REMINISCENCES

OF THE

LATE WAR.

BY

CAPTAIN ALBERT STEARNS.

GREEN POINT, BROOKLYN, N. Y.,
MARCH 4, 1881.
INTRODUCTORY.

Green Point, Brooklyn, N. Y., February 24, 1880.

Captain Albert Stearns:

Dear Sir: The undersigned respectfully request that you would prepare (either to be read or delivered orally) such of your own personal reminiscences of the War of the Rebellion as may be agreeable to yourself for the entertainment of "The Cousins' Sing" at some future meeting, to suit your convenience.

We believe such reminiscences would prove exceedingly interesting to all of us; and we take this method of solicitation, hoping that it will overcome the "native modesty" which, with a less authoritative requisition, might lead you to decline the request.

We are, very respectfully yours,

TIMOTHY PERRY, CHAUNCY PERRY,
ALBERT L. PERRY, FREDERIC T. PERRY,
M. F. PERRY, E. M. PERRY,
LIZZIE H. PERRY, S. F. BARTLETT,
W. A. BARTLETT, SARAH E. DAVIS,
ABBIE J. BARTLETT, M. H. BARTLETT,
CARRIE M. PERRY, CHARLOTTE T. PERRY,
WM. VANDERBILT, A. C. PERRY,
LOUISA M. DAVIS, J. N. STEARNS,
ELLA L. DAVIS, MATTIE L. STEARNS,
LOTTIE DAVIS, NELLIE G. STEARNS,
ANNIE M. PERRY, GEO. H. PERRY,
CHAS. E. PERRY, JOHN W. CUMMINGS.

In pursuance of the foregoing request the following "Reminiscences" were read on the evening of March 4, 1881, and at the unanimous and urgent request of those present Captain Stearns subsequently consented to furnish a copy for publication. It is now printed under the direction of the signers of the above request, and will, as they believe, prove an interesting memento to all the friends of Captain Stearns and of Company C.
REMINISCENCES.

In relating the story of my army life it is proper that I should say, by way of preface, that much of my time was spent on detached duty, filling offices the titles to which are unknown to "Army Rules and Regulations," but which were rendered necessary by the state of martial law which prevailed in the South at that time. In this respect my story differs from most others, being a tale of army life behind the line of battle, showing, to some extent, a class of work that does not appear in general reports, but which must be well done to keep the wheels of war moving smoothly.

I wish it also to be borne in mind that I am not attempting to give a history of my company. I have not the necessary data in my possession for that purpose; but I will give you a narrative of my own individual experience, the duties attempted, the effects produced upon those about me, coupled with some incidents coming within my personal knowledge. I shall aim to make all as correct as my documents, letters, and memory will permit. I shall necessarily have to say much about myself, and am aware that to do this will leave me open to the charge of vanity or egotism; but, as some of you appear to wish me to "blow my own horn," you will pardon me if I happen to "toot" a little too loud. My story will be lacking in evidences of brilliant strategy, so necessary for a soldier's story. I desired while in the army to accomplish whatever seemed to be needed, and to do it in a straightforward, unassuming manner. Detached duty came to me without being sought, or, indeed, wished for, because I knew it removed me from the chance of promotion, which is one of the greatest incentives to bravery, and which we should try to be worthy of without eagerly seeking for.
I deem it proper to state just here some of the reasons which prompted me to leave a position in the Police Department to accept one in the army which could not net me as large an income after meeting necessary expenses. Of course I am not unmindful of the fact that all citizens should feel that they owe a duty to their country which can be exceeded only by that which is due to the Maker; but in my case there seemed to be reasons of an unusual character which urged me into the service. Looking over the circle of my immediate relatives in Green Point, I saw that we all had families dependent upon us for support; but I believed that mine would not be likely to want for the necessaries of life in case of the loss or disabling of its head, and I take great pleasure in bearing testimony to the fact that my wife's parents assured me, before I left Green Point, that although they regretted the duty which I had imposed upon myself, still, in case of accident to me in the army, my family should not suffer want in consequence thereof. I have never doubted their will or ability to fulfil the promise.

I realized the fact that men were needed at home as well as at the front. Public opinion had to be kept up to the requirements of the Government; enthusiasm must be manufactured, if need be, in times of doubt or misfortune; secession sympathizers at home must be met and thwarted; the mob must be held in awe by the earnestness and confidence of the loyal masses. Others were perhaps needed at home; I was not. Again, health was very much in my favor. I had hardly known a day's sickness. I felt that I was the only one among my immediate relatives who could endure the hardships of army life, and I still think I was right. Furthermore, my eight years' experience in the police service, its contact with the lower classes, so sure to find their way into the army, and its military drill, seemed to fit me for some small command in the army. All these, as well as other reasons, were calmly thought over by me, unaccompanied by any "war fever" or sudden excitement; so that when, in July, 1862, the Police Commissioners undertook to raise a Metropolitan Brigade, our State being likely to come short of her quota without a draft (which was very undesira-
ble), I felt that the time had come for me to act, and I so decided before consultation with any one. The Commissioners offered a reward of two dollars to policemen for each accepted recruit. I knew that they could be depended upon to do whatever was promised to recruiting officers. Others had not always kept their promises. So upon the following day I visited the president of the Board, Mr. James Bowen, afterwards brigadier-general, and asked him how many recruits I must procure to entitle me to a captaincy. He replied "one-half of a company—forty men." I then told him that I proposed to issue a circular offering to add three dollars to the two he had offered, to pay the whole five dollars upon the recruits being sworn in, and to wait for the Board to repay me the two dollars. It will be remembered that no bounties were paid at this time. I think the State allowed a small sum to each recruit for travelling expenses. Mr. Bowen grasped me by the hand cordially, telling me that I was just the kind of man he wanted, and bidding me go ahead and bring the recruits to his recruiting offices. Upon the next day my circular was in the hands of every Brooklyn officer, and recruits began to come in. I soon found that my five dollars was bringing a better class of recruits than the two dollars paid in New York; and, furthermore, as I was not an authorized recruiting officer, my men feared that they would be compelled to serve in other companies than my own—an event which I should have deplored as much as they could. I stated the case to Mr. Bowen. He at first pooh-poohed, but finally gave me a letter to Governor Fenton, asking that I be authorized as a recruiting officer. The next day found me in Albany. A visit to the Governor procured the desired authority, and I then pushed ahead filling up my complement of forty men, and was requested to fill up a full company of eighty men, in which case I was to have the naming of my own lieutenants—a task which I accomplished in time to become the third senior captain in the brigade. I also recruited twenty-nine men more than my complement, thus giving me a chance to transfer some of the most objectionable to other companies, leaving me a picked lot of ninety-five men, who proved their superiority upon
all occasions, being almost invariably selected for duty when a company was required that could be depended upon to keep sober and faithful. Upon the enlistment of my eightieth man I named Eugene H. Fales for first lieutenant, who was then out with the Brooklyn Fourteenth Regiment, and George E. Pinckney for second lieutenant. My company being filled up, I made my home upon Riker's Island, our recruiting rendezvous, spending the time in preparing my men for the duties before them. We were mustered into the United States service on September 9, 1862, with only nine companies, so great was the need of men at the front, the tenth company following us some time later. On Sunday, the 14th day of September, we embarked upon a steamer for Perth Amboy, N. J. I will here observe that the time passed in recruiting and at Riker's Island imposed upon me the severest mental and physical hardship of any duration that I found in all my army experience, as a photograph taken at that time will testify. It was shown to my children a few weeks since, and they failed to recognize it. Nearly half of the regiment outside of my company was recruited from the New York City police courts, and the presence of a large squad of police was constantly necessary with the regiment at Riker's Island. They were visited by women whose skirts were lined with whiskey-bottles. Intoxication and brawls were of daily and nightly occurrence, and desertions were frequent. There was but little authority exercised over them as yet by their officers, whose course sometimes lacked firmness. As an instance, upon one occasion, when I was officer of the day, it was ordered, in consequence of unusual disturbances upon the previous day, that no row-boats should be permitted to land visitors. A number of boat-loads were turned away, my own wife and her father amongst the rest. They returned to Green Point; but most of the others loitered near, exhibiting the luxuries they had brought for friends, until finally the soldiers, to the number of one hundred or one hundred and fifty, becoming exasperated, made a rush to overpower the guard on the dock, coming within ten feet of us in a solid body; but, seeing me there with revolver and raised sword,
they stopped and sullenly retreated. They had, however, gained their point, for the order was soon countermanded—too late, however, for me to get the fruits and delicacies that were in the boat with my friends. I think that this little incident gave me an influence over the vicious elements in the regiment which I never lost, while it showed them that some of the superior officers could be frightened. I was glad when the time came for our regiment to be taken away from the evil influences of such city visitors, for I felt that life was as safe in front of a Confederate enemy as with such a mob when maddened by whiskey. In justice to my own company, now called Company C of the One Hundred and Thirty-first Regiment, New York Volunteers, I should say that they never disobeyed me, nor did any of them participate in this riot. Over half of them were recruited from my home ward and knew my reputation for discipline. Indeed, I had feared that this would injure my prospects of raising a company; but I found it otherwise. The better portion of the community knew that "discipline" tends to the greatest good of the masses, and their influence was accordingly used in my favor, for no similar body of volunteers was ever raised in Green Point, and the sequel will show that they acquitted themselves in a creditable manner.

