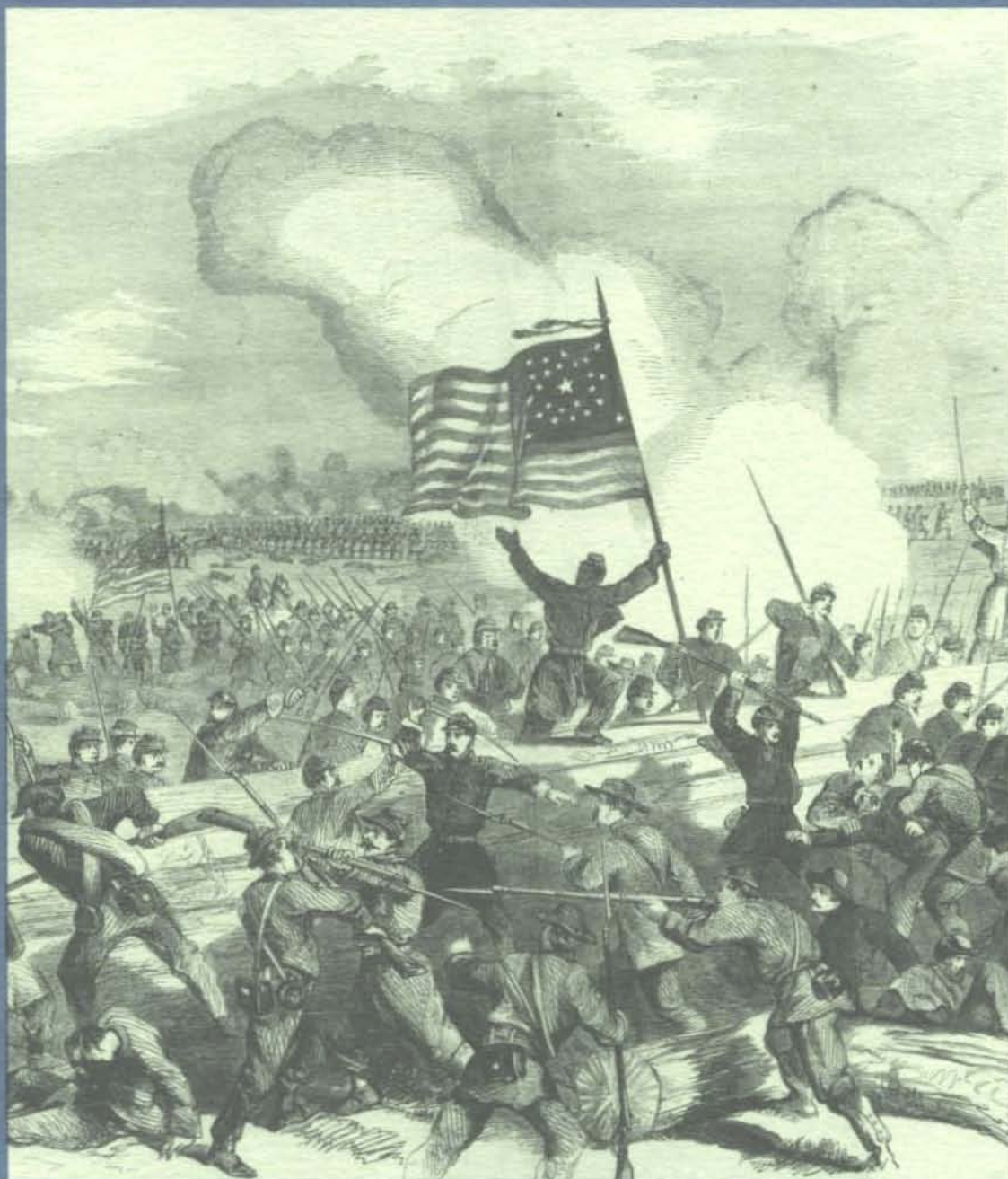




Rhode Island History

Volume 47, Number 4

November 1989



"I have felt all day as though I ought to write for this may be my last, although however great the danger may be, I am determined that nothing shall lead me from the path of duty."

— George B. Carpenter, "War and Other Reminiscences"

Rhode Island History

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War and Other Reminiscences

George Bradford Carpenter

Introduction by *Kris Van Den Bossche*

"War and Other Reminiscences" is George Bradford Carpenter's 1912 account of his experiences during the Civil War. Carpenter served as a soldier in Company D of the Fourth Rhode Island Infantry from the fall of 1861 through the summer of 1864, when he lost an arm at the Battle of the Crater. Although this narrative is relatively short in length, it describes many memorable episodes connected with Carpenter's war service.

George Carpenter grew up in the rural-industrial village of Potter Hill in Westerly, Rhode Island. The Carpenter family was prominent very early on in Rhode Island's history. Although a number of genealogies trace the family's history, none of them make mention of the forebears of George B. Carpenter. As he states, his grandfather was Ebenezer Carpenter. Apparently Ebenezer was one of the sons of Benjamin and Abigail Carpenter. Benjamin Carpenter resided in Hopkinton in 1820, and the census of that year indicates that he had two sons between the ages of ten and sixteen.

Ebenezer Carpenter first appeared in the census of 1830. In that year Ebenezer (twenty to thirty years old) lived in the town of Richmond with his wife, Ruth A. (Sheldon) Carpenter, and their three daughters (all under the age of five years). The census indicates that he had no male children at this time. The 1840 census makes no mention at all of Ebenezer and his family. They may have been boarding in another household, as it was common that one family would board with another.

From all indications, it would seem that George B. Carpenter was the illegitimate son of one of Ebenezer's daughters. Although Carpenter never admitted or even suggested this fact, his narrative

tends to confirm it. He made no mention of his father; rather, he discussed only his mother and grandfather. Additionally, his mother became pregnant at a very young age. Although being fourteen and pregnant does not necessarily preclude the possibility of marriage, it does indicate that the circumstances were probably atypical. This evidence, together with some additional information, supports the idea that Carpenter had no legitimate father.

Carpenter spent his early years living with his grandfather in Potter Hill. The village itself consisted of fewer than a dozen households, a few small businesses, and a good-sized cotton mill. The Potter family, which gave its name to the village, owned and operated the mill for several decades. In 1843 Thomas W. and Joseph Potter sold the company to two other local businessmen, Edwin and Horace Babcock. In 1847 a fire at the mill forced the Babcocks to rebuild. Carpenter's grandfather, Ebenezer, worked for them and helped to dismantle the charred post-and-beam frame, and it was while engaged in this work that he was struck and killed by a falling timber. George remained with his mother until she too died, one year later, at the age of twenty.

After his mother's death, there seem to have been no relatives willing or able to take Carpenter in. No father came forward to care for him. His aunts probably lacked the means to support him, as they were all young women, no more than twenty years old. Francis Carpenter, undoubtedly another relative, did not take the boy either, though he himself lived in the Potter Hill area. Consequently, George Carpenter found himself living in the home of the Thomas W. Potter family.

It is unclear why this family took the boy in. On the surface it would seem to be a charitable act on its part. The family was very wealthy, and Thomas Potter was one of the most notable men of the

Kris Van Den Bossche graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1989.

village. As the one-time millowner, Potter perhaps felt some sense of social responsibility for the welfare of his workers and their families. Moreover, with no male children, the family might have enjoyed having a young boy around the house.

The 1850 census shows Carpenter as being with the Potter family, and it lists no occupation for him. The 1860 census, however, describes George Carpenter (age eighteen) as being a "domestic servant." Maybe the Potters had taken him in with the idea that he would be of some use to them as he got older, though no more work might have been expected of him than would have been expected of any other member of the household. Regardless of his work status, Carpenter eventually grew to become an integral part of the Potter family.

During the 1850s George's life probably differed little from that of any other adolescent boy of that period. Although Carpenter may have worked a little harder than most of his peers, he still had the opportunity to attend the local school. In 1854 Thomas W. Potter died, but Carpenter's living situation remained relatively unchanged. The two Potter sisters, Maria L. (born in 1815) and Harriett (born in 1816), kept the boy in their care. These two unmarried women, both approaching forty, treated George much the same as they would have treated a child of their own. His future welfare was of such importance to them that they enrolled him in the Hopkinton Academy of Ashaway, Rhode Island, in 1859 or 1860.

The Hopkinton Academy first opened its doors to students in the winter of 1859. The academy accepted children of all ages, girls as well as boys. The older students, like Carpenter, had a number of courses from which to select, including mathematics, languages, astronomy, natural philosophy, physiology, geology, botany, music, and art. The tuition ranged from three to six dollars a semester, with art and music courses requiring an additional fee.

The courses were taught by a staff of four well-educated instructors under the supervision of the Reverend Joseph W. Morton (1821-1893), who himself taught most of the older students, including Carpenter. Morton was well qualified for the position he held. The master of several languages and a skilled instructor, he had taught at the renowned DeRuyter Institute of New York as well

as at several other schools. He was a popular figure at the academy, and his former students remembered him fondly for years afterward.

Many students developed close friendships among their peers at the academy. Since the school was coeducational, these relationships often arose irrespective of gender; in fact, a number of students met their future husbands or wives at the school. The academy provided opportunities for students to gather and mingle at a variety of worthwhile activities. Among these were the lectures offered by the Pithologian Society and the Students' Lyceum. On 1 March 1860, for instance, students could hear Wendell Phillips speak on abolition, and on 16 January 1861 they could hear the Reverend S. S. Griswold lecture on secession. The Hopkinton Academy not only provided its students with an education but also encouraged in them a social and political awareness.

The outbreak of the Civil War in the spring of 1861 affected the academy severely. The greatest blow occurred when Morton left to join the army in the fall of 1862. Even before then, though, the school was adversely affected when it lost several of its older students during a three-week period in its fall 1861 semester.

At about the time that that semester was beginning in late August, a recruiter arrived in Westerly to enroll men for the Fourth Rhode Island Infantry. His mission soon became common knowledge among the students, and during the next several weeks many of them joined up. Between 14 September and 3 October, nine students enlisted: Alfred B. Berry, Thomas A. Barber, Benjamin F. Burdick, George B. Carpenter, Davis Crandall, William L. Crandall, Edwin D. Gavitt, Henry F. Saunders, and Horace Stillman.

These students shared certain similarities in their background. Ranging in age from sixteen to twenty-two, nearly all of them came from villages within the town of Hopkinton; only Carpenter and Berry did not, and they lived nearby in Westerly. Most were from middle-class families and worked at a trade while attending the academy. Although the nine students did not enlist at the same time as a single body, they must certainly have made a conscious decision to serve together.

As the young men enlisted, the recruiter forwarded them to Camp Greene, where they were

equipped and trained. This camp, on the outskirts of the village of Apponaug in Warwick, served as the rendezvous for the recruits of the Fourth Rhode Island. Situated some eight miles below Providence, Camp Greene was conveniently located near the line of the Providence and Stonington (Connecticut) Railroad. Most of the recruits from the Hopkinton area probably took the train there from Westerly.

The life at Camp Greene gave the men a taste of what they would face for the next three years. The men lived in tents and slept on the ground. The food, though it was not so bad as what they would later get, was certainly unlike what they had received at home. The recruits were trained in the art of war, and they were subject to the orders of men who may have been their peers in civilian life.

George Carpenter enlisted as a private and was shipped off to Camp Greene on 24 September. On the twenty-fifth he secured a pass to return home, and there, on the twenty-sixth, he married Mary Covey. Mary, who was fourteen or fifteen at the time, lived across the street from the Hopkinton Academy. Although their marriage was somewhat hasty and spontaneous, it is likely that they had known each other for some time, and Carpenter probably had courted her while he was a student at the academy.

Carpenter returned to Camp Greene on the day following his marriage. Alfred Berry, William Crandall, and Benjamin Burdick arrived there about the same time as he did. Horace Stillman came a couple of days later, and Henry Saunders, the last of the group to enlist, showed up around 4 October. By this time the regiment had made preparations to leave for the war. On 5 October 1861 the Fourth Rhode Island departed, and a few days later it made camp just outside of the city of Washington, D.C.

The unit remained in the vicinity of Washington for several months. Then, in December, it was sent to Annapolis, Maryland, where it joined a division commanded by Brigadier General Ambrose E. Burnside. In January 1862 Burnside's division sailed for North Carolina, where over the next several months it fought several battles and captured a number of small cities. After returning to Virginia in July, the Fourth Rhode Island saw action at the battles of Antietam (17 September 1862) and Fredericksburg (13 December 1862).

During most of 1863 the regiment served on the Peninsula in Virginia. Although it participated in a few minor engagements, its service there was relatively peaceful and unremarkable. In the spring of 1864 the unit moved to Point Lookout, Maryland, where it guarded Confederate prisoners of war. Early in the summer the Fourth Rhode Island once again returned to Virginia, and from that time forward it served with Grant's armies in and around Petersburg.

Of the nine students who left the academy in the fall of 1861, only five survived the war. Davis Crandall, the first soldier from Hopkinton to be killed in action, lost his life at the battle of New Berne, North Carolina (14 March 1862). During this same battle Edwin Gavitt was severely wounded in the leg, and he spent several months in various hospitals before he finally died in June. Both Benjamin Burdick and Henry Saunders were wounded at Antietam. Burdick died on the field of battle, while Saunders lingered for a month before he too passed away.

Of the five remaining students, only one, Thomas A. Barber, remained relatively unscathed by the war. Horace Stillman became deathly ill after eating blackberries during the summer of 1863 and was discharged soon after, but he never fully recovered from the effects of his illness. William Crandall and Alfred Berry also suffered from illnesses contracted during the war. And George Carpenter lost his right arm during the Battle of the Crater (30 July 1864).

Carpenter claimed that his wound never really troubled him. He seemed to have few problems in readjusting to civilian life. His wife Mary was waiting for him, and within a year of his return they had their first child. Carpenter operated a grocery and dry-goods store in Ashaway, while also serving as the village postmaster, until 1872. Later, in 1880, he became involved with the Ashaway Line and Twine Manufacturing Company. He and two others purchased the mill in 1883, and Carpenter served over twenty years as the company's general manager and treasurer.

When the company experienced financial problems soon after the turn of the century, Carpenter and his partners sold out. Carpenter retired, though he remained active in village affairs. He died in a horse-and-buggy accident in 1914.

George Carpenter's narrative provides some insights into what it was like to have been a common soldier during the Civil War. By no means is it a complete account of his service. Rather, Carpenter painted a picture of his service from memory after fifty years had passed. He remembered, and he wrote down, what was most significant to him at that time. "War and Other Reminiscences" presents some of the experiences—entertaining, amusing, and traumatic—of a soldier who served in the Civil War.

