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William A. Canfield, by William A. Canfield**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A HISTORY OF THE ARMY
EXPERIENCE OF WILLIAM A. CANFIELD ***

*OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF STATE,
Concord, N. H., March, 1869.*

*This is to certify that the author
has served the country faithfully;
lost his arm at Petersburg; and is
of good report by all who know
him.*

(Signed,) *J. D. Lyman,* of
Secretary of
State.

**A HISTORY
OF
WILLIAM A.
CANFIELD.**



Sold only by Himself. Price 25 cents.

**MANCHESTER, N. H.:
PRINTED BY CHARLES F. LIVINGSTON.
1869.**

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OF THE
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WILLIAM A. CANFIELD.**

BY HIMSELF.

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READERS: In writing this little book, I do not claim to issue a work of choice language, nor to present any new facts or startling developments concerning the general history of the war. My intention is simply to write a short narrative of my life as a soldier in the Army of the Potomac and South West, and in the Hospital.

Having lost my left arm from a wound received in front of Petersburg, I have taken this method of procuring sufficient means to enable me to engage in some business by which I may gain an honest livelihood for myself and family.

Craving your kind indulgence, I bring my claim before you, hoping you will grant it a favorable reception.

Yours respectfully,

WM. A. CANFIELD.

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HISTORY.

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I was born on the 10th of June, 1840, in Thornton, a small town in the northern part of New Hampshire. I was the youngest of six children. Our parents were poor in this world's goods, but rich in faith and in the knowledge of God as it is in Christ Jesus. My early instructions were limited to a common school, and I was deprived of this at the age of twelve years. Had I improved even these few years, I might have been much farther advanced than I now find myself. As it is, I have to regret many misspent opportunities of my childhood.

My parents, as I have said before, were rich in faith, and it was first in their thoughts to instill into the hearts of their children principles of wisdom, virtue and love. Especially did our dear mother, both by precept and example, endeavor to lead us in the right way.

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The summer of 1853 I went to Franklin, N. H., to work in a hosiery mill. I liked my work, had a good boarding place, and in a short time felt quite at home.

I had been there several weeks, and there had been an unusual interest in religious matters for some time; many had already sought and found God. One after another of my associates had found peace in God through the merits of Christ, yet I remained unmoved.

One evening several of the boarders invited me to go to the prayer meeting. I went, little dreaming of the great blessing there was in store for me that night. I felt no conviction of sin at this time, nor did I until the invitation was given for those to arise who desired the prayers of God's people. To my surprise the whole party that came with me manifested a desire to be prayed for. Then for the first time in my life did I feel an earnest consciousness of God's presence. My friends had left me—God was with me, and I was afraid. Oh, how my poor heart shrank to hide itself; how gladly would I have hid myself from the presence of God, but I could not; the pure light of God's love was shining into my sinful heart, making every plague-spot clearly visible to my spirit's vision.

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We returned home. My sister, being one of Christ's little ones, invited them to go into the sitting-room for a season of prayer. Thus was I again left alone, but not long; for very soon I felt a gentle touch on my shoulder, and heard sister's sweet voice saying: "Come, Will, and pray with us."

I went, and in earnest prayer entreated God for Christ's sake to pardon my sins. I did not plead long in vain, for Jesus was very near me, and when I yielded my will to the Divine, how quickly He received me, and lovingly sheltered me in His bosom. Thank God, I have found a hiding place there ever since. When I came out of that room I was clothed and in my right mind—I was no longer afraid. For was not God my father, Jesus my elder brother, and Heaven my home?

I could hardly wait until Saturday night, I desired so much to tell my dear parents of my new-found joy. But the week soon passed away, Saturday night came, and I was home again.

I think my dear mother perceived the change almost as soon as she saw me. I would here say that my father had for some time neglected family worship, and was not enjoying much of spiritual life; but when I told them of my new-found joy, father fell upon his knees praying fervently for pardon for his neglect of duty, renewedly consecrating himself to the Lord. Truly there was great rejoicing in that little cottage that night. The family altar was again established, and we rejoiced greatly in the love of God.