Before leaving Green Point I was presented with a very generous purse by friends and well-wishers for the purpose of supplying myself with arms and accoutrements. I felt that a sword received in this way must not be disgraced.

It was thought best that our men should not know the day of their departure, and few suspected it when, on Sunday morning, September 14, we were ordered on parade in marching order. A large steamboat soon stopping at the dock, we were marched on board, trusty guards being stationed at the gangways, and they then knew that they were on their way to the front. The excuses made for leaves to go on shore were numerous, but none availed. The day and sail down the bay were splendid, as was also the collation on board provided by noble-hearted citizens. Still, it was all shaded with a tinge of sadness, for we felt that many would never return.
the sick occupying even the halls of Congress. I spent a day in seeing the place and public buildings, and then proceeded to Alexandria, stopping over night in the hotel where Colonel Ellsworth was killed, and returning the next day with twenty-seven of our men.

At Annapolis such time as could be spared from guard duty at Parole Camp was spent in drilling my company, in which I took much pleasure, offering three prizes, two of them to be silver medals, to the three men of my company who should excel in the manual of arms, to be competed for on the next New Year's day.

On October 15 I was made president of a regimental court-martial, from which military justice was dispensed at the rate of "forty pounds of brick, to be carried in a knapsack eight hours," for intoxication, second offence.

On October 20 I was placed in charge of a recruiting squad and sent home for recruits. My regiment being soon afterwards ordered to rendezvous at Fortress Monroe, I was recalled, joining my company on board the steamship Baltic at that place about November 29. We were soon transferred to the steamship United States, where the balance of our regiment were first quartered. We left Chesapeake Bay on December 4, there being fifteen steamships in all, and known as the Banks Expedition. After a somewhat stormy voyage of ten days we arrived at New Orleans, and three days later at Baton Rouge, my company being the first to plant colors on shore. We had expected a fight; but the number of our transports, aided by a few shots from the gun-boats, caused the rebels to beat a hasty retreat. Upon our entry into the city nearly a third of the people fled. Splendid mansions were in many cases left entirely deserted; one such, near which our pickets were at one time posted, must have contained five to eight thousand dollars' worth of pictures, with furniture to match. In a few days all were destroyed, being common prey for negroes or soldiers. Our regiment went into camp and performed light guard duty or drilling exercises at this place for over three months. We here got our first taste of army life in the heart of the enemy's country, for the rebel "Camp Moore" was but a
I will here relate an incident that came to my knowledge within the past year touching upon one phase of suffering caused by the war which can never be measured, nor can the lives lost by it be counted—I refer to the suffering of those left at home, the wives, children, parents, and friends. Being in conversation about the ease with which some people shed tears, especially ladies, I remarked that I never knew my wife to weep. Her mother, who was present, said: "I have." I asked when. She replied: "When you left for the army." My wife had regretted my decision, but when she found that I felt it to be a duty she accepted it, if not cheerfully, at least with composure. She had prepared everything possible for my comfort, and bid the usual adieux, determined that I should not bear or know her sorrows. But when she waved her handkerchief to me, as I passed from view at the nearest corner, the thought that she might never see me again proved too much for her, and she rushed into the presence of her oldest and truest friend to find relief for her breaking heart in tears.

In due season the regiment reached Philadelphia, partook of a free lunch at the well-known "Cooper's Shop," thence by cars to Baltimore, where another nice lunch was provided by the Union citizens; thence by cars to Laurel Factory, a small railroad station about eighteen miles this side of Washington, which place we reached about eleven p.m. Monday night, consuming thirty-eight hours in going a distance that can now be covered in about one-sixth the time; the railroads had not then got fairly into military order. On our trip we had a good chance to study the loyalty of our men, for some of the companies lost as many as fifteen men by desertion. I lost but one. Our duty at Laurel Factory was to guard the railroad; but it was of very brief duration, for in four days we were sent to Annapolis, Md., to guard our own paroled soldiers who had been so ignominiously surrendered at Harper's Ferry.

On October 7 I was ordered to proceed to Alexandria, Va., to recover a number of our men who had deserted or straggled from the regiment on its way out. This gave me my first view of Washington City, then one vast hospital,
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few miles east of us and Port Hudson twelve to fifteen miles north, rendering vigilance constantly necessary, a number of men being killed or wounded on the picket lines. We here experienced the annoyance of being without letters from home for over forty days from the time we left Fortress Monroe, and a more homesick lot of men could seldom be found. Our friends never forgot us, but they did not know how to direct letters to us. After communications were once fairly opened a mail seldom failed to bring two or more missives to me, and every two or three weeks an armful of papers would come by express, sent free by a thoughtful friend. These were eagerly looked for by the boys of Company C.

For dwellings the men had shelter-tents, each carrying one piece, which was about five and one-half feet square, with rows of button-holes and buttons on three sides; two, four, or six men would button together and make very comfortable quarters, as tight and warm as possible without a fire—just large enough for all to lie in and nothing to spare. Line officers fared no better, unless they burdened themselves or servants with extra pieces of tent.

Army jokes helped to pass the time away. Some wag proposed to one of our captains—who, I think, had been a dock-builder—that the Mississippi River needed a pier at Baton Rouge upon which to unload the vessels constantly arriving. The captain hastened to the commanding general and proposed the subject to him, assuring him that the adjacent forests would furnish the needed timber, and he (the captain) was just the man that could do the job. The general cast a pitying eye upon the officer, and advised him to return to his command, and he would let him know when the Government wished any piers built out into the Mississippi River. Shortly afterwards that captain resigned; the spring season came entirely too early for him.

In February, 1863, our commanding officer, Colonel Turnbull, resigned on account of ill-health. His loss was regretted by all. A parting supper was given him, and, in response to the toast of "Home, sweet home," Lieutenant V. B. M. Bergen, a nephew of Police Commissioner John G.
Bergen, referring to the recent sea-sickness which the colonel had passed through, extended our sympathies to him upon the further prospect of "visions of fat pork, dipped in molasses and dangling from a string, tendered as sure cure for sea-sickness," at the same time assuring him that we were "going home overland." Lieutenant Bergen was one of the most talented and promising officers in our regiment; but he did not live to go home overland; a hasty consumption determined the route that he must take, and his untimely death undoubtedly hastened that of his father, Tunis G. Bergen, Esq., which took place two months later.

Upon March 3 an order was issued by General Banks for me to report for duty to General James Bowen, Provost-Marshal-General.

