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PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF EVENTS IN THE

WAR OF THE REBELLION,

BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE

RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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REMINISCENCES OF SERVICE

WITH THE

TWELFTH RHODE ISLAND VOLUNTEERS,

AND A

MEMORIAL OF COL. GEORGE H. BROWNE.

BY

PARDON E. TILLINGHAST,

[Late Quartermaster Sergeant of the Twelfth Rhode Island Volunteers.]

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[Edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies.]

REMINISCENCES OF SERVICE

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TWELFTH RHODE ISLAND VOLUNTEERS.

The months of July, August, September and October of 1862, were stirring times in Rhode Island,—and in fact throughout the entire North. The vigorous onward movement of our army towards Richmond, which had been long and frequently promised, was still deferred. The decisive victory won by the Union forces over Lee's army at Malvern Hills at great cost, which, in the judgment of every officer in the Army of the Potomac save one, and he the chief, should have been immediately followed by a determined advance towards the rebel stronghold, which was only about a day's march distant, was supplemented by the now somewhat stereotyped order to

"fall back," thus presenting the not altogether inspiring military spectacle of a victorious army running away from its defeated and thoroughly demoralized enemy. [Pg 6]

General Pope's campaign in Northern Virginia, inaugurated with a great flourish of trumpets, had resulted disastrously; the rebel army was greatly encouraged by the inactivity and the vacillating conduct of their opponents, and had commenced a vigorous aggressive movement. The National capital was again in imminent peril, causing a feverish excitement throughout the country; Baltimore and Cincinnati were seriously threatened, and a great crisis was evidently at hand. Vigorous measures must be adopted at once, or our boasted Republic would soon be a thing of the past.

The President, in view of the great emergency, had ordered drafts, amounting in the aggregate to six hundred thousand men, one-half thereof for three years, and the other half for nine months, the latter to be drawn from the enrolled militia; and the utmost activity everywhere prevailed in connection with the raising, equipping and forwarding of this vast army of recruits.

Rhode Island was thoroughly alive to the occasion, determined not to be outdone by any of her sister States in meeting this new and pressing demand upon her loyalty and her resources; and meeting it too, if possible, without resort to a draft, which, of course, was obnoxious to the sentiments of the people. In order to promote enlistments, the stores in some places were closed at 3 P. M. each day; war meetings were held every evening, and the greatest enthusiasm was manifested. The whole State seemed to be one vast recruiting camp, and all the people, both male and female, to be engaged in the business. For it should ever be remembered, to the praise of the women of Rhode Island, that they were fully as loyal and as devoted to our country's cause during the rebellion, as were the men; and that in very many cases they suffered and sacrificed quite as much at home, though in different ways, as did their husbands and sons and brothers in the field. [Pg 7]

In such a state of public feeling what could I, a young unmarried man, do consistent with a fair amount of self-respect but enlist? Evidently nothing; and so I left the teacher's desk and enlisted as a private in Company C, Eleventh Rhode Island Volunteers, under Captain Charles W. Thrasher. I was detailed for service in the quartermaster's department under Lieutenant John L. Clark, and shortly after was transferred with him (I never knew why) to the Twelfth, and was appointed by Colonel Browne to the office of Quartermaster Sergeant. [Pg 8]

Camp Stevens, in Providence, was a lively place during the latter part of September and the first part of October, 1862. The Eleventh and Twelfth regiments were both encamped there together during a part of this time, preparatory to their departure for the seat of war. The former left on Monday, October sixth, and the latter on Tuesday, October twenty-first.

The Twelfth Regiment was composed mainly of good Rhode Island material, and was officered by intelligent, patriotic and brave-hearted men. There were representatives from nearly all of the ordinary walks and callings of life, thus furnishing the command with facilities for almost any emergency; and it was proverbial that whatever could be done by anybody could be done by some one in this regiment. The officers and the privates were well disposed towards each other; there was a prevalent spirit of prompt obedience to orders; and in general a manifest disposition on the part of all to make themselves useful and serviceable both to the Government and to each other. [Pg 9]

A journey of seventy-seven hours from Providence, partly by rail, partly by water, and partly on foot, brought this newly-formed regiment to Camp Chase, which was situated across the Potomac from Washington, in the neighborhood of Arlington Heights. The work of pitching our tents was at once commenced and rapidly pushed forward. But before it was completed, a violent storm of wind and rain broke upon us which continued for nearly two days without intermission. And such a storm! I think I never saw the like before or since. It did not simply rain, but it came down in great broad sheets of water; it poured; it came in great gusts. And then the wind—it whirled, it roared, it got upon its giant legs, and fairly howled with rage as the weary hours of that first night in camp wore away.