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The time passed very quickly until the autumn of 1858, when I went to Manchester to work for my brother in a hosiery mill, and boarded in his family.

I soon connected myself with the M. E. Church in this place, and found many warm friends. Among others, I became acquainted with Miss M. F. Stewart, of New Hampton, N. H., and in

due time married her. We had been married about one year when the war broke out.

My parents always taught us to reverence the stars and stripes; I loved my country's banner, and when rebel hands were raised to hurl it to the ground, I felt as if I must go and bear a part in the great struggle. My ancestors had fought bravely to establish the glorious liberty I had so long enjoyed. It was hard, very hard, for me to leave those whom I loved so dearly, but still harder to sit with folded hands here at home, while others were dying for the aid I could render. Frequently, when about my work, would my eye fall upon my hands (I have often thought it strange), and they seemed to reproach me every time I looked at them. At last I could bear it no longer; I felt sure it was my duty to go, and go I must.

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I enlisted under H. D. Davis, at Manchester, N. H., July 12, 1862, in the Ninth Regiment New Hampshire Volunteers. I went directly to Northfield, to visit my parents and friends before going into camp. It is almost useless for me to speak of the parting scene. I took leave of all my friends except my wife and sister, with her husband. My aged parents were bowed down with sorrow and grief. They had buried their oldest son and two daughters; there were only three of us left—and now to lose me (for they had little hope of ever seeing me again) was almost too much for them to bear.

We went into camp the first of August. Spent the first night in the barracks. I did not sleep much, I assure you, every thing was so strange—so much noise and confusion of tongues. But I soon became accustomed to my surroundings, and found real attractions in camp life.

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I had always made it a rule to reprove sin whenever an opportunity offered; but I soon found out what it meant to cast pearls before swine.

Then I adopted another plan; it was this: first, to watch every opportunity of doing a good turn for my comrades. I interested myself in the loved ones they had left at home—in a word, I tried to make them love me; and I succeeded far beyond what I expected. I do not think there was one in our company who would have seen any harm come to me if they could have prevented it. Then, when occasion required, I could reprove sin without being reproached and made to understand it was none of my business.

Our time was mostly occupied in drilling, until the 24th of August, when we were mustered into the United States' service. On the 29th, we struck tents early in the morning and marched to the depot, where we took the cars for the seat of war. It was a sad time with us that morning, as one after another bid farewell to loved ones. Very few of those brave men ever returned. I had previously taken leave of my friends and told them I should return to them again.

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We started from Concord about seven in the morning; large crowds were gathered at the stations all along our route to encourage and cheer us.

We arrived in Washington on the first of September; laid in the barracks near the station that night. The next morning, I got leave to look about the city, and must confess I was sadly disappointed. I had expected to see something grand, and perhaps I should if I had traveled far enough. As it was, about all there were to be seen were cows and goats, with vast numbers of swine running at large in the streets. I went back to the barracks not very well pleased with our Capital.

In a very short time we had orders to fall in. We then crossed the long bridge, and marched about three miles beyond, and camped for the night. About midnight we received orders to turn out—the rebels were upon us. We turned out in a hurry; formed a line across the road with bayonets fixed, for we had as yet received no ammunition. We remained in line about twenty minutes, and then started off on another road; marched about two miles at double quick; were then ordered back to camp, without seeing or hearing a single rebel. The next day, we marched about six miles up the Potomac. Here we found work chopping down trees, and throwing up fortifications.

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On the 4th of September, a part of the army of the Peninsula passed us on their way to the second Bull Run battle. They were all worn out with continual marching and fighting, and many looked as if they would fall by the wayside. I said to myself as they were passing: Why are worn-out men like these pressed to the front, while we are held back! Well, when the order comes, we too shall have to go; until then, we must wait and shovel. All I could do for them was to give them my ration of soft bread.

The 8th of September was my first night on picket duty in an enemy's country. About nine o'clock it commenced raining very hard. I was relieved about twelve; laid down near an old stump, and was soon fast asleep. When I awoke, I found myself in a pond of water which nearly covered me. I managed to get out of the water and back to camp. The result of this ducking was the dysentery in its worst form. I was compelled to go directly to the hospital, and receive such care as they had to give.