I went to New Orleans, and on March 12 was appointed provost-marshal of Iberville County, or Parish, as they are there called. It is located on the west bank of the Mississippi River, about twenty miles below Baton Rouge, the principal place being the city of Plaquemine, where I was to make my headquarters. I found this city had been a place of perhaps 2,500 people, but then contained a little over half this number. It was situated at the head of the Bayou Plaquemine, which takes its water from the Mississippi River, and so located in a bend of the river that its banks were constantly being washed away by the action of the water. Blocks of houses extending along the whole front were undermined and carried away just before the war, and I learn that still another block has been washed away since I was there. Upon commencing my duties I found that a provost-marshal was expected to be a sort of a combination machine—part sheriff and part police justice, something of a parson, father to all the planters and mother to all the darkies, a general embodiment of all the civil authorities, backed up by all the authority of the army. It was the wish of General Banks that the colored people should be kept employed upon the plantations to save us the expense of providing for them, and his labor system was probably the most complete of any in the departments of the South within our lines. We went to Louisiana to stay, and, with brief exceptions, did
stay. The sugar and cotton plantations were cultivated by Northern lessees, if the owners had left, and much suffering was spared the negroes by thus making them self-supporting. The planters depended upon me to keep their hands in good discipline, and their permits for supplies must bear my signature. The negroes looked to me to see that their rights were respected, and, when they found congenial sweethearts, to join them in the bonds of matrimony. The provost-marshal was expected to keep open house. He was a fixture, and reported only to the provost-marshal-general. His guard might be changed often, but he stayed. Officers travelling in places where hotel accommodations were wanting expected to find a welcome at the provost-marshal's, and were seldom disappointed. In this way I made many very pleasant army acquaintances. My guard numbered thirty to forty men, and all were kept busy. Offenders, both civilians and soldiers, had to be apprehended by them and punished by me. Their duties were often arduous and sometimes dangerous. On the evening of April 18 it was reported to me that a lot of goods had been landed on the opposite bank of the river six or seven miles below us. I knew they had no permit, and suspected them contraband of war. I sent a sergeant and squad of men at once to intercept them, intending to follow myself in the morning, as I had frequently ridden over the ground; but I was compelled by other duties to send a lieutenant of my guard. Crossing the river on a flat-boat, with his horse, he had proceeded but three or four miles when he found himself in front of a squad of guerrillas. He turned and retraced his steps, his fleet horse keeping him out of harm until he reached the place where his boat had been left, but it had recrossed the river. He hailed, and awaited its coming to him. My guard on the levee opposite him saw the rebels come up and fire, and saw him fall. He was robbed of everything valuable, and left for dead. A poor woman living near, finding him alive but seriously injured, bound up his wounds as best she could, and, with the assistance of a colored man, placed him tenderly in a skiff and brought him to us. I thanked her kindly, and, knowing that she was in want of even the
necessaries of life, placed a ten-dollar bill in her hands. She took it, but delayed recrossing the river. Finally she came back to me with tears in her eyes, saying: "Captain, I have an only son in the Confederate army, and should he ever be wounded I hope some kind person will do for him as I have done for this man. I cannot keep your money. I thank you; but it would burn in my pocket." Remonstrance was useless, and she went home. The lieutenant was wounded with buckshot, one of which had struck the temple. But he recovered, and returned to light duty after a few weeks. The sergeant and squad were captured and paroled.

Amongst the plantations I found many in charge of women, all the white men being in the army. Many of the planters at home could neither read nor write. Ignorance seemed to be the order of the day, public schools being almost unknown. There were two churches in the place that kept their pulpits occupied; one was Protestant, the other Roman Catholic. The pastor of the former seemed to feel called upon to keep his flock up to the secession standpoint by every means short of preaching it in his pulpit, for that would have closed his church. The priest appeared to mind his own business, and it was with positive pleasure that I furnished escorts on some of their fast-days for considerable parties of his people to come from the lines to church and return in cases where passes were not permitted. Indeed, this difference in loyalty seemed to prevail between the two classes of clergy wherever I went in the South. Some great influence seemed to operate on each to pull them in opposite directions on this question.

I found on the part of the white people a very marked preference for New York officers and troops; of course the provost-marshal was bound to be well received everywhere, but this feeling was shown where no official difference existed. It was charged that other troops seemed to take a wanton pleasure in causing unnecessary annoyance to Southerners where no good to their cause could possibly result. Upon one occasion, when the city was garrisoned by Eastern troops, some negroes brought in a report that the rebels
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were advancing upon the place in considerable numbers. Hearing the "long roll," I repaired to the colonel commanding, offering my services. I found his men all under arms, and was requested by him to head a reconnaissance, upon the plea that I was better acquainted with the roads. I gladly accepted, called for a squad of volunteers who could sit in a saddle, provided horses for them; took a circuit of several miles, finding all quiet, the alarm having been caused by two or three paroled Confederates returning to their homes. Upon the next day the Protestant pastor above referred to called on me and asked if I was aware that the Eastern troops had contemplated burning down the city had the attack taken place. I assured him that he must have been misinformed. He thought not. Upon enquiry I found that they had placed a pile of kindling-wood against an unoccupied house, with a view, as alleged, of making a light by which to repel any attack. Had the fire been built the direction of the wind was such that much other property might have been burned, especially if bullets had prevented the use of buckets. I always disapproved of everything tending to make unnecessary bitterness between the opposing forces, and such an incident as this would be used as an excuse for the levying of ransom-money upon whole villages, as was the case during the invasion of Pennsylvania by the Confederates.

My office was daily besieged by negroes seeking passes to the larger cities, where they would be safer, as they imagined. The older or more worthless the applicant the more unfortunate he became. They were usually refused if places could be found for them at home.

When the orders came to raise colored regiments the looks of the disloyal, whenever the subject was broached, seemed to indicate that they thought the depth of Yankee infamy had been reached. At this time nearly all able-bodied soldiers had been ordered to Port Hudson. I was left with only a guard of thirty-five convalescents, none able to do full duty. I became the ranking officer. A company of Confederate cavalry were hovering on our outskirts, being heard of within ten miles. Some of the provost-marshal more
remote from danger than myself fled to New Orleans. To add to my annoyance a quartermaster who had been detailed to open up a bayou for navigation left a company of colored soldiers with me, who were of no possible use in defending the place, only serving to invite the rebels in to massacre them, as I feared would be done. As an additional incentive to draw them in, an enterprising New Orleans trader sent a consignment of about twenty thousand dollars' worth of goods to the place clandestinely, expecting that he could "make it right" with the provost-marshal. I knew there were Confederates enough within two hours' ride to capture us with ease, but that my duty was to remain; that General Banks would feel easier to know that our flag still waved on the levee in front of the city, as my post was the key to that part of the valley. I discontinued the use of passes inland altogether, as a thorough picket guard could not be maintained with a force of less than two hundred and fifty men, giving it out that I remained simply to keep the negroes employed on the plantations, keeping up only a couple of picket stations on the main roads leading from the direction of the threatened raid. I procured transportation to Baton Rouge for the colored troops at the earliest opportunity; also ordered the lot of goods to be taken at once back to New Orleans under penalty of being pitched into the river, for which order I afterwards received the thanks of the owner, together with an order for a suit of clothes, which, under the circumstances, I accepted to the tune of one hundred and fifteen dollars.

