

DONALDSONVILLE CANNONIERS.

Recollections of a Louisiana Command During the Civil War.

Life in the Trenches During the Siege of Petersburg.

A Succession of Alarms, Combats, Suffering and Exposure.

Days With the Artillery Stationed Near Appomattox—Incidents of a Memorable Epoch.

In the present installment of extracts from my notebook, written during the civil war, I shall endeavor to present the every-day life of a private soldier serving in the trenches during the siege of Petersburg, Va., in the autumn of 1864.

Oct. 22, 1864—A hail storm swept over us to-day and the weather became intensely cold. Now the daily experience in the trenches, the army half clad and half starved, reminds me of the sufferings of the continental army at Valley Forge during the darkest days of the first American rebellion.

Sunday, 23—The stress of weather forced us to build "kennels" to-day to withstand the winter's cold. These fashionable habitations consisted of holes in the ground about three feet deep, by six in length, roofed with shelter tents, and having daubed chimneys. The sleeping bunk for the mess occupied two-thirds of the elegant "apartment," having a space of about two feet by six in which to store firewood and arrange our "lares" and "penates." It was a snug place when the fire crackled merrily, and as we sat on the side of the bunk and contemplated the work of our hands, we felt that it was well done. It was the custom for the member of the mess on guard to mind the fire after his two hours' vigil. Thus we kept from freezing, despite the fact that but one blanket was available for covering purposes.

27th—The morning was ushered in by the sounds of a terrific combat from the direction of our right flank, apparently about four miles to the southwest. Until dark we could hear at intervals the crack of musketry and the dull thud of light artillery. Harris' Mississippi Brigade, our support, received marching orders at 10 o'clock and moved promptly. Bushrod Johnson's division spread along from the left flank, forced to occupy three times the space on the line that it had held yesterday. Orders were received to double guards and exercise extraordinary vigilance in watching.

At dark the Yankees drove Wise's skirmishers out of their trenches; half an hour later Gracie's Brigade swooped down and recaptured the position. This affair took place in front of the "crater," where our line had been mined on July 30. A night of terrible anxiety was this, as we stood at our posts expecting an attack in force. At 10 o'clock Holcomb's legion lost its skirmish line and had a determined struggle to recapture the pits. Then commenced the heaviest bombardment of the siege along

THE ENTIRE LINE, ending at midnight. All that long night, while we stood at our guns, the cold rain came down pitilessly and we became chilled to the marrow, yet the eagerness to fight kept up our spirits, and there was a feeling of keen disappointment when day broke and we had to draw the charges from our guns. Exhausted by the long-continued excitement, we were glad to drop on our backs and court "fired nature's sweet restorer."

From stragglers and couriers we learned the details of the heavy fighting west of Fitcher's run, where, through the desperate bravery of Hill's Corps, the enemy was again defeated in his attempt to turn our right. The death roll was immense for our attenuated force, and we had to mourn many personal friends among our devoted support—the gallant Mississippians. No matter how many of Grant's hirelings are killed or wounded, he merely makes a requisition on mankind at large for more food for powder and it is furnished. This fact is ever before us, causing the men to feel that with all of Lee's genius he cannot create soldiers to fill the gaps in our ranks.

Friday, 28th—A bright, sunny day, such a contrast to the day just past. Wrote letters and read "Othello" to a crowd of the boys.

Saturday—Reveille at 8 o'clock a. m. in anticipation of an attack from the front. The affair at Burgess' mill on Thursday resulted in the capture of four battle flags and 700 prisoners, besides an immense number of new small arms, which the fresh recruits to Hancock's Corps throw away without firing. A friend by courier from General Lee's headquarters furnished these gratifying details.

Sunday—Went to town with Dr. Clark, of the Twelfth Mississippi. An extra of the Petersburg press gives cheering accounts of the triumphant progress of old "Dad" Price through Missouri. By special order of General Mahone, the gun detachments were sent to their posts at dark, so as to co-operate in some important movement. At 9 o'clock three regiments charged the Yankee picket line in front of Wilson's farm, capturing 200 prisoners. This affair provoked heavy skirmishing along the entire line until midnight, the mortars and light artillery adding their grim bass notes to the war chorus.

Nov. 1—One of the participants in last night's assault on the enemy assured me that a Yankee deserter had piloted General Finnegun inside of Grant's picket line; thus the prisoners were secured without much trouble or expense of life. Deserters state that much dissatisfaction exists among the Yanks because the "recruited soldiers," as they are called—those who dare company "Little Mac" with the blunderer, Grant—were put in front last week at Burgess' mills to get slaughtered.