* * *

I want to acknowledge the invaluable assistance and encouragement given to me in the preparation of this article by John Kaminski and Charles D. Hagermann of the Center for the Study of the American Constitution at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I also appreciate the cooperation of the Westerly Public Library, in whose local history collection the original typescript of "War and Other Reminiscences" is located.

PREFACE

At the earnest request and constant solicitation of my children I am writing out some of the things I saw and heard and experienced during my service in the Civil War which I am able to call to mind after a lapse of fifty years and more.

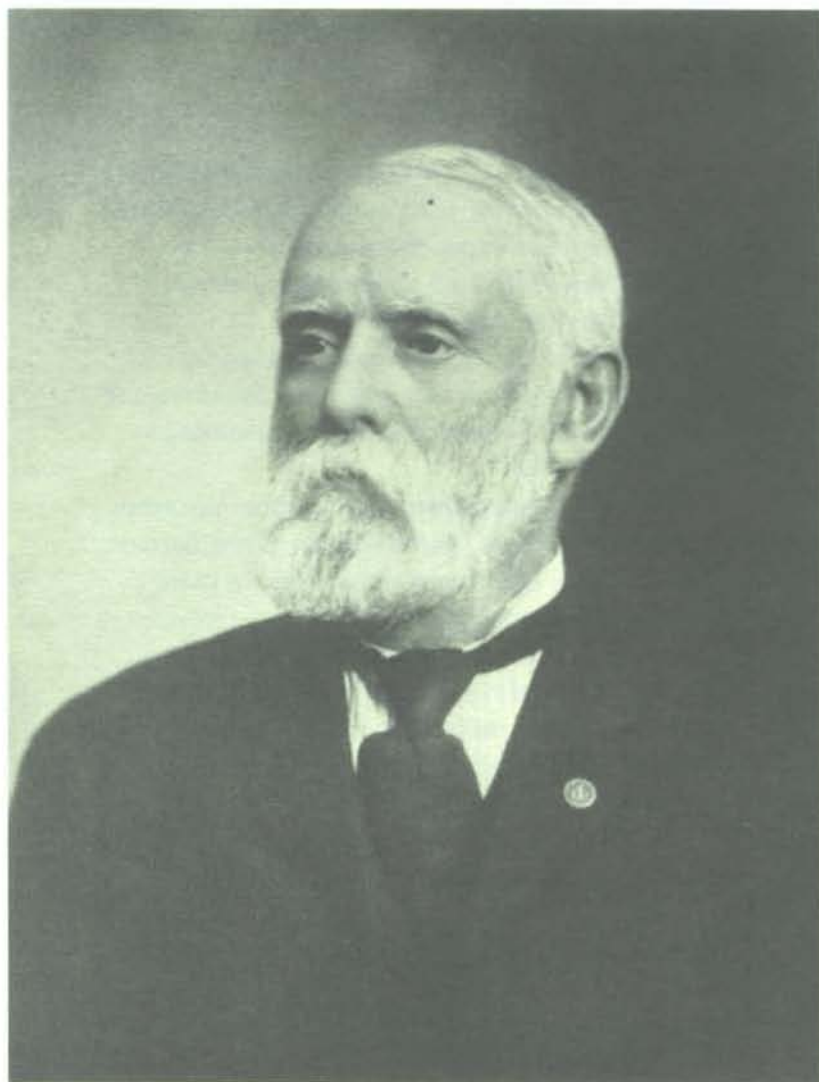
I shall try to portray instances and happenings from my own point of view, and with no purpose of making them in chronological order, or aiming at literary excellence.

Naturally I shrink from talking about my army life, especially where I personally appeared, because of the tendency of so many old soldiers to make exaggerated statements about their own experiences, but, as I am writing this to satisfy a long expressed desire of my children, and with no expectation that it will ever come to the eyes of the public, I may be pardoned for entering into details more than I otherwise would.

George B. Carpenter.

Ashaway, Rhode Island,
December 13th, 1912.

The 49th anniversary of the Battle of Fredericksburg.



Geo B. Seargent

War and Other Reminiscences

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I was born November 8, 1842, in an old gable-roofed house owned by Daniel Stillman, Sr., located about one mile west of Potter Hill, R.I., a little back from the Pawcatuck River. My grandfather, Ebenezer Carpenter, owned and lived in the house which still stands across the road from the Oliver Babcock homestead at Potter Hill, Rhode Island.

He died April 12, 1847, as a result of an accident, (a falling timber) while at work on the mill at Potter Hill, and the death of my mother on March 10, 1848, at the age of twenty years, resulted in the breaking up of the family, and I went to live in the family of Thomas W. Potter, father of Maria L. and Harriett W. Potter, on the 15th of March 1848, and continued living there for twelve years, or until I enlisted for the Civil War.

I was baptized and joined the First Seventh-day Baptist Church of Hopkinton in the winter of 1858.¹

After my return from the war I engaged in mercantile business for a few years, then went to Philadelphia connecting myself with Cadbury, Thomas and Company, Drygoods Commission Merchants, during the years 1872 -73 -74.

I was agent for William Johnson, a waste manufacturer of Philadelphia from 1874-1880 when I was made Treasurer and Manager of the Ashaway Line & Twine Manufacturing Company, continuing as such for about twenty years, when I retired.²

I served as Postmaster at Ashaway for seven years, 1865-1872, and was then removed because I voted for Horace Greeley for President.³

I have always been interested, more or less, in public affairs. I was a member of the Rhode Island Legislature in 1878 -79 -80 -81 -82.

I have been the Moderator of the Town of Hopkinton continuously for more than thirty years, a member of the Town Council and Board of Assessors, and have also received other appointments of honor and trust in both Town and State.

I have been the President of the Ashaway Free Library Association for thirty-three years, and a member of the Board of Managers of the Seventh-day Baptist Missionary Society since 1878, and in 1891 was President of the Seventh-day Baptist General Conference at its session in Westerly, Rhode Island. I have attended every session of the General Conference from 1878 to 1911.

CIVIL WAR

While in attendance at school at Hopkinton Academy at Ashaway, Rhode Island, I enlisted in Company D., 4th Rhode Island Volunteers on the 24th day of September, 1861, and was given permission to come home on the night of the 25th, and was married on the evening of the 26th to Mary Elizabeth (Green) Covey. From this union came four children to bless our lives, Harriett Wells, Edwin Grant, Frances Adelle, and Ruth Marion Carpenter, all of whom are living at this writing.

There were ten or more students from this school who enlisted about this time in different companies and different regiments in Rhode Island and Connecticut, and not one of them returned in good health; more than half were either killed or wounded, and the others contracted diseases from which they suffered the balance of their lives.

Our first experience in camp near Apponaug, Rhode Island, was to be many times repeated during our three years' service. The land where Camp Green was located was quite level and during the

1. The Seventh-Day Baptist Church that Carpenter joined was located next to the Hopkinton Academy in Ashaway, R.I. The Seventh-Day Baptist faith had been the predominant religion of the town from its earliest days.

2. In 1883 Sands C. Carr, George B. Carpenter, and Horace L. Crandall together formed the Ashaway Line and Twine Company. This company took over the operations of Lester Crandall, Horace's father, who had begun the manufacture of rope on this site in 1824. Financial problems in 1902 or 1903 forced the three

men to sell the enterprise to another group of local businessmen.

3. During the Lincoln administration, veterans often received postal appointments as a reward for their service in the war. Traditionally, though, postal appointments served as the means by which presidential administrations rewarded those who had supported them in elections. Because of Carpenter's support for the losing candidate (Horace Greeley), the Republicans who had supported Ulysses S. Grant offered the postmaster's position to someone else.

night a thunder shower arose, and when day appeared, we awoke to find we were lying in from two to four inches of water.

That was indeed somewhat novel for boys who had been coddled all their lives by anxious parents or guardians,—if I was caught with damp feet, I must change my stockings and bake my feet, and very likely have to go to bed early with a dry and warm stocking turned inside out and pinned around my throat—but these loving ministrations were all too soon to be but delightful memories, and today my heart goes back to those boy-hood days with gratitude and thankfulness to the hands and hearts which so kindly ministered to my necessities.

AN AMUSING INCIDENT

I had not, as I ought to have done, taken into my confidence the Misses Maria L. and Harriett Potter, the two maiden ladies with whom I had lived for more than twelve years, regarding my purpose to marry.

Of course they still considered me a mere boy, wholly unfit to become the head of a family, and I fully realized I would get a "call-down" when next I met them, and this occurred within a day or so. What excuse could I offer for my foolish move? How could I square myself with them for the injustice I had done them? These were questions that harassed my very soul.

On the way home from camp, I saw in East Greenwich a fine lot of clams for sale, and knowing how they enjoyed the bivalves, I purchased a peck and took them home with me, all the way trying to prepare a presentation speech, and when I entered the house the first question by Miss Harriett was, "George, are you married?" Catching my breath I began my diplomatic speech, "I have brought you a peck of the finest clams you ever saw. East Greenwich clams, you know, are very large. The flavor is noted the state over. We can have not only a good chowder, but what fritters they will make.

Just look at them! Aren't they nice? Where shall I put them?" Glancing up I saw Miss Maria just entering the room and a neighbor was coming in at the opposite door, but the cold eyes of Miss Harriett penetrated me through and through, and now that I had exhausted all my eloquence and diplomacy came again that freezing question, "George, are you married?" Can you imagine the tableau? I was down and out. I could not utter a word. Not that I was sorry that I had married the best girl in all the world, but the method I had used, so far as these dear women were concerned, had been shameful, and nothing I have ever done since has ever made me feel so small as I owned up all.

In due time the regiment was sent on to Washington, and to the front. We were mustered into the service of the United States at Camp Bladensburg, then two miles outside the city of Washington, on the 30th of October, 1861, and from that time on for several weeks were put through a course of drilling and discipline which was to make of us real soldiers.

In November we had our first experience of marching, going to defend an election for Governor and other state officers for the State of Maryland, and the particular voting place to which we were sent was something over fifty miles below Washington on the Potomac River.⁴

The last day of the march before reaching the polling place we travelled thirty-six miles, with all of our accouterments, and were deadly tired as we turned off from the road into a lot where recently the wood had been cut off, and piles of brush were on every side.

William Crandall and I spread one blanket over a bunch of brush, lay down and drew the other one over us and soon were asleep and knew nothing more until the reveille was sounded at sun rise.

Getting up we were both very sore and on examination we found the points of the brush, where they had been cut off, had come up through the brush heap, and we were lying on these uncom-

4. During the 1861 state elections, the United States government ordered troops to be sent to various rebel-minded towns in Maryland, where they were to "guard" the polling places. In essence, the government sent Union soldiers there to discourage people from voting for Southern sympathizers. The Fourth

Rhode Island went to Lower Marlboro, Md., and stayed there during the elections of 5 November. Lower Marlboro, located some fifty miles southeast of Washington, D.C., was noted for its rebel proclivities.

fortable and sharp ends; but with all our fatigue and lameness we were very hungry and wanted something besides hardtack and a piece of salt beef and some coffee without *cream*, so we journeyed to a house in sight, and asked the lady if she could get us some breakfast. She consented, bringing on fried bacon, hot biscuits, and black coffee, and when we were satisfied and arose from the table, we had eaten six pans of twelve biscuits in each pan, with accompanying bacon and grease and coffee.

The voting place was in a small office room, the voters going to a window to deposit their ballot, and on the veranda on one side was an ordinary water pail filled with whisky, with a tin dipper to drink from, for any and all to partake of as they wished.

After returning to Camp Bladensburg, Colonel McCarthy kept us under constant drill and discipline, that made us sore and restless because it seemed to us that he was hard and unjust.

In the latter part of November we were transferred from Camp Bladensburg across Long Bridge, which spanned the Potomac River between Alexandria and Washington, and went some miles into Virginia and joined a brigade commanded by General O. O. Howard. This was called Camp California.⁵ It was only about two miles from the picket line between the Rebel forces and the Union forces. Here we spent a few weeks in drilling and receiving that discipline which alone makes soldiers, but there were one or two instances which I will relate showing in a measure the life in camp.

In our company were five fairly good singers, who had been brought up in the villages of Rhode Island where the services of the church predominate, and knew little but hymns and church music, and they used at night to gather about the camp fire and tell stories and experiences and sing hymns

and tunes and occasionally a song, and their singing was so good that it attracted the attention of men in other companies besides our own. One of these singers was Benjamin F. Burdick, a brother of Harvey C. Burdick.⁶

On one night when they were particularly enthusiastic in their singing, some one looked up, and just outside the circle of light stood a man with his hands folded behind him, and his head dropped forward, and it was soon discovered that it was General Howard. Of course the singing ceased and the boys were quiet. Stepping forward he said, "Boys, don't stop singing on my account, for I am enjoying it thoroughly. It makes me think of my own boyhood days down in old Maine."

General Howard was a strict disciplinarian, and expected his men to obey whether they saw a good reason for obeying or not. One of his regimental drills, the importance of which he was trying to impress upon the different regiments, was the teaching of men to stand firm when formed in a hollow square against a cavalry attack.

Our regiment had its time at those drills and one afternoon when the Colonel was forming his regiment into a hollow square, General Howard rode by. He had a magnificent horse, obedient to his every word and touch, and he said to Colonel McCarthy, "I am going to charge on your regiment and attempt to break the line," and rode on down the parade and Colonel McCarthy remarked, "I hope no man of this regiment will dodge or fall back a foot when the General attempts to break the line." None of us expected to do that, but it is quite an experience to see an officer riding at full speed on a horse trained for war, right at you, swinging his sword and with the intention of riding you down, and not feel that the chances are somewhat against you.

In the front rank of the regiment each man drops

5. Gen. Oliver O. Howard's brigade consisted of the following regiments: the Sixty-first New York, the Fifth New Hampshire, the Forty-fifth New York, the Eighty-first Pennsylvania, and the Fourth Rhode Island. The Rhode Island regiment became a part of the brigade probably as soon as it began its initial training. Howard's brigade was a part of Gen. Edwin V. Sumner's division. Camp California, which served as the division's bivouac, contained upwards of ten thousand men.

6. Harvey C. Burdick (born about 1833) was, for a number of years, either a student or an employee at the Hopkinton Academy. His name appears in the program of a theatrical performance held by the students of the academy soon after the war ended. Burdick became a well-known resident of Hopkinton, and he lived quite a long life. However, he suffered from poor eyesight and in his later years was known to some as "blind Harvey."

on one knee, with the butt of his musket resting upon the ground, with the bayonet point outward at an angle of forty-five degrees, and the rear rank with bayonet over the shoulder of the front rank. If held firm, no cavalry can break it, and so we stood in that form and the General came at fearful speed and right at us on to the bayonets of the guns, and while he did not succeed in breaking the line, the poor horse was bleeding from many wounds in its neck and breast!

