

# DONALDSONVILLE CANNONIERS.

Survivor of This Command Recalls Incidents of the War.

An Intimate Acquaintance With Confederate Hospitals in 1864.

A Long Journey Home Through a Devastated Country.

Hospitality of the Ladies—How Wounded Soldiers Were Cared for in Different Cities.

## VII.

In the last installment of these memoirs I described the preliminary incidents and the explosion of the crater. The following extracts from my diary, written at the time, continue the narrative from the moment when I fell, badly wounded by a piece of shell:

Although the explosion of the mine had taken place before 5 o'clock a. m., so severe and continuous was the storm of shell and musketry in support of the assaulting column that it was too hours ere I could, with safety, crawl to the covered way on the route to town. Then, in company with another wounded comrade, I walked slowly to the rear. Covered with dried blood about the face and neck from splinter wounds, with shirt and jacket debedded from the ragged wound in my side, extending around the ribs, I must have presented a picture of misery when, at the head of Sycamore street, General Lee and his staff appeared.

Drawing up on the side of the dusty road, I made the customary salute, when the noble Lee said: "My friend, I hope that you are not badly hurt." Overcome by my emotions at the assurance of the sympathy of my ideal of the greatest of men, I could not reply, but pressed on, feeling that those words of commiseration compensated for an illad of woes. Can it be wondered at that the veterans of the Army of Northern Virginia would venture to the very jaws of hell at the bidding of Robert E. Lee? May he be spared to his country as the idolized leader of men, in peace as well as in war!

A Mr. Weeks, whose home was in the neighborhood, begged me to come to his house and have my wounds dressed. I mention this incident to indicate the patriotism of the citizens after four years of war had devastated the hearts and homes of dear old Virginia.

No ambulance was to be had; all vehicles too busy at the front, and the stream of wounded men was crowding the town, so we pushed on to the Confederate hospital on Washington street, a vast building which had been a tobacco warehouse, and had recently been fitted up with cots for hospital purposes. The matron of the ward, a Miss Winnifry, took me under her special care, cut my hair, furnished a new bed gown, and rendered me as comfortable as was possible under the immense pressure of duties which the arrival of batches of the wounded imposed on her. Dr. Ward, in charge of the hospital, dressed my wounds and picked splinters out of my face and neck, expressing a doubt about regaining the sight of the left eye. As the wounded kept pouring in, the immense building was soon full, and the sights and smells became terrible. Some of the wounded had been forced to lie in the hot summer sun for hours, because of the long light and the imminent danger of the Yankees effecting a lodgment on our line. The doctors got to work at amputations and resections, heroic treatment being frequently resorted to in order to save time. As chloroform was very scarce, many minor operations were performed without the aid of anesthetics, hence the agonizing shrieks of the poor fellows filled the vast edifice. The fever had come to some of these brave soldiers, and while some raved of home and the dear ones, the minds of others wandered back to the fight, and the air was heavy with curses, prayers and yells. It requires the inspired pen of a Dante to paint this phase of the soldier's life, akin, as it is, to mortal conception of what is most horrible to all the senses at once.

Can I ever forget that first night in the hospital, the groans of suffering fellow-beings, the canonical shrieks of those temporarily demented by the agony of wounds, the death rattle of the brave comrades beyond all human aid? Above all did I remember, and 'twas noted down in my diary by Comrade Schmidt the next day, how the ministering angels, those venerated women of the Confederacy, were there, to aid the surgeons, and prayerfully close the eyes of the dead heroes. Many of these delicate and refined ladies had come from Richmond in the morning, as soon as the news of the explosion of the mine had been flashed over the wires. There were wives, sisters and sweethearts among them who had come from distant homes to be near the objects of their affection. Delegates of different state associations came also on the wings of love, while prominent among the crowd of volunteer helpers were the sweet, patient, sympathetic "sisters" of the various religious orders of the Catholic church. Is not the deepest love and reverence of man for woman born of such scenes as these? The ladies of Petersburg, oblivious of the horrible surroundings, arrived with free will offerings of all that money could buy or affection suggest. What sacrifices of personal comfort these brave allies have made for us can never be estimated; to them is due all that gratitude and patriotism can point; a lifetime of devotion would not express a tithe of what our hearts feel for them in this, our hour of anguish.