And such a sorry sight as that camp presented the next morning was not calculated to promote one's military enthusiasm, to say the least. Many of the tents, all of which had been hastily erected, had been blown down during the night, and the drenched and shivering inmates were wandering about in search of shelter or assistance in again erecting their uncertain habitations. Baggage and camp equipage were scattered in all directions, and confusion held high carnival generally. As if this were not enough for beginners, we were also treated to our first installment of Virginia mud, which covered the entire surface of the ground to a depth of two or three inches. No description of this unique article, however, is necessary here. It is perhaps needless to say that our first impressions of a soldier's life in the "Sunny South" were not altogether favorable. [Pg 10]

But this storm, like all others, came to an end, and the bright, warm sunshine, together with the diligence of many busy hands, soon repaired most of the damage; so that the regiment was able to appear on brigade review in gallant style, on Tuesday, the twenty-eighth of October, the fourth day after our arrival, before the venerable General Casey, in whose division it had been brigaded. [Pg 11]

One week was the length of our stay at Camp Chase, at the end of which brief period we folded our tents and made a "Sabbath day's journey," although somewhat longer than that permitted by the Jewish economy on that sacred day, to Fairfax Seminary. (I may remark in passing that perhaps not the most scrupulous regard was had by most of the commanders who conducted the operations of our armies, either to the Jewish or Christian economy concerning the Sabbath day). This proved to be a charming location, indeed. The land was high, overlooking the broad Potomac

for a long distance; the city of Alexandria, situated two miles to the south, was in full view, while in the distance on our left was the magnificent dome of the capitol at Washington. The land sloped in a broad, undulating sweep towards the Potomac in front of us; the large and dignified brick buildings of Fairfax Seminary, then used as a hospital, were situated just to the north, in the rear, surrounded by a stately grove of trees (which, sad to say, speedily succumbed to the soldier's axe); several fine country residences were scattered about in the immediate vicinity, [Pg 12] evidently the recent homes of affluence and luxury, but now abandoned to the tender mercies of strangers in arms, being used mainly by general and field officers, with their staffs, for headquarters. And although their owners were rebels fighting against the Government, I must, nevertheless, confess to a strong feeling of sympathy which I then had for them, and thousands like them, in the untold and untellable distress, privation and suffering which they and their families must have experienced in being driven as exiles from their homes and firesides, their property appropriated to the use of their enemies, and what they, in the main, honestly considered their inalienable rights, taken from them. But such is and will continue to be the fate of war.

Regiments of soldiers were on every side of us. A few rods in front was the Fifteenth Connecticut, Colonel Wright; in the rear was the Thirteenth New Hampshire, Colonel Stevens; on the right the Twenty-seventh New Jersey, Colonel Mindil; and on the left a stalwart regiment of "six footers" from Maine; while for a mile or more in all directions little else was visible but [Pg 13] camps of soldiers. Truly this was a "tented field." Everything about our new camp, which was named Camp Casey, was soon put in the best of order, cleanliness and good order being prime virtues with Colonel Browne, and always being strenuously insisted on.

Our company was detailed each day at first for picket duty on the long line at the front near Cloud's Mills, which was about five miles distant; but subsequently the entire regiment performed this duty for twenty-four hours at a time, alternating with the other regiments of the brigade. The regiment was diligently perfecting itself in the manual of arms, and a military air and bearing were everywhere apparent. We had now commenced soldiering in good earnest. My principal duties, under the direction of the quartermaster, were to see that the commissary department was kept constantly supplied with everything in the way of subsistence which the army regulations allowed. Washington and Alexandria were the great reservoirs of these supplies, and to one or the other of these places I went three or four times a week, accompanied [Pg 14] by two or more four mule teams, with which to haul the stores to camp. The great army bakery was in the basement of the capitol building, whither we went for our supply of bread. And I think I do not exaggerate by saying that I have seen a line of army wagons half a mile or more in length, each awaiting its turn to be filled with the nice brown loaves. I need hardly say that after leaving the vicinity of Washington we bade an enforced good-bye to soft bread.

On one of my journeys to Alexandria, after getting my teams loaded with rations, I took a stroll about the somewhat antiquated city, visiting places of interest, amongst which was the Marshall House, where the brave Colonel Ellsworth met his terrible fate, and from which house the entire banisters of the stairs which he ascended in going to the roof to haul down a rebel flag, had been carried away piecemeal by visitors, as mementoes of the tragic event. Other parts of the building had also been sadly mutilated for the same purpose. But the stars and stripes had permanently supplanted the rebel flag hauled down by the lamented Ellsworth, and were proudly floating from [Pg 15] that now historic building.

I also visited another place of interest, but with what different feelings I will not attempt to relate. It was a large block which bore the following prominent sign: "Price, Birch & Co., Dealers in Slaves." Connected with it was a huge pen to hold the slaves, and an auction block from which thousands doubtless had been bought and sold. But for this establishment and what it represented, neither the tragic scene at the Marshall House nor the gigantic military operations then going on from one end of the country to the other, would ever have been witnessed.

I was also mail-carrier for the regiment to and from the post office in Alexandria, and was always cheerfully received on my return with a heavy mail; for amongst the chief delights of a soldier was a letter from home. As there was no salary attached to this branch of the mail service I was not accused of offensive partisanship, but permitted to hold the office to the end of my term of enlistment.

November 27, 1862, was recognized by us as Thanksgiving day, although the turkey, without [Pg 16] which no Yankee can properly observe the day, was conspicuous only by its absence. The usual amusements of the occasion, however, including a sack race between two men, each enveloped in a bed-sack drawn up and tied under his chin, were engaged in and greatly enjoyed. The governor's proclamation was read by Chaplain Field, and appropriate religious services were conducted by him in front of headquarters.

As it had been currently rumored for some time that Camp Casey was to be our winter quarters, the boys had taken great pains to make their habitations as snug and cosy as possible for the rapidly approaching cold weather. The non-commissioned staff, of which I was a member, appropriated to their use a roofless negro hut in the rear of the stately old mansion house which was occupied by the colonel and staff for headquarters, and by using the fly of a large tent for a roof, and otherwise improving it, we converted it into very comfortable quarters, anticipating quite a jolly time therein during the winter. The mess consisted of Sergeant Major Daniel R. Ballou, subsequently promoted to the office of lieutenant for bravery at the battle of [Pg 17] Fredericksburg; Commissary Sergeant Amasa F. Eddy; Quartermaster's Clerk Erastus Richardson; the Quartermaster Sergeant, and William, the colored boy.

