these heroic troops. At Waterloo the Old Guard recoiled before a less severe fire. But there was no recoil in these men of the South. They marched right on as though they courted death. They concentrate in great numbers and strike on the most advanced part of our line. The crash of the musketry and the cheers of the men blend together. The Philadelphia Brigade occupy this point. They are fighting on their own ground and for their own State, and in the bloody hand-to-hand engagement which ensues the Confederates, though fighting with desperate valor, find it impossible to dislodge them. They are rooted to the ground! Seeing how utterly hopeless further efforts are, and knowing of the impossi-
bility of their being able to reach their lines were they to retreat, a large number of the rebels lay down their arms, and the battle is won.

To the left of the Philadelphia Brigade the enemy did not get to such close quarters. Seeing the utter annihilation of Pickett's troops, the division of Wilcox and others on their right went to pieces almost before they got within musket range. A few of them ran back and tried to regain their lines, but many laid down their arms and came in as prisoners. It was at this critical moment that General Hancock fell among his men, on the line of Stannard's Vermont Brigade, desperately wounded, but he continued to direct the fight until victory was assured. It was then that he sent Major Mitchell to announce the glad tidings to the commander of the army. Said he: "Tell General Meade that the troops under my command have repulsed the assault of the enemy, who are now flying in all directions in my front." "Say to General Hancock," was General Meade's reply, "I regret exceedingly that he is wounded, and I thank him for the country and myself for the service he has rendered to-day."
TO GETTYSBURG.

Truly the country may thank General Hancock, as Congress did, for his great service on that field. Five thousand prisoners were sent to the rear. There were gathered up thirty-three regimental Confederate standards in front of the Second Corps. The remaining hours of daylight on that eventful day were devoted to the care of the wounded, looking over the field, and talking over the incidents of the fight. Many noble officers and men were lost on both sides, and in the camp hospitals they died by hundreds during the afternoon and night. The rebel General Armistead died in this way. As he was being carried to the rear he was met by Captain Harry Bingham, of Hancock's staff, who, getting off his horse, asked him if he could do anything for him. Armistead, in reply, asked him to take his watch and spurs to General Hancock, that they might be sent to his relatives. His wishes were complied with, and General Hancock sent them to his friends. General Armistead was a brave soldier, with a chivalric presence, and came forward in front of his brigade waving his sword. He was shot through the body and fell inside our lines.
Some of the wounded rebels showed considerable animosity to our men. One of them, who lay mortally wounded in front of the Sixty-ninth Pennsylvania, sullenly refused to be taken to the hospital. He said he wanted to die on the field where he fell. In front of the Philadelphia Brigade the dead lay in great heaps. Dismounted guns, ruins of exploded caissons, dead and mutilated men and horses were piled up together in every direction.

Out on the field, where Pickett’s division of Longstreet’s corps had passed, thousands of dead and wounded were lying. We had no means of reaching these poor fellows, and many lay there between the lines until the morning of the fifth.

The enemy could be seen moving around on Seminary Ridge.

Welcome supplies came up and were issued. All hands felt cheerful, but there was a degree of uncertainty as to whether the battle was really over, or whether the rebels were getting ready for some new movement, that prevented us from celebrating the national anniversary in a proper manner. Once in a while a rebel sharpshooter would try his skill
on some of our boys to let us know they were still there. The stench from the dead became intolerable, and we tried to escape it by digging up the ground and burying our faces in the fresh earth.

On the morning of the fifth we found the enemy had gone, and then what a scene. The first intimation our boys heard of it was by tremendous cheering in the direction of Culp's Hill. And what a cheer that was! A cheer that swelled into a roar that was taken up by the boys on Cemetery Ridge, and rolled along the crest to Round Top, and then back again. Cheers for the Philadelphia Brigade that stood a living wall against which the rebel hosts beat in vain. Cheers for Meade, who here began with a great victory his illustrious career as a commander of the Army of the Potomac. Cheers for Hancock, who had stemmed the tide of defeat on the first day and selected the ground on which the glorious victory had been achieved; who on the second day again stopped the tide of rebel victory and restored our shattered lines, and on the third day had met and repulsed the final assault on which Lee's all was staked, and who won the battle that was really the death-blow to the Rebellion.
FROM FREDERICKSBURG TO GETTYSBURG.

And then we gathered up with tender care and consigned to earth our noble dead.

Notes.—The Second Corps losses during the three days' fighting were 4,360. Three hundred and sixty-five of these were prisoners.

The actual fighting strength of the Union Army,  
June 30. .................................................................  93,500
The actual fighting strength of the Confederate Army,  
June 30. .................................................................  77,518
Total losses of officers, Union Army, killed and mortally wounded. ..................................................  338
Among them Generals Reynolds, Farnsworth, Weed, Zook and Vincent.
Union losses, all told. .................................................. 23,040
Confederate ................................................................. 20,451

Total losses ............................................................. 43,500
PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF EVENTS IN THE

WAR OF THE REBELLION,

BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE

RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS
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1896.
OPERATIONS OF THE CAVALRY CORPS

MIDDLE MILITARY DIVISION,

Armies of the United States,

from

FEBRUARY 27 TO MARCH 8, 1865,

PARTICIPATED IN BY THE

First Rhode Island Cavalry

BY

WILLIAM GARDINER,

[Late First Sergeant First Rhode Island Cavalry.]

PROVIDENCE:
PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.
1896.
[Edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies.]
I am to present a paper that differs somewhat in its character from those that have been read before this Society in the past. Its purpose is to correct what has been accepted as history of one of the Army incidents of the Civil War, by giving the facts in narrative form of that incident, and the facts presented will differ materially from the official record of the government of the event described. The narrative has been written under the title:
OPERATIONS OF THE CAVALRY CORPS, MIDDLE MILITARY DIVISION, ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES, FROM FEBRUARY 27 TO MARCH 8, 1865, PARTICIPATED IN BY THE FIRST RHODE ISLAND CAVALRY.

The glorious campaign of Sheridan, in the Valley of Virginia, will abide in our memory so long as life endures, and it will never cease to be a source of pride to the American people, (north of "Mason and Dixon's" line)—so long as great deeds, prolific of great results, are appreciated.

During the winter of 1864 and 1865, immediately succeeding the campaign mentioned, a cavalry force of about 10,000 was left in the valley with camp near Winchester.

The monotony of camp life and its duties was broken early on the morning of Monday, February 27, 1865, by the welcome order, "break camp," and each man was given five days' rations in haversacks, and thirty pounds of forage for his horse; fifteen
day's rations of coffee, sugar, and salt, were taken in wagons, one for each division.

Our train consisted of three wagons, eight ambulances, eight pontoon boats, and ammunition train; no other wagons were permitted to accompany the train.

The effective force of this expedition was as follows:

First Division, Brig.-Gen. Thomas C. Devin, officers and men, . . . 5,047
One Section, Cos. C and E, Fourth U. S. Artillery, officers and men, 54
Third Division, Maj.-Gen. George A. Custer, officers and men, . . . 4,840
One Section, Co. M, Second U. S. Artillery, officers and men, . . . 46

Total, . . . . . . . . . . . 9,987

With this force, all in fine condition, with “Little Phil” at the head, we marched out from camp in the early morning, and headed up the valley into a country made so desolate by Sheridan's vigorous
campaigning the previous Fall, and bare of subsistence to that extent, that a crow flying over it would have to take his rations with him.

General Grant had been for several months exceedingly anxious to destroy the Central Railroad and the James River Canal, both great arteries of supply for the City of Richmond, and the Army of North Virginia. General David Hunter had made one or two campaigns in that direction, but had failed to accomplish the desired result. Our first day’s march crossed Cedar Creek, Tumbling Run, and Tom’s Brook, the scene of our running fight with General Rosser, and ever after best known to us as the “Woodstock Races,” where we captured everything he had on wheels. We went into camp at Woodstock, having marched thirty miles.

Up early next morning (28th), and at six o’clock we were again on the move. This day we marched through Edenburg, across the North Fork of the Shenandoah River on our pontoon bridge, through Newmarket, going into camp at Lacey’s Springs, nine miles north of Harrisonburg. Small bands of guerillas had hovered on our flanks during the day,
but no effort was made to drive them off, and no damage was done by them; distance marched twenty-nine miles.

March resumed at 6 a.m., March 1st, through Harrisonburg and Mount Crawford, and camp pitched that evening on Middle River; during the day's march we had been considerably annoyed by small forces of the enemy, and Rosser, with a force of two or three hundred men, attempted to burn the bridge over the Middle Fork of the Shenandoah, but did not succeed. Two of Colonel Capehart's regiments swam the river above the bridge, charged Rosser and routed him, driving him rapidly to Cline's Mills, the advance pushing almost to Staunton; but few of the enemy were killed, thirty taken prisoners, and twenty wagons and ambulances, with their contents, were captured and destroyed. Our loss was five men wounded. Cline's Mills are seven miles from Staunton, where the headquarters of General Early were said to be. Not knowing but that he would make a fight at Staunton, Colonel Stagg's brigade of the First Division was ordered to destroy the railroad bridge over Christian's Creek, between
Staunton and Waynesborough, to prevent his getting reinforcements by rail, or, in case he would not stand, to prevent him carrying off supplies and ordnance stores. The bridge was burned, but Early, learning of our approach, made a hasty retreat to Waynesborough, leaving word in Staunton that he intended to fight at that place.

The next morning we entered Staunton. "Little Phil" was now in a quandary what it was best to do, pursue the course to Lynchburg, leaving Early in his rear, or go out and fight his (Early's) infantry and cavalry, defeat him, and open a way through Rockfish Gap, and so have everything in his hands for the accomplishment of that portion of his instructions which directed the destruction of the Central Railroad and the James River Canal. He decided upon the latter course, and Custer's division was directed to take up the pursuit, followed closely by Devin's division. The rain had been pouring in torrents for two days, and the roads were bad beyond description; nevertheless the men pushed boldly on, although men and horses could scarcely be recognized for the mud which covered them.
Custer found Early in a well chosen position at Waynesborough with two brigades of infantry, some cavalry under Rosser, the infantry occupying breastworks. Custer, without waiting for the enemy to get up his courage over the delay of a careful reconnaissance, made his dispositions for attack at once, sending three regiments around the left flank of the enemy, which was somewhat exposed by being advanced _from_, instead of resting _upon_ the bank of the river in his immediate rear.

Custer, with his other two brigades, partly mounted and partly dismounted, at a given signal boldly attacked and impetuously carried the enemy's works, while the Eighth New York and First Connecticut, which were formed in fours, charged over the breastworks and continued through the town of Waynesborough, sabreing a few men as they went along, and did not stop until they had crossed the South Fork of the Shenandoah River, which was immediately in Early's rear, where they formed as foragers, and with drawn sabres held the east bank of the stream.

The enemy threw down their arms and surrendered, with cheers at the suddenness with which they were captured.
The general officers present in this engagement with Early were Long, Wharton, Lilley, and Rosser, and it is a wonder how they escaped, unless they hid in obscure places in houses of the town.

The substantial results of this brilliant fight were eleven pieces of artillery, with horses and caissons complete, about two hundred wagons and teams, all loaded with subsistence, camp and garrison equipage, ammunition, and officers' baggage, seventeen battle flags, and one thousand and six hundred officers and enlisted men. The results, in a military point of view, were very great, as the crossing of the Blue Ridge, covered with snow as it was, at any other point, would have been difficult.

The disposal of the prisoners was the next question to be considered, and it was decided to send them to Winchester, more than one hundred miles away, under guard. The First New Hampshire and First Rhode Island, and a mixed crowd with lame and nearly worn out horses, and a number of dismounted men, taken from the many regiments of the command, about twelve hundred in all, were placed under the command of Colonel John L. Thompson,
of the First New Hampshire (formerly Lieutenant-Colonel of the First Rhode Island), and ordered to conduct the prisoners back within our lines at Winchester.

I will venture the opinion that, at no time during the war, did an officer have a more disagreeable service imposed upon him than that upon which Colonel Thompson was about to enter, and one of the purposes of this narrative is to show how satisfactorily he performed this duty, under the most difficult and discouraging circumstances, and the story, with some exceptions, cannot be better told than by the Colonel himself, in his official report, after his arrival at Winchester.

This report can be found on page 528, Series 1, Vol. XLVI., Official Records, War of the Rebellion, which reads as follows:

REPORT OF COLONEL JOHN L. THOMPSON, FIRST NEW HAMPSHIRE CAVALRY, OF OPERATIONS FROM MARCH 3D TO 8TH, 1865.

HEADQUARTERS, DETACHMENT OF CAVALRY,
WINCHESTER, VA., March 9, 1865.

SIR: I have the honor to submit the following report of the conducting a convoy of prisoners from Waynesborough to
our lines at this place. Some one thousand three hundred prisoners, including fifty-six officers, were turned over to me at Waynesborough on the 3d inst., with instructions to conduct them to Winchester.

I was furnished with an escort consisting of the dismounted men and those with poor horses from all the cavalry, about six hundred men, together with seven small organizations, numbering about six hundred men in the ranks.

I destroyed at Waynesborough four guns and caissons, and six ambulances, leaving the sick and wounded in the houses, the horses and mules being too weak to draw them. I took a gun with a train of fourteen horses and two mules. I was not provided with forage for the animals, nor rations for the escort or prisoners, except three days' rations of coffee, sugar, and salt.

I encamped at Fisherville on the night of the 3d, and before daylight sent the Fourth New York Cavalry, Major Schwartz commanding, to secure the two bridges between Staunton and Harrisonburg, as the streams were so swollen that it was impossible to ford them. They arrived only in time to save them from burning.

Major Schwartz was directed to inform the citizens of Staunton that a large number of prisoners would pass through the town, and that they must supply them with food.

On reaching Staunton I found a few females bringing out a poor pittance in baskets; I refused to allow them to approach the prisoners, and told the citizens that they could have half an hour to provide food, or I should take it from the Insane Asylum.
They brought none, and I took flour and bacon from the Asylum, upon which the prisoners subsisted until they arrived at this place. I learned at Staunton that General Rosser was collecting his command, which had all been furloughed, for the purpose of releasing the prisoners. He had only fifty men with whom he skirmished with our rear guard and prevented foraging, except with large parties. At Harrisonburg McNeil's company joined him, together with about one hundred more of his regular troops. He had sent dispatches in our front to all parts of the country, directing the citizens and soldiers to rendezvous at Mt. Jackson to prevent our crossing the North Fork of the Shenandoah, stating that he would follow with his forces, and certainly capture us.

I arrived at Mt. Jackson at noon on the 6th, and found the river impassable, even for horsemen, except at the ford near the pike. A force of two hundred men had collected, and held all the fords.

I spent the afternoon in trying to build a bridge by felling trees, but was unsuccessful. The river was falling rapidly however, and would be fordable next morning. At daylight I directed Major Brown, commanding the Twenty-second New York, with his own regiment and the First Rhode Island, to force the ford above the pike, and drive the enemy from the main ford. This was executed very handsomely; in ten minutes time the enemy was scattered in the mountains, and we had taken several prisoners.

At this time the enemy attacked our rear, which had taken a position on Rude's Hill, but was repulsed.

The dismounted men and prisoners forded the stream in
groups of fifty or sixty, holding each other by the arm. It was impossible for a single footman to ford, the water being breast high, with a rapid current.

When the fording was nearly completed General Rosser, with about three hundred men, made a vigorous assault upon the troops guarding our rear, and was again repulsed, with a loss to him of ten killed, several wounded, and twenty-five prisoners. The enemy made no other attack, though I was informed by the citizens that Mosby's men were to join General Rosser, and they would attack us in our camp that night. We marched, however, across Cedar Creek, and encamped in the earthworks at that place, reaching our lines at Winchester at noon on the 8th. I think General Rosser gave up the pursuit at Woodstock.

During the night at Mt. Jackson the gun we had brought was spiked and the carriage destroyed, as I was fearful that it could not be drawn over the ford, and it might fall into the hands of the enemy. I had no ammunition for it, the cartridges having been taken, by order of General Merritt, to destroy the bridge at Waynesborough.

Lieut.-Colonel Nichols, Ninth New York Cavalry, who was detailed by General Sheridan to take command of the troops of the First Division, rendered very efficient services.

Lieut.-Colonel Boice, Fifth New York Cavalry, whom I put in charge of those from the Third Division, deserves high commendation; he covered the rear during the entire march. His repulse of the enemy in the two assaults at Rude's Hill was brilliant; the prisoners could not withhold their commendation, but shouted with our own men.
Major Brown, Twenty-second New York, also merits praise for the manner in which he forced the ford, and cleared the enemy from our front.*

The troops were all severely tried with labor and hunger, and behaved perfectly. Our loss was one officer (Captain Wyatt, First New Hampshire), and five men wounded, and two captured.

The number of prisoners was increased by four officers and thirty men.

I have the honor to be,

Your obedient servant,

J. L. THOMPSON,

Colonel First New Hampshire Cavalry, Commanding Detachment. Assistant Adjutant-General, Cavalry Corps, Middle Military Division.

Endorsement:

HEADQUARTERS CAVALRY,
MIDDLE MILITARY DIVISION, March 10, 1865.

Respectfully forwarded.

The attention of the Major-General commanding is particularly invited to this report. The harassing difficulties overcome, and the skill, genius, and judgment displayed by Colonel Thompson in bringing safely to Winchester more prisoners than he started with, is deserving of the highest commendation and worthy of more than an ordinary notice.

A. T. A. TORBERT,

Brevet Major-General, etc.

*The italics are mine. W. G.
The capture of the remnant of Early's army at Waynesborough was a terrible blow to the hope of the Confederates that Sheridan would be stopped in his onward march, which was well understood by them to be directed against the Central Railroad and the James River Canal, and the defeat, thorough and complete, of the only organized command that might prevent such destruction, came with the force of a thunderbolt to paralyze them with fear, and already they could see and read the handwriting on the wall, proclaiming the downfall of the Confederacy.

To them it was a discouraging outlook, but out of all the despondency and gloom came the cheering assurance from Rosser (the "Saviour of the Valley"), that their fathers, brothers, and sons, captured at Waynesborough, would be soon recaptured, with their "Yankee guard." How that prophecy was fulfilled the foregoing pages explain.

The following report indicates that Rosser satisfied his superiors, if he did not himself:
HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA,  
March 9, 1865.

General John C. Breckenridge, Secretary of War:

General Rosser reports that on the 5th, with a few of his men, he attacked the enemy near Harrisonburg, who were guarding prisoners taken at Waynesborough, and captured a few prisoners. On the morning of the 7th, again attacked near Rude's Hill.

Having detained them for a day and night at the river, he caused them to retire in haste, abandoning the only piece of artillery they had and their ambulance. He annoyed them a great deal, and enabled a good many of our men to escape.

(Signed,) R. E. LEE.

As a matter of fact only two men of our escort were captured and none of the prisoners escaped, and, it is my earnest opinion and belief that none desired to escape, for their service under Early's leadership had thoroughly disgusted them with such warfare as they had experienced in the Valley of Virginia, and they were sensible enough to realize that the success of Federal arms, and the consequent restoration of the Union were assured beyond a reasonable doubt, and in conversation with them during this trip down the Valley, I found a number of them very ready to
express such a belief, and they declared that they
had already sacrificed too much in a hopeless cause.

Now a few words concerning the charge across the
ford, and through the town of Mt. Jackson, that
resulted, to use the language of Colonel Thompson,
"in the scattering of the enemy to the mountains," and was "executed handsomely."

The advance of that charging force was Troop A,
First Rhode Island Cavalry, commanded by our
genial and much loved comrade, Lieutenant Samuel
C. Willis. If there was any other officer in com-
mmand I did not see him, and I was very close to
Lieutenant Willis during the entire movement. In
fact the whole affair seems quite fresh in my mem-
ory, although thirty years have elapsed—(does it
seem possible, comrades?)—since the incident.

This was our last engagement with the enemy, and
it is strange but nevertheless true, that the battle of
Cedar Mountain, our first, and this last one, are the
best remembered by me of all our engagements, ex-
cepting our Middleburg racket, that resulted so dis-
astrously to our regiment, and put a star upon the
shoulder of that splendid officer, Alfred N. Duffié.
The chill of the water as we forded the river that March morning in 1865, the movement along the river bank after we had crossed, behind a screen of bush and young tree growth that fringed the stream from the ford almost to the town of Mt. Jackson, our sudden and unexpected appearance near the bridge and main street of the town, so near the enemy guarding the bridge that we could discern the color of their eyes, the confusion among them caused by our sudden appearance, the few shots they sent us, the clear ringing voice of Lieutenant Willis as he, rising in his stirrups, fairly yelled, "There they are, come on First Rhode Island," the swift pursuit we made, with drawn sabres, through the main street of the town to its north side, where we took position on a knoll on the left of the pike, and waited the arrival of our supports, all seem a recent event to me.

In our front all but a few of the enemy had disappeared, and those few were among some scattering trees east of the pike about a quarter of a mile away, and they sent us a few scattering shots, without damage.

I wish that I could remember the names of all the
men that took part in the charge through the town, for it was not only gallant, but audacious in the extreme, and wonderfully successful in extricating the command from its disagreeable position that was hourly getting more and more perplexing as reinforcements were added to the enemy's force.

If my memory serves me right, Sergeants Crane, Spencer, and Cross, Privates Blake and Remington, were in the charge, besides Lieutenant Willis, myself, and a scout who joined us when we crossed the river and volunteered his services, and was accepted by Lieutenant Willis. I am quite sure that our charging force did not exceed fifteen in number, and this small number of veterans attacked certainly five times their number of Confederates, and "scattered them to the mountains."

I cannot find any report of our regimental operations, from February 27th to March 8th, inclusive, in the official records or elsewhere, only such as the brief mention made of it in Colonel Thompson's report, that gives all the credit to "Major Brown and his regiment, the Twenty-second New York," for the scattering of the enemy to the mountains.
It is in evidence that the order for our movement across the river was given to Lieutenant Willis by Captain Capron, who, at that time, was in command of the First Rhode Island, and it would be interesting for many of us to know what part Major Brown, of the Twenty-second New York, had in the affair.

The members of our regiment are ever ready and willing to give to the comrades of other commands all that may be due them, but we must "open our lips and bark" a little when they are honored at our expense.

Colonel John L. Thompson's services as commander of this detachment were so much appreciated at corps headquarters that he was breveted brigadier-general United States Volunteers, on recommendation of General Sheridan.

There is no doubt as to the order given Major Brown by Colonel Thompson to cross the river and "force the ford," but it is not as clear to my mind how it happened that our regiment, instead of his own, the Twenty-second New York, were given the post of honor and danger in the movement. Immediately on the arrival of the detachment at Winches-
ter, Colonel Thompson, with his usual business-like promptness, made a report of the operations of his command, and supposing that Major Brown had carried out the instructions given him, gave that officer and his regiment credit for the valuable results achieved by a portion of the First Rhode Island Cavalry, and the compilers of the official records have published that report, and it must stand as history of the events described.

Some persons will naturally inquire why this case is presented at this late day since the war, and in reply it can be said that until the last issue of the Official Records, Series 1, Volume XLVI., in which is published the report mentioned, there was no definite knowledge of the injustice done, although there has been much conjecture, since the war, in the minds of the comrades interested, as to the why and wherefore official credit was not given them for exceptionally hazardous, brilliant, and valuable service at Mt. Jackson, Virginia, March 7, 1865.

Colonel Thompson had no motive for depriving the First Rhode Island Cavalry of any honor it deserved, and no disposition to do so, I am sure, for
our regiment was his first love, and up to the hour of his death, which occurred at Chicago, Ill., January 1, 1888, his relations with his Rhode Island comrades were not only fraternal, in the strongest soldiery sense, but affectionate in the extreme, and in various well remembered ways he manifested his great interest in their Veteran Association.

It is, to say the least, unfortunate for our regiment that no report of its operations, from February 27 to March 8, 1865, was written and forwarded to either detachment or division headquarters. If that duty had been performed no such error would have been made in Colonel Thompson's report, and the official records would have shown one more evidence of Rhode Island gallantry and soldiery achievement in the Civil War, and my comrades would realize the gratification and satisfaction of knowing that their faithful and efficient service had been given official recognition in the great historical record of war events now published, and being published, by the government, under the title, *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*.

Such reports as the one in question, emanating
from the highest official source, and published in such a work, must stand as reliable, right or wrong.

In the case I have submitted, the fact is illustrated that the pen is mightier than the sword, since it can take from those that have successfully wielded that weapon credit for such success, and give to others not in the least entitled to it.

Comrades, our days are swiftly gliding by; already many of our dear old comrades-in-arms have joined the "silent majority," among whom are some of those who were present in that charge at Mt. Jackson, March 7, 1865. In justice to them, and ourselves, let us, while we can, give such facts as will correct false statements and consequent impressions.
APPENDIX.

Note. In support of the claim made in this publication for the honors due, and in confirmation of its statements in reference to the "forcing of the ford," and the attack upon and rout of the enemy at Mt. Jackson, Va., March 7, 1865, the following letters are annexed hereto by permission of their authors.

Respectfully submitted,

WILLIAM GARDINER.

WORCESTER, MASS., June 17, 1895.

My Dear Comrade Gardiner: It seems very strange that the error in Colonel Thompson's report should have been made that has been published in the "Official Records." There should not be any question as to the advance force that crossed the north Fork of the Shenandoah River on the morning of March 7, 1865.

I was ordered to take a portion of my Troop (A) and cross the river as an advance guard. This order was given me by Capt. Willis C. Capron, then in command of our small regiment.

I called for volunteers, and a few men gallantly responded. I do not remember their names — wish I could recall them to my mind — but have been informed by Sergeant Jasper Spencer that only nine responded. With this small number of men and the scout that joined us after we crossed the river and offered his services to me and was accepted, we forced the enemy from the ford, charged and drove them from their position at the ruins of the destroyed bridge that formerly spanned the river at the Pike road, they retreating with a rush back to the bridge over the ditch at the foot of the hill, from which
we drove them through the village of Mt. Jackson to the woods and mountains, by our rapid, brave and effective charge.

The fact is, ours was the advance that morning, and continued in the advance until we arrived at Cedar Creek that evening and went into bivouac; of this I am sure, for it was my good fortune to command the advance squadron the entire day. Every man now living who was there must remember our work all that day. Your paper is entirely correct, and its statements cannot be shaken. The charge at Mt. Jackson, as you declare in your paper, "was gallant in the extreme and wonderfully successful," but we all thought very little of it at the time, although jubilant over our success.

Viewing the affair in retrospect, it does seem a great injustice that these nine or ten men, volunteers in an exceptionally hazardous movement that by their valor was made a grand success such as should entitle them to medals of honor, do not find even faint words of praise, but instead, credit for their brilliant service given to others not in the least deserving of it. If any other organization got in front of us that day when the river was crossed in the early morning, where did it go to, and how did it happen that we were the first to attack and rout the enemy? I will say in conclusion that had the officer then in command of our regiment kept a journal of the movements and operations of his command, as was his military duty to do, these things need not have been written.

Faithfully yours,

SAMUEL C. WILLIS,

Formerly 1st Lieutenant Troop A, 1st R. I. Cavalry.

TILTON, N. H., Nov. 11, 1895.

MY DEAR OLD COMRADE: I hope you will forgive me for neglecting so long to acknowledge my appreciation of your paper on "Cavalry Operations," read by Major Bliss at the
recent Annual Reunion of the First New Hampshire Cavalry Veteran Association at Weirs, in this State. Your statements in reference to the Mt. Jackson episode are in accord with my memory of that affair, and I have excellent reason for retaining a clear recollection of that event, for it was my last fight, and in which I received a gun shot wound.

In response to your request for my personal recollections of the situation at Mt. Jackson, March 6 and 7, 1865, I will say that my regiment, First New Hampshire Cavalry, arrived at Rude's Hill a little after noon on the 6th; we were a part of the rear guard; the advance guard, being the Twenty-second New York, were skirmishing with the enemy at the ford near the village of Mt. Jackson, and this continued most of the afternoon.

Sometime during the night Colonel Thompson sent for me to come to his headquarters and "talk over the situation." While I was there an officer reported that the river was falling, and expressed the opinion that it would be possible to cross at a place he had found up the stream. The Colonel then said, turning to me, "By Moses, I will send the First Rhode Island across as soon as it is light in the morning and whip them fellows; then we can cross the prisoners and we will have the river between us and Rosser."

After talking over the situation and the probability of an early and hot attack on the rear by Rosser in the morning, I returned to my command, but not to sleep. The rear guard consisted of the Fifth New York, commanded by Major Boice, and the First New Hampshire. With the break of day I was on the watch from our position on Rude's Hill to see the First Rhode Island cross the river, always a dangerous operation in the face of an enterprising enemy, but that regiment was over before we knew it. The first glimpse we had of them, they were nearly into the village; we could hear the firing and the cheers as the Rhode Islanders charged after the "Johnnies,"
now fleeing for their lives. Just at this time Rosser made a fierce attack on the First New Hampshire, and we, with assistance of the Fifth New York, drove the enemy back. In this affair I was wounded, and I still carry that piece of lead in my body as a souvenir of my last battle in the Civil War. After the prisoners had crossed the river, I went over to the town, and the surgeon of the First Rhode Island dressed my wound.

Since the war I have often heard Colonel Thompson refer to this last charge of the First Rhode Island at Mt. Jackson. The last time I met him was at his house in Chicago, and together we reviewed the campaigns of the war in which we were associated together, and in which we played our humble part in the great drama of Civil War from 1861 to 1865. The march down the Valley with the remnant of Jubal Early’s army, captured at Waynesborough, the thrilling experience we had in that movement, the many disadvantages we labored under, cold and cheerless weather, rainstorms and swollen rivers, little to eat, a vigilant enemy harassing on our front, flanks and rear, and nearly fourteen hundred more in our custody, hopeful that their comrades would succeed in the effort to release them, were talked of as a number of old comrades sat in the general’s comfortable and elegant home, with him acting, in his quiet and modest way, as the generous host. He said, “See here boys, in our first fight at Front Royal, May 30, 1862, 125 officers and men of the First Rhode Island captured 150, and in our last fight at Mt. Jackson in the Valley, March 7, 1865, a few men of the First Rhode Island charged in a brilliant manner, driving superior numbers of the enemy like chaff before the wind,” thus showing that he was cognizant of the fact then, if not at the time he made his report, on March 9, 1865, and it is now unfortunately published in the “Official Records.”

As ever, yours in F. C. and L.,

Otis C. Wyatt,
Formerly Captain Com’dg First New Hampshire Cavalry.

To William Gardiner,
Secretary First Rhode Island Cavalry Veteran Association.
Mr. William Gardiner.

Dear Sir and Comrade: The statements made in your paper entitled "Cavalry Operations, Middle Military Division, Armies of the United States, participated in by the First Rhode Island Cavalry," and read by you at the annual reunion of the regimental comrades, August 9th of this year, at Field’s Point, Providence, R. I., are entirely correct, and I am willing to testify,—under oath if necessary—as to the truth of all you have written concerning the Mt. Jackson incident in our career as a regiment.

It is a regrettable thing that such a mistake should have been made in Colonel Thompson’s report, and is now published as history in the "Official Records."

Very sincerely yours, of Camp and Field,

Jasper Spencer,
Formerly Sergeant Troop A, 1st R. I. Cav.
PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF EVENTS IN THE

WAR OF THE REBELLION,

BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE

RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

FIFTH SERIES.—NO. 6.

PROVIDENCE:
PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.
1896.
SNOW & FARNHAM, Printers.
THE
ORGANIZATION AND FIRST CAMPAIGN
OF
BATTERY E,
First Rhode Island Light Artillery.

BY
FRANCIS B. BUTTS,
[Late Corporal Battery E, First Rhode Island Light Artillery.]

PROVIDENCE:
PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.
1806.
[Edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies.]
THE ORGANIZATION AND FIRST CAMPAIGN OF BATTERY E, FIRST RHODE ISLAND LIGHT ARTILLERY.

At the beginning of the organization of the Army of the Potomac, the commander-in-chief, Gen. George B. McClellan, was known to have said: "This is to be an artillery war." Whether this was thought necessary on account of peculiar requirements of the field of operations, or an intention of the general-in-chief to have it such by his own desire, can only be inferred. He was one of three officers sent by the war department as an attaché to the allied army in the "War of the Crimea," and by his experience at the siege of Sebastopol, and constant study, had become an accomplished artillerist and skilled military engineer. He gave special attention to the increase of this arm of the service, and from the few batteries that composed the army at Bull Run,
the light artillery was increased to an average of one battery to every four regiments of infantry. It was estimated that there were upwards of two thousand guns in the several national armies, and more than three hundred in the Army of the Potomac.

Rhode Island was nobly represented in this vast power, principally through the efforts of Gov. Sprague, who had acquired great fame by his patriotic spirit, his prompt action in forwarding troops to defend the capital against the insurgents, his offer to loan the State one hundred thousand dollars to pay the expense of raising the troops before the necessary legislation could be had, and that there might be no delay in sending them forward. His gallantry in heading the troops himself, and leading them in the first battle of Bull Run, made a name for him and his State immortal in the records of the Rebellion. He had always shown strong military spirit, having attached himself, when a mere boy, to the Providence Marine Corps of Artillery, or light battery of Providence under that name. In this company he soon rose from the ranks, and was commissioned colonel by the governor of the State.
On the 1st of August, 1861, he was authorized by the Secretary of War to raise and equip a battalion of artillery, to consist of three batteries, one of which, the Second Battery, afterwards Battery A, Capt. William H. Reynolds, was then in the field. The First Battery, Capt. Charles H. Tompkins, served three months under the first call for troops, and therefore had been discharged. To this battery belongs the honor of being the first company of artillery to start to defend the capital. It was also the first battery of rifled cannon in the service of the United States.