Only a milk diet was permitted in my case, on account of the lacerated condition of mouth and throat. I managed to sleep towards daylight, worn out by fatigue and the harrowing scenes which I had witnessed.

Sunday, the 31st of July, 1864.—The news brought from the front by visiting comrades compensated for all my suffering. In the battle of yesterday the enemy lost between four and five thousand of his picked troops, while our loss was less than one thousand. Poor young Jacob Levy sobbed at my bedside, his arm in a sling, shot through by a mine ball, as he related the death of his brother and brother-in-law in yesterday's fight; so of the four who played whist at his campfire a few nights ago, two are wounded and two are at the bivouac of heroes, Peace to their ashes. Major "Buck" Miller and many comrades called in the course of the day to pay their respects. I made the acquaintance of Captain Wallace, Sixty-first Virginia, who occupied an adjoining cot, a very agreeable companion. Although suffering from a severe wound, he kept up his spirits remarkably to-day.

Tuesday.—Left eye much inflamed since Dr. Lewis extracted splinters from the lid; only a miracle prevented the loss of sight. The Kleley family, my good friends, brought ice and home-made

bread, thus adding much to my comfort. The Richmond papers designate last Saturday's affair as the battle of Griffin's farm.

Wednesday.—Went before the board of examiners at noon, and at the intercession of Major Jack Kleley it was decided that I should be transferred to hospital at Richmond.

Thursday.—On account of the danger from shells, trains on the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad do not come nearer the city than Dunlap's farm; to this point I was conveyed by ambulance and left for the capital at 4 o'clock. By sundown I was placed in bed 24, ward 25, of the Louisiana Hospital at Richmond.

Friday.—Dr. Hyde prescribed for me in his morning round, and Dr. Nicholls in the afternoon. Numbers of lady friends called with gifts of fruit and flowers, so that my room was a bower of bliss as compared with the cot in the general ward at Petersburg. Under the able administration of Dr. Nicholls and the Sisters of Charity this establishment is a model of its kind. Perfect discipline prevails, and the institution does honor to our state. Now and then some of the inmates come back from leave of absence full of fighting whiskey, but one word of command from a "sister" sends them penitent to their quarters. My roommates are Coakley, of the Washington Artillery; Charley Moss, quartermaster sergeant of a Louisiana brigade, and Lieutenant Louis Power, of the Fifteenth Louisiana.

Saturday.—We are all cast down by the news of the naval disaster at Mobile bay, the loss of the ram Tennessee and destruction of our weak fleet. Many visitors bearing gifts cheered our pleasant apartments daily, while the attending physicians and sweet Sisters of Charity were friends, indeed.

Monday, Aug. 8.—The board of examiners, Drs. Semmes and Nicholls, decided to grant me a furlough for forty days to visit the family at Mobile. The only person who regretted this was Marechal, my ward nurse, who had become very much attached to me. Left the beautiful Confederate capital by the Richmond and Danville route at 8 o'clock a. m. on Aug. 9. My friend and messmate, Ely, who was wounded in the arm at Griffin's farm by the same shell that struck me, is my traveling companion and guest. He fights for a seat on the cars while I carry the baggage, consisting of two haversacks and a bundle of clothing. Along the route, from a point within twelve miles of Richmond to Clover Hill, the Yankees have scattered desolation. That portion of the railroad which had been destroyed has been replaced by strap iron in lieu of T iron, such is our poverty in resources.

I was much amused at an old North Carolina veteran and his wife who sat opposite. The woman was treasurer of the party and chewed tobacco vigorously when not engaged in puffing at a strong-smelling pipe or "dipping" snuff.