But alas for all plans which have no firmer base than rumors in the army. For the regiment had no more than fully settled down to housekeeping for the winter, when, on Sunday, November thirtieth, orders were received that Colonel Wright's brigade, of which the Twelfth Rhode Island was a part, would move to the front the next day at twelve o'clock. As to their destination, no one knew save Colonel Browne, if indeed he did, and, as a matter of course, speculations and conjectures of all sorts were freely indulged in. "Shelter tents" were issued at once, the men were ordered to provide themselves with three days' cooked rations and have everything in readiness to move promptly at the appointed time. Truly, "there was hurrying to and fro, and gathering in hot haste," each one busily making ready for his unknown journey. There was but very little grumbling about leaving our nicely arranged camp and beautiful situation, although we had but very recently received what seemed to be almost a positive promise that these should be our winter quarters. [Pg 18]

The baggage was reduced to the lowest marching standard, and the men ordered to take nothing in their knapsacks except what they actually needed. The consequence was that a large portion of their "traps" had to be left behind, and judging from the number of officers' trunks which I shipped to Rhode Island after the regiment left, I doubt not that more dress uniforms adorned the wardrobes at home than their owners in the field. Such things look exceedingly nice on dress parade or review, but they are not altogether useful on a forced march or in a fight.

The hour of departure having arrived, the companies marched from their several streets, the regimental line was formed, and all was in readiness for a move. I must confess to an almost overwhelming feeling of loneliness as I saw the long soldierly column moving off, led by the splendid band of the Thirteenth New Hampshire, for amongst other things I thought it quite probable that before I should again see them, their ranks might be thinned by the terrible shock of battle. And so, alas! they were. But having received orders from the colonel to remain in charge of the camp, which remained as before, except that its occupants were gone, the tents being all left standing, I had no alternative but to obey. About seventy men were left in the camp, all of whom, with the exception of the quartermaster's clerk and myself, were on the sick list. Truly this was "a sick house with no doctor," for the surgeon and each of his assistants had gone forward with the regiment. We were cheered, however, just at evening by the return of our kind-hearted assistant surgeon, Doctor Prosper K. Hutchinson, now long since gone to his reward, who was sent back to remain with the sick ones until they should be able to join their comrades. The clerk and myself now appropriated the colonel's somewhat luxurious quarters to our use, and as we had plenty of provisions and a good cook, there was no occasion for us to complain of our fate. [Pg 19]

The fourth day after the regiment left, winter set in in good earnest. Snow fell to the depth of several inches, and the weather was bitterly cold and severe. I contrasted my comfortable quarters, as I sat by a blazing wood fire at night, with those of my comrades huddled in shelter tents and shivering from cold, somewhere on their tedious march to the front, and heartily pitied, while I could not alleviate, their condition. With the aid of some of the convalescents I struck the tents, turned over the camp stores and equipage, except a small part which was to go forward to the quartermaster's department in Washington, settled my accounts with the Government, and, through the kindness of the quartermaster of the One Hundred and Eleventh New York, who loaned me the use of his teams, hauled the balance of the baggage to Alexandria, placed it on board a boat for Acquia Creek, and on the seventeenth of December took leave of Camp Casey, and with thirteen men went forward to join my regiment. It was found encamped near General Sumner's headquarters on the heights opposite Fredericksburg, which place I learned it reached after a week's march from Camp Casey, travelling upwards of sixty miles—part of the time through the mud, and part thereof through the snow and over the frozen ground. My friend, Captain Lapham, who experienced the hardships of this never-to-be-forgotten march, has already vividly described it to you in his admirable paper on the Twelfth Rhode Island. [Pg 20] [Pg 21]

The terrible battle of Fredericksburg had been fought three days before my arrival at Falmouth, and I knew of it only from others and from the fearful havoc which it had made in the ranks of my comrades, upwards of one-fifth of the entire regiment having been either killed, wounded, or found missing at the close of that sanguinary contest. The part taken by the gallant Twelfth has also been graphically portrayed in the paper just referred to, by one who took an honorable part therein, and it would be presumption in me to attempt a word in addition.

The great Army of the Potomac, now upwards of one hundred thousand strong, was stretched along the eastern bank of the Rappahannock from Falmouth southward to, and including, General Franklin's division, and for miles there was but little space between the regimental camps of this mighty host. Our picket line was on the left bank of the river, while that of the enemy was on the right in plain sight, and for the most part the two lines were within reach of each other's rifles. But there was little firing done, it seeming to be tacitly understood that their principal business was to mutually watch, instead of shoot, each other. Anxious to see how rebels in arms looked, I rode the length of our picket line and inspected them as best I could, from this tolerably safe distance, and became satisfied that a nearer approach was undesirable. [Pg 22]

Our base of supplies was Acquia Creek, about fifteen miles in our rear, towards Washington, and thither I had to frequently go for our subsistence. The trains to this place were daily laden with the sick and wounded on their way to the great hospitals in and around Washington. And some of the sights that I saw in connection with the removal of our poor, maimed, sick and dying soldiers, shortly after the terrible battle, would be too painful to relate. I do not mean that they were not as well treated and as kindly cared for as was practicable under the circumstances, but that from their great numbers, the inadequate means for handling them, and the distance over

which they had to be transported in crowded box cars and filthy steamboats before much could be done for them, it was impossible but that their sufferings in many cases should be of the most aggravated character. [Pg 23]