On the afternoon of June 16 an acquaintance invited me to go out of town to spend the night. I declined. He was very urgent, and finally told me that if I wished to escape capture I must leave the place that evening. I replied that that was just the reason why I had determined not to go, as I had already heard rumors of an intended raid into town. I knew that my informant was in the councils of the secession element, and I believed that nearly all wished me to escape danger. I made all the preparation possible with my thirty-five men, barricading the guard-house, but was not disturbed. On the next day the "reliable contraband" brought in word that the rebels were falling back, so that night
I slept at my hotel; but at 6.30 A.M. was awoke by firing, and before I could dress myself two or three volleys followed in quick succession. By the number of shots I knew that a considerable force was in the attacking party. I hurried on a suit of citizen's clothing, and, running to the front door, I saw a dozen rebel cavalrymen. A look out of a side window showed another squad on the side street, and soon a hundred rode past with a yell. Returning to my room, I threw my sword on the top of a wooden frame that supported the canopy of my bed, then took the portraits of my family from a trunk and slipped out of a rear door, stopping to exchange glances with a rebel cavalryman posted outside the garden fence—lighting a cigar in the meantime, and willing to give him one had he thought to ask for it—then passing from his view around a stable, and concluding that the "better part of valor" for me was to "keep shady" until the sun ceased to cast a shadow. I looked about for a place of concealment. My eye fell upon a summer-house a few feet distant, which was about ten feet square, boarded up about three feet, and the rest of the way up to the roof all open slats. Within was a very wide cypress plank laying against a narrow shelf on one side. Under this was just room for me to lie, only the building was already occupied. I think I said it was a summer-house. Yes, it was, and built expressly for the accommodation of turkeys and chickens. Into it I tumbled, regardless of feathers or the protests of the other roosters. I was the biggest one of them all, only I didn't carry my feathers quite as high just then, and was not disposed to crow very much. Having concluded an amicable treaty of peace with the occupants within the coop, things resumed their wonted aspect. One big turkey of the masculine gender even had the audacity to roost on the plank under which I was concealed; but I didn't object, preferring to be "gobbled" by him rather than by any of the gobblers who were then heard searching through the hotel, one of whom clanked his long sabre within twenty feet of me; but neither I nor the feathered gobbler moved a wing. About nine o'clock a darky came running into the yard, saying in a low voice to
one of the servants: "Hi, Sam, dar's a gunboat comin'." "Is dar?" said Sam. "Yes; look out for fun." "Yes," replied Sam, "it would be fun if one of dem big bullets should rip froo your body." Then I heard galloping to the rear, and soon the boom! of a big gun saluted my ears, and an eleven-inch shell whizzed over my head, bursting in five seconds at the rear of the town. Others large and small followed in quick succession for five or six minutes, and then the firing ceased. I feared the boat was going away, but it proved to be time taken in turning her around so as to get headed up stream; then she opened fire again, and it was the sweetest music I ever heard, for it sounded the notes of my liberation. I immediately started for the landing, three blocks distant, walking quite leisurely, so that strangers should not suspect my identity. At the levee I saw that the boat was the Winona, commanded by my friend Captain Weaver, who had often dined with me. He saw my signal at once, gave orders to cease firing, and sent a boat ashore, taking me and thirteen of my men who came down while I was waiting; the other twenty-two, with their lieutenant, were captured. I then learned that the attacking party numbered about three hundred. Our pickets had been "gobbled" up and the guard-house surprised. My men fired one volley, killing one man, wounding two, and then surrendered. Arrived on board the Winona, we lay in shore for a few minutes; then, receiving word that the cavalry were returning, the captain determined to shell the town. The previous shots had been thrown over and beyond. He requested me to go up into the maintop to suggest the direction of shots. I did so, and about fifty more were thrown, consisting of eleven-inch and six-inch round shell and four-inch rifled shell. It was a novel sight for me away up there in the air, hearing the booming of the big guns below me, and seeing the shells circle up and then down through the air. I had only to name the point and the second shot was almost sure to pass by or through it. Upon the cessation of firing I took my thirteen men, with twenty-five of the sailors, ashore and secured the town. Finding no Confederates, I however captured the man that piloted them
into the place, and learned that the enemy were near by in considerable force with cannon. At the hotel my room was completely gutted, everything of value taken except my sword, which they had not discovered. They had also captured and burned two steamboats, wounding two of the hands, one of them mortally. We took the wounded men and re-embarked, sending them to Baton Rouge by a boat that soon passed, along with my despatches to General Banks; Captain Weaver also sending despatches to the naval commander. We lay in front of the town until the middle of the afternoon, getting only a cold lunch for dinner, as no fires are allowed on board while the magazines are open. I suspected that the rebels intended to raid down along the river, and knew that the only place to check them was at Donaldsonville, twenty miles below, where there was a small fort meagrely garrisoned. Captain Weaver took myself and men to this fort, and in the evening I took a passing boat for New Orleans. I reported to General Bowen upon arriving the facts of my losses, and my suspicion that the attacking party were a part of the brigade of General Green, and that they contemplated attacking Donaldsonville. Shortly afterwards the attack was made, as I had expected, commencing at two o'clock in the morning. But three gunboats being at hand, they were treated to grape-shot at short range, leaving two hundred dead or wounded on the field.

At New Orleans General Bowen directed me to "take it easy for a few days." I objected to lying idle in the critical condition of things. He then said I might go and see the post commander, General Emery. Upon reporting to him he gave me orders to report at "Convalescent Camp" and help organize the men there, who consisted of such as could do light duty only and might be used in case of emergency. Reporting there on June 20, I found the camp in command of Lieutenant-Colonel Geo. H. Barrett, of Ashburnham, Mass., who remembered me as having taken part in an exhibition at South Ashburnham eleven years before.

Port Hudson having been captured, I was, on July 16, appointed Provost-Sheriff of the Department of the Gulf, my
duties being to take charge of all persons under arrest, both civilians and prisoners of war, General Gardner and the two hundred officers captured at Port Hudson being amongst the number. These were quartered in the Custom-House, and all had their side-arms. Visitors were permitted to see them constantly, and to bring food and luxuries. Liquor was so plentiful that one of their senior officers begged of me to stop its flow, or he could not be responsible for the acts of prisoners with arms in their hands.

On August 5 I was ordered back to my regular station at Plaquemine, but stopped only eight days, the troops being withdrawn for the raid towards Texas.

Returning to New Orleans, I was ordered across the river to Algiers as provost-marshal for a few weeks, pending the movements of troops through that place for the Teche campaign.

On October 3 I was appointed Assistant Provost-Marshal of New Orleans. During my stay there several events of interest to me occurred. One was the grand review of troops by Generals Grant and Banks September 4, about twenty-five thousand men and sixty-four pieces of artillery being in line. The review was followed by a dinner given in honor of those generals by a wealthy citizen, to which I had the honor of an invitation.

My wife and two children also arrived in October, adding much to my happiness.

I also visited the spot where Jackson distinguished himself in the final battle of the war of 1812. The fortifications were still as he left them, consisting of a straight breast-work three miles long, on top of which the cotton bales were strung along, the seizing of which caused General Jackson so much annoyance afterwards. The works extend from river to swamp, having a ditch filled with water in the front. An unfinished monument about sixty-five feet high stands near the spot.

On October 24 I was ordered to relieve Major Porter as provost-marshal of three parishes, with office at Brashear City, one hundred miles west of New Orleans, where I remained ten and one-half months. The duties were about
the same as at Plaquemine. Having my wife and children with me, and boarding in a private family, added much to the comfort of the situation. Shortly after reaching this post my eldest child, Mattie, who had been suffering from a cold for some months, was taken worse. We had hoped that the change of climate would bring her relief, but none came. She died of pneumonia on December 28, aged four years and seven months. She had endeared herself to all our officers and friends, and many kindly sympathies were extended to us. We took her remains to New Orleans and had them enclosed in a metallic casket; took a last look of her lovely form, believing that "it was well with the child"; then ordered their shipment by first boat home, where they arrived and were tenderly cared for and interred by affectionate friends and mourners.

My own regiment was at Brashear City most of the time. The visits of the officers made evenings pass very pleasantly. Many troops were also passing through, stopping here usually a day or two for transportation. Brass bands and serenades were abundant, during which the provost-marshal was seldom forgotten, and always expected to "stand treat." The winter evenings were enlivened by an occasional sociable given at the headquarters of some of the colonels or by the provost-marshal.

I here had my first chance to notice the effect of army life upon negro soldiers, there being two or three regiments present for considerable lengths of time. I had previously found them very willing to enlist, but had my doubts about the advisability of so employing them; otherwise I should have sought authority to raise a regiment for myself. They proved very tractable; took great interest in the drill and pride in keeping their trappings bright and clean; were willing to labor upon fortifications, or at anything that seemed to aid in their liberation from slavery.

They learned to read rapidly, each regiment having a school for their benefit. When overtaken by sickness, however, they seemed to lack moral courage with which to combat disease, and an order for one of them to go into hospital was almost tantamount to ordering his coffin. This caused
me to doubt their courage upon the field of battle. When we received a visit from Secretary Stanton's adjutant-general, Thomas, I was curious to know his views on this subject. He assured me that "a number of colored regiments had been employed about Vicksburg and elsewhere, and that those regiments furnished about the only instance thus far in this war where the opposing forces had crossed bayonets, and that colored soldiers had actually been found dead with a dead Confederate in front, and each pierced by the other's bayonet." Few such instances occur, for the days of brute force in warfare have nearly passed away. A cavalry horse cannot be made to approach a line of bayonets. Soldiers will usually break their line before crossing bayonets, and then the poorest line must go to the rear.

On New Year's day, 1864, the prizes offered for competition in the manual of arms to my company over a year before were awarded, two of the three going to Green Point men.

Early in the spring of '64 General Banks ordered that public free schools should be established throughout the department, creating a Board of Education to organize them. A visit from one of the board, Mr. Wheelock, and a statement of his wishes, caused me to take hold of the matter, and I soon had four schools in successful operation, being the first, as I was told, outside the immediate vicinity of New Orleans. I received many compliments from the board for my efforts in their behalf; and when it was rumored that I was to be relieved, to accompany my regiment North, they wrote a very earnest letter to the department commander asking my retention at Brashear City.

The colored children were very eager to learn, many of them coming three or four miles to school, often two hours ahead of time. They made good progress in reading, writing, and in the simple rules of arithmetic; then they broke down. A thousand was to them "a right smart lot," and a million could not be made to seem more.