While I was talking near the gun with Dean Lee, of the Norfolk Blues, he was shot through the face with a minie ball and fell at my feet.

Nov. 2—An 8-inch gun, mounted on a pedan in the rear of our battery, on Hagland's farm, opened on the enemy's railroad train at dawn. The Yankees answered promptly with siege guns and snipers the duel lasting until noon. A cold drizzling rain has prevailed for two days past, which does not add to one's comfort or amiability with the ceaseless round of duties keeps right along, seasoned by alternate hope and fears. "What a piece of work is man," that he has been framed to endure so much of mental and physical torture with but patriotic hope to save him from despair!

On account of weather conditions, a ration of one gill of whiskey was given to the men in the trenches. We sent our share down to the poor fellows on the picket line, who needed it so much more than we did.

Saturday, 6th—At 11 o'clock p. m. we were roused from sweet slumbers to go to our posts. Half an hour later a signal rocket rose gracefully from the sight of the line, and in a few minutes the rattle of musketry announced an assault on the left; the Yankees had been charged from their pits, with the loss of many prisoners. The duce was to pay in consequence of this little dash, and the frate Yanks kept up a bombardment of our works until 1 o'clock next morning. We had scarcely got back to our kennels when rapid volleys of musketry pointed to another contest for rifle pits on the picket line. The struggle was short and sharp, for through the mismanagement of Bushrod Johnson we lost the ground and 80 men.

Monday—Rain fell during last night. Guard duty under existing circumstances is most onerous. One must peer through the embrasure, or look over the parapets towards the picket line, with eyes and ears strained to the utmost tension, ready at a moment to give the alarm, in case the faithful guards in front cease firing, for then the inference is

that the pickets have been surprised. Nov. 8—This day being election day in the north, is pregnant with big events for us. The pickets, rendered surly by bad weather, vent their spleen by keeping up a continuous firing. As the Confederate congress convened yesterday, President Davis' message appeared in this day's newspapers. This document is written in the chaste and strong style that characterizes the state papers of our noble chief magistrate. To us veterans, the most remarkable feature of the document relates to the organization of a body of 40,000 negroes to perform the duties of teamsters and pioneers, suggesting that they shall be rewarded with freedom after the war as a compensation for such services. This new departure was discussed about the campfire, and seems to us to be the first step towards the gradual emancipation of our slaves.

Wednesday, 6th—Rain continues; the trenches are six inches deep in mud. The result of the presidential election in New York state having been announced to Grant's army, supporters of McClellan rent the air with shouts of joy. The Yankee pickets in front of Wilcox's farm commenced cheering for "Little Mac," and just for devilry our pickets gave "three times three" for "old Abe." Then the blue jays fired a volley from their pits, and our boys gave them a "Roland for their Oliver." The alarm communicated to the entire skirmish line, which took up the firing from the railroad to the Appomattox, the cannon and mortars joining in, contributing their thunder to the shrill treble of the rifles. The fusillade lasted an hour, each army expecting the other to make an assault. Private Wins, of the Huger Battery, was wounded in the head, the only casualty in our vicinity.

Thursday—Weather moderated; the boys fairly revel in the springlike temperature. As we sat by the fire after dark, enjoying the lovely new moon, an alarm sounded, and we rushed to our posts. Double guards to-night on the gun platforms. Hammet, of the Huger Battery, was shot dead at his post, next gun to mine.

Friday—My friend, Theodore Taylor, of the "Blues," a plous gentleman and gallant soldier, was killed by sharpshooters to-day, and fell near my shelter, dying in the arms of his devoted brother. The big mortar shell showed us all this day, dropping within the works and causing us to fall prostrate many a time. Rations of coffee, sugar and rice have been surprising rebel stomachs this week, and the infantry received rations of baker's bread. Are we, drawing these luxuries for fear of accidents?

Saturday—Went to town by permission of Captain Landry, to attend Taylor's funeral. Weather turned bitter cold; water froze in the canteens.

Friday, Nov. 18—Another halfbreath escape to-day from a mortar shell, which fell near the gun and smothered itself in the soft earth. The movements of the enemy indicate that Grant will give us another hard shake ere the roads become too bad for military movements. What bull-dog tenacity the fellow showed! Heavy rains again and discouraged until the blessed sun appeared. As the mess chest was empty, I went to town and invested \$10 in a peck of potatoes. Flour is now \$1,000 per barrel, yet a healthy negro cannot be sold for as many cents. Because of short rations, such an item as extra food is of vital importance to the soldier. Besides causing an uncanny feeling in the body, it is considered bad form to get killed or wounded on an empty stomach.