Captain Tompkins was appointed major of the battalion, to whom the work of organization was intrusted. Battery B, Capt. Thomas F. Vaughn, was mustered into service and left Providence for Washington August 13th, and on the 25th of the same month Battery C, Capt. William B. Weeden, was mustered into service under this order, and left for the seat of war. Volunteering for the artillery had been spirited and many able-bodied men, capable of doing good service, had signed the roll intending to go. Governor Sprague asked for and obtained an order to
raise and equip two more batteries to be added to the battalion. Of these Battery D was mustered into service Sept. 4, 1861, and on the 15th arrived in Washington, where Capt. John Albert Monroe assumed command. Battery E, the subject of my sketch, soon followed, D being mustered into service on the 30th of the same month, and the same day departed for Washington. On the 13th of September the war department again extended the authority of Governor Sprague, and three more batteries were ordered to be raised, the whole to constitute the First Regiment Rhode Island Light Artillery. Battery F, Capt. James Belger, and G, Capt. Charles D. Owen, followed E in quick succession, and before the last of December, 1861, all the batteries except H were in the field.

Of this regiment Major Tompkins was appointed colonel; Captain Reynolds, lieutenant-colonel; Alexander S. Webb, first major; Samuel P. Sanford, second major. Colonel Tompkins resigned his commission Oct. 9, 1862, and Capt. John Albert Monroe was promoted to fill the vacancy. In June, 1862, Lieutenant-Colonel Reynolds was appointed to an impor-
tant agency for the government, and Major Monroe was commissioned December 4th following to fill the vacancy. John A. Tompkins, captain of Battery A, succeeded Major Monroe. Adjt. Jeffrey Hazard, Quartermaster Charles H. Merrill, Surgeon William T. Thurston, Assistant Surgeon Francis S. Bradford, and John R. Perry, chaplain, completes the list of regimental officers as they were during the period of which I am to write. These officers, although not immediately connected with the batteries that composed the regiment, filled very important positions in connection with the artillery service, particularly Colonel Tompkins and Lieutenant-Colonel Monroe, who proved themselves to be soldiers of undaunted courage, efficient commanders, and very valuable assistants to General Barry, chief of artillery.

The organization of Battery E was begun at Camp Greene early in September, 1861. This camp was situated west of the railroad, near what is now Hill's Grove, in the town of Warwick. It was here that my experience as a soldier first began, and a visit to this locality has as much interest to me as the historic battlefields of Virginia. The camp was named
in honor of Gen. Nathaniel Greene, of Revolutionary fame.

I was one of the first squad of recruits dispatched from the armory of the Marine Artillery, on Benefit Street, Providence, to Camp Greene, on the 5th of September, 1861. For several days we were the only men in camp, and having no duties except to prepare for the reception of additional recruits, we made ourselves comfortable and sought amusement in any way we pleased. Our pleasure soon ended, however, for in less than a week a number of men who expected to be officers arrived and took quarters in a tent that had been provided for their reception, and the day following we were furnished with a section of artillery (two guns and caissons) with horses. Then a squad of recruits came nearly every day, until there were about forty men all told in camp, and camp duty was begun with a somewhat military order.

This location had been selected for the rendezvous camp of the Fourth Regiment Rhode Island Infantry, by Maj. Justus I. McCarty, of the regular army, who had seen service in Mexico, and had been com-
missioned by Governor Sprague, colonel of the Fourth, for the purpose of organizing and taking the regiment to the field. Colonel McCarty was not an esteemed favorite at first with the officers or men, on account of his rigid discipline, which was thought to be severe, at least the artillery part of the camp thought it was, and, in order that he might reign supreme over the whole domain, the artillery camp was moved to the west side of Mashapaug Pond, near Providence. Recruiting at this time was spirited. Two batteries, the Sixth and Seventh, the Fourth Regiment of Infantry, and the First Cavalry, were all being organized and rapidly filling up. The disaster at Bull Run had awakened the North to the realization that the Rebellion was of a formidable character, and that the South could not be conquered without a struggle. All loyal hearts were imbued with the highest spirit of patriotism, and troops were rushing from every State towards the capital as fast as they could be furnished with the arms.

Our camp was now a busy one. Two additional guns and caissons, with horses, were furnished. Stables were erected, guards posted, and everything
BATTERY E,

was done to give the camp a military air and appearance. We had regular drills at the manual of the piece, and occasionally a field drill with the horses. The weather was the finest of the season, and the friends of the soldiers who came to visit them were allowed perfect freedom of the camp; and, if a soldier happened to be on duty, he would be voluntarily relieved by some comrade, and the camp was one of perfect harmony and enjoyment.

The battery was fully organized in about three weeks from my first day in camp, and on the 30th of the month was paraded in a hollow square, and the oath administered binding us to serve our country for three years, unless sooner discharged. This was the last assembly that sounded for Battery E in Rhode Island and we soon left our camp. At the junction of Broad and Greenwich Streets we united with the Fourth Infantry and marched through the principal streets to Fox Point, where we embarked on board the steamer *Kill von Kull*, and took our departure amid the thundering of cannon and the mingled cheers and tears of kindred and friends. The following day we landed at Elizabethport, where
we took cars, and on the 6th of October arrived at Washington, the seat of war, and marched immediately to Camp Sprague. The following day the Fourth Regiment went into camp in tents near the city, and Battery E was left sole occupant of the camp. Those who are acquainted with the history of the First Rhode Island Infantry, are familiar with stories of Camp Sprague, but a brief description here may be of interest.

Camp Sprague was named in honor of Gov. William Sprague, who distinguished himself and State by his active response to the calls for troops, and personally accompanying them to the front. The camp had an admirable location, about one mile north of the city. On the slope of a hill, and bordering a pleasant grove, by well laid out plans, commodious barracks were erected for the men, each company in line, and facing a street, at the head of which a house, with a quaint little porch, overlooking the camp, was the quarters of the company officers. In the grove, sheltered from the scorching summer sun was erected rough cottages for the field and staff officers, and a “headquarters.” These were the
quarters of the First Regiment. At the south, and almost uniting with the First, was Camp Clark, where the Second Rhode Island Infantry first went into camp; while at the west, and in front of the whole, was a large level space, on which was held the company and regimental drills. Our battery occupied a row of barracks at the north of the camp that had been the shelter for the First Battery, considered almost a part of the First Regiment. This camp was of the greatest interest to the members of Battery E, on account of the many anecdotes related of it by the First, which returned home July 28th, the term for which it was enrolled having expired. A larger portion of our leisure was spent in visiting the different quarters to see the decorations and emblems, some of which still remained, and to read the scribbling on the walls, which often referred to some acquaintance. A few days had elapsed when, at the hour for drill, the company was marched to the parade and Capt. George E. Randolph, promoted from Battery B, was introduced by our senior lieutenant with a few pleasant words as our commander. Captain Randolph, raising his cap, modestly said
he was proud to have command of such a body of men, and hoped they would always be proud of him. How those words touched the hearts of those who heard them. Their pride for him grew to devotion. There is no officer in the whole list who became known to their men, whose name inspires such a deep feeling of endearment as the name of Capt. George E. Randolph. The officers who had accompanied the battery from the State were Lieutenants Walter O. Bartlett, William A. Arnold, John A. Perry, and Pardon S. Jastram. Lieutenant Perry was promoted to chaplain of the regiment Jan. 13, 1862, and Israel R. Sheldon was sent from home to fill the vacancy. Lieutenant Bartlett was promoted on the 24th of the same month to be captain of Battery B, and Sergt. John K. Bucklin was promoted to lieutenant. This completes the list of officers and changes during the first year of the company.

The first work of Captain Randolph was to permanently organize the company. He accordingly issued his first order dated Oct. 10, 1861, in which he announced the appointment of the non-commissioned officers, my name being first on the list of corporals.
I was then but sixteen years old, and exceedingly proud of my rank, for I felt that I must have had the confidence of my officers to have been selected from among men who were all older than myself. In this order the detachments were numbered from one to six. A detachment of artillery, in military terms, means the men that are attached to each gun, forming a body of sixteen men, including a sergeant and two corporals. The men having a desire not to be separated from those with whom they had become best acquainted, or those with whom they had together left their homes, had mutually formed detachments, which were allowed to be preserved, and the greatest satisfaction and harmony prevailed in the company on this account. Having left our guns in Rhode Island we were immediately furnished with a new battery, consisting of four ten-pounder Parrott, and two twelve-pounder, smoothbore, howitzer cannon, a complement of horses, and a full supply of camp equipage.

Our time at Camp Sprague was spent in regular drill, until November 5th, when, early in the morning, we moved from Washington and passed into
Virginia. The defenses of the capital were now being rapidly completed, and the scenes along the line of march were the most picturesque and interesting of any military operations that we had yet seen. Passing through Alexandria we went into camp about a mile southwest of the city. For a day or two we had rain, and our camp became so muddy that a more elevated spot was chosen, and we moved again, to what was known as Camp Webb. While in this camp we had our first experience of a reconnaissance. It was about three o'clock in the morning when the order came for us to hitch up. The men turned out promptly, and the battery soon moved out of camp and joined the forces near Fort Lyon, with whom we proceeded in the darkness, none of us knowing in what direction. Our march was frequently interrupted by halts, and, when daylight broke upon us we could see that we were in the midst of a large body of troops, but were entirely ignorant of the object of the movement. At noon, after marching fourteen miles, we arrived at Pohick Church, a place of historical interest, it having been the wedding place of General Washington. We saw
near the church smouldering embers of the rebel campfires, which had the appearance of having been hurriedly forsaken, and there not being any of the enemy to engage our attention, the column made a short halt, and then facing homeward resumed the march. At this point Thompson’s regulars, that accompanied us, turned out of the road and fired a round of blank cartridges, the object of which I overheard him explain to our captain. He said if he could not see the rebels he would let them hear him. The return march was not interrupted, and we arrived in camp about dark, having had a new experience, that very well tested the spirit of the men, for it was expected that we would fall in with the enemy.

After being in Camp Webb about three weeks, we moved to the eastward, and went into camp near Fort Lyon, where stables were erected and arrangements made for passing the winter. Fort Lyon was an extensive earthwork, on a high elevation, overlooking the Potomac and city of Alexandria, and was one of the chain of fortifications that surrounded Washington. On the eastern slope of the hill, and facing the Potomac near the bridge that crosses
Hunting Creek, was the artillery camp of Heintzelman's division, to which Battery E was attached. The camp was known as Artillery Camp, and consisted of Companies G, Second United States, Captain Thompson; B, First New Jersey, Captain Bean, and the company of which I write. They were each spoken of as Thompson's, Bean's, and Randolph's batteries, Thompson being the senior officer and chief of the division. Here the winter of 1861-2 was spent in the regular duties of camp life, while the Army of the Potomac was being organized. We had a fine, grassy meadow for drills, in which great interest was taken, and we perfected ourselves in field manoeuvres. Sometimes the three companies of artillery would meet on the field together, under command of Captain Thompson, who would take position on a knoll, with the two junior commanders near him, and give orders by the bugle, each battery executing the same evolutions. These drills were the most exciting for the men of anything that occurred, and they would do their very best to execute the movements correctly and quickly. Battery E so far excelled the others that these drills did not
occur as often as they possibly would, had the senior captain been encouraged by his own command. It was not unusual when we marched from the field that the Jersey battery would be seen hurrying to execute the last order, and the regulars blocked in a countermarch by having a team or two snarled up by the swing drivers, and Captain Thompson giving an exhibition of profanity that was by no means mild, even for a regular officer. Our leisure, that is when stormy weather and too much mud interrupted our drill, was spent in correspondence, reading the daily war news, and in games of various descriptions. The morals of the company at this time were of the very highest, and it was very rarely then, even for only a trifle, that any game of chance was indulged in by the men. I will say here before proceeding with my paper, that Randolph’s battery was made up of men (to use a military phrase) of better calibre than any similar number of three years’ men that left the State in any organization. All rules of military discipline, and orders from superiors were cheerfully obeyed. There were very few punishments, which never exceeded more than an extra hour’s duty, and
with but one exception, I think, there was not a man punished for drunkenness, during the whole period of which I write. There was never any guard tent, or place of confinement, nor any use for it had there been one, and all entered into their military duties happily and mutually.

Artillery Camp was undisturbed by any hostile movement save one, when a call was sounded from division headquarters that summoned us to hitch up hastily and leave camp. It was early in the forenoon when we started, and as we turned into the road leading southward, we found it filled with troops all moving in the same direction towards the enemy's line. We marched several miles without any indication of what was going on, when the battery wheeled from the road and took position on a knoll that overlooked a large field on either side, and in front. Here the battery was placed in position for action, and a few preparations made for a defense, but, after waiting for an hour or two without any indication of there being an armed force near, an order came for us to return to camp. It was then near sunset, and without escort or company, the other troops having
gone further than we, the battery started on its homeward way. I shall never forget this as being a desolate and tedious march. The roads were muddy, and the weather about such as is experienced in the North late in November. A chilling, northwest wind, that almost amounted to a gale, numbed the men, and stiffened the mud, so as to impede our progress, and not until late at night did we arrive in camp. Fortunately I had the day previous received a box of provisions from home, sent by express, and had been well fed all day, and found my tent upright when we got into camp, while some had not provided themselves with rations, and found their tents flattened by the gale. This was our first struggle in Virginia mud, which was borne by the men with a courage and patience that must have been pleasing to the officers. A demonstration by the enemy against our picket line was the cause of the expedition.

The pleasantest memories of camp life are of our winter in Artillery Camp. The health of the men had been excellent, there having been but one case of fatal sickness, that of Corp. John B. Mathewson,
who died Jan. 7, 1862. In this case the body was embalmed and sent to his home for burial, the expense being borne by his comrades.

The entire Federal force had been organized by the President and Secretary of War into three large armies. That of the Army of Missouri and Arkansas, the Army of the Tennessee or the Cumberland, and the Army of the Potomac. The latter, commanded by Maj.-Gen. George B. McClellan, was divided into four grand divisions, or corps d'armée, commanded respectively: First, Brig.-Gen. Irvin McDowell; Second, Brig.-Gen. Edwin V. Sumner; Third, Brig.-Gen. Samuel P. Heintzelman; Fourth, Brig.-Gen. Erasmus D. Keys. The First and Second Corps were composed of two sub-divisions of three brigades each, also commanded by brigadier-generals. Each brigade was generally composed of four regiments of infantry, but in some cases there were five. The Third and Fourth Corps had three divisions each but were subsequently reduced to two, the same number as the First and Second Corps. The field artillery was distributed in about the proportion of one six-gun battery to each brigade, and was attached
to the division the same as were the brigades, and in charge of a chief of artillery, whose next superior officer was the division commander. There was also one regiment of cavalry attached to each corps. In addition to the _corps d'armée_ there was the Engineers' Brigade, composed of one regiment of cavalry, one regiment of heavy artillery, two regiments of infantry, and a battalion of United States Engineers. In addition to these there were two regiments of cavalry and two battalions of infantry attached to general headquarters, and six regiments of cavalry and twenty-three batteries of artillery in reserve. I have given this sketch of the make-up of the Army of the Potomac in order that those who were not soldiers, and some perhaps who were, may understand to what part of the army, and in what position Battery E was located, as it was attached to the First Division of the Third Corps.

The winter had passed away. The armies of the West had been pushing forward and down the Mississippi, sweeping the rebel army from before them and carrying victory wherever they went. Forts Henry and Donelson, together with Island No. 10,
and the cities of Nashville and Columbus had been taken, and our army lodged in the heart of Tennessee. Nothing had yet been done to wipe out the disgrace of Bull Run, and clamors had become loud for the Army of the Potomac to move. The confidence of the soldiers and all loyal people was bestowed upon General McClellan with firm devotion, who, it was believed, had organized an army superior to any the world had ever seen, certainly superior to that of the Confederates, and that he would lead it to a speedy crushing out of the Rebellion.

At length indications gave promise that something would be done. Shelter tents were issued and preparations for the evacuation of our winter huts were commenced. The First Corps, General McDowell, had moved upon the winter quarters of the Confederates at Manassas, which were found evacuated, and all stores and army supplies removed, which indicated that they intended to give up that part of the field and make a stand nearer Richmond. A few days later everything was packed in the battery for a campaign, and on the morning of the 17th of March the battery wheeled out of Artillery Camp, leaving a
scene of the happiest recollections. We had a full complement of men, a battery fully equipped, and every heart throbb'd with patriotism and a determination to serve the guns to the last man. Before noon we had placed our battery and horses, with the other artillery of the division, on board barges at Alexandria, and immediately commenced descending the Potomac in tow of transports that were laden with troops. This movement could not have been a secret even to the enemy, for I remember of its being generally understood that the advance upon Richmond was to be made by way of Fortress Monroe, and the rebel iron-clad Merrimac having been defeated by the Ericsson battery Monitor, it was thought she might have been so disabled that the army would ascend to some point on the James.

The first few hours of our sail down the Potomac were delightful. As we passed Fort Washington we saw some shots fired in practice that bounded over the surface of the water or plunged beneath it, when, sometimes, if a shell, it would explode, throwing volumes of water to a great height, showing the power of heavy guns. A little further on
we passed in sight of Mt. Vernon, the home of our first president. The scene was sublime. Fertile lands and pastures blooming with the first tokens of spring, and woodlands bearing the ever green foliage of southern pine, bordered the shores on either side, while the water, stretching seaward to the edge of the horizon, lay placid and mirror-like under a most brilliant descending sun, seeming to reflect upon us the peace which God had given, and to forbid our hostile intent. Later in the afternoon one of the transports in convoy separated the tow by taking two of the three barges, and proceeding left the one on which were most of our men in tow of a steamer that would have had a load to move herself, and was so slow that we all got tired out watching to pass a given point, and after disposing of some hot coffee that had been prepared for us, and an allowance of hardbread from our haversacks, we spread our blankets on deck where we slept till morning.

When we awoke, we found the barge at anchor several hundred yards from shore at the entrance of St. Mary's River, on the east side of the Potomac, near its mouth, and that the steamer had departed,
leaving us with no other company than a few small oyster craft. At first we could not understand the object of our having been left unprotected in what seemed a desolate region. But as the day continued, we saw that the captain of the steamer had known by his nautical experience that a storm was approaching, and that disaster would follow if he advanced upon the broad waters of the Chesapeake. The upper deck of our transport had been fitted up with some accommodations for passengers, having a large saloon, a few rooms, and a cabin, the latter being in possession of our officers. The day was spent in idleness, and with little anxiety except that our rations were getting short, from which we were relieved by the arrival of a steamer laden with army stores, which had been driven in with several other craft for a harbor, the storm now making it unsafe for any but large vessels to proceed. During the evening we were enlivened by the music of a troop of slaves, who visited us from the plantations. They had a banjo and violin, which were strung up into a somewhat harsh tone, as an accompaniment to male voices. They also disposed of a quantity of
eatables, a description of which would reflect upon the honesty of the negroes, for there must have been a disappointment in both pantry and hen roost on more than one plantation, with the proceeds of which and a collection for the entertainment, the visitors departed happy and wealthy.

The following day everybody stayed on board the transport till evening, when Captain Randolph, Lieutenant Arnold, and Lieutenant Butler, of the Regulars, a part of whose officers and men were also on the barge, went in a boat up the river to a planter's house, where they spent an hour or more enjoying the hospitality of the gentleman and his family. A good supper was spread, of which the officers could not have partaken with more relish than one of the two men who accompanied them, who made up for lost meals and put in an allowance for future possibilities. The morning of the fourth day opened clear, and a steamer took our craft in tow at an early hour and proceeded with good speed towards Fort Monroe, where we disembarked in the afternoon. The battery and horses with which we had parted company on our passage, had arrived previously, and
had been placed in waiting order by Sergt. William Millen and a few men who were with him. Without delay the battery was hitched up, and, moving through the burned village of Hampton, whose bare chimneys stood as solemn evidence of rebel vandalism, we went into camp about a mile west, near what is now the Soldiers' Home.

For several days the large fleet of steamers that it took to transport the army continued to discharge troops and war material, until the whole Army of the Potomac was in one camp, that could be overlooked from a single point. This brought us near the Second Regiment and Batteries A, B, C, and G, and I enjoyed greeting old friends, some of whom I had not seen since they left Providence. The enthusiasm at this time was intense, as it was thought nothing could resist the power of our army, and that the army of McClellan would sweep like a tidal wave over the whole seceding states.

On the morning of the 4th of April five days' rations were stowed into our haversacks, and at eleven o'clock A. M. we started with the advance divisions of Hamilton and Porter, and, marching through Big
Bethel, one of the outposts of Yorktown, made memorable by the fatal fight June 10, 1861, we arrived at Harwood’s Mills, where we encamped for the night. Next morning we resumed the march, and about three o’clock reached Yorktown and immediately went into position in front of the enemy’s fortications at Winn’s Mill, about one mile to the left of the principal defences.

The First and Second sections of the battery went into position in front of the rebel works at Winn’s Mill, with which they immediately became hotly engaged. At the same time the third section, in charge of Lieutenant Bucklyn, advanced across an open field and went into battery near a fence, along the sides of which a thick growth of brush hid our movements. A few shots, however, brought us to the notice of the enemy, who returned the compliment, making some close hits. From this position I saw plainly the effect of the firing, which afforded considerable merriment on both sides. Once I directed a shell at a company of infantry, which was seen to explode directly among them, and caused such a sudden breaking of ranks, and skedaddling,
as to create a cheer from all on our side. The first two sections had taken what seemed to be a trap set by the enemy, for he had such complete range of the position that every shot took effect, and, before we got through, eight dead horses and one wheel demolished was the cost of the experiment. In return for our cheers a Confederate band mounted the parapet of their works and commenced a march up and down to the chorus of Dixie Land. We were not separated too far to hear words of command, and the sudden stop of the music and the disappearance of the band at the flash of our cannon, made fun for us all. These provoking performances were exchanged at intervals until darkness came, and we retired out of range and bivouacked for the night.

Battery C and Griffin's regular battery had been engaged since noon in front of Fort Magruder, on the Yorktown road. The Third and Fifth Massachusetts batteries were also in action on our right, whose fire was returned with spirit and determination by the enemy, causing a cannonade that seemed to us at that time terrific. Battery C lost one man killed. The Third and Fifth Massachusetts had two men
killed and several wounded; also three horses killed. Berdan's sharpshooters had done good execution with their telescope rifles, and succeeded in silencing, for a time, some of the rebel guns by picking off the cannoniers whenever they attempted to reload. These men also suffered a loss of several of their number from not having sufficient protection for use of muzzle-loading guns, there not being at that time any breech-loading military rifles in use except, perhaps, for cavalry, and might not have been now, had they not been one of the developments of the war.

The second day at Yorktown was cloudy, with some rain. Our camp was in a field not far from the works, and the general belief was that the army would be consolidated at once and an attack made. This idea was, however, given up, as there was no indication of additional troops, but late in the afternoon a section of our battery moved to the front and exchanged a few shots with the enemy, our object being to break up working parties that were busily engaged strengthening their fortifications. At night we returned to our encampment to find that it had been transferred to a reserve picket post, all the bat-
BATTERY E,

tery, except the guns and horses, having been moved to the rear. No fires nor lights were allowed at night, and the greatest precaution was taken not to attract the attention of the enemy. This was one of the most unpleasant nights I ever spent in camp. Our five days' rations were gone, and we had been on short allowance for two days. The roads from Fort Monroe had become impassable owing to the past rains. Ammunition, provisions, and forage had to be left behind, and a new base of supplies was looked for nearer Yorktown. Not a murmur of complaint was heard from the men, who bore their hunger with courage; they had discovered that the field on which we were encamped had been recently planted with peanuts, which they dug up and ate. A quantity was also found in a building on the farm, and a small cow was captured, which also furnished us with food until the wagon train arrived.

On the morning of the third day we again went into position in front of the rebel fortifications, which had been considerably strengthened, and extended in a long line till lost sight of in the woods. Our first shot was at a party of shoveler's, who dis-
appeared like magic at the flash of the gun. Not anticipating any danger except from the rebel shell, which we had learned to skilfully dodge, I mounted the top rail of a fence to see the effect of our shot, when zip-whiz, a sharpshooter’s bullet came so near that I seemed to have lost half my nose, and I almost broke my neck by an impulsive twitch backward. The artist who had taken my head for a target was seen in a tree-top about three hundred yards distant on our right. He was brought to grief by Sergeant Milne, who dropped a shell exactly into his nest, and we had no further trouble from that source.

Active operations against Yorktown by this time were given up. General McClellan had decided upon the more tedious plan of digging the enemy out, so we dropped our guns and took up spades. But we did not do much digging; in fact we did nothing. If we had, the one hundred and ten thousand men that composed the army then, could have demolished the rebel fortifications with their artillery or shoveled the whole town into the ocean.

Battery E was moved to a camp in the woods about a mile farther in the rear. Our anticipations
had failed, and we awaited developments. The first mail from the north brought papers giving accounts of the first assault on the rebel works, topographical plans and descriptions of their impregnability, as seen from the office in New York, where the engineer was at work. The entire rebel army was said to be concentrated here. Yorktown was to be the decisive point—"the Key to Richmond," "the Sebastopol of America." The method of conducting the war was to be changed. No more bloody encounters upon open fields, to meet face to face and man to man. This was to be abandoned, and engineering skill was to conquer. This was the tone of the daily news at that period of the conflict. The work of digging the enemy out was begun; every soldier was armed with a shovel or pick, massive earthworks were erected in front of the rebel fortifications, extending from the York to the James River, and heavy siege guns and mortars were placed in position. Some of our infantry, holding the advance lines, would daily creep close to the rebel intrenchments to take a shot at some of the rebel artillery-men, which would often bring on, for a few minutes, a fierce cannonade.
On the morning of the 16th it was discovered that the enemy had erected a work during the previous night on the opposite side of Warwick River, between Winn's and Gee's Mills, which two Vermont regiments and three batteries of artillery were sent to attack. The Vermonters, after a brief skirmish, rushed into the stream waist deep and stormed the works. The first line was carried; but a shower of lead and iron checked the advance, and having had no support they were forced to recross the stream, suffering a severe loss. This attack brought out most of the troops along the whole line, in fear of a general engagement, and a sharp cannonade and picket-fire were kept up for some time, in which Battery E participated.

General McClellan made every effort to avoid an exchange of shots, and to restrain picket-firing. Perhaps this sport may have been indulged in more than was necessary, but our soldiers could not be kept quiet in sight of the rebels. Alternately a section of our battery would go into the intrenchments at night, to return at daylight, the rest of the time being spent in idleness within the woods, out of sight.
and sound of what was being done. Two or three times at this period I went along our lines and saw with a great deal of interest, the erection of siege batteries and the mounting of heavy rifled guns and mortars. But this was too slow, every man wanted to do something. Our inactivity at length brought on discontent and strong feeling against continuing the siege. "On to Richmond!" was shouted by press and people until the fourth day of May, when our impatience was relieved by the intelligence that Yorktown was evacuated, and an order to hitch up and be ready to follow in pursuit of the fleeing rebels.

Three days' rations were issued and Battery E moved out of camp, leaving behind everything not of use in a fight. On arriving at the Yorktown road we joined a column of troops marching forward, and entered the intrenchments in front of the town. Here a halt was made in consequence of the large number of explosive shells and bombs that were placed in the road, or wherever it was thought our troops would pass. These were laid in all sorts of ingenious forms for destroying the lives of our men,
showing clearly the barbarous spirit of Southern soldiers, and we saw a body of prisoners being forced at the point of the bayonet to remove the shells or mark out the spot where these infernal machines were buried. Hooker, who commanded the Second Division of the Third Corps, had entered the works about eleven o'clock, giving the rebels full six hours the start. General Hamilton had been relieved from the Third Division, to which, as I have said, Battery E was attached, and Gen. Philip Kearny had taken command, who pressed hard upon Hooker in pursuit of the retreating enemy. The advance was slow, as we had not proceeded more than three miles when darkness concluded operations for the day, and we wheeled out of the road and without shelter bivouacked for the night. Before morning the sky clouded and a drenching rain set in, giving a discouraging promise of a successful chase.

At daybreak reveille was sounded through the whole encampment, and little streams of smoke were seen in every direction, curling upwards from small fires, around which could be seen squads of soldiers busily engaged in cooking their meals. Soon the bugles
sounded "Boots and Saddles," then drums beat "Fall in," and, turning from the field, we were again on the road leading westward. Our progress was slow, often waiting for more than an hour for the troops in advance to move on. Governor Sprague having joined the staff of General Barry, chief of artillery, was frequently seen during the day. On one of our halts he came through the battery leaving some pleasant remark in return for the salutes which we all felt proud to give him. We also learned from him that Hooker had caught up with the enemy, and was having a brisk engagement. At noon we began to move more steadily, a part of the troops having taken the road leading to Warwick Court House, that now formed a junction with the Williamsburg road. The road soon gave evidence that a large force had passed before us. The rain of the previous night, and tramp of cavalry and artillery had put the roads in terrible condition. The troops on foot marched through the woods on either side of the road, while our battery strode through mud in which the horses sank to their bodies. Heavy firing was heard in front, indicating that the retreating army had been over-
taken, and a battle was raging. Every means was taken to hasten the troops forward. Our guns would now and then lodge in mud-holes till it was found necessary to abandon the caissons, using the horses, making twelve on each gun, and to lighten the ammunition chests the cannoneers and infantry advancing with us carried the ammunition in their hands. As we came nearer the firing was more distinct, and every effort was made to get forward in order to reinforce the troops engaged. We were often checked by the miring of some of the guns, until we reached a road that had been chopped through the woods. A short distance further on wounded men were seen coming to the rear. A steady cannonade and musket firing was heard only a short distance in our front. General Heintzelman was then urging his men forward with loud words of command. Turning to the left we emerged from the woods, when a thick, sulphurous smoke enveloped us, and loud cheers given by Hooker's exhausted division, told of their joy when Kearny dashed upon the field. Battery E was not ordered into the fight, as it was soon over. The rebels were driven from their rifle-pits; darkness,
and a heavy rain that it seemed would deluge the earth, closed the scene, and the battle of Williamsburg was ended.

Halting thus upon the edge of the battlefield, our horses were unhitched from the guns; the men, soaked with rain, hungry, and overcome with fatigue, laid down in the mire and slept. It was about midnight when I awoke, the rain had ceased, the sky was unclouded, and the moon, that never seemed brighter, cast upon us a most brilliant and welcome light. Arising from the bed I had made of a few fence rails, I went to a fire that I saw burning, around which sat a dozen or more men, some wounded, that belonged to Gibson’s Battery, Third United States Artillery. This battery went into battle in echelon, on the main road, in front of Fort Magruder. It had become mired, was charged upon and captured by the enemy; was retaken, but it had to be abandoned, the guns having settled into the soft mud, so as to become immovable. I listened to their stories of the fight with intense interest, at the same time kept turning myself before the fire until my garments were quite dry.
With the first streak of daylight Captain Randolph came to where we were standing, then walked through the battery, apparently anticipating an early order to move. The men soon got up from their muddy beds and commenced making fires by which to dry their clothing. Our haversacks having been fastened to the foot-boards of the gun carriages, coffee was made, which, with a few hard crackers, made a breakfast that refreshed and strengthened us all, and at sunrise Battery E was in harness, ready to move. It was expected the enemy would continue their retreat during the night; in fact our advance pickets who lay all night very close to Fort Magruder, heard them withdrawing their artillery, and as soon as it was light went forward and took possession, so we were not surprised to find them gone. About an hour after sunrise the left section (two guns of Battery E, and a section of Thompson’s battery) moved forward. A short halt was made as we crossed the battlefield, which everywhere gave proof of the terrible struggle that had taken place. The dead and wounded lay thickly over the ground, disabled cannon and artillery horses blocked the road we were
to enter, and the field on the right and in front, extending to the rebel rifle-pits, was strewn with the dead of both armies, while guns and accoutrements in great quantities were scattered in all directions. Proceeding as far as Fort Magruder, we joined an infantry force under General Jameson, which immediately deployed, advancing as skirmishers to the right and left of Williamsburg, while the artillery, with cannoniers dismounted, passed through the town by the main street and halted near the ancient seat of learning, William and Mary's College, the infantry continuing across the plain entered the woods a mile or more distant and disappeared. The Eighth Illinois Cavalry immediately came forward and followed in pursuit of the fleeing rebels, who in their retreat had abandoned one large gun in the works, a light brass gun of ancient manufacture, and two caissons, besides strewing the road with muskets, bayonets, knapsacks, and clothing in great quantities.

Our halt lasted several days, and the battery, that had been scattered the whole length of the route from Yorktown, was reunited. General Stoneman, with the Eighth Illinois and Sixth Regular Cavalry,
the Second Rhode Island and Ninety-eighth Pennsylvania Infantry, and a battery of horse artillery, had gone in pursuit of the enemy. On the 8th of the month, three days after the battle, the army began to move from Williamsburg, but not till the 10th did we resume our march towards Richmond. Three days after the battle of Williamsburg General Franklin, who had arrived with his division of reinforcements, some ten thousand men, advanced up the York River and landed at West Point, with considerable opposition, and a severe fight occurred, resulting in another flight of the rebels and a loss of about fifty men killed and one hundred and fifty wounded on our side. Porter's Division was transferred from Yorktown to West Point during the next two days, and on the 10th marched to White House Landing, on the Pamunky, twenty-five miles from Richmond, where the headquarters of the army were established on the 16th. Heintzelman and Sumner advanced slowly towards the new base of supplies, where the army was being concentrated, arriving there on the 13th. On the 14th and 15th it rained and we remained in our camp. About this time the Fifth
and Sixth army corps were organized. The Fifth consisting of Porter's division of the Third Corps, Sykes's division of regulars, and the reserve artillery, under command of Gen. Fitz John Porter. The Sixth, consisting of Franklin's division of reinforcements, and Smith's division, detached from Keyes's corps and commanded by General Franklin.