Our situation while in front of Fredericksburg was anything but comfortable. The men lived in all sorts of rudely constructed cabins, bough-houses and even subterranean huts, having no tents save the miserable misnamed shelter tents, which were used only as roofs for the conglomerate of structures which their ingenuity had devised. The fire-places were made of logs cemented and plastered with mud, and the chimneys mainly with empty barrels set on top of each other, (the heads being first knocked out,) and they also cemented together and plastered with mud. This Virginia mud, when thoroughly dried by the fire, is almost as hard as common brick. The water which we had to use and drink here was simply execrable. I don't think it was so bad as that in the Cove Basin, but it had a very similar appearance. Each little spring and rivulet were eagerly sought and constantly used by continual streams of soldiers, necessarily keeping them in a perturbed and more or less filthy condition; and besides, it was impossible that some portion of [Pg 24] the vast amount of offal accumulating from this great army should not find its way into these sources of our water supply. This was specially so when, as frequently happened, several regiments were encamped on the same little stream. Much sickness was caused during our uncomfortable stay here by this detestable water.

On the sixteenth of January, 1863, we received marching orders, but were directed to remain in camp, simply holding ourselves in readiness to move at short notice. The line of march of the right grand division commenced on January nineteenth and was continued through the twentieth. Regiment after regiment, followed by long strings of batteries, continued to move directly past our camp all day long, going to the right. Another great battle was supposed to be imminent. But alas for human plans; whether made by great generals or by persons unknown to fame, they are exceedingly liable to be thwarted. On the afternoon of the twentieth a cold northeast storm of wind, snow, sleet and rain came on and continued with increasing force for more than thirty-six hours, which necessarily put an end to the strategic movement of General Burnside, for the roads [Pg 25] became utterly impassable for the artillery, and practically so for all military purposes. After floundering about in the clayey mire for three days, the brave fellows came tramping back, weary and thoroughly disgusted, and again took up their abode in their wretched old quarters. Our gallant General Burnside was now relieved of the command of the great Army of the Potomac, and General Hooker appointed to succeed him.

On the afternoon of February ninth, we broke camp and took the cars for Acquia Creek, en route for Fortress Monroe, as was supposed, but really for Newport News. There was hilarious rejoicing on all hands at the prospect of at last getting away from our abominable quarters. The huts were set on fire; bonfires were made from the great piles of combustible débris which had accumulated during the winter; the rude barns which had sheltered our horses and mules added to the conflagration, and for an hour or so before embarking we held high carnival amidst the smoking ruins of "Camp Misery." At Acquia Creek we went on board the transport steamers [Pg 26] Metamora and Juniata, and the next morning steamed down the broad Potomac.

The agreeable change of situation, together with the pleasant sail, were very invigorating, and the men seemed almost to forget that they were soldiers, and to imagine themselves on some holiday excursion. Arriving off Fortress Monroe at four A. M. of the second day out, we awaited orders from General Dix, which being received we proceeded to Newport News and disembarked. We had at last got beyond Virginia mud, though still in Virginia, the soil at this place being light and sandy, and the ground for miles almost as level as Dexter Training Ground.

The schooner Elizabeth and Helen from Providence, which we had long been expecting, arrived about the same time. She brought a little more than three hundred boxes from friends at home for our regiment, and our portion of the cargo of vegetables was about ninety barrels. So that, altogether, we had a "right smart heap" of the good things from home. The contents of the boxes being largely of a very perishable nature, were considerably damaged on account of having been [Pg 27] so long on the journey. But we made the best of it, and enjoyed the unpacking of those boxes quite as much, without doubt, as our friends at home did the packing. Nothing could have been more beneficial to us than the generous supply of vegetables which we received, having subsisted mainly on salt meats and hard-tack while at Fredericksburg.

"A" tents were here issued to the companies; everything was cheerful and tidy about the camp, and we seemed to be living in a new world. My duties called me to Fortress Monroe nearly every day, which gave me a delightful little sail, together with charming scenery and plenty of work. The scene of the exciting and unequal contest between the Merrimac and the Cumberland, in Hampton Roads in March, 1862, was immediately in front of us; and about a mile from the shore, in the direction of Norfolk, could be seen a portion of the masts of the latter, emerging from the water.

After a stay of precisely six weeks at Newport News, during which time nothing of very great importance transpired in the Ninth Army Corps, all of which were encamped at this delightful [Pg 28] place, the Second Brigade, of which the Twelfth was a part, was ordered to the far-off city of Lexington, Kentucky. Our regiment at once embarked on the steamer Long Island for Baltimore, whence we were to go by rail to the West. Some of the scenes on board that steamer at night were ludicrous in the extreme. I have heard of one's "hair standing seven ways for Sunday," of things being "at sixes and sevens," and "all heads and points," but I must aver that the packing of the men on that boat exceeded anything I had ever seen in the way of mixing up human beings. They bestowed themselves in every conceivable position. It was almost an impossibility to go three steps without causing some one to cry out, "Keep off from me!" or, "O, my fingers!" an oath

generally preceding the expression, just for the sake of making it emphatic. The head of a soldier might frequently be seen mixed in with the feet of two or three of his immediate neighbors. And in one case I discovered two men lying directly under one of the horses, fast asleep. I soon ascertained, however, that they had been imbibing too freely of poor whiskey, and that therefore there was probably little immediate danger from their situation. [Pg 29]

