

DONALDSONVILLE CANNONIERS.

Recollections of a Command Famous in the Civil War.

Anxious Days and Nights in the Trenches at Petersburg.

The Desperate Struggle Known as the Battle of the Crater.

The Work of a Single Shell—What a Wounded Man Saw of a Famous Encounter.

VI.

I resume the extracts from my diary, written during the civil war, in the trenches before Petersburg, Va.:

July 22, 1864.—Last night the skirmishing on our left was incessant. The rattle of musketry seldom has the effect of disturbing the repose of those of us who are not immediately interested; it is only when the dead and wounded are carried over the field works in the vicinity of our guns that sympathy is fully aroused, and the boys lend a helping hand. On these occasions our crude knowledge of surgery, gained by observation and experience on so many battle fields, renders us helpful to our comrades. The prompt use of the tourniquet has saved many a precious life, and few nurses have more skill or delicacy in the use of the bandage than the old campaigners.

One of the horrors of war inflicted on us by the Yankee government is the prohibition of the importation of drugs and medicines from the north, even for the use of their own sick and wounded prisoners at Richmond, Belle Isle and points further south. Is this civilized warfare, or have civilization and warfare any affinity?

There appears to be unwonted activity among the enemy in our front in the matter of massing troops towards his right flank, whereas heretofore his policy has been to extend his left beyond Hatcher's Run. His field works are being strengthened and pushed forward gradually. On our side fatigue duty at night has become the rule, our attention being devoted mainly to adding entanglements to the abatis in front of the works. Can it be that Grant expects his legions to attempt the direct assault again?

We feel quite encouraged to-day by the news from Atlanta of Hood's success in some minor engagements, yet we fear his inexperience. As a brigade commander he was in his sphere. No incident of the war could have been more superb than the charge of Hood's Texas Brigade on Pope's left at second Manassas, just as our four batteries opened on the masses of Yankee infantry. What the Texans left of those red-legged Zouaves must be running yet. On that memorable day I saw "Stonewall" Jackson for the last time. As he rode up to greet Longstreet, who had just forced his way through Thoroughfare gap in the nick of time, a peculiarly sweet smile played over that grave visage that I can never forget.

Sunday, July 24.—Entertained at dinner some comrades of the Twelfth Virginia and Twenty-second Georgia, our nearest supporting regiments. Bought lightbread from town which had been made to order by a skillful dandy. It is something of a luxury to exist nowadays, with flour worth \$2.25 per pound and blackeye peas \$3 a quart. Our guests were amused at night by the singing of French songs around the camp fire by the glee club of the company. In fact, crowds of soldiers gather near us on these occasions to listen to these gay songs in a foreign tongue. In battle, nothing can be more inspiring than when Morel, the crack gunner of the battery, with rich bass voice, starts up the "Marseillaise." At the invocation, "Allons enfants de la patrie," the blood seems to course through the veins with fever heat, and the nervous feeling with which one invariably goes into the fray gives way under the influence of the inspired words of Roget de Lisle. The gaiety of the Creole is thus displayed in contrast with the serious demeanor of the Virginia artillerymen, whose best thoughts are then fixed on God and the eternal life beyond the grave; 'tis but the difference in temperament.

Troops are being drawn from this line to be sent to the north side of the Appomattox, and it appears like our infantry support is reduced to one poor, starved remnant to every 10 feet of earthwork. Having the interior line, we can re-enforce any threatened point through the covered ways at short notice; and, again, we have supreme confidence in the ability of "Marse Bob" to do the right thing at the right time. It does seem, however, that, with all his genius and presence, he cannot prevail much longer against the enormous mass of men and guns opposed to us. New batteries of heavy siege guns are being uncovered by the enemy. There is no limit to his resources, as money will buy recruits as well as cannon.

Monday.—I arose perfectly chilled through by the east wind that accompanied the heavy rain storm of last night. It was impossible to light a fire in the trenches, as everything had been wet; so we shivered until the glorious sun shone out. Letters from the home folks, refugees from New Orleans and sojourning at Mobile, warmed the cockles of our hearts. I went to town on a pass, played chess and enjoyed a night's rest in a bed, undisturbed by the rattle of musketry or the crash of mortar shells.

Tuesday.—Wrote letters to the family. After dinner, started for the front, stopping on the way to visit my friends of the Twenty-second Georgia. Enjoyed a jolly game of whist until the bugle sounded "lights out"; then groped my way to the old gun so dear to my heart.

Wednesday.—The enemy opened an enfilading battery on our position and continued to annoy us throughout the day. A 32-pounder shell passed through the parapet and fell within six feet of my shelter. Fortunately the fuse proved defective, or the intruder would have blown some of us to "kingdom come." It does seem as if a special providence watches over us reprobates, while the God-fearing fellows in our vicinity who appear to pray fervently to get to heaven frequently have their prayers answered literally. However, damage enough was inflicted on officers' tents and their contents. A poor, sickly-looking boy of Finnegan's Brigade has the top of his head taken off as cleanly as if cut with a knife as he came from the well, and while a long quivered on his lips. Others near by lost an arm or leg, and the gun detachment was kept busy assisting the surgeons. As night approached the fire of the big guns slackened, and the muskets of the opposing pickets kept up the merry racket all night.

