ELLIOTT'S BRIGADE IN "THE CRATER" FIGHT.

JUSTICE FOR THE SOUTH CAROLINIANS WHO BORE THE BRUNT OF BATTLE AND MADE THE VICTORY GLORIOUS.

A Full, Graphic and Authoritative Account, Showing That South Carolina More Than Virginia is Entitled to the Honors of the Desperate Conflict.

—By Col. F. W. McMaster—

—Columbia, S. C—

The Federals were so much mortified at the terrible defeat at the battle of the crater that the secretary of war ordered a court of inquiry to investigate the causes of the defeat.

The court, with the noble Gen. Hancock as president, met Aug 6, 1864, and was in session 17 days. The proceedings cost about 200 pages of the 40th volume "War of the Rebellion."

LEE AND BEAUHARNAIS

were made happy by the glorious victory they achieved, and two days after the battle Gen. Mahone was made major general and Capt Gracey, of Georgia, was appointed brigadier general.

Mr G S Bernard, now a distinguished lawyer of Petersburg, who was a private in Co E, Twelfth Virginia regiment, has written an extremely interesting account of Mahone's brigade in his book entitled "War Talks With Confederate Veterans," which every old veteran ought to read.

I have put the first time carefully read the proceedings of the court of inquiry, which on some particulars have modified views heretofore expressed.

In order to understand an account of the battle of the crater, a short sketch of our 7 affiliations should be given

Elliott's brigade extended from a little branch that separated it from Ransom's brigade on the north, run 250 yards, joining Lane's brigade on the south. Capt Pegram's Virginia battery had four guns arranged in a half circle on the top of the hill, and was separated from the Eighteenth and Twenty-second South Carolina regiments by a large commodious trench cavalier.

The Federal lines ran parallel to the Confederate, but the nearest point of Pegram's battery to the Federal lines was 90 yards, the rest of the lines being from 200 to 300 yards apart The line called picket line was immediately behind the battery, and was the general reserve of our troops The embankment called trench cavalier was immediately in rear of the battery and was constructed for the infantry in case the battery should be taken by a successful assault

The general line for the infantry, which has been spoken of as a wonderful feat of engineering, was constructed under peculiar circumstances. Beauregard had been driven from the original lines made for the defense of Petersburg, and apprehensive that the enemy, which numbered 10 to one, would get into the city, directed his engineer, Col Harris, to take a new line. This place was reached by Gen Gracey's troops at dusk of the third day fighting and our men were ordered to make a breastwork of fallen trees, brushes and shovels (it was rather a difficult feat to perform, but our noble soldiers went to work with very spades and pick axes and in one night this up a bank three feet high—high enough to cause Hancock to delay his attack in the next morning. The ditches were enlarged until they were eight feet from top to bottom, 6 feet wide, a banquette of 18 inches high from which the soldiers could shoot over the breastwork.

Five or six traverses were built perpendicularly from the main trench to the rear, so as to protect Pegram's guns from the enfilading fire of the big guns on the Federal line a mile to the north. Besides these traverses there were numerous ditches five or six feet deep which led to the works

The only safe way to Petersburg a mile off was to go down to the spring branch which passed under our lines at the foot of the hill then go to the left through the covered way to Petersburg or to take the covered way which was half way down the hill to Elliott's headquarters

At this point a ravine or more properly a swale ran up the hill parallel to the breastworks Elliott's and Lane's headquarters where Mahone's troops went in from the covered way and formed in battle line

The soldiers slept in the main trench At times of heavy rains the lower part of the trench was a foot deep in water The officers slept in bunkers dug in the side of the trench. There were traverses, narrow ditches, cross ditches and a few mounds over officers' quarters, so that there is no wonder that one of the Federal officers said the quarters resembled him of the catacombs of Egypt

An ordinary mortal would not select such a place for a three months summer residence

About 10 days after the battle and while the ruins were still smoking and the ravaging Gen Elliott's headquarters a distinguished mining general visited my brigade and I went to go over the line with him I gladly complied with the request He asked me where the most exposed at night I pointed out the front of the ditch He said "But where do you sleep at night?" We happen to be in the narrow ditch in front of my quarters, and I pointed it out to him. He smiled in disgust and altogether suitable for a Sunday school teacher, that he would desert before he would submit to such hardships