A sail of sixteen hours brought us to Baltimore, and a ride of three hundred and forty miles over the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad took us to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where we arrived at twelve o'clock on Saturday night, March twenty-eighth, tired and hungry. To our great joy we were immediately invited into the large and beautifully decorated hall occupied by the Soldiers' Relief Society, where we found a splendid supper awaiting us. There were twelve tables, each running the entire length of the hall, each arranged to accommodate one hundred men, and all richly laden with an abundance of delicious food and fruit. Compliments were few and exceedingly brief, but the rattle of crockery and knives and forks was long and continuous. The Seventh Rhode Island was in the hall at the same time, and you may be assured that Little Rhody showed an unbroken front here, as she had already done under more trying circumstances elsewhere. Suspended from the front of the platform was the following in large letters: "Pittsburgh Welcomes Her Country's Defenders;" while underneath this was "Roanoke, Newbern, Fredericksburg, Burnside, and the Ninth Army Corps." [Pg 30]

After the sumptuous repast was ended, Colonel Browne stepped upon the platform, and in a few appropriate and feeling remarks returned his thanks to the citizens of Pittsburgh for their hospitality to the soldiers of Rhode Island, and closed by proposing three cheers for our benefactors, which were given with a roar that seemed almost to raise the roof. We then marched out to make room for others that were waiting, the remainder of our brigade being near by. One of the waiters, who, I was informed, was the daughter of one of the first citizens of the city, told me that this hall had not been closed night or day for more than a week, and that every soldier who had passed through the city for a long time had partaken of their bounty if he chose to do so. Nearly five thousand had been fed during the past twelve hours, and still there was an abundance.

At ten A. M. we took the cars for Cincinnati, which we reached after a pleasant ride of about four hundred miles through the most delightful section of country we had yet seen. We almost imagined ourselves making one of "Perham's Grand Excursions to the West." Everywhere along the route we met with tokens of welcome and encouragement. White handkerchiefs fluttered from ten thousand fair hands, while the stars and stripes were displayed "from cottage, hall and tower," in great profusion. At Steubenville, Ohio, I should judge the inhabitants were nearly all at the depot on our arrival, where they greeted us with cheer upon cheer, besides innumerable expressions of loyalty and good will. Five long trains of cars, containing the five regiments of our brigade, kept within a short distance of each other during this entire journey, and when the forward train stopped, the others would come up within a few rods of each other, thus constituting an almost unbroken train for about two miles. The impromptu foraging parties that emerged from each of those trains whenever they came to a brief halt, it is unnecessary to describe to veterans. [Pg 31]

The brigade received a perfect ovation at Cincinnati. The streets were crowded with the enthusiastic populace, many buildings were brilliantly illuminated, and the entire conduct of the people proved most conclusively that the Union sentiment here was dominant. While passing along one of the streets our regiment was treated to a perfect shower of nice white handkerchiefs, which were thrown from the windows of a large brick block by a company of ladies. Each of these souvenirs was delicately perfumed and bore the name of the fair donor. We were also treated to another supper here, which, had we not fared so very sumptuously at Pittsburgh, would have been pronounced the *ne plus ultra* of feasts. After eating till we could eat no more, a fresh supply was brought on with which to fill our empty haversacks for the remainder of the journey. [Pg 32]

I was busily occupied all night, in company with a squad of men, in transferring the baggage across the river to Covington in ferry-boats, and loading it on board the train which was to convey us to Lexington, which city we reached the following day, having been six days on the journey from Newport News. We encamped on the State Fair Grounds, west of the city, a spacious and charming location, adorned with elegant shade trees, and surrounded with the stately suburban residences of some of the chivalry of Kentucky. You may perhaps infer that we were somewhat influenced by our aristocratic surroundings when I inform you that while here, our fire-wood consisted mainly of black-walnut, the ordinary fence-rails in that vicinity being composed of that material. [Pg 33]

The Sunday following our arrival here, the regiment was visited and briefly addressed by the venerable General Leslie Coombs, of Kentucky, that staunch and life-long enemy of secession, who was a friend and old acquaintance of Colonel Browne. His tall and manly form, his long, flowing white hair, and his stately bearing, together with his stirring and patriotic remarks in favor of the preservation of the Union and the vigorous prosecution of the war, made an impression upon my mind that I shall never forget.

After a week's sojourn here, our brigade turned its face southward and commenced what subsequently proved to be a long series of marches back and forth across the State, protecting exposed points and preparing for a probable meeting with the rebels either under General Breckenridge or General Morgan, who were constantly menacing the southern borders of the State. And besides, the mountainous districts thereof were infested with marauding bands, mainly under the general direction of Morgan, who were carrying on a guerrilla warfare both [Pg 34]

against the Unionists of the State, who constituted a majority of all the people, and also against the Union forces stationed there, thus keeping the citizens in a constant state of anxiety and trepidation. The pillaging and murdering of the peaceable and inoffensive citizens of that would-be loyal State by these organized bands of ruffians, constitute to my mind one of the darkest pictures of our civil war.