In moving towards Richmond the right of the army, Franklin's and Porter's corps, had kept to the north, striking the Chickahominy at New Bridge. The left wing, Keyes's and Heintzelman's corps keeping south, crossed the river at Bottom's bridge, while Sumner connected the right with the left. By the 28th Keyes's and Heintzelman's corps had crossed the Chickahominy, and the corps of Sumner, Franklin and Porter were stretched for eighteen miles along the opposite side of the river with headquarters at New Market, in rear of the right wing. While the army is thus extended along the region of the Chickahominy let us take a glance at the stream and its swampy borders, thousands of loyal and cherished patriots were swept from our ranks by its fevers and diseases. The river rises north-
west of Richmond, where several small tributaries, flowing through swampy uplands unite, then, running in a southwesterly direction, between the York and James, and parallel thereto for about fifty miles, turns to the south; and, after a winding course of twenty miles, falls into the James ten miles west of Williamsburg, being navigable for small craft for about twenty miles. The stream is crossed by several bridges, principally those used in the military operations of the Peninsular campaign. Bottom's bridge, on the south, crossed by the Williamsburg road, and Meadow bridge, fifteen miles to the north, crossed by the Fredericksburg Railroad, are the principal of these. Richmond lies six miles from the Chickahominy, opposite the centre of our military operations. The movements of the army had been so slow in advancing up the peninsula that a well defined description of the approaches to Richmond had been pictured on the mind of every soldier who could read our daily newspapers, and in crossing the Chickahominy more than ordinary notice was taken of its formation.

On the 29th of May, Battery E crossed the Chick-
ahominy at Bottom’s bridge. In approaching the bridge a gentle incline from the bordering uplands brought us upon a broad intervale intersected by deep ditches, and now and then slight depressions, filled with stagnant water, over which logs had been laid in corduroy in order that the artillery and cavalry might pass. Further on we entered a wooded belt, where slimy water and spongy soil indicated that we were in the midst of the great Chickahominy swamp. Here we crossed Bottom’s bridge, built with three short spans, and supported on piers of logs cobbled together. The work had been done by our own engineers, who rebuilt the bridge, the enemy having destroyed the one on which they crossed in their retreat. Under this bridge flowed a sluggish stream about a dozen yards wide and four feet deep, which filled its banks to the brim. This was the historic Chickahominy. The woods are about four hundred yards in width, and as we pass out on the opposite side we again cross the bottom lands and ascend to higher ground. Turning our heads to glance backwards, we see across the swamp a mile or more distant, a long column of troops, winding
over a vast plain, resembling a huge serpent, until it disappears into the forest, the top of which was about on a level with the ground on which we stood. Without a turn we kept along the Williamsburg pike for about a mile, when we left the road at the edge of a wood and went into camp.

Keyes's corps had crossed Bottom's bridge two days before and occupied the position now taken by Heintzelman. Slight defences had been made, consisting of a redan on either side of the broad turnpike, and a chain of rifle-pits. In front and on either side of our camp was level ground for a distance of about a thousand yards, the opposite side being bordered with heavy woods. The Richmond and York River Railroad was less than a mile at our right. Keyes had advanced his line about a mile and was intrenched in the woods on the Williamsburg road, at "The Seven Pines," a place so named from a clump of pine trees at the crossing of several roads. Casey's division of the corps was a half mile further advanced to what is known as "Fair Oaks Farm," where there were a couple of houses in a pleasant grove of white oaks. The white oak of New Eng-
land, with its smooth, silvery bark, becomes scarce in traveling south, until it finally disappears, and in this part of Virginia good specimens are uncommon, and they are called fair oaks, which gave origin to the name of this famed locality. Fair Oaks Station is often confused with Fair Oaks Farm. The former is situated a half mile further north, being a wood station on the Richmond and York River Railroad. Heintzelman's corps lay behind that of Keyes, extending from the railroad, and to the left in the direction of White Oak Swamp, both corps numbering about thirty thousand men.

Our first night on the south side of the Chickahominy was marked for its pleasantness. The temperature was mild and beautiful, and the grove in which we bivouacked was filled with fragrance from the tulip trees and flowering shrubs, while in the treetops, then in full summer foliage, sat numerous whip-poor-wills, striving to hush a rival or charm a mate with their enchanting songs. The moon, too, seemed to have more than its usual splendor, lighting up the scene with its silvery rays till all about us was discernible. The army was at rest. Nothing disturbed
the quietness save the muffled tramp of weary sentinels till daylight aroused the camp, when the busy work of army life was renewed. No reveille is sounded, no bugle or drum is heard, for the enemy is near. The drivers quietly groom and feed their horses, then from their haversacks a breakfast is prepared by the men. No dainties are had. A rough piece of boiled salt beef, or a piece of raw salt pork, well sprinkled with the mud or dust of the march, a canteen of water poured into the empty tomato can, a little coffee is added, and, proceeding to a fire that some comrade has kindled, the water is boiled, then from a pocket is taken a knife, having folded within its handle a fork and spoon, and, with a few hard crackers, this is all there is to a soldier's meal while on a march.

The sun had scarcely risen when clouds overspread us, and at noon rain commenced to fall. The army was without shelter, except the miniature tent that each man folded in his blanket. With these we found refuge from the torrents that put an end to all military work, filling the rifle-pits and rendering the roads impassable. From noon till midnight the storm
BATTERY E,

was terrible, surpassing that of Williamsburg. I never before heard such thunder, and the heavens flashed with a perpetual blaze of lightning.

The next morning the sky was still clouded, the earth was filled with water, and work on intrenchments, or the movement of troops, seemed to be impossible. Nothing of record transpired till about noon, when firing was heard on the line in front of Seven Pines. It suddenly increased; soon the sound of artillery, then the roar of battle. Kearny's division was hurried forward and passed from our sight into the woods, towards the battle. The left section of Battery E moved into the redan on the right of the turnpike, while the other two of rifled guns occupied similar works on the opposite side. The roll of musketry and boom of cannon were earnestly listened to, as we could distinguish our own from that of the enemy, and we knew our men were outnumbered. Our hearts were firm in the courage of our men, but the position of our army, being divided as it was by the flooded Chickahominy, caused grave fears to those who understood the situation. Nearer and nearer the sound of the battle
came. Then fleeing troops that had been overwhelmed and driven from the field swarmed from the woods, and continued past our line of reserve in lively retreat towards Bottom's bridge. Heintzelman, with Kearny's and Birney's division, placed himself between the retreating men and their conquerors, where he stood firm as a rock. Casey succeeded in checking the retreat, and, rallying his men without any regard to formation, re-entered the fight. The vast horde that endeavored to sweep the left wing of our army was held in check. Right, left, and centre were successively attacked, and the battle raged till dark, but the enemy could make no further progress. The excitement in rear of the line of battle was at times intense. In our slight fortification was the headquarters of our corps commander, where hurrying aide-de-camps and orderlies swarmed with reports from the fight, and flew off on their steeds to deliver orders. The council of generals; the hurried movements of troops; the loud commands of officers; the buzz of an over-reaching bullet, and the flash of a musket of some far-off picket; then the heart beats a moment in fear that our men are being driven back,
and is again rejoiced as we hear the cheers of our own men, and the rebel yells die out. These are incidents of the scene in rear of the battle.

Darkness ended the battle of Seven Pines, and Keyes and Heintzelman consolidated their forces on the plain in their rear, leaving a strong line of pickets on the edge of the field, which was the camping-ground of the partially victorious rebels. The roads were still filled with mud, and no troops could be moved except infantry. The Chickahominy was swollen, overflowing the swamp and bottom lands; the roads were flooded, and bridges washed away, so that no reinforcements could reach us. The whole rebel army was within sound of a gun, watching for day to come in order to renew the attack, in hope of vanquishing the divided Union army. Our men lay down for rest beside their arms, with the glare of the enemy's campfires illuminating the sky above their miry beds. In a short time all was still, nothing save an accidental alarm disturbed their slumbers till after midnight, when they were awakened and marched off towards the right of the field.

At daylight all was activity at the headquarters of
Heintzelman, Keyes, and Sumner. Sumner had constructed two bridges in front of his line across the Chickahominy, by which he had crossed before they were deluged with two divisions, those of Richardson and Sedgwick, both of which had been engaged the day before at Fair Oaks Station, this being the right of the line of battle. At seven o'clock the enemy began the attack by advancing down the railroad, leaving Sedgwick, who was still at Fair Oaks Station, and fell upon Richardson's division, supported by artillery, who repulsed the attack at every point. Hooker, who had been on the left, rushed his division to the point of the heaviest firing, and, with Birney's brigade, of Kearny's division, fell upon the enemy's rear, and, after an hour's hard fighting the enemy broke and fled, taking the Williamsburg road towards Richmond in their retreat.

The battle of Fair Oaks lasted only four hours, during which not less than seventy-five thousand men were actually engaged, the Confederates greatly outnumbering the Federals. Battery E was not called into action as the battle was fought entirely within the woods, and no artillery was used on either side except a few
shots from Sedgwick, when the attack was first made. The roar of musketry was terrific, more terrible than the thunder of the previous storm. Both armies fought desperately, and their commanders led them on with more determination than had ever before been displayed, both seeming to realize the very critical position they were in. One having behind it a swollen stream, and cut off from all support or retreat; the other, fighting under the very walls of its Capital, in front of its gates. After the battle I went, with a comrade, over the field, which everywhere gave evidence of the desperate encounter. Within the space of a mile lay more than seven thousand dead and wounded of both sides. The sight was appalling.

General McClellan entered the redoubt our battery was in, after the battle was over, accompanied by a few of his staff, among whom was Count de Joinville, who approached me very politely, as I stood near a gun, and asked several questions concerning the elevation and time of fuze; meanwhile McClellan, Heintzelman, Kearny, and Hooker were in conversation about the battle. This was the first
appearance of the commander-in-chief, he having been unable to get across the river till that time.

After the battle of Fair Oaks, General Heintzelman made a reconnaissance, going beyond the woods considerably until within shelling distance of Richmond, and made an extended tour on both sides of the Williamsburg road without seeing any of the enemy. General McClellan did not think it would be expedient to follow up the fleeing and demoralized rebels, or to advance his line beyond the woody belt which had sheltered the Confederates. Heintzelman posted himself in the position held by Casey at Seven Pines, his right extending to Fair Oaks Station, where he joined Sumner, whose forces stretched eastwardly down to the Chickahominy. Keyes united with Heintzelman's left, the line running southerly till it reached White Oak Swamp, the shortest distance between the two wings being about three miles, and five miles around the arc. The woods were cut down, and earthworks thrown up the whole length of this line. There were several redoubts built of timber and earth, into which the field artillery was placed, Battery E occupying the
one on the extreme left of Heintzelman's corps, where the battle began on May 31st.

About this time, I cannot give the exact date, General Kearny issued an order that all the officers and men of his division should wear conspicuously on the front of their caps a square piece of red cloth to designate them. This became known as the Kearny patch, and other corps, one by one, adopted distinctive badges, each division being indicated by one of the national colors, red, white, or blue, and green where there were more than three divisions. These badges were used on headquarters' flags instead of numbers, as had been used, and painted on all the wagons, and stenciled on all government property belonging to the corps. The soldiers were soon supplied with metal badges, by salesmen who went about the camps. These were made with enameled colors, with the name of the soldier, his company and regiment lettered upon it, and quite often a list of his battles. Every soldier was proud of his badge; not so much for its being an ornament, but proud of his corps, proud of the battles he had been in, proud to be recognized wherever he was seen.
Many a soldier, found dead on the battlefield, received careful burial, and his grave was made known by the badge found on his coat. A story is told of one of our brigades that before going into battle at Cold Harbor the soldiers pinned papers on their backs, on which were written their names and regiments. Such patriotism and heroism ought never to be forgotten. Corps badges have now a legal recognition in the Revised Statutes of the United States:

"Section 1,227. All persons who have served as officers, non-commissioned officers, privates, or other enlisted men, in the regular army, volunteer, or military forces of the United States, during the War of the Rebellion, and have been honorably discharged from the service, or still remain in the same, shall be entitled to wear, on all occasions of ceremony the distinctive army badges ordered for or adopted by the army corps and division, respectively, in which they served."

To Maj.-Gen. Philip Kearny belongs the credit of being the first to adopt, and of first having issued orders for all officers and men of his division to wear badges.
On the 13th, two weeks after the battle of Fair Oaks, McClellan moved his headquarters across the Chickahominy, establishing himself near Savage Station. Franklin’s and Porter’s corps, with McCall’s division of reinforcements of Pennsylvania Reserves, some ten thousand men, were left on the north side, their line extending east to Cold Harbor, and having the railroad to guard by which was forwarded the supplies. In this position the entire line extended eighteen miles, leaving the right wing separated from the main body of the army, thereby dividing it by the Chickahominy, in the same manner as it did when the Confederates attacked the left wing at Seven Pines.

The health of the army was now of grave consideration. In Battery E a large number were sick, and several had died. An extensive hospital was established at Savage Station, but those who could be moved were transported to Northern hospitals. In clearing up the battlefields of Seven Pines and Fair Oaks, only shallow graves could be dug for the dead, owing to the large amount of water in the soil, which would fill them at the depth of a shovel,
therefore the bodies were laid in rows, sometimes in heaps, and the earth thrown over them. Some did not have even such a burial as this, as those in Battery E, who went into the woods on the right, or the slashing in front of our redoubt, can testify. The sight then was sickening, many bodies lay as they fell, and struggling, died. Some were covered with earth, but generally only a few shovelfuls were thrown on their bodies, the arms and legs being exposed, and some were covered with sticks of wood from a pile there was in the woods. A large number of horses that had been killed were also carelessly buried, or left uncovered in the same manner. The air we breathed was putrid, and the water we drank seemed tainted with the foul drainings of the battlefield. Add to this the drying up of the swamps and the malarial atmosphere, and can it be wondered that a pestilence did not threaten the army, or prevail before? The statement that McClellan lost more men by disease than by the bullet, is not untrue, as can be shown by the roll of every company and regiment in the Peninsular Campaign. On the 20th of June the surgeon-general's report showed the number
excused from duty on account of sickness to be thirteen thousand.

The horses of the battery were sheltered from the sun in the woods in rear of the intrenchments, where a little camp had been made for the baggage, and material not used in active operations. Among the fallen trees in front were the pickets of both armies, and beyond this, about five hundred yards distant, was heavy wood, in which the enemy awaited our attack. In this they seemed to grow impatient, and a conflict between the pickets was of daily occurrence. Sometimes a shell from a rifled cannon would burst over our heads, or a solid shot go screeching a long distance to the rear. The sharpshooters' bullets made it dangerous for our cannoneers to be seen above the breastworks, and we never left our guns day or night.

At an early hour on the morning of the 25th, Generals Hooker and Kearny tried to advance their picket line in front of Seven Pines, which brought on quite a severe engagement, lasting until afternoon. In this fight the Second Rhode Island, which had returned to Couch's division, took part, losing several men,
besides having about twenty wounded, among whom were Capt. William B. Sears and Fred A. Arnold, members of this Society. Sickles's brigade, on the left of our battery, was engaged, and suffered considerable loss. In this battle, Oak Grove, or King's School House, as it has been called, the loss in killed and wounded amounted to about six hundred, and, although our object was accomplished, the engagement was given but little attention on account of more important movements of the army the succeeding ten days.

At last the clamors of our people for the army to move on, and the cry "On to Richmond!" were ended. The Confederate generals were tired of waiting for McClellan to make the attack, and decided to make it themselves. On the evening of June 25th General Jackson crossed to the rear of McCall's division, which was on the right of the Union line, thereby awakening McClellan from his dream. The next morning General Lee, who had been in command of the Confederate army since the battle of Fair Oaks, drove in the advance of our right wing, and, in the afternoon, made a furious attack at several points. The rebels, largely outnumbering McCall,
dashed upon his line with great courage, but were everywhere driven back. The action lasted from three until nine o'clock, during which time the thunder of artillery was distinctly heard the whole length of the line, and the enemy in front of our division made a feint in order to divert the attention of McClellan from the real object or plan of their attack.

During the night McCall's division was withdrawn some five miles from Mechanicsville, the scene of the engagement, and concentrated with Porter's corps, near Gaines Mill and Cold Harbor. That morning, June 27th, I accompanied an officer around to the right, to corps headquarters at Fair Oaks, thence to the headquarters of the commander-in-chief, at Savage Station, where I saw the entire baggage train, numbering, it seemed, thousands of teams. I had been at the same place two days previous, but the scene had so changed by the removal of headquarters' tents and the quartermaster's department, and the hurry with which army wagons were filled and started off with ammunition and provisions, gave rise to grave apprehensions in my mind, which I tried not
to entertain. I had seen enough, however, to know that McClellan had planned for a retreat, and upon returning to the battery related it to Sergeant Williams, who immediately reported me to Captain Randolph as disheartening the men. I assured the captain that I had made no mention of my observation except to the sergeant, whom the captain found it necessary to restrain from going among the men telling what I had confidentially said to him.

At half-past two our lines were again attacked on the opposite side of the Chickahominy. The Confederates, who greatly outnumbered the division opposed to them, rushed on in great fury, but were repulsed and routed, the assailed became the assailants, and the rebels fled from the field in disorder. A lull then occurred in the battle, and we could tell by the sound of artillery that our troops held their ground; some thought they were advancing. About an hour before sunset the whole Confederate force, numbering full two to one of our own, made a simultaneous attack along the whole front, which was handsomely defended until twilight, when our line gave way at every point, falling back to the bluff
bordering the Chickahominy, when French's and Meagher's brigades of reinforcements dashed upon the victorious rebels, checking the pursuit, and night ended the battle. Official reports of the number of men here engaged make it fifty-six thousand Confederates and thirty-six thousand Federals.

All the afternoon the Confederates showed themselves in front of Franklin, Sumner, and Heintzelman, with infantry and artillery, at times making quite an advance upon our pickets, so that it could not be told whether an attack was to be made or not. The rattle of drums was often heard as if there was a movement of large bodies of troops, the object in these feints being a diversion to prevent our sending reinforcements to the real point of attack. At night bands of music played Southern war tunes at different points in front of our line, and loud cheers of the exultant rebels gave us unpleasant reminders of their success.

During the night Porter and McCall crossed to the south side of the Chickahominy, destroying all the bridges on their retreat. Never before was the Army of the Potomac in a position to fight a battle. The
whole force was within a space of three miles between the two wings. Between them and the rebel army ran the Chickahominy with its bridges torn up, and its high bluffs approachable only through a thick swamp. The front had changed to the rear, and behind our army lay the rebel capital stripped of its garrison, and only a few troops left to guard its gates. But McClellan had resolved upon a “change of base,” and at daylight the retreat of the whole army was begun. In leaving our position the pickets were withdrawn, and a strong guard reserved within the intrenchments. Our guns were then run by hand into the woods, where the horses were attached, and, leaving everything that could not be conveniently carried, we quietly withdrew from before the enemy’s pickets. We were soon joined by Thompson’s and Beam’s batteries, of our division, also several regiments of infantry, some of which had been marched to the right the day before, but arriving too late to take part in the battle, had just returned. Keyes’s corps had taken the advance of the retreat, followed by Franklin and Porter. Heintzelman and Sumner fell back towards Savage Station, Battery E
halting in battery at the edge of White Oak Swamp, where a line of battle was held until night. This was on the 29th. Heintzelman had orders to destroy all the stores at Savage Station that could not be carried away. The stores and provisions were piled up in great pyramids and set on fire. The ammunition was piled on a train, which with a full head of steam was fired and sent towards the Chickahominy. A great volume of smoke and flame, a terrific explosion, a dash from a burning bridge into a chasm, and all this that would have fallen into the enemy's hands was destroyed. About five o'clock the Confederates made a fierce attack upon Sumner's corps at Savage Station, in which they were repulsed and driven back with such a loss that they did not see fit to try it again.

Battery E spent the night on the road of retreat; not in bivouac, but slowly marching with long and frequent halts. A journey full of discouragement to say the least. Not whipped, but out-generated. A flight from a lost battle. No one could tell where we were going, except it was thought that under the port-holes of the war vessels on the James we would find protection.
On the morning of June 30th we crossed White Oak Creek at Brackett’s Ford. This was the third day our horses had been without food and water. In fording this stream the water reached their bodies, but they were not allowed to stop. We had no time, and they were only refreshed by the bath and the little they drank while moving across the stream. It soon became apparent that the enemy was close upon us, that a stand would be made, and that it would now be our turn to meet the rebellious host. At first we went into what seemed a very favorable position in an open field, where we waited for the approaching enemy considerable time, during which our men, as well as the infantry force about us, refreshed themselves with eating some low blackberries that were ripe and in abundance. Then we were ordered to another place, and, entering the woods by a narrow path, moved further to the left, and at last went into battery on a spot of not more than half an acre, covered with brush and surrounded with heavy woods. Captain Randolph soon resolved to get out of such a perilous situation, and, attaching the horses to the guns, again we moved away. Our
lines by this time had fairly been established, extending nearly eight miles. The pop, pop, pop of our pickets denoted the advance of the Confederates. Battery E was in a most precarious position, and in order to get out our guide was obliged to lead us into the woods, through which we picked our way amidst the trees and between the enemy's pickets and our own. At noon the four rifled guns commanded respectively by Captain Randolph, Lieutenants Arnold, Sheldon, and Bucklyn, went to a position on the right in Slocomb's division, where they soon became engaged. Heavy cannonading was heard in the direction in which McCall and Sumner were posted. It was here that Longstreet made the first attack, pressing forward his brigade in mass, but was unable to gain any ground. Foiled at this point the rebels dashed with great fury on the line held by Hooker and Kearny, who met them with undaunted determination. Before their terrific fire no troops could have stood, and they again fell back. Again and again the exasperated rebels dashed upon our lines at different points, determined to break them somewhere. In this manner the struggle continued till dark,
when the pursuing enemy fell back, leaving us in possession of the field at nearly every point. In this battle the four rifled guns were engaged defending a road by which the enemy tried to advance, and they expended upwards of one hundred rounds of ammunition. After being separated from the first four guns, the fifth and sixth, in charge of Lieutenant Jastram moved to a small opening in the swamp in rear of Kearny's division. The position here was not adapted to the use of artillery, and the two guns were for a time exposed to a shower of over-reaching minies, ricochetting shot, and exploding shell. Late in the afternoon an aide to General Kearny dashed up and ordered Lieutenant Jastram to advance with the two guns. The cannoneers each took a round of canister from the caissons, which were left behind, and, entering the woods a short distance on the left, followed a narrow track that led to the field of battle. Here we saw strong evidence of the bloody work that was going on. In the road and on either side we met hundreds of men with blood streaming from wounds, who staggered to the rear, hoping to find a friend, or a stream in which to bathe their
shattered limbs, or cool their thirst. Emerging from the woods we turned to the left, into a narrow field. Thompson's battery, which had been in action nearly an hour, we found still hotly engaged. Passing in rear of their guns at a gallop we took position closely on their left. At this point a struggle had just ended. In front of the guns and over the field, the bodies of the slain were thickly scattered, while a dense smoke that settled upon the earth, cut off all view beyond. Above the smoke, to a height of about ten degrees, glared the setting sun, which seemed to have been stained with the blood that was then being poured out upon the battlefield. Behind this dense cloud of smoke the Confederates reformed their brigades. Then, sweeping the ground before them with artillery, and giving a fierce yell, they burst upon us. Our cannoneers hurried in delivering their canister. The Thirty-sixth and One Hundred and First New York Infantry that supported our guns, met the enemy with a deadly fire. Then, in the midst of a prolonged and terrific shower of musket balls our infantry fell back between the guns. Thompson at this moment drew off his guns under
cover of the thick smoke, and Jastram attempted the same movement. One of Thompson's guns was driven against a heavy gate-post, which caught between the wheels and the carriage body, as they left the field; and into this another was driven. Wedged together in this manner, the enemy swept down upon the cannoneers and took possession. At the same time this was being done the rebels poured in a second volley at close range. One of the wheel horses on the sixth piece fell across the pole, and in the agonies of death entangled the whole team. The infantry that we had been called upon to support had fallen back in rear of the battery, and the enemy in vast numbers swarmed toward us. In this position Lieutenant Jastram saw that nothing could be done but to abandon his gun, and, handing a spike to the corporal, it was driven into the vent, not, however, till the enemy was almost within a sabre's length. The other gun was saved by drawing it to where the horses were attached and retreating to the woods. With this the battle of Glendale, or Frazier's Farm was ended, and nowhere else on the whole line did the enemy force us back. It is said by those who
are familiar with the military life of General Lee, that he nowhere showed the skill that he displayed in forcing the attack on the retreating column at White Oak Swamp.

It was the gun to which I was attached that was lost, and, after leaving the battlefield, I returned to where the caissons had been left. Soon Lieutenant Jastram came up, and gave orders to remain there and he would find the rest of the battery. In this he did not succeed, and returned, but soon went off again. I was the only man with the two caissons except the drivers, and, leaving the field as it grew dark, entered a road on the line of retreat, where we were soon joined by Lieutenant Jastram, who had with him the rescued gun and three men, the others having wandered or skulked away, two or three falling into the hands of the enemy.

We followed Thompson’s battery on the main road, which was filled with retreating troops, and, after going about a mile, we turned to the left into another road, and, by order of Captain Thompson, unhitched our horses and bivouacked for the night. It was then about nine o’clock P. M., and, finding a
fire that had been kindled by those who passed before us, we made some coffee, and from our haversacks made a good meal. It was the first we had eaten except an occasional nibble on the march, since we left the intrenchments in front of Richmond. After this the few there were of us lay down and soon fell into a sound sleep, from which none were disturbed till daylight streamed above us. I was among the first to awaken, and to my astonishment found that Thompson's battery had gone and that we were entirely by ourselves. Lieutenant Jastram hurried the drivers in hitching up the horses and we quit the place and pushed forward as rapidly as possible to prevent being gobbled up by the enemy, who we knew would make an early advance. At first there was no one to be seen, then a few stragglers appeared from out of the woods where they had slept. These were steadily added to by sick and wounded soldiers, who hobbled on rude crutches they had made from the limbs of trees. It was a pitiful sight to see these poor men, who had hurried from their cots at Savage Station to avoid being left behind, delirious with the disease that the Chickahominy had spread over
the army, while others, with swollen and undressed wounds, with stiffened and shattered limbs, crept along as best they could by each other’s aid. With such as these we filled our gun carriage and two caissons with as many as could hold on, and in this way continued the retreat for about three miles. At this point we fell in with the rear guard of our army, and continued on with them until about eight o’clock, when we entered upon the slope of Malvern Hill, where we met Captain Randolph, who was overjoyed at seeing us again.

I shall never forget the scene as Battery E moved across the hill to take position for battle. It was the most picturesque of any military spectacle I ever witnessed. The hill was about one mile in length by half its breadth, the top of which was nearly free from trees, and the whole Union army was to be seen in full battle array. Batteries of artillery standing with drivers rein in hand, or moving across the field with cannoneers, some riding, some on foot. Regiment after regiment of infantry, with their glistening bayonets, standing “in place, rest,” waiting for orders; some marching to other positions, and
now and then a squadron of cavalry ready for action. "Rush's" regiment of mounted lancers, with their long pikes, near the point of which was attached a quaint little red flag, was moving along in column to a distant position. Not least of all, were the siege train and the ammunition wagons; also the large corps of ambulances, while here and there dotting the plain were to be seen three-cornered banners of various colors, indicating the headquarters of corps and division commanders, around which general officers were dispatching their orders, and aides with galloping steeds, dashed to and fro, adding life to this intensely fascinating and beautiful scene.

Battery E, united again, except the gun lost in the previous day's battle, moved easterly, halting on the crest of the hill, near the centre of the line of battle. The line was formed sickle like, extending around the hill, both flanks resting on the James River, and protected by the gunboats. The hill slopes gently northward to the verge of a thick forest, while in front and on the right, it fell somewhat abruptly into a ravine. Between the hill and the woods, a distance of perhaps one thousand yards, were level farm lands,
on which were patches of meadow and waving grain. In the centre of this field at our right were a dwelling and farm buildings, having more than an ordinary enterprising appearance. A part of Keyes's corps was attached to our own, that of Heintzelman, on the left of which, forming the left wing of the army, was Porter. Sumner united with us on the right, and next to him Franklin, and last on the extreme right was the balance of Keyes's corps. From the crest of the hill on which Battery E was situated, the whole field across which the enemy must pass to make an attack, was in the range of our guns. Thompson's battery on our right, and Bean's battery on our left, were formed at close intervals, it being only a few yards from gun to gun. Thus the whole plateau was surrounded with cannon, the heavy siege guns occupying a position in the rear. At the foot of the hill, sheltered by a growth of small trees and a slight ravine, was posted a strong force of riflemen, and behind our guns a strong support of infantry lay in close lines of twos and fours. In this manner the army was concentrated for resisting further advance of the enemy.
A sharp lookout was kept along the edge of the woods beyond the plain until an occasional horseman was seen, who seemed to be viewing our position. Soon after this we saw a sudden puff of smoke from a cannon that had been run up by hand, but still masked by the wood, and a shot went screeching over our heads. But before the smoke had cleared away this was followed by another, and still another, until there were five or six of them at different distances, their target appearing to be our battery. Our cannoneers sprang quickly to their stations, and the little duel was soon ended by the enemy being put to flight. Various statements have been made that there was no firing till about two o'clock p.m. But I think I am not mistaken in placing this at half-past ten in the morning. Half an hour after this a banging commenced on our right, in front of Sumner, by the enemy, who had drawn a battery from the woods, hidden by a barn, behind which and other buildings on the premises they posted their guns. Almost at the same time fifty guns were discharged at them, setting fire to the buildings and compelling them to withdraw. The rebels made some good
shots in their sudden attack, many of their shot barely clearing our heads, and two or three shells burst beautifully, as we were accustomed to say, over Thompson's battery. Sumner had taken up his headquarters under a stately elm in the yard of a farm house, and a shot that took away the jet and part of the tree-top caused a hasty evacuation of that locality.

Later, I should guess it was about noon, a battery of artillery came out of the woods at full gallop to about midway of the plain, and directly in front of Battery E. We could not help admiring the skillful execution of this movement, and the rapidity with which they went into battery and commenced firing. But sooner than they could fire a second round, our shell burst among them in such quantities that they became hidden in the smoke of bursting shell. The battery must have been shot to pieces, as we saw nothing of it again.

The battle was by this time fairly opened, and a fierce attack was made on us with artillery in various places along the line. A force of sharpshooters advanced under cover of the standing grain to within range of our cannon, and for a time was considerably
annoying, but we succeeded in driving them off. The afternoon was wearing away when an artillery attack was made to the left, but not out of range of our battery. The enemy's guns were soon silenced, but we kept up a slow fire on the woods where we knew the rebel brigades were forming for an attack. At half-past five the enemy opened upon Couch and Porter with the whole strength of their artillery, and at the same time advanced with heavy columns to carry the hill, but the heavy fire of our guns forced them back. Brigade after brigade then came out from the woods and rushed with yells across the open plain, through storms of canister and shell, until within a few yards of our line, when our infantry poured in such volleys they were sent reeling to shelter. Again and again they repeated the attack, and were as often driven back, leaving the field strewn with their dead. At last our men held their fire till the advancing columns were nearly to the edge of the hill, when they poured in a single volley, and dashed upon the stunned and confused rebels with bayonets, driving them in disorder from the field. It was long after sunset when the battle
ended, but not until after nine o'clock that our artillery ceased its fire.

During the engagement Battery E was well protected from the enemy's fire by the crest of the hill, which was almost to the muzzle of the guns. Behind us the hill sloped gradually for two hundred yards into a ravine, then rose to the level of the hill, where the siege guns were posted, firing at a high elevation. Behind us lay a brigade of infantry in support of the artillery, which rendered great assistance in bringing up ammunition from the wagons, that were sheltered some distance on the right. The casualties in the battery were slight, there being but one man killed and six wounded. The infantry that lay on the ground behind us lost severely, the Fortieth New York having twenty killed and about an equal number wounded, almost entirely by shot and shell that passed our battery. Captain Bean, of the Second New Jersey Battery, was instantly killed by a cannon ball while in the act of mounting his horse. The battery also lost several men, as did also the Second Regulars. During the engagement there were expended in Battery E more than three hundred rounds of
ammunition to each of the rifled guns, and over five hundred rounds in the howitzer. The first shot fired on the Union side at the battle of Malvern Hill, was by Sergeant, afterwards Captain Lamb, from number one gun. The last sound of a cannon to close the seven days’ battle was fired by Sergt. Joseph H. Milne, from the fifth piece, in charge of Lieutenant Jastram.

Before the firing ceased the army had commenced its retreat from Malvern Hill. Some refused to obey the order. General Martindale shed tears of shame. The brave and chivalrous Kearny said, in presence of many officers, “I, Philip Kearny, an old soldier, enter my solemn protest against this order for retreat. We ought, instead of retreating, to follow up the enemy and take Richmond, and, in full view of all responsibility of such a declaration, I say to you all, such an order can only be prompted by cowardice or treason.”

At ten o’clock Battery E left its position and fell in with the rear guard. The retreat to Harrison’s Landing was by a single road, a distance of seven miles. At midnight rain commenced falling, and
the road at once became muddy. The large force in advance was frequently compelled to halt while some broken down or mired wagon, or piece of artillery was removed from the road; and in the rain and darkness the troops hurried on till the whole army was one confused mass, trudging despairingly, overcome by defeat and fatigue till about six o'clock A. M., when the last reached Harrison's Landing.