Brashear is a city in a swamp, having Berwick's Bay on one side. A boat is there as necessary to a family as a horse is here. Alligators were plenty. I have counted sixty-three,
varying in size from eight inches up to eight feet or more in length, while on one trip in the cars from New Orleans. I had one for a pet which was about four feet long, but it had a vicious propensity for opening its jaws and crooking its tail around, which death alone completely conquered. It was kept chained to a stake on the sunny side of my office, with a sugar-house kettle sunk into the ground for a bath-tub. I was much interested one day by the way in which an old colored man handled this alligator. The man was perhaps sixty years old, with long, scanty gray locks, tall, slim, muscular, and withal very bandy-legged. He had run away from Texas, bringing his wife and boy with him. The wife was young, quite the reverse of her lord in stature, being "all up in a heap"—a regular "duck of a darky"—and, to add to her other charms, very cross-eyed. The boy was about six years old, knock-kneed, cross-eyed, and his height was probably exceeded by his circumference. The father was as black as the proverbial "ace of spades"; the mother was a mulatto. The father had evidently seen alligators before; the others had not, and he was showing them how easy he could handle one. With a firm grasp upon the small end of the reptile he would pull it back, then push it forward; next, with a twist, he would throw it over upon its back, and again upon its feet, to the great amusement of the spectators. Finally he turned around to explain to some of my guardsmen how he had been brought up in Louisiana and sold to go to Texas, where his wife had always lived. While this conversation was going on his boy was slyly trying his hand at alligator-taming. He boldly caught hold of its extremity with both hands and gave a tug backwards. Finding the scaly creature immovable, he essayed to push it forward, and met with surprising success, for it had by this time evidently made up its mind to see who was trifling with its tail, which just then doubled up like a jack knife, carrying the little fellow along with it, he being too thoroughly frightened to let go until he saw about eighteen inches of cold teeth affectionately opening to receive him; then, with a scream of fright, he attempted to jump over its body, caught his toes in the protruding spines of its back, rolled
heels over head to a safe distance, then picked himself up, showing a perfect picture of black-and-tan terror—knees knocking together, arms extended, mouth and eyes fringed with white, hair on end, or as near it as circumstances would permit, and screaming at the top of his voice. The fond woman, realizing how narrowly she had escaped from being the mother of an alligator's dinner, soon joined most heartily in the chorus, while the husband, as soon as he understood the situation, wound his bony arms about her caressingly, saying: "Now, don't, Dinah! now, don't! Sure de good Lor' 'ud nebber hab brung yer all dis long way ter freedom, had he 'tended'to send yer chill'less to de grabe." Taken altogether, the scene formed a most interesting series of tableaux.

During my intercourse with these people I found much to amuse and more to cause sadness, especially when I thought of their immediate future. They were universally loyal and true to the old flag. I never knew or heard of an exception to this rule, and I firmly believe that without their aid in the secret service, as well as when in uniform, we could never have won the contest.

Sailing on Berwick's Bay was a favorite pastime, of a summer's evening, for both blacks and whites; the former with their log "pirogues" or "dugouts," their colored sweethearts and songs of freedom, the latter often with sailboats and instrumental music.

Gunboats were always present or near at hand, being rendered necessary by Confederate raids on the opposite bank of the bay, where there was a small fort manned by colored troops, whom the rebs took especial delight in annoying. Probably a dozen times were we regaled by the crack of their rifles and the answering "boom" of cannon from the fort, usually happening at dusk in the evening. At first my wife would become nervous, as our house was close to the bay and the fort within easy rifle range; but finally she seemed to enjoy with the rest of us seeing the gunboats slip their anchors, pass up and shell the woods; then all would become quiet, and we would retire for the night.

Captain S. B. Washburn, a brother of the celebrated Con-
gressional trio, was in command of the naval forces in those waters, and in return for helping Mrs. Stearns eat a roasted pig—I think it was on the 4th of July—he, a few days later, invited her and myself to a gunboat ride. We were absent with him all day; saw plenty of alligators, but no rebels; went ashore and shot an ox for a supply of fresh beef; burned a saw-mill that had been used by the foe; sighted a sugar-house said to be the headquarters of a guerrilla band, and, hoping they might be "at home," Captain Washburn invited Mrs. S. and myself into the pilot-house, and ordered a big gun to be trained upon the building. The shell, a six-inch one, exploded a little to the right and too quick. The banks of the lake were too high for the gunners to see the mark, so they took their directions from the captain on the upper deck. The second shot was sent "two points to the left, cut the fuse one second longer," and it seemed to explode just in front of the building. This was my wife's first and only experience in action.

In time the provost-marshal's court became the favorite means of punishing recreant soldiers or sailors. His orders upon the paymaster for a stoppage of part of their pay for a certain number of months were always respected. The severest sentence I ever imposed was one year's confinement on the Dry Tortugas for robbing the mail-bag, which in this case was a common oat-sack.

Upon the advance of General Banks's forces up the Teche country many Confederate prisoners passed through my hands, also all invalids and convalescents of our own troops.

Brashear, being an important post, was blessed with frequent military reviews, when every soldier was expected to look his prettiest. Upon one occasion the troops were all reviewed by the District Commander, General R. A. Cameron, who enjoyed the enviable distinction of having tried three bushwhackers in Missouri by drum-head court-martial, and shooting them, thus putting a most effective stop to guerrilla warfare in his district. The general, having occasion, after the review, to remain over night, took tea with the post commander, and accepted an invitation to spend the
night under my roof. It was decided, rather late in the evening, that he should be assigned the parlor, which was the room then used as a sleeping-room by myself, wife, and our infant Flora. Arriving rather late, the general with his aid, after a brief smoke on the piazza, retired to this room; a vocal serenade by some singers of my company then entertained them for a half-hour, after which my wife and self retired to another sleeping apartment. Upon lifting the curtains to our bed I missed the infant. Calling upon Mrs. Stearns to explain the deficiency, I was greeted with "Oh! my, the baby is in the general's bed." Tapping lightly at the door, I found they had not yet retired. Excusing myself, I assured them that it afforded me great pleasure to furnish them with bed and board, but I could not contract to supply the babies.

At the table next morning the general assured Mrs. S. that she was according him "entirely too hearty and homelike a welcome."

During the spring and summer of '64 the "contraband" business was particularly good with us. They would come in singly, in pairs, and by the steamboat load; they would "run away from massa," steal a rowboat, paddle along by night, hide in the swamps or fish for food in the daytime, and finally reach their desired haven, the protection of the grand old stars and stripes. Then there would be rejoicings loud and long. Their numbers would increase on our hands to such an extent as to be really burdensome. A negro village would spring up within our lines like Jonah's gourd, and all apparently anxious to do something for the good cause. Camp-meetings were almost constantly in progress. It took but little to make them happy. "Massa Lincum and the Pro' massa" were about the only Union officers they knew of. Both came in for a large share of their prayers, and they were most intensely in earnest both in their songs and prayers. Men and women would become crazed with religious fervor, dash themselves down on the floor, or into the fire unless restrained, and cut up the most fantastic antics.

Occasionally the younger portion of the laborers on the plantations would ask permission to have a ball, especially
on occasion of the "harvest jubilee" just after the sugar-cane was all cut. Then the sweet lasses would appear in all the gorgeousness of gay ribbons, white gloves, low-necked dresses, bare black arms, and white slippers. Our soldiers enjoyed such scenes very much; sometimes I did myself. The slaves' sun of happiness seemed at meridian height. They were glad to forget the black clouds in the east, and could not see the almost equally dark shadows in the west which were yet to obscure that orb. A little slit of sunlight and warmth was all they got. Alas! when will they be able to receive and we to give them the benefits of all that we enjoy?

In the early part of May our communications were threatened by the rebels, and they also appeared in considerable numbers on our front. I took my family to New Orleans, where they remained about four weeks, returning after the danger had passed.

Early in August my regiment was ordered to accompany its division to the Shenandoah Valley, and all detached officers thereof were ordered to rejoin their commands. The order to me was dated August 5; but I had hardly received it by mail before a telegram came revoking the order. Shortly afterwards I received a copy of a very flattering letter, sent, unsolicited, by General Cameron to the provost-marshal-general, in which he asks my retention, saying: "The Government can ill-afford to lose the services of so valuable an officer, whose known loyalty and energetic application to the duties of his office are invaluable in that place."

