

August Forsberg Memoir Transcript

Page 1

Clouds commenced to gather on the political horizon of the country in 1860, but few anticipated a coming struggle of such gigantic proportions as history afterwards had to record. The 20th December South Carolina seceded the first step of another attempt to dismember the Union. About that time I had seriously contemplated to return to Europe or accept of a professional engagement in South America, but my feelings were so much interested in the issue of the approaching troubles that I determined to watch and wait. While in Baltimore I corresponded with friends in So. Ca. and was often advised to offer my services to that State as a Military Engineer. I finally determined to go South, and arrived in Charleston April 1st 1861. In the confusion and excitement, consequent upon preparations being made for offensive & defensive works in the harbour, I had but little opportunity to see any of the Civil or Military Officials, and, as I had yet some doubts of a coming war, I thought it unwise to precipitately offer my services in a military capacity. While thus watching coming events, I engaged in capacity of civil Engineer to execute topographical maps of the harbour of Charleston with defences already commenced and proposed.

Early on the morning of the 12th I was awakened by the first guns fired at Fort Sumter. I hastened immediately to the City battery, and from a vessel outside, within reach of the guns of the Fort, I witnessed, only as a spectator, the bombardment, which altho' bloodless in its issue, probably inaugurated the war. The 14th after the contest was ended, I left the city with some friends, took a trip around the Fort in a small boat, and examined, with much interest, the effect of shot and shell on

Page 2

the walls of this celebrated Fort, that was destined afterwards, in hands of the Confederates, to witness many a bloody struggle, and the most heroic defence for years. After the garrison had embarked and the fire in the Fort extinguished, comparative quiet reigned in Charleston for some time. In the mean while I was engaged in my topographical work, which, after being concluded, was brought to the notice of Gen. Beauregard, who, after some approving & complimentary remarks, suggested that I should be introduced to him with a view of further employment as Topographical Engineer * (*At the first glance on my drawings Gen. B. remarked "This has been done by a foreigner and experienced Topographer.") This message, I need not say, was to me a source of the greatest satisfaction, and I anxiously awaited the appointed hour for my introduction. But I was doomed to disappointment, the General had been ordered to Richmond, and up to this very moment I have not had the pleasure to see the renowned Chieftain.

Preparations were now being made to equip troops for the field in Virginia, which State had seceded the 17th, and was threatened by an invading Army from the North. My restive nature would not suffer me to be idle or confined to Office work. I left for Richmond with letters of introduction & recommendation to Gen. Beauregard, but again I was doomed to disappointment. Gen. B. had left the city to take

command in the field. While in R. I was offered position in the Engineer Bureau, but my appointment was postponed on ground of an intended reorganization of the Bureau. Anxious for the field

Page 3

I again contemplated to make use of my letters to Gen. B., when one day I accidentally in the hotel met with an old and valued friend, who advised me to call on and join Gen. J. B. Floyd, then engaged in the organization of his Brigade in South Western Virginia. I had already been introduced to Gen. F. in Washington, and had a great desire to meet him again. Accordingly, after a month's stay in Richmond, I left for the mountain regions of the State. Gen F. received me very kindly, and induced me to accept a position as Engineer Officer on his Staff. He offered immediately to write the President and ask for me a Commission as Captain in the Engineer Corps of the regular service. I am not aware of the cause of delay, but months afterwards I received the commission of 1st Lieutenant of Infantry with privilege to serve as Engineer with Gen. Floyd. I was at the same time informed that the application for my commission as Capt. of Engs. was refused on ground that I had not graduated at West Point Academy. During the organization of the Brigade in Camp Jackson near Wytheville I had no Engineer duties to perform, but volunteered to assist in the instruction of tactics. Every one acquainted with the arduous task of drilling raw troops can readily imagine the serious difficulties under which we labored in the first attempts to impart military discipline to those sturdy mountaineers, who, fresh from their homes, had seen little of the world but impressed with the idea that, as free citizens of a free country, they were, in every respect, equal to their Officers, and at liberty to obey or disregard orders at their own discretion. Many amusing incidents occurred

Page 4

relative to the social equality existing between the volunteers and the Comp. Officers of their own choice, elected generally not in consideration of their capacity, but principally because they were 'good & clever fellows' ready at all times to care for, grant favors, and sometimes perform menial duties for their men. In drill the men were apt and quick to learn. Company after company was received in camp and immediately turned over to some of the more experienced Officers for instructions. One day a company was ordered to report to me. Officers & men presented a very soldiery appearance and seemed delighted with the first lessons in the school of the soldier, but every little thing, to which their eyes or ears were not accustomed, diverted their attention and showed that they had seen little outside their native mountain homes. The Railroad track attracted their special attention and created considerable astonishment. During the drill a train was approaching, the sound of the whistle had an electric effect on their ears; instantly they stopped in a motion and looked at each other with unfeigned surprise. A voice in the ranks was heard: "Boys! that must be the railroad coming"! quick as lightning every musket was dropped on the ground and the men going like a flock of sheep towards the track to see 'the R.R. coming'. Looking in despair after the scattered company I little dreamed that those same men would in comparatively short time prove themselves in discipline, courage and endurance equal to the best soldiers perhaps in the world.

The news of the battle at Manassa had reached

Page 5

camp and created the wildest excitement. Gen. Floyd had already left with the 45th Regiment and was encamped on Gauley river, where the 22nd & 36th Regts. were added to his command. The 50th followed soon, and the 51st under Col. G. C. Wharton to which I was temporarily attached, was in progress of organization.

Early in August we broke camp and started to join the General. I have yet the most vivid recollection of the day and hour when the train left Wytheville. Fathers, mothers, wives & friends had gathered round the depot to cry over their loved ones, and bid them a last adieu. The scene was distressing indeed. I felt more than ever a stranger in a strange land. There was no one to cry over me, no one to wish me good speed and a safe return.

The first day we reached Bonsacks and the next we encamped near that village, waiting for our waggon train. While there measles broke out in camp, and in a few days the command was reduced to a small number. We already here experienced that the hardy mountaineers, accustomed to regular meals, hours and habits as far as health was concerned, was less calculated for field service than the young men from towns & villages, who were more used to an irregular life.

Orders from the General and news of an engagement at Cross Lane hurried us on. We had to leave two entire companies on account of sickness, and with the balance commenced our march towards Gauley river. The troops were not yet accustomed to hardships, every little water-course had to be bridged for their convenience and safe crossing. Many pleasant recollections are associated with our first march by Fincastle,

Page 6

Covington, Lewisburg & Big Sewel mountain. In every town and village we were most kindly received. The crossing of the Alleghany impressed me much with many reminiscences of my own native mountains. There I first experienced the deep attachment I have ever since felt for the good old Dominion. We crossed Gauley river at Carnifax ferry and reported to Headquarters Sept. 1st? (about).

During the summer Gen. Wise had been operating in Kanawha Valley and was now expected to join with Gen. F's forces. To facilitate communications a bridge was suggested to be built over the river near the ferry. The 7th I received the consent of the General to commence the work, and for that purpose 50 men and two axes were sent me, the timber to be cut on the adjacent woodlands and floated down the river. Such scanty resources would have baffled the skill of the best of Engineers in attempting to bridge

a rapid stream like Gauley, but fortune favored us. In the evening we found, hidden under a flatboat on the shore, several complete sets of carpenters' tools and the next day the work commenced in earnest. The 10th in the morning reports were received from scouts that the enemy were advancing in force. Immediate steps were taken to fortify the camp as well as could be done with inexperienced troops. About 3 o'clock P.M. the camp was attacked by the Federal forces under Gen. Rosecrans. The strength of the attacking party was estimated at 5000 with about 6000 in reserve. The forces of Gen. Floyd numbered according to morning reports that day 1735 effective men. The working party in my charge was flooring the bridge when the engagement commenced. The men having never been under fire before were taken

Page 7

quite by surprise when a shell passed over their heads and lodged in the opposite bank, but all seemed anxious to return to their comrades and engage in the fight. Shot and shell fell at intervals in the river, but the work went on until finished about 5 o'clock when we all returned to camp to take part in the engagement. When I reported to the General that the bridge was completed he seemed much pleased and remarked that its usefulness would perhaps soon be tested. From that I inferred that Gen. Wise's Brigade was expected; but we were doomed to disappointment. During our conversation I noticed that the General carried his right arm under the coat, but not until later did I learn that early in the evening he had been wounded. After dark firing ceased and the enemy retired from our front. News had now been received that an additional force of 4000 Federals were marching by Summersville to attack us in rear. After consultation with some of the Senior Officers the Genl. determined to recross the river under cover of the dark, and prevent any rear attack. Accordingly about 10 o'clock the troops were withdrawn by degrees from the temporary breastworks. It was indeed an imposing spectacle to see the troops like so many spectres silently moving down the dark mountain-road, and cross the river on the bridge, which was lighted with some torches. Wagons and Artillery were crossed on the ferry boats. When the Genl. passed I asked for a detail of men to assist in destroying the bridge and boats so as to prevent any pursuit. An Officer with 20 men were for that purpose ordered to remain with me. About dawn of day the last regiment had crossed the bridge, and but a few men, who had lost their way in the dark, were yet on the enemy's side of the river.

Page 8

I then looked for my working party, but no one could be found. Regardless of the importance of their Office, upon which the safety of our forces were dependant, they left me to face the enemy, which every moment was expected. I was now placed in a dilemma that can easily be understood. There was nothing left for me to do but to devise some plan, by which the bridge could be immediately destroyed by myself, to follow the retreating troops, or remain to be captured. Inspired by the imminent danger of our troops, and fear of possibly being suspected of having neglected my duties, I soon determined to attempt even what seemed to be an impossibility. An axe was close by me on the ground, I seized it and rushed on the bridge knocked off some planks in the floor and commenced to cut one of the sills close by the landing. But my strength soon failed, and with so limited practise in the use of an axe I made but poor progress. Still I worked on. The sun was now rising, the enemy had taken possession of our

evacuated camp, and some skirmishers made their appearance on the cliffs, from which they had full view of the bridge. A few shots were fired at me, but the distance was such as to make me discard any idea of danger from them. Still I was observed, and expected every moment to see their cavalry come dashing down the road. About that time my heart was sinking within me in despair, I involuntarily looked around me for help-and found it! Two men with axes were approaching, and offered me assistance which readily was accepted. They afterwards informed me that they belonged to the party which was detailed to assist me, but, as frequently was the case the first year of the war among the

Page 9

undisciplined troops, they disregarded the order and left with their regiment. The two men, as they said, reflecting upon the dishonorable act of leaving me in a moment of danger, returned to do their duty. They proved to be excellent axe-men, and in a few moments accomplished what would have taken me hours. The landings were cut, and thus the bridge, constructed without longitudinal bracing, lost its support, fell with a crash, and was almost instantly swept by the rapid stream out of sight. Next the boats were scuttled, and Gen. Floyd's command safe.

The engagement at Carnifax ferry presents the most extraordinary results. Of our men not one was killed and only fourteen wounded. The Federal Commander estimates his casualties at about 100, prisoners reported over 500, and subsequent reports reach 2500. (?) This may be exaggerated, but it is certain that after the fight several steamers went down the river loaded with wounded, and some of the ditches were filled with their dead. (?)

Gen. Floyd now formed a junction with Gen. Wise, and the combined forces returned to Sewel mountain, where they went into camp by order of Gen. Lee, who was on his way to take command.

My time was now occupied in superintending various small fortifications on the Meadow river and near camp, building new roads, and repairing old ones. The Army, now under Gen. Lee, had been increased by the accession of some North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, and South Carolina troops, to about 12000 men. But the sickness and mortality especially among the new troops reduced the number considerably. The Federal Army had followed cautiously, and on the 23d Sept. appeared on the summit of Big Sewel. The contending parties were now almost within gun shot

Page 10

of each others, but both in so strong positions that no attack was attempted. After a few days the Federals suddenly disappeared from our front, and disclosed the fact that we had suffered an enemy, inferior in number, to escape unmolested.

Shortly after Gen. Floyd's command was detached from Lee's Army, and sent across New river by a circuitous route to attack the enemy's rear, while Gen. Lee advanced from Sewell. After passing Raleigh C. H. information was received that the enemy had crossed the river at Cotton Hill, and was advancing on Fayette C. H. Our course was then changed in that direction, and we reached Cotton Hill without hindrance or interference on the part of the enemy, who was found encamped on the other side the river near the mouth of Gauley. The object of this long march failed. Gen. F. did not reach the enemy's rear, and no advance was made from Sewell. Yet his little command accomplished that much, that the Federal Army was prevented from further invasion of the country during that season. While in camp there Gen. F. received the intelligence that some time previous the Chief Engineer of the Federal forces had reconnoitred the mountain opposite their camp, and in a report to his commander, pronounced the mountain inaccessible to Artillery, and almost to Infantry. The Genl. immediately ordered me to have a battery of rifled guns mounted on the summit of a spur of the mountain opposite the Federal camp. He would listen to no objections on ground of its supposed impracticability, the order was peremptory and admitted of no delay. In two days the guns were in position. It would be difficult to describe the consternation that

Page 11

took place in the Federal camp when the first gun opened on them almost above their heads, but the anticipated effect of such a surprise was ruined by the inexperience of our gunners.

It was now late in the month of October, the weather was extremely cold, and the troops suffered severely from exposure in the bleak mountain region. Almost every day I reconnoitred on the river; and was frequently fired at by the pickets on the opposite side. One morning I discovered that nearly all boats had disappeared from that part of the river within view of our position.

I expected an attempt of the enemy to cross the river below us, and make an attack in rear. When reporting this fact to the Genl. I found that he was already aware of the enemy's intentions, and had taken steps to ascertain from what point the danger was approaching. It soon came to his knowledge that a part of the Federal forces, under Gen. Benham, was on the south side of the river. Immediate preparations were made to fall back, which was done rather precipitately. The night after this retrograde movement commenced we passed Gen. B's forces almost within the range of a musket, on a road where a few trees cut down could have stopped our Artillery and-waggons, and a regiment of Infantry could with little danger have disputed our passage, but thanks to their timidity we escaped unmolested. For this oversight it was reported that Gen. B. was relieved of command.