Twenty-two miles over a macadamized road, through the celebrated "Blue Grass" region, brought us to Winchester, a pleasant inland village in Clarke county, where we were allowed to remain for the full period of eight days. Our next stopping place was at Richmond, a very inviting post-village of about fifteen hundred inhabitants in Madison county, twenty miles south of [Pg 35] Winchester. This march, which occupied two days, took us through some of the most picturesque natural scenery to be found in the State, including Boonesboro, the scene of Daniel Boone's famous exploits with the Indians, at which place the entire brigade crossed the Kentucky river in a common scow which would hold only fifty men at a time. This delayed us for at least half a day, so that we had a good view of the wild surroundings.

I must here relate a personal incident. After arriving at Richmond, I was sent back to Winchester to bring forward some stores and supplies which had been necessarily left there. Our teams had not arrived from Covington, and I was detained for three days awaiting their appearance. I was stopping at the house of one Mr. Bush, a well-to-do planter, whose acquaintance I had made while the regiment was encamped there. On the third night of my stay with him I was suddenly aroused from a sound sleep at one o'clock by two soldiers who had entered my room, and who immediately confronted me, one with a drawn sword, and the other with a revolver, which he held in one hand, and a lighted candle in the other. They said nothing, [Pg 36] except to caution me that any attempt to move from my present position would be at the peril of my life. One of them commenced to search my clothes, while the other stood guard over me, holding his glistering revolver uncomfortably near my head. I thought my hour had probably come, taking it for granted that the men were rebel soldiers and had taken advantage of my isolated situation to first rob and then dispatch me. But I finally mustered courage enough to ask them their business as politely as I knew how, and was promptly informed, greatly to my surprise, that I was a rebel spy and their prisoner and that they were Union soldiers sent there to arrest me. I at once felt relieved, knowing that I could readily establish my identity, and furthermore that I was tolerably safe anyway in the hands of Union soldiers. Mr. Bush, who had followed them into the room in his night-clothes, immediately assured them that I was not a rebel spy, or even a rebel, but a member of the Twelfth Rhode Island Volunteers, and manifested considerable indignation that he should even be suspected of harboring rebel spies. Some papers and letters in my pockets supported the testimony of my host, and after considerable time spent [Pg 37] in examining them, my brave (?) captors concluded that I was not the man they were looking for, and left me without so much as an apology for their mistake, to ponder upon my deceitful appearance. I learned the next day that two rebel spies had in fact been prowling about the neighborhood for several days, and that these officers (for such they were) had been searching for them.

A week at Richmond, three days at Paint Lick Creek, a tributary of the Cumberland, a week at Lancaster, and on we go, still southward, till we reach Crab Orchard, a Kentucky watering place of considerable note, where we remained for ten days. It was not every brigade that was allowed to spend this length of time at a fashionable southern watering place during the sultry days of June, at the expense of the Government.

Instead of proceeding still further southward, as had been expected, we were here suddenly ordered to execute a "right about face," and retrace our steps to Nicholasville, a point twelve miles south of Lexington, where it was understood we were to take the cars en route for the far- [Pg 38] off city of Vicksburg, where we were to assist General Grant in the siege against that rebel stronghold. This was not encouraging news to soldiers whose term of enlistment would expire in a little more than thirty days. Back we went, however, through the dust and heat, making the distance in two long days, the boys frequently rallying each other on the march with the remarks: "It's all in the nine months, boys;" and, "Why did you come for a soldier?"

Just as we got in sight of Nicholasville another surprise awaited us. One of the General's aids came dashing up to Colonel Browne with orders detaching his regiment from the brigade and directing him to report to General Carter at Somerset, more than seventy miles away, without delay. Half of this distance lay directly back over the route we had just travelled. This was, indeed, provoking. But we were soldiers, and had learned that our first and principal duty was prompt and unquestioning obedience to orders. So we bade good-bye to the other regiments of our brigade by giving three hearty cheers for each as they marched past us on their long journey [Pg 39] to the West, and immediately turned our faces southward again and started for Somerset.

It then being nearly sunset, we bivouacked for the night as soon as we came to a convenient place, and resumed our backward march at daylight the next morning. The First Tennessee Battery and a regiment of mounted infantry soon joined us, and in company with them we reached Somerset, having gone by the way of Camp Dick Robinson and Hall's Gap, after a four days' march. In six successive days we had marched one hundred miles. And what was somewhat remarkable, we went into camp at the end of this time with not a man left behind.

After a stay of ten days at Somerset, during which time our base of supplies was at Stanford, thirty-three miles away, and could only be reached by our mule teams, we moved down to the Cumberland river, where we encamped on a high and precipitous bluff overlooking the river and the rugged mountainous scenery for a long distance. A brief rest and on, on we went again, bivouacking for a night on the battle-field of Mill Springs, where General Zollicoffer met his fate; [Pg 40]

climbing the mountains with our heavily laden mule teams, building bridges, constructing roads, and making but slow progress over the roughest country that I ever saw. Several of my teams were capsized and rolled down a steep embankment, mules, drivers and all; others got mired in swamps, and it was with the greatest difficulty that they were ever extricated; but we pulled ourselves along in one way and another over a distance of thirty miles of this sort of country, and finally reached Jamestown (popularly known as "Jimtown"), on the southern border of Kentucky, on the twenty-third day of June, which place proved to be the end of our journey southward.