I was retained for another month, until after a pending election, if I remember aright, for which I felt very thankful, as my wife was seriously ill with swamp-fever at that time and all through the month of August, but during the first week in September gained strength. Then I was glad of a chance to take her home; and, furthermore, I knew that a desperate attempt to crush out the rebellion would be made during the coming autumn and winter, and I wished to be "in at the death." I could not bear the thought of being mustered out without having passed through one battle. My wish was gratified!
My final order of relief was dated September 9, 1864. My wife was just able to ride the one hundred miles to New Orleans, the quartermaster in charge of railroad placing an apartment in his private car at my disposal. Passage to New York was secured for our party. My wife recovered strength as soon as our boat touched the salt water of the Gulf, and her appetite was such that she never missed a meal during the trip, though a three days' storm of considerable severity drove every other lady from the table. With this exception, the voyage was unusually agreeable. We had our first view of a genuine water-spout; several whales spouted their welcomes to us; porpoises were abundant and frolicsome; even the little "Spanish men-of-war" raised their fragile sails, showed their colors gleaming in the sunlight and comprising all those found in the rainbow, thus saluting the Stars and Stripes as we passed.

Arriving safely at home, a brief call upon friends, some needed purchases for a winter outfit, and I was off on my way to my regiment in the Shenandoah Valley. Applying at Harper's Ferry for transportation, I was ordered to assist in organizing a provisional division, made up from the various hospitals, of all soldiers able to do light duty, and designed to strengthen Gen. Sheridan. I here took a sad interest in inspecting the engine-house in which John Brown took his famous and foolhardy, though perhaps providential, stand against the whole power of the slave oligarchy. We also, on the march out, passed the prison at Charleston where he was confined and hung. His soul appeared to be still marching on.

Arriving at my regiment on Cedar Creek October 13, I found quite an artillery duel going on, our army all being under arms. I was placed in command of Company C at once. The next day I made some slight changes in the list of non-commissioned officers, with a view to increase their efficiency, then settled down to camp-life, the throwing up of breastworks being the order of the day just then.

On the morning of October 19 my division was ordered on a reconnoissance to test the accuracy of a rumor that the rebels had fallen back from our front. We were ready to
start at five o'clock, but, some delay occurring, did not then get off. At half-past five we were surprised by hearing a heavy fire of musketry about three-quarters of a mile distant on our left. Volley after volley was poured into our Sixth Corps before they could return a shot. Thus commenced the famous battle of Cedar Creek. Its history has been written too often and ably to make it prudent for me to make the attempt, for you all know how the surprise resulted in a four mile retreat, with a loss of many men and cannon; also, how, on the arrival of Sheridan, the crippled army faced about and administered a most crushing defeat upon the foe, recovering all our lost cannon and many more, also capturing "everything else that went on wheels." My own company numbered thirty-two enlisted men present for duty, and two detached to another part of the camp, who were never afterwards heard from. Being good and faithful men, I count them as killed in action. My regiment probably numbered two hundred and twenty-five present for duty.

A battle of this kind is fertile in incidents; every soldier present can tell them. One such I will relate, showing the feeling with which good soldiers regard a coward; stating, by way of preface, that almost every company has its skulkers. The enterprising skulker will do any quantity of drilling or digging, but he can smell the battle afar off. He is a regular bullet-barometer. An approaching battle is sure to be preceded on his part by some terrible stomach-ache or a congestive chill that can only be healed at the hospital, so he "heels it" to the rear. If the battle is the result of a surprise to him, as at Cedar Creek, his fertility of resource never deserts him.

On this morning, when our division had fallen back about one and a half miles and were lying down behind a rude breastwork improvised from a rail fence, with the enemy throwing four-inch shells into our part of the line, a mounted squad of provost-guard happened to be marching a lot of skulkers back to their respective regiments. One of these was hobbling along far in the rear, regardless of the blows from the back of the guard's sabre. Just at this moment a shell struck the ground in front of my company, spattering
us with dirt, ricocheted over our heads, struck and bounded again, then struck this loitering coward square in the back, felling him in an instant. A cry of "Served you right!" and a burst of laughter from a thousand throats was all the sympathy he got.

During the afternoon, after Sheridan had marched us back towards the rebels about two miles, we were halted in a woods for nearly two and three-quarter hours waiting for the final charge. Being fatigued with the unaccustomed exercise, I here lay down and took quite a nap. An occasional shell whizzed over or burst near us. Lieutenant Henry, of our regiment, was mortally wounded near me at this time, but I felt just as safe asleep as awake.

On the final stampede of the enemy we passed over the ground where the severe fighting of the morning had taken place. In passing one little piece of woodland I counted in one place the bodies of eleven Confederates lying in a row covered with old blankets—a most ghastly dress-parade. Near by lay six others prepared in a similar manner for burial. The enemy, supposing us too badly punished to do them further harm, had ordered their burying details out to clear up the field; but we cleared the field for them. Coming to those portions of the field where our own soldiers had been mown down in the morning, many of them were found in a nude state, especially the officers, the superior quality of whose clothing had tempted the cupidity of the enemy. Many of our wounded lay uncared for just as they had fallen early in the morning of that cold day. A little beyond the location of our own camp was the spot where the Confederates had established one of their temporary field hospitals. I saw on the next morning over a dozen amputated limbs in one pile, and nearly as many more a few yards distant; this sight caused a worse shudder to pass through me than any of the previous day, for my nerves were surfeited with the work of the day of battle; now I shunned the sights.

The record of Company C in this action is as follows: Time under fire, five hours. Number in action, including myself, thirty-five; number killed or missing in action, three; number wounded, including myself slightly, eight.
Total casualties, eleven—being over thirty-one per cent. As the enemy fled past our old camp we left their further pursuit, at about half-past five o'clock, to the cavalry, and marched into our morning’s camping-ground, entering which my company numbered in enlisted men present for duty sixteen, being just one-half of the whole regiment then present bearing muskets. If any other company from this city can beat this record I shall be willing to award its commander and members all due honor for the discipline and courage necessary to accomplish such results. My colonel and lieutenant-colonel rode up before dismounting and complimented me upon the manner in which I had fought my maiden battle, and a friend afterwards told me that I was favorably mentioned by my brigade commander in his reports to division headquarters.

Early the next morning large details were made to look for the wounded and bury the slain. The method of procedure was as follows: A picket line of soldiers would be formed, which surrounded the whole of the battlefield—in this case a space five miles long by three wide. Each would then be ordered to advance in a direct line to their camp. In this way all the ground would be covered, and as they approached a common centre would gradually close up, so that men could be spared to assist any found wounded or to bury the dead. Some brigades would enclose a plot with a rude fence, burying all of their own within it for future removal if desired. At the same time our brigade was ordered out towards Fisher’s Hill to “feel for the enemy” or pick up any straggling parties that might have loitered by the way. Returning on the 21st, when within a half-mile of our camp I was surprised by seeing our friend Mr. John N. Stearns. The meeting was as agreeable as it was unexpected. A walk over the field during the afternoon and in the evening listening to the music of a dozen bands or looking at the lurid lights from a circle of camp-fires three or four miles in circumference, with him for a companion, formed a very desirable framing to the exciting pictures of the previous three days. He shared my shelter-tent that night, and together we visited the “hero of the day,” General Sheridan,
on the next morning. Departing, he took my letters home, leaving me a very substantial double blanket and other things by which to remember his very welcome visit.

From this time until January 6 the days were spent in guard duty and trying to keep comfortable, as the weather was quite cold and the ground covered with snow most of the time. We changed camp three or four times, getting nearer Winchester each time.

Having considerable leisure, I conceived the idea of a petition to Congress asking that the pay of officers be increased—that of the enlisted men had risen fifty per cent.; ours was the same as at the beginning of the war. I visited the commanders of every division and brigade in the Army of the Shenandoah, not forgetting General Sheridan, who, being absent, was represented by his adjutant-general. Showing them the draft of the proposed petition, all wished me to go ahead, and Major-General Torbert urged me to "hurry up." I guessed the cause, and lost the signatures of three or four hundred officers, who were ordered away before I could get my printing done. Obtaining a leave of absence, I went to Harper's Ferry, got the blanks printed, returned, sent duplicates to every command in the army. In due season all were returned to me, and when bound together made quite a formidable document, containing the signatures of over nine hundred officers, ranking from lieutenants up to major-generals. A copy was sent to each House of Congress. Hon. John A. Kasson, acknowledging their receipt, wrote me: "It will give me pleasure to be the medium of presenting a petition of so many gallant officers of so gallant an army." I am not aware that any other organized effort was made to secure this object, though I sent copies to every army corps. I accomplished what I sought, and gained a host of friends thereby, for our pay was soon increased about thirty-three per cent.

