

From the Beaver Radical.
**HISTORY OF THE ONE-HUNDRED
AND FORTIETH PENNSYLVANIA
VOLUNTEERS.**

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[CONTINUED.]

1864.

We knew of a man exposed to the fire of sharpshooters at Raccoon ford, who was of such a musical turn of mind, that before protecting himself from their balls, he stopped to determine whether the sound of a bullet was from B to E or E flat.

Appetite will lead a man as far as curiosity. There were more men captured while seeking something to eat or drink, than during battles. It would have been a great saving to our army, and the Rebs could have been whipped sooner, if there had not been a persimmon tree in the South. We have seen hundreds straggling to get them, even before they were ripe. It was the same, though not so bad in regard to fruit. At one time it came to such a pass that Gen. Barlow promoted a corporal who shot a man for stopping to get some cherries. For meat, potatoes, or corn men would risk their lives. Two men of the 140th at one time shot a sheep while on the skirmish line. It was between our line and that of the rebels, and within range of the Rebels. Yet they crawled out for it under the fire of the enemy. We saw two boys at Mine Run go to a stable outside our skirmish line for some hay for their horses, who both coming and going were exposed to a storm of bullets. During marches men would go away from the column to get chickens, or even stop in the woods to make coffee, and before they could get back the Reb cavalry would pick them up.

Whiskey could not be easily obtained except by officers at headquarters. Regulations allowed some to each man when on atigue. He was required to drink it however when served out, and there was not enough given to intoxicate. No man could take his share and give it to a comrade, nor was he allowed to save it from day to day, but had to drink it on the spot or else refuse it. This rule was often dodged and men would occasionally get on a spree. We do not speak particularly of the 140th, for they seldom got a chance to accept or refuse a drink; but we have seen men in it refuse to take their ration of whisky when worn down by fatigue, and in need of it, because they feared their example would lead others to drinking and ultimately ruin them. There was at one time a great deal of public clamor in regard to the whisky ration, and many Generals in deference to the wishes of those at home refused to issue it. But others drew it ostensibly for the men, and kept it at Headquarters to treat their friends. Or it could be drawn and kept at headquarters without the knowledge of the General commanding. There is so much to do about headquarters that a general cannot attend to it all. He has Aids or assistants who take charge of the different departments. The Provost Marshal looks after deserters, prisoners, new troops and those to be discharged. The Inspector attends to the arms and ammunition and sees there are no horses but what regulations allow. The Quartermaster attends to the rations; the Adjutant General signs all requisitions of whatever kind, and does it in the name of the General. Now if an Adjutant General wants any whiskey he sends up an order for it and the General knows nothing of it. We could tell of cases where it was drawn two kegs at a time, for the men of course, but the men never got it. It was drawn by telegraph operators "for battery purposes." The electric battery needs no whisky, it was the operator who wanted it. Any officer could get whiskey for himself or men if the Colonel would approve his requisition. Our Colonel would never approve unless it were positively needed. Some other Colonels would. If it was granted for officers it had to be paid for. During battles some officers got it. It is hard to tell how much damage came in consequence of it;

how many foolish movements—movements destructive to life were made. We knew of a captain who went into a battle drunk, and stopping in an exposed position to shake his fist at the Rebels, was shot through the throat and died immediately. We saw a General at Chancellorville under the influence of liquor, and his men suffered in consequence. And before Petersburg we saw the same fall from his horse three times while riding a hundred yards. We saw officers in the Wilderness wild with whiskey, and cursing because sober men refused to follow them to death. We could instance more than one movement of troops, made because the officer in command was drunk, which accomplished no good, yet caused the slaughter of men. So much for whiskey.

We crossed the Weldon railroad at the Yellow house, and moving out to the left of the army, relieved the Ninth Corps. It was usually called "Burnside's Geography class," because he had taken it nearly around the Confederacy.

That evening a detail from the 26th and 140th had to be put on picket, because the "Fifth Canada" had deserted. Picket shovels had been distributed to the men only a few days before, and the Johnnies having secured some by this, stood on their works cheering and holding them up.

Nov. 30. After putting up good huts the regiment was moved to the left to defend Fort Welsh. It was well protected by ditch and abattis. The ditch was eight feet deep. The abattis was made out of tree tops laid on the ground, with their butts toward the Fort. Each branch was sharpened, logs were wired along their butts, and telegraph wire wrapped and twined among the branches. Sometimes there were two or three lines of these in front.

For more protection against attacks, stakes were driven, until only a few inches stuck out of the ground, and wire stretched from one to the other. Striking an enemy's foot when moving at a run to attack, this wire would be apt to trip and break the column.

Dec. 31. Was discharged.

Left the regiment with regret, for I had been with them over two years. I had tried to be contented with my position and had no aspiration for a higher. I enlisted as a private with no expectation of appointment. When I became a Sergeant I fitted myself for the duties of that post, and never longed for else. But when fever cut down Reed, and bullets Captain and Campbell, I was promoted—not for anything I had done, but because of vacancies above. Alas! how often we read, "He was promoted for bravery," when in truth he was promoted by the unflinching courage, and unswerving devotion to a country of some superior officer. I have known cases (my own is one them) where promotion came by the merits of others. I have also known cases where deserving men were never promoted, because a cowardly officer above them would never get in the road of a bullet.

We were kept about a week at Washington, D. C., "Stripping red tape" before settling up. If there was any one thing soldiers hated above another it was the forms and ceremonies connected with guard mounting, reviews, return from picket and halting on marches. They were all necessary, but occasions would arise when it was advisable to suspend them. Guard mounting is a beautiful thing, but why do it in a snow storm? Straight lines are pretty, but at a short halt after a march, why keep a regiment standing until three stragglers get into position? Two thirds of the profanity in the army was caused by useless maneuvers. Towards the end they "played out," as the high positions became filled with men who had served in the ranks.

One thing not spoken of yet, which might as well enter here was the countersign. It was used more about forts than elsewhere. In front where no one was allowed to pass the picket, it was of no use. At first when all the "agony" possible was "put on," it was in vogue. In three months service when the word "Roberts," was given, a Swede named Peter misunderstood and thought it was "Robbers." At midnight when relieved he started to camp. The first guard he encountered was a dutchman.

Who gooms dare? asked Henry.

Frient mit de conntersine.

Dat ish you, Bete?

Yesh.

Vell, advance mit der gountersine.

Robbers.

Nine, Nine, dat ish nix Bete.

Tish Henry.

Nine, ish nix.

Well, wat is't den?

Thieves, said Henry in hls dutch style.

Finally they settled it and Peter went on.

(To be Continued.)