The Bermuda Expedition to Roanoke.

Historians have given but little attention comparatively, to one of the most brilliant, as well as one of the most difficult incidents of the Civil War, perhaps because of the limited number of men engaged on both sides and that it did not end the great rebellion, but it certainly was one of the issues to a vicious end, and the troops engaged endured hardships and privations, at least equal to any campaign.

Green and took fresh from their homes all the north as they all were, totally unused to campaigning, they displayed a spirit of courage and endurance unexcelled by any Union army, during the entire war, under like circumstances.
As it was my first in battle, the scenes and incidents are perhaps more vividly impressed when my memory than any other campaign in which I took part, and therefore I may be excused if I dwell a little long on the event that made me a full-fledged soldier, and if I can impart the same interest to you that it was to me, I shall be more than satisfied.

In the fall and winter of '61 and '62, the Confederates held the entire coast of North Carolina, as well as Norfolk and Portsmouth, formerly the site of the United States navy yard, and its fortifications and situation rendered it almost invulnerable, assailed by either land or sea, with such force as were then available, and as it was largely supplying the Confederates with implements of war for both land and sea, it was very desirable that its capture or destruction should be speedily accomplished.
The coast of North Carolina was also an important factor, with its numerous bays of navigable water reaching far into the interior, protected by a long low reef or sand bar, with many inlets, making it a paradise for blockade runners, and very difficult for our navy, then at a low ebb, to guard.

For this reason it was obviously necessary that Albemarle and Pamlico sounds, with their various tributaries and inlets, should be under the control of the federal government, and could this be accomplished, a flanking column could be thrown in the rear of Norfolk that would cut it off from the Confederacy, and either force its surrender or destruction.

For this purpose, what is known as the Roanoke Island expedition was planned early in the fall of 61, but owing to the difficulty of marching...
proper vessels and transports suitable for this work, the expedition did not sail till midwinter.

When completed, the expedition consisted of twenty light draught vessels, having an armament of about 50 guns, only a dozen of them of less weight, 50 12-pounders, under the command of Louis M. Goldsborough, who afterwards gained considerable distinction. The military division was composed of an army of about 15,000 troops, to which was attached seven gunboats, under the command of Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside, one of the real fighters of the war, though, as proved later, not a brilliant commander of large armies. But he was brave, loyal and true to his country, enthusiastic in the cause, beloved by his men, and undoubtedly the last qualified of any one at that time to have charge of the expedition.

My Regt, the 51st Ill. Inf., which had been doing guard
St. Paul, Minn.,

Duty in Md., was attached to this army in the brigade commanded by Jesse L. Reno, who afterward commanded the 9th Corps, and was killed at South Mountain.

Never will I forget the day we broke camp at Annapolis, Md., and embarked on transports which for many long days was to be our home. What a happy, joyous set we were, as we marched up the gangplank; going, we knew not where, but to meet the enemy, breaking the monotony of camp life for the thrilling scenes of strife and battle, and every man determined to do or die, but to die last. The orchestra comes back to me to day, almost as the scene appears then. What fabulous prophecies we were during the two days we were sailing down the Chesapeake. Young, happy and enthusiastic, nothing could stand before us, nothing should prevent us from winding up this rebellion so quick, that the rest of
the unfortunate army, who were held by McClellan around Washington, would have nothing to tell of but the defeats of Bull Run and Balls Bluff. One man was going to reach all his dead; another with some of the milk of human kindness in his veins, was planning to bury his dead in one long trench, and even went so far as to engage if a space could be had for that purpose. We learned men of war in afterdays, but at that time, our inexperience led us to believe that the enemy would present himself before us, in dress parade form, and after letting us kill all of him we chased off, either retinue or surrender. All of that foolishness was cruelly knocked out of us, before we even got sight of a rebel. When we sailed into Hampton Roads on the evening of the second day, what a sight met the astonished eyes of a landsman! It seemed that the bay was closely packed with vessels, large and small, with old...
glory " floating from every mast. What a wonderful, terrible armada! Great frigates bristling with heavy guns, marines drilling on deck, bands playing! Transports covered with blue evading men from deck to topmast; and the walls of Fort Monroe standing out boldly from shore, a menace to all approaching foes. Had the Merrimack made her attack at that time, she could have literally covered the bottom of Hampton Roads with federal and vessels.