On January 6, 1865, our division was ordered to Baltimore, at which point our regiment embarked on the steamship Illinois January 12, finding a well-known Green-Pointer, Mr. Campbell, in charge of the steward's department. We reached Savannah, Ga., on the 20th, and on the same day I
Jieminiscences of

was sent for by Major-General Grover, commanding post, and asked if I would like to take charge of the street department of Savannah. Of course I accepted the offer, and the necessary order was published on the 22d. I found good quarters as a boarder with the family of one of Savannah's ex-mayors, and found plenty of work in organizing a department out of nothing to begin with. I found that the city was located on a plain at the top of a steep, sandy bluff fifty feet high above the level of the river. Along this bluff were located the principal warehouses, most of them being five stories in height on the river side and but two on the other, so arranged in connection with the bluff that a cart could drive into either of the four lower stories—an advantage I have never seen elsewhere. This bluff is worth millions to the city when viewed from either a commercial or sanitary point of view. The location and soil of the city are very favorable for health, but that dread plague, yellow fever, is feared every summer. My duties at first were quite onerous. The city must be cleaned up at once or Yellow Jack would be upon us. The mayor and several physicians called at my office, begging me to hasten. I invited suggestions from them at all times. I procured a detail of soldiers; divided the city into inspection districts; an enlisted man was sent into each, directed to call at every house, exhibit his orders to inspect the premises, and look into every cellar, yard, and outbuilding; if refused admission, note the number of the house and pass on, making a note of all nuisances or carts and cart harnesses. I organized blacksmiths', wheelwrights', and carpenters' departments, stables, etc., and in ten days had things in good working order. Sherman's cavalry and artillery had converted her numerous and beautiful parks into stables covered with piles of manure; the city sewers appeared to have been neglected for months, or even years, being in some instances much worse than useless; the sidewalks had been overlooked as well as overrun; pavements were found torn up in places, the stone having been used, it was said, to ballast and sink old hulks in the river's channel to prevent the approach of Federal vessels, the same as we, for an opposite purpose, sank them at Charleston—though, in the
former case, Albion did not protest against the outrage upon the sacred rights of friendly nations. Reference to one of my monthly reports shows the following duty done during that month:

Total number of days' labor .......... 3,165
Total number of loads of garbage removed .... 5,577
Total number of loads of manure removed .... 5,478

Total loads ........................................ 11,055
Costing ........................................ $1,035 40
Number of employees ....................... 222
Number of carts and horses ................. 87

in addition to 18 Government mules. During the month of February 512 dead horses and mules were removed and buried. The poor creatures had been brought in by General Sherman's camp-followers and actually starved to death. They could not live on sand, and would be turned into the streets when almost dead. My men would select such as looked promising, put them into my stables, and in time I had a fine lot of animals; those not wanted being driven to some suitable field, there shot and buried. Those so disposed of are not included in the above 512, and must have exceeded that number. I soon had the city in better order than ever before; I even had time to do ornamental work. Savannah is called the "Forest City," on account of the great number of shade-trees. Some of her streets have four rows of magnificent trees: two in the centre, lining a promenade, and the other two on the sidewalks. I had the trunks of all in the streets whitewashed for seven feet up from the ground, one monthly report showing over 6,200 so treated; the effect was very fine. I also whitewashed the five-story brick warehouses all along the river's front, making quite a tidy contrast with their moss-covered condition—one monthly report showing nearly 11,000 square yards so covered.

General Grover seemed to feel quite proud of my success at sleeking up, and my request to be permitted to accompany my regiment to North Carolina was returned with this endorsement: "The interests of the public service will not
admit of this request being granted at present.” To quiet the citizens I gave the newspaper reporters memoranda of the work accomplished in my department from time to time. Upon one Sabbath morning I received a note from the commanding-general saying that General Grant’s inspector-general had just arrived, and he wished I could submit a detailed statement of the labors performed in my department for him that evening, similar in plan to those given to the newspapers. I had it prepared for him in due season. On one occasion when General William T. Sherman was in town I was sent for to go to headquarters, and was there informed by General Grover that General Sherman had paid me a very high compliment by saying that he had “never before seen the city in such a holiday attire.” It will be remembered that Sherman in his younger days, when a captain, had commanded the garrison of Savannah. I find in his report to General Hallock of this visit, published in Nichols’s “Story of the Great March,” he says that he “found the city in the most admirable police”—i.e., cleanliness.

Savannah was never more healthy than during that summer. I had no hesitation in asking my wife to come to me, bringing our daughter Flora with her. Having, through the kindness of a friend, obtained the needed pass from Washington, they came out about April 1. We found pleasant boarding-houses, took many rides about the city and out to Bonaventure, a beautiful grove of oaks draped with Spanish moss, on a beach five miles distant, and all went merry as could be wished while Sherman was taking his Atlantic promenade and Grant was hammering away at Petersburg.

The citizens soon found that the Yankees knew how to keep a Southern city healthy, and they seemed to feel that my labors were for their especial benefit. The two daily papers of Savannah vied with each other in complimenting my efforts in their behalf.

The way in which the city was surrendered to General Sherman, and the behavior of the leading citizens afterwards, all tended to create very pleasant relations between them.
and the Union forces. An illustration of this occurred at my office in South Broad Street. A lady called upon some matter of business, and during the conversation, noticing that she possessed unusual culture, I asked how she had fared at the hands of our soldiers. She hesitated a moment, and finally related this experience: She was the wife of the Confederate General Blank (the real name I have forgotten), who was a graduate of West Point. Just previous to the capture of Savannah his command was in the city. They had all heard the wildest rumors about the evil propensities of Sherman's Yankee soldiers, and that their war-cry was "Beauty and booty!" So, when her husband told her that the Confederates were to evacuate the city that night, she begged to be taken with him. It was impossible; but in lieu thereof he gave her a note to a Union general known to be with Sherman, and formerly a classmate at West Point, asking that such consideration would be accorded to his wife and infant as might be thought proper by a victorious army. About noon of the day that the Federal troops entered the city she gave this note to a colored man, with orders to find the general to whom it was directed; and she sat down to await the result, not doubting but that she would be sent out of the city, and intending to be thankful if nothing worse happened to her. The messenger returned in an hour, reporting that he had found the general's headquarters, but he was then absent; an aid had promised to hand the note to him upon his return. Her ears were constantly greeted by the noise of drums, cavalry, and cannon passing over an adjacent street, and she waited tremulously, in doubt whether it would not have been better to have kept the note and concealed her identity. At four o'clock a squad of soldiers passing up her street stopped in front of her home; one stepped upon the stoop, and an officer touched the door-bell. Now she knew that her time had come. A servant answered the bell. She heard her name called. She determined to meet her fate, whatever it might be, with a dignity becoming the wife of a Confederate general. The officer was shown into her presence in the parlor, and he asked if this was Mrs. General Blank. She
arose from her chair, saying: "It is." The officer gallantly lifted his cap, saying General So-and-So "sends compliments to Mrs. General Blank, and also a soldier to act as her safeguard. If she will be pleased to furnish him with quarters in her house his rations can be drawn from his company." The sudden change from a sense of danger to one of safety was more than her nerves could bear. She dropped back into her chair and wept. The officer quietly withdrew. The soldier remained, and she found him not only a gallant and brave soldier, but a gentleman and a scholar. He did not draw his rations from his company, but ate at her own table. In telling me this story the moisture in her eyes attested its truthfulness, as well as the mental suffering she must have passed through. She could not but speak in the highest praise of the discipline and order of the Union troops, and such was the testimony of nearly all I met. Occupied houses were protected, deserted ones were occupied. I took the elegant mansion of the rebel General Henry R. Jackson, an ex-United States Minister to Austria. My soldiers read his books; perhaps some went home with them. His piano went to the apartments of the commanding general's adjutant, whose wife touched its keys in the absence of its owner.