The roads were now in such a condition that we could make but small day's marches, and pursuit of the enemy was impracticable. After some days rest at Piney creek we continued our southward march through Fayette,

Page 12

Raleigh & Mercer counties, crossed the river and encamped at the Grey Sulphur Springs in Monroe. Orders were there issued for preparation of winter-quarters, thousands of trees felled and the cantonment soon under fair way of construction, but its tranquility we were doomed never to enjoy. Again on the march through Monroe, Giles & Pulaski. Early in December we arrived to a place near Dublin Depot Va. & Tenn. R. R. where we were to encamp until further orders. Now we had a spell of rest that was more than welcome to the wearied and broken down troops. The weather was delightful, and, with signs of returned gayety in camp, all seemed to have forgotten the hardships of the expedition to Cotton mountain, and the muddy roads leading to and from it.

About Christmas rumors were prevalent in camp that we were to be ordered out of the State on service in the West. Unpleasant as such expectations were to the Virginians, they as usual were ready to go where duty and their country called them. The orders were received and New Years eve we embarked for Kentucky. No important incidents occurred on the R. R. trip through Virginia, Tennessee & Kentucky. In Nashville the enthusiasm of the people and the liberal spirit towards the soldiers was well calculated to cheer the men & inspire them with confidence in the cause. We encamped near Bowling Green, Ky. where Gen. F. reported to Gen. Sidney Johnston, commander of the Confederate forces in that Dept. After a few days I was ordered to complete some fortifications, which had been under construction for some time. The works already executed was not as formidable as I had expected to find them, and had not been

Page 13

located advantageously. Some important and very extensive works had been proposed but the Engineers always found it difficult to get a sufficient number of men detailed from the different commands. Rations were reported to be issued to 90,000 men, but to us who frequently communicated with the different Headquarters, it was clear that the Comdg. General was practising a laudable deception on his powerful antagonist. Some weeks after our arrival Gen. Floyd with his Brigade was ordered to Rüpelville, thence to Clarksville, Tenn. and Dover, about 1/4 mile from Fort Donelson. While in Clarksville I was ordered to inspect the fortifications around that place, which without hesitation, I pronounce the best works I had seen executed during the first part of the war. An Officer by birth & education an Englishman had been in charge of these works, which reflected much credit on his skill and ability as a military Engineer. I afterwards proceeded to Donelson to assist in the Superintendence of this very incomplete Fort. No magazine had yet been built, only a limited number of Siege-guns mounted, and all the parapets needed to be strengthened. The location of the Fort, I believe, could not have been selected by a very practical Engineer, however the work had so far progressed that change of location was impracticable. The Engineer, in charge when I reported, was pressing the work with the

utmost vigor and exhibited a not common skill and experience as an Engineer and Artillery-Officer. In the coming battle he fell at his post, calm and firm to the last in the execution of his duty.

I had not been on duty in the Fort more than a day, when an order was received from

Page 14

Gen. F. for my immediate return to Clarksville. He desired to consult me as to the feasibility of blockading the Cumberland river below the town, in order to check the Federal gun-boats, should they succeed in passing the Fort. After examination of the river I reported favorably to the practicability of his plan, but for some reasons he postponed the commencement of the work. In the mean time informations were received from Fort D. that the enemy was advancing and some skirmishing had already taken place.

While in Clarksville I had the pleasure of an introduction to Gen. Buckner, whose fine military appearance and gentlemanly bearing impressed me with an admiration that never grew less for the noble Kentuckian. He was not one of the successful Generals in the Confederate Army, but he cannot be denied a place in the front rank of military Commanders.

Gen. Floyd, with his staff, left Clarksville for Dover 1/4 mile from the fort, and was received with loud cheers from his command, to which were now added those of Genls. Pillow, Buckner, and Bushrod Johnston. From Febr. 8th to the 12th our Cavalry skirmished with the enemy. The 12th our pickets were driven in, and the enemy reported advancing in force. By special permission from Gen. F. I remained with his Brigade then commanded by Col. Wharton of the 51st Va., and I served as Engineer, Aid de camp, or in whatever capacity my services were required. The Brigade was ordered to the left of Gen. Buckner's Division and near the centre of our line of defence. During that day and the following a brisk fire was kept up from the enemy's batteries to which ours responded.

Page 15

In the night some breastworks had been constructed, which offered some little protection to the men. The line of entrenchment running southwest from the fort, and partly covering Dover. The 14th the Federal gunboats commenced the bombardment of the fort, many of their shells passed over the fort. and our line of entrenchment, and fell among their own troops on the extreme right. Several of the gunboats were disabled and the fleet fell back in a crippled condition. During the bombardment while the Genls. were in consultation, a citizen in a very excited state, rushed by the sentinel and into the room exclaiming: "Where is Gen. Floyd? The gunboats have passed the fort and are coming up the river!" Calmly Gen. F. rose from his seat, looked the informer full in the face and said: "Pray, Sir! what way are they coming, by land or water?" The frightened man left without further explanations.

The troops had now been in the trenches for three days and nights, and commenced to show signs of exhaustion. From cold they especially suffered as no fires were allowed near the line, and there were no reserves to relieve those in the trenches. During the night snow fell for several hours and increased the discomfort of the men. All night scouts were active, Staff Officers busy in communicating orders to subordinate commanders, and preparations made for a sortie early in the morning. Day had not dawned before some of the commands were withdrawn from the trenches and formed in line to attack the enemy's right flank. It was first supposed to be only a sortie, but soon it was known that the Genl. intended to turn the enemy's flank

Page 16

and fall back to a position near the Cumberland Iron works, which he had before selected as a far better position than the one he occupied. Here it may be mentioned that Gen. F. had protested against the occupation of Fort D. as long as his means of defence and number of troops were so limited, but he held his position by peremptory orders from Gen. Johnston.

Gen. Pillow commanded the advance. About 6 o'clock the column was in motion, and a short distance from our line of defence the skirmishers commenced firing. In half an hour the engagement became general. I was separated from my Brigade and meeting Major Gilmore, Chief Engineer, whose horse had been killed, I carried for him orders to the extreme left, which had been thrown in great confusion. Returning to the centre I found some regiments had broken, the woods were full of stragglers, some too much exhausted to move on, others after a short rest moved cheerfully on to the front, and a few were so utterly demoralized, that even the threat of being shot as cowards could not move them from their hiding places. I saw none of my Brigade except such as were wounded, and slowly wending their way to the hospitals in rear. Among them I recognized Capt. Newberry of the 51st, one of the bravest of the brave, he was severely wounded, and anxiously inquiring for a Surgeon to dress his wounds quickly as he had no time to spare, but intended to return to the front immediately. I could hardly persuade him to go to the hospital, however, he finally consented on condition that I should take his rifle, a captured one, and 'do some work for him.' Accepting the rifle, I promised to do my best, and

Page 17

started in the direction of the now receding fire, indicating that the enemy had already been driven a considerable distance. Passing through the woods I found groups of men from various regiments conversing over the fortunes of the day, but refusing their own Officers to advance further, because, they said, the Yankees would not stand for a fair fight. I spoke to some urging them to go once more to the front and finish the day's work. One stalwart looking fellow eyed me sharply, and finding in my appearance perhaps nothing prepossessing, my plain Soldier's overcoat and gun on my shoulder indicating no rank, he bluntly remarked: "Why the devil don't you go yourself?" I answered that I was on my way but desired some company, as I could do little or nothing by myself. "Well", said he, "I am ready

--- You go on -- I'll be right behind you", and turning towards the crowd, he added: "You boys, fall in! let us see what this 'ere fellow is goin' to do!" One after another was added to this 'Indian file' until its number reached that of a respectable company, all shouting and laughing, as they were going to a merry dance. I soon discovered on a ridge a small party of the enemy that seemed to be unsupported. Their line like ours had been broken and the fight was principally carried on by detached parties on both sides. To stop and form line with my mixed and undisciplined little band was out of the question. At the word forward! They charged, shouting and yelling like so many demons, and carried the ridge with but slight loss. My good companion or second seemed delighted and with a bright smile on his face he came up to me saying: "Shake hands, old fellow, you know how to do them things, just tell us what to do next." Forward again to

Page 18

the next ridge, where a party of the Federals had been rallied. Another shout, another charge, and in but few minutes the enemy was dislodged, not tho' without making several of our little party 'bite the dust'. When reaching the top of the hill, we saw at a distance the retreating Federals, which I believe, could not have numbered much less than a regiment. Our party were not one hundred men. On again through one of the enemy's deserted camps, tents were torn down, prisoners captured, and some trophies from the field secured, among which a calico wrapper and some hoop-skirts, found in a tent, created much merriment, and were carried on points of bayonets to camp. In another section of the field were advancing several Confederate parties headed by Col. Wharton, Major Smith of the 36th, Capt. Snead of the 50th and some other gallant men, of which the old Dominion justly can be proud. But the firing ceased about 3 o'clock P. M. and no enemy was to be seen on the field.

A glorious victory had been won, the enemy had been driven about two miles leaving a number of their dead and wounded on the field. The road was open for us to fall back to any point south of Dover, had such a move been considered necessary for the safety of our Army. But our speculations as to the next following act in the drama was suddenly checked by a Staff-officer of Gen. Pillow's, who delivered the order to fall back on the breastworks immediately. This, I have good reasons to believe, were contrary to the plans and orders of Gen. Floyd. By this retrograde move we lost all advantages gained in the bloody struggle, but the order had to be obeyed, and reluctantly we retraced our steps over the field, filled with

Page 19

dead and dying, to the entrenchments near Dover.

This battle I have always considered one of the most stubbornly contested, and perhaps the bloodiest of the war, proportionately to the number engaged. At no time did the Confederates there number more than 13,000, of which less than 9,000 were engaged on the field of the 15th. We were not aware of the strength of the enemy, but it is no exaggeration to estimate their forces four times larger than ours. In

this engagement I had occasion to notice the behavior of the troops from different States, and perhaps I may be deemed partial in saying that the Virginians bore the brunt of the battle, and probably excelled the other troops in firmness and endurance. I had also an opportunity to witness a charge by Col. Forrest, the afterwards so celebrated chieftain, which already then stamped him as a Superior Cavalry Officer.

Returning from the field I took a round through the different hospitals to see my wounded friends, and offer them the comfort it was in my power to give. But I was so exhausted, having not rested for nearly forty hours, that I could hardly drag my limbs along. Without hesitation and fear of being disturbed I retired to the quarters I had occupied with the Brigade Com, & Staff, previous to the battles. The house was situated near and outside the extreme left of our line. A few wounded soldiers with their attendants had taken possession of the lower part of the house, but none of our servants could be found on the premises. I carried some wood up stairs, made a good fire, and was soon comfortably asleep on a pallet before the fire. About midnight I was aroused by a painful sensation in my feet, the cause of which was explained by

Page 20

the fact that the bed was on fire, and the soles of my socks partly consumed. A bucket of water emptied on the bed soon extinguished the fire, but the smoke of the burning feathers had completely filled the room, and almost suffocated me. I hastened to a window for air, drew the heavy curtains, and raised the sash. Almost instantly I heard the whizzing sound of a bullet, which struck the window frame, and immediately after the distant report of a rifle. The curtains were dropped in an instant. Fearing to draw fire from our own line by exposing light in the opposite window, I opened the door, and was soon refreshed by the cool air from the passage. By that time I heard my name called, in a hurried manner, from the lower floor, and recognized the voice of my friend Capt. McCue (?) of the Commissary Dept., who came to warn me of approaching danger, and order to report to the Brigade Com. I stood awhile listening to the clatter of his horse's feet on the frozen ground, expecting every moment to hear him fired at from the same direction I had been, but everything was quite. In a few minutes I was dressed, and looking round the room before I left, I saw Capt. Newberry's rifle, which I loaded and carried with me. Coming down stairs I called aloud but received no answer, the house was dark and deserted. I was now on the road, but fearing to approach our line, and perhaps be fired at by our own men, I started for Dover. In every bush, stump or fence-corner I imagined I saw a Yankee with his gun levelled at me, and several times did I cock my rifle to return the expected compliment, but without molestation did I reach the town safely.

Page 21

There I found part of the Brigade drawn up in line, but I could not ascertain from anybody what was the meaning of so much excitement. A rumor was going round that the enemy had rallied and returned with re-enforcements, that we were surrounded, and expected to force our way through the enemy's line, or cross the river an rafts and escape to Clarksville. The idea of a surrender never entered my mind until

near morning when the General ordered the troops nearest the landing to be immediately embarked on two steamers, that just had arrived from Nashville. The nearest troops were the Virginians of Floyd's Brigade, of which a large number embarked on the first steamer with the General himself. The second boat was not more than half loaded, when a regiment without Officers to control the men, came rushing down, and nearly swamped the boat. The Captain, to save his boat, set out from land, but returned and endeavored to take some more troops aboard. Another rush made on the boat nearly capsized it. Just then an order was received from Gen. Buckner to leave immediately or the boat and all aboard must be included in the surrender. The boat then steamed up the river, and Gen. B. surrendered to the enemy his 4 or 5000 men with all the public and captured property in and around the fort.

Many have been the rumors and speculations as to the management of affairs at Fort Donelson and in all probability years will elapse before the truth of this campaign will be represented in history-if it is ever to be so. Many honest men doubted the necessity of a surrender. Certainly the enemy was not, after such a defeat in condition

Page 22

to press us very hard, and I have always believed that the enemy never intended another attack. Gen. Floyd was much censured for this surrender, very unjustly, I think. He occupied and defended his position by order of the Dept. Comr.; he made as good a fight against such powerful odds, as ever was made on this continent; he inflicted a punishment on the enemy, proportionately to his strength, that has not been surpassed during the war. In turning over the command to a junior Officer he may seem to have committed an unmilitary act, but he never intended to surrender, and if not supported in his view, he was powerless, could accomplish nothing by remaining, and, it seems, had a perfect right to retire from the scene, and save to the Confederacy as many soldiers as possible. Previous to battle at Fort Donelson Gen. Johnston had evacuated Bowling Green, and was falling back through Tennessee. Had not Gen. Floyd so stubbornly disputed the enemy's passage or the Cumberland river, Gen. Johnston's army would have been cut off. I do not believe that Gen. Floyd or his command ever received credit for that.