With this closed the last of the six days' battles, which history has recorded as seven. No one who was there on the morning of July 2d can ever forget the look of discouragement on every man's countenance. The rain poured down in torrents, the whole army was without shelter, no food could be had, nor fires kindled. The dead that had died in the ambulances during the night were removed and left by the roadside, and men grouped beneath the trees or quietly strolled about in search of some dry place where they might sit down for rest. By half-past nine the rain had ceased. Division and brigade commanders were busy in separating their commands, which were huddled together without order or division. Before this had been accomplished a battery of
rebel artillery appeared on an elevation about a mile distant, and sent a dozen or more shells among us, creating for a time considerable confusion. Three of these shell exploded in our battery, but without serious injury. The first section, Lieutenant Arnold, started immediately with a force of infantry and cavalry, in pursuit of the audacious bombarders, and drove them away.

The next day, July 4, 1862, the Army of the Potomac began intrenching itself, with both flanks resting on the James River, under protection of our war vessels, and here I will leave my story of Battery E. I have not said all that should be said of the officers and men of this company, or of those noble hearted and patriotic young men who died of disease in the swamps of the Chickahominy, or those captured and taken to Southern prisons, or who fell in battle, or by the roadside, as the army was pushed back in its retreat. I may have done an injustice to a company of men which was second to no other that went from our State, by crowding into this short space a year of service, within which was a campaign of blunders ever to be remembered.
PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF EVENTS IN THE

WAR OF THE REBELLION,

BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE

RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS
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ASSAULT ON FORT GILMER

AND

Reminiscences of Prison Life.

BY

GEORGE R. SHERMAN,

[Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel United States Volunteers, and late Captain Seventh United States Colored Troops.]

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ASSAULT ON FORT GILMER AND REMINISCENCES OF PRISON LIFE.

Sept. 28, 1864, I was transferred from Company F, to command Company C, Seventh United States Colored Troops, attached to the Third Brigade, Third Division, Tenth Army Corps. At 5 P. M. we broke camp from in front of Petersburg, and were soon on the move toward the James River. Lieutenant Califf, in his history of the regiment, says: "A tedious night-march followed, during which the north side of the James was reached via the pontoon bridges at Broadway and Jones Landings. After a few hours' rest in a cornfield on the morning of the 29th, the brigade moved forward as a support to the First Division, the First Brigade of which, under Colonel Duncan, charged and captured the enemy's works on Signal Hill, on the New Market Road. The Eighteenth Corps about the
same time charged and captured Fort Harrison. Soon after noon, while the brigade which had been moving by the flank up the New Market Road, halted, an order was received to form column of regiments, faced to the left. Scarcely had this been done, when Gen. William Birney, commanding the brigade, rode to the right of the column and directed our regiment to move off by the right flank. As we were crossing the Mill Road, Colonel Shaw* received from him the order, "Form on the right by file into line, and charge and take the work that is firing!"

Before our line was completed, the Ninth Regiment Colored Troops charged the redoubt to our left, and was repulsed (See Appendix No. 1), and the commanding officer of the Eighth Colored Troops was ordered to send four companies deployed as skirmishers to take the same work. While our regiment was forming for the charge, the assistant adjutant-general of the brigade came to Colonel Shaw with the order, "Send four companies deployed as skirmishers to attack and take the fort that is firing."

*Col. James Shaw, since brevetted Brigadier-General of United States Volunteers, is a native of Providence, and still resides here.
Colonel Shaw replied that he had just received orders to charge with his regiment, to which Captain Bailey answered, "Well, now the General directs you to send four companies deployed as skirmishers to take the fort." Our lieutenant-colonel and major being absent, the four right companies, C, D, G, and K, were placed under command of Captain Weiss, who, when he received the order to charge, replied, "What! take a fort with a skirmish line; who ever heard of such a thing? I'll try, but it can't be done." What followed can best be described by quoting from his (Captain Weiss's) report. He says:

"I at once, about 1 p. m., ordered the four companies on the right of the regiment, C, D, G, and K, twenty-five or thirty paces to the front, where a slight depression in the ground screened them from the eyes, if not the projectiles of the enemy. After being deployed by the flank on the right of the second company, the command advanced in ordinary quick-step against the objective point. Emerging from the swale into view, it became at once the target for a seemingly redoubled fire, not only from the fort in front, but also from the one on its right. The fire of
the latter had been reported silenced, but, instead, from its position to the left oblique it proved even more destructive than that of the one in front.

"Both forts were most advantageously situated for defense, at the extremity of a plain, variously estimated at from five hundred to seven hundred yards wide, which level surface afforded at no point shelter from view or shot to an assailing party. The forts were connected by a curtain of rifle-pits containing a re-entrant angle, thus providing for a reciprocal enfilading fire in case either was attacked. The nature of the ground and the small altitude of the ordnance above the level of the plain also made the fire in the nature of a ricochet.

"As the party advanced, the enemy's shell and shrapnel were exchanged for grape and canister, followed soon by a lively rattle of musketry. When within range of the latter, and after having traversed about three-fourths of the distance, the order to charge was given and obeyed with an alacrity that seemed to make the execution almost precede the order. For a moment, judging from the slacking of their fire, the enemy seemed to be affected by a panic-
like astonishment, but soon recovering, they opened again with canister and musketry, which, at the shorter range, tore through the ranks with deadlier effect. Captain Smith and Lieutenant Prime, both of Company C, here fell, grievously wounded, while forty or fifty enlisted men dotted the plain with their prostrate forms.

"In a few minutes the ditch of the fort was reached. It was some six or seven feet deep and ten or twelve wide, the excavated material sufficing for the embankments of the fort. Some one hundred and twenty men and officers precipitated themselves into it, many losing their lives at its very edge. After a short breathing spell, men were helped up the exterior slope of the parapet on the shoulders of others, and fifty or sixty being thus disposed, an attempt was made to storm the fort. At the signal nearly all arose, but the enemy, lying securely sheltered behind the interior slope, the muzzles of their guns almost touching the storming party, received the latter with a crushing fire, sending many into the ditch below, shot through the brain or breast. Several other attempts were made with like result, till at last forty or more
of the assailants were writhing in the ditch or silenced forever.

"The defense having been obviously reinforced, it was decided to surrender, especially as the rebels had commenced to roll lighted shells among the stormers, against which there was no defence. Seven officers and seventy-nine enlisted men delivered up their arms. Many in mounting the parapet could not help taking a last mournful look on their dead comrades in the ditch, whose soldierly qualities had endeared them to their best affections, and many, without for a moment selfishly looking at their own dark future, were oppressed with inexpressible sadness when reflecting on the immensity of the sacrifice and the deplorableness of the result. It was a time for manly tears."

The muster-out rolls show that of nine officers and one hundred and fifty men in that charge, at least fifty-one men, or thirty-two per cent., were killed or mortally wounded. This number does not include any of the eleven men of Company K, who, when the regiment was mustered out, two years later, were still reported missing in action since Sept.
29, 1864, because it was not definitely known whether they were killed, or died in prison. It is probable, most if not all of the eleven were killed in the ditch that day, and may reasonably be added to the fifty-one; in that case the percentage of killed would be thirty-nine and one-half per cent. All engaged in the assault, except one, were either killed, wounded, or captured. One man escaped from the ditch and ran back to the regiment during the excitement, while the remaining survivors surrendered.

Of the nine officers, two were severely wounded before reaching the ditch, and two were wounded while on the outer slope of the parapet. It is certainly a remarkable circumstance that not an officer was killed, notwithstanding all were as much exposed as any of the men. Seventeen men were wounded before reaching the ditch, but were able to crawl back, and, after recovering from their wounds were returned to duty with their regiment, and many of the seventy-nine captured were also wounded. Those who were able were set to work on the rebel fortifications. One was claimed as a slave. Advertisements were inserted in Confederate papers calling
upon masters to come forward and claim negroes captured in arms from the enemy. This was done by authority of an Act of the Confederate Congress, and by proclamation of Jeff Davis. It was known as the proclamation of outlawry of negro soldiers and their officers. (See Appendix No. 2.)

Fifty-five of the seventy-nine men captured died in prison within six months, either from wounds or privations, which number includes the eleven of Company K reported missing in action, while only twenty-three survived. Taking the fifty-one known to have been killed, and the fifty-five who died in prison, we have a death list resulting from that charge of sixty-seven per cent. On behalf of these companies of negro soldiers, I challenge the world’s history for a parallel case.

The following table shows the detailed loss of each company’s men:
The final record, as per muster-out rolls, differs from reports made immediately after the action, because it was not then known how many of the missing had been killed.

This day proved to be the most disastrous of any in the history of our regiment. The storming of a strong field work by a thin line of skirmishers, when
the reinforced garrison was amply sufficient to defend it against twenty times the number of the assaulting party, resulted as might easily have been foreseen.

First the Ninth Regiment was sent, unsupported, to charge a work on the left of Gilmer, across an open field, where its line was enfiladed by the enemy's fire, and was repulsed; then four companies of the Eighth were sent against the same work, with no better result, and after this bitter experience four companies of the Seventh were sent to their destruction on an errand equally hopeless.

Had Gen. William Birney massed his brigade, consisting of five regiments, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Forty-fifth United States Colored Troops, and Twenty-ninth Connecticut Colored Volunteers, and launched it at Fort Gilmer, it would have fallen into our hands, and probably Richmond, too; for General Lee had all he could do to resist General Meade, who was hard at work on the extreme left, and had left Richmond not very strongly guarded as to numbers. As it was, General Birney had his own ideas, and very peculiar ones, on the subject of handling troops, the prevailing thought being to fight in detail.
After our capture he endeavored to throw upon Colonel Shaw, who commanded the regiment, the responsibility for the loss of the four companies, and in 1878 made a very bitter and libelous attack upon him, which he caused to be scattered broadcast throughout the city of Providence, and wherever General Shaw was most known.

Before publishing those charges he wrote me, making sundry inquiries, to which I replied: "We frequently talked about this matter (the loss of the four companies) while in prison, and concluded it must have been Captain Bailey's mistake, notwithstanding one of our party had, on a former occasion, heard from yourself an order very much like it. Probably most of the captured officers would always have thought it Captain Bailey's mistake, had not the Eighth and Ninth Regiments received a similar order. Had the brigade, led by yourself, charged the fort with as much courage and determination as shown by Companies C, D, G, and K, of the Seventh, we would have captured it."

The charges were false, and a letter from him under date of Jan. 24, 1865, *four months after the*
assault upon Fort Gilmer, to Governor Sprague, then a member of the Committee on Military Affairs in the United States Senate, and found four or five years ago in the Governor's papers, strongly recommending Colonel Shaw for promotion, shows beyond any possibility of doubt that he knew them to be so. (See Appendix No. 3 for copy of Birney's letter.)

From Richmond Examiner, Oct. 4, 1864: "The following list of casualties is reported in the Powhatan Artillery, Capt. W. J. Dance, commanding, in the fight at Fort Gilmer, near Chaffin's Bluff, on the 29th of September: Killed, one corporal, three privates. Wounded: Captain Dance, severely; one sergeant, three corporals, thirteen privates."

The Richmond Whig, of Oct. 2, 1864, said: "The commands of Colonel Dubois and Colonel Eliot reached Fort Gilmer just in time to prevent its capture by the enemy. Both commands were highly complimented by the General commanding, for their bearing and gallantry during the assault."

General Butler, in his Autobiography, page 736, referring to this assault, says: "Fort Gilmer was the salient point in the line, and its occupation would
have caused the evacuation of the whole line. The men rushed up to the breastworks in spite of a heavy fire; they found that the works were very high, and the ditch very deep, from the bottom of the ditch to the parapet being fifteen feet. The colored soldiers, undaunted, attempted to assault the parapet, and climbed upon each other's shoulders for the purpose of getting at the enemy, but after a prolonged struggle and the death of many, they were obliged to surrender; but the manner of the attack more than compensated for their loss, for it was another demonstration that the negro would fight."

Oct. 11, 1864, General Butler issued an order in which he expressed his opinion of colored soldiers, as follows: "Of the colored soldiers of the Third divisions of the Tenth and Eighteenth Corps, and the officers who led them, the Commanding General desires to make mention.

"In the charge on the enemy's works by the colored divisions, better men were never better led; better officers never led better men. With hardly an exception officers of colored troops have justified the care with which they have been selected. A few
more such gallant charges, and to command colored troops will be the post of honor in the American armies.

"The colored soldiers, by coolness, steadiness, and dash, have silenced every cavil of the doubters of their soldierly capacity, and drawn tokens of admiration from their enemies—have brought their late masters, even, to the consideration of the question whether they will not employ as soldiers the hitherto despised race.*

"In the late movement where all have deserved so well it is almost invidious to name, yet justice requires special gallant acts noticed."

Among other instances of meritorious conduct, he mentions the seven officers whose capture has just been narrated, viz. : "Captains Julius A. Weiss and Thomas McCarthy; First Lieutenants George R. Sherman and David S. Mack; Second Lieutenants Sylvester Eler, Joseph Ferguson, and Robert M. Spinney, of the Seventh United States Colored Troops, are all entitled to the highest praise and commendation for their gallantry and good conduct

* See Appendix No, 4 for extracts from Confederate newspapers.
in the assault upon Fort Gilmer, for which they are not now promoted, being either killed or in the hands of the enemy."

Scarcely any mention has been made or credit given the participants in this assault, by the newspapers or historians of the North. Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War, page 702, refers to it as follows: "On the 28th of September, Ord and Birney, (David B), with two divisions of the Army of the James, crossed the river and fell fiercely upon the strong works near Chapin's Bluff. One of these, Fort Harrison, was captured, but an assault was made upon Fort Gilmer, which was repulsed with heavy loss."

The Confederate papers and Southern Historical Society have given the assault special notice; we cannot, therefore, forbear quoting the following accounts of the affair:

The Richmond Whig, under date of Oct. 6, 1864, says: "When the writer hereof turns to look upon the traces of the carnage of the 29th ultimo, standing upon Fort Gilmer's parapet, he looks into the wide, deep ditch that yawns in its front, and his eyes fall upon thirty odd stark figures that are lying
below, shot in the head, the heart, and wherever it is fatal to be struck. These were the forms of Butler’s slain black soldiers.

"A sturdy artilleryman, near by, volunteers the information: ‘Those fellows fought well, sir. They came up at a double-quick, with their guns at right-shoulder-shift, and leaped into the ditch. Then they began to assist one another up the parapet, and here, (pointing to the spot), many of them were shot down upon the edge. Our men threw hand-grenades among them, and these assisted us in killing many. We heard them cry out in the ditch, "Look out for the hand-bombs," - and that fellow you see lying there was bending over one of them to pick it up and throw it back at us, as others had done, when it exploded and blew the top of his head off."

In Volume I, page 441, Southern Historical Society Papers, may be found an account of this charge, by Charles Johnson, of Salem, Va.:

"Fort Gilmer was on a hill, with quite an extensive flat in front. The Louisiana Guard Artillery on the left, and Salem Artillery on the right of the fort, occupied redoubts so constructed that each had an
enfilade fire upon the Yankees as they advanced. The enemy came rather cautiously at first; finally they came with a rush, our artillery firing shrapnel at first, but they soon began to load with canister, and the way those negroes fell before it was gratifying to the people on our side of the works. But the Yankees came on until they got to the ditch in front of Fort Gilmer, a dry ditch, about ten feet wide and twelve feet deep. Into this a great many of the negroes jumped and endeavored to climb up on each other’s shoulders, but were beaten back by our infantry and almost all of them killed. One negro, who was either drunk or crazy, crawled through a culvert which ran from the inside of the fort into the ditch, and was shot on the inside.

"Thus ended the battle of Fort Gilmer, and there was no more fighting done on this part of the line where we were on that day, though I think the part of the line occupied by Gray’s Cavalry was attacked, but I never knew anything about that fight.

"Had our troops given way that day (and I think if the Yankees had known how near they were to Richmond we must have been beaten), there was
nothing between us and the city, and instead of being burned by our men, as it afterwards was, Richmond must have fallen into the hands of Beast Butler and his negro soldiers."

On page 438, he says: "The truth is that upon that same September 29th, Richmond came nearer being captured, and that, too, by negro soldiers, than it ever did during the war, and but for the devotion and bravery of Bushrod Johnson's old Tennessee brigade and the Texas brigade, consisting of about three hundred men each, the Yankees must have carried everything before them and captured Richmond."

Major Fox, in his book of *Regimental Losses*, says: "In proportion to the number engaged, the greatest loss sustained in one engagement by any regiment during the war, was by the First Minnesota, at Gettysburg, which lost 75 killed, or mortally wounded, out of a total of 262, or 28 per cent. of those engaged,—a percentage of killed unequalled in military statistics."

Now that statement cannot be true, for to Companies C, D, G, and K, of the Seventh United States
Colored Infantry, belongs the honor of having made as sanguinary a charge, under as trying circumstances, and of having lost a much larger percentage of the number engaged; and to these four companies must henceforth be accorded the honor of "a percentage of killed unequalled in military statistics."

If we stop for a moment to consider what this extraordinary loss of life signifies, perhaps it may be better understood if we compare it with remarkable losses of other battles.

The Light Brigade's charge at the battle of Balaklava appears in the history of European wars as the most disastrous ever sustained by any command in a single battle, in modern times, prior to the War of the Rebellion. It has been made famous the world over by Tennyson's inspiring poem, painted in pictures, and made the subject of many pieces of scholarly word painting, until the whole world has heard of the gallant Six Hundred and its charge into the valley of death. Its exact loss was 113 killed and 134 wounded, in a total of 673 engaged, a trifle less than 16.8 per cent. killed, and 36.7 per cent. killed and wounded. It may be a surprise to some of you
to learn that there were more than fifty commands in the Federal, and many in the Confederate army, during the late war, which lost much larger proportions of killed in a single engagement, than did the Light Brigade. For further comparison of losses see Appendix No. 5 for a list of Union regiments that lost in a single engagement more than 16.8 per cent. of their numbers killed.

To return to my narrative: Having decided to surrender, Lieutenant Spinney raised a handkerchief on the point of his sword. The rebels ceased firing and bade us come in. Inside the fort we found bustle and confusion; reinforcements were arriving; a gun which had been removed to prevent capture was being returned to its position, and as there was no indication of another assault, officers and men crowded around us.

Stepping down from the parapet, I was approached by one of the so-called F. F. V.'s, whose smiling countenance and extended hand led me to think he recognized an acquaintance. In this I was mistaken, for the next instant he snatched my watch from its pocket, with the question, "What have you there?"
I immediately seized and recovered the watch, while he held only a fragment of the chain; putting it in my inside pocket, I buttoned my coat, and replied, "It's my watch and you cannot have it."

Just then I noticed Lieutenant Ferguson was the recipient of much attention, several having gathered about him, and the next instant his new hat had been appropriated by one of the soldiers. Seeing an officer with a Masonic badge, Lieutenant Ferguson made himself known as a brother Mason, and appealed to him for redress. The officer quickly responded, and caused the hat to be restored to its owner, only to be again stolen a few minutes later, and the thief made to restore it as before.

An escort was soon detailed; the prisoners formed in four ranks, and the "March on to Richmond" was continued, but under quite different circumstances from what we had flattered ourselves would be the case, when, only a few hours before, our brigade commander remarked, as he rode by the regiment, "We will certainly be in Richmond to-night."

When it became known in Richmond that a large force had crossed the James and captured Fort Har-
rison, great excitement prevailed in the capital. No one could tell how soon our army might be at their doors. There was certainly cause for alarm. We met a great many armed civilians of all ages and conditions on the way to the front. A general alarm had been sounded by the ringing of the bell in the old bell tower in Capitol Square.

This bell was in "ye olden tyme" used for fire alarms, and to summon the members of the Legislature, but during the war was struck only to call out for defence every man and boy who could carry a musket. On this occasion it was rung as never before. Messengers were also sent out by the provost marshal to spread the alarm through the suburbs. I have since been told by residents that nothing but a physician's certificate of illness was accepted as an excuse. Only one newspaper was published in the city on the next day, because editorial staff, compositors, and pressmen were at the front; neither doctors, teachers, nor preachers were excused.

After about three miles march we halted for a rest, but were not allowed to sit down. Here a squad of the Richmond Blues came up and accosted us with
all the vile epithets they could think of. One of the more drunken and boisterous brought his rifle to an aim, the muzzle within two feet of my face, and, aiming directly at my head, swore he would shoot. Stung to the quick by their taunts and jeers, and feeling that immediate death could not be worse than slow torture by starvation and exposure, to which we knew so many of our brave comrades had been subjected, and remembering the Confederate Congress had declared officers of colored troops outlaws, I replied, as my eye, glancing along the barrel of his rifle, met his, "Shoot, if you dare!" Instead of executing his threat, he withdrew his aim and staggered on. Here, Lieutenant Ferguson, whose hat had twice been stolen and restored, lost it beyond recovery. One of the rebs came up behind, snatched it from his head, and, substituting his own, ran off. The lieutenant consoled himself with the reflection that at last he had a hat that not even a rebel would steal.

About 7 o'clock we reached the notorious Libby, where officers took leave of their enlisted comrades. This prison was named after its proprietors, Libby &
Son, who, before the war, carried on the ship chandlery business. It was a block, or building, three stories high, in three sections, separated by a solid wall, or partition, from foundation to roof, each section having one room, one hundred feet long by forty-five feet wide on each floor. The street front, or north side and west end, is shown in the engraving. The officers connected with the prison, and the quarters of the commandant and other officers in charge were on the first floor of the west end. It is in this lower west room the prisoner first enters, and from it he is ushered to his future dreary abode. The appropriate legend, "All hope abandon ye, who enter here," might well have been inscribed in letters of blood over its gloomy portals. After some little delay we were conducted inside, searched, and the little money we possessed taken from us, with the assurance from Major Turner that it would be placed to our credit, and returned when we were exchanged. (The Confederate authorities, or more likely Major Turner, still owe me $15 on that account.) I was permitted to retain the empty pocket-book, my knife, and watch.
Our names being recorded, we, the seven officers of my regiment, were told to follow the sergeant, while other prisoners who had joined us on the road remained behind. Now, thought I, the question whether we are to be treated as officers of white men, or otherwise, will soon be decided. As we were led toward the stairs, and saw the sergeant directing his steps toward the flight leading down, instead of up, to the room above, where we had seen crowds of prisoners at the windows, my heart sank within me, and I thought it would have been better had we fallen on the battle-field. He led the way to a small, close room in the cellar, and, as we passed in, barred and bolted the door, and left us in darkness. Here, without food, the bare floor for a bed, the dampness trickling down the walls on two sides, seven of us were confined in a cell about 8 x 10 feet. It was a long night, but finally morning dawned, and as the first ray of light shone through the little barred window above our heads, we thanked God we were not in total darkness. About 9 o'clock rations of bread and meat were handed in through a hole in the door, and, being divided into seven parts, were drawn by
lot. At noon, after being again searched, we were conducted to the officers' quarters on the second floor, at the west end of the building, where we found about two hundred unfortunates, and were greeted by them as "fresh fish," a term applied to all newcomers. The arrival of "fresh fish" was a great event in prison life, as we soon learned. Old comrades are eager to greet them and learn the news. They are the only means of obtaining correct news from "God's Country," and were at once besieged with questions, and almost suffocated by the impatient crowd. The initiation into all the rights and privileges of prison life soon followed.

We were now in a large room, perhaps 100 x 45 feet, windows at both ends and one side, but all destitute of glass, without blankets, or anything to sit or lie upon, except the floor, and all thinly clad. After a two days' sojourn in Libby, the authorities prescribed a change of air, and about the middle of the third night we were hurriedly marched out and packed in box-cars like sardines. The fatigue and discomforts of the two days' ride, relieved only by a night's bivouac by the roadside, will long be remembered.
We were without rations for forty-eight hours, except only a small quantity of crackers given to some, and to others half a pint of corn meal was issued as we alighted from the train for bivouac. The corn meal was almost useless for food, because none had any suitable means of cooking. Only a few had tin cups, in which they boiled mush. Some mixed the meal into pones, on flat stones, and baked the hoe cakes as best they could, on flat stones, previously heated in the camp-fires. We were not only watched through the night, as we lay in the woods, by a special detail of home guards, but warned by the continual baying of a pack of hounds, that an attempt to escape would be hazardous. In the evening of the second day we arrived at Salisbury, and that night were quartered in the third story of an old factory, occupied on the lower floor by political prisoners, deserters, thieves, and spies, who, during the night, made a raid upon the newcomers with intent to steal whatever they could; but were repulsed without serious loss. In the morning we were removed to several log cabins, formerly negro quarters, in another part of the grounds. In that to which our party was assigned,
we found an old-fashioned wooden churn, which, after much perseverance, having only a very dull pocket-knife to work with, I succeeded in transforming into two pails, making a bottom to one from a barrel head, and making handles to both from a hoop found under the hut. These pails were highly prized by our mess and were kept in constant use until our release. One was used for drinking water and the other to bathe in.

Separating the officers from enlisted men was a line of sentries, whose orders were to shoot any one approaching within six paces on either side, the distance being marked by a furrow or narrow ditch, and called the dead-line. This dead-line also extended around the enclosure the same distance from the stockade. The second Sunday after our arrival, as we were assembling to hear preaching by one of our number, a chaplain, I believe, of a Maine regiment, a prisoner, stepped to a tree on the dead-line and was at once shot through the breast by the sentry outside the fence, who was on an elevated platform, and not more than two rods distant. This, in broad daylight, without any attempt to escape being made, without
disobeying any rule of the prison, and without notice. The guards were not always so over-vigilant. Another instance, I remember, shows the lack of watchfulness of one. Harry Kitchum, a good-natured Dutchman, sold his blanket to a sentry on duty inside the enclosure, and, watching a favorable opportunity, stole it from him in less than an hour. The chagrin and indignation of the guard may be imagined. The Yankee trick was denounced in language unsuited to this occasion.

Additions were being made to our number almost daily, and were corralled in the open space, so that in less than two weeks, probably five thousand or more were there. A pretence of shelter was furnished by the issue of a few Sibley tents, but not more than sufficient to protect a third of the prisoners from the elements. The guard was increased, a portion of the fence at the corners taken away, and artillery stationed at the openings to sweep down the crowd if an outbreak should occur.

This we had in contemplation for some days, and a plan of escape was decided upon. At a given signal all within the enclosure were to make a charge on
that portion of the fence or stockade nearest them, and if successful in getting outside, to separate as much as possible. It was expected some might be killed, or wounded, or recaptured before reaching our lines and protection of the old flag, but we hoped most, if not all, would escape before the guards could reload and fire the second time. The possibility of gaining our liberty was worth making a desperate effort to accomplish.

The execution of this plot was to have been attempted at midnight, but was discovered the preceding afternoon by the failure of a leader to communicate with those separated from us by the chain of sentinels. We had often done this by throwing a stone, with note attached, from one dead-line to the other; but in this case the note fell short; the sentry picked it up, called the corporal, and in less than five minutes the whole scheme was made known to the prison officials. Within an hour orders came to fall in line; we supposed for the purpose of ascertaining who the instigators of the plot were, or to intimidate us by threats of less rations or solitary confinement if caught attempting to escape. Noth-
ing was said, however, about the discovery of our plan, but it was whispered about we were to change quarters again, no intimation being given us as to our destination.

After an hour's waiting in the ranks, we were marched to a train, and again packed in box-cars and started North.

We hoped the journey was to continue to Richmond to be exchanged. Had we known just where we were going, and that our exchange was not to be in the near future, many would have escaped (a few did) by jumping from the train which ran slowly, less than ten miles an hour, and with only a few guards to watch us. After a slow and tedious ride of ten or twelve hours, we arrived at Danville, which proved to be our destination. Here we were assigned to the two upper floors of a tobacco warehouse, which formed one side of an open square, and standing apart from the other buildings was lighted and ventilated from all sides. The windows of the two upper stories, unlike those of Libby, were provided with glass, but in the lower story the windows were without sash, and only partly boarded up, having
openings of four or five inches between the boards allowing free circulation of the cool breezes, which, drawing up through cracks of the floor upon which we lay, rendered the nights very uncomfortable.

A new organization into messes was arranged, from eight to ten in each, to facilitate the issue of rations. These were first drawn by the commissary of each mess, and by him divided into equal parts and drawn for by lot. When we first entered this prison the rations consisted of corn bread made from unbolted meal, about six to eight ounces, say three by four inches square, and varying in thickness from an inch to an inch and a half; a cup of pea soup, or, in lieu of soup, a small piece of fresh beef; never soup and meat the same day. Gradually the issue of beef became like angels' visits, and, about December 1st, ceased altogether. A few times during the first month they gave us sorghum molasses, not exceeding a pint to our mess of eight, and it always came in the afternoon when there was nothing to eat with it; and as few had anything to keep it in, it had to be eaten at once if at all. Now, one-eighth of a pint of sorghum, when it constitutes a man's dinner, is
an item of considerable consequence, and each wanted the benefit from that which was his due. All had wooden spoons, and there was one tin cup in the mess into which the ration was drawn, from which each in turn would take a spoonful. Later most of us obtained cups or empty fruit-cans.

When soup was issued it was received in the wooden bucket which we ordinarily used for drinking water, and eaten from the bucket. The soup often had worms from the peas floating around, but these we would skim off with the wooden spoons, and, trying to forget we had seen them, eat it because we were forced to by hunger. The ration of soup was soon discontinued also, and we had only the corn-bread, and that growing less and less. It was the art of feeding as practised by the Hibernian on his horse—the exchange preventing my testing the one straw per day. The bread came into prison in squares sixteen by twenty-four inches; these were marked off before baking into sixteen squares of four by six inches, one square or loaf being allowed for two men; the loaves were carefully divided by the mess commissary, and while one turned his back
to the bread as it lay on the floor, the commissary pointing to a portion would ask, "Whose is this? and this?" The one whose back was turned would make the allotment, from which there was no appeal. Many have claimed that the bread was made from corn and cobs ground together, and might honestly have come to that conclusion, as at times it was more dry and saw-dust-like than usual; but being made from unbolted meal, careless mixing may account for that. Generally, I would eat the whole ration at once, being careful not to waste a crumb, and then go without a morsel for the next twenty-four hours. Sometimes, remembering how hungry I was the night before, I would divide my ration into three parts and resolve to make three meals of it, but invariably all would be eaten before noon. Hunger will drive one to almost any extremity, and to illustrate how inadequate was the ration, I can say I have seen officers take potato parings from spittoons, wash and eat them.

In the early days of imprisonment when we were served with beef occasionally, I have seen officers savagely fighting in their eagerness to get their hands
into the barrel in which the meat was brought, hoping to scrape off a little grease from its sides. There was a striking contrast between the rations furnished us and the rations served to rebel prisoners by our government. (See Appendix No. 6.)

Officers of all grades, from second lieutenants to brigadier generals were here, and some whose family or Masonic connections in the South procured them special privileges. The social equilibrium was, however, daily restored by a common pursuit, a general warfare under the black flag against a common enemy, the *pedicules corporis*, or grayback, an insignificant little pest, individually, but collectively formidable indeed. This operation, technically called skirmishing, happened twice a day, according as the sun illumined the east or west sides of the apartments along which the line was deployed in its beams. They had no respect for persons, but preyed alike on the just and the unjust, and presented their bills as confidingly into the body of the major-general as into that of the humblest private. In this wretched place, if nowhere else, every soldier shed blood for his country; it was the battle for human rights
against brute force. I remember one man who had a little wooden box into which he put all the vermin he caught, and when the officer of the day and the officer of the guard came in to count us, would watch a favorable opportunity and throw the contents of the box over their backs. While there were all grades of military rank here confined, and all grades of character, it does not follow that the highest in rank were the most gentlemanly in deportment. This was indeed a time and place to try men, and develop character. If there be any meanness or selfishness in a man, I know of no better place than a Confederate prison to bring it to the surface.

Fortunately we had an abundance of good water, which we brought from the Dan River, a distance of about two hundred and fifty yards. Pails were furnished, and when four or five were ready, the inside sentry would call the corporal of the guard, who would send a number of guards to the river with us. Occasionally a prisoner succeeded in evading their vigilance, and there were several escapes, but in most cases only to be recaptured and returned to their old quarters.
Twice a day the officers came in to call the roll; that is, form us in four ranks, in close order, faced to the front, and count the files. If any had escaped, it was essential the number should be kept good for some days, and for that purpose various schemes were resorted to. Sometimes one of the rear rank, after being counted, would glide along unseen, to the left of the line, and be counted again. A hole was cut through the floor above us, and, while the officers were going up stairs, some would climb through and be counted with those in the third story. In more than one instance, prisoners who escaped from the guard while going for water, were recaptured, and returned to their old quarters before their escape had been discovered by the prison officials.