The Thirty-second Kentucky infantry, called the "thirty two-sters," Colonel Wolford's famous cavalry regiment, six hundred strong,—the most dare-devil set of fellows, probably, in the Union service,—together with two mounted regiments of infantry, here reported to Colonel Browne and were temporarily placed under his command, and everything made ready for a brush with the rebels, which was daily expected, General Morgan being reported just in front of us with a large [Pg 41] force. On the twenty-ninth of June our pickets were suddenly attacked and driven in by the enemy, causing the greatest excitement in camp. The long roll was instantly sounded; the men rushed to their companies with all possible speed; the regiment was formed in line of battle at a double-quick by Lieutenant Colonel Shaw, and all was ready for the fray. Company A, Captain Alexander, and Company C, Captain Allen, had been previously stationed about half a mile in front, on a road leading south towards the Cumberland river, where they had felled trees and erected a sort of rude barricade called Fort Alexander, in honor of the captain in command, which position they continued to hold.

The battery took a position on the Columbus road, on which the enemy was approaching; the other regiments were just in the rear, while Wolford's cavalry went forward on a keen run, their famous commander being at least a hundred yards in front of his men when he passed our regiment, presenting, in connection with his headlong followers, a scene of the wildest excitement. He speedily came in contact with the enemy,—whose particular object at this time [Pg 42] was the capture of our battery,—drove them back without bringing on a general engagement, captured a score or more of prisoners, and so thoroughly routed and scattered the enemy by his bold and vigorous dash, that they made no further attempt to dispute the possession of this antiquated town with our forces until the morning of the fourth of July following.

Our quartermaster's train, however, was attacked two days later, on its way from Green river, whither it had been for supplies, by a guerrilla band of about fifty men; but as the train was guarded by a company of mounted infantry from the Seventh Ohio, the attack was repulsed after a vigorous contest, with some loss on both sides, and our provisions and quartermaster arrived in camp unharmed the next day, to the great joy of the regiment, who were nearly out of supplies.

On the third of July a battle was fought near Lebanon, which was a short distance to the north of us, between a portion of General Carter's forces and those under General Morgan, in which [Pg 43] quite a number were killed and several wounded.

We commenced the celebration of the glorious Fourth by forming in line of battle with alacrity at half-past three A. M., our pickets having been again driven in, and the rebels seeming determined to have a bout with us before we left Kentucky. And I think our men would as soon have fought as not on this occasion, being tired of the constant annoyance, and ready to prove to Kentucky bushwhackers what kind of stuff they were made of. But, fortunately for both sides doubtless, the rebels remained outside of "Jimtown," and our forces remained inside, resting on their arms all day, and momentarily expecting an attack, which, however, was not made. And on the fifth of July, General Carter, deciding doubtless that this part of the State was not worth fighting for any longer, abandoned it to the enemy and moved his forces northward; first to Somerset, and then to Stanford, our base of supplies, which he continued to hold. Somerset was again reached after three days of the most difficult marching we had ever experienced, a heavy rain storm being in progress most of the time, rendering the movement of the artillery and heavy- [Pg 44] laden army wagons well nigh impossible. With ten mules on one team, and two industrious swearers to drive them, I was only able to make a distance of two rods through the mire in the space of one whole hour, on one occasion during the first day of this march, which, by the way, was on Sunday.

Of course the army could move no faster than the wagon train on this march, as the rebels were immediately in our rear, ready to pounce upon us if a good opportunity was offered.

Eight days of continuous marching, most of the time over the same route we had travelled twice, and some of it three times before, and we were again at Nicholasville, where our regiment took the cars for Cincinnati by the way of Lexington. Our term of service had expired, but at the request of our greatly beloved General Burnside, we remained at Cincinnati for a week to assist in protecting that much frightened city from the raids of the somewhat ubiquitous General Morgan, who had preceded us from "Jimtown" to that more populous and inviting community. [Pg 45] Another journey of a thousand miles—not, however, on foot—and the Twelfth Regiment was again at home.

MEMORIAL OF GEORGE H. BROWNE,

[Late Colonel of the Twelfth Regiment.]

Colonel George H. Browne departed this life at Providence on the twenty-seventh day of September, A. D. 1885, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, sincerely lamented by all who knew him. He was a Rhode Islander by birth and education; thoroughly imbued with the history and traditions of the State, and always identified himself with its best interests. Conservative, candid and outspoken, and an excellent judge of human nature, he was not easily deceived or led to do an unwise or even an injudicious act. To say that he was a wise, prudent and thoroughly conscientious man, is but to voice the common sentiment of all those who knew him.

Since September of 1862, I have known Colonel Browne well, and been honored by his constant [Pg 46] friendship. During the period of his service in the army, my duties brought me in almost daily contact with him; I was one of his mess during our Kentucky campaign, and had the opportunity to study his character and habits with deliberation; while since the war I have known him in the walks of private, professional and political life. And for stalwart manliness, transparent honesty and true nobility of character, I can unhesitatingly say that I have not known his superior.

As the commanding officer of the Twelfth Regiment, he at once inspired both the confidence and love of his men. His utmost energies were continually put forth for the efficiency and usefulness of his command, while his efforts for the personal welfare of each individual member thereof were proverbial. Indeed, in the latter respect he seemed more like a kind father watching over the welfare of his children, than a cold military commander issuing the stern edicts of war. It was his daily habit to go about the camp and personally inspect the same, frequently making his appearance in the tents and huts of the privates as well as in the quarters of the officers, for [Pg 47] the purpose of ascertaining their condition as to cleanliness and comfort; inquiring after the wants of the men; visiting the hospital and speaking words of hope and good cheer to those who were sick, and in many other ways seeking to minister to the welfare of his command. A single instance of his unselfish devotion to the good of his men illustrates this characteristic.