It was then we first learned the size of the expedition, and gained the first faint conception of the magnitude of the task we were undertaking. But certainly the whole Confederate army could not successfully resist this immense power!

We left Hampton Roads on the morning of Jan. 11th, and in two days were off Cape Hatteras, in one of the worst storms that ever befell that wind and wave-washed shore. If any of my hearers were
even off Naturas in a storm you can realize somewhat of our feelings at this time. Suffice it to say that the happy devil may care little for boys, who a few days before could have whipped the world, were now earnestly devoted to feeding the fishes, and the industry displayed, showed their intention of doing a perfect job. The man who was going to death his dead, turned deadly pale at the mere mention of harmless dead hog, and the one who would bring his dead in our long trench, was pitifully calling on someone to bring him.

We had a sorry time of several days in getting through Naturas into our families sound, and even then were not much better off. The ground was nearly as rough as the ocean, and it became almost impossible to get water and acuate the transports. Many of the boys in their mislaid generosity, who had thoroughly emblazoned themselves for the benefit of their fish, were now hungry as sharks, and...
wanted to chew hard tack all the time, corn
from d themselves limited to three tack a day,
and some days not any, and as for water, it
was literally "water water everywhere but not a drop
to drink." Think caused us the most suffering.
It rained every day and the boys would be found
on deck all times, holding their tin cups under
any place that shed a few drops, and it was
an elixir without price. It was so rough that it was
impossible to get to us except by small boat, and
then only during a lull of the storm, which did
not occur very often. We finally got up from
the hold a barrel of vinegar, and when that
became unbearable, we would take a tablespoon
of it, and try to imagine steel—it was all
clean water, right from the spring in his father's back pasture.
Several times the ship would drag her anchor
and then would go bump on some sand bar, and
then such a cracking and groaning of timbers!
St. Paul, Minn., October 10

We would think the old ship was going to break up some. But a tug or a gundalow would soon pull us off and our fears subsided; but not our hunger.

From our ship of our fleet were wrecked in trying to get through the inlet and all one day and night, the crew of the “city of New York” that went aground in the inlet, only a few miles from where we were, were tossed to the rigging to prevent being washed away. Calling for help which could not be given to them. Cold, wet, hungry in midwinter, their sufferings must have been terrible.

After a long time a few of them were relieved by surf boats, and the ship breaking up, the rest were relieved by death.

About the 12th of Feb the storm abated and on the 14th we started up the sound towards Reindeer Island with a large part of our fleet. It was only 30 miles distant but we moved very slowly on account of a dense fog, and it was nearly evening before we
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Saw the shores of North Carolina. The next day was spent in getting our fleet through the marshes, the channel being so narrow that two vessels could not pass abreast, and on the 7th, about noon, we arrived at a point called Ashby's Harbor.

The fleet fired a few guns to clear the ground of a few jollys, moved on up, Crevalon Sound, and soon the heavy guns began to talk to Fort. Bartow.

This was the first time I had listened to heavy cannonading, and many of us climbed into the rigging from whence we could see the shell bursting over the fort's fort, and also see the effects of the enemy's fire on the fleet. We could see the calm, calm payment for all we had endured. We cheered every shot from our guns, and speculated on the number of deaths each shell had caused, and had our guesses been fairly accurate, at least one half of the
Southern Confederacy would have dealt them and them.

In the course of the afternoon the troops began to land at Ashley’s Harbor. A rebel battery raised some objections by throwing a few shell at us, but they were quickly cleared away by one of our gun-boats.

The landing was a disagreeable job. We went in small boats as near shore as possible and then had to wade a distance of 500 yards before we reached the sandy beach. A part of this distance was very muddy and we frequently had to pull some of our weaker comrades out of the mud.

After reaching the sandy plain where we bivouacked for the night in a hard, rain with nothing but our overcoats to shelter us, where we passed one of the most disagreeable nights on record. Wet and chilled without fire, we tried to sleep and to be thankful for even an honest bed again. By midnight about
10,000 Turks were landed and I guess they could have been bad. Few Christians in that army judging from the vast amount of profanity heard on all sides. It rained hard all night and as there was no way of improving shelter, we had to take it.