The spring of 1865 will be remembered as a season of victories for the Union army. Upon the occasion of the celebration at Fort Sumter General Grover placed a fine steamship at the disposal of his staff officers, which took them there, first stopping at Hilton Head to give us an opportunity to attend a grand ball given by General Gillmore on the evening of March 12. I saw Rev. Henry Ward Beecher at the post. He told me it was the first time he had ever set foot upon the "sacred soil." Arriving at Charleston Harbor, we were surprised at finding ourselves the recipients of grand salutes from the navy and forts, all the gunboats "manning their yards." It was a beautiful sight. The cause was made clear upon reaching the landing and seeing an aid from the commanding-general awaiting our arrival with compliments for the Secretary of the Navy, who was supposed to be on board. Hacks and tow-
boats were gratuitously placed at our disposal for sight-seeing, and freely used during the two or three days that we remained.

Time passed on, and finally came the welcome news that the war was at an end. My regiment was ordered home. I was relieved to accompany it by a very complimentary General Order, dated July 21, from which I clip the following: "The general commanding, in relieving Captain Stearns, feels compelled to tender his high appreciation of him as an officer and his entire satisfaction with the manner in which he has conducted the duties of his office."

Then followed a very pleasant sail home with my family and regiment, a parade up Broadway, escorted by a city regiment, during which I received an offer from Police Commissioner Bergen of a captaincy in the Metropolitan Police Department should I choose to return to its ranks.

I had omitted to state that Captain Corsa, of our regiment, was a nephew of Police Commissioner Acton, so that the Board was kept well posted on my army record. This offer, so considerately tendered, coupled with the solicitations of family and friends, determined me to remain North. I had intended returning to Savannah and leasing a plantation. More recent events have shown how unwise this would have been. The parade was followed by a feast at the Union Club-Rooms, a sail to Hart's Island, and a final muster-out on August 3, 1865, being thirty-seven days short of our term of enlistment, our men receiving eleven months' pay at that time. Money was now plenty, but it had not always been so with us, and almost every officer and soldier had been compelled to run in debt to the sutler. As he was settling up with the officers, I jokingly said to him: "You have never had my name on your books." "Yes, Captain, I have," he replied. "When?" "Once when you offered a fifty-dollar bill that I could not change," was the reply.

Thus I closed my army life, as I hope for ever. Its memories bring some sadness and also much pleasure to me, for I was followed by the love and esteem of friends at home, and accompanied by the respect of my superiors in the army. I cannot feel otherwise than thankful for all.
Reminiscences of the Late War.

My company was mustered out with the following creditable record of those first mustered in. Later recruits are not included in this list:

Number taken from Riker's Island.................95
Of these there were killed in action......................6
Missing in action, probably killed......................1
Killed in an affray.................................1
Killed by accident...................................1
Died of wounds received in action......................2
Died of disease.......................................7

Total deaths........................................18

Or nearly 20 per cent. *

Such a record should satisfy the most punctilious as to the fighting qualities of Company C of the 131st New York Vols.

Much might now be said about the observed effects of army life upon the character of the soldier. I entered the army feeling weak, having always had wise friends to go to when in need of advice. I came out feeling that I could hold my own with the average army officer.

The "horrors of war" have often been depicted both by pen and pencil, but still you really know but little about it. You have never had a victorious enemy march past your door, and God grant that you never may!

I will close by thanking my friends of those days for the good offices, the sympathies, and the kindly wishes that were so acceptably tendered to me upon all suitable occasions during my service in the volunteer army of our beloved country.

* All with one exception unmarried men; the married seeming to be under providential protection. The single exception was our esteemed friend, Hubert H. Booth, who died the night before we reached home.
ROSTER
OF
As it left New York City, September 14, 1862.

The names of those who were killed in battle or died of wounds received in action are printed in small caps. Those who died of disease in italics. Subsequent promotions are also noted.

Captain Albert Stearns.
Commissioned as Major.

First Lieutenant Eugene H. Fales.
Commissioned as Captain.

Second Lieutenant George E. Pinckney.
Promoted to First Lieutenant, Co. "B."

Orderly-Sergeant Robert W. Reid.
Promoted to Lieutenant, Co. "D."

SERGEANTS.

*Hubert H. Booth,*
Promoted to Quartermaster-Sergeant.
Commissioned as Lieutenant.

George W. Kelsey,
George Pearson.

CORPORALS.

Jonas Cheshire, Jr.,
Promoted to Sergeant.

Charles W. Weeks,
Promoted to Sergeant.

Edward Northrup,
Promoted to Orderly-Sergeant and afterwards transferred to Invalid Corps.

Walter E. Lomas,
William A. Parremore,
William Sherlock.
Reminiscences of

PRIVATE.

Augenmer, George,
Ayers, Henry,
Promoted to Orderly-Sergeant.
Booth, John,
Barry, David,
Beir, Frederick,
Brown, David,
Killed by accident.
Callaghan, Edward.
Campbell, Michael,
Canava, James,
Carme, Joseph,
Clark, Clement,
Clayton, James,
Clous, John,
Connors, Michael,
Killed in an affray.
Conway, James,
Corwin, George E.,
Coryear, George,
Counter, Olive,
Promoted to Sergeant.
Davis, John,
Dickson, James,
Dobiecki, Joseph A.,
Duer, Charles,
Promoted to Corporal of Co. "D."
Duff, James B.,
Promoted to Sergeant.
Dugan, Thomas,
Ebert, Henry,
Edwards, Richard,
Eaherty, John.
Francis, John W.,
Gesmer, Isaac,
Gibbins, George,
Harrington, John,
Haven, Joseph P.,
Hill, Roswell, Jr.,
Promoted to Corporal.
Hillier, Edward,
Hillier, Daniel,
Hillier, Daniel T.,
Hindle, Frederick,
Hoffman, William,
Promoted to Corporal.
Johnson, John,
Jones, Benjamin,
Promoted to Sergeant.
Jones, Thomas,
Kayser, Frederick.
Kelly, James,
Kelly, Thomas,
Promoted to Corporal.
Kennedy, Martin,
Kenney, Theodore W.,
Kiepler, David,
Kimmerly, Frederick
Promoted to Corporal of Co. "D."
Knoeller, William,
Koberg, Adolph,
Kreller, Frank,
Lamprecht, August,
Lawrence, Charles W.,
McCabe, Michael,
McGuire, James,
Moran, John,
Murray, James,
Missing in action; probably killed.
Ogden, Isaac,
Promoted to Hospital Steward.
Peaseell, Henry,
Petersen, Christian.
Petersen, Henry,
Pewtnar, George E.,
Pitcher, William,
Reeves, Peter W.,
Reils, Henrich.
Saxton, Richard,
Schank, Joseph,
Sheppard, John,
Sherwin, George,
Smith, Peter,
Thoma, Blasious,
Thompson, John,
Tichenor, Eugene,
Titus, Asa T.,  
Promoted to Sergeant.
Tuers, Cornelius T.,  
Promoted to Corporal.
Vanderveer, William,
Wallace, Patrick C.,

Walters, Stephen.
Weeks, Lafayette B.,  
Promoted to Corporal.
Whitman, Andrew,
Williams, Thomas,
Woodcock, Charles,
Young, Charles L.,  
Promoted to Sergeant.

Young, David.

ROSTER
OF
RECRUITS MUSTERED IN AFTER NOV. 1, 1863.

PRIVATES.

Ackerman, William,
Cameron, Henry,
Charvin, Paul,
Collins, John,
Entries, Joseph,
Heath, John,
Hennis, John,
Johnson, Henry,
Johnson, Robert,
Kiley, Thomas,
Meenan, James,
McCune, Patrick,
Moore, Patrick,
O'Brien, Michael,
Rinehart, Rosier,
Royal, Charles,
Semazon, Aristide,

Stack, Adolph,
Torrey, Charles E.,
Van Steinberg, Thomas,  
Promoted to Corporal.
Vingham, Henry,
Vreeland, John,
Wall, James.
Missing in action; probably killed.
Williams, Charles,
Wilson, Andrew,
Wisson, August,
Wolff, Casper,
Yage, John,
Zulch, Henry,
Hooper, George H.,  
Colored Cook.

The company participated in the battles of Irish Bend, Vermillion Bayou, Donaldsonville, and the long siege of Port Hudson; also, the battles of Opequan Creek, Fisher's Hill, and Cedar Creek, having men killed or mortally wounded, and many less serious casualties, in almost every action. The severity of the duties
performed and the unhealthiness of the Southern climate are mainly chargeable with the death of seven by disease, and rendered necessary the discharge of thirteen for disabilities incurred in the service. A number were transferred from the company by promotion and otherwise, so that the losses from all causes amounted to fifty-one, leaving but forty-four enlisted men of the original ninety-five on the roster at the final muster-out.