

Army Correspondence.

We have been given permission to publish the following letter, received by a friend. It is from the pen of an old resident of this county, and for many years a highly respected citizen of Easton, where he now has many friends and relatives:

NEAR PETERSBURG, VA., Sept., 18, 1861.

My DEAR ———:—I have often thought of you—the army and the interesting family group which surrounds your peaceful and happy fire-side, and have often since my advent in to the army intended writing to you; but not knowing your sentiments and views in reference to this monstrous rebellion, I have hesitated to do so for fear it might not be agreeable, but in view of our former relations and associations in life, if we differ in opinion, you will at least accord to me honesty of purpose. Since my connection with the army I have passed through many dangerous and trying scenes, and to one of my former easy life it taxed my firmness and powers of endurance to their utmost capacity. The first year of my term passed with comparative ease and pleasure, our post of duty being at Norfolk and Portsmouth, with little of hardship to encounter; after which we were ordered to Suffolk to assume active operations, and here I would date the commencement of trials, which consisted of long marches, loss of rest and exposure in all kinds of weather, but being unsuccessful in our pursuit of the enemy between Suffolk and the Black Water we returned to the former place fatigued and almost exhausted in strength. Our next move was to York Town; from thence to West Point, and finally to Newbern, N. C., at which place we continued for several months. A threatened interest transpired here except a threatened attack of the Rebels on the 20th of February, but after reconnoitering for some days, they very wisely concluded not to do so.— Our next and great move was to City Point to join Butler's forces for the spring and summer campaign, and here let me add, if I did experience hardship, privation and exposure it was nothing to what I have seen since. After arriving here our first move was on the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad. After tearing up and destroying about three miles we fell back to a place called Bermuda Hundred. The next advance of our forces was to Drums Bluff, eight or nine miles from Richmond and one and a half miles from Fort Darling. On our march we encountered the enemy's pickets and skirmishers some three miles from these first lines of defenses. After a stubborn resistance for some hours we forced them back, and finally took possession of their works. They retreated to the fort which is situated immediately in the rear of the entrenchments and from which it was impossible to drive them with all the force of artillery we could bring to bear. We continued in on the road in close proximity to the fort for several days, exposed to shot and shell and with the loss of three or four men. During this time the enemy had been largely reinforced and came down upon us like a mighty avalanche. We fought them hard and desperately, but being outnumbered, were compelled to retreat. In this battle we lost many brave men and I regret to say had to give up the contest.

Our next move was on Petersburg, at which point we have been (until relieved the other day) ever since. You may ask why I enlisted at my time of life? My reply is how could any one who has the least degree of manhood in his nature or patriotism in his soul stand aloof and refrain from active exercise, while all the vital interests of the country are suspended upon a balance, while treachery and treason are running rampant, and all our republican institutions and every blessing we enjoy and hold dear, are involved in this mighty issue. As for myself I viewed it as my indispensable duty to go forth and offer my life, if need be, in support of the Government, her laws and her sacred institutions, and to-day, as old as I am, I feel a conscious patriotic pride in being called a Union soldier, and of discharging my duty, so far, faithfully to my country, and if I should fall in any future engagement, it will be with my face to the enemy, contending with all my powers in the defence of our rights and the preservation of this glorious Republic. I shall then leave the world a patriot and a hero, and in the best, most noble cause that God and humanity ever called man to act in. Our position has been in the trenches and rifle pits directly in front of Petersburg for the last three months, which is only a half or three quarters of a mile from the celebrated Cockade city. During this time we have been constantly exposed to the enemy's fire, both day and night, which rendered our situation unpleasant and extremely dangerous. From the rifle pits we have a splendid view of this, the 4th city in the renowned bogus Confederacy, whose towering Church steeples and public buildings loom up proudly, but pleasantly before us, presenting the appearance of a place of considerable size and magnificence and air of grandeur and nobility seldom witnessed in the South. The surrounding country of which we have an extended view for miles, is the most beautiful, fertile and picturesque I ever saw. It is mostly rolling land, with deep ravines, high mounds and gently sloping declivities, running down to evergreen valleys, the richness, beauty, and luxuriance of which can only be rivalled in Italy or Switzerland, whilst the mounds, of which there are many, furnish the most pleasant and delightful situations for places of residence, any where to be found in the country. On our arrival here everything was fresh, green and growing. We passed through and encamped near one of the largest and most luxuriant fields of corn I have seen any where, and as the rich green blades waved to and fro in the gentle breeze, it forcibly reminded me of other and happier days, when all was peace, prosperity and happiness, but now as well as tens of thousands of acres throughout this State, it is nothing but a barren waste, widely contrasting with the thickly wooded hills adjacent to the scene whose rich green foliage slightly tinged with autumn's golden hue, making a harmony of delicate shades most beautiful to be seen.