Because of our resistance of that charge we were commended in the Adjutant General's orders the next morning.

As I stated before, there was about two miles from the front picket line between the two forces. The picket line was made up of whole regiments who went out and stayed usually three days and nights, the companies relieving each other as the case demanded.

Reports had been going the rounds that a good many pickets had been killed on that line, by the Rebels crawling up in the night imitating a hog. (The woods were filled, so to speak, with these hogs.) The Rebel would crawl up and make a noise like a hog, and when he came near enough to see the picket, would shoot him and then escape in the darkness.

In one of these trips on picket duty, I was located at the head quarters of the picket line, which usually is from about one-quarter to a half mile back from the main line.

One night some one discovered a light high up and quite a ways from the post, which seemed to be moving as if it was signaling, and we soon learned that it was beyond the main picket line and in the Rebel territory. The Captain detailed me to go down and see what that light meant.⁷

I proceeded first to the outside picket post, and

made inquiries as to whether they had seen or heard anything suspicious. Not learning anything, I proceeded to the second picket post controlled by Lieutenant Read.⁸

They had not discovered the light but they had seen, as they imagined, groups of soldiers moving in the lane-way which led down to a large plantation house with trees on either side of this lane-way.

It was a beautiful moon-light night, and they said they had seen the glitter of the bayonets in the moon-light as the men moved from one place to another, and that if I went down to this light I would have to pass by that lane-way where it went off from the main road, and that I was not likely to escape either capture or shooting, and advised me not to go, but to return to the Captain and report the circumstances. I replied that I could not do that, for my orders were strict, "Learn what that light means before you return." So I started down the main road, hugging the wall on the side farthest from the lane-way, and I could see, as they had described to me, the glistening bayonets and the moving shadows, and expected that I would be held up before I had crossed the lane-way road.

I clung close to the wall and kept in the shadows, and when I had reached a position where I could look down this lane-way to the white house beyond, not a man was in sight, and there was nothing to indicate that bayonets had been there that night.

Passing on I came to the picket post of the then called Mosart Regiment of New York.⁹ This picket post was located in a corn field. The corn had been harvested into shocks. My imagination was very keen, and when I called the attention of the sentry to the light and asked him if he had seen it or heard anything from it, and he said "No," I said, "But men are all about in this field, hiding behind those

7. At this time Nelson Kenyon was the captain of Company D, Fourth Rhode Island. Kenyon had recruited the company in the fall of 1861 and was given his commission when the regiment was mustered in. He resigned from his position in August 1862.

8. Walter A. Read initially served as the second lieutenant for Company D. He received a promotion to first lieutenant soon after, and when Captain Kenyon resigned in 1862, Read received another promotion. As the company's captain, Read commanded Redan No. 2 (near Portsmouth, Va.) in 1863 and 1864. In August

1864 he took temporary command of the regiment. Read served again as the company's commander until the regiment was mustered out.

9. The Mosart Regiment, officially known as the Fortieth New York Infantry, belonged to General Sedgwick's brigade of General Heintzelman's division. The Fourth Rhode Island performed picket duty in front of the enemy in mid-December 1861. It is likely that Carpenter's adventure occurred sometime around that date.

shocks of corn." "Well, he had not seen them," he said, "and did I want him to go or detail a man to go with me to learn what that light meant?" and I said "Yes," and soon we started, and as we moved along, of course, the shadows made by the brilliant moon were also moving, and for some time we imagined they were men, but when we came down to the edge of the wood, we found that some one of the soldiers had built a fire at the bottom of a tree to cook his coffee, and that the tree was hollow quite a ways, some forty feet above the ground, and the fire had burned on the inside of the tree, and occasionally, as the draft would be stronger than at other times, it would come out of a knot-hole, and wave and move like a signal light. It goes without saying that I went back much braver than when I came down, and made a satisfactory report to the Captain.

December 25, 1861.¹⁰

"We are having a rest today, it being Christmas, and as there is no drill, I have taken this chance to wash my underclothes. (I left the washing to read your welcome letter.) Edwin received a box last night from home. Some of the company went down to the band and got a fiddler to come up and fiddle while they danced. None of the 'South County Boys' as the captain calls us, excepting Edwin, joined in the amusements.¹¹

"Our captain and lieutenant met with rather a sad loss the other night. The tent caught fire from the flue, caused by the pipes passing through the side of the tent. It burned the tent almost up and it burned their coats and sashes. Their loss was about seventy-five dollars.

"There were four express boxes received in our company today as Christmas presents from friends at home. Two of them had large turkeys in them.

"I went to Alexandria a few days ago. It was the

first pass I have had since I left Camp Green. I visited the house where Ellsworth was killed. I cut a piece from the bedstead on which Jackson slept the night before he killed Ellsworth. It is also the same bed where Ellsworth was laid after he was shot and on which he died.

"I also cut a piece off the stairs on which he stood when he was shot. The same flag floats over the house that Ellsworth raised on it."¹²

Some time during the month of December we were detached from the Howard Brigade, and sent to Annapolis, Maryland, where an expedition was being formed under the command of General A. E. Burnside.¹³

It was a great mystery to the country to what point this expedition was destined, and later on we boarded steamships which took us with many other regiments and batteries and gun boats to Pamlico Sound, one of the sounds which run along the coast of North Carolina, ending at Cape Hatteras.

There had been, while we were at Annapolis, a good many men stricken with measles, and a large number were left in the hospital.

Our company embarked on the side-wheel steamer "Eastern Queen" and we arrived off Hatteras in a severe storm, running off and on sixty miles that night before we could cross the bar into the sound.

Along in the evening I felt somewhat uncomfortable at the roll of the vessel, and went out upon the main deck to get into the wind, thinking I would feel better, and then up onto the platform which surrounded the walking beam of the engine and lay there through the night and the storm, and was pretty well wet through as the day light came, and not feeling any better, I went down into the cabin and to the surgeon's office, and remarked to him that I was not feeling well. Turning me to the light

10. Carpenter included some excerpts from his wartime letters in the narrative itself; others (including this one) he grouped together in a separate section at the end. In the present text the latter excerpts have been chronologically inserted into the narrative. Often (as in this case) Carpenter does not identify the letter's recipient.

11. The Edwin here mentioned is probably Carpenter's comrade Edwin D. Gavitt.

12. Elmer E. Ellsworth was the colonel of the Eleventh New

York Infantry, better known as the "First Fire Zouaves." On 24 May 1861 Ellsworth was shot and killed by the proprietor of the Marshall House (in Alexandria, Va.) while attempting to haul down the Confederate flag that flew over the building. Ellsworth's actions appealed to the patriotism of the people of the North, and he became a martyr and hero overnight.

13. Throughout the war the occupation of coastal areas played a major role in subduing the Confederacy. Together with the naval blockade of ports, this tactic closed down most of the

at the window, he said, "I shouldn't think you would feel good, you are all broken out with the measles—go below!"

I should have mentioned that during the storm a schooner on which there were eighty horses was driven ashore on the sand bar off Hatteras Inlet, and the horses were thrown overboard to swim ashore and save themselves if they could. They got along all right so far as the swimming was concerned, but when they struck into the breakers, they were rolled over like logs and more than half of them never lived to reach the shore.

After a good deal of maneuvering by gun boats and the forces under General Burnside, the infantry was landed upon Roanoke Island. The vessels having the men on board were run to the shore as far as possible. The water being shallow, the men had to jump overboard and, wading in water from their waists to their shoulders, went ashore.

Our own regiment landed just after dark and when we reached the shore, orders were issued that no lights or fires should be made during the night, as it might disclose our position to the enemy, and so we lay down between the hills in a cornfield, and in the night it rained, and rained, and rained—and we lay and slept it through.

The next morning the attack upon the Rebel fortifications was made, and this was our initiation into actual warfare. We captured the batteries and the fortifications and about three thousand five hundred prisoners.

On this island there were a good many wild hogs and pigs roaming, and we had been existing on hard tack and salt "horse" for several weeks, and something fresh did taste good, but so many hogs were killed that General Burnside issued an order that from and after a certain date, no more pigs must be killed, but when Davis Crandall came in off guard one morning and saw near by a pig weighing about forty pounds, he could not resist the temptation to

capture and butcher the little fellow. Knowing that the sentry would soon be around inquiring "who caught that pig that was squealing," he dug a hole in his tent, buried the pig, covered it and then spread the blankets over the place, and with three comrades sat down to play "Old Sledge." When the guard had been around and made his inquiries and found no evidence of violation of military orders, and the day had passed—in the darkness before the dawn, that pig was dug up, skinned, and a good sized ham was taken up to the Captain's tent and placed upon his table before he woke, and when the roll call was made that morning the Captain intimated that if he could learn who placed that ham upon his table, he would put him in the guard house! Of course, there was a smile went over the faces of some of the men in that company.

On the third of March we left Roanoke Island on vessels, proceeding up the Neuse River and landed within about eighteen miles of New Berne, North Carolina, and after marches and counter-marches, and much delay, an attack was made upon a large fort, I think, of thirteen guns, reaching from the river across to the line of the railroad running from Beaufort to New Berne.

This fort was strengthened very much by elaborate defence in front, consisting of trees that had been felled and the branches sharpened out, making it very difficult for any body of men to get near the fort.

The fight continued from early morning until late in the afternoon, several regiments having tried to charge across this protected area to the fort and had failed.

The Fourth regiment had worked around near the railroad and discovered the end of the fort, which was at a large brick-yard, and Colonel Rodman,¹⁴ thinking that he could charge in by that brick-yard, and disconcert the Rebels to such an extent as to permit the troops in front to pass

South's international commerce. The expedition led by Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside was expected to capture certain strategic points in North Carolina; Federal occupation of these areas would drastically reduce the shipping operations of the state. From the time of this expedition until he left the army, Carpenter served under the command of General Burnside.

14. Isaac P. Rodman replaced Justus McCarty as the

regiment's colonel on 30 October 1861. Rodman, a captain in the Second Rhode Island Infantry, was appointed in place of McCarty by Governor Sprague. Colonel McCarty left the military service and returned to civilian life. Rodman subsequently rose to command the brigade and then the division to which the Fourth Rhode Island belonged.

across, concluded to make the charge, and just at that time General Burnside's Aide came up and ordered the Colonel to return to his original position, but the Colonel was so sure that victory lay right there that he ignored the order of the General and ordered the regiment to charge.

Over the railroad, over the high fence, through the brick-yard, we went down along the inside line of the fort. It was indeed a surprise to the Rebels, for they turned and retreated through the woods, and General Burnside and his forces rushed across and gained entrance into the fort and pursued the Rebels out across the river into the city of New Berne, over a railroad bridge and out into the country over a dry-bridge. Many were taken prisoners, many were killed and wounded, and we occupied the tents of the Rebels that night, feeling pretty good over our victory. Here Davis Crandall of Rockville was killed, and Edwin Gavitt of Ashaway lost a leg.

In the tent next to the one which I occupied were four darkies who had found liberty, and all night long they "patted Juba" and whistled, and I never heard such harmony as those boys made over their release from bondage.

After arrangements had been made for holding New Berne and that section of the country, by placing both sufficient men and gun boats, we left for Beaufort, North Carolina, a place located near the entrance of Bogue Sound. Located at the seaward side of this sound was Fort Macon with a garrison of about two hundred men. It could be seen readily from the main-land which was about a mile and a half away, and still farther out on the ocean could be seen the blockade ships of the United States.

We laid siege to the fort from a position on Bogue Island and after two days' battle they surrendered just at night and we marched in before the sun arose the next morning.

The leader of our regimental band, Joe Green,¹⁵

who was then the leading bugle player of the United States, as we went into the fort that morning, went on to the parapet and played on his bugle "Star Spangled Banner," "America," and "Home, Sweet Home." Scarcely was there a ripple upon the water from any wind that was blowing and while the blockade fleet was four miles away out at sea, the rich tones of his bugle and the music which he played were heard on board the fleet, and they dipped their flags and cheered as a salute in honor of the selections and of the occasion that had drawn them out.

While located at Beaufort, we occupied vacant houses and the opportunity which we had not had before of calmly writing home was taken advantage of at this time, and one could pass through the quarters at almost any time of day and see many men reading letters and writing to their dear ones.

"May 16, 1862.

"I have not been very well for a few days past. I thought at one time I would have a bilious fever, but I took eight pills, a dose of castor oil and a large dose of the Balm of Gilead, which gave me a pretty good clearing out and I felt much better."

"Our colonel has been promoted so we have no colonel at present, we belong to *no* brigade, and I don't know if we belong to any army."

My next visit to New Berne and Beaufort was forty-seven years later, when the State of Rhode Island sent a commission to that city for the purpose of dedicating a monument erected in memory of Rhode Island's soldiers killed in North Carolina.¹⁶ This monument was erected in the National Cemetery just outside the city of New Berne. I was invited to accompany this commission and was selected to make the dedicatory prayer.

There was a slight difference in the reception in March 1862 and that of October 1909. Now, we were made the guests of the city and everything was done to make our visit pleasant and memorable.

15. Joseph C. Greene was the leader of the Fourth Rhode Island's small band. On 4 August 1862 General McClellan issued General Order No. 151 (Army of the Potomac), which disbanded all regimental bands. Joe Greene was discharged on 10 October 1862. Some of the other band members may have rejoined the regiment as common soldiers.

16. Rhode Island erected many monuments to honor her soldiers who served in the war. Besides this monument and many within Rhode Island, others have been erected in Gettysburg, Pa., Antietam, Md., and even Vicksburg, Miss. Rhode Island's governor at this time was Aram J. Pothier (1854-1928), who served from 1905 to 1915 and again from 1925 to 1928.

The Governor of Rhode Island and his staff and other state officers, together with prominent men from different parts of the state accompanied this commission.

We were met at the station by a salute of twenty-one guns and escorted to the New Gaston Hotel by a brass band and a large concourse of citizens.

The Adjutant General of the State of North Carolina, on behalf of the Governor, welcomed us at the gathering of the notables of the state and city at the Court House. For two days and nights we were guests of the city and state. Excursions to the old battle fields and other notable places of interest around the city, a trip up and down the Neuse River on a splendid yacht, a reception by the Daughters of the Confederacy, a trip to old Fort Macon at Beaufort, North Carolina, and a ride over part of the route of the Great Water-way canal between the Neuse River and Bogue Sound were part of the entertainment given us.