As the season advanced, we suffered more and more from the cold, for being captured in September, our clothing was not sufficient for December and January weather. Very few had blankets, and the rebel authorities never issued blankets or clothing of any kind. As already mentioned, the windows of the lower room were without glass, and only the lower half boarded up; the wind whistled through
the large openings, and, drawing up through the cracks in the floor upon which we had to lie at night, would almost freeze us. I finally succeeded in trading off my watch with one of the guard, for an old bed-quilt and twenty dollars Confederate money. The money came when much needed, for I then had the scurvy so badly from eating salt on the bread, that my tongue, lips, and gums were much swollen, and by night I could scarcely speak. In the morning the swelling would be somewhat reduced, and by soaking the corn-bread I could swallow a little. Sometimes I would sell the ration of bread for a dollar, which with the twenty obtained for the watch, saved me from starving. I bought rice of the guard for two dollars a half-pint, and good sized potatoes for a dollar each, while onions were worth two dollars apiece. The cooking was done in tin cups; if the weather was pleasant, in the yard over a little fire with wood or chips picked up while going for water, or, if stormy, upon the rickety stove in our quarters. About this stove clustered, four or five deep, poor fellows, some scarcely able to stand, watching their cups, or seeking a little warmth, while those in the outer
circle presented an elbow patiently toward the fire, and probably after long waiting might succeed in worming in sideways near enough to feel the heat. On this stove we burned corn-bread crusts for coffee. Against this stove, by means of notched sticks or a bit of wire, we suspended the same tin cups or pails, containing messes, disgusting enough as I think of them now, but in reality tasting good then. We had corn-bread coffee, corn-bread soup, or rice and water, flavored perhaps by a bit of onion or salt-fish; or a few beans and bits of bones if we were fortunate enough to find one thrown out by the guards.

Before we left Salisbury, one of our mess obtained possession of a bound volume of Harper's Magazine, and, as there were but eight in the mess, each could read an hour or more daily. When we had all read it, we traded for a volume of The Portland Transcript.

It was useless for an outsider to think of borrowing these books, for they were in use by the mess from daylight to dark; a few games of checkers or cribbage, played sitting on the floor tailor fashion, were always in order; a trip to the river for water
and the skirmishing already mentioned constituted the regular routine. Some amused themselves by carving wooden spoons, bone finger-rings, napkin-rings, miniature books, crosses, etc. The more expert in that line made very creditable sets of these considering the scarcity of tools. A pocket-knife and saw made from a table-knife, by carefully striking the edge with another knife, constituted the full equipment; a whole day might be spent sawing off a bone for a finger-ring. Evenings we would be in darkness, except only the flicker of a single tallow candle in each room, and as moving about without frequent collisions was impossible, we gathered in little groups and talked of home, friends, and the good time coming when we would have one good square meal; arrange the bill of fare comprising all a morbid mind prompted by a starving stomach could conceive, lay plans for escape, and discuss the route to be traveled, sing a few hymns and national airs, usually closing with "We'll hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree," or "Down with the traitors, up with the stars."

The bed-quilt received in exchange for my watch, was long and very narrow, scarcely wide enough to
cover two persons. I folded the end over about three feet, tied the edges together, making sort of a bag, into which Captain Weiss and I thrust our lower extremities; spread our flannel blouses on the floor, used our shoes for pillows, pulled the quilt over our shoulders, and, with barely space sufficient to turn over, retired for the night.

We had skirmished, cut bones, read a little, hear contradicting reports of exchange, perhaps witnessed an arrival of "fresh fish," or the return of one who had escaped, and, as one after another dropped off into the arms of Morpheus, and the rooms became less noisy, the weightier thoughts which lay deepest during the day came to mind. It was then imagination painted the loveliest pictures of the friends we cherished, though far away; and later if the night was not too cold, we would drop to sleep, frequently to dream of home and loved ones; of Christmas festivities; of trains of army wagons so overloaded with delicacies that they were falling into the road; of a general exchange of prisoners; a thirty days' leave of absence, and a thousand other things altogether unlike that which we were experiencing; and would
wake only to find ourselves prisoners, cold and hungry; quite different from waking scenes of other days. Every bone aching from lying on the floor, and our hearts aching, too, in full realization of the fact that the imprisonment might and probably would continue until the collapse of the Confederacy, for which we were all earnestly praying.

We became very intimate with our neighbors; a fellow-feeling must necessarily exist, when as was the case with us, we had to lie so close that turning was impossible unless they too consented to turn over at the same time.

During the night each guard was required to call the number of his post half-hourly, in succession, as follows: "Corporal of the Guard, Post No. 1, half-past twelve o'clock and all is well," and by the time this had been repeated by the many sentinels around the four prisons in the immediate neighborhood, it would be almost time for Post No. 1 to commence again.

Sometimes the call would be varied to suit the exigencies of the occasion. I remember one night, the cry "three o'clock and cold as ——," was re-
peated by many of the guards. On another night, one, after making the customary call added, "I wish I was in Griddle Creek." A neighboring guard asked, "What good would that do you." He replied, "I'd go home to see my maw mighty quick." Cat calls, barking like a dog, or crowing like a rooster, would often start a midnight concert.

The rebel officers claimed their government was ready and anxious to exchange prisoners man for man, but we would not, could not believe it possible that our officers in authority would allow so much suffering if it could be alleviated.

Little did we then think, as is now known to be the case, that we were victims of the "best policy," a sacrifice for the good of the country. (See Appendix No. 7.) We seldom saw a newspaper, therefore could only judge of the situation by the value of their money, as estimated by the Jews and speculators who were frequently allowed inside for purpose of trade. As the offers of five dollars for one in November advanced to ten in December, and twenty Confederate for one in greenbacks in January, we concluded the end could not be far distant.
It may seem strange that after being searched, some of us two or three times and robbed of everything they could find of value, there would be anything left worth trading for; but everything had a price; brass buttons, needles, pins, pencils were all in demand; a pocket-knife was worth a fabulous price, very few being put upon the market. Some traded a cloth coat or trousers for a homespun butternut, with horn or wooden buttons, getting Confederate money or provisions to boot. Many sold all the buttons from coat and vest and substituted little sticks.

The guards were mostly men too old, or boys too young for field duty; were always ready for a trade when they could do it without being discovered by their officers, and often came on duty with tobacco, potatoes, rice, etc., in their pockets for trade.

They didn't seem to care so much for the buttons having U. S. on, as they did for the State buttons. A North Carolinian (tar heel) who was posted at the door opening into the yard, was very anxious to obtain two New York buttons to complete the requisite number and to match those he already had on the
skirt of his new homespun coat; a party of the boys gathered around and engaged him in earnest conversation while one of them cut the two buttons from the skirt of his coat, and immediately sold them to him at a good price. The theft was not detected, until an hour or more later, when having been relieved from duty he was about to sew the buttons on his coat he discovered they had been stolen from him.

All accustomed to smoking (and there were but few exceptions), would manage to secure tobacco for at least one smoke daily, and, if in no other way, would sell half their scanty rations. The few who did not use tobacco found it impossible to escape the offensive odor, for from the earliest dawn until long after we sought "Nature's sweet repose" on the vermin infested floor, and, especially on cold days, the air would be loaded with tobacco smoke from more than a hundred pipes. I often saw gentlemen refuse another a light from their pipes for fear a little tobacco would go with it.

There were with us two officers, who, when we arrived at Salisbury were in solitary confinement, and
had been for several months, whom the rebels were holding as hostages for guerillas, captured and condemned to be shot by one of our generals. When the removal to Danville occurred, they were released from close confinement and sent with us. These two planned an escape and nearly succeeded in accomplishing their object. They dug a hole through the brick wall into an adjoining unoccupied building, cut through the floor into the cellar, dug under the foundation, and were just coming through on the other side, when some one in passing stepped on the thin crust and fell in; next morning the two who had worked so hard for their liberty were placed in close confinement again; and the authorities made another but quite unsuccessful attempt to rob us of everything that could in any way assist an escape, particularly pocket knives and watches. They made all go to one end of the room, placed guards across the middle and searched us one by one. The few who had articles of value had only to toss them over the guards' heads to some one already searched, and when his turn came had nothing to be confiscated.

After this the sentries would not let us stand near
the windows, and, on one occasion, without warning, fired through a second story window, missing the one aimed at, and badly wounded a man on the floor above.

Early in December an unsuccessful attempt to escape from our prison (the No. 2) was made in broad daylight. The scheme was hastily arranged after being suggested by the sight of about one hundred stand of arms stacked in the open square near by, and, as I looked at it, it had but little prospect of success. The two inside sentinels on the lower floor were to be overpowered and gagged, the corporal was to be called, under pretense of going for water, and, when he opened the door, he too was to be seized and a rush made by the waiting crowd inside for the stacked arms, while some were to overpower the guards on the outside by a hand-to-hand encounter, after which those in the neighboring prisons could be released; then we were to seize the arsenal near by, where a sufficient quantity of arms and ammunition for a complete outfit could be obtained for the thousand or more prisoners, and we could then march through to the Union lines.
Many of the officers thought the scheme ill-advised, but Brigadier-General Duffié, formerly colonel of the First Rhode Island Cavalry, and Col. William Raulston of the Twenty-fourth New York Cavalry, felt confident of success. The inside sentinels were easily disarmed and gagged, but when the corporal of the guard came in response to the water-call, he caught sight of the crowd ready to pounce on him, while the door was still ajar, and before he could be seized, he slammed the door to, and swung the bar into place. The slamming of the door and unusual noise inside, had by this time attracted the attention of the outside guards, who thrust their guns between the boards of the windows, and, firing into the crowd, mortally wounded Colonel Raulston; two others were also mortally wounded; the rest hurried back to the room above.

It is a well attested fact that the Southern people told the negroes and their own children, too, that Yankees had horns like cattle, ears like elephants, and feathers like birds, as also many other frightful and ridiculous stories. One day a visitor came in accompanied by his boy about seven years of age. After
looking us over carefully, the boy turned to his father with a disappointed look, and said, "Why, papa, these Yankees ain't got no horns!"

"No," said one of our number, "we have neither horns nor feathers, but look here," and as he forced his loose fitting set of false teeth on the end of his tongue, beyond his mustache added, "just see the hair on my teeth." The little fellow hid his face in the skirts of his father's coat, cried like a baby, and begged to be taken home.

About the middle of January, Captain Cook, one of our mess, was informed that a special exchange was effected in his case, and he was to start for the North next morning. He had a pair of almost new hand-sewed shoes, which had been furnished him by friends in the South, and which out of sympathy to me he kindly offered to exchange for mine. This I felt ashamed to do, for what remained of mine would have been worthless under other circumstances. They were nearly worn out when I was captured, and soon became so badly ripped that the unity of sole and body was preserved by cutting narrow strips or strings from the uppers, and by making holes
through soles and vamps I tied them together. These strings would wear but a little while, and the frequent cuttings had made the shoes very low, but Cook expected to be in “God’s land,” and under the old flag where shoes were plenty, in a few days, and insisted upon the trade, to which I agreed. He left us with a light heart, taking with him the addresses of our friends to whom he was to report by letter. His fond hopes were doomed to disappointment, for instead of going directly North, he was detained in Libby Prison, until a few days before the rest of us arrived, and when we reached Annapolis, he was there waiting leave of absence, and had worn the old shoes until within a few days.

Early in February, rumors of a general exchange began to circulate, and boxes of provisions and clothing from the North were delivered.

Some of these boxes had been held in storage for months until in many cases the contents had become spoiled and almost worthless, and others made so by being searched and the contents, butter, tobacco, sugar, etc., dumped promiscuously into the box before delivery. Our mess was among the fortunate ones,
and received a well filled box of provisions and $1,200 Confederate money, the equivalent of $60 greenbacks, which the officers of our regiment had kindly contributed, and which the adjutant had exchanged for Confederate money on the picket line. Had it been sent to us in greenbacks we never would have seen it, but their money, like Lieutenant Ferguson's hat, was not worth stealing. Had we received this donation in November, we would have subsisted comfortably all winter; as it was we lived sumptuously as long as the contents of the box lasted, and when about a week later we started for Richmond, had drawn considerably on the $1,200.

No one of the four hundred prisoners will ever forget, while they remember anything, the excitement that prevailed when Colonel Smith, commander of the prison came in one evening, after many of us had lain down, and told us he had received an order for our exchange, and as soon as transportation could be furnished we would be sent to Richmond. We had repeatedly heard rumors of exchange only to be disappointed, but this time the news was official and could be relied on. Cheer upon cheer shook the old tobacco
warehouse, and I think might have been heard all over Danville. "Home, Sweet Home," "America," "Rally Round the Flag," and other patriotic songs sung by the full chorus of four hundred voices followed long into the night, for every one could sing then if never before.

February 17th, we left Danville for Richmond, and were again quartered in Libby. On the 19th we signed the parole papers, pledging ourselves not to take arms against the Confederacy until duly exchanged. The second morning after signing the parole, an officer came in and stated that for want of transportation only one hundred would be sent down the river that day, and the others would follow soon; that those whose names he called should "fall in" on the lower floor ready to start. As he proceeded to call the roll, each listened attentively to hear his own name. Of our mess only one had been called.

As he stopped reading and turned to leave, I thought what if our army should commence active operations and put a stop to the exchange; our imprisonment might be prolonged indefinitely; and although my name had not been called, I resolved to
go with the party if possible. I therefore hurried down stairs and fell in line with the lucky ones, all the time thinking of the possibility of detection, and the consequent solitary confinement, and did not breathe freely until we disembarked at Varina Landing. We then had about a mile to march before reaching Aiken’s Landing. On the way we met a great many returning Confederate prisoners, stout, hearty men clothed in army blue, many with overcoats and several blankets, while nearly all our party were in rags, and barely able to march from one landing to the other. I had been in prison from September 29th to February 21st, 146 days, with only summer clothing and without a particle of soap. Once I made an attempt to wash my shirt, and having no change caught a severe cold, either by being without for a while, or by putting it on before it was dry. After that a dry scrubbing had to suffice.

At Aiken’s Landing we found a flag of truce boat in waiting, and boiled ham, coffee, crackers, and soup in abundance.

It would be useless for me to attempt a description of our feelings as we passed through our picket line
into "God's Country," and beheld in the distance "Old Glory" as we had become accustomed to call it.

"Our flag of stripes and stars,
   Forever may it be as it was to us that day,
   Emblem of freedom pure and grand,
   Symbol of liberty."

Our privations and suffering had been trivial in comparison with the enlisted men captured with us, all of whom suffered untold hardships to which most of them succumbed. Denied not only clothing, but fuel and shelter through the winter, and sometimes for days without rations or water to quench their thirst; the sick and dying not only neglected, but maltreated and even murdered by incompetent surgeons; shot at without provocation or only to satisfy the caprice of the guards; scourged as slaves; kicked as dogs; hung up by the thumbs; forced to drag cannon-balls; obliged to "mark time," hours upon a stretch; immured in underground dungeons; harried and mangled by blood-hounds; all of which harrowing details were fully corroborated by the few emaciated wrecks who returned.
What wonder that men lost their strength, spirits, and reason; the story of exposure and cruelties at Salisbury where our men were confined during the winter, rivals that of Andersonville, as the consummate infamy of Wirtz is shared by his confederate, McGee.

After all the horrors of the stockade and barrack incarceration, under rebel rule; the unmitigated rigors of forced marches; the robbery and insult of officers and privates; the systematized starvation; the denial of fuel in winter, in a wooded country where an abundant supply might easily have been obtained; and obliged to burrow in the ground for protection from the elements, the record of prison treatment is made blacker by the account of contumely inflicted on the poor dust of humanity; the desecration of the inanimate remains of our soldiers who died victims of neglect and cruelty.

We might find some palliation for scanty rations, and scantier clothing supplied to its prisoners of war, by a government taxed to its utmost to supply the needs of its own army; or, if they simply hurried the burial of dead prisoners, omitting marks of outward
respect to enemies of their cause; but when we know they added insult and ignominy to indifference and carelessness; that they suffered the dead bodies of our soldiers to lie for days festering in the sun, or piled them naked in heaps, as wood is corded upon carts, and flung them like brutes into ditches; and when we remember that the remains thus dealt with were our brothers, who had fallen into captivity by the fortune of battle, and had perished through the barbarity of the captors, their only crime that they wore the blue, defending the flag of our country for freedom, equal rights and national unity, we cannot dwell with calmness upon the story of outrage on the civilization of our age and nation.

These dreadful facts have become matters of historic record, and will be transmitted to posterity as the deeds which only treason and rebellion could perpetrate, when inspired by the spirit of human slavery.

"O God, what a horror was this for man to endure,
With an ocean of free air above and a sky stretching pure;
All herded and huddled together like swine in a pen,
So much like brutes we almost forgot we were men."
APPENDIX NO. 1.

From Col. George E. Wagner, who, on the 29th of September, 1864, commanded the 8th U. S. C. T.:

PHILADELPHIA, August 10th, 1878.

Dear General: I have been looking over the record of the 7th Regiment, particularly that portion relating to the attack on Fort Gilmer; of course I do not know what orders you received from Gen. Birney, but have a very vivid recollection of the affair as far as it relates to the 8th Regiment. In the march up the New Market road, the 8th led the Brigade. Just as the order was received to march to the left in the woods, the 9th Regiment was put ahead of the 8th, formed in the woods, and charged across the Mill road, and diagonally across an open field in front of Fort Gilmer. They were pretty badly cut up, and fell back without accomplishing anything. During this charge the other regiments formed into line on the Mill road, the 8th being on the left. It was about this time, I presume, that Capt. Weiss started on his disastrous expedition.

Gen. Birney then ordered me to send four companies, deployed as skirmishers, to capture the work. Capt. Cooper, who commanded these companies, charged across the open field with his command, until within a short distance of the enemy's line, where he had a good view, and seeing their works fully manned, and having not over one hundred men himself, like a prudent officer he halted his men, made them lie down, kept up his fire, sent word to the rear concerning the situation, and asked for orders. In the meantime, Gen. Birney, seeing Capt. Cooper halt, ordered me to take our four addi-
tional companies and go into the works. I rapidly deployed my men and advanced, halted the second line of skirmishers, went to the front line to see what the trouble was, and finding that the enemy had at least ten men behind the works to my one in front, I sent Capt. Brooks to Gen. Birney to fully explain the matter, and ask if it should advance. Orders came to remain where I was, to keep up the fire to keep the gunners down, which I did; in fact I could do nothing else. To advance would have been annihilation, and to fall back nearly as bad. All told we had not over 200 men in the fight, and this number had been largely reduced under the heavy fire to which we had been subjected while forming and while advancing across that open field, my loss being 12 killed and 61 wounded, about 35 per cent. of those engaged, among the wounded being 5 officers out of 12 that went into the fight. After Gen. Birney had been advised of our position by Capt. Brooks he came out some distance towards our skirmish line and looked the field over for himself. Our most trying time was yet to come. Before leaving with the additional four companies I had particularly enquired of the General as to our flanks. He told me that both flanks were well covered; that such and such troops, naming them, were on our right, and such and such on our left. Relying upon this I gave myself no uneasiness upon that score, but steadily kept up our fire. My ammunition commencing to run low, I sent word to the General asking for a new supply or to be relieved. My wants were partially supplied, and the fire kept up. Suddenly, just before sunset, my left company, which was commanded by Lieut. Mayer, ( . . . ) was doubled up, the enemy having, from somewhere to the left, been sent upon my left flank, which was swinging in the air without support. They made a terrific charge, doubled up the flank, got partially in our rear, and to all appearances the Eighth was bound for Richmond. That was one of the tightest pinches I was ever in during the war. Gathering up a couple of companies from my right, including my old Co. "A," we went for
them, screeching like ten thousand fiends. It was at this time
that we had the hardest work of the day, and that I got to
closer quarters than in any of my previous experience in the
war. The counter charge was a success, the line was straight-
ened, and the enemy repulsed. We were aided to a consider-
able extent by Capt. Spaulding, and somewhat startled too
when we had got the "Rebs" started, a fire suddenly opened
in our rear; it was commencing to get dark; we could not at
first tell what was up, and Libby again appeared in our mind's
eye. The enemy seemed quite as much startled, and hastened
their flight. This was Capt. Spaulding, with four companies,
of the Seventh, coming to our relief. We then fell back to the
"Mill" Road, joined and moved with the rest of the
brigade. . . . Yours very truly,

(Signed) GEO. E. WAGNER.

Gen. JAMES SHAW, JR.
I have said, those of our captured men who were able, were set to work upon the rebel fortifications. In retaliation, General Butler issued the following General Order, No. 126, Oct. 13, 1864: "It being testified to the commanding general by a number of refugees and deserters from the enemy, that from 100 to 150 soldiers of the United States, captured in arms by the Confederates near Chaffin's Farm, have been taken from Libby prison and other places, and placed to labor on the fortifications of the enemy's lines in front of their troops, the commanding general orders that an equal number of prisoners of war, principally members of the Virginia reserves, by and under whose charge this outrage is being carried on, be set to work in the excavation at Dutch Gap, and elsewhere along the trenches, as may hereafter seem best, in retaliation for the unjust treatment of the soldiers of the United States so kept at labor and service by the Confederate authorities.

"It being also testified to by the same witnesses that the rations served to the soldiers of the United States so at labor, is one pound of flour, and one-third of a pound of bacon daily, it is ordered that the same rations precisely be served to these Confederate prisoners so kept at work daily, and no other or different."

Commenting on the outrageous proceedings of Butler in putting Confederates to work in Dutch Gap, the Richmond Examiner said: "We must not admit it as an act of retaliation, for if it be so admitted, it gives up the ground of argument, and recognizes the slaves as free men." Whether they were willing to admit it as an act of retaliation or not, they
were certainly forced to submit, for the prompt action of General Butler soon caused the Confederates to release our men from work; and on October 20th, General Butler published General Order No. 134: "It having been officially certified by General Lee, commanding Confederate forces, that the prisoners of war put to work in the trenches near Fort Gilmer, have been withdrawn, to be treated as prisoners of war, it is ordered that the prisoners of war of the Confederate forces put to work in the canal at Dutch Gap in retaliation, shall be at once withdrawn, to be held and treated hereafter as prisoners of war."

The proclamation 'of outlawry of colored soldiers and officers, was as follows: "Now, therefore, I, Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America, and acting by their authority, and by virtue of my authority as commander-in-chief of the armies of the Confederate States, do order—That all commissioned officers in the command of said Benjamin Butler, be declared not entitled to be considered as soldiers engaged in honorable warfare, but as robbers and criminals, deserving death; and that they and each of them be, whenever captured, reserved for execution.

"That all negro slaves captured in arms be at once delivered over to the executive authorities of the respective States to which they belong, to be dealt with according to the laws of said States.

"That the like orders be executed in all cases, with respect to all commissioned officers of the United States, when found in company with armed slaves in insurrection against the authorities of the different States of the Confederacy. Dated December 23rd, 1862."
APPENDIX NO. 3.

HEAD-QUARTERS
Second Division, Twenty-Fifth Army Corps.
ARMY OF THE JAMES

In the Field, Va., January 22, 1865

Hon. Mr. Sprague,
U. S. Senator

Sir,

Enclosed please find a draught of a bill to encourage volunteer officers of
experience to remain in the military service. If it should meet your approbation, I think
it might do something to check the loss of such officers which is now very rapid.

I avail myself of the occasion to say a few words in behalf of your fellow-
townsmen and constituent, Colonel James "Shaw, 7th U. S. Colored Troops. He has never
asked me to do so, but his modesty should not cause him to lose what is too often accorded
impostunes in demand.

The Colonel has been serving under me, almost without interruption, since November, 1863.
He has been a most faithful and conscien-
Your obedient servant,

John Birney

Brevet General U.S.V.
That the Confederates were brought to consider the propriety of using the "hitherto despised race" as soldiers, the following extracts are submitted in proof:

An article in the New York Herald of Nov. 4, 1864, copied from a Richmond paper, arguing for the arming of slaves, contained the following passage:

"But A. B. says the negroes will not fight; we have before us a letter from a distinguished general (we wish we were permitted to use his name and influence), who says 'Fort Gilmer proved the other day that they would fight; they raised each other on the parapet to be shot at as they appeared above.'"

The Richmond Whig of Oct. 7, 1864, said: "The Enquirer believes that the slaves of the South may be made—should the exigency ever occur—steady and reliable soldiers. It says, "It is not necessary now to discuss this matter, and may never become so, but neither negroes nor slaves will be permitted to stand in the way of our cause. This war is for national independence on our side, and for the subjugation of the whites and the emancipation of the slaves on the side of the enemy. If it fail, the negroes are nominally free, and their masters really slaves, therefore we must succeed."

"Other States may decide for themselves, but Virginia after exhausting her whites, will fight the blacks through to the last man. She will be free at any cost."

The Richmond Examiner of December 9th, 1864, published the following extract from the Governor's message: "All
agree that when the question becomes one of liberty and independence on the one hand, or subjugation on the other, that every means within our reach should be used to aid in our struggle and to baffle and thwart our enemy. I say every man will agree to this. No man should hesitate, even if the result were to emancipate our slaves; there is not a man who would not cheerfully put the negro in the army rather than become a slave himself to our hated and vindictive foe.”

The Richmond Examiner said editorially December 20th, 1864: “The bill for the impressment of slaves which passed one branch of Congress, might be very properly amended and enlarged in the other—namely, by placing at the disposal of the military authorities, not only 40,000 negroes, but 80 or 100,000 and leaving it to General Lee, at his discretion and according to the exigencies of the service, to use them in any way he may think needful.”

A correspondent of the Richmond Times in a recent issue (1892), says: “Just before the surrender of Richmond, the soldiers in Winder and Jackson hospitals, who were able for field duty, were organized—forming a company from each hospital, and there was also a negro company (attendants in the hospital) organized in each: the former companies forming a battalion for the purpose of protecting the city against Federal cavalry.

“This battalion had been called out several times when the Federal scouts were near the city. We were at Seven Pines the day before the surrender of Richmond, and were called in that night.

“What I want is the article that eulogized our battalion, especially the negro companies that drilled so nicely on one occasion when we were on dress-parade in front of the state house, a few weeks before the surrender of the city.”

This communication was signed by A. R. Tomlinson, formerly Company H, Fourth North Carolina Regiment.
The old saying "one may lead a horse to water but a hundred cannot make him drink," would have been forcibly impressed upon the Confederate authorities, if they had put the colored hospital companies or any organization of colored troops into an engagement. Sergeant Henry Jordan of my company, was badly wounded when captured, and remained in the hospital while those who were able were sent to Salisbury. When sufficiently recovered he became an attendant in the hospital, and later served as drill-master of one of the colored companies. I have been assured by him that they had planned and fully arranged to desert in a body, as soon as a favorable opportunity presented.
APPENDIX NO. 5.

Union Regiments, which lost 17 per cent. or more, of their number killed in a single engagement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regiment</th>
<th>Battle</th>
<th>Per cent. killed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7th U. S. C. T., 4 companies.</td>
<td>Fort Gilmer</td>
<td>32.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27th Connecticut</td>
<td>Gettysburg</td>
<td>17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Illinois</td>
<td>Shiloh</td>
<td>17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th Illinois</td>
<td>Fort Donelson</td>
<td>20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22d Indiana</td>
<td>Chaplin Hills</td>
<td>18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Iowa</td>
<td>Belmont</td>
<td>18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32d Iowa</td>
<td>Pleasant Hill</td>
<td>20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Maine Heavy Artillery</td>
<td>Petersburg</td>
<td>22.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Maine</td>
<td>Rappahannock Station</td>
<td>17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Maine</td>
<td>Petersburg</td>
<td>19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th Maine</td>
<td>Fredericksburg</td>
<td>17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Massachusetts</td>
<td>Antietam</td>
<td>22.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th Massachusetts</td>
<td>Antietam</td>
<td>17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20th Massachusetts</td>
<td>Fredericksburg</td>
<td>20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th Massachusetts</td>
<td>Cold Harbor</td>
<td>23.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57th Massachusetts</td>
<td>Wilderness</td>
<td>17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d Michigan</td>
<td>Knoxville</td>
<td>18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24th Michigan</td>
<td>Gettysburg</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Minnesota, 8 companies.</td>
<td>Gettysburg</td>
<td>28.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th New Hampshire</td>
<td>Gettysburg</td>
<td>19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th New Hampshire</td>
<td>Cold Harbor</td>
<td>21.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th New Jersey</td>
<td>Spottsylvania</td>
<td>26.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th New York</td>
<td>Manassas</td>
<td>23.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30th New York</td>
<td>Manassas</td>
<td>19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49th New York</td>
<td>Spottsylvania</td>
<td>18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regiment</td>
<td>Battle</td>
<td>Per cent. killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59th New York</td>
<td>Antietam</td>
<td>18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63d New York</td>
<td>Antietam</td>
<td>17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69th New York</td>
<td>Antietam</td>
<td>22.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111th New York</td>
<td>Gettysburg</td>
<td>22.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121st New York</td>
<td>Salem Heights</td>
<td>17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141st New York</td>
<td>Peach Tree Creek</td>
<td>21.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147th New York</td>
<td>Gettysburg</td>
<td>20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Ohio</td>
<td>Cedar Creek</td>
<td>17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14th Ohio</td>
<td>Chickamauga</td>
<td>18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38th Ohio</td>
<td>Jonesboro</td>
<td>20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63d Ohio</td>
<td>Pickett's Mills</td>
<td>17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th Ohio Battery</td>
<td>Iuka</td>
<td>18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26th Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Gettysburg</td>
<td>17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49th Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Spotsylvania</td>
<td>22.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69th Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Gettysburg</td>
<td>21.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83d Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Peninsula</td>
<td>20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141st Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Gettysburg</td>
<td>24.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145th Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Fredericksburg</td>
<td>18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3d Vermont</td>
<td>Lee's Mills</td>
<td>18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Vermont</td>
<td>Savage Station</td>
<td>18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Wisconsin</td>
<td>Chaplin Hills</td>
<td>18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d Wisconsin</td>
<td>Manassas</td>
<td>17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Wisconsin</td>
<td>Port Hudson</td>
<td>20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36th Wisconsin</td>
<td>Bethesda Church</td>
<td>20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37th Wisconsin</td>
<td>Petersburg Mine</td>
<td>21.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th United States</td>
<td>Gettysburg</td>
<td>23.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79th United States Colored</td>
<td>Poison Springs</td>
<td>23.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX NO. 6.

The Southern Historical Society has published many narratives relating to prison experience in the North; Vol. 1, Page 247, Rev. George W. Nelson says: "At Camp Chase my rations were of good quality and sufficient. At Johnson's Island they were not so good or so plentiful, though sufficient to keep a man in good health. At Point Lookout in May and June he says: "About this time rations were reduced; we were cut down to two meals a day; coffee and sugar were stopped; the ration was a small loaf of bread per day, a small piece of meat for breakfast, and a piece of meat and what was called soup for dinner."

Mr. Keiley, at one time Mayor of Richmond, was at Elmira prison during the summer of '64. Page 269, Vol. 1, he says: "The ration of bread was usually a full pound per day, while the meat ration was invariably scanty."

T. D. Henry, a prisoner at Camp Douglas, says: (Page 276.) "Rations were of very good quality and quantity."
I have said, we were the victims of the "best policy." While the rebel Congress did not formally revoke the bill of outlawry of negro soldiers and their officers, it was never enforced so far as the officers were concerned, for we were treated by the prison authorities in all respects as well as others, but the colored soldiers were undoubtedly subjected to more privations and hardships than the white; and the exchange of prisoners was stopped because of the proclamation, and their refusal to exchange the blacks; and, notwithstanding the fact, that the Confederate authorities subsequently repeatedly offered to exchange prisoners, man for man, which in all probability would have included the blacks, since we then held nearly twice as many prisoners as they; but as they had not said they would exchange the blacks, the original refusal was made a pretext for stopping all exchanges, and their overtures were not accepted.

That it was only a pretext, I quote from General Butler's book in substantiation. He says on page 590 that he met Mr. Ould, the Confederate Commissioner of Exchange, by appointment, March 10, 1864: "All points of difference were substantially agreed upon so that the exchange might go on readily and smoothly, man for man, and officer for officer of equal rank, and officers for their equivalent in privates as settled by the cartel."

Again on page 592, he says:

"General Grant visited Fortress Monroe on the first of April. To him the state of the negotiations as to exchange was communicated, and most emphatic verbal directions were received
from the Lieutenant-General not to take any further steps by which another able-bodied man should be exchanged until further orders from him.”

Under date of April 20, 1864, the following telegram was sent to General Butler: “Receive all the sick and wounded the Confederate authorities will send you, but send no more in exchange.

(Signed) U. S. Grant, Lieutenant-General.”

This, of course, put an end to all exchange, since, to obtain the delivery of sick and wounded without any return, would be a difficult operation. Continuing, General Butler says:

“Nothing further was done with the exchange save to receive such sick and wounded as they delivered to us, till the 15th of August, when a note was received from Major Mulford, Assistant Commissioner of Exchange, enclosing the following letter from Mr. Ould:

RICHMOND, VA., Aug. 10, 1864.

Major John E. Mulford, Assistant Agent of Exchange:

SIR: You have several times proposed to me to exchange the prisoners respectively held by the two belligerents, officer for officer, and man for man. The same offer has also been made by other officials having charge of matters connected with the exchange of prisoners. This proposal has heretofore been declined by the Confederate authorities, they insisting upon the terms of the cartel, which required the delivery of the excess on either side on parole. In view, however, of the very large number of prisoners now held by each party, and the suffering consequent upon the continued confinement, I now consent to the above proposal, and agree to deliver to you the prisoners held in captivity by the Confederate authorities, providing you agree to deliver an equal number of officers and men.
As equal numbers are delivered from time to time, they will be declared exchanged. This proposal is made with the understanding that the officers and men on both sides who have been longest in captivity will be first delivered where it is practicable.

I shall be happy to hear from you as speedily as possible whether this arrangement can be carried out.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

(Signed)  
Robert Ould,  
Agent of Exchange.”

Mr. Ould has since said, “This offer, which would have restored to freedom thousands of suffering captives, which would have released every Federal soldier in Confederate prisons, was not even noticed, that is, no reply was made to it. As the Federal authorities at that time held a large excess of prisoners, the effect of the proposal which I had made, if carried out, would have been to release all the Union prisoners, while a large number of Confederates would have remained in prison, awaiting the chances of the capture of their equivalents.”