On the south side of Petersburg in close proximity to the town, and now occupied by the rebels, is situated a range of high hills or miniature mountains, called the heights, upon and around which the rebels have the strongest kind of fortifications, and as the town is situated immediately on the margin or slope of these hills, it is extremely difficult to remove them or capture the place. The fact is, no force, however large, could take and hold the town without first dislodging the enemy from his strong holds, which from its very location could not be done on a charge without severe loss on our part.— You will see by reference to a good map that Petersburg is situated on a branch of the Appomattox river, a small, dirty stream running up to the town, and at no time, navigable for vessels of any size. Their nearest and main port for Supplies and the transportation of produce is at City Point on the James River, a distance of from seven to eight miles from town; it is or was connected with the place by a small branch Railroad, which now and all the country through which it passes is in our possession, and the road used for forwarding supplies to the army.

Grant could at any time blow the city to atoms, but as his policy is not to destroy property unless military necessity requires it, and as the destruction of Petersburg would in no wise effect

the enemy's position, or render him less weak he suffers it to remain. Our capture and possession of a large portion of the Weldon Railroad which runs through here in connection with the one to Richmond, seems to claim particular attention in that direction and the hardest and severest battle of the war may be hourly expected.— His forces are large and daily augmenting. His plans and general arrangement of his troops well matured and prepared for any emergency, and the issue tremendous and awful as it will be is of important significance to the Rebels. If Grant succeeds in holding the Weldon Railroad (which he has done for some time, and of which he has destroyed more than thirty miles,) and then makes his way to the Danville Road and have forces enough to destroy and cut off all communications, the inevitable consequence will be, Lee will have to cut his way out or starve, for this would cut off every source of supplies for the rebel army at least so far as Virginia is concerned. The capture of Atlanta by Sherman, and the almost total demoralization of Hood's forces is a death blow to all rebel hopes in the Southwest, and while its discouraging effects must be seriously felt in the rebel army here, it adds vigor, energy and determination to our troops, such as I never witnessed before.