Meantime our fleet had silenced Fort Bartow, and in the morning began to fire at the rebel intrenchments which were situated about midway across the island about a mile distant from us. These works consisted of a heavy ordnance, with a lagoon in front and flank, and a heavy clashing of timber in front of all. A difficult place to assault, but we were inexperienced, and did not know failure. My brigade, under Rose, had the left, and were supposed to flank the rebel position, while Foster had the center and Parke the right. In this formation we moved on the enemy of the 8th, soon striking the rebel skirmishers who...
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Col. J. N. Henry,
Chaplain
Anoka, Minn.

Half a dozen howitzers attached to Fulton's brigade was all the artillery we had in view, they taking position and opening fire, began the battle. The 9" R.Y. made an attempt to charge by way of a cart-path through the swamp, but was literally blown off the road by the heavy guns of the enemy, double shotted with grape and canister, and soon moving this road. Our brigade had meantime, advanced to the edge of the clothing, and then I had my first view of the enemy. We were soon engaged and from that time I had all the hairiness of my own I could attend to, and saw but little of what others were doing. It would be impossible to describe my feelings at this time. A very insatiate longing to get behind a tree or even a bush would do, as the first minnie began to hum around us, and when a man fell at my side I re- member of dumbly wondering what aided him, that...
he should lay down so suddenly when the orders were to stand up, and I rather expected to see the sergeant—jab him with his ‘toad-stirrer’ to call his attention to orders. But when we were ordered to fix all that vanished, a feeling of retaliation took possession of me and I actually felt as though I wanted to hunt some one. After a sharp fusilade for some time we were ordered to fix bayonets, and the officers were anxious getting the men to cease firing long enough to perform this part of the manœuvre, but after a time we were ready and a charge was ordered. Away we went through that plashing over or under fallen logs as the case might be; through the bushy tops of trees; sometimes in the mud to our knees or coming along on the tops of some log that gave us a few feet of unimpeded progress! Through the lagoon up to our am- ples in water; over into the ditch and all over
The works, the sand and gravel giving way beneath our feet, and we scratching all the harder; whooping, yelling, howling like demons. And this was my first charge, and the wildest one I ever made. It would have taken veritable brass to have withheld that wild imbecility. Such The Gehuins did not stop to debate when they should go, but went at once, those of them who could get away. My regiment and the 2nd mass were ordered to pursue the fleeing rebels and after them we went - cutting off their retreat at a steamboat landing where we overtook several hundred of them and came near capturing the steamboat. Among the prisoners was Capt. Wise, a son of Ex-Gov. Wise of Virginia, who was in command of the rebel forces. Capt. Wise was wounded and died a few days afterwards.
What a rejoicing we had when the battle was over. We had gained our first victory, and won all heroes. And some looking heroes most of us were.

There was not a decent-looking uniform in the regiment. My blouse was entirely gone from the belt down, one pant-leg ripped up nearly the whole length, the other gone above the knee, and no cap at all. There were not all carried away by the shell and shell of the enemy, but were the fruits of that indiscriminate rush through the slashing.

And how we all wanted to resign, go home and tell the old folks all about it! But Uncle Sam had other views, so we didn’t go. We soon realized that the work we had just accomplished was only a small incident of the great war that was at that time just fairly commenced. The enemy’s forces were still on the island, and we were soon
advancing against them, driving them out of their camp with but little skirmishing, and compelling their surrender. The results of this battle was the complete occupation of Roanoke Island, 2800 prisoners, and about 30 pieces of artillery.

Our loss, reported by Beaufort, was 235 in the military division, and 20 by the fleet in its bombardment of Fort Bartow.

During the next 4 weeks we were encamped on the island, taking a much needed rest, and getting our sea legs off, while the fleet were briskly engaged in destroying the rebel boats, capturing and destroying about 40, adding a few to our navy and all without loss.

It was while at this place I took my first lessons in commercial pursuits. An old fellow, near...
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Long, hairless and gaunt was a typical Southern
kept-a country farmer about a mile from camp, and
one day a party of us went over to buy of him.
He positively refused to sell any goods to a
"damned Yankee" at any price, which we thought
not good business policy, so we just put the old fellow on a barrel in front of his store
when he could see well, and take lessons in
the Yankee way of selling goods, sent word
to camp that we were ready to do business, and
before night we had the whole stock cleared out.
Of course there was a heavy credit account, but
that was incidental to the times. We did not
make the times. The smallest man in North
Carolina that day was that storekeeper. But I
have no doubt he benefited by the advice.
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It got that day, provided he ever got another
stick of goods to operate with.