THE CRATER

The explosion took place at 4 45 a. m The crater made by 8000 pounds of gun powder was 135 feet long, 57 feet broad and 30 feet deep. Two hundred and twenty-eight men were buried in the debris—Eighteenth regiment, 82; Twenty-second, 176, and Pegram's battery, 22 men

To add to the terror of the scene the enemy with 14 cannon and 4 mortars began a bombardment much greater than Fort Sumter ever received. Gen Meade ordered Elliott's brigade to man the crater was pale stricken, and more than half of the Eighteenth regiment retreated with their colonel down Two or three noble soldiers asked me if I would go back with them to the counterscarp and made their way for Petersburg Small as I was I felt ashamed of the proposition I saw one solitary scattering at the counterscarp of the ditch like a mere dot in a vast breastwork of 12 without but one or one shot run for dear life was down into the trench. Why do I say that? I came to consciousness in a hot out, "What old Mose sunrise? and I immediately returned to my place in line

The same consternation existed in the Federal lines. Gen Meade has since described the day broke ranks and it took a few minutes to restore order

THE FIRST FIGHT

About 15 minutes after the explosion Gen Ledlow's corps advanced in two lines of battle. The attack was kept for 50 yards Soon after Gen Wilcox's corps came in on the left of Ledlow's line Then Potter's corps followed by flank and was ordered to the right of Ledlow's corps

The pall of smoke was so great that we could not see the enemy until they were in a few feet of our works, and a lively fusillade was opened by the Seventeenth regiment on the north side of the crater in the Twenty-second Ga. Lt. A. J. Gray of 16, on the top of the breastwork was the center of his regiment, and my guide if with the coolness of a veteran As soon as I reached him I dragged him down a bit, but he still persisted him to shoot from the banquette On the south of the crater a few men on the left of the Twenty-second line and, and Capt R E White, with the Twenty-third regiment, had a hot time in filling the enemy

Adjt Sims and Capt Flood, of the Eighteenth regiment, with about 30 men were cut off in the gorge line They held the line for a few minutes Adjt Sims was killed Capt Flood and his men fell back into some of the cross ditches and took their chances with the Seventeenth

It was half an hour before the Seventeenth filled the gorge line and a small space of the northern part of the works not injured by the explosion. All the Federals who had rushed to shot a gun on the north of the crater.

Major J C Coit, who commanded Wright's battery and Pegram's battery, had come up to look after the condition of the latter He concluded that two officers and 20 men were destroyed Subsequently he discovered that one man had gone to the spring before the explosion, that four men were saved by a cremate and captured.

Col Coit says it took him 25 minutes to come from his quarters and go to Wright's battery and thinks it was the first gun shot on the Confederate side Testimony taken in the court of inquiry in no case was more ever quite

GEN STEPHEN ELLIOTT

Gen Stephen Elliott, the hero of Fort Sumter, was wounded and captured by officers, time up soon after the explosion. He was shot in a new hand, and I saw him a few days after. He was sitting the scene for a few minutes he disappeared and in a short time he came up he was accompanied by Col A H Smith, of the Twenty-sixth, with a few men I was sitting leaning his way through the crowd He said to me "Colonel, I am going to charge these Yankees out of the crater. Will you follow Smith with your regiment"

He immediately climbed the counterscarp The gallant Smith followed, and about half a dozen men followed Just in low ties the minute he was shot from the crater through his shoulder I believe it was the first ball shot that day from the northern side of the crater He was immediately pulled down into the ditch, and with the utmost coolness, and without a moment of pain turned himself over to me, the next ranking officer Capt Hutson and Lieut Wallace were left above on furlough

I immediately ordered John Phillips, a brave soldier of Co I, to go around the trench to inform the commanding officer of the serious wounding of the Elliott, and to inquire as to the condition of the brigade in the south side Major Shell replied that Col Fleming and Adjt Smythe were killed and wounded, and that Twenty-second were buried up, but with the remnant of his regiment and the Twenty-third under Capt Wills and a part of Wise's brigade he had driven the enemy back, and intended to keep them back