This visit to North Carolina, together with similar visits by other states to places in the South, and the courtesies so marked and manifest on all sides are fast wiping out the bitterness engendered by the war.

Some time in July of 1862 we were transferred to Newport News, which is located just a little ways up the James River beyond Fortress Monroe, and here we recuperated and received our first express box from home.

Extract from letter to Maria Potter under date of July 28, 1862.

"I am writing tonight somewhat out of necessity. I stand in need of a number of things which I can not get here. We have not had anything paid to us in almost three months, and when last I was paid I sent some of that to Mary, and it is said we are not to get our pay for another month, so if you will send me a few things that I stand in need of, I will send you the money for them when I get paid. I want a good substantial portfolio to keep my papers in, also some paper and envelopes, ink and pen, with a penholder, a few needles and a knife. Send about

five yards of blue worsted braid, a comb, fine and coarse, a pocket looking-glass, a pair of suspenders, a blue shirt, cotton check, a bottle of Seth Arnold's balsam, a box of Ayres' pills, a small bottle of pain killer, and if there be any room after these are in, send something to eat, and a pocket-book which I very much need."

About this time evidence of a raid into the Northern States by General Lee was received, and we were hurried on to Washington and into Maryland to intercept the Rebel forces.

We arrived in Washington late in the afternoon, made our beds upon the side-walks of the city, and in the early morning, while making our coffee and getting our breakfast, the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, passed through that part of the city where we were located, and stopped to chat with some of the boys, so close to where I was sitting that I could hear his voice and see his face and understand something of the strain which was upon this great man because of the fearful contest between the North and the South.

Sometime during the day we passed on out from the city towards Harpers Ferry. In the mean time, the forces of General Lee had crossed the Potomac above and below Harpers Ferry and passed into Maryland by the way of Frederick City. The Union forces at Harpers Ferry were compelled to surrender before the large forces of General Lee.

Frederick City has been immortalized by Whittier in his poem known as "Barbara Frietchie."

Our own regiment passed on to the east of Frederick City and to the north, reaching Turner Pass, which is a gap in South Mountain of the Blue Ridge Range, and the fighting between the Rebel forces and our own began early in the day for the possession of this pass.

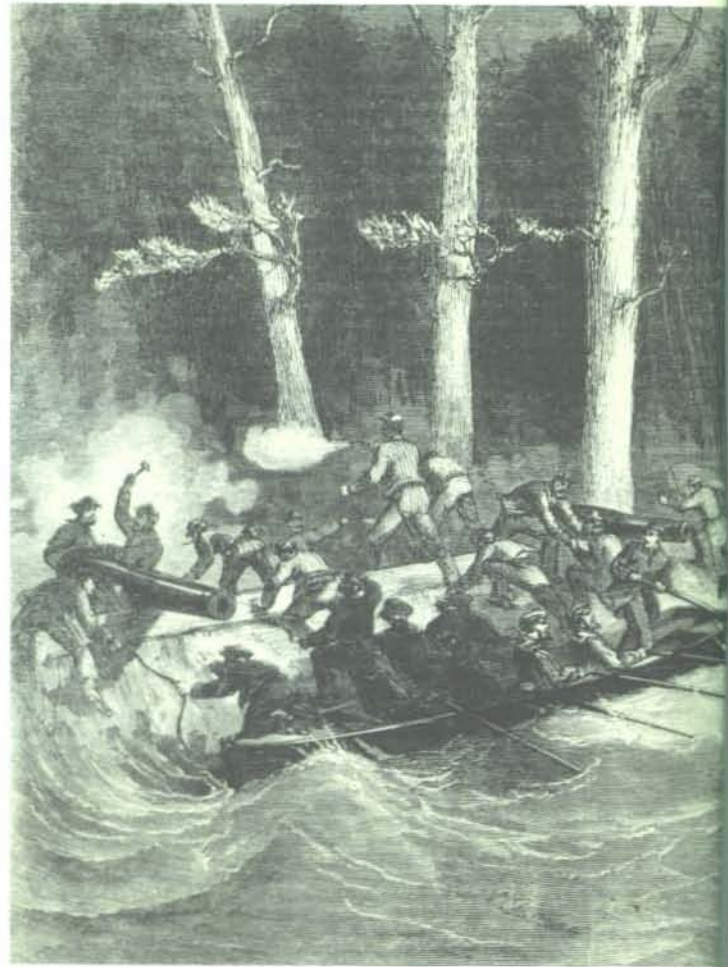
The Rebels were already in possession of it and our job was to clear them out. The fight was kept up through the day and into the night. Our own regiment supported a Massachusetts battery located well up into the mountains high above the pass, and this battery had planted its guns on an old mountain road, across which, with a passage way



"In due time the regiment was sent on to Washington, and to the front. We were mustered into the service of the United States at Camp Bladensburg, then two miles outside the city of Washington, on the 30th of October, 1861, and from that time on for several weeks were put through a course of drilling and discipline which was to make of us real soldiers."

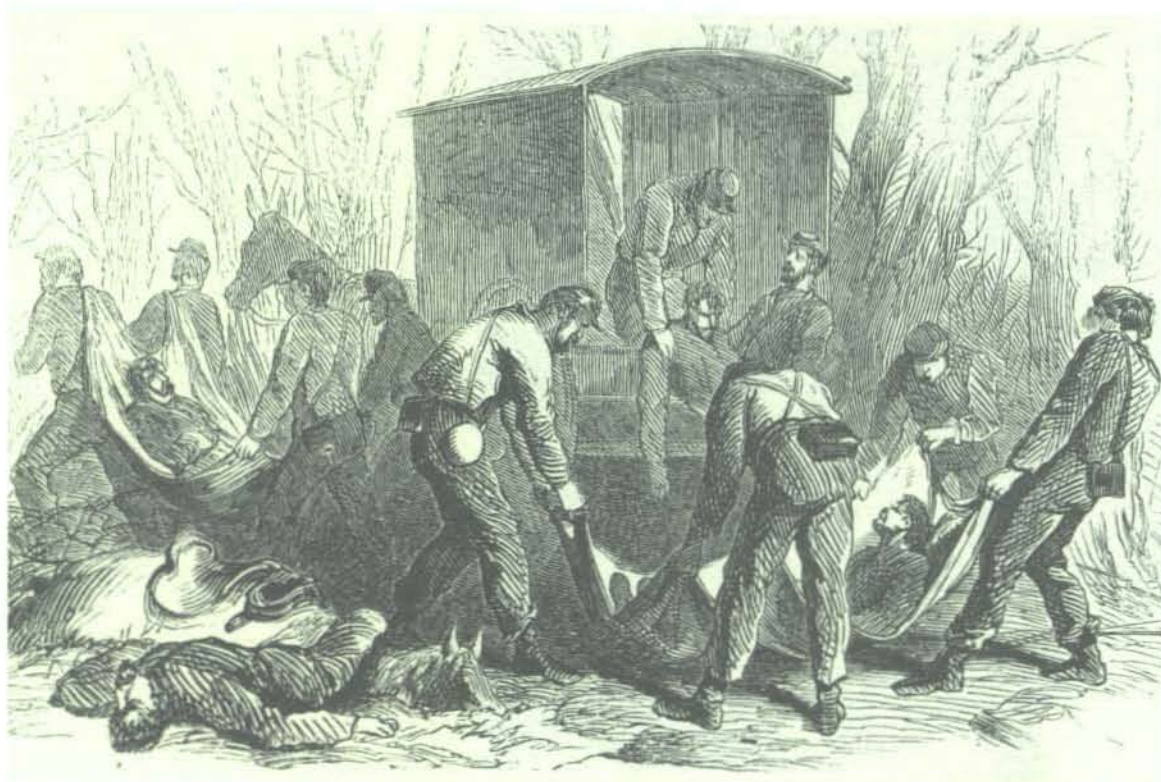
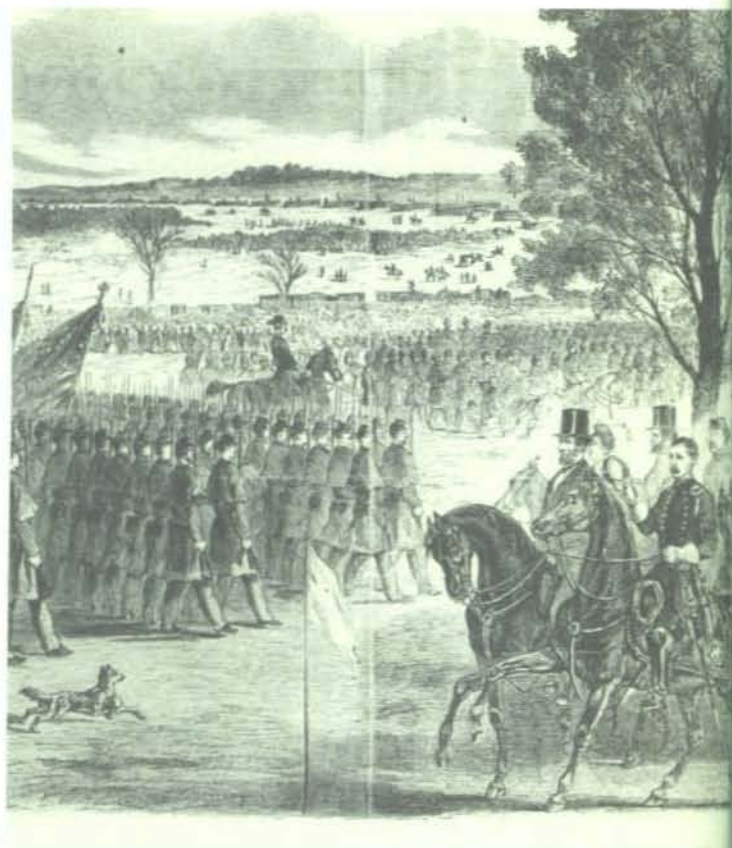


"I hope no man of this regiment will dodge or fall back a foot when the General attempts to break the line.' None of us expected to do that, but it is quite an experience to see an officer riding at full speed on a horse trained for war, right at you, swinging his sword and with the intention of riding you down, and not feel that the chances are somewhat against you."

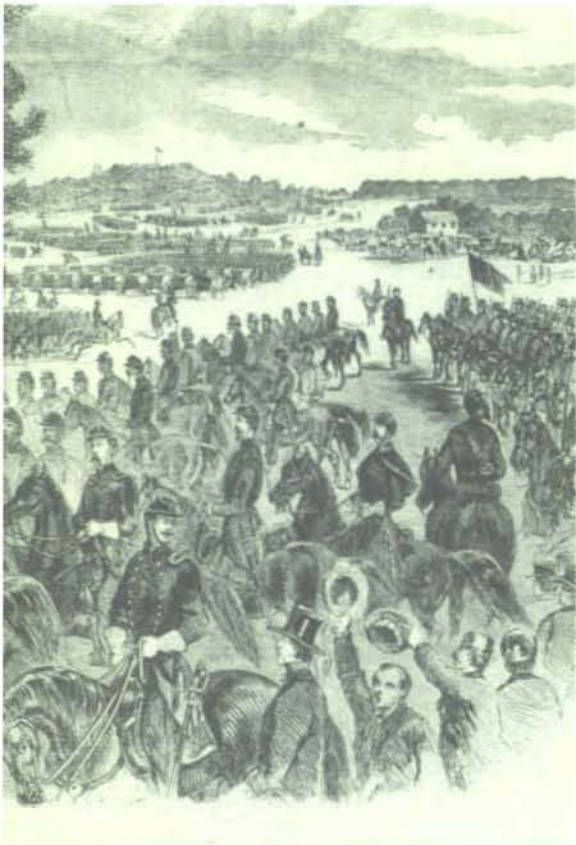


"Some time during the month of December we were detached from the Howard Brigade, and sent to Annapolis, Maryland, where an expedition was being formed under the command of General A. E. Burnside. It was a great mystery to the country to what point this expedition was destined, and later on we boarded steamships which took us with many other regiments and batteries and gun boats to Pamlico Sound, one of the sounds which run along the coast of North Carolina, ending at Cape Hatteras. . . . We arrived off Hatteras in a severe storm. . . . After a good deal of maneuvering by gun boats and the forces under General Burnside, the infantry was landed upon Roanoke Island. . . . Our own regiment landed just after dark and when we reached the shore, orders were issued that no lights or fires should be made during the night . . . and so we lay down between the hills in a cornfield, and in the night it rained, and rained, and rained. . . . The next morning the attack upon the Rebel fortifications was made, and this was our initiation into actual warfare. We captured the batteries and fortifications and about three thousand five hundred prisoners."





"Our own regiment passed on to the east of Frederick City and to the north, reaching Turner Pass . . . and to the north. We lost a good many men, among them General Reno, our Corps Commander. . . . We remained on this first night took up our march for Pleasant Valley, or what in history is known as the battle field of Antietam."



"The President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, passed . . . so close . . . that I could hear his voice and see his face and understand something of the strain which was upon this great man because of the fearful contest between the North and the South."



fighting between the Rebel forces and our own began early in the day for the possession of this pass. . . . during this day, taking care of the wounded and burying the dead, and recuperating generally, and towards



"Last night I had the pleasure of hearing some very sweet music. An Italian, who is travelling around among the soldiers with a harp, played and sang one piece which seemed to affect the men considerably. As the words 'Do they think of me at home!' floated out on the clear night air in all the richness of his Italian voice, many a tear coursed down the cheeks of those rough men. Those who had braved death in every form and witnessed hundreds in their last agony of despair and had turned away seemingly unaffected by the horrors around them, but had been made to weep at that anxious inquiry, 'Do they think of me at home!' sung so touchingly by that poor wanderer."



"The firing on both sides was pretty nearly incessant and within the firing zone traverses had been dug. . . . These traverses were in irregular lines so that a bullet or a shell entering them would go but a little way before it struck an angle and was stopped. They were sufficiently wide for two men to pass each other easily, which facilitated the carrying of ammunition and food. Then in these traverses there would be dug a short ditch at right angles with the main ditch, into which, if a shell dropped into the traverse, a man could escape until it had burst."



"We arrived here on the third of July and were located near a regiment which had been recruited among the coal mines of Pennsylvania, the colonel of which was a mining engineer. He had suggested to his superior officer that his regiment would be willing to run a mine from the Union line to and under some Rebel forts. His suggestion was accepted, and the fort . . . was selected. . . . The distance from where the entrance of the mine began to a point directly under the fort was something over five hundred feet. This gallery was dug wide enough for two to pass, and the dirt was brought out in aprons which were tied to them, and put into the bags. . . . It took several days to dig that gallery under the ground and, when they reached a spot directly under the fort, they dug out eight chambers, sufficient to hold about eight thousand pounds of powder. This was packed closely together and a fuse led out to the opening. The gallery was closed up. . . . There were four guns and two hundred seventy-five men in that fort. The explosion was a terrible sight. Four guns and parts of their carriages and men were blown high in the air in a confused mass, and not one man of all that company escaped death."

through, ran a stone wall.¹⁷

The Rebels made several efforts to capture this battery but the coolness of its Captain had prevented. Even now I seem to hear him say in clear, ringing tones, as the shots and shells from the Rebel forces were driving through the woods over our heads and around us, "Steady men! Steady men!"

