

Recollections of a Gallant Command in the Civil War.

Alarm and Confusion in Mobile in the Summer of 1864.

In the Trenches Before Petersburg, Resisting Grant's Advance.

Constant Fighting and Heavy Losses but the Morale of the Confederates Remained Intact.

VIII.

In the last installment of extracts from my diary, written during the civil war, I narrated my trip from the front through the heart of the devastated Confederacy. On arriving in Mobile I found a peculiar and characteristic condition of affairs. My diary is resumed:

Aug. 13, 1864—Confusion reigned supreme at Mobile. As before related, the Confederate ram Tennessee, bearing the broad pennant of Admiral Buchanan, had fought the entire Yankee fleet, mounting over 200 guns, and had been compelled to surrender on the 5th inst. Fort Gaines was captured by the combined land and naval forces on the 8th, and Fort Morgan was invested by the army and navy; thus the enemy was virtually in possession of Mobile bay. A panicky feeling existed in the city and martial law prevailed.

Forced to report immediately to the provost marshal, my furlough was stamped with a special permit to remain ten days in the city; others not so fortunate were banished from town or enrolled in the home guards. The vast majority of the citizens decided to remain and risk capture with the city, while many fled to inland towns, "where the wicked (Yankees) cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

By reason of the federal invasion, the supply of fish and oysters, favorite food of Mobilians, has been interfered with. Vegetables are hard to get, as the country folks are afraid to venture into town, so that family marketing for the plainest sort of fare costs \$30 per day for mighty short commons.

Tuesday, 23d—Fort Morgan surrendered this day with its entire garrison, a sad blow to our country and another source of anxiety to the citizens of Mobile, although this does not add materially to the risk of the immediate capture of the city. The Mobile Register, an excellent newspaper, contains daily accounts by telegraph and mail of the military operations in all departments of the country—of Lee's army at Petersburg, Hood's in Georgia and Dick Taylor's in the trans-Mississippi department. It is evident however, from editorial comments and citizens' letters to the newspapers that the best military minds of the Confederacy are possessed by those who do not bear commissions in the army or navy, but who can criticize the deeds of the brave soldiers at the front and the sailors who risk their lives on our puny vessels for the sacred cause.

One demoralizing influence of the war is to be noted on attending fashionable receptions, for despite war's alarms, social functions hold sway in the beleaguered city; that is, the penchant of the women for anything clad in uniform. Gold lace appears to be the social leveler; the fact that a man is attached to either branch of the service is a passport to good society. Patriotism in such cases dominates ordinary discretion, and as a consequence, the tone of decent society has been distinctly lowered. The daughters of the elegant Mme. L., for instance, were escorted at their mother's reception by men who had been professional gamblers.

Aug. 20—We build strong hopes for an armistice as the result of the Democratic convention, to be held at Chicago to-day, for the purpose of nominating a candidate for president of the United States, so-called.

Thursday, Sept. 8—I left Mobile on my return to the army, after a sad farewell to the family, in company with Colonel Wm. M. Levy, of General Dick Taylor's staff, and reached Richmond on Sunday, 18th. Two days later I returned to Petersburg and found that stores and munitions of war were being removed across the Appomattox.

Sept. 21—Reported for duty at my gun in the midst of a terrific bombardment of the town. Found comrades in good spirits, quite a contrast to the creaking citizens of Mobile, and related my adventures while the minie balls made familiar music as they whistled over the parapets. From 6 to 7 o'clock p. m. the truce now exists in front, which both armies take advantage of to relieve pickets. During the cessation of firing I looked about and found few changes at this post since the battle of July 30, except that the Yankee picket line had been advanced fifty yards nearer, while his main line of battle seems to have fallen back to a heavier line of redoubts. The extension of the enemy's left toward the Weldon Railroad has compelled a corresponding move on our part. A few siege guns have been mounted on the heights in the rear of our field works, a complicated system of covered roads has been instituted, and our countermine from Battery 27 is yet in process of construction. Among the gun detachment I missed Rouzeau, a splendid soldier, who had been killed by a solid shot while in the act of firing the gun. The plank on which I rested this night, after having enjoyed the luxuries of home, did not seem a "thrill driven bed of down."

Reveille is now at 8 o'clock a. m. The Yankees attack the heavy guns behind us with 15-inch mortar shells, giving us the benefit of stray shots. During the afternoon truce I went down to our rifle pits and was amused at the fire of repartee which the opposing pickets indulge in as they sit on the edges of their pits. The Yanks have the advantage of the argument to-day, boasting of Sheridan's defeat of Early in the valley. Our boys, however, are feasting on the beef captured by Hampton's cavalry last Sunday. "Come over and have some Hampton beefsteak, Yank," was the latest joke. "Grayback, come over and ride in that train" (alluding to the military railroad from City Point). "We wouldn't mind it, Blue Jay, if you kept separate cars for the niggers!" was the rejoinder. Those were fair specimens of the badinage of the rifle pits.

Saturday, 20—Reveille at 2 o'clock a. m., as General Lee had learned of the intention of the enemy to fire a shotted salute to-day in honor of Sheridan's victory. Their guns opened on us at 7 o'clock, and took up the salute from the right to left of the line and back again. No one hurt among our battery.

Sunday, Sept. 25—Weather turned cold about midnight. The autumn has fairly commenced. No truce occurred to-day, as some of the men have taken advantage of the short armistice to desert to the fleshpots of the enemy.