Monday morning the 17th we arrived in Nashville to witness the wildest excitement imaginary. Gen. Johnston's army had passed through the city without any attempt being made to save the public property. Engineers carried orders in their pockets, for the destruction of the bridges before Gen. Floyd's command could possibly have arrived. A perfect mania had beset the people to destroy everything. Boats loaded with Commissary stores were emptied in the river; Warehouses were opened and Quartermaster's stores thrown out in the street. Gen. Floyd stopped such proceedings, enforced some order, remained several days in

Page 23

the city, and had a great deal of public stores saved to the Government, but I doubt that he or his command ever received any credit for their efforts. With the remnants of his Brigade Gen. Floyd left Nashville the 20th for Murfreesboro, no enemy having yet made his appearance on the other side the river.

Gen. A. S. Johnston after abandoning Nashville retreated South. Gen Floyd's command, now reduced to four skeleton Regiments and one Battalion of Va. Infantry, was ordered by Railroad to Murfreesboro with so much of the public property as could be saved from the general destruction in Nashville. From that place the troops shortly after were marched across the Cumberland Mountains to Chattanooga. The general impression among the troops were that Gen. Floyd's command were authorized to operate as an independent Corp in East Tennessee until they were recalled to Virginia, which seemed to have been an understanding with the War Office when the troops, to re-enforce Gen. Johnston, were first ordered out of the State, and very properly so! The Department of South Western Virginia was open for an invasion, and no Commander could better than Gen. Floyd, with his knowledge of the country, and that section of the State.

While at Chattanooga the Gen. ordered me early one morning to accompany him up the Lookout Mountain. The day was clear and suitable for observations. I have never seen Gen. F. in better spirit than that day when we ascended the Mountain. He spoke feelingly about our late reverses and losses in men, but the bright prospects of the young Confederacy seemed to have inspired him with cheerfulness, and several times during our ride he commenced, in

Page 24

a powerful voice, to sing his favorite song: "The Bold Soldier Boy."

Arrived at the place of our destination, the top of the Mountain, he requested me to furnish him a topographical sketch or birds-eye--view of the country surrounding the Mountain, evidently for the purpose of preparing for defensive operations. While I was thus engaged he conversed freely on the subjects of our prospects, of the importance of Chattanooga as a strategic point, and the advantage of the situation for defensive purposes. He also predicted that the country then within the range of our vision would be of historical renown in the war for Southern independence. In October 1863 his prediction was verified.

The expiration of the twelve month's volunteer service was drawing to a close. The question of re-enlisting for three years or the war was first mooted to the command while stationed at Chattanooga. By act of the Provisional Congress the men re-enlisting for such term of service were allowed Sixty days

furlough. This measure, at such time and under such circumstances when the Confederates had suffered serious defeats, was considered ill-timed, not to use a harder expression. The consequences might have been detrimental to the cause. While the country was full of furloughed soldiers the frontiers were exposed to invasion by an energetic and powerful enemy.

The General thought no better opportunity could be offered to recruit his command, which had been terribly reduced during the hard winter-campaign. Accordingly the offer of re-enlistment was made and generally accepted by the men, thirty days furloughs were issued to them and preparations made to return to Virginia.

Page 25

In the mean time informations were received that Cumberland Gap was threatened by a Federal force and Floyd's command moved immediately by Railroad to Knoxville. Furloughs had already been issued to the troops but upon appeal of Gen. F. they all declared their willingness to remain with him as long as any invasion by way of Cumberland Gap was threatened, but for which it was soon found to be no immediate occasion. About the same time orders were received from the War Department relieving Gen. F. from command. It will not be necessary to dwell upon the probable causes for such an action as no one has been made public and it has been left to infer that there existed none but political opposition in Richmond. Indignities offered Gen. F. personally and his command, and false representations made to the Department were not calculated to strengthen the patriotism of soldiers, who had already suffered much and sacrificed much for the cause. Gen. E. Kirby Smith, the successor of Floyd, ordered all public property to be turned over to his agents. The complete transportation of the Brigade brought from Virginia was seized, Gen. F's private baggage was unloaded on the road and the team carried off, improved fire-arms were taken away from the men, and other acts of petty despotism enacted. It was also intimated that the furloughs were to be revoked and Floyd's men detained in Tennessee if necessary by force of arms, but if such measures were contemplated it fortunately was not attempted to be carried into effect. The greatest stickler for military discipline, under such circumstances, would have hesitated before he had submitted to such insults. Without further hindrance the command returned to Virginia to

Page 26

recruit the depleted ranks and prepare for another campaign. When Gen. F. was relieved from command my office on his staff naturally ceased, but an order previously given me to recruit for and assist in the reorganization of troops in South Western Virginia, the order afterwards approved by the Dept., relieved me from the necessity of reporting to Richmond. While the troops were on furlough I engaged with the Adjutants in completing Rolls and Returns for the Dept. In the latter part of April the troops commenced to assemble in Camp Jackson near the town of Wytheville.

April 16th 1862 the Conscription law was passed, which placed all citizens between the ages of 18 and 35, and not exempt from military service, under the control of Confederate Authorities. It was high time that some strict measures should be enforced to meet the preparations on a far grander scale on the part of the enemy. Like other laws enacted the Act of Conscription had its advocates as well as opponents. It cannot reflect any discredit on the Confederates that such a measure was necessarily enforced. No nation has responded with more alacrity and patriotism to the call for volunteers to defend the rights of an oppressed people, but the number of volunteers were not equal to the emergency in this case. An important feature of this Act, concerning the reorganization of the Army, was the re-election of Line Officers and the election of Field Officers by the Company Officers. It must be remembered that the Confederate volunteers had not yet reached any high state of military discipline. The men had not yet learned to appreciate the strict disciplinarians, and as a natural consequence exercised the to them pleasing power of selecting more popular but less capable demagogues for their Officers.

Page 27

Many of the best Officers of the Line were thus unceremoniously dropped, and sortie, chagrined over such in their opinion unjust treatment, never again entered the service in the field. On the other hand it was contended, that by re-election an opportunity was given to rid the service of a number of worthless Officers, whose non-capacity had been found out during the first twelve months of the war. What advantages or disadvantages predominated in this case may perhaps not be easy to determine, but there can be no doubt on the mind of any military man that the whole elective system was highly detrimental to the service.

In connection with this subject, and without reflecting on the appointments made by those in power, it could not fail to strike an observer that the service was rather burdened by the number of political Generals in the field. Every prominent Politician seemed almost to have been entitled to a Brigadier-ship while men of military education, capacity and experience often served in the most subordinate positions. Prominent among those may be mentioned the graduates of Virginia Military Institute, who, as a body imparted to the Confederate armies much of the military discipline enforced at that admirable institution where they were educated. This assertion is not intended to pluck any laurels from the few but very prominent graduates of West Point Academy, who adorned the Conf. service.

After the expiration of the thirty days furloughs the men, a part of what formerly was Floyd's Brigade, promptly reported at the Camp near Wytheville. Some time was naturally consumed in reorganizing Companies, electing Officers, arming and equipping the men, drilling e.e. Early in the month of Play some excitement was created by the advance

Page 28

of some reconnoitring parties sent from the Federal forces under Gen. Cox, stationed at Princeton in Mercer County. The Confederate Col. Jenifer with a small number of mounted men, guarding the road from Mercer, fell back to Wytheville and advised the removal of specie from the Bank and the burning of Wytheville if necessary to check the enemy. Col. G. C. Wharton, Commanding at Camp Jackson, dissented from the views of Col. Jenifer and ordered me with some Companies from the camp to reconnoitre the road to Princeton. By general consent and request of the Senior Company Officers I acted as Field Officer until the election of such could take place. We advanced as far as Crab Orchard in Bland County without encountering any Federals. Some days after Col. Wharton arrived with the troops from Wytheville and we moved on to the East River or Walker's Mountain, picketed the gap and established a line of communication with Gen. Humphrey Marshall in Tazewell County, on our left, and Gen. Heth in Giles County, on our right. Gen. Marshall proposed with the co-operation of Gen. Heth and Col. Wharton to advance on Princeton by three different roads and surround the place with a view of capturing the whole Federal force. Gen. M. with about 3000 men was to advance on the left, Gen. Heth with probably 1500 men on the right, and Col. Wharton with parts of the 50th & 51st Regts., the 23d Battalion and a section of the Otey Battery, in all not exceeding 500 men, in the centre. The plan was well conceived and could have been successfully carried out, but for the want of concert in action very little was accomplished. It had been reported that the road we were to take had been obstructed by the Federals and to ascertain facts I reconnoitred the road with a few mounted men, encountered

Page 29

only three or four marauders whom we chased to within a few miles of Princeton and found the road open. Early next morning Col. W. advanced leaving about a company of Infantry and one piece of Artillery on the top of the mountain. The column advanced rapidly for several hours without any hindrance. At a farmhouse near the road a party of Federals were entertained by a so called Union man. The breakfast table was just set when our advance guard arrived in sight of the house and broke up the party. A guard stationed at a bridge over a small creek was equally surprised and retreated in confusion after having torn off the flooring of the bridge. When we arrived at this point some women from the neighboring cottages were busily engaged in replacing the planks to further our advance. Information now was received that a column of Federals, its strength not known, had early in the day passed us on the road where Gen. Heth was expected to advance, and by a path-way turned into the road we were marching and were following in our rear. In this dilemma Col. W. promptly decided to hasten on to Princeton expecting support from Gen. Marshall, whose guns were already heard in front of the town. Arrived in sight of Princeton we found the situation somewhat critical. There was no time to communicate with Gen. Marshall, Gen. Heth had not arrived, and the enemy was closing on our rear. However an advantageous position was taken and the troops divided in detachments under Major Hounshel, Lieuts. Derrick, Otey and myself, part facing the town and the other part faced to the rear to receive the approaching enemy. While Col. W. sought an interview with Gen. M. the enemy closed on us, a brisk fire ensued but in fifteen minutes the affair was decided. The Federals, although superior in number,

Page 30

were totally defeated. This little engagement, which took place in the open field, presented a most remarkable result. Only one man on our side wounded and another accidentally killed by his comrade in the rear-rank, while the enemy suffered severely, principally on account of their massing in confusion on the road within easy range of our guns. Preparations were now being made to advance on the town, but a flag of truce informally and unauthorized received by a Subordinate Officer stopped further action. The pretended object of the truce was to get permission to bury their dead and remove their wounded, which at this stage of the proceedings was unfortunately granted and the truce strictly observed on our part, while on the part of the enemy undue advantage was taken. The removal of the dead and wounded, which could have been accomplished in an hour's time, was so conducted that it occupied nearly the balance of the day, and in the mean time the discomfitted enemy in our front and rear were rallied, removed and with other scattered detachments concentrated in and around Princeton. Such proceedings were carried on while the truce was pending and, strange to say, no objections on our part were raised. It was also to us inexplicable that, when Col. W's small force in front and rear engaged an enemy superior in number, no assistance was rendered from the larger commands on our right and left, and still more so that we were refused the privilege to advance on the town and secure the fruits of our victory. Yet it was even so! The following night the troops rested on their arms only disturbed by the noise of moving Artillery and wagon trains, too plainly indicating an evacuation. The next day revealed the fact that we had been

Page 31

exceedingly obliging to our enemies, that we had not in the least hurried them in removing their stores, and further, as they yet may have required some time in crossing Artillery and trains over Blue Stone River, we remained in status quo until 3 o'clock P.M. At that time we were allowed the privilege to march down to the evacuated town, to take a look at the empty store houses & the full hospitals, and then-march back again. Gen. Heth's command was not seen on the field. He started on the road leading to the rear of Princeton but ascertaining that the enemy were in our rear, hearing the firing, and probably supposing that we were cut off, his command in all probability became somewhat demoralized and retreated hurriedly to this stronghold at the Narrows of New River. The troops under Col. Wharton returned to their old camp at East River Mountain and as no active operations in the field were anticipated for some time, the reorganization of Regiments were completed and Field Officers elected. I received several flattering offers of Field & Staff appointments in different commands, but I had already acquiesced in the request of the Officers of the 51st Va. Infy. to remain with them until the election should take place, and then I was gratified with an unanimous vote for the Lieut. Colonelyc of the Regiment. Col. G. C. Wharton reelected Colonel of the Regiment, and the Senior Officer in Cwlp assumed command of the new Brigade, leaving me in command of the Regiment, which position I continued to occupy until by promotion and by right of Seniority I acted as Brigade Commander.

The 51st Regt., mostly composed of hardy mountaineers from South Western Virginia, had already seen much of active service in the field, had endured

Page 32

much, sacrificed and suffered much, but had not yet reached that high state of discipline, which, consequent upon a hurried organization and too much of active service, was generally wanting at that period in the Confederate Armies. Under a more competent commander than myself this Regiment might have established for itself a more conspicuous position in the Army, but yet few Regiments in the service were more deserving of the fair reputation they enjoyed, than that which I had the honor to command.

Some days after the re-organization, the command was ordered to the 'Narrows' of New River, where Gen. Heth's Brigade previously had been stationed. The forces there were composed of the 50th, 51st & 63d Rgts., the 23d Battn. Infy. and the Ringold Battery, all under command of Brig. Gen. John Echols, senior Officer in Camp. The Department of South Western Virginia under command of Major General Loring.

Nearly all summer was occupied in drilling and recruiting. The troops for the first time had an opportunity to be properly instructed in Tactics and they improved rapidly. Some few reconnaissances towards Kanawha Valley were the only varieties in our regular routine of camp life. A small affair at Pack's ferry on the Greenbriar river resulted only in driving some 3 or 400 Federals from their advance camp, and caused some detachments at Lewisburg and Blue Sulphur Springs to fall back rapidly.

In the month of August a forward move was contemplated by the Commanding General and part of the forces under Col. Wharton were advanced to the Grey Sulphur Springs in Monroe County.

Page 33

September 1862.

Camp Grey Sulphur Springs, Monroe Co.