It may take time for Grant to consummate his mighty work and perhaps the loss of a great many men, but the capture of Richmond and Petersburg ultimately, is as sure and certain as the sun shines. Our advance on the 30th of July and the blowing up of one of the largest forts in possession of the enemy was the most awful yet sublime and magnificent scenes I ever witnessed. It was a beautiful morning, just at the dawn of day, with a light and gentle balmy breeze, scarcely enough to ruffle the smooth surface of the water all nature seemed quietly reposing and presented a calm and serene aspect, when all at once a lurid flame of dazzling light broke forth, and with it a tremendous explosion, which sounded like many batteries of artillery or the loud peals of distant thunder, the earth shook and wavered as if some great earthquake or mighty convulsion of nature had taken place. The men in the ranks momentarily trembled like leaves before the wind, when simultaneously with the shock 160 canon and fifty mortars, some of the largest calibre, belched forth in thunder tones the missiles of death and destruction, whilst over head and around the gleaming, bursting shells, flying in every direction. The sharp crack of the rifle all along the lines—the tumult of clashing arms of contending hosts arrayed in deadly conflict—the groans and cries for help of the severely wounded, presented a scene which beggars description, and one I hope never, never witnessed again. Grant's plan of attack was well matured, his forces large and arranged in line of battle some hours before the charge, and would have been entirely successful in the capture of Petersburg and a large number of prisoners, but some of his subordinate officers failed (through intemperance if it is alleged) to bring forward their commands, and although we succeeded in taking two lines of the Rebel Works early in the engagement, yet in consequence of this criminal neglect to bring forward reinforcements we were compelled to submit to a disgraceful repulse, and give up the advantage gained. Our loss in killed, wounded and prisoners was nearly six thousand men, a lamentable failure, deeply regretted on the part of the men not one half of whom were brought into action. I have experienced danger and witnessed death in every engagement and often in the heat of an engagement could I of wept for the severely wounded, whose dying groans and heart rending appeals for help was but too apparent to be misunderstood, but the magnitude and importance of the contest and the principles involved in it claimed my constant attention and required all my physical powers in forcing back the rebel traitors, whose impetuous and misguided spirit has ever been manifested in the most malignant hatred, characteristic only of the savage.

In looking over the vast fields of Virginia, once fertile and fruitful, now barren, desolate and overgrown with brambles the mind becomes painfully exercised at the gloomy and forbidden aspect of everything around him and he is led to exclaim what folly, what insane madness, what mighty infatuation to induce men to make such tremendous sacrifices for an inordinate lust for power and dominion, especially when founded or based upon one of the most inhuman institutions that ever tarnished with its accursed stain, the bright emerald of American liberty, and rendered this country (the boasted asylum of the oppressed of all nations) a reproach and by-word to all civilized powers:—I mean African slavery—an institution, the toleration or continuance of which was no more intended or thought of by the sage framers of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence than they thought of making this Government a monarchy. No, the magnanimity and pure patriotism looked far beyond sectional and sordid interests. Then philanthropy and benevolence took in all that was dear to the whole country. Then great documents were not the work of canting politicians, nor the offspring of imbecile minds, but the work of the assembled wisdom of the 13 original States, who after weeks of prayerful deliberation declared that they should be a free and an independent republic, and by a wise and equitable provision in the Constitution, it was to continue throughout all time, one and indissoluble. In was Washington's greatest care to watch with a jealous and vigilant eye our growing importance, our unbounded resources and extensive influence which we as a republic were daily developing to the world; it was for him to scan narrowly the workings of the degenerate mind to see that no dissension should arise that would menace our republic or institutions, and lead to infractions of Constitutional law.— Thomas Jefferson, the apostle of Democracy and author of the great enunciator of liberty and freedom some years after it had gone forth to the world holds this language: "Slavery," said he, "is an evil of high magnitude, destructive to the best interests of society and intensely at variance with our republican institutions;" and Jas. Madison, 42 years ago, in writing to a friend upon the subject of State Rights, uses this emphatic language. Said he—"treat any man as your most inveterate enemy, that would hint to a dissolution of the Union, for any cause."

I might prolong my remarks to an indefinite period, suffice it to say that the rebel aristocrats failing for once, in having the ascendancy and control of the Government which they have had by the connivance and aid of Democrats North for a long time, were willing to stake their all upon the hazard of a die for the extension of African slavery, and the untrammelled right to traffic in human blood, a trade vile as it is, it furnishes the very elements of vitality to the South and is the source of the most wanton profligate licentiousness, as well as the cause of all the odious lines of distinction which exist in society, but I am glad to say it has reached its culminating point and now receiving its eternal quietus.

I should be pleased to correspond with you, and a number of my friends in Easton, and hope you, at least, will favor me with an early response. My highest regards to your family.— Remember me kindly and affectionately to Brother and Sister and all relatives, and believe me still
Your sincere friend,

W. H. H.