

Reminiscences of a Command Famous  
in the Civil War:Hard Life of the Confederates in the  
Trenches.Glimpse of Three Illustrious Command-  
ers in Consultation.The Slow Advance of Grant's Forces  
on Petersburg—Pages from  
a War-Time Diary.

## IV.

July 5, 1864.—Life in the trenches has fairly begun, the more so the pity of it. Our men have been, to a certain extent, demoralized by fighting under cover. They now betray a sort of nervousness as indicated by dodging shells, an involuntary motion in wondrous contrast to the reckless bravery displayed when fighting in the open. Desertion has become quite common, principally among men from the mountainous regions. The horrors of our daily life are beyond description; our forefathers of the time of Alfred the Great indulged in greater luxury. Reveille is at dawn, after having stood Reveille is at dawn, after having stood. Our shelter consists of two sheets of canvas or rubber cloth stretched over a cross-pole to protect us from the heavy dew; rain we can scarcely provide against. The dust of the inner ditch is intolerable, and, when taken over this into red mud, we take off our valuable shoes and try to drain the water down towards the covered way.

Water is brought from an old well on the farm, and is so precious that half a canteen is considered a full allowance for the morning ablutions. Our simple breakfast of corn bread, rusty bacon and such other articles of prime necessity as our scanty purses permit, is prepared in a frying pan over a small open fire; the boiling process is done in a tin cup. As the sharpshooters are comfortably lodged in trees opposite our position, every incautious movement away from the shelter of the earthworks is attended with peril.

Forty yards in front of the works are the rifle pits, occupied by the ever-grievous pickets. All night long these tireless heroes are straining their eyes through the darkness to prevent a surprise, or firing at working parties of the enemy as the parallel approaches creep towards us. At dawn a white cloth is elevated on a ramrod by one of the men on picket, as a sign of truce during the day, and this truce is held inviolate.

Supplies are sent us by the covered way from the wagon camp, some mules in the rear; while the people of Petersburg, forced to trade upon the necessities of the army, bring cakes, pies, fried chicken and other delicacies of the season for sale to the men. Whisky is smuggled in that way, and many a poor fellow under the influence of liquor becomes imprudent and gets a minie ball into his corporation. Our amusements consist of reading, playing chess, checkers or cards. Reading is, however, an expensive luxury, as the Richmond *Whig* or *Examiner* costs a dollar a copy.

On occasions when firing has ceased in our front by mutual consent, we scramble over the earthwork with haversack on shoulder and gather pieces of shell, solid shot and flattened lead bullets, which had been fired at us by "our friend the enemy." This metal we "vote" to town when on leave of absence and sell to the ordnance department at 10 cents per pound. Thus fragments of shells are recast at the Tredegar Iron Works at Richmond and shot back at their original owners within a week. The hard-earned money obtained from this source avails but little in buying the necessities of life, as salt and sugar are worth a dollar a pound, peas sixty dollars a bushel and a pair of red russet shoes cost a hundred dollars.

Sunday is generally observed as a day of rest, as General Pendleton, chief of artillery of Lee's army, was an ordained minister when the war broke out. Army chaplains come to visit us occasionally, and are received with respectful attention, but the majority of the men of the Donaldsonville artillery, being Catholics, are wont to count the beads of their rosaries and offer up supplications to the God of battles in a private manner. The Norfolk (Va.) Blues, alongside of us, is composed of a model and fervent religious set of men, who enjoy preaching and prayer meetings at frequent intervals.

July 6, 1864.—Visited friends to-day in the Twelfth Virginia Regiment (Maone's old command), which holds the position on Wilcox's farm, a mile to our right. In passing along the covered way I noticed negroes wheeling dirt away from the counter mine, which our engineers are arranging to meet the mine that the Yanks are boring through a hill about 200 yards to the left of our redoubt. Nearly every afternoon there is a conference of our leaders near my gun, because the earthworks there form a salient, thus affording a fair view of the intricate net work of redoubts, forts and traverse works to the Appomattox on the left and towards Hatcher's Run on the extreme right.

How the boys worship General Lee, whose calm, handsome face and noble mien command reverence! Always in undress uniform on these occasions, and with a couple of orderlies holding the horses near by, he looks the personification of modest dignity. He always has a pleasant word for the officers or privates near whose quarters he chances to rest, while inspecting through his field glasses the powerful siege guns of the enemy's fortifications within the sweep of his vision. A. P. Hill, pale and delicate-featured, is at the side of the great leader this afternoon, and little "Billy" Maone makes the third of this distinguished group. They confer with great earnestness, pointing to the right, where Grant is extending his line, with the manifest intention of enveloping our most exposed flank and cutting off our railroad communication with the south. This conference lasted an hour or more, and at its conclusion General Lee mounted his horse, shook hands with Hill and Maone, bowed to the group of officers and men in the vicinity, and rode back towards the city.

As Hill was about to leave and return to his headquarters, an irreverent Creole cried out, "Cut that curl!" alluding to a stray fragment of his ambrosial locks that straggled from his kept-down the middle of his forehead. The cry was taken up, just as any other trivial incident of the campaign is treated by the gay, thoughtless veteran, and "Cut that curl!" echoed for miles along the front of the Third Corps.

Before General Early was detached with his command he rode along the line with a black feather in his felt hat, and as the gay boys were reminded by the ornament of a duck's tail, the "Quack, quack!" from hundreds of throats betokened the approach of the most profane general officer of the army.

General Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson, of blessed memory, invariably compelled the most enthusiastic cheering from the men by reason of their high moral characters and distinguished bearing. The most profound admiration was invariably expressed for these grand men on their appearance among the troops.

After dark my gun was moved a hundred yards to the right, to make room for Moore's Battery. This move placed the gun directly on the ruins of the River's house. The operation of transferring the ammunition chests to bomb-proofs in the new position was attended with a lot of hard work, that kept the gun detachment up until past midnight. Rations have been decreased to a pound of meal and four ounces of meat per diem. This is the result of taking so many prisoners and having to feed them.

July 7.—During the night the enemy, despite continuous firing on the part of our brave pickets, advanced about a hundred yards, and by dawn we discovered an immense new earthwork in the midst of the River wheat field, where none had been at the setting of the sun. It is evident that Grant's army cannot be depended on for a front assault, and the great blunderer has adopted siege operations by parallel approaches. The privates appreciate this fact, consequently

there was fierce pistol firing all day from those hot little pits in front of our rifle line. The guns opened on the Yanks during the day, in order to annoy working parties and to secure accurate range of their new works, while the Blue Boys responded with accuracy, showing great accuracy in firing.

Friday, July 8.—I borrowed a copy of Shakespeare from a town acquaintance and enjoyed "Othello" in the "boom, pride and circumstance of glorious war." The restoration of Secretary Chase appears to have caused intense excitement at the north. Early's capture of Martinsburg and advance towards Harper's Ferry have also tended to make the Yankee nation think that truce has broke loose again. At 5 o'clock p. m. in accordance with special orders from General Mahone, the guns along the line opened from left to right, in order to develop the position of the Yankee artillery. There was a grand burst for half an hour, then quiet reigned along the line, except in Longstreet's front. On our left the opposing works are now so close that an incessant fusillade is kept up night and day. Mortar shells add to the general effect at night, and we mark their graceful course by the lighted fuse. When these monstrous shells come down inside the works, romance ceases and widespread destruction ensues. The shellings of Petersburg set our heads nodding from day to day, and up to this time Grant has never complied with the usages of civilized warfare by giving notice to the authorities to remove non-combatants. Are we to have a taste of the black flag? EUGENE H. SEELY.