The next morning the Rebels having retreated, we saw the terrible havoc which had occurred from the firing of the guns of this battery. The passage way through this wall was literally packed with the bodies of men who had repeatedly charged and were not able to return to their lines. The Rebels had not only passed through this gap in the wall, but had mounted the wall in their anxiety to capture the battery, and in one case there sat upon the wall, still and rigid, eyes wide open and glaring, a Rebel soldier killed just at the time when his body was poised on the top of the wall so that it fell neither to one side nor the other.

We lost a good many men, among them General Reno,¹⁸ our Corps Commander, but it so happened that none of the group coming from Ashaway or its vicinity were wounded or killed.

We remained on this field during this day, taking care of the wounded and burying the dead, and recuperating generally, and towards night took up our march for Pleasant Valley, or what in history is known as the battle field of Antietam.

As we came out on to the side of the mountain overlooking this valley, it was a wonderful and magnificent sight. We were high enough up to see the camp fires of the Rebel and Union forces spread out in the valley below, and it seemed to us that every man had a camp fire, so many there were.

We reached our position some time in the night, and on the morning of the 16th began one of the most bloody, and I may say, most unsatisfactory battles of the war.

I cannot portray with much accuracy this battle, nor have I, at this stage of life, any desire to attempt it. A few outlines must suffice.

General McClellan who commanded the Union forces was not at this time very popular. Criminations and re-criminations, charges of unfaithfulness and lack of ability in time of battle had passed from the Generals in the field to the War Department in Washington, but they had been denied by General McClellan but he was, as I might say, in rather bad odor. However, he did receive the loyal support of the great Corps Commanders, such as General Joseph Hooker of the First Army Corps, General E. V. Sumner of the Second, General W. B. Franklin of the Sixth, General Fitz John Porter of the Fifth, and of the late General Jesse L. Reno of the Ninth, together with General A. E. Burnside.¹⁹

The battle lasted two days, and the gain of one side was often offset by the repulse and gain from the other, which finally resulted in the retreat of the Rebels back towards the Potomac, and here General McClellan was severely criticized because he did not follow up that retreat, make his victory complete and annihilate the Rebels.

Our own regiment was fearfully cut up in this battle. We were led by the mistake of somebody to make a charge into a corn field, not knowing that behind that corn lay a Rebel force, awaiting just such a manœuvre, and we were driven back by a fearful loss. General Rodman, our former Colonel, received wounds from which he later died, and many officers and privates of our regiment suffered terribly.

To come back to our own little group, I may say that Benjamin F. Burdick, who was wounded in this charge and died later, was being carried away to a safe place by Henry F. Saunders when he, too, was stricken, the ball entering near the collar bone and passing out under the shoulder blade, penetrating

17. The Fourth Rhode Island spent most of the day of the battle of South Mountain supporting the Sixth Massachusetts Battery. Later in the afternoon the regiment relieved the Thirty-sixth Massachusetts Infantry and took their place in the line of battle.

18. Jesse L. Reno was a graduate of West Point and a career military man. In November 1861 he was commissioned as a brigadier general of volunteers, and he received a brigade of Burnside's troops as his command. Reno fought with Burnside

throughout the North Carolina campaign and up until his death at the battle of South Mountain. At the time of his death Reno was a major general, and during Burnside's absence he had taken temporary command of the Ninth Corps.

19. Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, who commanded the Army of the Potomac for part of 1861 and most of 1862, lost his command shortly after the battle of Antietam. He was sent home to New Jersey to await orders (which never came), while most of his corps commanders played little or no part in the later

the lung, from which wound he died a few weeks later.

When our company was called together and the roll call was made, only twenty-one of the sixty-odd belonging to the company were present to answer to their names. Not all had been killed or wounded but in the excitement and rapidity of events, they had taken refuge in other regiments and not until the second day did those who had escaped get back to the company head-quarters.

I searched this field, which was more than seven miles long, looking for the bodies, either dead or wounded, of comrades belonging to my company. I made two efforts before I finally found Henry F. Saunders. He was in a milk house over a spring, and was able to get at the water, but not able to return to his company. I never succeeded in finding the body of Benjamin F. Burdick. It probably was buried in one of the many trenches in which were piled up the bodies of the dead, sometimes as many as a hundred or more in a trench.

When the Rebels retreated, they went in such a hurry that the trenches in which their dead were buried were so thinly covered that our artillery in passing across the same ground would sink in on the bodies of the men.

We remained in camp in Pleasant Valley for some time, apparently to give the government, or the War Department, a chance to straighten out the jealousies and ill feelings between the Generals, and not until some time in October did we cross the Potomac again, going in the direction of Fredericksburg.

The command of the army had been taken from General McClellan and given to General Ambrose E. Burnside, who, it was reported, did not want it and who told President Lincoln so. Whatever General Burnside's ability may have been, nobody doubted his loyalty and his honesty.

Now began the march towards Fredericksburg of the two great armies, the Union and the Rebel, in parallel lines not far separated from each other, each hurrying to gain possession of grounds which would be to their advantage in the coming battle.

Burnside reached Fredericksburg first and had his request to the Government been heeded and pon-

toon boats been sent to him and been there upon his arrival, he would have crossed the Rappahannock River and taken possession of Mary's Heights, which is upon a high plateau west of the city of Fredericksburg, but red tape and official delays again defeated the purpose and plans of the Generals in the field, and several days before the pontoon boats arrived, the Rebels had possession.

Here the two armies lay for weeks with only the river separating them. Exchanges between the Union and the Rebel men were often made by wading into the river and trading rations for tobacco.

Under date of November 21, 1862, the following grumble may be of interest.

"I hate to ask but I wish you would send me a little money if you have it to spare. I have not seen a cent in over four months. I need a few things. We hope to be paid off soon. It makes me almost angry to have you talk of pork, beef, cabbage, pies, etc. I have seen the time since we have been on this march when I would have given twenty-five cents for a hard cracker. We went three days without anything, having marched so fast that the supply train could not keep up with us."

Early in December, about the tenth, preparations were made by General Burnside for an advance upon the Rebel forces, and an attempt was made on the eleventh to cross the river, but the Rebel sharpshooters, located in the city and sheltered by buildings and along the banks sheltered by trees or other things, prevented the crossing.

On the morning of the thirteenth the General called for volunteers to take the pontoon boats across the river, and something over a hundred men immediately offered their services.

Into the boats they gathered, and over the river they went under the terrible fire from the sharpshooters whose aim was cruel, but they reached the other side in sufficient numbers to drive back the sharpshooters, and when the firing of these sharpshooters had been stopped, a rush to build a bridge across these pontoon boats was made, and in an

years of the war. Burnside, however, was elevated to command of the army in November. Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker also rose to command the army, replacing Burnside in early 1863. Hooker

served as the army's commander until June 1863, when he too was replaced.

hour or so Burnside's forces were pouring into the city of Fredericksburg.

Out beyond the city and between it and Mary's Heights was a plain a half mile perhaps in width. Mary's Heights had been fortified by the Rebels and at the bottom of the hill ran a stone wall behind which the infantry could protect themselves.

Across this plain, division after division charged and were repulsed, down still farther to the left General Franklin had met with a similar opposition, and all day the tide of battle ebbed and flowed until the night of the fourteenth. At times it seemed as if our men would succeed in attaining the heights above and then they would be driven back. The plain was literally strewn with the bodies of the dead and wounded. This fight lasted until after dark on Monday night, the fourteenth, when by common consent both sides rested. Then began the picking up and gathering together of those who were wounded and unable to escape from the field. It was a busy night and before the morning dawned we had been gathered together and the Union forces had re-crossed the river and returned to their own position to the surprise and dismay of the Rebels who thought such a move was impossible.

The roll call of the different companies after the return to camp had been accomplished told the story of the fearful loss, and practically without any advantage gained. The administration and the country were both much discouraged over this defeat which was only off-set by victories in the West.

Under date of January 18, 1863 the following incident was related.

"There was a funeral in the 11th Pennsylvania Cavalry yesterday of a soldier belonging to an Ohio regiment, who was taken prisoner at Antietam and had with four of his comrades been confined in Libby Prison until about a week ago, when they were notified that one of their number was to be hung in retaliation for the similar execution of a Guerrilla lieutenant in this department some two months ago.

"They drew lots to see who should be the lucky one—for who would not be a lucky one who could escape with *death* from such a loathsome imprisonment as they suffered for over a year. He had been shackled with a long bar of iron which had worn the flesh off to the bone and had hardly clothes enough to cover his body."

Under date of February 15, 1863, in a letter to M. L. Potter, the following grumble is found.

"Then your Uncle Joseph (Potter) thinks I am rather extravagant, does he?²⁰ Well, I think of course, that he is mistaken for this reason. We are charged \$2.10 for shoes which on a march never last over two weeks, and our pants which are very poorly made and which we have to sleep in, of course, last but a very short time, and other things are in proportion. I have never had but one dress coat since I enlisted, and that is at home. What I have drawn at the quarter-master's department have only been things that I really needed. The sun has looked upon my nakedness many times since I have been a soldier. My toes have felt the frost quite often, yet I think I have never murmured before now, nor do I now, only so far as to satisfy you that I am as prudent as I can be under the circumstances. Please don't let anyone else hear of this."

Extract from a letter of mine, dated April 23, 1863.

"Did I ever tell you about a certain spring at Fredericksburg which has, ever since the nation became a government of itself, been a warner of war or peace? About three months before the breaking out of the War of the Revolution the spring first made its appearance and continued to run until about two months before its close, when it disappeared and was not seen again until 1812 when it commenced as before. About three months before the fall of Sumpter, this spring broke out as it had years before and many a weary soldier has refreshed himself at its limpid fountain. About a month ago it disappeared and where once was a beautiful, bubbling spring, now is but its pebbled bottom. The man who owns the farm upon which this

20. Joseph Potter was the brother of Thomas W. Potter, and

an uncle to Maria L. and Harriett Potter.

spring is situated says he is willing to stake all he is worth that this rebellion will end in less than three months."

In army life the unexpected is constantly happening. Here is one.

During the battle of Fredericksburg in December, 1862, I lost the picture of your mother which I had carried about with me since I had received it soon after reaching Washington. It was found and returned to me several weeks after the battle. Again I lost it while near Petersburg, Virginia, and it was returned to your mother, having been found and sent to headquarters at Providence, Rhode Island, and forwarded to Ashaway through the hands of Thomas A. Barber. This picture was mounted in a red velvet locket and opposite the face, marked on the white silk lining, was this address,

"G. B. Carpenter,
Potter Hill, R. I.
Co. D. 4th R. I. V.
1st Brigade 2nd Division
9 Army Corps"

After I enlisted Miss Maria L. Potter made me a needle book and furnished it with thread, needles, pins, buttons, blue yarn for darning stockings, etc. This was lost with other things during the battle of the explosion of the mine at Petersburg. This came back to me twenty-five years after the fight, having been found and preserved by Sergeant Charles Hill of our company, who through all these years had been looking for my address.²¹

In March 1863 we left Newport News for Suf-

folk. Our regiment with others was located in a camp called "Gettysville," named after General Getty who was in command.²² This camp was situated a few miles south and west from the city of Norfolk, and was established as a line of defence for the city and country bordering on the James River. We occasionally had skirmishes with the enemy, driving them from their positions, and being generally forced back to our own line afterwards.

Among the other regiments here was what was then known as the Pennsylvania Bucktails.²³ Each man wore, as a part of his uniform, a buck's tail in his hat. They were, indeed, a picturesque-looking lot of men and very attractive on march with the tails flying in the wind.

On the north and west of our camp ran the Nansemond River, whose banks were so high that wooden shutes were needed to carry the farm produce down to the sailing vessels in the river. As I remember it, some of these shutes were more than fifty feet in length.

Between this river and our camp were large plantations where great quantities of sweet potatoes, watermelons, etc., were grown. While orders were very strict against poaching, the temptation to get something fresh was greater than most men could stand.

I remember one night going with two others to a field of watermelons. We wore what was called an army blouse of blue flannel. This was much like a shirt though an outside garment. When buttoned at the neck, it was much like a bag.²⁴ The melons were so large that the blouse would only hold two. Selecting the best we could find, we loaded up and

21. Charles F. Hill, a resident of Fall River, Mass., initially served in the Fourth Rhode Island as a private, but within a year of his enlistment he received promotions that elevated him to sergeant. During the Petersburg campaign Hill served in the ambulance corps. He probably came across Carpenter's "needle book" soon after seeing him at the field hospital during the Battle of the Crater.

22. George W. Getty was a graduate of West Point and a career army officer. Soon after the war broke out, he was appointed a brigadier general of volunteers. By the time of the Fredericksburg campaign, he commanded the Third Division of the Ninth Corps. In March 1863 Getty and his division left for Suffolk, Va., and they participated in the defense of that town when the Confederate general Longstreet attacked it that spring. The division also led an advance on Richmond, Va., in June

1863. Getty went on to command a division of the Sixth Corps through most of 1864 and 1865.

23. The Pennsylvania Bucktails, known also as the Thirteenth Pennsylvania Reserves or the Forty-second Pennsylvania, belonged to the Third Division of the First Army Corps. They were in a different part of Virginia in April 1863. However, it is likely that one of the other Pennsylvania regiments serving on the Peninsula may also have worn buck's tails in their hats, emulating the style of the aforementioned regiment, which had won early recognition for its bravery in battle.

24. Carpenter here refers to the Union army's fatigue blouse. Also known as a sack coat, this blouse was the standard uniform coat for soldiers engaged in active duty. As Carpenter states, when it was taken off and buttoned up, the fatigue blouse could be turned upside down to serve as a sack.

started for camp. On the way we had to ford a shallow brook about ten or twelve feet wide. The house where the owner lived was in sight not far away. The two other comrades were walking along together while I was in the rear, something like a rod. As they entered the brook and had reached the center, out from the bushes at one side, jumped something white and, as it struck the water it uttered a horrible blat. The two men in the brook were thoroughly frightened. They surely thought the Prince of Darkness had appeared in a robe of white to punish them for stealing watermelons! They dropped their blouses with the melons and hiked for the camp. I was equally frightened, but could not run back for that would carry me towards the house, and I had no business in that direction. "To hesitate is to be lost" but at this time it was salvation to me, for I had time to discover that this frightful apparition was none other than a white Nanny goat trying to be sociable.