Wednesday—The mess subscribed to the Petersburg Public Library one dollar for a month's dues. The Norfolk Blues had a room in town, where we stay when on leave, by invitation of Dodge DeFord. Since Friday last there has been no sharpshooting by the pickets in front of the river salient during the day time, as, by tacit agreement, the men were forced to remain outside of the pits to lessen the chance of having their feet frost-bitten. Rations of cornmeal and rusty bacon have been distributed of late, and those articles are of meager quantity.

Nov. 25—I went to hospital, where Dr. Andrews, brother of my friend, Major Garnett Andrews, found that I had scurvy, and recommended transfer to High Bridge, Va., where a portion of the battery is in winter quarters. It is impossible to telegraph to Mobile on account of the raids of Sherman's cavalry through Georgia; it requires three weeks for a letter to reach the army from points in the far south.

Sunday, 27th—Very heavy mortar shelling took place to-day from Fort Rice's vicinity, while Fort Sedgwick gave us a dose of shrapnel from the siege guns every five minutes. Cary Wilson and Spencer Reid, of the Blues, were wounded by shrapnel. I received a package of underclothing from dear old New Orleans friends now sojourning at Nassau, U. P.

Monday—I reported to Artillery Corps Hospital, thence by order to the Army Hospital, and after examination was sent to Richmond. At the Louisiana Hospital I occupied a room with old Joe Burke (brother of Glendy Burke) and Ahern, of the Louisiana Guard Artillery.

Thursday, Dec. 22—Reached High Bridge station, near Farmville, Va., and reported for duty. At this strategic point, which is under command of Major Edmond Maurin (formerly captain of my battery), the light artillery is in substantial earthworks, covering the railroad bridge over the Appomattox, while a regiment of militia, under Colonel Fairenholt, occupied winter quarters nearby. I joined the mess of Philo Vialo and Ernest Monnot, the latter destined to become one of the most prosperous sugar planters in Louisiana. Life in the snug log cabin was one of comparative luxury. After the morning and afternoon drill at the guns, the afternoon had nothing better to do than to cultivate the friendship of patriotic families in the neighborhood. Never was a community more devoted to the cause of secession than the elegant and refined inhabitants of Princess Anne county. During the many weeks of our sojourn not a day passed but that these honest folks manifested their patriotism by deeds of friendship. The poor folks made sacrifices to show their sympathy, and the wealthy never tired of entertaining us in true Virginia style. Little can we wonder that firm friendships resulted from such delightful relations, while several of the most susceptible of the veterans did not withstand the fascinations of the lovely and accomplished Virginia maidens. My messmate, Ernest Monnot, returned soon after the close of the war and married Miss Locket, the belle of the county.

What monument shall we erect, with graven inscription, to perpetuate the memory of the mothers, wives, and sweethearts, those grand women of the Confederacy, who never for a moment, during these four long years of dreadful war, failed to inspire the soldiers with hope and confidence in the ultimate success of the lost cause. How they prayed and toiled for us, nursing the sick and wounded, and closing the eyes of the dying! No sacrifice of personal comfort was too great for these grand creatures to make for the promotion of the object of the war. The Virginia women, not satisfied with sending husbands and sons to battle, never tired of inventing plans for the comfort of the army. Societies for sewing, knitting socks and gloves, writing letters for the illiterate—in fact, every branch of industrial and manufacturing efficiency has been their province to inaugurate. My feeble pen falters at the task of paying a deserved tribute to the women of the Confederacy, the noblest army of patriots and heroines that the world ever saw.

Jan. 27—As Colonel Fairenholt's regiment has received marching orders, the entire guard duty of the post now devolves upon the artillerymen. Some stand guard over the Yankee negro prisoners, others at the High Bridge, and the balance at the fortifications that defend the post. No sooner had we fairly settled down to the new work than the militia regiment returned from Burkville junction.

Feb. 6—As Major Maurin is away on furlough, the artillery is under charge of Lieutenant Canille Mollere, the most popular officer of the command. Orders arrived at 8 o'clock this morning to prepare to march against a moving of the enemy which was advancing towards the South Side Railroad. While in the midst of preparations a dispatch to Mollere announced that the Yankees have been

whipped back at Dinwiddie courthouse, so we went back reluctantly into quarters. News also arrived of the return of our peace commissioners from Fortress Monroe, where Lincoln's terms of peace amounted to a direct insult. This decisive action of the federal government will tend to unite the hearts of our people in the resolution to carry on the war to a successful issue, for which we fervently pray. EUGENE H. LEWY.