Col. Wharton's Brigade composed of the 51st Va. Rgt. & 30th Va. Battn. Sharp Shooters the latter organized Sept. 1st, was making diligent preparations for the expedition to Kanawha Valley. Sept. 6th the army moved in two columns one from our camp, the other from the Narrows New river & Princeton, and formed a junction at Shady Springs. Gen. Loring's Army was composed of three Brigades of Infantry under Brig. Gens. Williams, Echols & Col. Wharton, two batteries of Field Artillery, and some irregular organizations of Cavalry. At Raleigh Courthouse the enemy had erected some strong works, but they were all evacuated. Sept 10th we were early in the morning near Fayette Co. House where the enemy was strongly fortified. When within a few miles of the town the advance was divided in two columns under Gen. Williams & Col. Wharton. The former with all the Artillery advanced directly on the town,

while Col. W. with Infantry alone, marched towards the rear of town, by a circuituous route and over a precipitous mountain, to intercept the enemy on the only road open for him to retreat. The second day of the march I was kicked by a horse and so crippled that I had to travel in an ambulance. The morning of the 10th I was lifted on my horse, and followed my regiment as long as I could do so mounted. Two o'clock P. M. was agreed upon by the Commanders for the attack in front & rear, but our guide had taken us by such a route that when Gen. Williams commenced firing, we were yet some miles from the position assigned us. At the first report of the guns in front of town we were ordered to 'double quick'. In the excitement I forgot all about the pain in my wounded knee, dismounted and with aid of my sword, used as a walking cane, I hobbled along with my men. The weather was

Page 34

intensely hot and the men, being moved so rapidly over such rough ground, soon became exhausted and scattered. I reached the position in rear of town, with only a handful of men, just as a Federal wagon-train was making its way out. It was fired into and forced to return. The enemy, observing his communications with the rear threatened, advanced most of his available Infantry to dislodge us from the ridge we occupied, and, assisted by a battery within easy range, he was not far from success. But for the stubborn defence made principally by Capt. Graham of the 51st and his company nearest to the road, the day may not have been ours. Until dark firing continued on both sides, without any advantage gained. During the night the Feds burned some of their stores, and evacuated the town successfully- I suppose very much to their own surprise. The engagement at Fayette C. H. was heralded as a great triumph to the Southern Army, but the fact that Col. Sieber with his inferior Federal force escaped unmolested during the night with his artillery and most of his trains, proves, I believe, his superior management, or great oversight on our part. In the morning pursuit of the enemy was ordered. They made a stand at Cotton hill and the falls of Kanawha river, but were forced back after some skirmishing. Approaching the river we found that the retreating enemy had fired his magazines, and the explosions of shells sounded very much like a desperate canonading. A fire was also kindled in the ferry-boat, but two Confederates swam the river, extinguished the fire, and brought the boat over to our side. Surgeon Watkins & Sergt. Major Davenport of the 36th Va. have the credit of this brave act. Col. McCausland, comdg. Echols Brigade, crossed the river and followed the enemy on the north side. Gen. Williams and Col. Wharton pursued a part, of the Feds. on the south bank of the Kanawha.

Page 35

Notwithstanding the most rapid march we could not overtake the flying Feds., but a picket in their rear was surprised and captured by Lieut. Tate of the 51st. The 13th Col. McCausland's men drove the Feds. through Charleston, which was fired in some places by them, but our men extinguished the flames. Canonading was kept up with our party on the south bank. Towards night the Feds. burnt the bridge over Elk river and prevented further pursuit.

Next day a temporary bridge was put up and the troops ordered into camp $\frac{1}{2}$ mile below town, there to spend weeks in inactivity. Advantages gained in this campaign were the capture of a considerable

quantity of stores and small arms, and the access of the salt-works for a short time. Charleston could not be claimed as a strategic point, and the occupation of Kanawha Valley for any length of time was an impossibility with so small an army and so far from supplies that could not be furnished there. Soon rumors were afloat that Federal armies were advancing from Point Pleasant & Summersville, and Gen. L. evacuated Charleston the 9th October. Some days after Gen. Loring was relieved from command by order from the War Dept. and the forces now commanded by Brig. Gen. Echols continued their march southward through Kanawha, Fayette, Raleigh and Mercer counties. Our march was arrested by another order from Richmond to return to Kanawha, Gen. Echols to command. So on again! Through the mud to Charleston, where we for two days enjoyed snow, mud, and another scare that the yanks were coming indeed and in considerable force. Accordingly another retreat commenced, and the forces arrived at 'Narrows' New river November 3d footsore, exhausted and discouraged as to their future destination. However they were soon ordered to erect winter-quarters, and enjoyed peace and quiet there during the winter.

Page 36

The command of the Dept. South-western Va. now devolved upon Brig. Gen. Williams, who was succeeded by Major Gen. Sam Jones. Hd. Qtrs. located at Dublin. Gen. Echols succeeded in command of camp at 'Narrows' New river. The winter months were spent in fixing comfortable quarters, in Officers preparing for examination, drilling of the troops, and recruiting for the different commands. Some Regiments in the Dept. during the winter and following spring, had the first and only opportunity to be properly instructed in tactics and military discipline. They improved rapidly, and could in spring favorably be compared with regular troops. In April 1863 Col. Wharton's Brigade's composed of the 51st Rgt., Lt. Col. Fg., Rgt. 30th Battn., Lt. Col. Clarke, & Ringolds Battery, Capt. Stamps, were ordered to Glade Springs, Washn. Co. Va., where, by easy access to the rail-road, its services could be commanded in any section of the Dept. at shortest notice. Drilling and recruiting continued, and the Brigade was in efficient state for a coming campaign.

While in camp at Glade Springs I visited Gen. Floyd several times. As a general thing he was lowspirited and took but little interest in the topics of the day; only when the conversation turned upon war-news and the prospects of the Confederacy could, in his flow of eloquence and his flashy eyes, be recognized the old chieftain. It had long been a subject of speculation, on the part of the Officers and soldiers of his old command, if he ever should be re-instated in his office of Brig. Gen., and one day I approached that subject with a view of ascertaining how far his own expectations corresponded with those of his admirers. Well do I remember his answer: "It is very doubtful", he said, "that I will again have the happiness to lead my brave boys against the enemies of my country, but be it far from me to charge

Page 37

President Davis with any injustice. He is a great man, and I believe him to be good man. I can- not be made to believe that he is an enemy of mine, but, unfortunately, there are persons down at Richmond who constantly poison his ears against me, and they are responsible for wrongs heaped upon me."

But a few days before his death I carried him a message of love and sympathy from his old Brigade. He was sinking rapidly and it was clear to me that the broken hearted patriot could not live long. I attempted to cheer him, and expressed the hope that he soon would be in the field with us. This seemed to have a powerful effect on him, he rose from his seat, and with his head proudly erect the colour returned to his sunken cheeks, the flash to his eye, when he exclaimed: "At the head of my old command all would be well with me, and gladly would I give the balance of my natural life after the independence of the South has been established_ But, he added, I now fear it will never be so" and, sinking down on his couch, he seemed to be crushed under the weight of indescribable grief. After a few words of parting I left, never to see him again.

There can be but one unanimous opinion as to his loyalty and devotion to the southern cause, and it must also be admitted that he was one of the most remarkable men of his age. Friends he had many, but also many bitter enemies. Like most of our public men he did not escape some bitter slander and undeserved accusations from political opponents, but if he erred who would not willingly cast the mantle of charity over some errors of a man who sacrificed the last days of his life on the altar of his country, and who served the cause with an ardor and devotion

Page 38

not excelled in the history of the war. Whatever may be said to tarnish the fame of that soldier, statesman and patriot, in the memory and hearts of many Southern men will long live the name of John B. Floyd.

Our sojourn at Glade Springs, as far as comfort was concerned, was certainly the most pleasant part of the war. The communications by rail-road with different parts of the State were easy, visitors were received daily, and the citizens -for miles around our camp, Ladies especially, contributed greatly to our pleasures and comfort.

The 8th July Col. Wharton was appointed Brig. General, and I was promoted to the Colonelcy of the 51st Va.

The news of the Confederate disaster at Gettysburg had been received, and our Brigade was ordered to the Valley of Virginia, to Join the forces of Gen. Imboden and cover the retreat of Gen. Lee's army. We left Glade Springs the 10th July for Staunton by rail-road, were detained there some days by order of the Dept. Commander, and started on the march the 19th, arrived at Winchester the 23rd, when the rear of

Gen. Lee's army passed on its way to east Va. We remained only two days in Winchester shipping some captured property, arms e.c. to the rear, and fell back to Fisher's hill near Strasburg, where we remained, under command of Brie. Gen. Imboden, until August 3d. That day, by order of Gen. Lee, we started to join the Army of Northern Va., marched by Edenburg, New Markep thro' Milands Gap, by Madison C. H. to Liberty Hills, where we camped until the 25th Aug.

A cavalry raid in West Va. caused our Brigade again to be detached from Gen. Leets army, and we were ordered west to Bath Co. where we arrived 30th. August, but found the bird flown, i.e. the enemy under Gen. Averill had retreated North. After some days near the warm Springs we were ordered again to Dept. S. W. Va.,

Page 39

marched by the hot springs, and Sulphur springs, Union & Giles C. H. to Dublin Depot in Pulaski Co., embarked there on the rail-road for the Saltville in Washn. Co. which place was threatened by a raid from Tennessee. The 23d Septr. we were ordered to Tenn, advanced as far as Jonesboro, enemy retreated, and we returned to Glade Springs, Va. After a few days again ordered back to Lollicoffer, Tenn. under Gen. Williams, who, upon false alarm that the enemy had passed to our rear, retreated hurriedly to Abindon, Va. where we reminded in camp until October 31st. About the 20th October I was ordered by Major Gen. Sam Jones to a Court Martial over which I presided until the 20th November. Then joined my Regiment near Blountville, Tenn. Major Gen. Robert Hansom had now been assigned to command of the District of East Tennessee, and, with a Division, composed of two Infantry Brigades under Brig. Gens. Corse and Wharton, two batteries & some cavalry, was prepared to advance. We left camp the 23d. November and advanced as far as Blains cross roads, Dec. 4th, within a day's march of Knoxville, which was besieged by Gen. Longstreet. We fully expected to press on and join his Corps, but instead were ordered back to Beans Station. Picketed Gap in the mountain while Gen. Longstreet's Corps, after raising the siege of Knoxville, was moving east. Returned to Rogersville, moved again to Beans Station, and back to Rogersville. Remained in camp there to the 29th December; then forded Holston river, and camped near Whitesburg Dec 31st. While in camp there the weather was extremely cold, several artillery horses froze to death, and the sufferings of the men surpassed anything of my previous experience. Through the non-efficiency of our Commissaries no more than two & a half rations of flour only, per man, were issued there for seven days, which was but little worse than the general fare throughout the Tenn. campaigns.

Page 40

Moved the 7th January 1864 to Bulls Gap, which constituted our permanent camp until March 14th. While there several advances and reconnaissance were made in direction of Dandridge & Morristown, and ten days spent in winter-quarters at the latter place. The 15th March a reconnaissance was made to Howards Gap, after which the troops were ordered back to Greenville.

There are few campaigns with which not some pleasant recollections are associated, but our winter campaign in Tenn. presents none whatever. In itself this campaign was a bloodless one, as far as any conflict with the enemy was concerned, but the bloody tracks made by the many barefooted soldiers on the hard frozen roads, their tattered garments, the decimated ranks of the different commands, and the hospitals filled to overflow, told a tale of hardships, sufferings and exposures, which perhaps never has been equaled on this continent. My health did not escape uninjured. I asked leave of absence which was immediately granted and I started for Richmond, Va. but was advised to stop for surgical treatment at the Ladies Relief hospital in Lynchburg. This institution was most favorably known in the South. Under the management of some of the most prominent Ladies of Lynchburg this hospital earned for itself a well deserved reputation throughout the Confederacy. Thousands of Confederates will always keep in grateful memory its kind Lady-managers, its skillful surgeons, its Matron and attendants.

While in hospital Wharnot's Brigade was ordered back to Va. and, after some weeks in camp near Abingdon, was sent to the Valley of Va. and assigned to the Division of Major Gen. Breckinridge.

The 15th May stood the battle of New Market. Gen. Br. defeated and routed the Federal forces

Page 41

under Gen. Siegel. The conduct, of my regiment under Lt. Col. Wolfe, in this engagement, was highly complimented. The casualties were 103 killed & wounded, among which we mourned the loss of Capt. W. H. Tate, a gallant Officer and one of my most intimate friends. The news of the battle at New Market, the first in which my regiment had participated without me, and the report that Breckinridge's Division was ordered to Gen. Lee, made me anxious to rejoin my command, and contrary to the advice of the Surgeon in charge I left the hospital and started for the Army of N. Va.

May 20th I reported to Hdqtrs. near Hanover Junction and was introduced to Gen. B., of whom I have always been an ardent admirer. My beau ideal of a chevalier and a Soldier has been John C. Breckinridge.

Immediately upon arrival I was ordered in line of battle at the Junction, and remained there the whole night. The next day changed position to North Anna bridge and the 22d again at the Junction skirmishing. The 23d we were entrenched near Hanover C. H., the 24th, 25th & 26th again at the Junction in line of battle. The 27th marched to Mechanicsville and remained there in line of battle the 26th. The 29th, 30th & 31st in trenches at Totohotamoy creek. The evening of the second day there I was surprised by the accuracy of some of the enemy's sharp shooters, and the long range of their small arms. Seats had been fixed around a shady tree some distance in rear of our line, where I was sitting with some Officers of the Brigade, my head resting against the tree. In the depth of our conversation the well known whistle of a bullet was heard. We looked in astonishment around, but could hear neither

report of a gun or see any smoke. Another ball passed still closer, and broke up the party, a third ball passed between my neck and the tree cutting some hairs of my head

Page 42

and some bark of the tree-I did, of course, not wait for another ball. Upon examination I found that no enemy could have been a less distance than a mile from our line.

June 1st marched to Mechanicsville, and the 2d to Cold Harbor, participated in the battle of Fraziers farm or Cold Harbor the 3d. The preceding night some rain had fallen and I had taken shelter with the Brigade Com & Staff under a shed, and, stretched on a plank before a small fire, I endeavored to dry my wet garments-access to our baggage for a change of clothing was, of course, impossible. In the morning at daybreak I was aroused by alarm along the line, my toilette was made by a shake in the fashion of a Mastiff, disturbed in his pleasant slumber, and, boots in hand, I rushed to my regiment on the left of the Brigade.