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On the 10th, our regiment received orders to move. They joined the Second Brigade, Second Division, Ninth Army Corps. Unable to walk I was carried in an ambulance, until we came up with the regiment on the evening of the 11th, when I joined my company. My comrades soon made a good fire of rails and did every thing they could for my comfort. J. W. Lathe got some green corn and roasted it for me, and on the morning of the 12th, got me aboard an ambulance again. I afterwards learned that he was reprimanded for taking such an interest

in me, and I shall ever remember his kindness with gratitude.

On the 13th, we arrived at Frederick City, Md. During the day it was rumored that an order from Gen. Lee had fallen into Gen. McClellan's hands, which had so exposed the position of the enemy, that he soon gave orders for the entire army to move forward.

Our column took the main pike road to Middletown. We arrived on the south side of the town after dark, and went into a field that had been recently plowed, where we bivouacked for the night.

On the 14th, at the battle of South Mountain, the enemy occupied the side and top of the mountain on both sides of the road. I will not attempt to describe the battle, for I did not participate in it; I was left by order of the surgeon in the hospital just established in the village. It was a large two story building, situated on the east side of the town. That night I was put in the second story. The room was filled with the wounded and dying.

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At about three o'clock in the morning, I was obliged to go down. The moon was still shining in all its beauty and loveliness over the western hill-tops. As I turned the corner of the building a sight met my gaze which baffles description.

There were about thirty dead bodies, mangled in every conceivable shape, covered with blood, with eyes wide open glaring at me. My very blood run cold with horror, and it was some minutes before I could pass them. Since then, I have become accustomed to such scenes, but I can never recall that sight without a feeling of dread.

On the 15th, the battle at South Mountain was still raging. All was excitement. I had no thought of self now, but bent all my energies to the task of caring for the wounded. There were two others with me, and we tried in every possible way to alleviate their sufferings. We brought them water, washed their wounds, and spoke words of comfort. We had no experience in such things, but did the best we could.

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The surgeon, who came round about nine o'clock, said we had done well. After looking at some of the worst cases, he gave us orders, advising us to do the best we could. For three days and nights I had neither sleep nor rest, when I was compelled to give up and take my chance with the others.

The ladies here, I shall ever remember with gratitude; they were very kind to us, bringing us many luxuries we should not otherwise have had.

I was now brought very low by the chronic diarrhea; I could hardly get up, and still no help appeared in my case. True, the surgeon was very kind, but I thought it rather hard when he told me "you must let it run. I cannot help you, I have nothing to do with."

I had heard the ladies telling of one Polly Lincoln, who possessed much skill. I thought perhaps she might cure me, so I made further inquiries in regard to her, and learned that she lived most of the time alone in a hut made of logs, not far from the hospital. She gathered her own herbs, made her own medicine, and performed wonderful cures,—so they told me.

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With the surgeon's permission, I soon found her out and told her my complaint. "Oh!" said she, "I'll fix you all right in a week or two, only keep up good courage." And to work she went, at once; made me a nice bed on the floor, and fixed me a dose of herb tea in a very short time. I felt very comfortable, I can assure you, that afternoon, as I lay there on the floor, watching that good old Samaritan in her humble home; my heart was filled with gratitude, and I felt safe in her hands.

There was only one room in the house, and that very poorly furnished; still, every thing looked neat and home-like. There were two other soldiers there at the same time; one from the 17th Michigan, with his leg off, the other from Massachusetts, with his arm amputated at the shoulder-joint. She took care of us all, and often assisted at the hospital. I was with her two weeks, and then reported in person to the surgeon in charge. He gave me leave to go back another week. At the end of that time I was fit for duty. But I must not leave this good old mother without saying a few more words. She was, in deed and in truth, a good Samaritan to us all; and there are hundreds who can testify to the same truth; hundreds who will remember her with heart-felt gratitude as long as they live.

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The soldier from Massachusetts died in a few days; the other was able to go home in four weeks.