My comrades never let up until they reached camp, and told a startling story of having met a ghost which carried Carpenter away. I gathered up the two blouses but could not bring off their melons and reached camp about an hour after the others had arrived to their great surprise. For the next few days I had the time of my life joshing those two fellows, and they were hailed throughout the camp for a time as "Melons."

"THE DISMAL SWAMP"

The Dismal Swamp was located nearby this camp. Through this swamp and leading into a lake in its center was a canal, through which were pushed boats some forty feet in length, a pole being fastened to either end by which the boat was propelled through the water by men walking on the bank. These boats before the war carried freight between Norfolk and towns in the Albemarle Sound. At this time the canal was clogged with debris likely to occur from disuse. Trees had fallen into and across it and the tow path was full of holes and covered with limbs from adjacent trees. At the edge of the lake a hunter and trapper had built him a house raised above the water and here made his home, living by his skill in hunting.

In April of 1863 a report came to the commanding officer that an effort was being made by the Rebels to get on our rear flank by way of this lake

and canal.

A detail of sixty men from the different regiments with two commanding officers and one sergeant was sent through this waterway to reconnoiter and learn the facts. We had one forty-foot boat and a smaller one for the officers. It was thought best at that time to take along enough whisky to keep off the chills and fever. It was a most tedious job to clear out the canal. About one-half of the men could ride in the boat and could only be gotten out because those out wanted to get in.

We reached the lake in the afternoon and found no evidence of the Rebels, and the officers started back to camp in the small boat and left me in command with orders to bring the men back to camp.

The fear of chills and fever had so worked on the minds of the men that whisky was in great demand and before we had gotten half way out of the swamp there was pretty near a mob, and the change from those in the boat to those out who wanted to get in resulted in many getting a good ducking in the canal, and often the sober ones were hauling the drunken ones out to save them from drowning. It was dark, and we had no lights. The mosquitoes were getting in their fine work, and taking it all together, it was a measly job and I was glad when a little after midnight we emerged from the swamp and gathering wood made a fire and tried to keep warm and get dry until morning came.

In 1893 while on a trip to the Pacific Coast, leaving Portland, Oregon, in the early evening for Sacramento and San Francisco and the train some two hours out and stopping at a station, a gentleman came into the car I occupied and dropped into the seat immediately in front of me, throwing his arm across the back of the seat. Glancing over at me, he observed the G.A.R. button in the lapel of my coat and swung around and saluted me with "Hullo, Comarade." Rising we shook hands and at once went to reminiscing about by-gone days of the war, and when we found what regiments we belonged to, we knew a host of things in common. Both regiments had been located at Gettysville and his was the Pennsylvania Bucktails referred to earlier in this rambling epistle.

During the conversation he told of the trip into the Dismal Swamp and remarked, "I have often

thought of the Sergeant in command that night, and wondered if he survived the war." And when I said I was that man, he jumped to his feet and caught me in his arms and gave me a regular bear hug, for he was a magnificently built man, six feet two, broad shouldered and the very picture of health.

Of course we had forgotten there was anybody else in the car and talked loud and laughed louder, and when I came to realize the situation, about every one in the car had gathered about us listening, and the bucktailer told the story much more vividly than I am now telling it. He insisted I should spend a week with him at his ranch, but I could not. We had never met before to know each other, but our common service was familiar to both.

Soon after the incident related above of my visit with an old soldier who served with me on the Dismal Swamp expedition, I was walking up the long platform at Mojave Junction on the South Pacific Railroad in California, when two men approached me, and the larger of the two accosted me with the remark, "That's a valuable button you wear in your coat." I replied that I thought a great deal of it. "Well," said he, "Do you know what that means?" holding in his hand a Masonic emblem attached as a pendent to his watch chain. "Yes," I said. Then turning to his companion, he said, "It's pretty valuable, and I am fairly well fixed financially, but, Joe, I would give all I am worth and sever every social connection if I could rightfully wear that button!" "Why didn't you go to the war?" "Oh! I thought then it was necessary for me to *stay at home and take care of the women and children!*" and turning away he continued his walk up the platform.

Comments on some remarks of Dr. Perry, a surgeon in a nine months' regiment, in a letter to M. L. Potter written in June, 1863.

"I guess Dr. Perry doesn't know as well as some others do about what fare a soldier gets upon a march! His regiment, I think, has never been out of

the limits of soft bread! If he had marched one hundred twenty miles with only seven teams to carry rations for ten companies of fifty men each and fought nearly every day, he might tell a different story, or if he had been in front of the enemy when retreat was certain destruction and an advance without more men was a defeat; a distance of twenty-five miles from the nearest supply station with the roads so muddy that it was all the mules could do to drag the wagon, let alone the provisions; when 'hard tack' was worth twenty-five cents a piece, he might talk about what good rations the men get. It is well for a man to *talk* who never passed through such scenes as these! I often hear it remarked that the nine months men know more about what a soldier has to endure than those who have served since the war broke out. I suppose when the nine months men get home they will make the blood run cold in the veins of the more timid ones by relating the hair-breadth escapes they have passed through and the hardships they have endured. Well, I only hope they won't draw a picture so hideous that it will scare those who intend to enlist to escape the draft, for we want them out here. If they are afraid to meet the butternuts, we will leave them to guard the knapsacks while we exchange compliments with the Rebs."²⁵

There was a man in our company with us at Gettysville, John W. Cory by name, who was over sixty years of age, and ought never to have enlisted, but he was a good soldier and brave to rashness, but the long marches were too much for his rheumatism and he would be incapacitated for days at a time. He had the sympathy of all the men and finally was urged to apply for a discharge. He dreaded to go to the hospital, so one day he went into the woods and cut a long cane and for weeks never walked without it. I thought the surgeon understood the situation. However, he said nothing to Cory but quietly recommended a discharge and

25. Dr. Thomas W. Perry was the surgeon for the Eleventh Rhode Island, a nine-months regiment. Ironically enough, Dr. Perry and his regiment served together with the Fourth Rhode Island at the siege of Suffolk, Va. When this letter was written, both regiments were probably performing similar duties.

Carpenter's criticisms are valid, however, as the Eleventh Rhode Island never experienced active campaigning quite like that which the Fourth Rhode Island did during its three years of service.

when a few weeks later Cory was handed the papers, a tip had been given to the men and we were around to see how John took the matter. When he comprehended that he was actually discharged from the service and had an order for transportation home, he stood and gazed at the paper, all the color went from his face and I thought he would certainly drop, then the blood came back, great tears ran down his cheeks, he tried to speak but could not. Two of his tent mates led him away to his tent, and then he realized that his age was a bar to further service. I think he would have preferred to have fallen in the front, fighting for his country. A few days later many of his comrades went to Norfolk to bid him "Good Bye" as he sailed for home. He was standing on the upper deck as the boat cleared the dock. Raising the cane high in the air, he threw it over among the men and shouted, "Go back and help some other poor cuss to get home who can't stand up to the rack."²⁶

RICHMOND

During the summer of 1863 an expedition was made up of several regiments located at or near Portsmouth, Virginia, and Fort Monroe to threaten Richmond.²⁷

We came in sight of the city but had not sufficient force to capture it. This march up and down the peninsula was very trying and many men were made sick from over exertion, terrible heat, bad water and lack of food.

Our regiment passed through a great field of blackberries, and we could not be driven away even by exploding shells from the Rebels, who hung upon our rear for parts of two days. The sudden change from a diet of hard-tack and salt beef to a fill up on the berries was more than we could stand, and hundreds of men were sick. Horace Stillman

came near dying. His father came to see him while he was in the hospital and took him home.

I had not been strong as a boy. I can not remember a year at home that I was not sick from some cause or other, and now I had been in the army for almost two years and had never been sick enough to go to the hospital, but this march was too much for me. After marching one hundred twenty-five miles without sleep and little to eat, I had to go to the surgeon for relief in my great pain. He put me into an ambulance and sent me to Fort Monroe. I was back to my company in a few days, much to the surprise of our regimental surgeon.

In October of this year I was given a furlough of ten days, which was very unsatisfactory. It took two and one-half days to reach home and as many to return, leaving me only five days at home.

Your mother is reading from a letter she received from me under date of December 4, 1863. "We had a grand dinner for Thanksgiving, which consisted of two large pieces of sausage about the size of your thumb and stuffed with the tenderest of puppy meat, and two roast sweet potatoes. This sudden change of diet from plain food such as we are in the habit of having to such rich delicacies came very near making me sick!"

The months I spent in Redan No. 2 and around Portsmouth, Virginia, and the reconnoitering in different directions were so full of incidents, humorous and pathetic, that I could write many pages, but I must draw the line somewhere and will only relate one more.

A few rods from Redan No. 2 was quite a large settlement of colored people. They had built a place of worship, the roof of which consisted of poles about the size of a bean pole, resting on stakes driven into the ground with a fork or prong at the

26. John W. Cory, from Warwick, R.I., enlisted in Company D in September 1861. He served with the Fourth Rhode Island for two years before he received his discharge. It was fairly common for men over forty-five years of age to enlist as ordinary infantrymen. While some served through the war with but little difficulty, many suffered from illness and old age and received discharges because of their disabilities.

27. As General Lee's Confederate army invaded Maryland and Pennsylvania, Gen. John A. Dix's army (concentrated on the Peninsula) launched an offensive against the city of Richmond. The objectives of the raid were to threaten Richmond and to

destroy communications between that city and Lee's army. The move was brought to a halt when Confederate troops successfully resisted the passage of Dix's army at the Pamunkey River north of Richmond. On 4 July General Dix led his men back to their base in and around the town of Portsmouth. This offensive has been known as the "Blackberry Raid": while many suffered sunstroke and fell out of the line of march because of the extremely hot and dry weather during this campaign, thousands of other troops also fell out to take advantage of the luscious blackberries that were everywhere evident.

upper end for the poles to rest upon, and on top of these were placed brush for protection from the hot rays of the sun. I had often attended their meetings and enjoyed them very much. Their quaint sayings, their exhortations, their cries, and contortions for the *power* to come upon them and, above all, the melody of their songs and hymns would often lead to great excitement.

I was present at one of these gatherings when the power was sought so earnestly that the roof came down on the heads of all. The poles forming the roof were so low that many laid hold upon them and the supports gave way. It was embarrassing, but no one was injured.

Another extract from a letter to your mother under date of January 20, 1864, written from Redan No. 2. (A redan is a fort. This one had four guns and was manned by our company.)

"Today has been one of trial to me, at least a part of it. We received orders to be ready to fire at a target at twelve o'clock at a distance of eight hundred yards, and that the General commanding would be present to witness the firing.

"In artillery a sergeant commands one gun and is responsible for that gun. The Captain²⁸ called the sergeants up to his tent and said to them that he wanted them to do their very best. Precisely at twelve o'clock each sergeant had his detachment at his post, and soon the General arrived. We were to fire four shots each.

"Sergeant Mowry²⁹ fired first, and of the four shots, not one reached the target, all falling short. Nothing was said but the Captain looked rather cross as he ordered me to prepare to fire. I soon had my gun loaded and at the command the iron messenger went screaming through the air. All eyes were directed towards the target. Two seconds had not passed when about ten feet in front of the target the shell was seen to burst. 'An excellent shot,' said the Captain. 'Very good,' said the General. By this time I had loaded again and soon another shell

was sent to find its former companion. This one passed directly beneath the mark, bursting and hitting the target. A smile was on the face of the Captain, and I was satisfied. My other two shots were very good and I was relieved of the anxiety which I had felt before the trial, but I won't brag any more."

Here is a quotation from a letter written from Redan No. 2, under date of February 9, 1864.

"Last night I had the pleasure of hearing some very sweet music. An Italian, who is travelling around among the soldiers with a harp, played and sang one piece which seemed to affect the men considerably. As the words 'Do they think of me at home?' floated out on the clear night air in all the richness of his Italian voice, many a tear coursed down the cheeks of those rough men. Those who had braved death in every form and witnessed hundreds in their last agony of despair and had turned away seemingly unaffected by the horrors around them, but had been made to weep at that anxious inquiry, 'Do they think of me at home?' sung so touchingly by that poor wanderer. Oh, what an influence home exercises over the mind of the soldier! 'Tis his first thought at reveille, the last thought at taps."

March 10th, 1864.

"The rebels returned with a much larger force and cut off two companies of colored cavalry and made a sudden dash upon our inner pickets, killing some and wounding a number of others. Although the force that surrounded the colored cavalry was three to our one, yet the niggers fought like tigers and succeeded in cutting their way through the rebel lines and a part of them have come in. All that have come in say that no prisoners were taken on either side.

"One little bugle boy defended his captain until he was killed and then shot the rebel who had killed his captain and brought in his captain's horse and that of the rebel also. A brave little fellow indeed.

28. Walter A. Read was the captain of Company D by this time. Captain Read commanded the troops at Redan No. 2, a fortification near Portsmouth, Va.

29. Emor W. Mowry, a resident of Burrillville, R.I., was initially a corporal in Company D. He then served as a sergeant from November 1862 until his discharge in October 1864.

(Same letter)

"There is a lieutenant in our hospital who received a mortal wound yesterday. The ball passed through his left breast and came out under the shoulder blade.

"He rode five miles on his horse and then rode four on a caisson. He then got aboard a hand car in which was a lady who held him in her arms until he arrived at our hospital. He had nearly bled to death in her arms. She tried all she could to staunch the life current but could not. A brave woman if she was a Southerner. She was a refugee seeking protection under our flag."

We left Norfolk for Point Lookout in the Chesapeake Bay where were located hospitals sufficient to accommodate five thousand and barracks for the accommodation of eight thousand prisoners.³⁰

We were received by the Fifth New Hampshire Regiment who had prepared for us a good dinner. We soon learned that we were here as provost guard.

Early in June the Fifth New Hampshire went to join Grant at Petersburg and June 8, 1864 over three hundred returned here wounded in the most horrible manner, besides leaving a large number on the field who needed not the aid of earthly surgeons.

In an examination of the prisoners who arrived today, there were discovered two women who had served two years or more in the Rebel army and had not been discovered until they were called for examination, when they admitted their sex.³¹

I was detailed for staff duty at head-quarters, but was released a few days later to join my regiment which left for near Petersburg and Grant's army on July 1st, and arrived at Petersburg, July 3rd.