General Butler evidently did all he could to have the arrangement carried out. He proposed to go on with the exchange, man for man, until he got all our men, and if the colored soldiers were not delivered for exchange, then to retaliate on the 20,000 or more Confederates remaining in our hands.

I understand General Grant objected to the exchange for fear the reinforcements to the Confederate army would endanger his position before Petersburg, and that of General Sherman in Georgia.

General Butler says: “I offer no criticism of this policy, it was not mine, and my part in it was wholly in obedience to orders from my commanding officer, the Lieutenant-General.”
APPENDIX NO. 8.

I have been asked by people of the South, as also by friends at home, if it be possible to make good soldiers of the negroes. If I thought they would fight. My reply to the first question has always been, as emphatically as I could make it, Yes. I ask for no better material than such men as formed our regiment; men who had been slaves, knowing little or nothing except immediate obedience to commands; most of them unable to read a word, but all anxious to learn, and being very attentive to instruction soon did learn, not only the school of the soldier, but to read and write. They learned to handle muskets properly, and to march well, more quickly than the white regiment I served in.

Show them how to handle a musket, and they would imitate the movement at once; having an ear for time and tune, it was surprising to note the steadiness and accuracy of their marching after a few days drilling. The drum-corps of our regiment excelled that of any white regiment I ever heard. We marched thirty miles in Florida, July 22, 1864, and when halted for bivouac, every man of my company answered to his name at roll-call. We were never troubled by either straggling or desertion; out of 145 belonging to C company, only one, a recruit, and substitute from the North, deserted, but not until the fighting was all done. Their camp was always neat, in as good if not in better condition than those of white regiments.

During a most trying and tedious tour of duty at Deep Bottom, in August, 1864, the Seventh Regiment carried with fixed bayonets, a line of rifle-pits, and carried it without firing a shot, but with a loss of thirty wounded, some of whom died.
A correspondent of the New York Tribune said: "It was one of the most stirring and gallant affairs we have ever seen." A very flattering order was received from headquarters, from which I extract the following:

"To the colored troops recently added to us, and fighting with us, the Major-General commanding tenders his thanks for their uniform conduct and soldierly bearing.

"They have set a good example to our veterans by the entire absence of straggling from their ranks on the march." By order of Major-General D. B. Birney.

In reply to the second question, "Will they fight?" I would, if it were possible, answer still more forcibly, I KNOW they will fight for liberty as well as any men who ever carried muskets. I think I have shown conclusively from the testimony of both sides, that the Seventh Regiment of Colored Infantry was composed of fighting men.

I can fully agree with General Butler, when in his final address he pays this tribute to the colored soldiers of his command:

"In this army you have been treated as soldiers, not as laborers.

"You have shown yourselves worthy of the uniform you wear.

"The best officers of the Union seek to command you.

"Your bravery has won the admiration even of those who would be your masters.

"Your patriotism, fidelity and courage have illustrated the best qualities of manhood.

"With the bayonet you have unlocked the iron-barred gates of prejudice, opened new fields of freedom, liberty, and equality of right to yourselves, and to your race."

I have written only of what I know to be true, and in many instances used the language of others who were participants with me in the engagements mentioned, because they have written better than I could possibly have done.
It was not my purpose in preparing this paper to prove that colored soldiers would fight well. The enlistment of over 180,000 when in view of the fact that they could not, if captured, expect the same treatment as white men, required more nerve than for whites to enlist earlier in the war.

It shows they were willing to put themselves in a position to serve their country in time of its greatest need. With the 36,847 who gave up their lives in the struggle for national existence; with Deep Bottom, New Market, Fort Gilmer, Port Hudson, Fort Wagner, Olustee, and over four hundred other engagements with the enemy participated in by them; in all of which they acquitted themselves with credit, as testified to by every officer in whose command they served, and by a multitude of unwilling witnesses, whose prejudices were overcome by the numerous instances of unexampled gallantry coming within their personal observation, the evidence is conclusive; it may indeed be said, "The negro was a soldier in every sense of the word."

It does not become me to say much about the officers of colored troops. I believe in almost every instance they were selected from among the officers, non-commissioned officers and privates of our army who had seen active service. No outside influence, either social, political or military had any undue weight with the examining board. Each had to stand on his own merit. In some cases officers above the line failed to pass as second lieutenants.

Up to Feb. 2, 1864, out of 740 candidates 333 had been rejected, and out of the 407 who passed, 202 were recommended for second lieutenants, 101 for first lieutenants, 72 for captains, 18 majors, 8 lieutenant-colonels, and only 6 were found equal to the responsibility of a colonelcy.
PERSONAL NARRATIVES
OF EVENTS IN THE
War of the Rebellion,
BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE
RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

FIFTH SERIES.—No. 8.

PROVIDENCE:
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1898.
BATTLE OF THE CRATER

AND

EXPERIENCES OF PRISON LIFE.

BY

SUMNER U. SHEARMAN,

[Late Captain, Fourth Rhode Island Volunteers.]

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Battle of the Crater; and Experiences of Prison Life.

I have been asked by the Society under whose auspices we are gathered to-night to tell you something of my personal experiences in the Battle of the Mine, or of the Crater, as it is sometimes called, and to supplement those experiences with some account of my life in a Southern prison.

At the time of the battle I was captain of Company A, Fourth Rhode Island Volunteers Infantry. The regiment to which I belonged was a portion of the Ninth Army Corps, under the command of General Burnside. The battle was fought on the 30th of July, 1864. But some months previous, as far back as January, 1863, the regiment, as also the corps, had been detached from the Army of the Potomac. Burnside, as you know, succeeded McClellan after the battle of Antietam in command of the Army of the
Potomac; but he himself was removed from that command in January, 1863, and taken away from the Army of the Potomac. But the regiment to which I belonged ultimately became separated from the corps, and was on detached duty in the city of Norfolk, Virginia, and afterwards at Point Lookout, Maryland, where we were when the order came for us to rejoin the Ninth Corps, which had been brought back to the Army of the Potomac.

We arrived in front of Petersburg, at a point on the line where the Ninth Army Corps was stationed, on the Fourth of July, 1864. The two lines, our line and the enemy's, were at this point very near each other, from one hundred and fifty to three hundred yards apart, the distance varying according to the line of the works. We were ordered to encamp in some woods in the rear of our line of rifle-pits, and not far from them.

Shots from the enemy were continually coming into our camp, being fired at the men in the breastworks in front. We had to erect a barricade in the camp to protect ourselves, behind which we lived. Men of course strayed more or less away from the
barricade, and every now and then some one would be wounded. Every three or four days it became our turn to take our places in the rifle-pits, where we had to stay forty-eight hours, and sometimes longer. We never went into the rifle-pits without some one being killed or wounded.

While we were encamped in this way, we heard of the plan of Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Pleasants, of the Forty-eighth Pennsylvania Infantry, who was a practical miner, and his men were largely men who had worked in the coal mines of Pennsylvania. He conceived the idea of building a mine under a certain portion of the enemy’s works, with the purpose of blowing them up. At a certain point in the enemy’s line, opposite the point where we were located, was a very strong earthwork, mounting several guns of large calibre, which did very much damage to our fortifications and troops. It was but one hundred and fifty yards from our line to that point. Back of it, on higher ground, was a hill called Cemetery Hill, regarded as a strategic point. If we could capture that hill, it was believed that much would be done to force General Lee out of Richmond. This fort stood in the
Colonel Pleasants believed that he could remove it by his plan of blowing it up. The idea was that, if the fort could be removed by the explosion, the enemy being taken by surprise, opportunity would be afforded for our troops, already in position, to charge in through the open space thus made, and, taking advantage of the surprise on the part of the enemy, to push on to the crest of Cemetery Hill.

Colonel Pleasants met with no encouragement on the part of General Meade, in command of the Army of the Potomac; nevertheless, as General Burnside, his corps commander, approved of it, he was allowed to undertake it. No assistance whatever was afforded him by the Engineer Corps of the Army. He had to devise such methods as he could to accomplish his purpose, working at a great disadvantage all the time, but he finally accomplished the task. He began the work inside of our lines, under cover of a hill, at a point where the enemy could not perceive what was being done, and carried his tunnel through the earth the whole distance of one hundred and fifty yards, until he reached the fort. It was twenty feet beneath the surface of the ground at the point he reached.
AND EXPERIENCES OF PRISON LIFE.

From thence he made a branch at right angles on either side, making it in the form of a letter T, as it were, at that point. In these branches he placed large wooden tanks in which powder was to be put. Four tons of powder were placed in these wooden boxes, and connected by a fuse at the entrance of the mine.

The 30th of July, 1864, was fixed upon as the time for the explosion to take place. It was intended to have it take place somewhere about three o’clock in the morning. Troops were gotten into position the night before under cover of the darkness, ready to charge as soon as the mine should be exploded.

I had been engaged for some days previous at the headquarters of the Third Division of the Ninth Army Corps, General Potter commanding, as judge advocate in connection with a court-martial. On the evening before the battle, the evening of the 29th, an order came to me to report to my regiment. I did so, and found that it was about to take its place in line of battle, ready to join in the charge on the morning of the next day. I had my supper in camp as usual, and we started to take up our position, carrying with us
no food, nor anything in the way of clothing, except the clothes we had on.

The time arrived when the explosion was expected to take place, but no explosion occurred. It was learned that the fuse had gone out. An officer of the Forty-eighth Pennsylvania volunteered to go in and relight the fuse; and, as I remember, it went out a second time, and was relighted. Shortly before five o'clock, just as the sun was rising, a sound as of thunder was distinctly heard, and in a moment the earth at the point where the mine had been constructed was thrown upward, slowly mounting into the air to a height of some two hundred feet, and then, spreading out like a fan, fell back again into the excavation made by the explosion. The soil was of a clayey character, and enormous boulders of clay were thrown up and fell back around the opening, resembling in some respects the crater of a volcano; hence the battle has sometimes been called the Battle of the Crater. The men who were in this fort, and the artillery, and everything pertaining to the fortifications, huge timbers, ammunition, tents, and everything that would be naturally located there, were all thrown heaven-
ward. The men, of course, were either killed or wounded, with hardly an exception. A large number of men were in the fort. It has been estimated by some that there were a thousand.

As soon as the explosion took place, the artillery all along the line on our side, some one hundred and twenty pieces or more, began firing at that point. The firing lasted some moments, and then the troops were directed to charge. It had been the plan of General Burnside to have his division of colored troops lead the advance. There was in the Ninth Corps at that time a division of colored troops. They had been drilled with the idea of taking the advance, but General Meade overruled Burnside's plan, and thought it best that the colored troops should not be put in that position. So General Burnside called together his division commanders, and told them of the change of plan on the very night before the battle, and allowed them to draw lots to see which one should take the lead. The lot fell to General Ledlie, the least efficient of the division commanders in the Ninth Corps.

When the Third Division, to which my regiment
belonged, charged over our breastworks and across the space between our line and the enemy's line, they came upon the enemy's works to the right of the crater; but by that time the enemy had recovered from his surprise, and was concentrating a terrible fire upon all that region. The men instinctively sought shelter in the excavation made by the explosion, but when we arrived at that point we found the crater filled with troops of General Ledlie's division. There seemed to be complete chaos reigning there. The lieutenant-colonel of our regiment, who was in command, Colonel Buffum, tried to rally the men, as did officers of other regiments, and to push on to Cemetery Hill; but General Ledlie, who should have been with his command, remained behind in a bomb-proof. I remember seeing him, as we passed the front, secure in a bomb-proof. His troops had fallen into confusion in the way I have explained, and he was not there to remedy the situation. It seemed impossible for the officers to accomplish anything in the midst of the reigning confusion.

The Fourth Rhode Island, the few of us that were together at that time, followed the colonel and the
color bearer out beyond the enemy's works towards Cemetery Hill, but we encountered such a hurricane of shot and shell that it was impossible to face it, and we were driven back again into the shelter of the enemy's works, where we remained. The attempt to capture Cemetery Hill had proved a failure. Many of the men and officers tried to get back to our own line, but the enemy by that time had a raking fire over the space between their line and our own, and it was almost sure death for any person to undertake to cross it. Very few of those who did, escaped being killed or wounded. The space between was so covered with the dead and the wounded that it was possible for a person to go from one line to the other without stepping on the earth. I have learned since that an order was issued for the troops in the crater to return to our own lines, but I myself did not hear of such an order, neither did Lieutenant-Colonel Buffum. We remained in the crater. It was on the 30th of July, as I have said, and one of the hottest days of the summer. The enemy had gotten range upon the crater, and were dropping mortar shell into our midst, but we held them at bay until our ammunition gave
out. Finally they made a charge, and succeeded in reaching the crater, and were firing directly down upon us. General Bartlett, the highest officer in rank in the crater, a general from Massachusetts, gave the order for us to surrender. An officer of my regiment, a lieutenant of the Fourth Rhode Island, Lieutenant Kibby, tied a white handkerchief on his sword, and held it up in token of surrender. The enemy ceased firing.

I may mention that General Bartlett in a previous battle had lost a leg, and it had been replaced by a wooden one. A shot struck him and his leg was broken, but it proved to be the wooden leg.

During all this time we had no water to drink, and we were parched with thirst. I had the feeling at the time that if I had a thousand dollars I would give it cheerfully for a drink of water. The sun beating down upon us as it did, exposed as we were, and having neither water to drink nor food to eat, I became very much prostrated. I have always believed that I came very near having sunstroke, from the aftereffects upon me.

When we surrendered, I, in common with others,
began clambering out of the excavation, up over the boulders of clay to firm ground, and as I reached the surface, a Confederate soldier confronted me, saying, "Give me that sword, you damn Yankee!" I of course immediately surrendered my sword, giving him sword and belt and pistol. I was walking with the colonel to the rear, under the escort of Confederate soldiers, when another soldier, without any ceremony, took my colonel's hat off his head, and put a much worse one in its place. The colonel wore a felt hat, and they seemed to be desirous of hats of that description. I had on an infantry cap, and my head was not disturbed. We had gone but a few paces when another Confederate soldier took off the hat that the colonel now had, and put on a still worse one. It seemed very strange to me to see my colonel treated with such disrespect, but he endured it without protest.

I felt very weak, and I suppose was not able to walk with my usual steadiness, for I heard one Confederate soldier say to another, pointing to me, "I wish I had the whiskey in me that he has." If I only could have had a little at that time, I think it would have been good for me.
We were taken to the rear of the enemy's line to a field just outside of Petersburg, where we were placed under a Confederate guard, and remained there all that afternoon and all night. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when we surrendered. A mounted officer rode up during the afternoon to take a view of us, who I was told was General Lee. If it was, it was the only time I ever saw that famous officer.

As I have said, I was completely prostrated, and lay upon the ground, with no desire and scarcely the strength to get up. A fellow-officer brought me some water, which I drank, and bathed my head and forehead and breast, in order to restore me, if possible, from the fainting condition I was in. As the sun went down and the night came on, it became cooler, and I began to revive and feel renewed vigor. The Confederates gave us nothing to eat. An apple was given me by some one, and that was the only food I had that day. The next day was Sunday. In the morning the Confederates took the officers and the negroes who had been captured in battle and arranged us in an order like this: four
officers, four negroes, four officers, four negroes, and so on, until all the officers and negroes were formed into a line of that character. Then they marched us all over the town of Petersburg, through the streets, to show us up to the inhabitants. The idea they had in view, I suppose, was to humiliate the officers. We passed one house, in the doorway of which stood a white woman, with a colored woman on either side of her, and as we passed I heard her say, "That is the way to treat the Yankees; mix them up with the niggers, they are so fond of them, mix them up." I thought to myself that she was very much in the same position that we were. Another woman whom we passed, called out, saying that if she had her way she would put all those Yanks in front of a battery and mow them all down.

A man said to me as we marched along, "They are going to take you down to Andersonville. They are dying down there three or four hundred a day; you will never live to see home again." I thought to myself that his welcome was not, to say the least, hospitable. The guard who was marching along by my side said to me that he did not believe in insulting a pris-
oner; that he had made up his mind never to insult a prisoner, because he had the feeling that he might some time be in the same position.

We were taken to an island in the river Appomattox, the officers at last being separated from the colored men. About eight o’clock Sunday evening eight hard crackers and a small piece of uncooked bacon were given to each of us. I had had no food except the apple that I spoke of, since the Friday night previous in camp; I went from Friday night to Sunday night without anything to eat. I ate part of the crackers and the bacon, thinking that I would make them go as far as possible, not knowing when I might receive any more. It was dark when they gave us the crackers and the bacon, and in the morning I discovered that the bacon was alive with maggots and that I had been eating it. I scraped off the maggots, and ate the rest of it.

On Monday morning they put us aboard box freight-cars. There were no seats in the cars, and we were packed in like so many cattle, and started on our journey to Danville, Virginia. Arriving there, we were imprisoned in a tobacco warehouse, where we remained
two or three days. This warehouse the Confederate government had improvised as a place in which to incarcerate prisoners of war, and a very large number of men were confined here. We saw some most revolting sights, men reduced to skeletons and so weak that they could scarcely crawl about. Here we were given boiled bacon and hard crackers for our food.

The enlisted men remained here, but the commissioned officers were taken on board freight cars again, and carried in the same way as before to Columbia, South Carolina. It was a very tedious and trying journey. It was insufferably hot, and very little food was supplied us. We arrived at Columbia after dark in the evening, and marched directly to the county jail, situated in the city of Columbia.

We were placed in rooms in the jail. The one in which I was had nothing in the way of furniture in it. We simply lay down upon the floor just as we had come from the freight cars. The next day we were distributed around in the rooms on the floor above that on which we were first placed.

The jail stood on one of the principal streets of the city, close to the sidewalk and adjacent to what I took
to be the city hall. In the rear of the jail was a yard, surrounded by a high fence and containing out-houses. It was a small yard. In it was a small brick building containing a cook-stove. A pipe from a spring led into the yard, with a faucet from which we drew water, which was of very excellent quality.

The room in which I was placed I should think was in the neighborhood of twenty feet square. There were, as I remember, seventeen of us in that room. There were seven similar rooms, four on one side and three on the other side of a hall running the length of the building. The side of the room towards the outer wall consisted of an iron grating. Between that grating and the outer wall was an alley-way perhaps three feet in width. There were windows in this outer wall, which were also covered with gratings. The room contained nothing whatever in the way of chairs or beds or anything for our comfort. It was absolutely empty of everything, except lice and bed-bugs, until we entered it. All along on the angle made by the walls and ceiling were rows of bed-bugs, and at night they came down upon us.

Having been divided in these rooms, we organized
ourselves into messes, there being a mess in each room. Each mess detailed men from its number to do the cooking. We appointed the highest officer of our number in the prison, Colonel Marshall, as provost marshal. He appointed a lieutenant as adjutant, who kept a roster and detailed two men every day in each of the rooms to do police duty. Their duty was to sweep the floor, and to scrub it when necessity required. No broom was supplied us. We therefore had to purchase one. The men in the room in which I was, clubbed together and bought a broom, of very inferior quality, for which we paid five dollars in Confederate money. There was a tub belonging to the room, very roughly made, in which we brought up water from the yard below whenever we found it necessary to wash the floor. We would dash the water over the floor, and then scrub it with the broom.

We were allowed out in the prison yard each day, at daylight in the morning for an hour, and again in the afternoon for an hour. During the morning hour we all gathered around the one faucet in the yard, to perform our morning ablutions. There were some one hundred and twenty of us, as I remember, and of
course we could not all engage in this process at the same time.

The cooks were allowed to go into the brick house of which I have spoken, long before daylight, where they built a fire with wood supplied by the Confederate government, and proceeded to fill a wash-boiler connected with the cook-stove, with water, which they heated and stirred in the corn meal supplied us as the chief article of our diet. This they afterwards baked in two dripping pans, these being the only cooking utensils which the building contained. After they had finished baking this corn-bread, they divided it into pieces about as large as one's hand and perhaps an inch or two thick, and spread it out on boards, which they brought up into the prison about eight or nine o'clock in the morning. A piece of this bread and a tin cup full of cold water constituted our breakfast.

When I entered the prison I had nothing with me but the clothes I had on, and a tooth brush and a small pocket comb. At the time I was taken prisoner I had some twenty or twenty-five dollars in greenbacks, and this I exchanged for Confederate money,
through one of the guard placed over us, receiving, as I remember, some fifteen or twenty dollars for each dollar of the currency of the United States. With this money I bought me a pint tin cup, paying five dollars for it, Confederate money. A naval officer who had been captured at Fort Sumter a year previous to our imprisonment, and who was also in this prison, gave me a small caseknife and a fork made of the handle of a toothbrush. A fellow prisoner who was ingenious with the jackknife, carved a tablespoon out of a piece of wood, of which he made me a present. These articles constituted my kit.

The ration supplied us consisted of cornmeal, rice, and sorghum. The rations were issued to last ten days. They amounted to about a pint of meal a day, a tenth of a pint of rice, and a gill of sorghum. The cornmeal was sometimes good, sometimes it was wormy, sometimes it consisted of the corn and the cob ground up together. The meal was cooked in the way I have described, and twice a day we had a piece of the size I have mentioned. Sometimes we would save our rice and sorghum, and have what we considered a feast. At other times we would sell the
sorghum, through the guard, to somebody outside the prison; in exchange for cow-peas, and out of these peas a soup would be made. Of course, it consisted of nothing but the peas boiled in water. We had no meat and no salt. When such an exchange was made, we had the luxury of a pint of this soup.

As I have said, I had no change of clothing, so when I indulged in the luxury of washing day, I had to go without underclothing until my clothes were dry. Of course, each man had to wash his own clothes.

Every now and then it came my turn to wash the floor, and clean up the room as best I could. Retiring at night, consisted in sweeping the floor. We went to bed, of course, upon the floor, wearing the clothes that we had worn during the day. I was fortunate enough to procure a log of wood out in the jail-yard, which I utilized as a pillow, folding up my coat and placing it on top of the wood to make my pillow more comfortable.

Of course time hung heavy on our hands. We therefore tried to while it away by engaging in games of various kinds. We clubbed together and bought
a pack of cards, paying fifteen dollars for them, and they were very poor cards at that. Some one of our number made a checker and chess-board out of a square piece of plank, and whittled out rough checkers and chessmen. We used to tell stories, and indulged largely in telling what we would like to have to eat, and what we would have if we ever got out of that place. I often dreamed at night of having magnificent banquets, and that seemed to be the case with my fellow-prisoners, for we frequently told each other in the morning of the splendid repasts we had had in our dreams. The naval officers of whom I have spoken, some fourteen in number, having been there for a year, and having received their pay in gold regularly, by an arrangement made with the Confederate government on the part of Admiral Dahlgren, had been able to purchase a good many things. They had supplied themselves with a number of books. They had Sir Walter Scott's novels, they had Don Quixote and Gil Blas. The two latter I borrowed of them, and read them in the prison with great interest. Some of the men in the room in which I was having learned that I knew something of Latin, asked me if I would
not undertake to teach them Latin, so I obtained from these naval officers a Latin grammar and a Latin Prose Composition, and established a class in Latin. So in one way and another we managed to get through each day.

A portion of each day was occupied by each one of us in a critical examination of our underclothing, in order to make sure that we destroyed the crop of vermin which we found there each day. They were not the kind that are found in the heads of school children, but seemed to infest woolen clothing, and, as we all wore woolen clothing, we were greatly annoyed by them. This process we called "skirmishing," and it was one of our daily duties.

There were guards around the prison in the jail-yard and on the street below at each side of the prison. At the front of the prison there was a large window, which we were ordered not to approach after six o'clock at night. The guard had instructions to fire at any prisoner who might show himself at the window. We not infrequently tantalized the guard by going near enough to be seen by him, and dodging back just as he fired.
We were allowed out in the jail-yard, as I have said, early in the morning. A Confederate corporal would unlock the door, and shout out, "Yanks all out!" Of course, we were counted as we went out, and when we returned we were all drawn up in line and counted again, to make sure that all that went out had returned.

The captain in charge of the jail seemed to be a very excellent man. He was an elderly man, too old for active service in the field, and the men under him were either old men or boys, some of them hardly old enough to carry a musket. This showed to us, as we thought, that nearly all their available men were at the front. The guard was frequently changed; that is to say, the men who served for a few days would disappear and an entirely new set take their places. They wore no uniform, and we therefore concluded that they were rustics and others in the neighborhood, temporarily serving as guards over the prisoners.

One day while I was waiting for the officer to let us return into the prison, we having been allowed out in the yard, I was walking back and forth in the lower
hall. While doing so three young girls came up to the sentinel on duty at the front of the building and spoke to him. They were evidently of the class known in the South as "poor white trash," who had come from the country. I heard them say to the guard that they would like to see a Yankee. He immediately pointed to me and said, "There's one." They replied, looking critically at me, "Why, I don't see but what he looks just like other men." What they expected to see I am sure I cannot tell, some monstrous being or other, I presume, for there had been most surprising stories told at the beginning of the war, among the ignorant white and colored people, of the horrible appearance of the Yankees. It was declared that they had horns on their heads, and altogether presented a very devilish aspect.

We used to talk more or less of the possibility of escape. We could easily have gotten away from the prison, because of the inferior quality of the guard. Whenever we were allowed outside, we could have made a rush, and thus gotten away from them. Some of us, of course, would probably have been killed or wounded, but a majority could have escaped from the
prison itself. The difficulty was to get to our own lines, the nearest place being the seacoast at Charleston, S. C. This long distance had to be traversed, travelling by night and hiding by day. The Confederates were accustomed to hunt prisoners with bloodhounds, so the chances of ultimate escape were very small.

Two of our number, however, determined to take those chances at the first opportunity. So one night, when a severe storm was raging, the wind blowing, and the rain pouring down, they tied some blankets together as a rope by which they could be let down to the street. Here I may say that some of the prisoners happened to have blankets with them when they were captured, though I myself was not one of the fortunate ones. We had discovered that the sentry on duty when the nights were stormy, was in the habit of retiring within the porch over the front door of the prison; therefore these two men thought if they could reach the ground while the sentry was within the porch, they might possibly make their escape under cover of the darkness.

The plan proved successful. We let them down
from the window, and saw and heard no more of them. Whether they were recaptured or not I did not know for years afterwards. They were not brought back to the prison, and I have since learned that they succeeded in getting away. In order to deceive the officer who called us out in the morning, we placed two dummies on the floor in place of the men who had escaped during the previous night. This ruse deceived the prison officials, so the men had a longer opportunity of making their escape; but it was discovered at night when the roll-call was made that there were two men lacking, and, of course, I suppose the two escaped prisoners were at once pursued.

The windows in the prison were sadly lacking in glass, many panes having been broken out. Glass was almost an unknown quantity in the Southern Confederacy at that time, as they manufactured none themselves, and the blockade was so stringent that they could import but little. The consequence was, when winter weather came on, that the prisoners suffered from cold. The captain of the jail fitted up the vacant spaces with boards, and so many panes had to be supplied in this way that it seriously darkened the
prison. He also placed a stove in the centre of the hall which I have spoken of as running the whole length of the prison. It was very insufficient in its capacity to heat the prison, nevertheless it was better than nothing. Of course the fuel supplied us was wood.

An old colored woman was allowed to come into the prison whenever she chose, to sell what the southern people call “snacks,” to such as were fortunate enough to have money to buy them. The lunches consisted mainly of baked sweet potatoes and flour-bread or biscuit. A New Hampshire officer had quite a little sum of money when he was taken prisoner, and this he had husbanded to the best of his ability, and had some of it left when the cold became quite severe. Through the old colored woman, by paying her liberally for it, he obtained an old carpet that had seen its best days. It was quite ragged and torn. This, those who slept on my side of the room placed over them, and thus had some little protection from the cold weather. We used to sleep spoon-fashion under this carpet, and of course we all had to turn over at the same time to keep the carpet over us. We ap-
pointed one of our number to give the word of command whenever he was disposed to have us turn.

Thus we lived week in and week out, until nearly six months had gone by. One day, when I was engaged in teaching my class in Latin, I heard shouts from some of my fellow-prisoners, calling, "Shearman! Shearman! You are wanted!". Making my way toward the direction of the shouts, I found that a Confederate corporal was at the prison door, who informed me that he had good news for me. He took me down stairs, and there I found a Confederate major, who told me the joyful news that I was to be exchanged next morning. I could scarcely believe what he said to be true, for I, in common with the other prisoners, thought we should be compelled to remain there until the end of the war, and when that might be we did not know.

I might say here that we were allowed to write letters home, but they were limited to one side of a half sheet of note paper. The paper and envelopes were of the poorest quality imaginable, and cost an exorbitant price, reckoned in Confederate money. These letters had to be read by the captain in charge of the
prison, and forwarded by him to their destination. In my letters I almost always asked my father to do what he could to get me exchanged, but I had no hope that he would be successful. It seems, however, that the two governments had made an arrangement to exchange ten thousand sick men. The exchange was to have taken place at Savannah, and five thousand were exchanged at that point, when General Sherman arrived at Savannah, which compelled a transfer in the place of exchange. The remainder were exchanged at Charleston, South Carolina. Through the influence of General Burnside, a friend of my father's, my name was included in the list of those to be exchanged, although I was not sick. All this I learned after reaching home.

After my interview with the Confederate major, I was taken up stairs again into my portion of the prison, and told my fellow-prisoners of my good luck. There were six others to whom the same glorious news was imparted. Of course it was the topic of conversation from that time on during the rest of the day and evening. Many of the prisoners took advantage of the opportunity to send letters home by us,
and wrote much longer communications than were allowed, we agreeing to secrete them about our persons, and carry them away surreptitiously. They could thus write many things about themselves and their condition that would not pass muster, going through the captain's hands.

I did not sleep a wink that night. The excitement of the news which I had received would not permit me to close my eyes. I might say here, speaking of sitting up nearly all night, that we had no lights in the prison, and when night came on, we had to sit in the darkness until we were ready to lie down upon the floor. Occasionally we would indulge in the luxury of a tallow candle of the poorest quality, for which we paid a dollar in Confederate money. Sometimes a pine knot would be found among the wood which the cooks used. This we would take up into the jail and light in the evening. Of course it afforded light, but it also filled the room with clouds of smoke which escaped through the broken windows. Next morning our faces would be covered with soot.

To come back to the matter of my exchange, on the afternoon of the next day I was duly liberated,
with my six companions, and marched to a freight train. I remember that it was a cold day for that region, and that snow was falling. It was the only snow, as I recollect, that we had during the time I was a prisoner. The train of cars soon started on its way to Charleston, S. C. A large number of prisoners were gathered at various points, coming from Andersonville and Florence. We reached Charleston early the next morning, and were marched across the city to the wharves.

Charleston was completely abandoned by its inhabitants because of the siege on the part of our forces, and it was the most desolate looking place I have ever seen in all my life. The damages inflicted by shot and shell were to be seen on every hand. The grass had actually grown in the streets of Charleston, although at the time we were passing through, a light snow was on the ground, adding to the desolation of the scene. General Toombs of Georgia had threatened before the war began that the South would make grass grow in the streets of Boston, and that he would call the roll of his slaves on Bunker Hill. Grass actually did grow in the streets of Charleston as a result of the war.
Arriving at the wharves, we were placed on board of a steam vessel, which proved to be a blockade runner, and were carried out to a fleet of vessels under the walls of Fort Sumter, which our government had provided for the transport of prisoners. I was placed on board a ship called the *United States*, with a number of my fellow-prisoners. Those of us who were officers were assigned by the captain of the ship to staterooms. We found that there were nine hundred prisoners on board from Andersonville and Florence, some of them in the last stages of emaciation. Two or three of them died on the voyage from Charleston to Annapolis, and their bodies were buried in the sea. The Sanitary Commission had an agent on board, with an ample supply of underclothing. I at once got rid of the clothing which I had worn so long in the prison, throwing it overboard, and accepted with alacrity the new and clean clothing given me by the agent of the Sanitary Commission.

We lay at anchor one night in Charleston harbor, and the next day sailed for Annapolis, Md. Arriving at that point, we found each prisoner had been granted a thirty days' leave of absence. I telegraphed my
father of my arrival at Annapolis, and found, on reaching home, that he could hardly bring himself to believe it.

We went from Annapolis to Washington to obtain our pay, which had been accumulating during the period of our imprisonment. I purchased new clothing, and then joyfully started for home. I had served nearly three years, and my regiment had been mustered out of service during the period of my imprisonment, its time having expired. Some of its members had re-enlisted, and were consolidated with the Seventh Rhode Island; but I felt that I had done my duty, and that I was entitled to withdraw from the service, so I sent in my resignation direct to the Secretary of War at Washington, accompanying it with a surgeon's certificate of my health, and setting forth the facts of my service and my imprisonment. I obtained the endorsement of the Governor of the State to my application, and it came back in a few days accepted, and I was out of the service. I have often felt that I would have been tempted to return had I known that the war would end as soon as it subse-
quently did, so as to have had the satisfaction of being in at the close, if possible.

I have never regretted my being in the army during that most trying and critical period of our country. I feel as did the Westerner who said that he would not part with his experiences for a hundred thousand dollars, and he would not go through with it again for a hundred million.
PERSONAL NARRATIVES
OF EVENTS IN THE
WAR OF THE REBELLION,
BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE
RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

FIFTH SERIES.—No. 9.

PROVIDENCE:
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1899.
REMINISCENCES

OF THE

SIGNAL SERVICE

IN THE

CIVIL WAR.

BY

HENRY S. TAFFT,
[Late Captain Signal Corps, U. S. A., and Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel United States Volunteers.]

PROVIDENCE:
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REMINISCENCES OF THE SIGNAL SERVICE IN THE CIVIL WAR.

[Read before the Society January 17, 1899.]