A column of Federal Infantry emerged from the woods opposite. Line after line developed itself, and moving steadily forward we saw that their aim, was a salient angle in our line, occupied by Echols Brigade, on the left of ours. They advanced partly covered by the hill under the gallant, for awhile only exposing their left flank, on which a regiment was quickly deployed in front of mine. A few well directed volleys from some of my companies, armed with long ranged rifles, forced the deployed regiment in our front to retire hurriedly. But the column advanced steadily, and, when on the rise of the hill in front of and within some two-hundred yards of the salient, they gave a cheer and charged. I have seen few instances of a line advancing in so perfect order to assault a work. The front line was swept by such a hurricane projectiles of every description as to make it stagger, but the second line pressed on, and, mixed with the remnants of the first, came like a rolling wave towards the point of attack. When within close proximity of our works they commenced to fire

Page 43

but the returned volleys of the Confederates threw them in great disorder, and only by assistance of another line, did they succeed in reaching our works. Some had already mounted the parapet, others leaped into the ditch and were killed there. Echol's men fought well, but pressed by a very superior number they were about to give away, when a reserve of Gen. Finegan's Florida Brigade were brought to their assistance. The Federals occupied a part of our line for a few minutes, but, at the approach of the reserve, they gave away immediately, and, retreating across the field, the well directed fire of our riflemen and the numerous batteries brought to bear on the flying mass caused a slaughter that was frightful indeed. This ended the general engagement in our front but along the line for miles we could hear the rattling of musketry and the booming of canons during most of the day. When night closed the

exciting scenes of the day intelligence were brought us that success had crowned the efforts of our army. Thousands of Federals slain in front of our line testified to the carnage of the battle.

During the charge on our line in the morning I noticed a Federal Officer, whose conspicuous gallantry elicited applause on our side. Undaunted by the storm, of projectiles he rode in front of his regiment in the charge, and when the decimated ranks faltered, he rallied and led them again forward. In the retreat he was one of the last to leave the field. This incident had nearly escaped my memory when one day, after the close of the war, I accidentally in Washington found a copy of Harper's Weekly giving detailed accounts of the battle of Cold Harbor, illustrated with some battle scenes. One of them represented the charge of a regiment, led by one Lieut. Col. Vegesack, an Officer from the Royal Swedish Army, serving in the Volunteer Army of the U. S. The illustration was, of course, one of the wildest exaggeration, but incidents

Page 44

connected with the account of this Officer's gallant behavior, corresponded so with the one I had myself witnessed, that there has been but little doubt on my mind, that a countryman was one of my opponents in that battle. If such was the case I cannot but express sentiments of admiration at the exhibition of such valor on the part of a Scandinavian warrior, while I deeply regretted that he was engaged in the cause of our oppressors.

June 4th, 5th, 6th we remained in the trenches, exposed to the frequent artillery duels and to flee enemy's sharp shooters, whose accuracy of aim and long range guns made it exceedingly dangerous to expose any part of the body above the parapet. Frequently hats were raised on the points of swords or bayonets, and immediately perforated by a bullet. Several of my men paid the penalty of their lives for unnecessary exposure. A source of the greatest annoyance to us in the trenches were the projectiles from the enemy's mortar batteries. There is perhaps nothing in modern warfare that can have a more demoralizing effect on troops in entrenchments than a continuous fire from mortar batteries. From direct fire the men consider themselves generally so well protected that games at cards often were played during the heaviest canonading, but the sound of a bomb slowly, as it seems, rising in the air, has a most painful effect. By force of imagination every man expects the bomb to fall right on him, and the anxiety and suspense, before the bomb falls, is intense. One day at Cold Harbor Gen. Br. was riding a short distance in rear of our line when a shot from an opposite battery struck his horse and passed diagonally thro' his body. The escape of the Gen. was miraculous, he only received some bruises in the fall.

Gen. Br.'s Division was now detached from the Army N. Va. and sent to repel a Federal army

Page 45

under Gen. Hunter who was supposed to be advancing on Lynchburg. The troops marched to Richmond the 7th June, took train for Hanover Junction, next day to Afton Station, and marched to Waynesboro the 11th. It was now fully ascertained that Gen. Hunter aimed at Lynchburg by way of Lexington. We were marched by Howards Gap in Blue Ridge Mt., Jonesboro, Tye River, and Amherst C. H., and arrived in Lynchburg the 16th. The 12th I was assigned to the command of Gen. McCausland's Brigade, composed of the 36th & 60th Rgts. & 45th Battn. Infy., he having been transferred to the Cavalry service. When we arrived a number of citizens and convalescents from the hospitals were already in the trenches around the city, which was ill prepared for defence against such a number of invaders as were approaching. Their advance could have been in the city some days before us, but intimidated by McCausland's Cavalry, which were skirmishing in their front, and retarded by the destruction of some bridges, the city was saved from an unwelcome visit of Hunter's raiders, whose march through the country was marked by pillage and crimes of the most revolting nature and of every conceivable description.

The next day arrived the divisions of Gens. Gordon, Rhodes & Ramseur with several batteries of artillery. All the forces now under command of Lt. Gen. Jubal A. Early. We were first ordered to camp some distance from the city, but the following night ordered back and stationed at College Hill, where breastworks were erected while the Cavalry skirmished with the advancing enemy. In the evening I made a reconnaissance on the Forrest road with 1000 men and two pieces of artillery, but I was soon recalled, the enemy having advanced on another road and was nearer to the city than my little force. The 18th we advanced to attack. The skirmish line of my Brigade engaged the enemy's

Page 46

cavalry most of the day. On the left of our line the engagement was more general and severe. My Brigade was on the extreme right. During the night following the enemy retreated and Gen. Early ordered immediate pursuit. We followed the enemy close to Salem (21st) where McCausland captured several pieces of artillery but the Federals escaped to the mountains. It has never been clear to me why Hunter's Army before Lynchburg was not cut off from retreat, captured or annihilated. Their feint attack on the city proved the demoralization in their ranks, and being so far from supplies and all succor, not a man ought to have escaped. The loss of the Feds. during, the whole raid was estimated and admitted to be 10,000 men, of whom some died, it was reported, from starvation in the mountains where they fled in consternation, and were afraid to approach the highways or even private houses, unless in larger bodies, when they committed all sorts of depredations.

The 23d we camped near Buchanan. The order of the day was 'on to Washington.' This move was evidently to relieve Gen. Lee's Army by causing a diversion of the enemy's forces around Richmond. Since the middle of June the weather had been intensely warm and the long marches caused a great deal of straggling. A large number of the men were unable to keep up with the fast moving column and were left behind on the road. Our march was by Lexington, Staunton, and down the main road of the

Valley of Va. During this long march Gen. Brs. Division, now under command of Brig. Gen. Wharton was mostly in rear of the army protecting the wagon train, and in consequence was by Early's veterans nicknamed "Breckinridge's wagon-guard". Some of this Division had seen less of active service than the troops from the east while others had done as much of fighting and had suffered hardships unknown to Gen. Lee's Army.

Page 47

But the "wagon-guard", in the Valley of '64, established for itself a reputation equal to that of any Division in the Service.

July 3d at Bunkers hill our cavalry in advance skirmished with the enemy. Next day Martinsburg was taken with some prisoners, a good deal of spoils, and a grand 4th July party broken up. The divisions which first entered the town immediately took possession of the spoils, and were engaged in a grand revelry when our rear division was marched thro' the place, the men casting envious glances at those of their comrades who had been fortunate enough to be in front that day. The 5th we crossed the Potomac and camped near Sharpsburg, Md., and remained there part of the following day. The 7th we reached Rohrersville, the 8th Middletown, where the enemy's cavalry attacked our rear, but were soon dispersed. The 9th we were before Frederick City. Our division was that day in reserve, and did not participate in the battle of Monocacy. The Comr. in Chief levied a tax on Frederick City, which was immediately paid and the Conf. troops were marched through the town, in every instance to my knowledge, respecting private property, except horses, of which a large number were pressed for the use of Artillery throughout the line of march. I have heard of instances when private property was not respected by some of our Officers & men, but no such case having come under my personal observation I do not feel at liberty to express any opinion. Goods of various descriptions were purchased and sent to the rear. If dishonestly obtained goods were sent at the same time, the captors profited little thereby, as a good deal was captured by the enemy some days after. Another feature of this campaign had a most demoralizing effect on the Army. Some Officers high in rank turned over their commands to the next ranking subordinate,

Page 48

for the purpose of attending to private business, such as purchasing goods for their families, speculating, or securing some spoils of war, while subordinate Officers were denied the privilege of supplying themselves with articles of necessity, and compelled to remain with their respective commands. The effect of such injustice and not very praiseworthy example upon the morale of the Army can readily be imagined, and was plainly apparent in later disasters, which greatly impaired the issue of the campaign.

A feint was made by our Cavalry in direction of Baltimore, while the main Army moved by way of Rockville to Washington City, and arrived there the morning of the 11th. After some skirmishing with the

advance the outposts were evacuated by the enemy, and the city, to all appearance, at the mercy of the Confederates. The instructions of our Comdg. Gen. were, of course, unknown to us, and I naturally hesitate to express any opinion as to the effect or probable consequences of the Confederates taking forcible possession of the Federal Capitol, nor do I feel at liberty to criticize the actions of our experienced leaders, but there can be no doubt on the mind of any military man, acquainted with the situation, that Gen. Early's Army, if active operations had been substituted for the delay at Sharpsburg, Frederick city and before Washn., could have with but little loss of men taken possession of the Federal Capital, removed the archives of the government, secured all the spoils of war, and retired safely to Virginia. Such at least is my honest opinion.

But delay was dangerous. Federal troops poured into the city, and concentrated at various points threatening the safe retreat of our army, and it became a necessity to retire the night of the 12th. Recrossed the river, and arrived at Leesburg the 14th.

Page 49

The enemy's Cavalry was constantly hovering- around us, and the 16th, near Snickersville, they captured a part of our train with some of the spoils from Maryland. Crossed the mountain and Shenandoah river and skirmished with the enemy (the 18th) between Berryville and the river. The skirmish line of Wharton's Division drove the Federal army-corps some distance and forced it across the river. The 19th my Brigade was on picket near Cassellman's ferry. The enemy had received re-enforcements and were preparing to recross the river while another column was approaching from Martinsburg and defeated Ramseur's Division near Winchester. By some misunderstanding or possibly neglect of duty the order to retire was not sent me before late at night. The enemy had been crossing the Shenandoah above us for some hours before I was aware of our endangered situation. However, under cover of dark, I succeeded to withdraw my Brigade without other molestation than the excitement caused by stragglers from the main army, which in the dark were taken for part of the enemy's forces. We retired skirmishing to Middletown & Strasburg, where we remained the 22d & 23d. Col. Thos. Smith of the 36th Va., who had been absent wounded, reported for duty, I turned over the command to him, and was again assigned to command of Wharton's Brigade, in which my regiment was serving, and which afterwards was recognized by my name. I remained in command of this Brigade except the time I was absent wounded, until the close of the war, or as long as the main part of the Brigade remained in the field. It was composed of the 51st Rgt., Lt. Col. Wolfe, the 50th Rgt., Major Perkins, the 45th Rgt. Capt. Thompson, and the 30th Batt. S. Shooters, Major Otey--all Virginia troops. The long fatiguing march since early spring, battles and disease had

Page 50

reduced the Brigade to less than a thousand muskets. The Brigade Staff was composed of the following Officers: Major Peters, Quarter Master; Capt. Leigh, Asst. Q. M.; Major Ficklin, Commissary Subsistence, Capt. Thompson, Asst. C. S.; Lieut. Greenway, Actg. Asst. Adj. Gen.; Lieut. Roche, Act. Asst. Insp. Gen., Lieut. Cosby, Ordn. Officer, and Lieut. Selby, A. D. C. All efficient Officers and refined gentlemen, whose

social intercourse I appreciated very highly, and whose usefulness in the field often reflected much credit on the command.

The 24th a general advance was ordered. Breckinridge's Division, now Wharton's, composed of three Brigades under Cols. Patton Smith & myself were in front. Near Kernstown skirmishing commenced and continued for an hour. Gen. Br. then, leaving the skirmish-line in front of the enemy, ordered Gen. Wharton to move by circuitous route around some hills on the enemy's left flank. The effect of our appearance on the crest of a hill was instantaneous. The Feds. drawn up in two lines of battle, each more than twice our number, were panic-stricken and in a few moments the valley below us seemed to be a dark blue irregular moving mass. A battery on a hill opposite our line opened immediately, and with great accuracy picked one file after the other from our line. Yet undaunted our men pressed on as rapidly as the undulated ground and the many fences in their way, would admit. But the flying Feds. escaped, leaving their dead, wounded and some prisoners in our hands. The precipitous and disorderly retreat of the enemy through Winchester was so great that some of their men were tramped down in cellar-doors, and with broken limbs afterwards picked up and removed to hospitals. We pursued three miles below Winchester where late in the day we were ordered into camp. Next day after dark we marched to Bunkers Hill.

Page 51

No enemy to be seen. Several days were now employed in destroying the R. R. or as it was called: "Early finishing 'Stonewall' Jackson's contract on B. & O. R. R."

August. 4th The army advanced to Shepherdstown. The next day crossed the Potomac and skirmished with the enemy's cavalry near Sharpsburg. Advanced to Boonsboro and feigned an invasion of Pennsylvania but turned towards Williamsport and re-crossed the river the 6th. Moved by Darksville & Bunkers Hill to within four miles of Berryville (Augt. 10th) where the enemy were in fortified position. An advance of the enemy was reported, and my Brigade ordered to support the picket. I moved in direction of Berryville leaving the 51st & 45th at Mill creek and advanced the 30th Battn. Skirmished with and repulsed some squadrons of the Fed. Cavalry. No other effort on their part being made to force our position, we bivouaced on the field with orders not to advance, but if again attacked to fall back on the other side the creek. Early next Morning the Battn. was withdrawn and my Brigade joined the Division. Gen. Early now executed a move which, altho' profitless in its issue, for its quick perception and boldness I have always considered one of the best strategic moves I have ever witnessed, worthy of a 'Stonewall' Jackson. The enemy evidently expected to be attacked from the north side, where we had been skirmishing, and were strengthening his fortifications in that direction. But Gen. Early withdrew and quickly moved his army around the enemy's left flank and in the evening of the same day appeared in his rear. Had immediate attack been made, the result may have been a rout of the Feds., but Gen. E. considered the position too strong to take by assault without great sacrifice of men, of which he had so

few compared with the forces of the enemy. Next morning after some skirmishing Early retired, and pressed by the Feds. continued to retreat by

Page 52

Newtown to Fishers hill, where severe skirmishing continued for several days.