I find in one of my letters to your mother from Redan No. 2 at Gettysville what one would hardly expect to find in war correspondence, namely, news of evangelistic work. Under date of March 17, 1864,

"God is certainly cleansing the nation from its dreadful sin, and may He give us strength to exclaim in the words of our Lord, 'Not my will, but Thine be done.' We know He has not deserted us; no, not even us wretched beings in the army, who have so often laughed to scorn His blessed teaching. Already He has begun his righteous work among us. Sixteen precious souls have been brought to feel His cleansing power within the last month, and many more who once acknowledged His kindness and mercy but who have been sinning with a high hand, regardless of the solemn vows they once made, have returned to His service and are now laboring in His vineyard. They have meetings every evening and I attend whenever duty permits."

The army of General Grant lay along the west side of Petersburg for ten miles north and south. He had been continuously fighting Lee and his army through the wilderness and, to protect Petersburg and Richmond, Lee had strongly fortified his position. Fighting had been going on for weeks before we arrived at Petersburg, and the city had been invested on the south, east and west by the Union forces which had gradually approached towards the city.

PRESENTIMENTS

What appears from several old letter of June and July, 1864, savors of coming trouble to myself, such as in a letter of June 23, 1864.

"Every day is bringing the opposing armies closer together. There seems to be a something which I can not see through, a heavy mist like, which hangs like a descending cloud, ready to swallow me up in its dark surroundings. I hope everything will be for our good. I pray God to direct me in all my actions of daily life and I try to do my duty as well as possible."

June 27. "We received orders yesterday to join the Army of the Potomac. When you hear from me

30. In 1862 an army hospital was established at Point Lookout, Md. A year later a stockade to hold prisoners of war also was erected. By July 1864, when Carpenter left again for the front, more than fourteen thousand Confederate prisoners were being held there.

31. Several women prisoners were brought to Point Lookout while Carpenter served there. On 14 April 1864 two women, captured nearby, were taken in. They were listed, however, not as soldiers but as blockade runners (smugglers). Another woman brought there has no offense listed against her. These may or

next we shall probably be in front of the enemy near Petersburg. It is nine weeks today since we came to Point Lookout. We have been expecting this order for some time. Tell Maria not to forget the promise she made me when she stood by the carriage as I started on my return to my regiment, for if ever soldiers needed the prayers of the loved ones at home, it is at the present time when to falter is to betray the trust which the country reposes in us, and to you I would not say one word that would cause you grief. Do not worry about me, I am no better than many others who have been sacrificed. I had hoped to return and live happily with you, and I still hope to, but should I fall I hope you will be able to say, 'Not my will but Thine be done.'"

June 28. "I have felt all day as though I ought to write for this may be my last, although however great the danger may be, I am determined that nothing shall lead me from the path of duty. If I do not go, it will be the first time the regiment ever went without me, either into a battle or on a march. I have often heard it said that the last words of a friend were prized very much. We linger over the death-bed of a loved one, anxious to catch the last whisper of the departing one, and as we turn from that death scene, we ever afterward think of the parting words. I do not wish to be the cause of a single tear of grief to you, yet something seems to weigh heavily upon my mind. I do not feel as I have in other instances when I was about to meet the enemies of the country, yet I hope for all of this depression which I feel that I may go safely through all danger and when my term of service expires return to you."

July 3rd. "We are undermining the Rebel forts, running tunnels almost every way. We have joined our old favorite, Burnside. It is some time since I received a letter from you. I may never receive another, for long before the mail will come we shall doubtless be engaged. I hope I may pass through

unscathed. It is well we can not see the future, for if we could, I am afraid there would be many more cowards than there are. I know I am one and always was, yet I wish to do my duty and must. Pray for your husband that he may be faithful to both God and country."

The firing on both sides was pretty nearly incessant and within the firing zone traverses had been dug. (A traverse, to an ordinary person, is a ditch below the surface of the ground for the shielding of the men passing from one point to another.) These traverses were in irregular lines so that a bullet or a shell entering them would go but a little way before it struck an angle and was stopped. They were sufficiently wide for two men to pass each other easily, which facilitated the carrying of ammunition and food. Then in these traverses there would be dug a short ditch at right angles with the main ditch, into which, if a shell dropped into the traverse, a man could escape until it had burst.

I remember one incident. Among our own men was one man very short in stature with indomitable pluck. One morning while we were drinking coffee and eating our hard tack, a shell rolled down into the traverse among us. We scurried into the side ditches and waited for it to burst, when this man, Martin Quigley by name, looked out and saw the fuse still burning. He jumped out and caught up the shell and threw it over his head out of the ditch, and it burst as it landed. He took up his coffee and hard tack as if nothing unusual had occurred, and we finished our breakfast.³²

We arrived here on the third of July and were located near a regiment which had been recruited among the coal mines of Pennsylvania, the colonel of which was a mining engineer.³³ He had suggested to his superior officer that his regiment would be willing to run a mine from the Union line to and under some Rebel forts. His suggestion was

may not have been the women to whom Carpenter refers, but he was present at Point Lookout during the month of April.

32. Martin Quigley, of Smithfield, R.I., spent his three years in the Fourth Rhode Island as a private. With nine months left to serve, Quigley reenlisted for another three years. When the Fourth Rhode Island was sent home, he was transferred, along

with some newer recruits and others who had reenlisted, to the Seventh Rhode Island. Quigley finally received his discharge in July 1865, a few months after the war ended.

33. The regiment that constructed the mine was the Forty-eighth Pennsylvania Infantry. Lt. Col. Henry Pleasants planned and carried out the tunneling and the explosion of the mine.

accepted, and the fort lying just in front of the traverse where we were located was selected. The ground on which this fort was located was probably from sixty to eighty feet higher than the point where the cut would be made to undermine it.

Of course, both Union and Rebels were watching each other very closely to discover any unusual work or manoeuvres going on.

The soil in that part of the country is yellow with a reddish tinge, and as they dug the ditch, the dirt was put into bags and removed so that no one would discover that mining was in progress. The distance from where the entrance of the mine began to a point directly under the fort was something over five hundred feet. This gallery was dug wide enough for two to pass, and the dirt was brought out in aprons which were tied to them, and put into the bags referred to. It took several days to dig that gallery under the ground and, when they reached a spot directly under the fort, they dug out eight chambers, sufficient to hold about eight thousand pounds of powder. This was packed closely together and a fuse led out to the opening. The gallery was closed up with the dirt that had been taken from it, packed together as solidly as could be, and all seemed ready to fire the fuse and explode the mine when proper orders should be given.

In the mean time General Burnside had made his plans to charge over the ground toward that fort and, if successful, beyond it into the city of Petersburg.

The time was set for the explosion at four o'clock in the morning. The fuse was lighted on time, but no explosion occurred, and it was soon learned that there was a break somewhere in the fuse, so the dirt had to be taken out again until the broken fuse was found and repaired and the dirt put back again, and the fuse lighted, and then it did not explode—and again the dirt had to be withdrawn and a new break was found, and the process of refilling again gone through with. By this time it was nearly eight o'clock, but when the fuse was

now lighted, the explosion occurred. There were four guns and two hundred seventy-five men in that fort. The explosion was a terrible sight. Four guns and parts of their carriages and men were blown high in the air in a confused mass, and not one man of all that company escaped death.

The charge was ordered and we with other regiments rushed across the space over and beyond the excavation, which was something like forty feet deep and sixty feet across. We came in sight of the city of Petersburg, and there met the enemy rushing to prevent our further approach. As a regiment, we were driven back into the mine hole, and there with such protection as the edge of the mine gave us, fought as long as our ammunition lasted. The general tried to get ammunition and food to us but none of his men succeeded in crossing that space between the mine and the Union lines. They had gotten a cross fire of musketry and artillery with shrapnel, and succeeded in preventing our retreat to the Union lines.

While in this hole, having taken my turn with others in helping to keep the enemy from reaching us, I had stepped down and back and had my hand on my rifle which was standing on the ground, when an officer from a Massachusetts Regiment put his hand upon my arm to call attention to the colored men who were down in the bottom of the hole. (This was the first time that a large body of colored men had been put forward in so important a fight. They had failed and were gathered together in the bottom of this hole.) Just as the officer put his hand upon my arm, a shell burst overhead and a piece of the shell cut off my right hand just below the elbow, and also three of the fingers of this officer who had spoken to me.³⁴

The arm hung by a few cords at the back side, the bone having been severed. I spoke to a man near by and asked him if he could not tear a strip from the rubber blanket lying at his feet and bind it around my arm, as a tourniquet, to stop the bleeding. He did so, and I took my gun and started down

34. The officer wounded along with Carpenter most likely belonged to the Fifty-eighth Massachusetts Infantry, which fought alongside the Fourth Rhode Island during the Battle of the

Crater. Identifying the officer, however, is next to impossible, since so many of that regiment's officers were wounded, killed, or taken prisoner by the Confederates.

through the excavation to the other side, thinking I could escape across to the Union lines, but when I informed some men lying about there of my purpose, they said, "You can not reach our lines. No man who has gone out of here has succeeded. Most of them are dead or lying wounded in the space between this excavation and the lines," and I remarked, "I guess I might just as well try to get across as to be taken prisoner and die." So we stood and discussed the matter, and the noise of the screeching of the shells and the whistling of the bullets would come and go like the wind which you have heard singing through a crack in the house or door, and I thought that, if I could only time myself correctly between the time of the discharge of one lot of guns and that of the next, I might escape across this five hundred feet, and so I said, "If I start when that noise ceases, I think I can make good." I made two or three efforts and each time fell back into the crater, discouraged because of the sound of the shells and bullets, and then it occurred to me that the noise of those shells and bullets does not reach our ears until they have passed us, and therefore, if I go and have any chance, it must be when they are at their height. One of the boys laughed at my reasoning, but I made the effort and, when the sound of the bursting shells and the whistling of bullets was at its highest, I started and ran across that space. When I came to the Union lines, I went down into the traverse in a heap. The men there picked me up and asked if I was wounded, and I laughed. Looking me over, they found, besides my wounded arm, seven distinct bullet marks upon my haversack, my knap-sack, my gun, my cartridge box, and my clothing, but not one had touched me in passing.

I started out of the traverse to walk to the ambulance which was only a mile away. At different corners of the traverse were agents of the Christian Commission and the Sanitary Commission to assist wounded men on the way, and I drank whisky and brandy at every corner and felt no ill effect from the same.

I reached the ambulance and was put in beside a man who was lying with eyes closed, whom I at first thought was dead. When the ambulance had started on its way to the field hospital, we passed four colored soldiers who were carrying on a stretcher a man wounded in his big toe, and I remarked, using language which I do not now use, criticising them for leaving the field and the fight to carry away a wounded man who could have gone away without assistance.

I was probably the last man to escape from the crater, for in a short time the eleven hundred men cornered in that death trap surrendered to the Confederate forces.

The hospital was two miles away and during this drive the man who was lying on the other side spoke to me and said, "Have you a hope in Christ?" Well, nothing that had occurred that day came with such a shock to me as that inquiry. I had not been thinking about these things much of late, but I replied, "Well, I hope so," and he said, "Well, there is nothing like a hope in Jesus Christ for a man situated as you and I are." When we got to the hospital, I got out and he was taken out dead.

Sergeant Charles Hill of our company happened to be on duty at the hospital that day and met me at the ambulance and said, "You are lucky, for the surgeon of our regiment is just going to take his turn at the operating table and you will get the first chance." I was taken to the table. I remember an old man sitting at the foot of the table and afterwards was told that he was a celebrated surgeon. I remember their giving me the chloroform and the last thing that I do remember was hearing that old man say, "Pick up that artery, Doctor."³⁵

I was taken from the table and laid out on the ground with a long line of others who had been operated on that day, some with an arm off, some with a leg gone; some with this thing and some with that.

I had reached this hospital just about noon and when I came out from under the influence of the chloroform, I heard a soldier saying, "Here is your

35. The surgeon who operated on Carpenter's arm was probably one of the regiment's assistant surgeons, Robert Millar. Dr. Millar at this time was serving at the Third Division

hospital, which was most likely the hospital to which Carpenter was taken.

hot coffee," and I sat up and received a cup of coffee as he came by. (I supposed for more than twenty-five years that I received that cup of coffee on the night of the day that my arm was cut off, but when I saw Sergeant Hill twenty-five years after that, he told me that I did not come out from under the influence of the chloroform until the second day towards night, and they thought I never would awaken from under its influence.)

Right beside me lay a man who had lost his left arm just as I had my right arm, and we talked the matter over. I felt as well as I do today, no pain, not particularly weak. This was towards night and just before dark an orderly came around saying, "Those who feel like walking to City Point may form in line." The man beside me, whose name was Ray P. Eaton, remarked, "Let's go!" and we took one of our knapsacks and put all our earthly belongings into it, he carrying with his right hand and I with my left, and went out into line.

The surgeon came along to make the examination and said to Eaton, "What are you doing in this line? You can not walk to City Point. Get out of here!" When he came to me, he said the same thing and when he had passed down the entire line, he found six with arms gone who were bound to walk the ten miles to City Point, and he said, "Get an ambulance. These fellow are bound to go," and so we were put into an ambulance and driven to City Point, a distance of ten miles, over a corduroy road the whole way, and were shaken up and suffered more than we would have suffered if we had walked.

When we reached City Point, Eaton said to me, "Have you got any money?" I replied, "I think I have a few cents. It is in my right hand pocket and you will have to fish it out." He put his hand into my pocket, got what change I had and went off, and in a short time returned with a pitcher filled with milk punch, and that was our supper that night. The next morning we went aboard a steam-boat scheduled for Washington. A good old German doctor aboard talked with Eaton and myself and encouraged us a whole lot but best of all he said was, "Come down to the dining-room and get a good meal."

We arrived in Washington in due time and I was taken to Campbell Hospital feeling hearty and good,

and ought to have been ready to come home in a month, but one night when the nurses had gone down town to some entertainment, leaving only one in the ward in which I was, a load of wounded came up and one of them was put into our ward.

He had lost his leg and it had not been dressed or anything done for him for four days, and so I tried to assist the nurses by holding a dish or handing a sponge or cloth or in anyway that I could aid him while he dressed the wound. It had been so long that maggots had got into the wound, and with sulphuric acid and a syringe we attempted to cleanse the wound, and I am not exaggerating when I say that there were maggots that came out of that wound more than an inch in length and as large as an ordinary slate pencil!!

Two days after that, when the visiting surgeon was going his rounds making his examinations and I had complained to him of soreness in my arm that was unusual, he examined it and said, "You have gangrene in that sore and I guess you will have to go over to Ward 10." Well, "Ward 10" was what we all called in the hospital "The Death Ward," because most of the men who were sent there never recovered.

