

HISTORY OF THE ONE-HUNDRED AND FORTIETH PENNSYLVANIA VOLUNTEERS.

BY DR. A. W. ACHESON.

[CONTINUED.]

1864.

Wylie's life was saved by his watch.

Baldwin was cooking coffee one day when a Reb shot at and hit the fire his tin was on, spilling some of it. He swore a little, and putting the bucket on the end of a stick held it over the fire. "D—d if he wouldn't like to see that reb upset it again." Just then the reb put a hole through the bottom of it. "D—d if he wouldn't have some coffee yet." Borrowed a bucket, and although the reb shot at it several times he sat there until it boiled.

July 8. We were sent to work on Fort Warren. It was protected from view of the Rebs by boughs stuck in the ground. A thousand men were busy at it. It enclosed two acres. We worked all day. In the afternoon a shell flew over us. All hands dropped their tools, and fled for shelter. It was the first I had heard since wounded. Was I scared? Well I found myself hunting a pile of dirt anyhow. But there were twenty behind it when I got there, and I stayed out. The shells had a more devilish yell than formerly. One struck a tree thirty feet from the ground, and looping off the top, left the shaft quivering in the air.

Only two men were hit.

July 9. While the regiment was at Cold Harbor they made a charge, but were repulsed, leaving some dead and wounded on the field. One of company D, Samuel B. Evans, lay all morning in the hot sun, calling for water. His cries were heard, but being in range of the Rebs, no one felt like relieving him. At length John L. Hathaway seized two canteens, saying no mess-mate of his should suffer that way, jumped the works, and rushed out to the man. The Rebs themselves respected the act of kindness, and permitted him to reach his comrade. But no sooner were the canteens deposited than whiz after whiz came the bullets. He dropped on the ground and rolled back to our lines.

July 10. At one A. M. we were routed, and started towards the left. Marching past the Williams house, we went three miles down the Jerusalem plank road. There we relieved the Sixth Corps pickets who were going to Washington to fight Early.

The locomotive on the Weldon road could be heard whistling. A colored engineer came in who said the trains were running for the first time since our cavalry tore up the track.

July 11. We were relieved by the rest of the Brigade. The boys found a big pot and made a mess of soup. Rations of cabbage, pork crackers and beans had just been issued, with which we had a fine mess.

July 12. We moved back to the out side line of works, where we were kept busy all afternoon, pulling them down.

A Division of cavalry passed down to make a raid.

In the evening we moved three miles down the road, beyond where we had been. While at supper an order came to go on picket. It was already dark. A mounted Orderly went with us to show the way. We reached the advanced cavalry posts and established the line in a wheat field. After posting the men I went to the officer commanding the Cavalry and learned the position of his force.

At eleven P. M. an order came to return to camp. We did, scrambling back in the dark. We found the troops ready to move. Marched back to where we tore down the works. After daylight.

July 13, we started again. Our course lay through a pleasanter section than usual. The fields were green instead of dusty which added to the interest, as well as the comfort of our march. But the day was hot.

We passed several artillerists in the woods making gabions. They were woven like baskets, and used in forts, after being filled with dirt.

We halted in a miserable place—on a plain, dusty and minus wood, water and shade. The heat seemed to come down the near way. Shelter tents were put up on guns, brush was brought up to shelter us, and we rendered our situation endurable. A little cannonading took place at noon.

July 14th was occupied in fixing tents. Blake told me what occurred between the Second Brigade Pioneers and their Captain. He had a squad out building works in a dangerous place and was lying behind a pine log watching operations. Every now and then he would give directions—"Hunker down boys! Hunker down! with a strong Irish accent. "Alex, hunker down cut that bus low Alex. He daubed his whiskers in the pitch on the log. "Ah! there I'm all over the sentinel hairs oil uv Varginny. Hunker doon boys! Hunker doon."

At dark we were taken out on fatigue. The line of works built by slaves, for the defence of Petersburg in 1862, had to be torn down. We worked hard until midnight, and then returned.

July 15. At six A. M. we went out again and worked until noon. At six P. M. we went out and worked until midnight.

July 16. The Sanitary and Christian Commissions frequently gave the soldiers a treat. Sometimes pickles, cabbage or lemons were sent. At one point on our line of pickets, the two sets were often visiting each other. One day as a Yank was at dinner, having received some extras, a Johnny came over to chat. "Hey Yank, what ye got for dinner?" "Beef, soft bread, salt, coffee, sugar, vinegar lemonade and pickles. What have you had Johnny?" "O! bacon and corn meal, but I don't believe you."

"Well, Johnny, look for yourself."

"Whew! won't invite me!"

"No."

"O do."

"No I wont."

The Reb sat awhile without saying anything, but getting up, returned to his own line muttering, "Yank I will have some o' them rations, see if I don't." That night he deserted. The first thing he said on reaching our line was "I told you Yank I'd have some o' them"

Deserters from the enemy were coming very fast.

Each Corps had been assigned some special duty. Ours was in reserve. That meant to attract attention—assist and back up any point on the line attacked, and do all the digging for the rest of the army.

Day after day we were kept at work. As soon as the earth works were leveled, we were set to digging covered ways to the front line. They were roads four feet deep in the ground, running in a zig zig direction. The dirt was thrown on the side towards the enemy. They were intended to protect wagons going to the front. The first we dug were in the rear

of the Fifth Corps. While there I went up to look at the Rebs. It appeared very peaceable. One would hardly suppose the two bodies deadly enemies. Their line was not two hundred yards away. They were at work on their fortifications. There was no firing; the pickets of both sides not fifty yards apart, were standing out apparently unconscious of danger. The ground between the lines was a contrast with that behind. There the grass was growing untrodden, and the corn untouched. It was ground on which to encroach was death. But back of the lines was dust, dust, dust. Nothing seemed to be growing.

July 18. While working ten Rebs deserted. Some firing began along the lines which resulted in the blowing up of a Reb casson.

For several weeks we were kept working. The time spent in camp was pleasant or otherwise, according to the weather. After a long dry spell we had rain. It came at night. Many of the boys had no tents. They lived in chebangs, which answered very well in dry weather. Only about thirty blankets were in the regiment. The nights got cold and the days kept hot. Heavy dews fell; it was a first rate time for chills and fever; it was an awful way of living. We took our turn regularly at fatigue, but our Headquarter Officers began to intimate that the men were forgetting their knowledge of the musket in their zeal for the spade. Their hints to Army Headquarters soon took effect.

To be Continued.