Augt. 17th The Army was moving on the main road in direction of Winchester. After passing Kernstown the Division was halted and my Brigade ordered to some distance, left of the road, to support Col. Jackson's Cavalry in checking an advance of the enemy on our extreme left. About three miles from Winchester and one mile from the main road our sharp-shooters commenced to drive the enemy. The distance from Support made it necessary to extend the skirmish line by displaying the 30th Battn. on its right. The whole line advanced steadily driving the enemy within a mile of the fortified heights southwest of Winchester. In the mean time the balance of the Brigade was ordered to the front with the Division, and line of battle formed some hundred yards in rear of skirmish-line. I was now ordered forward with Gen. Wharton to receive instructions from Gen. Breckinridge how to advance on the Federals position with a view, if possible, to cut off a Fed. Battery opposite our left. In full view of the enemy's sharp-shooter Gen. Br., dressed in a white linen duster over his uniform, a too conspicuous target, stood and coolly delivered his orders. I don't know what made me the most nervous, the Federal bullets or the extra ordinary coolness of Gen. Dr. About sundown the order was given, to charge. My Brigade on the left in advance, Cols. Smith & Patton on the right in echelon. The Divisions of Gens. Gordon, Rodes & Ramseur on the right of the road were already in motion. The 45th & 51st on the extreme left moved under cover about hundred yards, then through an open field, where they were exposed to an enfilading fire from the battery, further advanced they were protected by a hill from artillery fire, but crossing the brow of this hill we were again under fire of the battery, which made some havoc in

Page 53

our ranks. At that moment I accidentally stumbled over a rock and fell head long on the ground, while in the same instant a shell exploded over me. The cry among my men were raised: "the Col. is killed" and so impressed some of them afterwards looked upon me as a spectre when I appeared amongst them. But with the exception of some trifling bruises on my face and hands I escaped unhurt. Undaunted by the fire from the battery the two regiments pressed on, plunged into the creek near Barton's Mills, and crossed under fire of the enemy's sharp-shooters, concealed behind the stonewall of the grave-yard and some buildings about the hill. These sharp-shooters were soon dislodged and we reached the base of the hill where direction was changed to the left, and, driving the support of the battery before us, we carried the height. The time necessarily occupied in crossing the creek and advancing up the hill, allowed the enemy to carry off their guns in direction of Winchester, leaving in our possession the field, some killed, wounded & prisoners. Night, which was now fully upon us, stopped the pursuit. This charge of my Brigade, witnessed by several of our General Officers on an adjacent hill, elicited many very complimentary remarks.

The Army remained near Winchester the next day, the dead were buried and preparations made to advance. Augt. 21st My Brigade, moving on the Smithfield pike with the Division, was ordered to take a road leading to the right from Smithfield, and march out to meet and drive back some of the enemy's cavalry threatening our wagon-train and the rear of the Army. We marched

Page 54

on this road some two miles when we came upon some of our own cavalry making feeble resistance to the enemy's skirmishers, who were concealed in the woods in our front. My Brigade skirmishers were immediately sent forward and soon engaged. The Brigade was formed in line behind the crest of a hill on the left of the road, from which position I could watch the movements of the skirmish-line, which scoured the woods and drove out in the open field a considerable number of mounted and dismounted Feds. The line continued to advance about a mile, when they came upon a battery of six guns, supported by the Fed. Gen. Wilson with about fifteen hundred cavalry. The battery was just taking a position to check the advance of Gen. Anderson who was moving down the Berryville road with his Division. The battery was speedily removed upon the approach of our skirmishers, and followed the cavalry which retreated in considerable confusion. This feat was accomplished by the gallant Capt. Allison of Wythe Co. Va. with some 70 or 80 sharp-shooters. During the skirmish a Lady was seen waving her handkerchief from behind a house on the right of the line. I sent an Officer with some men to ascertain the meaning of her signs. The Officer returned and reported that he feared it was a snare to capture any one approaching the house. The skirmish over I sent another party for the same purpose, who was informed that at the time the Lady made signs to us, Gen. Wilson with Staff were in the house and could easily have been captured. After remaining some two hours in the same position, finding that the enemy had no

Page 55

intention to return and trouble our wagon-train I withdrew to Smithfield, and camped in rear of the army. For some days following firing was heard on our right in direction of Harpers ferry.

Augt. 25. My Brigade left camp at the fortifications near Charlestown and rejoined the Division near Leetown. We were placed in front and moved down the road to near Kearneysville, where we encountered Gen. Torbert's cavalry. Gen. Early here ordered the advance of the 51st Rgt. deployed under Lt. Col. Wolfe, the balance of the Brigade in reserve. The 51st advanced boldly, and commenced to drive the enemy's skirmishers before them. Some pieces of artillery were then brought up to check their advance, but our Artillery soon silenced them. My regiment was now engaged in the most unequal contest; assailed by large bodies of cavalry in front and on both flanks, they fought manfully, but unsupported their destruction or capture could only have been a matter of time, and yet I was refused to go to their assistance with the balance of my command. I cannot deny that at that moment, seeing my regiment, to which I was so deeply attached, sacrificed apparently to no purpose, I entertained

feelings of bitterness towards the Comdg. General, which only was removed upon more calm reflection of circumstances connected with the situation and satisfactory evidence that Gen. Early's orders, as communicated, to me, must have been misunderstood. Another large body of the enemy's cavalry was now moving up on a road leading into the pike at a right angle and behind the line of the 51st I was then ordered to advance another regiment. The 45th was

Page 56

immediately sent in double quick time to intercept this cavalry and had just reached the base of a hill some four hundred yards to the right of the pike when the enemy made his appearance on the brow advancing at a sharp trot. The gallant 45th pressed on and in a few minutes carried the hill, which they continued to hold during the fight. In the mean time the 51st was steadily moving forward when a force of the enemy's cavalry, estimated at two Brigades or probably more, was observed massing on the left. This was noticed by Lt. Col. Wolfe who immediately sent word to be re-enforced, but before assistance could have reached him the whole force came creeping down on the left of the 51st, which with decimated ranks, unsupported and with most cartridge-boxes empty, after a gallant resistance was forced hurriedly back with the loss of many brave Officers & men. At this moment the gallant Lt. Col. Wolfe fell mortally wounded. The right of the 51st still held its position until flanked it was compelled to fall back. This exposed the left of the 45th. The 30th Battn., which had been ordered to lie down under heavy Artillery fire during the whole time was sent to re-enforce the 45th. This was done with a celerity of movement, for which this Battn. always was conspicuous. Col. Patton's & Smith's Brigades now advanced on the left, and we were re-enforced by Gen. Terry's Brigade of Gordon's Division. But the enemy were already retreating, and after gathering up the remnants of my unfortunate regiment, I joined the main column in pursuit of the enemy who were driven beyond the Potomac at Shepherdstown. Among the mortally wounded in this engagement was Capt. D. S. Allison, a model Soldier, and as such the greatest favorite in the Brigade. He was also one of the bravest of the brave.

In the engagement of the 25th the Color-bearer of the 51st was shot, another of the Color guard seized the colors and was almost immediately shot down, when a third took the colors and bore them from the field, although wounded and hard pressed by the enemy.

Page 57

The 27th we again camped at Bunker Hill until the 2d September we moved to Brucetown six miles from Winchester. There we remained in camp skirmishing as usual almost every day during the whole campaign. Sept 17th two Divisions were sent to Martinsburg, and my Brigade ordered to picket so much of the Opequan river as had been before occupied by Ramseur's whole Division. Thus I had, in case of attack, to defend a line three miles long with less than 800 muskets. This weak line of defence must have been observed by the enemy's reconnoitering parties which during the 18th frequently made their appearance on the opposite bank and exchanged some few shots. The 19th at daybreak I received a

message from the Officer in command of 30th Batn. on the right of my line, that the enemy on the other side the river appeared in threatening attitude. I repaired immediately to the spot, and found the situation very critical. Without my knowledge or that of any Officer on my line some cavalry on my right had been withdrawn during the night, and thus a gap of about a mile left between the right of my Brigade and the left of Col. Patton. The enemy had taken advantage of this position and crossed some cavalry, which attacked my line on flank and in rear. A gallant resistance was offered by Capt. Adams comdg. 30th Battn., but the line was too extended to cope successfully with the enemy's attack in front, on flank, and partly in the rear. Capt. Adams was severely wounded, some of his Officers and men killed, wounded or captured, and the balance forced to fall back. By degrees the whole line was thrown in

Page 58

confusion and I had no other resource but to rally the Brigade on higher-ground near Brucetown about mile from the river. There we took a stand and. for hours successfully repulsed numerous charges by the enemy's cavalry, and dismounted. Col. Smith's Brigade and two pieces of Artillery had been sent to my assistance and participated some time in our spirited engagement. During this fight an incident of daring occurred, which for its remarkable boldness has remained indelible on my mind. A Federal (officer I suppose) recklessly exposed himself several times in our front. I ordered him not to be fired upon but if possible to be captured. Once he boldly rode up so close to our line, that I could plainly see his saddle, which for its peculiar shape attracted my attention, and I made some remark to the effect that I should like to examine it still closer. A young soldier serving in one of the companies from Grayson Co. Va. in my regiment heard the remark, and, as it had been addressed to him, he replied: "I will get it!" and instantly leaped over a heap of fence rails, behind which a part of the command was stationed. Before I had time to recall him he had disappeared in the woods in the direction where the Federal had been last seen. In a short while he returned with the saddle on his back.

After many fruitless attempts to dislodge us from the position we occupied the Feds. retired from our front, but the sharp firing on our right, in direction of Berryville, indicated that Gen. Ramseur's Division was hard pressed, and, our safety endangered. On the left the firing was not so incessant, but the enemy was

Page 59

gaining ground. Gen. Breckinridge, after examining the situation, ordered me to withdraw quietly and if possible unobserved by the enemy, who was massing on our left. By deploying cavalry in front our move was partly masked, but two of the enemy's batteries followed us some distance, alternately changing their position and firing into our flank. We retreated to within a mile of Winchester and were kept for awhile in reserve. The fighting had been so much in detail that we knew little of what had transpired on other points of the field. The gallant Gen. Rodes had fallen and our losses had been severe, but the punishment inflicted on the enemy was such as to inspire us with the most encouraging hope of a final success. While in reserve and expecting to relieve Gen. Gordon's Division a stampede took place in and around the main road to Winchester, which may have had serious results. The road and fields were in a

few minutes full of wagons, caissons, ambulances, straggling Cavalry & Infantry, all in a disorderly mass flying before the rapidly approaching cavalry of the enemy. Wharton's Division was then moved in double quick time by the flank, right between the enemy and the pursued, and saved the army from an immediate disaster. The Division remained in the same position in the open field exposed to front & flank firing, the Federal Cavalry making continuous charges without moving our line an inch. Throughout the day we had noticed the demoralization of the enemy's Infantry, their Officers were seen driving the men up to the constantly wavering lines, and I honestly believe that ten or fifteen

Page 60

minutes longer occupation of the position, in which we were placed about 5 o'clock P. M., with continuous firing, would have routed their Infantry, and secured us a glorious victory. But the superiority and number of their cavalry, upon which now rested their whole dependence, and some minutes inactivity on our part changed our bright prospects into a signal defeat. This Cavalry had been several times repulsed by our Division, which now was lying down to rest and to be less exposed to the flying shots & shells, and considering it imprudent to make further attempts on our Infantry they commenced massing on the extreme left of our line to force our poorly equipped and jaded cavalry, which defended that part of the line. The result of such an attempt could not be very doubtful and aroused me with the liveliest apprehension of the approaching danger. No reserve being at hand no assistance could be quickly rendered. While thus anxiously watching the manouevres of the Federal Cavalry I thoughtlessly exposed myself more than necessary and drew fire from several directions. My right hand,, extended in direction of the Cavalry column, was penetrated by a minnie ball, immediately after another ball struck my right leg, but a knife in my pocket turned the ball, and probably saved my life. Another ball, turned and made harmless by the buckle of my sword, but, I don't know when it struck me. The second ball brought me on my knee, and the hand bleeding profusely made me very sick. My assistant, Lieut. Greenway, as cool in danger as he was a devoted friend, was close by my side and raised

Page 61

me up to bring me off the field. I merely stopped to send a message to Major Yonce the only Field Officer now left with the Brigade and then turned towards the rear to find a Surgeon. A shower of bullets flew around us as we left the field, but Providence suffered us to escape the danger. In the mean time the enemy's charge on our left had been successful. But a short distance in rear of the line we found ourselves suddenly surrounded by a mingled mass of our retreating Cavalry closely followed by the Federals. Lieut. Greenway then threw his handkerchief round my neck to conceal the stars or my collar, and as I was covered with blood & dust we passed to the rear without much notice been taken of us. Gen. Fitz Lee's Cavalry gallantly rallied and checked the enemy until our Infantry line could fall back, to another position, but the day was lost. Coming in to Winchester I found one of my regimental Surgeons, who took me into a private house to have my wounds dressed. But a few minutes in the house and Lieut. Roche, Actg. Insp. Gen. of my Brigade, entered with the inform, action that our army was in full retreat and no time was to be lost. My hand was hurriedly bandaged and on Lt. Roche's horse I escaped with a confused mass of wagons, ambulances, caissons, mounted & dismounted troops. I suffered no pain but the loss of blood made me very faint, yet I was not insensible to the grief and

mortification consequent upon seeing our prospects of a glorious victory so sudden snatched from us, and changed into a precipitous rout. Wharton's Division, like the others, suffered severely. The gallant Col. Patton was mortally wounded, so was Major Yonce, a

Page 62

model Soldier and the last Field Officer in my Brigade on the field of Winchester. In fact only one Field Officer, Col. Thos. Smith, escaped unhurt in Whaxton's Division. The regimental colors of the 51st were the only in the Division carried off the field. The battle was fought with 8000 musket and perhaps 1500 effective cavalry, under Lt. Gen. Early. The lowest estimate of the enemy's force I have heard given by Federal Officers themselves was 42,000 troops engaged.

The Army retreated to near Newtown, and after some rest next day to Fishers hill, where the scattered commands were rallied and preparations made to defend that place. The 21st troops were in the trenches. General Breckinridge, who had some days previously been ordered to the command of Department of S. W. Va. and only remained with us on account of the pending battles, left that day. Few military commanders have enjoyed that unlimited confidence from their subordinates as Gen. B., few Comdg. Generals aroused such a spirit of enthusiasm, love and devotion among his troops, which could not but with the deepest regret see their Chief removed, to another field of operation.