Some time after this, I received orders to report at Camp Convalescent, Alexandria. I stayed there two weeks and then started off with a squad for the front. We arrived at Aquia Creek, on Saturday, October 13. We were put into camp there and told to wait until after the battle before proceeding further. To wait there within sound of that terrible artillery-fire at Fredericksburg, did not suit me. I longed to be with my comrades and share their danger.

With these feelings I went to the Provost Marshal and stated my case. He gave me a pass to report to General Fry, at Falmouth, but instead of reporting to him, I found my regiment over in the city and took my place in the ranks. The boys were glad to see me, but said I was a fool for coming into that slaughter-yard, as they called it. It was my duty, and I was willing to take my chances with the rest.

We went on picket Sunday night, but were ordered to fall back across the river about four in the morning, and at day-light we were in our old quarters, there to do picket duty on the Rappahannock, as the boys said. This was the most discouraging place that I was in during my stay in the army. Any soldier who was there could tell some pretty hard stories of that place. Our troubles there are too well known to every one at all conversant with the history of the war, to need any comment.

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A few days after Burnside got stuck in the mud, we received orders to pack up; this was good news for us; we felt sure we could get into no worse place than this mud-hole.

We got aboard the cars at Falmouth; arrived at Aquia Creek about dark, then took the transportation boat and landed at Newport News. This we found to be a change for the better; it was a very pleasant place. Here they gave us tents, and plenty to eat as good as the army could afford. There were some who were not satisfied; and if you had found them in private life, you would have heard them growling continually about something.

Our regiment went into camp about one mile from the landing. Here we had a good drill-ground; drilled six hours each day. I enjoyed my stay in this place very much.

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Our next move was to take a boat for Baltimore. The boat was an old rickety craft, and came near sinking, during a slight gale going up the bay. Arriving at Baltimore, we took the cars bound for the South-West; this was a very pleasant ride, although we were somewhat crowded.

When we arrived at Pittsburg, we found a good supper awaiting us, and I think those in charge of the tables can truly say that we did justice to the hot coffee, ham, &c., that was set before us.

Thanks to those true and noble hearts that were so mindful of their country's defenders. All along the route from Pittsburg to Cincinnati the inhabitants threw into our cars baskets, boxes and pails, filled with good things. This was a pleasant route, the scenery in some places being very beautiful. I should like to go over it again, only under different circumstances. I should be very glad to make the acquaintance of the generous-hearted people of Ohio.

Leaving Cincinnati, we crossed the Ohio river into Covington, Kentucky. Here we again got aboard of the cars, and arrived at Lexington. We went into camp about one mile from the city, in a beautiful grove; the fair-ground was only a short distance from us. I think I never saw a fence come down more quickly, and, as if by magic, a village sprung up, with its streets running north and south beneath those beautiful shade-trees. A crystal stream of pure water ran along in the valley below, which supplied us with water for every purpose. We stayed here two weeks.

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On the 15th of April we packed up, and for nearly two months were marching about from place to place. The people treated us kindly, but we could easily discern where their sympathies were strongest. Now and then a slave would come to us for protection. I remember, one Sabbath morning, a very smart colored boy came to us, and about noon a constable came after him. The colonel told him if "he could find him, to take him back to his mistress;" this word was passed round in double-quick time. The boy was in the first tent they came to, but as they were coming in he darted out past them. Then a race commenced worth seeing; round and round the camp they went; at last, the boy started for the woods, and the constable after him, with four or five boys in blue following close upon the pursuer. Seeing the boy was likely to escape, the constable drew a revolver and levelled it at him, but before he could fire he was knocked down without ceremony, and I think got the worst of that hunt. This happened near Lancaster, Kentucky.

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In a few days we recrossed the Ohio river, went aboard of the cars at Cincinnati and in due time arrived at Cairo, Illinois, where there were boats waiting for us; went on board at once; laid at the wharf that night, and started down the Mississippi river early in the morning on our way to Vicksburg. Our company had the upper deck, therefore we had a fine opportunity to view the surrounding country. The rebels fired into us once, but did no damage. We landed on the west shore, near Vicksburg, on the 15th of June. We saw Grant's fireworks on that doomed city for two nights.