Friday, 30th—Went to Richmond on leave, and found that the snorting citizens had been aroused by the alarm bell when the enemy forced our lines at Deep Bottom, and that the provost guard was arresting every one and sending them to the front. Shouldered a musket and started with some comrades to join the "Departmental Battalion," located on the Randolph farm, near Newmarket road; sounds of battle from the direction of Chaffin's bluff gave the fresh levies food for meditation. But I returned to Richmond, as there appeared to be no immediate prospect of a fight in defense of the city. At the suggestion of Rabbi Michaelbacher, of Richmond, General Lee has granted a short furlough to all Jewish soldiers in his army to come to the city on the occasion of the celebration of the day of atonement, so the line of battle, stretching about forty miles, from Richmond to Hatcher's Run, was considerably thinned by the Hebrew exodus.

Fort Harrison, a strong earthwork near Chaffin's farm, has been captured by the enemy, causing intense excitement in the city. The boom of cannon continued throughout the night. The provost guard have stringent orders as to the impressment of citizens for military duty; only the pass of General Kemper,

commanding the local defense force, is respected.

Houses were searched by the provost guard for citizens of retiring disposition. It is strange how many of these suddenly became 60 years old in order to claim exemption from service. Visited comrades at the Louisiana hospital, and was told by Henry Newchurch that on Friday night last every preparation had been made to evacuate the lines in front of Petersburg in anticipation of the enemy's flanking our position at Chaffin's farm.

Sunday, Oct. 9—I went to the capitol where the body of the gallant General Gregg lay in state, witnessed the funeral obsequies of the dead hero, and had the pleasure to see our noble president amid the solemn cortege.

Oct. 12—Returned to my gun and found it now supported by a portion of the Sixteenth Mississippi, Harris' Brigade. No sharpshooting during the day, but that practice at night is incessant. The guns have been fitted with mantlets, semicircular wooden shields resting on the re-enforced portion of the piece, the object of which is to protect the gun detachment from sharpshooters. The mantlet is not used when the gun is in action. Funnel-shaped wooden frames have been inserted in the earthwork near the parapet through which a good view of the front can be had with slight danger from sharpshooters; these contrivances are dubbed by the boys "Dimmock's opera-glasses." On account of cool weather it has become necessary to build chimneys out of mud and sticks at one opening of our canvas shelter; thus winter quarters have been established in the trenches. It is now the custom to load the guns at night with spherical case.

Oct. 14—A curious ruse has been resorted to in order to draw the enemy's fire, and thus secure fragments of iron to sell to the ordnance department, namely, the "sham charge." The officers in command of the pickets commence giving orders: "Attention! right dress, steady, fix bayonets, forward, double-quick, charge!" The enemy, naturally expecting an assault, opens heavily along the line, and during truce hour we gather the harvest of wasted shot and shell. Heavy firing takes place in the direction of Dutch Gap canal, which is rapidly approaching completion, then the grand attack on our lines by land and water is apt to happen. Fine mortar practice is indulged in daily, the shells are directed at guns and mortars beyond us. Northern news copied in Richmond papers indicates that the state elections have gone in favor of the Republican party. This points to the election of Lincoln in November, and is perhaps fortunate for us, for if McClellan were elected, and should adopt a conciliatory policy, the "home guards" of the Confederacy would be inclined to go back into the union.

Oct. 15—Captain Prosper Landry returned to-day and took charge of the company. General Lee is adopting the most stringent measures in order to increase the army. Negroes are being impressed as teamsters, while all supernumerary and detailed men are being armed with muskets and sent to the front. Of our battery, John S. Moton, Savoy, Delmer and Charlet were ordered to Fort Gregg, a heavy earthwork about two miles to our right, to form part of the garrison there. Gun detachments are now limited to seven men and a corporal, the supernumeraries acting as infantry in support of their guns. Billings, of Moore's Battery, was killed to-day, just as his head appeared for a moment over the parapet.

Oct. 17—Heavy firing on our line, in which my piece was actively engaged. The mortar practice of the enemy is too accurate for comfort. Two infantrymen, who were visiting us, got down in the bombproof and decided not to stay for dinner for fear of accidents. The enemy kept up his infernal attentions until midnight.

Tuesday, 18th—An eleven-inch shell tore the embrasure of my gun to splinters, and I was one of a fatigue party to cut wadding poles to repair damages.

Oct. 19—On detail from 8 o'clock a. m. to 4 p. m., with a large party engaged in making a covered way for the artillery to retreat through in case of emergency. Solved the abstruse problem, "How little work can a certain number of soldiers do in a limited time?" Severe bombardment of our position by the siege guns and mortar batteries diagonally opposite.

Thursday—This day was distinguished by the heavy and continuous bombardment to which our part of the line has been subjected. A gun of the Norfolk Blues, twenty yards to the right of my gun, was disabled by a mortar shell. We are kept so busy fighting from day to day that although battles rage on the extreme right, and we hear the pounding of the guns and crash of musketry, we take no note of them, except what we learn from straggling infantrymen or read in the Richmond papers. At 10 o'clock p. m. orders were received to prepare to repel an assault, which would probably take place at dawn on the morrow.

Friday—Awoke at 4 a. m., no assault, no breakfast, no comfort, nothing doing. During the month of August, despite the fiercest opposition on the part of General Lee, the Yankees had made a lodgement on the Weldon Railroad, thus cutting off our main artery of supplies from the Carolinas. The loss to our army in killed, wounded, and prisoners runs up into the thousands, yet the morale of the army has not been seriously affected. Above all sentiments is implicit confidence in the wisdom and patriotism of our leaders, and a grim determination to die in the last ditch if it be necessary. As a consequence of the hold gained by the enemy on the Weldon Railroad, a line of redoubts was built connecting this point with the old left of his army on the Jerusalem plank road. In September, Grant, after a stubborn, but ineffectual, resistance by a part of A. P. Hill's Corps, extended his field works to the Boynton road, thus forcing us to string out our line of infantry to a dangerous point in order to protect the South Side Railroad.

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