The 22d I was advised by several Surgeons to go to some hospital for better treatment than could be offered me in the field. Fears were entertained that the wound in my hand by exposure might cause the loss of hand or arm, and even endanger my life by causing lock-jaw. Accordingly I took leave of my comrades in arms and left the camp accompanied by my friend Capt. Thompson of the Com. Dept. After a ride of some twelve miles we

Page 63

accepted the hospitality of a citizen living near the pike, and after a refreshing supper prepare to retire. About that time, 9 o'clock, I heard the rattling of wagons on the road and sent a servant to ascertain the cause of so many wagons moving up the Valley. He returned with answer that they were sent for forage. We then retired, but about midnight were aroused by the intelligence that the enemy were upon us, Our horses were saddled in a hurry, leave taken of our hospitable host, and moving up the road we learned of another disaster at Fishers hill, which had taken place some hours after we left camp. The trains, Artillery e.c. had been passing all night and stragglers from different commands were moving rapidly up the road. A little later and we would have lost our chance to escape. For the timely warning of danger I was indebted to Capt. Moore of the Q. M. Dept. who sent his 'Wagon Master Mr. Cassell to my place of retreat.

The Army fell back to Mount Jackson, and I continued up the Valley pike, stopped at Harrisonburg to have my wound dressed, was most kindly received and treated in the hospital there, and arrived the same night in Staunton. A cold rain had been falling during the day, which I thought favorable to my wounded hand, but arrived at the end of our long ride I was perfectly exhausted. The kind attention of Capt. Thompson on our trip made me as comfortable as I could have expected to be under such circumstances. The next day I left with the train for Lynchburg, reported at the Ladies' Relief hospital late in the evening, and was put

Page 64

under charge of Dr. Warren, whose skill as a Surgeon, gentle and amiable comportment and pleasant intercourse as a Gentleman, have elicited for him a large circle of friends and admirers, especially among those who served the Southern cause.

While in hospital I watched with the deepest interest the movement of our little Army in the Valley. General Early was not inactive. The Army had retreated as far as Waynesboro, but early in October again advanced down the Valley. The 19th stood the battle of Cedar Creek. The Army was equipped at Fishers hill, and was marched out 1 o'clock A. M. to attack the enemy's camp. The surprise was successful. The enemy was driven in a route to Middletown leaving, most of his Artillery, wagons and camp equipage behind. But passing thro' the enemy's camp such a number of Early's men stopped to plunder that he considered it imprudent to pursue the enemy with perhaps less than half of his army, and in consequence ordered a halt. This unfortunate event gave the enemy an advantage to rally and bring up reinforcements. In his turn Gen. Early, in the evening, was attacked and driven back to Fishers hill, leaving in the hands of the enemy some of his Artillery, wagons and ambulances, besides the large capture made in the morning. An order subsequently issued by Gen. E. reflected severely on the conduct of his men, but in extenuation of their behavior it is but justice to acknowledge, that the example set by some Comdg. Officers at former occasions had the most baleful influence on the morale of the Army,

Page 65

that they most lukewarm efforts of some Comdg. Officers had been made during the campaign to keep up anything like military discipline in their respective commands, and the effect of constant marching and fighting during the summer and fall was not calculated to make the Army anything but a reckless, armed mob. Be it far from my intention to attach odium to the reputation of the many gallant Officers and chivalrous Gentlemen in Early's Army, but facts cannot be denied.

With exception of a reconnaissance to Middletown the 11th November and a Cavalry skirmish at Rudes Hill the 22d the army remained in camp at New Market until in December Wharton's Division was moved to Camp near Fishersville and commenced there to erect winter quarters. The other Divisions had been previously returned to Gen Lee's Army near Richmond.

The wound in my hand proved to be of more serious nature than I first anticipated, and I believe that nothing but the skill of my attending Surgeon and the very kind and untiring attention I received in the hospital saved my arm or hand from amputation. Numerous invitations were extended me to spend my convalescence in the country. I accepted one of my friend Squire G. of Wythe Co. whose generosity and kind hospitality I had previously enjoyed and learned to appreciate. The Southern Soldier did in him always find a generous friend as the cause an ardent admirer and untiring supporter. I left the hospital early in December, and, indulged in the quite and comfort of ray pleasant place of retreat. I soon forgot passed hardships and dreamed of no danger.

Page 66

But again I was awakened to the realities of war. A raiding party of the Federals, under Generals Stonernam, Burbridge and Gilliam, had invaded the State from Tenn. so rapidly that the Confederate Commander, Gen. Breckinridge, unwarned and without proper means to arrest this march had to suffer them to penetrate the country as far as Wytheville, which place they entered December 16th. Their object seem to have been the destruction of the Washington Salt-works and Wythe Lead-mines, the latter not far from the residence of Squire G. The morning following the day the Federal raiders entered W. we expected them to advance further, and to prevent being captured Major G. and myself set out before day and crossed New river. When on the other side I suggested to change our direction towards the Lead-mines, where the employees, some 70 or 80 men all armed, could easily have prevented the Feds. from crossing the river at the ferry, unless they were in considerable number, and had brought Artillery with them. On our way to that place a messenger brought us the news that Gen. V. with his Brigade of Tenn. Cavalry had passed the nines, declared his inability to defend the place, and advised a surrender to the approaching enemy. We then re-crossed the river and started in direction of Wytheville to find out the whereabouts of the raiders. They were yet in the neighborhood, and had sent a party of 200 men, which passed us on another road, to the Lead-mines, and of this party 30 crossed the river and destroyed of the surrendered property of the mines only so much as could be replaced in a few days. In the mean time

Page 67

Gen. Breckinridge had collected the few troops in the Dept. and put the superior force of the enemy to flight. The injury inflicted on the Saltworks deprived the people but a little while of their usual supply of salt.

Early in January 1865 I returned to Lynchburg and shortly after went to Richmond with the intention of asking retirement from active service in the field while my hand was yet in such condition that I could not hold pen or sword, or mount a horse without assistance. But the condition of affairs, as represented in Richmond, determined me to return to the field and to do all in my power to promote the interest of my command. My presence in camp was much urged on account of the growing discontent of the

troops. Letters from Officers and men in my command were equally urgent, especially as a regiment in the Brigade had exhibited a spirit of mutiny. Accordingly I retired to Lynchburg and in a few days after to camp near Fishersville where Gen. Wharton's Division was stationed in winter quarters. The weather was such as not to admit of the usual military exercises, the men were principally occupied in improving and making their cabins more comfortable, a Chapel was under construction, and everything wore a cheerful aspect. No mutinous spirit was perceptible. Heavy snow had fallen several times, which gave the different Brigades an opportunity to test their strength and skill in maneuvering in the many snow-battles which took place, and in which Officers and men, from, the highest to the lowest, participated and enjoyed prodigiously. A new Brass band was under

Page 68

organization for the Brigade, the members of which were giving concerts for the amusement of the troops. The last concert was given the last day of February. The next day it was ascertained that the enemy were advancing on us, we knew not in what number. For weeks it had been rumored that the Federal General Sheridan was moving up the Valley with 15000 Cavalry, but it was not credited that he would leave the Macadamized road in such a season. March 1st we remained in camp ready to advance or fall back at a moments notice. During night orders were received to move on Waynesboro a. few mil.es in rear of camp. The whole command under Gen. Early was now reduced to two small Infantry Brigades, two Batteries, some Cavalry perhaps not more than one effective company, and a company of the Valley reserves, in all about 1200 men.

Shortly after daybreak we took position in front of town, while all stores were removed to a safer place. A cold rain was falling during the forenoon, the troops without fires were very uncomfortable. Many a longing eye was cast towards the mountain gap only two miles in our rear, where we could have defied Gen. Sheridans whole Army, but the order to remain in front of town was peremptory, I suppose, on the ground that it had been reported to Gen. Early that only two Brigades of the enemy's Cavalry were moving on us. A choice of position would have been a matter of indifference to us while not engaging larger force of Cavalry, but it proved to be Sheridan's whole force.

Page 69

Brigade after Brigade were deployed in our front, some moving on our flanks, others towards our rear. In a short while we were so completely surrounded that escape was impossible and resistance would have been madness. Many a veteran who had been with me for years and never shirked duty or refused to fight, now, discouraged and disgusted, hardly cared to fire his gun but doggedly threw down his arms and marched to the rear as a prisoner of war. Some were of the opinion that we had been sold to the enemy, but every one acquainted with the Generalship, courage and patriotism of Gen. Early is ready to scorn such a charge. While moving across a lot in town towards the field where the prisoners were assembled, a drunken Federal trooper rode up and fired at me; the ball passing close by my face. Such outrage on a prisoner I did not intend to suffer without retaliation. I was yet armed with my revolver, which was drawn in an instance, but at the sight of my pistol the valiant Fed. wheeled about and

disappeared. I made some efforts to raise the hammer of my pistol, which I held in my left hand, the right I yet carried in sling, but I did not succeed in time to return the fire of my would-be murderer, who in a few minutes returned with a number of others all leveling their carbines at me with order to surrender or die. I quickly hid my pistol under the cape of my coat and followed my captors. I was asked for my sword, but without use of my right hand I had, of course, carried no sword, and thus deprived my captors of one trophy of war. The pistol

Page 70

was yet in my possession, but reflecting upon the danger of being discovered armed I called for the Officer of the Guard, a Capt. D. of N. Y. Cavalry, and delivered my pistol to him with request that, as it was a keepsake which I valued very much, it should be returned to me after being exchanged or paroled, upon paying to Capt. D. its value, exchanged it for another, or such terms as lie, Capt. D., should think just and reasonable. He promises to do so, but the smile on his face convinced me that my appeal had been made to a man who could not appreciate better feelings. The prisoners, 990 all told, were formed in line in a field ankle deep with water, and kept there the whole night. The following morning we naturally looked for the issue of rations but were sadly disappointed. A young Lady from town received permission from the Fed. Commander to distribute some food among us. She labored assiduously during the day, with some other good Samaritans, in providing for the wants of the Confederates, and displayed that fortitude and endurance, which never was wanting with the women of the South. A special reason I have to keep this young Lady in a grateful remembrance is that she, unobserved of the guard, took charge of and kept for me my watch, thus saving from the clutches of the enemy another of what they called "war trophies." In the afternoon our long march as prisoners commenced. Mounted Officers were deprived of their horses and ordered to the head of the column. The road to Staunton was in a horrible condition. So much of Artillery, wagons and

Page 71

horses had been moving over this road during several days of rain, that the mud in some places between the banks was three feet deep. Through this slush we were forced to march, the mounted guard on both sides preserving for themselves the better passable banks. Onward at a rapid pace through the mire, where some stuck fast and could not extricate themselves without the assistance of others; until after dark when we bivouaced about 6 miles from Staunton. During the march the Federals exhibited a great deal of fear of something, and fired one of the captured field-pieces several times, probably for the purpose of intimidating some 2C or 30 men of Gen. Rosser's who were supposed to be in the neighborhood. The Federal guard, I believe, could not have numbered less than 2000. Without the assistance of some of my fellow prisoners I doubt that I had been able to reach the camp, where, drenched with rain and mud, we found our 'ready-made' beds in the wet grass. I was very much exhausted, sick and suffering, much pain in my wounded hand. I called for the attendance of a Surgeon, which was promised but, of course, not given. The misery and agony of that night I will never forget. Early next morning we were ordered to form in companies of one hundred each for the purpose of receiving rations. The hungry men readily obeyed and were kept awhile in anxious expectation of the

promised rations, but in its stead order was given to continue the march. The effect of such cruel deception and mockery can easily be imagined.

I exerted myself to the utmost to keep at the head of the column, but my strength failed. After a few hours'

Page 72

march I fell perfectly exhausted and was unable to move out of the position in which I fell. My eyes closed but I was yet conscious of what was going on around me. I could hear remarks made by my fellow prisoners passing by, I also heard remarks of some Feds. passing me but for the of decency they ought not to be repeated. Some of my men stopped to offer me assistance, but the guard forced them on. A Fed. Surgeon rode up, examined my pulse and recommended something stimulating and a horse to ride. Where the stimulant and horse were to come from he did not stop to inform me, but undoubtedly he thought it a good joke to be mocking a prisoner in my condition. The column had nearly passed me when two Feds. rode up, and with the most terrible oaths ordered me to 'move on'. As no answer was or could be given they drew their sabres and swore to kill me on the spot if I did not immediately 'move on'. I expected and courted death to relieve me of my misery, but it was more yet in store for me while in the hands of the enemy. Not moving out of my position one of the men struck me with the flat of his sabre on the head, the other run the point of his sabre in my shoulder, but no torture, I believe, could have aroused me from my state of stupor. For awhile I knew nothing of what was going on, but waking up as from a dreamt I saw an Officer in the U. S. uniform sitting by me holding my hand. Involuntary I closed my eyes wishing death rather than further insults, but this Officer spoke kindly to me, tried to cheer me, and offered all assistance in his power

Page 73

to make me comfortable. To hear words of kindness from one of our enemies took me much by surprise. I could hardly believe my ears. After I had rested some he asked me if I thought myself able to ride on horse-back and answering in the affirmative he ordered some of his men to lift me out of the mud and place me on his own horse. With some cheering words and advice as to where to meet him, he started across a field while I kept the main road. Mounted on a young spirited horse, the idea naturally presented itself to my mind to attempt an escape; my risks were the danger of not being able, in my feeble condition, to sustain myself in the saddle, and that of being fired at by the rear-guard. However, such danger I considered of less importance, but the kind act of him, who now trudged along in the mud while I was comfortably seated on his horse, was to me a stronger guard than Sheridans whole army. Near Staunton the prisoners were brought to a halt and my friends greeted me again. Soon the Officer who so generously had assisted me, treated me so kindly, and perhaps saved my life, made his appearance covered with mud from the road he had been footing, and I learned him to be Captain Abbott of the 21st N. Y. Cavalry. Often during the long march down the Valley he came up to the head of the column to inquire for me and offer me the use of his horse. All honor to him, he acted as an Officer and a Gentleman, who, even in the ranks of an enemy must be honored and respected.

The Federal Commander at Staunton gave notice

Page 74

to the citizens that as he had no provisions to spare they were at liberty to provide their friends, the prisoners, with some food. Generously the citizens of Staunton responded to such a call, but a large number of the prisoners were already so exhausted that their appetite was greatly impaired; and few thought of or were able in their feeble condition, to burden themselves with the provisions left on the ground. After some rest the column moved on and encamped next night on Middle river. The following night we bivouaced near Harrisonburg. During the day and part of the previous one my feet were so sore and swollen that I was permitted to ride on a captured caison, then in charge of Lieut. Courtney of the N. Y. Cavalry. This young Officer paid me much kind attention during the short time I had the fortune to be under his charge.