Large details for fatigue duty were put to work repairing the breaches in the works made by the bombardment. This sudden activity of the Yanks indicates to us that a big movement is on foot; we pray that it may portend an assault. However, all of the Third Corps, except Anderson's Division, has been withdrawn from this line. Heath's Division left yesterday, and its place is now occupied by Wright's Brigade in single file. This evening Captain Landry turned in his section of Richmond Parrott guns, and received in their stead two fine Napoleons, which were immediately placed in position. Being so close to the enemy (now about 800 feet distant as well as we can judge), the risk of a quick rush is more imminent from a vigilant foe, and these smooth-bore guns can spit canister or spherical case as fast as we can feed it to them in the event of an uninvited intrusion on the part of the Yankees. Rain again to-night, much to our disgust and discomfort.

Victory by Mary's small army over the federals under Crook inspires us with fresh hope as to the speedy termination of the campaign. To-day the ene-

my had the impertinence to relieve his pickets at noon, instead of at nightfall, as is customary. What is up?

Friday.—This morning was devoted to entertaining a number of friends from the Twelfth Virginia, who dropped in for a visit. Some brought rations with them, while we contributed soup and bread to the Lucullan feast. Strange fact that these infantrymen, seasoned veterans as they are, dodged every time a cannon ball or shell whizzed over their heads as they sat at dinner, deep down in the trenches. While on guard a deserter was sent in by our pickets, and I escorted him to General Mahone's tent. He told of preparations for an assault on the morrow, and the most careful preparations were made by us to forestall the movement. Half the gunners stood guard at a time, the others slept at their posts on the gun platforms, as well as the prevailing excitement would permit. There has been no truce on the picket line this week to permit of the usual exchange of courtesies and rations—nothing but vicious firing at night and unrelaxed vigilance during the day. With the rain water accumulated in the rifle pits and meager rations to comfort the stomach, the patriotism of the army is sorely tried. A Yankee picket called over to one of our men: "Say, Johnny, why don't you send General Finnegan over?" "What for?" was the reply. "To take command of his brigade, of course; it's all over here," was the rejoinder.

Saturday, July 30.—Revelle was sounded at 2 o'clock a. m. We crowded to the front, peering through the embrasures across the short space between the lines, as the continuous rattle of musketry told of the vigilance of our brave guards in the rifle pits. Swiftly the big guns were loaded with canister, and vainly we strained our eyes through the gloom in the direction of the enemy. From the depth of the trenches comrades handed coffee to the gun detachment on post, the only refreshment required by those whose hearts and muscles were so tense in expectation of the death struggle. The minutes seemed hours as we waited and watched until the silver streaks of dawn betokened the approach of day. Then rose the sun majestically through the fog and the god of day never before appeared so bright to our excited imaginations. We had become careless, being convinced that Grant had prudently decided not to stir up the hornet's nest, when suddenly to our left there mounted to the sky an immense shaft of black smoke, rent by flashes of blood-red flame in lightning strokes. The ground reeled and throbbed beneath our feet as the volcano burst from the bowels of the earth, hurling upward men, cannon, logs and vast boulders, obscuring the light of day. The fiends had sprung their mine. Like a funeral pall hung the ink cloud over the scene of devastation, for scarcely a zephyr stirred the balmy summer air on that fateful day.

Stunned with fear, we could but rivet our gaze on the horrid scene, until the roar of a hundred cannon along Burnside's front awakened us to the realization of our predicament. Then crashed the long lines of musketry and the infernal chorus of the slaughter began as soon as our men realized what had happened. Fort Sedgwick's heavy siege guns opened on us at a distance of 600 feet, and had our range immediately. While we remained at our posts awaiting the order to fire, our gunner exclaimed: "Good God, boys, look at the flag!" and, to our amazement, where the gallant Pegasus of South Carolina had floated the battle flag of the Confederacy at dawn, we now beheld the stars and stripes flaunting in our faces. The wild cheers of the assaulting column rang in our ears as they entered the breach in our works made by the explosion of the mine; we saw the glitter of their bayonets gilded by the morning sun. Withdrawing the guns from the embrasures, we prepared to fire on the foe, whom we expected to sweep down by a flank movement.

At that moment a shell burst in the embrasure of my gun, scattering death and wounds. I received a jagged piece of shell in the side, and was splintered from head to foot from the wretched lining of the embrasure; so the balance of the proceedings were noted as I sat in the trench, while the boys bathed my wounds and performed all the kind offices that circumstances permitted. Our infantry support, completely panic-stricken for the moment, cowered behind the ramparts.

Presently the sharp words of command were heard as little "Billy" Mahone, in front of the crack division of the Third Corps, was seen advancing at a double quick through the covered way, heading towards the Yankee flag. In a few minutes the rebel yell came like music to the ear as our boys charged the enemy, captured their intrusive standard and rushed the Yanks back into the chasm their mine had made. Never was there a more superb illustration of "the engineer hoist by his own petard."

Recovered from their panic, the veterans of the Army of Northern Virginia seemed nerved to deeds of superhuman valor. The sight of the negro troops excited them terribly, and hell did actually break loose when our blood-crazed soldiers forced the assaulting column into the hell-hole they had created.

Presently the Confederate mortar batteries began to work from the interior line of city defenses, in co-operation with a few flanking batteries of light artillery, pouring shells into the chasm, now crowded with retreating Yankees. Then followed perhaps the most horrible slaughter of the siege for of those who escaped from the mine hole hundreds were deliberately shot as they tried to run back across the space between the lines. But while our loss was small compared with that of the enemy's, our noble martyrs cannot be replaced, and the force becomes weaker with each succeeding day. By nightfall our lines were restored, and the opposing pickets were blazing away viciously, as if in special remembrance of the terrific episode of this morning. EUGENE H. LEVY.