

# DONALDSONVILLE

## CANNONIERS.

A Gallant Louisiana Command Famous  
During the Civil War.

Recollections of Its Part in the  
Siege of Petersburg.

Marching and Bivouacking on the Way  
to the Front.

Soldiers Devote Rations to the Poor  
of Richmond—Hospitality of  
the Virginia Women.

### I.

I purpose contributing to the Picayune the history of the part taken by a Creole battery, "The Cannoniers of Donaldsonville" (known officially as Maurin's Battery), in the defense of Petersburg; and, as the matter is adapted from my diary, there will be no attempt at a polished style, but rather a plain, unvarnished tale of the events of each day as set down in pencil in the time-stained book before me.

At that time the battery was attached to the battalion of Major "Buck" Miller (formerly of the Washington Artillery), and formed part of A. P. Hill's Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia. We had actively participated in that campaign against Grant from the Rapidan to the Chickahominy, perhaps the grandest campaign on record in the elements that make ambition glorious. Grant started his "on to Richmond" movement with over 140,000 men, while the superb Lee, with less than 53,000 men of all arms, stood like a lion in his path, leaving the marks of his claws at the bloody battles of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, North Anna, and second Cold Harbor. The most remarkable record of this campaign is the fact that from May 3, 1864, to June 10, the official loss of the Army of the Potomac amounted to 60,000 men, or more soldiers than Lee had in his command.

And now for the diary of daily events:  
Monday, June 13—The enemy appears to have moved from our front in the direction of the south side. By 6 o'clock a. m. our corps was streaming by every road towards the Chickahominy. Our guns having joined the balance of the battalion, the line of march led through a dense swamp over which McClellan had constructed a substantial road in 1862. We crossed the Chickahominy, now a very insignificant stream, at "Federal," or "Fifth Cavalry" bridge, two miles above "Grapevine" bridge. Half an hour's march brought us to Fair Oaks station, on the York River Railroad, where we halted for orders. Near this point the right wing of the federal army rested during the battle of Seven Pines. Moved by the "nine mile" road to its junction with the Williamsburg road, where we halted for two hours to rest the horses. While here one could view, 500 yards to the westward, the position held by my gun (piece 3) during that bloody Sunday's fight at Seven Pines. We resumed march at 8 o'clock, and at 2 o'clock next morning went into bivouac at Williams' farm, on the Charles City road, fifteen miles southwest of Richmond.

June 14—This day's rations have been devoted to the poor of Richmond by unanimous consent of the company. The enemy's gunboats thundered forth several times during the day. It is the general impression that Grant is changing base to the south side. Mint tea is fashionable in camp. Cool nights with heavy dew prevail.

June 15.—We moved promptly at 3 a. m. A steady march of one and one-half hours' duration brought us to Jacob S. Atlee's farm, on the Darbytown road, six miles south of Richmond, where we halted to cook rations and feed horses, then moved a short distance up the Darby road and settled down for the day. As this point is but four miles from Drury's bluff, the growling of the Yankee gunboats is heard quite plainly.

June 18—Reveille at 1:30 o'clock a. m., as orders to move had been received during the night. At daylight we found the Darbytown road crowded with infantry moving northward. Heavy firing was noticed in the direction of Chaffin's farm. Our guns followed a tortuous road across country to the river road, which we met near Stern's farm, one of our old old camping grounds in 1862. Here the boys striped an orchard of cherries and green apples for an *al fresco* luncheon. We crossed the James river at Colonel Knight's farm by means of a rude pontoon bridge. From the bridge the view was enchanting, including Richmond to our right and Drury's bluff to the left. Midway between the bridge and the bluff are formidable looking obstructions. On reaching the Chesterfield bank, we traversed the plantation of Wm. Watkins, one of the finest places in Virginia. Emerging from the plantation road we struck the Richmond and Petersburg turnpike at a point five miles below the capital. The dust became intolerable, and, with the intense heat of the sun, made this march memorable for discomfort. We crept along in the rear of the corps wagons, encouraged only by the hope of fighting under our own Beauregard, and in defense of the "Cockade city." When opposite Port Walthall the crash of musketry was quite plain coming from the direction of the river, while the dull boom of cannon came to our ears from the direction of the besieged town. During a halt at Drury's bluff the ladies in the vicinity gave us a supply of milk. Ah! those dear patriotic Virginia women! What an ever-present inspiration their self-sacrifice affords! From the flank fortifications of the bluff to the city the road is lined with graves, wrecks of wagons, and other debris of the battle of the 18th inst. At 6 o'clock p. m., the guns were parked on Dunn's hill, overlooking Petersburg. I patched my ragged pants, enjoyed a wash, then went to town to pay a visit before my turn for guard duty. I found my friends terribly nervous at the prospect of being in the midst of siege operations. I had some difficulty in passing the guard at Pocahontas bridge on return to the bivouac.

EUGENE H. LEVY.

(Continued Next Monday.)