Being satisfied that the object of the mine was to blow up the front line in which Gen Meade could rush his troops to the rear, I ordered Col Smith to take his regiment, and Capt Crawford with three of my largest companies Co K, E and A, and to occupy as many men as Smith's, to proceed by Elliott's headquarters up the ravine to a place where I knew of the crater—I could make the men lie down—and if the enemy attempted to rush down to retard them to the last extremity This was near 6 o'clock a m, and the enemy had ceased any advance on the north side of the crater

By this time the crater was packed with men. I saw at least 200 Confederates 2 pass four or five officers waiving swords and pointing towards Petersburg, and I supposed they were preparing for a charge to the crest of the hill

ELLIOTT'S BRIGADE.

The line and strength of the brigade from left to right was as follows: Twenty-sixth regiment, 120 men; Seventeenth, 440, Eighteenth 350, Twenty-second, 300, Twenty-third, 200 in all 1,500 men, a full estimate.

BENHOW'S REGIMENT

The first severe attack of the enemy was on the south of the crater Benhow's regiment left by a part of the Twenty-second and Major Shell and Lieutenant Wills Twenty-third Capt Wills The enemy attacked with fury. Our men fought nobly but were driven down their ditch Wise's brigade then joined in, and our men rushed back and recovered the lost space About this time they saw a part of Wright's Georgia regiment, Minnesota regiment, and then the Ninetieth Pennsylvania, the 48th and 19th and their right and militia of them climbed the crater and went to the rear of the enemy in the gorge and every variant spice on the north side Sensitive aggressive attack was made on the south side by Wright's regiment He was of the day The frightened rearward ran down the direct line to Petersburg Hill was through the Seventeenth regiment Large Federal officer was driven back and our men again to took of the crest of the hill

SEVENTEENTH REGIMENT

The Fifth line being checked on the south of the crater charged Co A, the extreme right company, next to the crater Capt W. H. Pipes as he was sent sick, and a few of the men were carried with him by the explosion and were consequently demoralized Private Hike was ordered to surrender—declined to surrender and would surrender to a Yankee He climbed his musket and knocked down four of his assailants, and was bayoneted There was one man killed in Co A Co F was the next attacked, and private Wm Cabbell killed one man and bayoned two with the butt of his musket Lieut Samuel Lowry, a fine soldier of 22 years, and Capt Pipes were killed Co D surrendered in trenches, and 12 men were killed Lieut Lieut W G Stevenson has learned the result would have been after an Fourteen out of 27 of these men died in prison of scurvy at Elmira, N Y Private J S Hogan, of Co D, came the traverse He joined in Mahone's charge and after the fight was welcomed by the enemy went to the rear to relive himself, then went into the charge under Gen Sanders After the fight was over he was enough coffee and sugar to last him a month This young rebel seemed to have a fair or two with the rolling Yankees At the battle of Tut Steadman he manned a cannon which was taken from the enemy, and in the retreat from Petersburg he was in every battle He was always on the skirmish line, ready, where he could kill, wound or capture the enemy. He feared not and while his other soldiers fled he purched cans, and surrendered at Appomattox with his haversack filled with provisions

Co C the next company, had 14 men killed. Its captain, William Dunnomt, was only 18 years of age, and he fine a captain as war in Lee's army Lieut C Pratt, a fine officer not more than 22 years old, was killed The company de-

valor on Sergt T J LaMotte, G and H Pulliam, L Thee, K, Ivy, and H, one, P, Dye

The Federals had the advantage over the Secession in this case that our small elevated pants made the crater they could shoot from. After being driven down about 60 yards they we was an mighty big one, and Sergt T J LaMotte, but a fortunate shot, which stopped his advance A good part of the fighting was done by the men on each side of the crater—the rest being cut off from view.