The next movement of note was against New-
bern, a fortified town up the Neuse River, and
about a hundred miles from Roanoke Island.

For this purpose we again took transports
for Hatteras Inlet, where we were joined by the
fleet, and on March 12 sailed for the Neuse
River and that night anchored off Shem-
creek, about 18 miles below New Bern. The next
morning we landed, many of us wading
ashore, so great was our eagerness to get on land.

It was about a dozen miles from the place
of landing to the enemy's camp, and the
roads were just ruts of mud through which
we were obliged to march, dragging our
our artillery with us. It took us all day to go this distance, and a tired lot of mind be dragged boys we were when we went into camp that night. The bullet had moved up the river, shelling the woods ahead of us during the day, which broke the monotony of the march, and kept the enemy's skirmishers from encircling us. At daylight we made the attack, the brigade being on the right and following the railroad and having the advance. The rebel works were 5 miles below Newbern with a battery of 13 heavy guns on the river and a line of entrenchments over a mile long on the opposite side. The Confederate force numbered all told about 10,000 men of all arms and were well entrenched. It looked like a formidable job to drive them out, but our precious ariens had given as lots of confidence, and we
believe that nothing could exist one of our
threats. A train load of reinforcements for the
enemy that had just arrived, was the first thing
we struck, and the way they got out of that train
and into thin works showed that they were good
spirits. The battle commenced at short-range
and was spiritedly carried on for some time. Our
brigade was hotly engaged for about 4 hours
when the enemy gave way and we were quickly
inside of thin works. The enemy was in full
retreat to Newbern, and all three of our brigades
in hot pursuit, and reached the river bank about
the middle of the afternoon. In the mean time
the gun boats had forced their way up, capturing
a steam boat, by means of which we were soon
crossing the river, the rebels having set the bridges.

The confederates escaped by their railroad,
And even of em who. As a result of this battle, we captured, besides the city, eight batteries of light artillery, 26 heavy guns, two steamboats, a large amount of ammunition and quartermaster stores.

and about 2000 prisoners. Our loss, as reported by Burnside, was 91 killed and 1446 wounded.

The admitted loss is 5000.

On the 19th of April Renué's brigade was sent to the left of Camden near Elizabeth City. After a long march, having been misled by a guide, we found the enemy entrenched, and after a sharp engagement, we drove them out of their works, losing 14 killed and about 100 wounded. Weared by the long march and the extreme heat, it was impossible to pursue. We returned to camps near Newburn, where we remained some time, campfire in a sunbaked field nearly surrounded by a pine forest that had been used for in the tar and
St. Paul, Minn., 24th

Thus is done by cutting boxes in the trees with an ax for the pitch to run into, when it was gathered and converted into commercial products. In this way the trees became saturated with pitch, and became highly inflammable. Some luckless night, on mischief bent, set fire to some of these trees and soon the entire forest was a mass of crackling flames, that not only illuminated our camp during the night, but cluttered it; both night and day, very unpleasant and difficult as a breathing place, on account of the dense smoke, adding also largely to the natural heat of the climate. In a short time we were all as black as the darkest clarkies in North Carolina. We were short of soap, and water to alms had no effect. But almost every one tried to move camp, but our officers though it would be
proper punishment for setting the fire, to keep us from when we could enjoy it. We had been named "Fires' Angels" by the rest of the brigade, before this, but we were anything but angels of light from this time on, both in conduct and color. I think this incident first gave the government the idea of using the colored troops, and that Burnside's experience would make him the most able commander.

Fort Macom was the next important point subdued, in which my regiment took no part. This gave us the benefit of one of the best harbors on the southern coast and ended the campaign.

While we did not succeed in cutting the Welden railroad, which was part of the scheme, yet our work caused the evacuation and destruction of the Confederate works and ship yard at Norfolk, rendering Hampton Roads, from this source...
almost as safe as New York harbor.

The success of the campaign was so pronounced, that the officers commanding were given great credit, and important promotions, by Uncle Sam, while the rank and file, after enduring extraordinary hardships, were considered experienced enough to be put to the front again, in other scenes of trial and trouble. Those of us still living, who took part in this movement, are unanimous in the belief that we have earned, thoroughly, all the pensions we are liable to get.