On the 17th we took the boat and ran up the Yazoo river about twelve miles, and landed again. We went into camp on the east shore, about two miles from the landing; made our beds of cane-brake, which was very nice. Here we found an abundance of blackberries. While we were awaiting the appearance of Johnston, we saw a great many things of interest; but we were annoyed greatly by snakes and lizards. Let us make our bed where we would, they were sure to find us, and claim a part of our blankets for a resting place. They were harmless, however, and we soon became accustomed to them. The lizards varied in length from three to eight inches, and were of various colors, gray, green, red, etc.

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The morning of the 4th of July dawned on us with all its beauty and loveliness, and the birds seemed to be giving praise to God in commemoration of our National Independence; with it came the surrender of Vicksburg. In the midst of our joy, and throwing up of hats, we received orders to fall in, and were soon on our way after Johnston. He fell back as far as Jackson, and made a stand; we soon came upon him and the battle commenced. For eight days we had more or less skirmishing, but it was not such fighting as we had been

accustomed to having while with the Army of the Potomac.

At last we made preparation for a general charge, but when we made it, we found empty works. The bird had flown, and had set the business part of the place on fire.

The second day after we entered the city we turned back again; this was a very hard march; we started at the quickstep, and kept it up all day. Two men fell dead by the roadside, while many others fell by the way; it was very warm, and we could get no good water, but were obliged to drink red mud as we passed through the low grounds and ravines along our route.

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As we retraced our steps, I noticed an aged lady sitting where I had seen her two weeks before, at her cottage door, smoking her pipe of cob with a stem two feet long, as unconcerned and contented, apparently, as if the rude hand of war had not laid its devastating touch upon the country about her. I do not know but what she is there yet; she seemed to enjoy her pipe very much.

In due time we reached our old camp-ground. After staying in camp about one week, we again got aboard of the boat and started down the river. We had not gone far before we run aground, and in backing off, broke the rudder, and were obliged to lay there all night. In the morning a tug came up and helped us off; they took on board a part of the Sixth New Hampshire Volunteers, giving us more room. We were eleven days going up the Mississippi river. I took up my quarters on the pilot deck, and enjoyed myself much in looking at the scenery along the route; it was grand.

In due time we arrived at Cairo, Illinois; got aboard of the cattle train, and were rolled away at railroad speed, till at length we arrived at Cincinnati, and recrossed the river to Covington. Here we again got aboard the cars, stopping next at or near Camp Nelson, Kentucky, where we had a good camp-ground, and plenty of good water. The following day we were ordered out for dress-parade; there were but twenty-five officers and men, all told; the remainder had been excused by the surgeon in the morning, or were sick with the "shakes;" so it will be seen that our regiment was very badly used up.

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We remained here about a week, and then our regiment was distributed along the Kentucky Central railroad, a company or two at each bridge, with headquarters at Paris. Companies A and F were stationed at Kimbrae's bridge, so called, about one mile south of a pretty little village called Cynthiana. There was a block-house on each side of the bridge, which made us very good quarters. Our duty, which was to guard the bridge nights, was very light, and gave us plenty of time to visit our neighbors.

The people here were very kind and generous, with the exception of a man by the name of Smith, a union man, and because he was such he thought the boys ought to work for him: cut up his tobacco, pick his apples, etc., and take their pay in promises; but this soon played out, and I have no doubt but what he lost ten times as much as it would have taken to fulfill all his promises.

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In October, I was detailed acting Sergeant of the provost guard at Cynthiana. Here I had a chance to become more acquainted with the inhabitants, and learn their views in regard to the war. It was a nigger war to most of them; but for all that, they treated us well with but few exceptions.

There were four churches in the place; two black and two white, so called. I attended them all, but I liked best at one of the colored churches, as they had the smartest preacher.

In December, 1863, the State of New Hampshire sent us about four hundred substitutes gathered from all parts of the country. About one-half of them deserted.

In January, 1864, we were ordered to Camp Nelson; went into camp on the south-east side, near Daniel Boone's cave. On the 25th, we broke up camp, and passed through the following places: Camp Dick Robertson, Lancaster, Stanford, Hall's Gap, Cuba, Somerset, and arrived at Point Burnside on the 30th, a distance of eighty-four miles. February 1st, we were occupied in fixing up our camp; while we remained here we drilled four hours per day. On the 23d, we had orders to be in readiness to march. On the morning of the 27th, struck tents, and took up our line of march; passed through Somerset and Grundy, and forded Buck Creek, Church Valley.