LOSING AFTER FIRING THEIR GUNS

About 8 90 a. m. we drew a narrow ditch to see if Smith and his men were prepared I asked to be the man to go out and fling down to the ravine before I go back I saw there was a vacant space in our trench I jumped in and saw a man who looks poked around an angle, as I got in the musket was fired and I thought I had imbedded the balls in the breastworks I immediately concluded that it was not safe for me to remain longer in the open the extreme right of his men and went lower down In a short time I again saw a man in the ditch I let down the hill, anxious about the weak point on our line. I was scolding a little with a man to the stem. As I turned I observed a rush down the line As I got in the ditch I saw a man who had knocked off A big brawny fellow cried out, "Hold on men! the rebels are fighting without the guns!" The ditch stood, stopped the men until he picked up the lead and I took it and fired. Soon I knew the name of this hoodlum—Sergt Pulliam

The principal fighting was done by the head of the column A few gunn fellows attempted to cross the breastworks—Sergt Sims and a man called Jones—but were immediately close together in our breastworks, instead of the rebels, they had stuck like glue to our outer bank

A LONG AND LAZY FIGHT

The sun was oppressively hot Then was very little musketry the cannonading had slackened to a few shots, and the soldiers on both sides as the day was hot seemed to have lost zeal. I was present to devise to pass the time I saw Capt Steele the swing bayonets over a traverse I saw Lieut Colonel Jones on the ground, and asked what he was doing He whispered, "I'm trying to get the drop on a fellow on the ditch" He They would throw clods of clay at each other over the ditch As an Irishman threw over a lump of clay I heard him say, "Take that, Johnny" We all wished for a Hunnegard had supplied us with hand grenades, for the British had simply down to a little row in the trenches

THE BATTLE THAT CONQUERED

MIDAY

At 8 19 a m Potters 4 300 across rushed over and reached the tight flank of the Seventeenth N C Lots of hollaring and fighting greatly to the disomfort of white man that packed themselves to the safe side of the breastworks Thousands rushed into the ditch. Hayman's Twenty-sixth and Twenty-fifth regiments were ready to get hold of the negroes Mighty had been more sound than during the morning, now they were packed in an mass of sound and in close range. Big things was kicked off down the hill side, but when it got down to the branch the musketry was terrific. Well, about thirty 200 yards off point Lincoln says Along half-mile stockade, at the bottom of the branch, the rebels were huddled amongst the negroes Col Cox says 2,000 negroes rushed back and into Lincoln from the left and I saw them in the ditch Lieutenant Bailey, who was shot through the arm, said that Hayman and Hamrick's brigade was repulsed to across those lines

When the battle was at its highest the Seventeenth was forced down its line about 30 yards Lieut Col Pleasing, of Hayman's Twenty-fifth regiment, came up to me and pointed out a gap I place I had seen Hayman's men forced back him to build it with his own men as mine were almost exhausted by the heat of the day He hurriedly assented, stopped on a bayonets to act ground mounted, and so shot in the neck and dropped dead by my feet

At this moment Colonel Jones of Gen Hayman's staff rode up and said he had requested me to come out to Hayman's headquarters I immediately proceeded to the place, and Gen Mahone came up I was introduced to him, and suggested to him when his men came in to form them on Scales's name to the brow down in the ravine A few minutes afterwards he and Gen Hayman and Capt Steele brought out the remnant of the Seventeenth regiment, and they marched down the ravine to the Mahone's men

MAHONE'S CHARGE

By this time Gen Mahone's battle of Virginia 800 men strong, was coming down to place, and were formed a few steps to the left and a little in advance of Smith's and Cleveland's men I was in the rear with Gen Johnson close to Lieut a head pattern, and could see everything that transpired in the ravine Gen Mahone ordered to arrange his men I was apprehensive that the army would make a charge before he could get his row Behind effective begun to climb out of the man a ditch until they numbered about 25 men in Gen Mahone's row on the extreme right it seemed to me long with some musket Lieutenant Colonel Clay had gone to Old Washington, who was carried with the same debt, and I did Gen Mahone was anxious to talk some of the Georgians with him but the Lieutenant Colonel Clay was not participated the charge

The noble old veteran, Col Wright rolled out "Forward" and 800 brave Virginians sprung to their feet and rushed 200 yards up the hill Ere we had the possession of a West Point drill but it exhibited the pluck of Virginia at Thermopylae. The men advanced in the utility as they reached the numerous ditches that lay in the ravine which all were but from view The firing was not very great for the bayonet and butt of the muskets all in a mass strewed the ditch I if any one desires a graphic description of a hand to hand fight I beg him to read the graphic details that are given by Mr Bennett in his "War Talks of Confederate Veteran"