We reached Danville at 6:30 p. m., changed cars and arrived at Goldsboro at midnight. From Danville only box-cars with wooden benches were provided for the wounded. A dapper-looking old merchant, anxious to reach Wilmington in time to attend an auction sale of the cargo of a blockade runner, got into our boxcar and took a seat among the old boys. Presently he became nervous and fidgety when his neighbors indulged in a good long scratch. Full of sympathy, he ventured to remark: "My friend, you seem to be troubled with fleas!" "Fleas, you son of a gun, do you take me for a dog?" was the indignant rejoinder; whereupon the citizen apologized humbly and passed around his flask of liquor.

Wednesday.—Reached Charlotte, N. C., at 6 a. m. and again changed cars. Filled our haversack with apples at a dollar a dozen. After crossing the South Carolina line the intense patriotism of the ladies was much in evidence. Maids and matrons flocked to the cars at every station, urging the wounded to partake of all sorts of delicacies. At Chester we were almost killed with kindness by the dear creatures, who would insist on eating and drinking to our utmost capacity. The patriotic Miss Gills left at my side a monument of sympathy composed of chicken sandwiches, fruit, pies and milk, enough to last Ely and myself for three days, so we were able to divide with the less fortunate.

Reached Columbia, S. C., at dark; hired a light wagon to take us to the Wayside Hospital, where our wounds were dressed, and rough, but clean beds placed at our disposal.

Thursday, 11th.—We continued our journey at 4 o'clock a. m. via South Carolina railroad. Arriving at Orangeburg, we found that the noble women of that vicinity had provided a substantial breakfast for the wounded. At Branchville we took another train for Augusta, Ga. At P'ackville, S. C., a splendid collation awaited us, the soldiers charging on the tables in true rebel style, with the yell and rush so characteristic of "we-uns" in a fight. The ladies humored the joke and waited on table with infinite grace. Many of these are of the aristocracy of South Carolina, but all social lines seem to be obliterated on such occasions, and that with wondrous fact.

We reached Augusta at 5:30 p. m. and went to Macon depot. We left at 7 and at 4:30 o'clock next morning the train stopped at the ruins of the trestle and bridge over a river that had been destroyed by a raiding party of the enemy. We crossed the river by means of a scow, the passengers resuming the journey on a waiting train. I enjoyed an excellent breakfast at Gordon, and was glad to get to Macon at 9 o'clock p. m. At this hospitable city there is a wayside hospital where wounds receive careful attention and a plain meal is furnished to the soldier gratis. As railroad trains seldom connect in the Confederacy, we went to the Lanier House, on the main street, and took a look at the promenaders. The absence of Parisian style is painfully evident in this inland town, in painful contrast with the daintily-clad Creoles of New Orleans. I found that we had to scramble for seats at the station, the cars being crowded to suffocation. The smell of the wounds in the close atmosphere of the cars was another source of discomfort.

Saturday, Aug. 13.—Columbus, Ga., welcomed us at 4:30 o'clock to-day. Had breakfast at the neat "Soldiers' Home," where a large number of ladies assisted the surgeons in dressing the wounds, afterwards presiding over an excellent breakfast. Left there by freight train and reached Opelika at 9 o'clock. It was here that one of the boys insulted mine host of the Iron House by asking for a clean roller towel in order to complete his toilet. The hotel proprietor remarked with an oath: "Darn your pesky soul! Why, more 'en a hundred men have wiped on that ar towel, and you are the first one to put ar' ails about it!" From Opelika we had to travel by wagon as far as Louchapoka in consequence of the queer ideas of Rousseau's raiders as to the status of railroad construction. It cost us \$20 each to travel those fifteen miles behind a team of flea-bitten mules. Montgomery, Ala., was sighted in dark. The wayside home there was so very uninviting in appearance that we went to the Exchange Hotel.

I left for Mobile at 4 o'clock p. m. next day, and arrived at our destination on Monday at 9:30 a. m., making seven days' travel for a journey that can now be accomplished in thirty hours. Incidentally, it may be here noted that such a thing as a railroad schedule was contrary to public policy in those times that tried men's souls.

EUGENE H. LEVY.