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It rained very hard the second day and snowed and rained the third day, so there were three inches of snow on the ground that night, and we were wet and cold and covered with mud; but on the 4th of March, we arrived near an ancient village called London; a distance of sixty miles. We remained here till the 6th, when we started on our journey again, passed through London, and, tired and footsore, arrived on the north side of Cumberland Gap, a distance of fifty-six miles, on the 10th, just as the sun was setting behind the western hills; having for supper only the crumbs of our morning meal.

On the 14, we again set out, passed through the Gap, Tazewell, Tennessee, crossed Clinch river, Leonard's Village, and arrived near Knoxville, on the 17th, a distance of sixty-five miles. Here we joined the Brigade again, and on the 21st took the road that led us across the Wildcat Mountain to Burnside Point; a distance of one hundred miles. We arrived there on the 27th about noon, drew rations, and continued our march. We arrived at Camp Nelson on the 31st; a distance of seventy-six miles.

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This was a very hard march; I wore out three pair of army shoes, on this tramp. We did not see an armed rebel on the whole route.

April 2d, marched to Nicholasville, and again took the cars, reaching Annapolis, Maryland, on the 7th. General Grant reviewed us at this place. We remained here until the 23d, drilling, &c., when we took up our line of march, passed through Washington, D. C., crossed the Potomac, and went into camp on the other side, on the 25th; a distance of forty-six miles.

On the 27th, we again started out and arrived on the plains of Manassas, on the 28th; a distance of thirty-four miles. Here we remained till the 4th of May, when we again set out and arrived on the line of battle in the Wilderness, on the 6th.

Our Brigade had been in all day, and at night were scattered all through the woods. Colonel Walter Harriman, of the Eleventh New Hampshire Volunteers, was taken prisoner.

The morning of the 7th, being the third day of the battle, was opened with a terrible roar of musketry all along the line of seven miles. It was impossible for our Commanding Chief to see but a small portion of the army, so a great deal depended on the Corps Commanders. I cannot describe the dreadful carnage of the Wilderness.

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The killed and wounded were scattered through that vast forest of underbrush, which, dry as tinder, and set on fire by the shells of the enemy, was burning fiercely. The two lines charged back and forward; we would gain a little ground in one place and lose in another. Just at dark, we were ordered to the rear, and lay down to rest. But the next morning we found ourselves on the old Chancellorsville battle-ground. Here we found human bones strewn all over the ground.

On the 9th, we moved about five miles to the left, and in rear of Fredericksburg. A battle raged at Spottsylvania. On the 10th, we went on to the line on the left; hard fighting all along the line. On the 11th, we were ordered to the rear to another part of the line; it rained hard all night. About five o'clock on the morning of the 12th, we received orders to advance.

On we went driving the rebel skirmishers before us. Now you might have seen the gallant Hancock leading the second corps to victory; they came upon the enemy unawares, and took two lines of works and seven thousand prisoners.

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We being the right of the Ninth Corps, formed on the left of the second. We got in advance of the rest of the line while coming through the woods, and formed on the left of the second just in season to receive the return charge of the rebels. We opened on them as they came up in solid column in front and on our left flank, and gave us a volley lengthwise which sent us staggering back to the woods.

We lost two hundred and twelve men out of five hundred, in less than five minutes. I received a slight wound in the leg, but I assure you, it did not hinder me from making good time for the woods. We soon rallied, and went back to the line with only one hundred men to guard the colors; the rest were scattered but came up during the day and night. Hard fighting every day till the 21st. Then Grant made one of his masterly movements round their right flank. Our Brigade started direct for their extreme right, struck them about five o'clock, and made preparations for a charge, but darkness set in, and about ten o'clock we started for the rear; marched all night, and took our breakfast on the bank of the Pamunkey river; continued our march, and on the 24th crossed the North Anna river, under a severe storm of shell bursting over our heads; we then entered the line. On the 25th, advanced our line about five hundred yards; 26th, hard fighting, but nothing gained. During the night we fell back across the river and burned the bridge.