In a few minutes the enemy in the ditch up to 50 yards of the crater were killed or captured The bayonet and butt of three acres of ground became suddenly quiet comparatively

Mahone in an hour time sent in the Georgia brigade, under Gen Wright There was such a hue for him the crater that he was forced to oblique to the left and flanked on Mahone's men in a few minutes after they landed at the foot of the crater in their second charge

Colters' Alabama brigade came up at this time Besides his Alabamians were Elliots brigade and Clingman's sixth first North Carolina The charge was made about I o'clock p m, and the Federal artillery poured all its fire on the crater for some minutes slaughtering many of their own men At this charge Lieut Col. Cash, who was absent at the battle of Petersburg, in a member of a constitutional cause up and took charge of the seventh in the ravine, where Capt Steele had left them In the charge of the crater Gen Sanders were Col Culp, Col Smith and Lieut Col J H Hudson with the Twenty-sixth, and a large number of privates, especially from the Seventeenth regiment, which also had a good many in Mahone's charge

A good many of the Twenty-third joined in the charge, and private W H Dunlap, Co. C, Twenty-third regiment, saw of Columbia was the first man who got in the crater on the south side

While the men were piling up and down the ditch Capt Frank Jones, Alabama, was picking up the dead and wounded of his men, and he was killed two of them, the fellows I saw in the ditch in a minute they were shot down

A little conversation with Gen Clark Sanders, adjutant general, illustrates how true politeness smooth the wrinkle's brow in time of war Gen Sanders was a fine looking Federal officer, making his way out of the crater on the left, and he was received music by fire musketry, seeing one big was sent off. He said "Good morning, sir" in a very much pain. The soldier replied the pain he received at Spotsylvania a year ago was worse than this wound. I said to the pain he name as Gen Hard it Gen Sanders kindly helped me to get out

The bayonet was sometimes resorted with incidents which amuse us Lieut Colonel Jones, Twenty-fifth, Joe Free, a member of Co H The adjutant had gone in the afternoon to the weapon pits to see the men at the labors of the day. Thus was a group of men reclining in the ditch. The adjutant approached and said, "Boys, I had gone into the pits and in a few minutes shot at me. I ducked my head and I said, 'Lord have mercy on me' and keep from the bullet I was shot in the head"

This is an earnest and effective prayer for Mahone's men in an hour off trouble whenever they

In a recent letter received from Capt R A Crawford he says the many formal thanks he received, but he says them a well did right the day each time and not the fault of the men in the trench When Mahone came and formed my three companies charged with him Col Smith was with us I heard four times Cousack Mure, a very intelligent private of Co K said they I fired the time charge Capt Crawford requested Gen Mahone to let him go back to his battalion to the regiment and he said I think it best to stay Sanders and I joined Smith, well we stuck to the Co K lad I min, Capt Cherry, Co. E, lo and Capt Harley Co. H, 26, in all 18 men

Capt R A Crawford was a member of a military court during duty in Petersburg at the time of the explosion, and could not get back until the 30 Lieut Col Willcox's brigade in the ravine Lieut Colonel Willcox reported to me at Willcox's headquarters I made some inquiries of Lieut Colonel Willcox and Lieut Colonel Williams, of Co K, was killed, and that one of the Chowders, a member of Co K, which Chowder was one of the worst in the works. Those instances I mention, well exhibit the feeling of the men of the Seventeenth and Twenty-fifth and I were with me in the charge and as far as I know non at least a portion of all the companies were with me Tree Bell that poor Paul was with me very distinctly, and that he was very active in the charge Paul was in the ranks in forming out hidden Dr Jones who I have been with since I left home for the most part, seemed very loth to leave their hiding places I felt quite a bit of pity for them, I felt like a fool in the ditch I felt I was a fool in the ditch, but there is nothing that I can recall at this late day to listen the Dr. Jones if he was any more active at that time than I was, I do not know, but I know I felt I was a fool in the ditch I felt I was a fool in the ditch

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