The momentous and exciting incidents which have been so rapidly transpiring during the past few months in which the army and navy of this Republic have taken so prominent a part, and have achieved such wonderful renown, have for the moment engrossed the attention of the public to such a degree, that except in the minds of the older generation, or among the veterans of the army and navy, the subject of the Civil War has been cast in the shade, and reminiscences connected with its tragic history have become stale and unprofitable.

Your president has, however, assumed the grave responsibility of inviting me to present a paper before you this evening relating to events connected with my
personal experiences in the signal service of the army, during that great crisis in the nation's history, but I realize that what may seem of more than passing importance to myself as an actor in that great struggle for the supremacy of the flag, and the permanency of the Union, may to others possess very little interest. I shall, therefore, at the outset of my remarks entreat your kind indulgence and forbearance for what may appear but the rehearsal of dry historical events.

Before touching upon the signal service, with your permission, I desire to relate an incident connected with my early association with army life. In January, 1861, I was in Massachusetts, my native State, having recently returned from San Francisco on a visit to relatives in the East. Believing that war was inevitable and liable to occur at any moment; that the South, smarting under its defeat by the election of Lincoln as President, was preparing to attempt the dissolution of the union of the States by open and armed rebellion against the authority of the government, and by bloodshed if necessary, to enforce its demands, and, if successful, to establish an independ-
ent and separate republic for the maintenance of slavery, and the principles of State sovereignty for which it had so stoutly and persistently contended; and believing that the government in her unprepared condition for defence against its enemies would need the aid of all her loyal sons, I determined to commence the formation of a company of men to be prepared at any hour or moment to respond to the country's call upon her loyal sons for her defence. Accordingly, I gathered together a goodly number of the young men of the town and stated my views of the situation, and finally invited them to join with me in the formation of a company to be prepared for any emergency which might arise. Seventeen men responded to this invitation and their names were signed to the following pledge:

"We, the undersigned, believing that the government is about to be assailed by the hands of traitorous foes, hereby pledge ourselves, our lives and sacred honor in her defence, and will at once respond to any call to arms made by the President of the United States, or others in authority, for the support and protection of the Union and the defence of the Flag."
This little band of minute men were drilled in marching and the manual of arms, using axe handles for muskets, in a country store in the evenings after closing time, during that winter of intense excitement and feverish expectancy preceding the actual commencement of the war. Thirteen of these men afterward became members of the Fifteenth Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers, afterward known as the “Fighting Fifteenth,” and went into the war. A majority of them laid down their lives upon the battlefield or in consequence of wounds received in their country’s service. Those who had signed the above pledge who did not enter the service were prevented from so doing by physical disability. I mention this incident as I believe this band of patriots to have been the first volunteers to enroll themselves for their country’s defence, from the New England States in 1861. The writer enlisted as a private soldier in the company which was recruited by him to its maximum number in April and May, 1861, and many who applied were turned away. It went into camp at Worcester as a part of the Fifteenth Massachusetts Volunteers, June 28, 1861, was mustered into the
United States service July 12th, and was commanded by Col. Charles Devens. It achieved a record for bravery and heroism second to none in the war. The writer was commissioned by Governor Andrew a first lieutenant previous to leaving Worcester for the seat of war. The regiment left camp at Worcester Aug. 8, 1861. It received its first baptism of blood at Ball’s Bluff, Va., October 21st, where it was defeated with the terrible loss in killed, wounded, and prisoners of nearly one-half of those engaged in the action. During the three years in which the regiment was in the field, it was engaged in all the principal battles which took place under McClellan, Burnside, Meade, and Grant. Its total losses in killed, wounded, and missing in its numerous battles and skirmishes were 911 men out of a total enlistment of 1,701 men.

At the battle of Antietam, the regiment sustained one of the most remarkable losses of the war. It went into action with 606 officers and men, of whom 318 were killed, wounded, or missing—more than one-half of those brave boys wiped out in that awful conflict.

At the battle of the Wilderness, it went into action
with 275 men, and in that battle, and at Petersburg, its losses were 143 men. Again at Gettysburg, its losses were nearly fifty per cent. of the number engaged. The regiment well earned its title of the "Fighting Fifteenth." It was engaged in twenty-two important battles, a record hardly surpassed and rarely equaled by any body of troops during the war.

Fortunately, perhaps, for myself, while my regiment was lying at Poolesville, Md., a few weeks preceding the battle of Ball’s Bluff, I was ordered to report to the chief signal officer of the army at Washington for instruction in signal duty. It was understood by Colonel Devens and by myself that I was to be detached from the regiment only until I had become familiar with the signal service. This proved to be an error, and from the date of my departure until long after the close of the war, I saw neither the regiment nor any of its members again.

Upon reporting to the chief signal officer, Major Myer, I was at once initiated into the weird mysteries of aerial signals with wands or motions of any kind, with flags by day and torches by night, and very soon became efficient in its work. Here let me
turn back the search-lights of memory upon a page of history, revealing the discovery and inception of the system of army signals.

For the first time, so far as known in the world’s history in actual war, and upon the battlefield, a system of aerial signals was employed by the armies engaged in the great struggle between the North and the South from 1861 to 1865. This system was the invention of an assistant surgeon of the United States Army, Lieut. Albert J. Myer, and had been the subject of experiment for some years prior to the war, both upon the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Its practical utility had been in these experiments so fully demonstrated, that upon the opening of hostilities the system was adopted by the War Department, and Lieutenant Myer was appointed its chief, with the rank of major, with authority to have commissioned officers and enlisted men detailed from the regular and volunteer service for instruction in signal duty. Accordingly, on the 10th of June, 1861, Major Myer proceeded from Washington to Fortress Munroe, and reported to Maj.-Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, commanding the Department of Virginia, and, on June 12,
1861, ten officers and thirty enlisted men were detached from regiments serving in that department, and directed to report to the chief signal officer of the army for special duty in the Signal Corps. This was the inception of the signal service in the United States Army, and the first detail of officers and soldiers for this new military corps of the service which was destined to become of such incalculable aid in the movements and direction of troops and artillery when under fire upon the battlefield, and to revolutionize and take the place of other cumbersome, imperfect, and dangerous methods of communication under similar circumstances.

It may not be uninteresting to know in what manner the suggestion was first brought to the mind of this young officer of inventing this method for transmitting and receiving messages. While stationed in New Mexico in 1856, being out upon a scouting expedition with a detachment of cavalry, he observed a body of Indians of the Comanche tribe in an elevated position some distance from his point of concealment, making peculiar motions in the air with their lances, which seemed to meet with intelligent
response from another group upon an eminence some miles away. He closely observed these motions, which described certain spherical movements with definite intervals, until he became satisfied that the method of sign language was a system mutually and perfectly understood, and the thought was at once suggested to him of devising a code and using it in the army. Acting upon the idea thus presented, he immediately began a series of experiments, and in a few weeks had systematized the code of signals which has since been in use in the army. He patented the invention, and soon after the breaking out of the Rebellion, made the patent over to the United States Government without any remuneration whatever.

I quote from the preface of the History of the Signal Corps, recently published: "The genesis of military signalling is written in the labors of Myer. What from the most ancient times other commanders had dimly comprehended, Napoleon first saw clearly enough to crystalize into his maxim, 'The secret of successful warfare is the secret of accurate and rapid communication.' What the great captain of modern warfare recognized, but could not attain, was the
problem whose solution fell to Albert James Myer of the Medical Department United States Army. In all campaigns from the remotest times, the maintenance of communication by transient signals had presented itself to commanders as of paramount importance, but in practice it had eluded them. The flashing shield at Suninam and the fingers of Chappe’s semaphore were alike in their unavailability upon the field of battle. The waving flag and torch of Myer were the first contribution to the solution of the problem, which were efficient without cumbersome machinery, and while so simple as to be easily extemporized from any chance material, were yet capable of performing every service which they could be called upon to render."

The officers and men who had reported to Major Myer at Fortress Monroe were rapidly instructed in the code of signals and its method of practical use by day and night in the transmission and receiving messages of any character or length, by the waving of flags by day and torches at night. Jointed staffs were made for both flags and torches to be used for varying distances. Flags were also of dimensions of
from two to six feet square, to be used for either short or long distances. For distances of from one to five miles, a pole six feet long and a flag two feet square were generally used, and for greater distances up to thirty or forty miles, the pole would be eight, ten, twelve, or sixteen feet in length, and the flag four or six feet square. All the flags used had a square in the centre of a different color from the margin, as a flag with white margin with red or black centre, or the reverse, so that it could be more readily distinguished and less liable to be mistaken for some other flag.

The first service performed by this initial signal party was in its character experimental, although in the field and in the presence of the enemy. A signal station was established at Fort Wool, located on the Rip Raps in Hampton Roads, and efforts were made to secure an accurate and effective range on the rebel batteries at Sewall’s Point. In order to accomplish this it became necessary for an officer to be stationed at a point where the effect of every shot could be observed accurately and recorded. Major Myer and other officers were furnished with a tug and
steamed out to a position of observation covering both the Union and rebel works. From that point the firing was directed and the exact range was obtained by signals from the tug to the Union fort.

The phenomenal success which marked these tests of the practical use of this new method of signals, gave fresh impetus to its employment in every department of the military service, and the chief of the corps at once made vigorous efforts to increase its efficiency by causing the detail from the volunteer forces in the field, of many active, intelligent, and educated young officers, and establishing a camp of instruction at Georgetown Heights near Washington, D. C. The officers and men gathered here in July, August, and September, 1861, were speedily and thoroughly drilled in the principles and field work of signals, and on October 9th the first regular detail for the field was made by the following order:

**Special Order, No. 9.**

First Lieutenants Theodore S. Dumont, Edward J. Keenan, Henry S. Tafft, and Wm. S. Coggswell; and Second Lieutenants Franklin E. Town, H. Clay Snyder, and Ocran H. Howard, act-
ing Signal Officers, will proceed without delay to Annapolis, Md., and report for duty to Brig.-Gen. Thomas W. Sherman.

By order of

Albert J. Myer,

Chief Signal Officer.

It was my fortune to be selected to accompany this first detail to join the expeditionary corps then preparing for a descent upon the South Atlantic coast, and reporting in compliance with the above order, was assigned to duty as signal officer upon the staff of General Sherman with two other officers of the Signal Corps.

After several days delay at Annapolis, the transport flotilla sailed down Chesapeake Bay for the rendezvous with the naval fleet which had in the meantime been assembled at Fortress Monroe. This great fleet was under the command of that noble and brave old commodore, S. F. Dupont, afterward rear admiral United States Navy.

On the 29th of October the entire squadron of war ships convoying the transport and supply vessels, comprising altogether nearly one hundred vessels of
all classes, set sail upon one of the most important campaigns of the war. The naval vessels, surpassing in number any fleet ever gathered before upon the Atlantic coast, presented a grand and inspiring panorama.

The principal ships were the frigate Wabash, carrying about sixty guns; sloops of war Susquehanna, Vandalia, Mohican, and Pocahontas; gunboats Augusta, Bienville, Curlew, Florida, Ottawa, Pawnee, Pequin; Seminole, Forbes, Senaca, Unadilla, and many smaller vessels and steam tugs armed with rifled cannon. As they sailed away from the coast of Virginia on that beautiful October afternoon, formed in three lines abreast, with the big flag-ship Wabash leading the centre column, it was indeed a magnificent and thrilling spectacle. The prows of the great ships were pointed towards the south, and, as no one at that moment, not even its commander, knew the destination of the fleet, orders being sealed, and to be opened only after the vessels were well out to sea, speculation was keen among officers and men as to where the first blow was to be struck.

Signal officers had been placed upon the flag-ship,
with brigade commanders upon the transports and upon the old ocean liner *Atlantic*, the headquarters of General Sherman, commanding the army. Constant communication was maintained by the army signals between the different commands of the army, with remarkable accuracy and dispatch, and the small body of signal officers and men had not only their knowledge of signals fully tested, but their powers of endurance as well.

Off Hatteras a terrific storm was encountered and it appeared as if many of the frail craft improvised for the occasion would be engulfed or driven on shore. Not the least of dangers to be guarded against was that of collision where so many ships were so closely gathered, and the service of the Signal Corps became of the greatest importance, in fact, was indispensable in transmitting and receiving instructions and orders, reporting casualties, etc. During two days the storm continued with unabated fury, and the ships were scattered in every direction. Signal officers and men were on duty day and night, frequently being lashed to the railing of wheel-houses or bridges, to enable them to retain any stationary
relation to the ship, and to prevent being washed into the sea.

Drenched to the skin, and nearly frozen, these men stuck to their posts like veterans, and performed their duty with flag by day and torch by night until the storm abated. Food and hot drinks, in this case unprohibited by saint or sinner, were served to them at night upon their perches, and there eaten and drunken as best they might, between the biting winds and the roaring sea of that awful storm. Ships were tossed like egg shells, and many became helpless and were taken in tow by the stauncher vessels. I remember a little river steamer commanded by as brave a man as ever walked a quarter deck, Captain Phillips by name, which seemed about to be engulfed in the raging sea as our own good steamer, the Atlantic, bore down to her relief, the captain in her wheelhouse, perched on her upper deck, the waters making a clean breach through the vessel fore and aft as we approached and hailed, asking if he would be taken off and abandon his ship. "No, I will stand by her until she sinks, but get a line to me if you can." And so we did and saved the little craft, and later
she did good service in southern waters under this brave commander, as a dispatch boat.

Several vessels were lost in this storm, but on the morning of November 4th, the scattered fleet began to arrive off Port Royal, which, upon opening orders, was found to be its rendezvous. The steam frigate *Susquehanna* was the first to arrive, followed by the *Atlantic*. These were the only ships in sight on that morning, of that great fleet which had so proudly sailed from Hampton Roads seven days before. During the day, however, many came in and anchored. Upon the following day, the 5th, several gunboats were sent into the harbor upon a reconnoissance to discover the location of the fortifications of the enemy, and to ascertain their strength and that of the rebel fleet also. The rebels opened fire upon them as was expected, to which our ships made no reply, and soon withdrew, having gained the desired information without loss.

During all this time the greatest activity was in evidence in both arms of the service, and the Signal Corps was kept busy in transmitting orders from ship to ship and in keeping watch for the expected rebel
ram which it was reported would run down and attack us as did the *Merrimac* in Hampton Roads, the fleet lying at anchor there. However, no ram appeared, and the morning of November 7th dawned clear and beautiful. The waters of the Atlantic and of the bay of Port Royal seemed in perfect repose. A peaceful calm rested upon the face of all nature. The lofty pines and the graceful palmettos, dressed in their rich tropical foliage, seemed to rejoice together in the resonant stillness of the atmosphere. The shores of the "Sea Islands" appeared to be within rifle-shot, though miles away. Voices could be readily heard from ship to ship as the great fleet of war vessels were preparing for action. Every eye was strained to discover the first indications for getting under way. Very soon the smoke from the funnels of the steam war-ships assured us that the hour of attack was close at hand. At this moment a message was received by army signals from the flag-ship that the attack would be made at once and the *Wabash* would take the advance. The grand old hero Dupont declared that he would lay the *Wabash* within five hundred yards of the enemy's works and level them to the ground or sink his ship.
All the larger armed vessels were to follow where he led. The smaller vessels would act independently. The plan of battle was to pass into the harbor and attack Fort Beauregard on the right or north side of the harbor, proceeding past that position after delivering their broadsides, then paying their respects to the rebel gunboats lying in the upper part of the bay, describing a circle and returning towards the starting point, passing Fort Walker on Hilton Island on the south side of the bay; then, unless the enemy in the mean time surrendered, the circle would be again traversed by every ship not disabled, and they would move in still closer to the forts.

This was the plan of the battle of Port Royal, and it was executed as calmly and with as perfect precision as if it were but a holiday event, instead of one of the most tragic and momentous occurrences of the war.

It was nearly ten o'clock before the great ships began to move. Slowly, majestically, the frigate Wabash, carrying more than sixty guns of heavy calibre, forged ahead and took her place in the advance. Through my field glass many of her officers
could be recognized upon her main and quarter decks. The brave old Commodore Dupont, conspicuous above all others, took his position upon the quarter deck and remained there during the entire action. Then followed the other vessels of the squadron, those carrying the heaviest and greatest number of guns taking the lead.

I had often read of naval battles and of the terrific effect of shot and shell, but until that hour had never begun to realize what fearful engines of destruction they were. Words can convey but a feeble description of the scene which opened within the next half hour and continued for nearly three hours, every ship of that great squadron in action; every gun within the rebel forts sending forth their messengers of death; shells bursting in mid air, in the rigging and hulls of the ships, in the waters of the bay, in the fortifications of the enemy, in the sands upon the shore, great columns of sand at times spurring up fifty feet in the air and falling back like an immense fountain of water as a shell buried itself beneath the surface and exploded, smoke and flame sometimes shutting from view for several moments the ships and
forts, but everywhere on every side, the booming of the great guns, the bursting of the death-dealing shells, until it seemed that the rebel fortifications must be razed to the ground, and that many of the ships would be crippled and sunk by the terrific bombardment. Soon it was evident that the rebel fire was weakening and becoming more irregular and infrequent, and, as the smoke lifted, it was seen that many of their guns were dismounted or otherwise disabled.

An incident thrilling in character and of more than tragic interest, occurred during this battle. It was observed that a gun upon Fort Walker was repeatedly loaded by a man wearing a red shirt. He was closely watched. Other guns were deserted or dismounted, but the gun served by him remained in position and was loaded and fired with the utmost coolness and precision, until finally his heroic bravery was recognized by the "boys in blue" upon the transports, and they began to cheer the rebel with the red shirt. Cheer upon cheer from the throats of ten thousand men rent the air each time he came upon the parapet to load his gun; finally a shot
struck the gun as the brave fellow appeared again to load it, and both the man and the gun disappeared from our view amid the smoke of the bursting shell. When we gained the fort, the red-shirted rebel was lying dead beside the gun he had served so gallantly and so faithfully. Who was he, I hear you ask. An Irishman, forced into the ranks of the rebel army at Charleston; the only Irishman I ever saw fighting under the rebel flag. His remains lie beneath the palms and palmettos upon lone Hilton Head. Above them a monument of bronze or stone should be erected to commemorate his heroic bravery. An Irishman is brave by instinct. In all my experience in battle I never saw an Irishman who showed the white feather.

Such terrific cannonading nothing human could withstand, and by one o'clock the rebel flags were lowered. Then came the rush of the army for the shore. All the small boats were ready and the men likewise, and in a few brief moments thousands were leaping from them as they touched the beach, and, plunging through the surf, gained the bluff and pushed forward after the flying rebels. Among the
latter there was a perfect stampede. Throwing away guns, knapsacks, and sabres, they fled for the woods and swamps in the greatest fright and confusion, crying: "The Yankees are coming; the Yankees are coming." The rout was chaotic, the victory complete. The rebel fleet, together with several passenger steamers which had run down from Charleston and Beaufort to see the "Yankee ships sunk" — a boast which had been made by the rebel commander previous to the battle — soon beat a hasty retreat, and ran away as fast as steam could carry them, and the dense black smoke from their funnels could be seen over the tree tops, long after the vessels had disappeared from view. It has always been a mystery to me why our gunboats did not follow up and capture or sink the rebel fleet, as it could easily have been done without the loss of a man.

Thus ended one of the most brilliant naval engagements of the war, and had the victory been followed up at once by an advance upon Savannah and Charleston, both would have fallen within the next two weeks.

During the battle the signal officers were engaged
in transmitting and receiving orders to and from the brigade commanders, and in preparations to land as soon as the enemy surrendered. They were among the first on shore and at once established a signal station upon the only plantation house in sight. This station was the first one opened south of the Potomac, and it was maintained without interruption during the entire war. A day or two later a station was opened upon the parapet of Fort Beauregard across the bay three miles; another, three miles distant west, and not long after at Spanish Wells plantation and Braddock's Point,—the latter upon the plantation house of the noted South Carolina nullifier, John C. Calhoun,—thus establishing a line the length of the island, twelve miles, the Braddock Point station being one of observation, as it covered the mouth of the Savannah River, Tybee Island, and Fort Pulaski. The first shot fired upon Fort Pulaski by the Union Army after the commencement of the war was from a rebel water battery at Braddock's Point. This was in presence of General Hawley, General Terry, and the signal officer with them. The guns had been spiked with rat-tail files when the
enemy retreated, but the Yankee machinist was equal to the occasion, and drilled them out, and it was from these guns that the shot was fired that awoke Johnny Reb, and brought him up on the walls of the fort in large numbers to see what the Yanks were up to.

During the next four weeks the signal officers and men were kept busy in various ways; in opening communication, scouting, reconnoissance, acting as aids to the generals upon whose staffs they were serving, and supplying information to the commander of the army and navy, until it came to be generally understood that the signal officer was the repository of everything worth knowing, being both omniscient and omnipresent, and was besieged for news accordingly. He was to be prepared at any moment, night or day, to undertake the most hazardous service. He stood in confidential relation to the general commanding and enjoyed his most unlimited confidence, but he was bound by a solemn oath not to divulge the secrets of the system and code; consequently no other than a signal officer, either in the army or navy, knew or could interpret its mysterious motions.
Thirty days after the capture of Port Royal, Beaufort was occupied. This was the summer home of the blue-blooded aristocracy of South Carolina. Before we entered the town it had been looted by both negroes and rebel cavalry, and its streets were strewn with household furniture, broken crockery, books, picture frames, pianos, etc.

A new duty was imposed upon the chief signal officer — that of general inspector — in order to show the condition of the place when our army entered it. This duty was performed to the satisfaction of the commander. A line of communication was at once established by signals with Bay Point and Hilton Head. Nine days after landing at Beaufort, the chief signal officer was directed to cross Port Royal Island to the Coosaw River ten miles away, in command of two companies of the Fiftieth Pennsylvania Volunteers, to examine the opposite shore of that river; feel the enemy; draw his fire; capture him; find an advantageous place to land troops upon the main land, and return — if alive — to headquarters with his report, the same day. All this was accomplished except the capture of the enemy. In fact, in this
respect the boot came near being on the other leg, and had it not been for the opportune arrival of a small steamer with a detachment of Third Rhode Island boys and a couple of brass field pieces on board, I doubt if this tale would have been told by me. The result of this little skirmish was that the rebels dusted, our loss two killed and about a dozen wounded. This was new work again for the signal officer, but he rose to the occasion, made his plan, submitted it to the general, accompanied him the following day down to the flag-ship eighteen miles away, where a council of war was held, and the plan of battle drawn up by the signal officer, which contemplated landing an army at the point indicated, marching south four miles, flanking the rebel position and fort at Port Royal Ferry, was adopted, and cooperation by the navy assured. Sixteen days later the battle of Port Royal Ferry took place. Troops crossed the Coosaw River in flat-boats at daylight, landed at the place selected, the signal officer accompanying the army being by accident the first upon the shore. General Isaac I. Stevens commanding was in the bow of the leading boat,
and beside him the signal officer. It was run up alongside of an overturned flat-boat, the tide having ebbed so that at the moment it was above water, the general leaped upon this improvised wharf, but its slimy surface was too elusive for the general's spurs, and down he went, while the impetus given by the sudden stop of the boat sent the signal officer flying over him and up the bluff without waiting for orders to advance. A signal officer was on board the leading gunboat, and at once communication was established between the army and navy. The enemy in small force at this point, promptly retreated inland, destroying bridges and felling trees across the road. These obstacles were speedily overcome, and within an hour our advance met the enemy and the fight was on.

This was the first opportunity to test the efficiency of the signal system under fire in actual battle. Its utility and usefulness had been demonstrated in a certain manner on many occasions, but it was yet to be seen if its officers and men were of the metal to place themselves in positions of the greatest danger, and still retain the coolness and level-headedness
which were the prime essentials for the successful execution of this duty.

As I recall my impressions at the moment just preceding the opening of the battle, I realized fully the importance of the occasion, and the responsibility resting upon myself individually as being the only signal officer with our troops on shore, and determined at all hazards to win success for this new arm of the service. With this purpose in view, I advanced with our skirmish line to the crest of the ridge beyond which the rebels were lying in the edge of the woods. Their position could not be seen from the gunboats, and for more than two hours the firing from the latter was directed by our signals. During this time the signal party, an officer and two men, was a conspicuous target for the enemy, and a continuous fire of grape, canister, and bullets was kept up upon them. None of the party were injured, but the signal flag was repeatedly shot through. The duty performed upon this occasion received due recognition from both the army and naval commanders and the signal officer was honored by the President with the brevet of major for "gallant and meritorious service."
Our troops were victorious in this engagement, and the general commanding did not hesitate to acknowledge that his success was largely due to the aid of the signal service.

From this time on, the Signal Corps in the Department of the South was considered an indispensable auxiliary to every movement of the army or navy. It took part in the campaign of Florida in March, 1862, its chief officer being the first to land at Fernandina and to raise the first flag upon the house of the rebel governor of the State in that city. Gen. Horatio G. Wright, commanding the troops, made this his headquarters upon landing the following day. Here again the work of the Signal Corps became conspicuous. From the cupola of the governor's house where a signal station had been opened within a half-hour after landing, the transport fleet could be seen outside the bar. Communication was immediately established with the signal officer on the steamship Empire City, who wagged a message from General Wright that the ship was aground on the bar, storm approaching, and asking the naval commander for assistance. This message was at
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once delivered, and resulted in two powerful gunboats being sent outside and the steamship hauled off from her perilous position, where, had she remained during the night, the storm which came on before morning would have destroyed her, and, doubtless, many lives. This occurrence is a matter of record at the War Department, and the saving of the steamship, cargo, and many lives, is placed to the credit of the Signal Corps.

The advance upon Charleston, known as the campaign of James Island, followed shortly after the occupation of Florida, and in this the Signal Corps became an important factor. It formed almost the only method of rapid communication between the army and navy, and between the different posts of the army. Its scouting parties and details for observation were constantly on the alert; scorning every danger, surmounting every obstacle, they became the right arm of the commanders in the field. They won their way to this enviable position by downright pluck, persistent energy, undaunted courage, and faithfulness to the discharge of their duty.

I have the right, and believe it to be my duty to
the memory of my comrades who so ably seconded my efforts, to give this testimony upon this occasion, however strongly I may be inclined to shrink from it.

At one point on James Island fully half a mile in front of our lines, a tall pine was selected as a station of observation. The perch was reached over eighty feet from the ground, by slats nailed upon the rough bark of the tree, forming a ladder. From this perch one could look into Charleston and over the bay — over Fort Johnson and the fortifications in the rear about the village of Secessionville. I climbed to this crow's nest but once. This once was enough for me. I made a solemn vow that if I ever reached mother earth alive, I would never again be guilty of such a foolhardy act.

At another time, two signal officers and an aid of General Stevens were scouting outside our lines with the purpose of ascertaining the strength and location of the enemy in our front. Advancing along the margin of a creek under cover of a fringe of trees, we dismounted and fastened our horses and crawled upon hands and knees a quarter of a mile to a grove of live oaks where we expected to obtain a good view
into the earth-works and rifle-pits of the enemy. We succeeded, but were discovered. The writer slid down from that big live oak and behind its protecting trunk in less time than it takes to tell it, and in a moment it was riddled with grapeshot and shell. When the rebels concluded we were dead or wounded, and ceased firing, to send out and bring in our remains, we made a dash for our horses that would have put in the shade a modern sprinter, mounted, and, taking to the open field, put spurs to our steeds and made for our lines with the shot, shell, and rebel hot after us, and we got there.

On the 16th of June, 1862, the battle of James Island was fought. It was intended to surprise the enemy by an attack before daylight, but as usual, our troops were delayed and it was nearly sunrise when we struck the outposts in front of Secessionville. They were prepared for us and the first fire from their pickets killed two of our men. A brigade was at once deployed and ordered to charge. The order was gallantly executed under a withering fire of grape and canister at close range. The enemy's works were captured, but they soon rallied, and,
being reinforced, drove us back with great slaughter and the loss of many taken prisoners.

In the meantime, the signal officer upon the field having given the proper range to the batteries in the rear, and to the gunboats in the creeks on our right, was ordered by General Stevens to take command of two field pieces of a Connecticut battery, its proper officer having refused to take it into action as directed, and being placed under arrest in consequence.

Stevens, when excited, was not a strict churchman, and on this occasion he spoke from the abundance of his heart in language which could not be mistaken, but hardly suitable for a social occasion like this. The point of it was, however, that Lieutenant Tafft was placed in command of that battery, "Sir, take it up to that hedge, sir"—indicating a position on our right within close range of the fortifications—"and give the rebels — sir."

This was a new line of work for a signal officer, but with characteristic cheek, the order was obeyed to the letter. Across that field, swept by shot and shell, the flying horses plunged, the battery swung into position, and during the next hour the dose pre-
scribed by General Stevens was effectively and generously served to the enemy. When we were finally ordered to retire, the guns were drawn from the field by soldiers instead of horses, the latter having been either killed or disabled.

After our troops had fallen back a short distance and were lying down, the signal officer was sent for by the general. Upon reporting to him he was found lying between the cotton rows still enveloped in blue flame and sulphurous smoke, but this time instead of a poor artillery subaltern who was being scorched, it was the ranking general in command who was a mile away in the woods on our left, with two or three thousand fresh troops, and who had aroused General Stevens's anger by refusing to support him in making another attack. A message was to be delivered immediately to that officer begging him to move up the troops. Finding that the message could not be sent by signals on account of heavy woods intervening, the only alternative was to ride over a marsh across which a narrow causeway had been built. This causeway was enfiladed not only by the artillery, but also by the sharp-shooters of the enemy, and
the chances for the life of a man who would attempt its passage seemed slight; but the order was imperative, the exigency of tremendous importance. Putting spurs to his faithful horse, the officer rode straight into the jaws of death down upon the narrow roadway, indifferent to everything but the accomplishment of his purpose, urging on his flying steed until his feet hardly seemed to touch the earth; rifle-shot and bursting shell filling the air with the song of death, passed by, leaving him unscathed, and the message was delivered to the badly frightened officer who was found sitting upon his horse surrounded by his staff, a full half mile away from danger. He declined the aid demanded, and ordered General Stevens to retreat. The perilous ride was again taken, and again rider and horse escaped. The message which carried with it the stigma of defeat, when victory seemed within our grasp, was delivered, and, recognizing a soldier’s duty, obedience to the orders of a superior officer, our army was withdrawn and the advance on Charleston abandoned. Had the general commanding the army on that occasion been other than a coward, Charleston would in my opinion have fallen before the sun set that day.
The Signal Corps on this occasion, wherever posted, were commended for their efficient service, their coolness and bravery under fire.

This event closed for the present the campaign against Charleston, and, not long after, the army returned to Port Royal.

These reminiscences have already been extended much too far, and the narration of the operations of the Signal Corps in the reduction of Pulaski, the attack upon Sumter by the monitors, the campaign of Morris Island and fall of Sumter, must be deferred to some future time.

I have confined my remarks upon this occasion principally to the operations of the Corps in the Department of the South for the reason that there it was tested for the first time on the field of battle, and its initial success attained; there its great utility was first impressed upon the commanders of the army and navy, and there the writer for nearly two years had personal charge and direction of its operations. Many interesting details of its service, individual instances of gallant and heroic bravery of its officers and men, have necessarily been omitted.
PERSONAL NARRATIVES
OF EVENTS IN THE
WAR OF THE REBELLION,
BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE
RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS
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FROM

Spottssylvania to Wilmington, N. C.

BY WAY OF

Andersonville and Florence.

BY

SIDNEY S. WILLIAMS,

[Late First Sergeant Company C, Tenth Massachusetts Volunteers.]

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1899.
[Edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies.]
FROM SPOTTSYLVANIA TO WILMINGTON, N. C. BY WAY OF ANDERSONVILLE AND FLORENCE.

On the 12th of May, 1864, occurred the battle of Spottsylvania, considered by some to be the hardest fought battle of the war. It would certainly rank among the first. At an early hour in the morning Hancock, with his superb Second Corps, broke through the centre of the rebel line, capturing a large number of prisoners. Our corps, the Sixth, was hurried up to the scene of fighting. Arriving on the ground, we were soon engaged. By nine o'clock or before, we had exhausted our ammunition, and were obliged to seek such shelter as we could get without returning the fire. A portion of our regiment were on a knoll much more exposed than the rest, so we went up to the captured rifle-pits which were two or three rods in advance of where we had been staying. This was a very unfortunate move. Although we escaped the
bullets from the front, they came in thicker than ever from the right. I am inclined to think that we had got into about the central part of the hornet's nest. While lying up against the rifle-pits my Enfield rifle was struck twice by Minie balls within a short time. There is an oak stump at the National Museum in Washington, the tree of which was cut completely off by Minie balls at this place.

There were four of us members of Company C, Tenth Massachusetts, who bunked together at Brandy Station the winter previous, John C. Clark, James H. Abbott, J. Hervey Howard and myself. Clark was killed trying to get back to the regiment. Abbott was lying by my side on the rifle-pit, when he was struck in the heart by a bullet and killed instantly. He died without a struggle, like a child going to sleep. A little later on I was captured, and Howard who was with the rest of the regiment was the sole survivor. He is still living at Hatfield, Mass., a member of William L. Baker Post, Grand Army of the Republic, Northampton. It was not long before the rebel line came up over the rifle-pits, and those of us that were left were sent to the rear. Howard tells me
that the dead were four or five deep at these pits the next morning. The only one of my company captured with me was a man named George C. Phillips. We were sent to Lee’s headquarters with the rest of the prisoners. Phillips and myself put up our shelter tent that night, and putting our haversacks under our heads for pillows slept through the night. I must have slept sound, for the next morning my haversack with all its precious contents had disappeared, and I never saw it again. There were five days full rations, hard bread, sugar, coffee, cooking utensils, including a ration of fresh meat that I had drawn the day before and was waiting to get a chance to cook. Phillips very kindly shared the contents of his haversack with me. We stayed here a day or two, when we were sent south, marching a couple of days when we took cars, passed through Lynchburg where we stayed a day or two, and then on again for Andersonville.