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May 27th, we took up our line of march, crossed the Pamunkey river, and went into camp; a distance of thirty-five miles. On the 30th, we started out as rear guard for the brigade teams. May 31st, General Griffin ordered our regiment alone into the woods to try the enemy's strength; we passed down into the ravine and up a steep bluff under a galling fire, but at last we reached the top and held our position till the reserves were sent to support both of our flanks; hard fighting all day.

June 1st, 1864. All quiet till about ten o'clock; then the enemy charged on our left and were driven back with heavy loss. They also charged on our right in plain sight. Two lines came up on the double-quick till within two hundred yards. Then you might have seen a line of dusty forms spring up as if by magic, and a sheet of fire burst forth which sent them reeling back to their cover in the woods. They soon rallied again and came on with double the force that had first assailed us. Just then, one of our light batteries, of six guns, was placed in position in the woods, and gave them grape and canister.

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On they came regardless of life and fearless as demons; but soon they met a sheet of fire which seemed to consume them; they retreated to the woods for the second time, and made no further attack on that part of our line.

On the 2d, we fell back and moved about five miles to the left. At four o'clock, they came down on us and tried to get in our rear; but all to no purpose. We fought hard during the following day, but rested that night. On the 4th, we moved about four miles, and formed on the right of the line at Coal Harbor. Every one knows about this place. It will be sufficient to say that we had work to do, and I think all were glad when the order came to fall back.

Just after dark, on the 11th, we started back and took our breakfast near Whitehouse landing, and continued our march. Our next rest was near the James river, where we remained until the 15th, when we took up our line of march just at dusk, and marched all night and till four o'clock of the following day. Forming on the line of battle near the Weldon railroad, we went in on a charge, and fought more or less all night.

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On the morning of the 17th, we charged all along the line, drove the enemy back, took several pieces of artillery, and more or less prisoners. Advanced about one mile on the 18th, and during the night threw up earth works in an old oat field near a peach orchard. On the 19th, we dug our pit eight feet wide and three deep, throwing all the earth in front. Hard fighting on the left. On the 20th, hard fighting all along the line. I received a slight wound across my left temple.

June 21st ended my term in the field. I was wounded in the left arm, and had it amputated just above the elbow. Now for the hospital. I was carried to City Point on the 23d. Thanks to the Christian and Sanitary Commissions, which greatly relieved us, not only in furnishing so many good things, but in sending to us those who always had a kind word for us all.

On the 30th, I was carried on board the hospital boat, and arrived at Washington, D. C., on the 1st of July, and was carried to Finley Hospital. I was well cared for here, and my arm healed rapidly, while many others sickened and died.

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On the 22d of August, I received a furlough for sixty days. I arrived home on the 24th. I cannot attempt to describe my feelings as I crossed the threshold, and placed this good right arm around the aged form of my beloved mother, who tottered to meet me, and throwing her arms around my neck, kissed me again and again. Not less welcome was the fervent "God bless you, my son," from father. My wife was absent at this time, at the bedside of a sick sister, who died in about two weeks after I got home. Then she returned to me, and entered into the general rejoicing at my safe arrival.

Soon after I came home the stump of my arm began to trouble me very much. Gangrene set in, the stump swelled up and turned black. They carried me to my sister's, Mrs. Smith Hancock, in Franklin, where I was attended by Dr. Knights of that town. For about three weeks my life was despaired of; then I began to gain. Through the kind care of all and the skill of Dr. Knights,—but more through the providence of God,—I was spared; for what, I do not know. God knows, and he doeth all things well.

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December 2d, I reported at Concord, and went into the Hospital there. On the 8th, I was sent forward to Washington. Arrived there on the 11th, and went into Finley Hospital. I was transferred to Manchester, N. H., on the 10th of January, 1865, and remained there till I received my discharge, on the 29th of May.

My story is told.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A HISTORY OF THE ARMY EXPERIENCE
OF WILLIAM A. CANFIELD ***

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