The surgeon that morning was substituting for the regular surgeon, Dr. Gleason, who had gone to Baltimore, and so I took the liberty to say, "I will not go to Ward 10 until my own surgeon directs it." Well, he said he would try to cleanse the wound with some sulphuric acid and he wrapped a rag around an ordinary splinter and put sulphuric acid on it, and thrust it up into the wound and worked it around and took it out and said, "I guess that will drive it off," but the next morning it was worse, and he went through the same performance. The next morning it was still worse, but my own surgeon was present then and I related to him the circumstances. "Now," I said, "Doctor, this digging into that sore with a stick and a rag around it with sulphuric acid is no fun and it is sapping my strength and, if it is doing no good, I do not want to repeat it, for I had rather die easy than be tortured to death." I said, "I am willing to lie on my back and let a nurse hold that stump up and you may pour in all the sulphuric acid you want to and let it burn just as long as you think it is necessary but this must be the last time it will be done." He said,

"Well, that will be pretty heroic treatment and you will have to take chloroform." So they chloroformed me and they did lay me on my back and they did pour sulphuric acid into the wound which had been eaten by the gangrene, and the hands of the nurse who held up the stump while it was being done were burned all over in spots. When I came out of it, I said to the nurse, "If those fellows are going to do anything, I wish they would get at it," and he replied, "Well, it is all over, Carpenter. Don't worry about it."

The operation had so weakened me and I was so tired that I wanted to go to sleep and while just in that condition an orderly came in and reported to the nurse, "Doctor Merrill and Mrs. Carpenter are in the reception room. Shall I bring them in?" He said, "Yes," and they came in.³⁶

Of course, it was a great surprise to me to see my wife there and I always thought it came as near carrying me over the bar, so to speak, as anything that had occurred, but Doctor Merrill said it was the shock of her presence and the surprise which set my blood to circulating and saved me. However that may be, the eating of the gangrene had been stopped and Doctor Merrill's acquaintance with the Surgeon in Chief (Shelden) of the hospital caused me to have all sorts of wines and brandies and fruits and delicacies of all kinds, besides those brought from home, and in a few days it was thought safe for my wife to return home.

Extracts from letters from Mary E. Carpenter to her husband, George B. Carpenter, who was in Campbell Hospital, Washington, D.C.

"Ashaway, R. I.

"Sept. 22, 1864.

"I received the news of your second drawback today and have grieved over it all day. You charge me again and again not to worry about you and yet tell me that which strikes the greatest fear to my heart. How can I cease from worry when my

darling soldier is suffering so intensely and I so far away from him. It seems as if I must fly to you and yet I am held back until I am almost crazy. I am making a few efforts to come to you but my people oppose while every one else is astonished that I do not go to you with the speed of the wind. I am not going to ask your advice for fear you will tell me to remain at home and how can I stay at home when, after waiting for these three years to pass away, and they have flown on leaden wings, I must wait two months more. It is more than I can bear. This separation is more cruel than death. Why is it? What have I done that God should so cruelly punish me, and why should the purely innocent be the greater sufferer? I do not understand it, and fear that I am forever blind to the mercy which we are told is in every chastisement. Oh God, spare me! Let this bitter cup pass from my lips. I have always prayed to be humble and to say, 'Not *my* will but Thine be done,' but I can not say it now. Oh George, I can not give you up. Every thought has been for you for so long that to lose you would be to lose myself. I have so built upon your sure coming home that every fibre of my being is interwoven with yours. Every plan I have laid has been made in reference to your home-coming, every bit of work that I have done, thinking how you would like it, thinking that your precious eyes would soon rest upon it. And can I give you up? No, no, I can not, I must see you once more. I must stop writing for tonight, for it is late, and if I have time I will resume it in the morning. Please give my thanks to that kind person who sends me those precious missives, telling me of my soldier. Pray for me, darling, that I may not rebel against God's will, but may meet my duty with an unfaltering heart and that, should we be called upon to part on earth, I may come to you in heaven.

"Good night, dearest,

"Yours lovingly,

"Mary."

36. Dr. John Hill Merrill (1834-1893) was no longer in the army at this time. He, like Carpenter, was a resident of Potter Hill, R.I. He had enlisted as a private in Battery H of the First Rhode Island Light Artillery, but within a month he had received an appointment as an assistant surgeon. Serving with various

Rhode Island batteries, he eventually became surgeon in chief of the artillery brigade of the Second Army Corps in October 1863. In March 1864 he resigned his commission as a major and returned to his practice in Rhode Island.

"Ashaway, R. I., Oct. 12, 1864.

"Dear Husband,

"Your precious letter reached me yesterday and I was so delighted with it that I could not be contented with just answering it, but I must let others share the good news with me, so I carried it down to your home. Your people were well pleased that I took the pains to inform them of your progress. I am not going to attempt to put upon paper the agony of suspense that I have endured since I left Washington. I certainly thought that some of your good friends would write immediately, but I had to wait *nine days* for any news whatsoever, but, never mind, I was doubly rewarded by receiving a letter written by your own hand. The 4th Rhode Island Volunteers arrived in Providence last Friday and Thomas Barber came home. They are to be discharged today.³⁷ Thomas is the only one of the ten who went from here that returned with the regiment. Alfred Berry did not come back. He remained at Norfolk, Virginia. Horace Stillman came home before his time was out; Henry Saunders, Edwin Gavitt, Davis Crandall, Benjamin Burdick, and Thomas Langworthy are all dead. William Crandall came home sick and you are still sick. Thomas Barber brought that picture to your home, and I took it yesterday, so it is safe. I am very cheerful now that I am assured of your steady gain. I hope when you write again you will be able to tell me more particulars. I am hoping that my darling will be with me soon. I do so wish that you might be here on your next birthday, but I will not be impatient."

I had not been out of bed when I seemed possessed to want to get home to vote for the reelection of Abraham Lincoln.

The election was to be on the eighth day of November, my birthday. I therefore urged the surgeon to allow me to go home and he consented. I had neither hat, shoes nor stockings. My wife had brought me a dressing gown made of many colors, very handsome and very noticeable as one went

along the street. One of the nurses loaned me his shoes, and went with me down the street and I purchased a pair of shoes and the man put them on and tied them up for me. I bought a hat and was then taken down to the train and put into a sleeper. The nurse took off my shoes but when I got into New York the next morning, I discovered how foolish I had been in buying a pair of shoes which laced up, for try the best I could, I could not tie them. An old gentleman across the aisle said, "Here, let me lace those shoes up for you. I can not see you trying to do it yourself." I told him I wanted to get to a certain place in New York for the purpose of getting my transportation changed.

I had transportation by rail, but I wanted to come from New York to Stonington on the boat, as I thought it would be easier, and I said to this man, "I do not know where this place is," and he said, "I will go right there with you." In his company I went up to the place and told the sentry on duty what I wanted, and he said, "You go up Broadway to such and such a street and to such and such a number, and they will exchange your transportation so that you can go by boat."

When I reached the office, there was a long line of men waiting for the same purpose, and I got tired of standing about, and finally concluded I would go back to the first place. I passed down Broadway until I came to an old church on the corner of Fulton and Broadway. There was an iron fence about this church resting on a granite coping, and I sat down upon that granite. An officer came along and said, "Hello, what are you doing here?" I replied, "I am looking for Colonel Blank's place." He said, "Yes, and you can not find it?" "No." He smiled, pointing across the street where there was a notice across the front of a building with letters three feet long, telling all about the place and the man who had charge of it, and so forth, and I had not seen it! Of course, I got up and went over. I think the officer thought that I was somewhat under the influence of liquor. As I went up the stairs, I met the Colonel coming down. I had grown

37. The members of the Fourth Rhode Island who had not reenlisted in January returned home to Rhode Island in October

1864. The regiment was mustered out of the United States service on 15 October.

pretty weak and wobbly and he took hold of me and helped me up, and I was just hurt enough to tell him about my experience up Broadway and he said, "Can you tell me the man who told you to go up there?" I thought I could, and he called up a man, and I said, "Yes, this is the man who told me to go up to number so and so Broadway," and he gave him a severe talking to which I will not try to repeat. It is sufficient to say he ordered another man, "Take this man up to a room, put him to bed, carry him up a breakfast, let him stay there until time for him to go to the Stonington boat, take him to the boat, provide him with a state-room and put him to bed." All these things happened.

I got into Westerly the next morning in a fearful rain storm. Not a carriage present to take a passenger away. It was the little old depot and a big stove was in one room. I went up to the stove to warm my hand and looked over the other side and there was a tall man wearing a fur cap. There was something familiar about his face, but I had no idea that I knew him.

I had an aunt who lived on Pierce Street. There was a path which went up the bank and over Lawyer Dixon's land, and the path came out on Pierce Street. So in all that storm I went out and hurried up on the bank of the railroad, and when part of the way up this man came to the station door and shouted, "Is your name Carpenter?" I said, "Yes, but I can not stop to talk with you."

I got to my aunt's. I do not think there was a dry thread in my clothing. Her husband was a good deal bigger man than I, but she dressed me out in his clothes, gave me a good breakfast, and I was none the worse for my experience.

The next morning who should call at the house but this man with the fur cap, and he said, "You don't know me?" "No." "Well, my name is Covey." It all flashed upon me. He was my wife's brother who was home from the army on a furlough. We had come from Washington together and never discovered our identity until that morning in Westerly.³⁸

I took the stage that morning up to Potter Hill and greatly surprised Miss Maria and Miss Harriett Potter as I entered the house. Your mother was visiting in Mystic and during the day heard of my return and immediately came home.

A few days after my return home an election was held for President of the United States, and I wanted my first vote to be cast for Lincoln's re-election.

I was born in Westerly, Rhode Island, and had never lived anywhere else. Doctor Merrill went with me to the hall in Westerly where the voting was taking place. I still wore the dressing gown of many colors which attracted much attention, and I was greatly embarrassed when, as I approached the town clerk, Mr. Cross, to get my ballot, I was told that my name was not on the list. For a moment there was quite a stir among those standing about, many of whom had known me from a boy. Doctor Merrill perhaps said more than any other one and spared no one who might be to blame. I think Samuel H. Cross, town clerk, had to take more than he deserved. He could not explain why my name was not on the voting list, and so with a good deal of disappointment and grumbling on all sides I returned home without voting for that great man, Abraham Lincoln.

CONCLUSION

As you read these imperfect and fragmentary tales of one whose vision comprehended so little of the great drama being acted on the stage of a divided nation and who performed so insignificant a part in conciliating the contending forces, you will, I know, throw the mantle of charity over my many failures as a boy and a soldier, and still hold me in loving remembrance as your father.

After I decided to yield to your urgent requests to recall something connected with my army life, I found my memory crowded more and more as I progressed until I had to guard against the temptation of being prolix. I have said too much already in a personal way, not intended for public perusal, but I

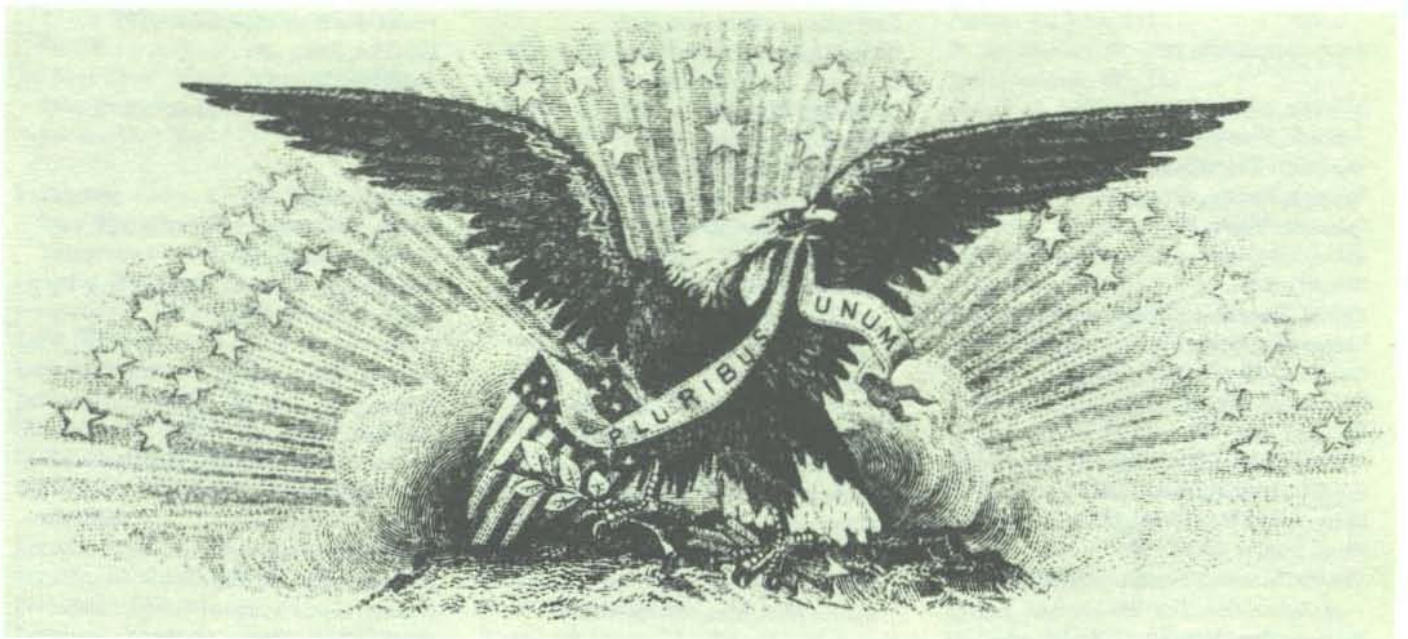
38. Eugene H. Covey, Carpenter's brother-in-law, was a lieutenant in Company G of the Fifth Connecticut Infantry. Covey had enlisted from his hometown of Groton, Conn., at the age of twenty-one or two. Although he was mustered in as a

sergeant, Covey quickly rose to become the first lieutenant of his company. In October 1864 Lieutenant Covey was given a discharge for disability. Covey had only recently returned from the army when Carpenter met him.

trust in your discretion. I have now crossed the line of three score years and ten, and as I look back on those strenuous times, I realize how near to Jordan's brink I trod, and my heart is filled with gratitude to the dear Father for His goodness and mercy to me in sparing my life; and for those dear ones, present and absent, who so kindly ministered to my needs, and are still doing for me, I have no

words which will adequately express my love and gratitude.

"Now all the fearful wounds are healed,
And all the Nation's scars
Are hid forever from our sight
Beneath the stripes and stars."



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