The Confederate prisoners had yet received no rations from their captors, and their lives were only sustained by the charitable contributions of the Ladies living near tile road. Few men dared to show themselves as they were often arrested and added to the number of prisoners. Several times did I see Federal sabres raised over the charitable hands that offered us food, but the women of the South were - too well accustomed to such treatment to be easily intimidated. With baskets filled with bread and meat they followed the column and when refused access to the prisoners they threw the food over the guard into the ranks of the prisoners, who in some instances fought like hungry hounds over the bread thrown at them.

Page 75

The Confederate Gen. Rosser with a handful of his cavalry had been hovering around the column, and many a hopeful prayer was offered for our deliverance at his hands. The Feds. showed too plainly their uneasiness notwithstanding their strength in number of men, and most unmercifully pressed us to move faster. Before daybreak of the 6th we were aroused by distant firing and cheering. A few of Rosser's men had made a feint on the Federal Detachment in front, no doubt intending to give us an opportunity to overpower the sentinels nearest to us, and to make good our escape to the woods. But the prisoners were too much exhausted and dispirited to make any such attempt. At early dawn of day the Feds. professed to have made attempts to bridge the North fork of Shenandoah river for one safe crossing, but that the Confs. on the opposite bank had made them desist. We were therefore forced to wade the river, which was four feet deep in the middle, and the water so rapid that no one man could stand its pressure. The only way of crossing with some chance of safety was for half a dozen men or more to lock arms and support each others, the flank man down the stream assisted by a stout pole. In the confusion and hurried to cross we could not ascertain if any of the men were drowned, but the fact that some dead horses were seen floating down the river, makes it very probable that some unhappy men there

found a watery grave. On the opposite bank we witnessed a charge made on the rear of the column by the indefatigable Rosser with perhaps two hundred of his men,

Page 76

of whom a few were captured and added to our number. After crossing the river the pursuit of Rosser's men was discontinued. The night of the 7th we bivouaced on the old battle field of Cedar Creek. Approaching Winchester, the 8th, the Feds. had another scare. A column of U. S. troops, which came to relieve the prisoners' guard, was taken for Confederates. The excitement was intense, contrabands sent to the rear, prisoners halted, and preparations made for defence, but before anybody was hurt the mistake was discovered. At Winchester the garrison was paraded and joined the procession through town, salutes fired and a great ado made over the capture of a thousand Confederates, which proved in what estimation they held such an important event.

At Stevenson's Depot, some miles below Winchester, our march ended. Six days had passed since our capture and the first rations were issued. It may seem almost incredible that human beings could have existed so long under such circumstances, to have been forced a march of 120 miles in such a season, without blankets and no more provision than a few could pick- up on the road, but hundreds live yet to testify to this truth, as thousands can testify to similar acts committed by the Federals, who so bitterly complain of the treatment their prisoners received at our hands. The hardships of this long march told severely on some of weaker constitution. An old worthy Gentleman who served in the Virginia Reserves was among the captured.

Page 77

He kept up well for some days, but his feet were so swollen that the boots were cut off his feet, and he had to continue the march bare-footed and sick. His sufferings were intense. We learned that some time after he died a maniac in a hospital. A large number of my men died from the hardships of this march in hospitals and places of confinement.

The evening of the same day we arrived at Stevenson's Depot, we were packed in box-cars, which had been used for transportation of cattle or some live stock, and forwarded to Harper's ferry. In the afternoon of the 9th we arrived in Baltimore. The cars were closed so as to conceal the fact that they contained prisoners. After sun-down we were liberated from our dark -and foul confinement, and marched to Fort McHenry. The 11th we were shipped on a steamer and arrived early next morning at Fort Delaware, where, after being searched, money, knives and other articles taken from us, Officers and enlisted men separated, we were ushered into different 'Pens', where old friends and war associates greeted us.

I have kept no diary of my life in prison but have sought to forget all the unpleasant reminiscences of that place, consequently can only give a general outline of our treatment. About 2200 Officers and from 7 to 8000 enlisted men were confined there in separate barracks or 'pens' located in front of the Fort on the lower part of the island, which is below watermark and surrounded by a heavy embankment. Thus by means of ditches with sluice-gates that part of the

Page 78

island can in a few minutes be flooded with at least four feet of water. No communication existed between Commissioned Officers and enlisted men except when a letter tied to a piece of coal, a rock, or some heavy substance could, unobserved by the sentinels, be thrown from one pen to the other. When it happened that any sentinel noticed a letter, so thrown, fall in the yard he immediately levelled his gun, and woe to the ones who would live dared to touch the paper which was taken possession of by the Sergeant or Corporal of the guard. During the latter part of my confinement an under ground line of communication had been established by some daring men in the so called privates' pen by means of a ditch running from their wash-house to the one within our enclosure and mostly covered by some bridges. Thus in a small space the men crawled half immersed in muddy water a distance of some forty yards. In this manner several of my old command visited me during the dark hours of night for the purpose of talking over the past and future prospects, asking advice, and wishing me well. Their devotion to me in adversity as well as in prosperity will ever be to me a source of heartfelt sympathy and gratitude. Prisoners in the different pens were divided in 'Divisions' of about 100, each selecting their own Chief, who was responsible to the Authorities for the sanitary condition of their respective wards. Sentinels had been withdrawn from within the enclosure and stationed on platforms surrounding the pens from where they had a general view of the prison-yard. The strictest order, which necessarily demanded, was always observed. By special permission

Page 79

the prisoners attended to their own police regulations, which compelled them, for their own safety, to do all in their power to guard against diseases prevalent where so large a number of men are confined in so limited space.

The Barracks or Quarters were divided in large rooms, each with a passage in the centre, and on each side of the passage were bunks six feet deep, one four feet above the other, hardly enough for a man in kneeling position. Of this bunk each prisoner was allowed from two to three feet. When a prisoner was taken sick he was immediately removed to a hospital, and in many instances never heard of again. The constant plying of a small steamer, called "The Dead Rebel", between the Fort and a burial-ground on another island, told horrible tales of the mortality among the prisoners.

Closely adjoining ours was a pen called the "galvanized", which contained a class of prisoners who had declared their willingness to subscribe to 'the oath', and were allowed to perform menial duties on the island for some trifling consideration.

Religious services were not prohibited by the Authorities, and were performed regularly every Sunday in some parts of the pen.

The water furnished us to drink was professed to be from Brandywine creek, but its taste was far from sweet. It was kept in cisterns very often so long that it became green and slimy, and consequently injured the health of many.

Rations were of the kind generally known as 'Retaliation Rations', on which no human being could exist for any

Page 80

length of time. Twice a day were issued three crackers ('hard tack') or its equal weight in bread, with a piece of meat averaging in size three or four cubic inches, but often spoiled or so fat as to not be in keeping of the stomach even of an Ostrich. An article, understood to be soup, was issued once a day, but upon close examination of its ingredients it was generally emptied in the ditches. Adjoining the "Dining Hall" where prisoners of war were treated to the above bill of fare, was a Sutlers shop. Placed there, I presume, to tantalize the poor fellows who had no money to spend in either luxuries or necessities of life, and to tempt those who more fortunate could afford to indulge in some luxuries at the most fabulous prices. Any one familiar with the character and nature of a Yankee nedlax can form some idea of the scale of Sutlers prices when we had no alternation but to buy at their own prices or do without necessities of life. In my presence a Sutler was bragging that he had in one day made two thousand dollars out of the prisoners.

When money was forwarded to prisoners, if they received it at all, it was in shape of Sutlers tickets after a deduction of a fee of two percent for the generous trouble of taking care of our money. It was the same thing with packages of clothing and other articles sent through the Authorities, remarkably many things were considered contraband, I suppose, as they so often 'turned up missing'. I had money and clothing sent me by friends, but never received the least thing. Such irregularities could easily have been obviated had those

Page 81

in Authority taken the least trouble to see justice done, but the management of most business was left in the hands of Non-Commissioned Officers, men of the lower class of people, who probably were not able to comprehend the difference between honesty and dishonesty, decency and indecency, criminals

and prisoners of war. That such inferior class of men should lord it, to their utmost over the Confederates in their power, is a matter of course, and in keeping with the nature of all inferior minds.

Every letter sent or received was examined by a Sergeant or his Assistants in charge of the Post Office, and such letters as contained 'disloyal' sentiments were, of course, confiscated. But the judgement of loyalty or disloyalty was left to those very men who saved to themselves the three cents stamp for every letter they were pleased to deem expressive of disloyal sentiments. Baskets of condemned letters carried out from the Post Office indicated that was a right lucrative post.

No case of prisoners being causelessly and wantonly fired upon by the sentinels existed to my knowledge during the time of my confinement, but there is sufficient evidence that such cases did occur during the war. Only one newspaper, the rank radical Philadelphia (Forney's) was suffered to circulate in the Barracks. Its circulation was of course limited, but some few could not stand the temptation to learn news even from such a source. The news of Gen. Lee's surrender April 9th, cast a gloom over the prison that added considerably to our miseries, especially on account of the exaltations of the garrison. At first the report was

Page 82

received with doubts because we were well aware that our oppressors used every opportunity by false reports, insinuations and petty annoyances, in which they had reached perfection, to inflict upon us a punishment that in many instances surpassed more brutal treatment. The effect of the report of the murder of Mr. Lincoln, April 14th, can readily be imagined. We knew that innocent as we were to this outrage, yet we were in some way to suffer for it. Mail and delivery of articles, sent by friends of the prisoners, were stopped for some time, rations were meaner and scantier than ever, and some of the guards took great pain in impressing upon the minds of the prisoners that a certain percentage of them were to be executed in retaliation.

When, after the surrender of Gen. Lee, salutes were fired from the Fort some officious Fed. had expressed a great deal of sympathy for the prisoners and cautioned them to prepare for the worst, that the guns in the fort were shot and would be fired at our barracks. At the report of the first gun some pale faces showed that those rumors had not all together been disbelieved. At one time an order was issued that no restrictions would be laid on the reception of articles of whatever description, liquor and deadly weapons supposed to be expected, and as a natural consequence numerous orders were sent for everything that could contribute to the comfort of prison life. But when a large number of boxes and packages had been received at the fort, the order was countermanded, and, as a matter of course, the greater portion of the property confiscated.

Page 83

Before the fall of Richmond several applications were made by prisoners to take the oath of Allegiance to the U. S. Government on the supposition that immediate release would be granted. With some exceptions the applicants were disappointed. After the surrender of Gen. Lee's Army the Commander of the Fort was to ascertain what number of the prisoners were willing to take the oath, and for that purpose the rolls were called. Impressed with the idea that release would be granted to those who voluntarily subscribed to the oath, a large number, who had suffered from long imprisonment, who would sacrifice anything for a speedy return to their families, who in their minds were satisfied that with the surrender of Gen. Lee there was no hope for the Confederacy, and. who in some instances of course, had grown lukewarm or indifferent to the cause, did without hesitation offer to take the oath, or in prison parlance to "swallow the Pup". Others refused on conscientious grounds. Not notwithstanding the fall of Richmond and the surrender of Gen. Lee, the Confederacy was yet a de facto Government with Armies in the field, and the Allegiance due that Government could not be absolved by the mere fall of one of its cities or the surrender of one of its Armies. On such ground I, for one, refused to take the oath as long as there was a Confederate Officer in Authority or a Confederate flag raised in the seceded States. Another feature of this oath-taking was not only objectionable but insulting to civilization. To offer an oath of Allegiance to belligerents while in duress as prisoners of war, especially as the only condition

Page 84

of release or parole, is an act which admits of no honorable explanation or excuse.

Those who declared their willingness to take the oath were disappointed in their expectations. Some few were released by special orders but a majority of the prisoners remained. Some days after the rolls were rectified and some more added to the number of the oath-takers.

After the Surrender of Gen. Johnston's Army still another similar offer was made and accepted by all but a small number, who could not be intimidated by either threats or insinuations as to the fearful unknown punishment that would be visited upon those who refused to take the oath. But still no general release. Not before the month of June all Line- and Staff-Officers, against whom no special charges had been preferred, were released by order of the War Department, on taking the oaths of Allegiance to the U. S. Government and giving parole of honor not to commit any act of hostility against those in power.

Some days after the General and Field Officers, yet remaining in prison, were removed to more comfortable quarters, Soldiers' rations issued to them, and the freedom of part of the island allowed. This considerate treatment exceeded our highest expectations, but still our continued confinement, so

long after the surrender of the Confederate Armies, was inexplicable. Finally the 24th July the long anticipated order for release arrived and in a few hours afterwards a steamer carried the liberated prisoners away from a place which none of them will remember without feelings

Page 85

of horror and disgust. Although free from confinement we were yet subject to military regulations. In every place we stopped we were instructed to report, to the nearest Provost Marshal and await his pleasure. I stopped with some friends in Baltimore to attend some business before returning, to the State of Virginia which I had considered my home since the commencement of the war. I visited Washington, which I found greatly changed since before the war. The appearance of this city was mostly that of a cantonment for black and white troops. How different from what it used to be! I will always cherish many pleasant recollections of the society & gayeties of this Capital of the once Republic.

While in Baltimore I was informed that some paroled prisoners of war had been arrested for remaining in the city over ten days without special permission. For the purpose of obtaining such favor, I repaired immediately to the office of the August Provost Marshall, who, was represented by a person in the uniform of U. S. Army, looking quite uncomfortable and out of place in his new military coat and in his exalted position. This very important personage informed me that I had 'violated orders' but he would overlook it for that time, yet, as a punishment I presume, I was not to leave the City without his special permission, he having to satisfy himself that I was 'all right'. Graciously the permission was given some time after and in the latter part of the month of August I returned to Virginia, where

Page 86

I since, as far as the U. S. military authorities were concerned, have been left undisturbed in the avocation of my business.

The series of events which took place during my imprisonment, the fall of Richmond, the surrender of one after the other of the Confederate Armies, the capture and incarceration of President Davis, were hard indeed to realize. However, there was nothing left for us to do but to accept the situation, and furl the banners under which we had cheerfully suffered so much hardships, fought so many glorious battles. Time, it is said, will heal all wounds, but it is yet grievous to contemplate the bright prospects, the hard struggle, and the sudden downfall of the, for a time, lost Confederate cause.