On Sunday, May 3, 1863, his regiment marched from Richmond, Kentucky, to Paint Lick Creek, a distance of twelve miles, through a drenching rain. Many of the men had become foot-sore or otherwise disabled by reason of the great amount of marching they had recently done, and some of these became unable to complete the journey; whereupon, Colonel Browne, Lieutenant Colonel Shaw, and other field officers, gave up their horses to the use of these disabled ones, and themselves tramped with the men through the mud and rain for a good part of this distance.

Colonel Browne was a brave man. He faced the guns of the enemy at Fredericksburg where the battle waxed hottest, with as much apparent coolness as though simply facing his regiment on [Pg 48] dress parade. A ball pierced his mantle; "the noise of battle hurtled in the air," and death-dealing missiles were flying thick about him, but he neither wavered nor blanched. Wherever his regiment was ordered to go, thither he promptly went in front of it, inspiring his followers with courage both by his genuine heroism and his manly words of cheer.

His bravery, however, was not of the ostentatious or noisy sort. It was more like the current of a still but deep-flowing river, which moves calmly but steadily onward, irresistibly drawing to itself, and unconsciously controlling all the lesser streams about it. He never paraded his virtues before his fellow-men, or posed as a hero or statesman for public applause. Indeed, he utterly scorned all attempts made by others for the sake of notoriety and position as vulgar and unworthy. He admired, however, and honestly won, the fame which follows generous and noble deeds, and not that which is sought after by the demagogue and the charlatan. He was notably considerate and courteous in his treatment of his subordinates in office, never seeming to [Pg 49] command, while in fact exercising the most perfect control.

Colonel Browne retained an abiding interest in the men of his regiment to the day of his death. His greetings to them on the street, in the marts of trade, and especially at their annual reunions, were always warm and hearty. A single incident will serve to illustrate his interest in their welfare. Meeting me one day last winter on Westminster street, he said: "Judge, *I've got some good news to tell you*," and invited me to step into a bookstore which he was then passing while he should reveal it. "Do you remember Sergeant ——, of Company ——?" said he, his face all aglow with that expression of happiness which was peculiar to him. "Yes, Colonel, I do; what about him?" "Why, he's been out West, and by diligence and skill in a profitable business which he there engaged in, first as clerk and subsequently as one of the firm, and now as the manager thereof, has actually made his fortune, and is to-day a rich and highly respected man. And he came to see me the other day and told me all about it." And then with much enthusiasm and [Pg 50] honest pride in his manner, said: "*Isn't that good news from one of our boys?*" Had this sergeant been his own son, he could hardly have manifested more joy in his prosperity.

His private benefactions to several of his men who had long been in indigent circumstances, are known and remembered by Him who said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

There was no circumlocution or ambiguity in Colonel Browne's methods. Whatever he had to do, he went about in a direct and business-like way, and prosecuted it to completion in the same straightforward manner. He had none of the arts or tricks of the demagogue, and was utterly incapable of double-dealing or hypocrisy. And no man whom I have ever known, more thoroughly detested these base qualities in others. He had no patience with shams or subterfuges of any sort

whatsoever, and did not hesitate to frown upon them with indignation whenever and wherever they appeared. If diplomacy has been correctly defined as being the art of concealing one's thoughts in his language, he never would have made a successful diplomat; for he always said just what he meant, and always meant just what he said. [Pg 51]

Colonel Browne's abilities, both natural and acquired, were of a high order. He had a broad, vigorous and well-balanced mind, which had been thoroughly trained and disciplined to habits of logical and exact reasoning, and a power of analysis which led him to correct conclusions with almost mathematical certainty. He was not a superficial thinker, but always insisted on laying bare the very roots of the matter under consideration, and then gradually working upwards to natural and legitimate conclusions. His processes of reasoning were inductive rather than dogmatic. With such a mind, so constituted and developed, he was eminently fitted for positions of trust and responsibility, whether private or public, which foot the citizens both of his native town and State were not slow to learn and appreciate.

As a legislator he was diligent, prudent and conservative, possessing the courage of his convictions, always exerting a large and salutary influence by his candor, integrity and good judgment, and readily won the confidence and esteem of his associates. Public office was with him a public trust, to be administered with strictest fidelity and care. [Pg 52]

In his chosen profession, in which the strength of his vigorous manhood was spent, he attained eminence and preferment, being a recognized leader of the bar of this State for many years before his death. A safe and able counsellor, an ingenuous and convincing advocate and an honorable opponent, he brought to the practice of his profession those qualities which insure success. Quibbles and quirks and barren technicalities were an abomination to him as a foundation upon which to base an action or a defense. Like Solon, "who built his commonweal on equity's wide base," so he built his legal structures on the broad principles of justice, truth and right.

In 1874 he was elected to the high and honorable office of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of this State by a legislature composed mainly of his political opponents, a monumental tribute to his integrity, learning and ability. He declined the office, however, and remained in the profession which he had dignified and honored to the day of his death. [Pg 53]

As a private citizen he was a man of unimpeachable character, generous impulses, and high and noble purposes. His life was pure and unostentatious, and his manner frank and undisguised. Let us ever cherish his memory, and strive to emulate his virtues.

Transcriber's Note

Typographical errors corrected in the text:

Page 33 Kentuckey changed to Kentucky
Page 34 guerilla changed to guerrilla

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