At one of the stops on the way the prisoners were marched through a shed where an inspection of some kind was being held. Looking ahead in the line we could see the rebels taking out shelter tents from the
knapsacks. On seeing this Phillips opened his knapsack, took out his piece of tent and threw it away.

When it came our turn they did not open our knapsacks at all, so I saved mine. We arrived at the famous prison in due time, and halted on a knoll outside; had a good view of the delectable spot where we were destined to spend the summer. The aspect was not very encouraging. It was not long before the gates were opened, and we were ushered in.

The site of the place had been a dense pine forest, the trees having been cut down to form the stockade. This consisted of logs fifteen or twenty feet long, standing up side by side, and stuck in the ground enough to hold them secure and braced on the other side at regular intervals. The inclosure contained over twenty acres I think. There was a small stream or brook running through from west to east. Where it entered the stockade the water was tolerably pure, and was used for drinking purposes and also for cooking. Below that was a space boarded off for washing and bathing purposes, and below that were the sinks, extending nearly to the further side. The original settlers had not found Andersonville quite so bad
as it had become since it became more densely inhabited. They had found plenty of wood, and had constructed quite comfortable barracks. Many of them had been captured at Little Washington at an earlier period of the war. They had just received six months' pay and consequently had plenty of money. They formed the solid men or landed proprietors, so to speak, of the place, and doubtless looked down with a feeling of superiority on the new comers. They had seen the place grow from a small hamlet to a large densely populated city; I cannot truthfully say a flourishing or prosperous one. The camp was laid out with two main streets, leading from as many gates. On these main streets many of the men who had the trading instinct largely developed had established shops, where such of the prisoners as were fortunate enough to have money, could exchange the same for tobacco and other luxuries. Some of these fellows waxed fat both in purse and in person. After awhile when we were at Florence, the rebs began to get on to these men, and extend a gentle pressure, so that in a majority of cases they went out of the Confederacy as poor, or poorer than
they went in. The prisoners were divided into detachments of ninety, which were sub-divided again into three of thirty each for convenience of drawing rations. Once inside they were left to their own resources so far as providing shelter was concerned. Such of them as had shelter tents or rubber blankets used them for protection against sun or rain, while those not so fortunate got along as best they could without shelter. The place was very much crowded when our party arrived, and we were obliged to take up our quarters in a low, swampy section near the brook. It was not long, however, before an addition was opened at the northern end. We then secured a much better location near the dead line. After getting settled in the new place, it occurred to us that we might, under cover of digging a well for water, have a tunnel by which we might escape. Wells had been dug in various parts of the prison, and formed quite an item in the water supply of the place, so that our starting one would not excite suspicion. I have forgotten how we procured the tools for digging, but somehow or other we had them. The well was started openly in daylight, and in a day or two
we had it down through the clay some fifteen or twenty feet to a layer of sand, and some four or five feet deeper. At night we entered the well, and started the tunnel just under the clay. Some men, belonging to the Sixth Maine, were engaged with us in the undertaking. We had a box with two barrel staves tacked on the bottom, and a rope at each end. The man in the hole would draw the box in and fill it, when another man stationed in the well would draw it out and empty it. It was rather dangerous work for the man in the tunnel. I tried it one night, but could not get enough oxygen to keep my lungs in working order, and was lucky in being able to get out again to the well in the morning. The sand taken out of the tunnel was drawn up, and dumped near by. Somehow it got to be known that there was a tunnel going on, although only those in the secret knew where it was located. Every night lots of poor devils might be seen standing around with their haversacks on, waiting for something to turn up they knew not what, nor where to look for it, but somehow they hoped there was going to be a chance to get outside of the hated enclosure. We had our
tunnel dug some thirty or forty feet, and were about to bring it up toward the surface, which would bring it well outside the stockade, when one fine morning the rebel quartermaster, who by the way was said to be a "galvanized Yank," though it hardly seems probable to me that they would put one of this class of men into so responsible a position; at any rate he was quite a smart kind of a fellow; he came in, and, counting the sentry posts so as to get the right location, came direct to our well and inquired who was digging it. There did not seem to be any one around there that knew anything about it. He then looked down, but could discover nothing, as we had the opening plastered up. At last he got a ladder and went down, and, taking a stick, commenced jabbing around and soon found the tunnel. He very kindly offered us picks and shovels if we wanted to start another. The well was filled up, and that ended our attempts at escaping by the underground route.

The term "galvanized Yanks" was given to those who took the oath of allegiance to the Southern Confederacy, and enlisted in the rebel armies. We must not judge these men too harshly for taking this step.
Probably nearly all did so with the intention of deserting at the first opportunity, and thinking they would have a better chance to get away than if they stayed in prison. In all probability they were sent to garrisons where their opportunities to desert would be few and far between.

It would be difficult for a person who had not been there to understand how indifferent one can become to scenes of suffering and death. In passing from our tent to the brook for water, you would pass perhaps a dozen men who were in the various stages of disease, some of them perhaps in the last gasp. Emaciated men whose flesh had wasted away, leaving nothing but skin and bone, the top part of their hands looking full and natural, in striking contrast to the remainder of their frames. Men in rags and without shelter of any kind. One or two men were roaming around camp without a particle of clothing upon their bodies. One man in particular had a great penchant for bathing. He never missed a forenoon without taking his regular bath. Now there was nothing very remarkable in his feeling inclined to bathe. The queer thing about it was the place he
chose for cleaning himself. Instead of going above the sinks, he chose to go below. The condition of a small stream after receiving the sewage of twenty-five hundred men can better be imagined than described, especially at certain hours in the morning.

For amusements we had about every day an amateur prize fight near the lower end of the sinks, in which one or both of the contestants were pretty sure to have on one of the red caps of the Brooklyn Fourteenth.

**Across the Pedee.**

Toward the last of August 1864, there began to be evidences of a change at Andersonville. New prisoners brought in told about Sherman's army rapidly approaching. The long hoped for exchange had never come, and the only hope of the prisoners was in being rescued by Sherman. Consequently, when the time came for abandoning the place, the change was not looked upon with a great deal of favor by the prisoners. However, our feelings were not consulted to any great extent in the matter, and about the first of September the place was abandoned, or at least the
larger part of the prisoners were sent away. Among the rest, some four or five hundred of us were shipped to Florence, S. C. The transportation was effected by means of box freight cars, which were used as parlor, sleeping and dining cars combined. The guard's station was on top of the car. At every stop we made after dark, and, on starting up again, before the train acquired full headway, numbers of the men would drop out of the doors, and lie motionless at full length until the train had got away, when they would strike out on their own hook to enjoy a few days freedom, and then, in a majority of cases, would be recaptured. In due course of time we arrived at Florence, which is a small town, a railroad centre on a small scale, situated in the northeastern part of South Carolina, some thirty or forty miles from the North Carolina line. We found on arriving that the stockade destined for our accommodation had not been completed, and consequently we were encamped in an open field with nothing but an ordinary camp guard to hold us. The guard consisted of boys and men too young or too old for active service in the field; also some home guards from Charleston, Wil-
mington and other places. The guard duty was performed in a manner similar to what I have seen at the old militia musters in Massachusetts before the war. Two sentinels would pace their beat facing each other until just in time to avoid a collision, when they would halt, about face, and march back. Old soldiers would have known better. The proper way would have been for all the sentries on the line to march one way, and then turn at the same time and march back. In that way no portion of the line is left unguarded.

One night, soon after our arrival, a party of half a dozen or so happened to meet near the guard line, and fell to discussing the chances of making a break. There were, as might have been expected, a great variety of views expressed. At last we settled on a plan that was probably as impracticable as any that had been broached. It was agreed upon that we should meet at the same place the following evening, and make a rush, overpowering one or more of the guards, and escaping in the confusion that would ensue. On the following evening for some reason, only one beside myself was at the appointed place,
probably owing to a misapprehension of the time or locality. My companion was a young fellow named Peter Mercury, belonging to one of the regular regiments, the Thirteenth I think. He was only about nineteen years old, but quite a stalwart fellow. He had been brought up in the woods in Northern New York, and was quite skillful in all kinds of woodcraft, so we concluded we would try and run the guard then and there. It was now about seven o'clock, and, as the moon, nearly full, would rise about eight, there was no time to lose. So Mercury took one beat and I the next; watching my opportunity, when the guards had turned their backs, I ran across the line, and threw myself in some tall grass a short distance from the line. Looking back I saw Mercury's head bobbing up and down as he was crawling along, having crossed his beat safely. I crept along and fell in behind him. Although we had got so far, we were not out of danger by any means. We had not gone far before three or four men, off duty, accompanied by a dog, came along the path close to us. Our hearts sank, as we expected nothing but what the dog would expose us, but to our great
delight they all passed by, dog and all, without discovering us. Our way led directly past a battery camp. We passed so near that we could hear the voices of the men in their tents. We soon came to a ploughed field where we ventured to get upon our hands and knees and creep. We had been crawling before. After crossing the field we came to some woods, where we once more ventured to stand upon our feet. The question now arose, what are we to do with ourselves now that we had gained our freedom. We were absolutely destitute of everything in the shape of provisions or clothing except what we had on our backs, and very scant at that. We were equally destitute of any information with regard to the locality, beyond a general knowledge that we were somewhere in the State of South Carolina. However, I had an idea that by taking a north-easterly direction we should eventually strike somewhere near New Berne, N. C., which was the nearest point we knew of in possession of the Union troops. Accordingly we determined on taking that course. By this time the moon had risen, and we plunged into the pine forest, soon leaving the lights of
the camp far behind us. We walked all night. For the most of the way it was like walking on a parlor carpet, the pine needles had fallen and killed the undergrowth, so that we had very little to obstruct our way most of the time. The next day we lay hid in a ravine, going out only to a cornfield near by, where we procured some corn on the ear with which we stayed our hunger, eating it raw. At night we started on again, and soon came to a river which we tried to ford, but it was too deep. Went down stream a little way, and came to a bridge over which we passed safely. The next night they had a guard posted on the bridge, as we heard subsequently. We kept on during the night without any serious mishaps. Once while passing a mill pond we were startled by a succession of splashes in the water that sounded like a row of boys diving off a log one after another. We had this experience two or three times, and as we could see nothing were at a loss to account for it. Afterwards we were told it was done by young alligators. If we had known what it was at the time, it is doubtful which would have been the worse scared, ourselves or the alligators.
After awhile we got bolder, and traveled daytimes, and rested at night. One morning we encountered an old gentleman with a gun. However he was after birds, and did not molest us, nor we him. This was the first human being we had met since leaving Florence. That afternoon we reached the big Pedee River. This is a large stream, perhaps larger than the Connecticut at Hartford. We were lucky enough to find a boat sunk near the shore, with a pair of oars hid near by. During the afternoon one of us bailed out the boat with an old tin kettle we found, while the other kept watch on the bank. After dark we started for the other shore. The current was quite strong and carried us down stream quite a piece. We landed on a sand bar, and struck out for high land, but soon found ourselves in a dense briar thicket that reached a foot or two over our heads. Thinking we could soon push through we kept on, but at last after having tried two or three hours were obliged to give it up, and managed to get back to the sand bar very much demoralized and minus a good part of our clothing. We slept on the bar the rest of the night. In the morning
found we could escape the briars entirely by going down stream a little ways. Soon we reached solid ground and pushed on again. So far we had found very good traveling. The woods were open, as a rule, and the swamps not so bad but what we could go through or round them without going much out of the way. Our food consisted mainly of raw corn on the ear; now and then a few wild grapes, and occasionally we would find some small watermelons in the cornfields. At night we would make up our bed of the pine needles without fear of being disturbed during the night. We kept on in this manner for several days without meeting any serious mishaps. One day we reached a stream, I think it is called Lumber River. The problem was, how to cross it. There was no bridge or boat, and it was too deep to ford. We solved it by swimming, putting our clothes on a plank, and pushing it ahead of us. Arriving on the other side we dressed and started on, but soon found our troubles but just begun, as a deep and very dangerous swamp lay between us and the high ground. However, by climbing on trees, and wading in the treacherous
mire, we at last succeeded in getting on solid ground again. At length this kind of life began to tell on us, and we determined to stop at the first black man's house we came to and get rest and some cooked food, which we began to feel the need of very much. So one afternoon we reached a house that looked as if it might afford the needed accommodations. Leaving Mercury in the woods, as he was the worst off, I went up towards the house. There was a grape arbor in front. Going up one side I saw an old man and a woman, white people, picking grapes. I had got quite close to them, and almost in front of them, but they did not see me, so I stole back and reported to Mercury. We were under the impression at that time that all the white people were enemies. After a brief consultation we determined to advance in force and demand food and shelter. When we got there the man and woman had disappeared. We then went to the front door and knocked two or three times, but failed to rouse any one. We then went to the rear door and finding it unlocked, went in. The place was unoccupied and was used as a barn and was half
full of cornstalks. We bunked down on the cornstalks and stayed that night and the following day, helping ourselves to some apples we found on a small tree. Towards night we heard voices of some persons approaching the barn. Looking out through some crevices of the logs, we saw two men approaching. One of them was the old man I had seen the day before, and the other a younger man. One of them said: "I wouldn't have taken twenty-five dollars for those apples." (Considering that Confederacy currency was about twenty-five for one at that time, the price was not exorbitant.) The other man said: "Perhaps they are in the barn now, I see their tracks around, let us go in and see." So they came, and we jumped down and confronted them. They wanted to know who we were. We told them Yankees, upon which they came up and shook hands, and we found we had fallen into the hands of friends. We sat down and talked awhile, and it was settled that we should go to the old man's house and get supper, and then spend the night with the other, and accordingly after a long and friendly conversation, which consisted mainly of questions on their
part and answers on ours, we accompanied the old man, whose name was Abram Moore, to his house only a short distance away. He was living with his daughter, a widow with several children. The supper consisted of bacon boiled with some kind of greens and corn-bread. It would not be considered a very elaborate banquet, perhaps, but certain it is that it tasted better, it seemed to me, than any meal I ever sat down to, which is not to be wondered at when it is considered that we had been for weeks without any cooked food. We got up from the table as hungry as we sat down, not wishing to deprive the family of their meal. After dark the other man came around for us and we went home with him, going a mile or two to get there. Arrived at the place about nine o'clock perhaps, and sat up half the night answering questions from our host and his wife, for these good people were very inquisitive and wanted to know about everything at the North. About midnight a dog outside suddenly commenced barking, and in a moment four or five armed men sprang into the cabin through the rear door. It flashed through my mind in an instant that
we had been trapped, and I jumped for the front door. However, they called out to me to stop as they were friends. It seems that our host had sent word to some rebel deserters who were lying out, as they called it, in the vicinity, and they had called to make us a visit.

The swamps of North and South Carolina at this time were full of these men, who were lying out to avoid the conscription, and some of them had left their commands after being defeated. The word deserter, as we understand it, is rather too hard to use in connection with them, as they were almost to a man earnest Union men. The party that called on us were very cordial and friendly. One of their number, and the only one unarmed, was a Confederate soldier home on a furlough. However, he was as friendly as the rest. We fraternized with our new found friends, and had to go through a second course of questions. We were, so to speak, appropriated by one of them named James, or Jeems as he insisted on being called. He told us that himself and four others were lying out in a swamp some twenty miles away, and it was agreed upon that we
should accompany him there the next day, and stay awhile and recuperate. After awhile our friends left and we bunked down on the floor and got a few hours sleep. Next morning after breakfast Jeems came around and we started, our guide leading the way at a tremendous pace, and we keeping up as well as we could. We traveled all day, now and then going out of our way to avoid a settlement or dangerous spots. Towards night we came to the vicinity of the swamp, but as it would not be safe to go in at night, we went into a barn where we slept that night. In the morning we followed Jeems beside a brook a long way, some of the time wading and some of the time on the bank.

After awhile we left the brook and went some distance further, when Jeems told us to wait where we were until he went ahead and notified his companions. We heard him give a peculiar whistle, and after awhile he came back, and we all went in together. We found three men here who got up and gave us a cordial welcome. They had just been cooking breakfast, and invited us to join them. We did not require a second invitation you may be sure.
The meal consisted of fresh beef, fried with plenty of corn-bread. The way we pitched into that repast was a caution. We ate until long after our host had got through, and then stopped only from shame and fear they would think we were hogs. It took us over a week before we got filled up. I tell you, comrades, there is no beef like that corned-beef; at least I never came across any that I relished so well. Perhaps hunger had something to do with this.

After breakfast we had a chance to inspect our new quarters. Our hosts had resumed their occupations; one was cleaning his firearms; another knitting a pair of stockings, for although they had lady friends that doubtless would have been happy to have relieved them of this duty, yet I presume they were glad to have anything to do to occupy their time, which must have hung heavily on their hands. They had built a log cabin with bunks to accommodate five or six. The situation was well calculated for defence if their enemy could have found them, of which there was little danger.

We must have presented a striking appearance when we landed there. Both legs of my pants from
the knee down were gone, and the rest of my clothing was in rags, the result of our encounter with the briar thicket on the banks of the Pedee, and one shoe had been left in some of the swamps we had encountered. Mercury was probably about as bad off. Our new friends were very kind and thoughtful. They brought us each a suit of clothes and stockings, and made us each a pair of shoes.

It will, perhaps, be a mystery to some how they could make shoes in the midst of a Southern swamp. I will tell you. One night they started off to make a visit to a tanner, whose place was some eight or ten miles off. When they arrived there the proprietor happened to be away, so they helped themselves to four or five sides of leather, taking it out of the vats half tanned. In the morning the leather was in camp. One of the men then went out and cut some sticks of hard wood, and, taking off the bark, threw them into the hot ashes where they seasoned awhile, then with a hatchet and drawknife he fitted them to each of our feet. He made the shoes on these lasts. I wore mine until I got to Annapolis, and they were solid then and as hard as sheet iron. But as they
fitted the feet, I never experienced any trouble wearing them.

With regard to the food question, we always had enough. The cattle there ran wild in the swamps, the owners knowing them by the brands or ear-marks. When we ran short of meat, one of the men, who was a fine shot, would go out and soon run across a cow or steer, which he would shoot, and then the rest of the men would cut it up and bring it into camp. They would then cut it up into strips, trying out the fat. We would hang the pieces out in the sun where we would leave them, taking the precaution to keep a little fire of chips going under them, the smoke of which would keep the flies off, and possibly help to preserve the meat. Prepared in this way it would keep sweet for weeks, or until it was used up. They would trade some of it and the hides with the darkies for meal and salt. We stayed in the swamp some five or six weeks, but the season was getting late, and we wished to get through before cold weather set in, so we made arrangements to start. One of the men had also concluded to go with us to try his luck at the North.
The night before we were to leave he went off to call on his girl. The next day he didn't show up. We waited twenty-four hours for him, but for some reason he did not come. Either he had been picked up by the Confederate authorities, or else the attractions of his sweetheart proved too much for him, and we had to start without him. This was a great misfortune, as he was familiar with the country, and would doubtless have seen us safely through.

We left the swamp by another path from that by which we had entered it. Our friends accompanied us to the edge of the swamp, and we parted from them with their best wishes, and a good supply of fresh pork, as a rebel pig had been unfortunate enough to wander within reach and had been promptly dispatched. This swamp, or the portion of it we had been staying in, is situated in Robeson County, some six or eight miles from Lumberton. A few miles walk brought us to the Cape Fear River. We struck it at a place called Lyons Landing, found a disabled Confederate soldier, who ferried us across and asked no questions. We went on for a couple of days or so without meeting any
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adventures. One morning we started in a cold storm, lost our bearings and found ourselves at noon in the vicinity of the place we started from in the morning. We took a fresh start and after awhile came to a small settlement; went into a house and got a woman to build a fire, and partially dried our clothes; after awhile we started on again.

Late in the afternoon we came to a mill down in a hollow from the road. The miller, an old man, was standing in the doorway and spied us as soon as we saw him. He said: "Hello, boys, come down and get a dram." We went down, and, going around the building into a shed, saw there were three or four young men whom we had not seen before. It was too late to back out, so we put a bold face on and went up to them. The old miller now commenced putting the questions to us, which we answered as truthfully as we possibly could under the circumstances. He wanted to know who we were, and where we belonged. We told him we were Confederate soldiers who had been home on a furlough, and we were now returning to our regiment. He wanted to know where we lived. We
told him in Robeson County. He then questioned us as to localities and names. We had stopped in the swamps long enough to become somewhat familiar with the names of prominent citizens and localities in the vicinity, and accordingly gave him the names. Still the old fellow did not seem quite satisfied. Just at this time Mercury (very little passed within the range of his vision that escaped his notice) saw the old fellow hand a key or something else to one of the young men, who on receiving it immediately went out. Upon this he gave me the wink, and I said, "Guess we had better be going, as it was getting late," and started out, the old fellow making no effort to detain us, somewhat to our surprise.

We went up the bank, and as long as we were in sight kept a moderate gait; but as soon as we got out of sight, we let out at our very best speed. About a mile from the mill we came to a bridge, which we crossed, and, looking back, saw the old miller coming on horseback at full speed, with a gun in his hands. On the side of the road we were on was a small thicket, on the other side quite an ex-
tensive swamp and forest. We had no time to cross the road, but just stepped into the thicket out of sight as he went by, his horse on the jump. He stopped a colored man who was coming down the road and questioned him, but learning nothing, kept on, and as soon as he was out of sight we crossed the road and plunged into the woods, where we were comparatively safe. We lay still until dark, when we started again and tried to find the road, but were unable to do so. After wandering around we spied a light at a distance and succeeded in getting up to it. We found a colored man splitting shingles by the light of a pitch-pine fire, and we went up and made ourselves known to him, but he was a surly fellow and would not say anything, not even to tell us how we could reach the road. He did, however, make out to say his master was not far away; so we took the hint and left, managed to find the road, and went on some further. The rain, which had held up for awhile, now commenced falling again harder than ever. After awhile we came to a wayside church or schoolhouse, which we broke into and stayed there the rest of the night. I can't say slept, as it was cold and our clothes were wet through.
Early next morning we pushed on again, and, after going a few miles, came to the conclusion that we were on the wrong road, so we went back a piece and took another road, followed this road for awhile when we came to a planter's residence, which stood back a little way from the road. We saw half a dozen men with horses in the yard. They saw us as soon as we saw them and started for us. We broke for the woods, but as there was no fence and the woods were open, they soon came up with us and the jig was up. They had a pack of hunting dogs, which, however, they took pains to inform us were harmless. We did not observe our old friend, the miller, among the captors, although I have no doubt that it was through his kind offices that we were taken. They were well-to-do citizens, who managed to keep out of the army by such service as this. We were taken to the house of one of the men, a Mr. Robinson, where we got a good dinner and supper and a good bed to lie on, something we had not seen before in a long time. Next morning after breakfast we started in the following order: first, two men in a buggy in advance, next came Mercury in a buggy
with a man, next myself and man, and two in another buggy, and bringing up the rear were two men in a team. All of the escort were well armed. We were taken to some place, the name of which has escaped me, and reported to some one who ordered us taken to Wilmington. The procession started again for Magnolia, a small station on the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. Here we took the train and in due time arrived at Wilmington.

Arriving there our escort handed us over to the provost marshal whose headquarters were in a warehouse near the river. After a brief stay here, we were sent to the jail. They divided their jails on the color line it seems, and we were sent to the prison, formerly used for the detention of colored people, but now used as a military prison. The other jail, I presume, was used for civil offenders. We found here some fifty prisoners, mostly Confederates, from the garrisons around Wilmington, who were in for various offences, such as staying over furloughs and other misdemeanors. There were also a few citizens who had been arrested on suspicion that they were going to skip the Confederacy,
and among the rest four Yanks. These four had experienced worse luck, if possible, than we had. They had escaped from Florence, about the time we did, and made their way to the coast. They saw a vessel off shore, and, getting a boat, succeeded in getting aboard of her, when they found to their great dismay, that they had got aboard of a blockade runner. The captain carried them to Wilmington, and delivered them to the authorities. They were sent under guard overland to Florence. On the way they succeeded in getting on the soft side of the guard by talking as though they were tired of the service, and intended to enlist in the Confederate service as soon as they got back to Florence. This step was taken by a great many prisoners, who did so thinking they would have a better chance to escape. These fellows were known as "galvanized Yanks." One night, the guard having perfect confidence in the good faith of the new converts, went to sleep. As soon as everything was quiet the boys took their guns and ammunition, and started off on another tack. However, they were recaptured by citizens at about the same locality where we had
been, and through the instrumentality of the same old miller. While on board the blockade runner they found some of John Morgan's men who were returning home after being captured and escaping in Ohio. These fellows were friendly and gave them blankets, etc.

The jailor was named Sam. I suppose he had another name, but if he had it was never used. He was quite an easy, good-natured fellow, but with an eye to the main chance if there was any money to be made. He would button-hole every fresh prisoner who came in, and endeavor to exchange Confederate currency for greenbacks at the rate of twenty for one. He was very solicitous about the health of the men under his charge; at least he did not mean to destroy our health by over-feeding. However, we fared as well as our fellow sufferers of the Confederate persuasion. The jail was a brick structure, on a street corner. The yard was about twenty-five or thirty feet square, and surrounded by a high, brick wall, with broken glass on the top.

While in the swamp I had sold an old brass watch, which I had been carrying, for sixty dollars Confed-
erate currency. I was quite a capitalist. I bought one day a pint of peanuts, for which I paid one dollar. This will give you an idea of the purchasing power of Confederate money at this time.

We stayed here two or three weeks, and began to think we were booked for the winter. The other prisoners were coming and going all the time, so we soon began to feel like old settlers. We had just made arrangements with Sam to get one of our men into the cook-house, when orders came to send the six of us back to Florence.

Accordingly we started for that place under guard on a passenger train, arrived in due time, and were turned over by the guard to the prison authorities. The lieutenant who took charge of us, in answer to an inquiry of mine, replied very cheerfully that we were to be shot the next day. However, we did not take much stock in the yarn. They handcuffed us together by twos and shoved us into the guard-house, a log building adjoining the stockade. Here we were very much surprised at each receiving a big loaf of white bread, the first time anything of that kind had happened while we were in the Confederacy.
We began to think there might be something in the shooting story after all. However, next morning they took off our handcuffs, and put us into the enclosure with the rest of the prisoners. I soon found my regimental comrades, who were very much surprised at seeing me, as they had given us up for dead, or had got through to our lines long before.

The stockade at Florence was similar to that at Andersonville, only smaller. It was an enclosure surrounded by pine logs. The logs were perhaps fifteen or twenty feet long, and sunk in the ground side by side sufficiently to hold them secure. They were also braced on the outside. The sentry posts or boxes were built up on the outside at regular intervals and accessible only from the outside. All around the inside, and at ten feet distance, ran the dead line; in many places an imaginary line only, as the light railing had been carried off and burned.

I took up my quarters with my regimental comrades at first, but, as the place was crowded, soon found a place with a party of Indiana soldiers who had spare room in another quarter of the camp. They had been prisoners a long time, and had
accumulated plenty of blankets and other articles necessary for camp life, and had quite comfortable quarters. During the winter most of them were taken sick and several died, and as we drew rations for them as long as they lived, and they ate little or nothing while sick, we had, with my extra rations as a member of the police force, enough to eat and to spare. The rations consisted of meal and pea-beans, perhaps every other day cornbread instead of meal, and occasionally a ration of molasses. The rations were doubtless sufficient in quantity to sustain life, but being issued as a rule uncooked, and the prisoners generally having no facilities for cooking, they might as well have had none at all, as far as deriving any nourishment from them was concerned. During the winter we had an exchange of sick prisoners. I don't know as I ever before really wanted or tried so hard to be sick, but it was no go, I could not impress upon the rebel surgeon the idea that I needed a change of climate. I went out near the gate and watched the line as they filed out. I soon spied Mercury among them waving his hand at me in a most triumphant manner. Somehow or other
he had smuggled himself into the line, though I doubt if there was a sounder man in the whole camp.

There was a large number of men who, as the saying goes, had lost their grip, either through sickness or other causes. There were several poorhouses, so called, constructed, which were filled with these fellows. These poorhouses were constructed by digging a hole in the ground, like the cellar to a house, and covered by logs coming to a peak like a roof. This was covered by earth, and afforded some sort of protection from the cold and rain. These places were filled with men who had no other place to go to, and who were destitute of blankets and clothing. During the first warm days of February these places were overhauled, men were taken out alive, but whose clothes were covered with white mould from head to foot.

I had succeeded in getting an appointment on the police force. This was gotten up by the prisoners for the sake of enforcing order among themselves, as among so large a body of men there will always be found some turbulent ones. Our uniform consisted
of shirt and pants and a coat if the roundsman was lucky enough to have one. We were armed with a short club suspended from the wrist, and a small whistle to summon assistance if things got too warm. The pay consisted of an extra ration. We had our regular beats, and so many hours on and off, and I think we were as expeditious in hunting for shelter on a rainy night as any of Chief Baker's men. I remember one night while patrolling my beat I saw a small fire at a distance from where I was, and accordingly went over to see what it was. There was a poor fellow half clothed, and without shelter, hovering over a small fire of half a dozen chips that he had collected, endeavoring to get a little warmth from a fire that was hardly more than the blaze from a tallow candle. I spoke to him, and he looked at me with a vacant stare. He was wandering in his mind, and all I could make out was the word "mother." I could not help thinking that the chances of his mother ever seeing him again were very slim. I went around that way again in about half an hour, thinking I would try and get him in under shelter, but the fire was out and he had disappeared.
About the 20th of February we were started from Florence for Wilmington, for the purpose of exchange. Arriving in the city from the south we were conducted through the streets to the northern end. On the way through, the ladies of Wilmington came out with bread, cookies, and other eatables, which were very acceptable. We were marched in squads or car loads, each car load being kept separate. At this time our forces under Schofield were about to take the city, and we could hear the musketry firing, at times quite distinctly. The negotiations for exchange were apparently broken off, and they commenced running the prisoners on the cars again, to take them up in the country. I made up my mind that I had had enough of it, and determined I would run the guard again if I could find some one I knew to go with me. I was in the last detachment, or the first to go back. I worked my way through each detachment, till I came to the last, but could find no one whom I knew. It was now about night time, and they were apparently making arrangements to stay all night, as they were allowed to send out parties under guard to get wood and
water. I took position near the guard line, and presently a party came along going out after wood and water. They had two or three guards with them. I immediately fell in behind them. The camp guard thought I belonged with the party, and the guard with the party did not see me at all. I gradually fell behind, and, after getting out of sight of the camp guard, turned away in a different direction and soon was clear of the whole of them. This was quite easy of accomplishment, as it was about dark. After wandering around for awhile, I struck a path and was following it, when I heard voices of men in the rear. I stepped out of the path into the brush, and they came along and passed me. As they went by I learned from their talk that they were escaped prisoners, so I came out, made myself known, and was invited to join them, which I was happy to do. They had tried in every direction, but were unable to get out of the camp. We concluded to stay where we were, as it was a dry place, bunk down and wait until daylight. We stayed there that night and the following day and night.

The second morning we heard the sound of cheer-
ing from the direction of the city. One of the men went out and found a colored man who told him that the streets of Wilmington were full of Yankee soldiers. We started immediately, and, taking the railroad track, were soon in Wilmington, and looking at a line of bluecoats with guns on their shoulders and the old flag with them. This was the 22d of February, 1865, Washington's birthday. I also celebrated my own birthday at the same time.

The citizens were not all mourners at this time. There was one citizen who felt so good that he was giving away silver coins to any one who would come and get them. I succeeded in getting one silver quarter dollar in the rush.

We reported to the provost marshal who furnished us rations and quarters. There were some fifty or seventy-five escaped prisoners here. We stayed here four or five days, and were shipped to Annapolis in a leaky old schooner, leaving Wilmington before the rest of the prisoners got in; arrived at Annapolis safely, after a long and disagreeable voyage. The balance of the prisoners came in on steamers the next day. The second day I was taken sick with
typhoid fever and went to the hospital. Phillips was brought in about the same time with the same disease.

Before closing, I would like to give you a slight sketch of George C. Phillips, and the somewhat remarkable manner in which our lives coincided. Although a native of Fitchburg, Mass., he happened to be at Northampton and enlisted in the same company at the same time with myself. We were together nearly all through the war, and part of the time bunk-mates. As I have shown, we went over the rebel breastworks at the same time, arrived together at Andersonville, got back into our lines about the same time, were both (after about nine months of captivity without a sick day) taken sick at the same time with the same disease, recovered at the same time, went to Boston together, and were discharged at the same time. After that he went with me and stayed a couple of weeks at my home in Northampton. After that our lives diverged. He went to Boston and was a traveling salesman; from there joined Post No. 113, of which he was a member as long as he lived. He had business in
Providence occasionally and called to see me once in a while, stopping at my house one night. Afterwards he went to New York where he carried on business. One day, some seven or eight years ago, I had a call on the telephone at my place of business. A man called up and wanted to know if it was Mr. Williams? I said yes. He then told me that a man named George Phillips had just died at his house, who had been acquainted with me. I went over at once, and saw that it was my old friend and comrade. It seemed that he was here on business, and had been stopping at the Narragansett Hotel. He was taken slightly ill, and Mr. Berry, who had called me up, very kindly invited him to his home, as the hotel would be a poor place for a sick man. He grew worse very fast and died. His wife was with him at the time. He was buried at Mt. Vernon, just out from New York, where he resided.