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**Author:** Henry H. Meacham

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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE EMPTY SLEEVE \*\*\*

## THE EMPTY SLEEVE:

OR THE

LIFE AND HARDSHIPS

OF

HENRY H. MEACHAM,

IN THE

UNION ARMY.

*BY HIMSELF.*

SPRINGFIELD, MASS.:

SOLD FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE AUTHOR.

PRICE, 25 CENTS.

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## PREFACE.

READERS, in writing this book, I do not intend to bring before you a work of ability; but simply to describe a few of the many scenes that I passed through while in the Army of the Potomac and in the hospital. It is true, that I did not suffer as some of our soldiers did; but having lost my right arm, which excludes me from most kinds of work, I have taken this method of gaining a living. I have myself and wife to care for, and my wife's health being poor, makes it still harder for me to get along; and thus, by writing this book, I hope to place myself and wife in comfortable circumstances. With these few remarks, I throw myself upon the generosity of the public, thanking them for the kindness I have already received, and assuring them that I shall always be grateful for their aid in the support of myself and wife.

HENRY H. MEACHAM.

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## THE EMPTY SLEEVE.

AT the breaking out of the Great Rebellion, I was engaged at carriage-making in the town of Russell, in Massachusetts, but thought it my duty to enter the service in defence of my country, and do what little I could to keep traitors from trampling the good old flag under their feet. I

went and was examined, but was rejected. I came back with downcast feelings, but was determined to try again. As time rolled on, and my health improved, I tried again for a soldier's life, but without success. I little knew the hardships and perils, of active service, and thought it very pretty sport. But it was not the novelty of the scene that inspired me to go, but the love of my country. Finally, at my third examination, I was accepted; and my heart beat with joy.

I left Springfield, the twelfth day of September, perhaps never to return; and went to Long Island, in Boston Harbor. There I remained one week; then the Transport came to take us far from our homes. Many were the wistful glances that were cast back towards our home, where were the ones we loved most dear; and how we longed for one more farewell salute before we left our native State; but that could not be. The wind was blowing hard (it makes my brain dizzy to think of it now); but we had to go. We little knew but we should find a watery grave before reaching the scene of action; but the weather calmed, and we had a very pleasant voyage, and arrived at the front, where I was placed in Company E, Thirty-second Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers, who were lying at Culpepper, Virginia (which is about sixty miles from Washington, and in the direction of Richmond). Here I first commenced my life in the army. We were not destined to remain here long; for in less than two weeks, Lee, with his host of rebels, came marching on to Washington. Then commenced Meade's retreat for Centreville. That was the first marching I had done, and I then hoped it would be the last, for my feet were badly blistered. My readers can judge for themselves how they would like to march twenty-three hours out of twenty-four, with their feet in that condition; but, thank God, we were two hours ahead of Lee and his army, and it saved one of the most bloody battles of the war; for, had Lee got the heights of Centreville, we should have been cut off from all supplies and captured, or obliged to cut our way through the enemy's lines.

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When we arrived at Centreville, we gave three cheers, which rang through the lines for miles, thinking that we were once ahead of Lee's time. But many of the men that were taken sick or fell into the enemy's hands, died, without any one to care for them, there alone, away from friends,—wife and children, father and mother, brother and sister, never to know what became of their husband, father, child, or brother. Such were the scenes that occurred on this march, but they were trivial compared to experiences that followed.

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Soon after this, came the battle of the Rappahannock Station. Though short, it left many a man lying cold in death; but we succeeded in driving the enemy back behind their entrenchments at Mines Run. This was near Thanksgiving time; the weather was cold and rainy, and we had to wait some time before we could follow them. But the time came, and on we went, not knowing where we were going,—perhaps to our long homes. Oh, that long and lonely night after we arrived there! But in the morning, we marched to the right, to Robinson's Tavern, a distance of two miles. It was raining hard at the time, but about noon, it cleared away and was very cold. We remained there until the next morning, when we again commenced our advance. We had not far to go before we came near the enemy's works. Here we halted and formed our lines; and after waiting a few hours, received orders to be in readiness to make an assault on the enemy's works at four o'clock.

Here we remained without food, for our rations were all gone, and we knew not when we should get more. We did not move until one o'clock the next morning, when we turned out in the cold, and marched about a mile to the right. We arrived there long before daylight; and there we had to stay, for we could not stir around to keep warm, as the enemy were in sight, and we should be likely to get their shells. We were to make the attack at nine o'clock; but nine o'clock came, and yet we did not go forward. Some of our men crossed Mines Run stream, which was dammed up to make the water deeper; but nearly every man froze to death, and on this account, we did not receive the orders, as we expected. That was a long day to us, being in the cold, with thin clothes and no food. We remained here until the shades of night hid us from the foe. Our hearts beat with joy when we were ordered to fall in, for we knew that we were going back, and should not make an assault; but when we got to our old position, we were hungry, tired, and cold. Oh, that long night, with but just enough covering to keep us from freezing! We were all glad when we could turn out in the morning, and have some exercise and fires.

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Another day wore slowly away, and at night, we took up our line of march for the rear. As we turned our heads back in the direction of the enemy, we could not help thinking that many more of us were on that march than would have been, if we had made the assault. It was three o'clock in the morning when we crossed the Rapidan. We marched half a mile further, and encamped.

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Morning dawned bright and beautiful, and it was late before we took up our line of march again. We felt weak and faint, having been two days without any food, and no signs of getting any that day; but we marched with good spirits, thinking our work done until the next spring.

#### RATIONS, AFTER THREE DAYS' FASTING.

As the sun was setting in the west, we arrived at Bealton Station, and were gladdened by the sight of teams with our rations. Here we halted, and got ten pieces of hard bread and a small piece of pork. Many poor men ate the whole at once; but in these cases it made them sick, as they did not stop to pick out the worms, for the bread was very wormy; but we must eat it, or have none. After getting our rations, we marched two miles, to Liberty; here we went into camp, and the next morning formed our line of picket-guard, but not knowing how long we should remain here, did not build our winter-quarters for a few days.

Finally, we concluded to run the risk, and put up cabins. We then commenced, and in two days had what we called a good home. The cabins were constructed of pine-logs, piled together like a log-house, and for the roofs we used our shelter-tents; thus forming our winter homes, which were very comfortable. We had a fireplace and chimney, made of small sticks and mud. In Virginia, the mud makes good mortar, being mostly red clay. The guard-duty was every third day; we had to stand two hours, and off four, rain or shine. Thus you may judge what it is to be broken of your rest every third night, and perhaps be drenched with rain; then to stand all night on guard, with your clothes frozen stiff. This was the condition that we were in on picket-duty; but we have often since looked back to those days, and thought what easy times we had. They were easy to what we had after General Grant took command of the armies of the United States. For our fires, we had to carry our wood about half a mile, while the teams were lying idle. The officers had a good time at this place, as they seldom went on duty; but the private soldiers had the work to do. [8]

An incident occurred here, that may be worth relating. The major of our regiment thought he would go out and see a young lady by the name of Whitehouse. So, one day, he and his orderly started, and passed our picket-guard (as he had command of the lines, we could not stop him), to see his sweetheart (a lady he had got acquainted with some time before, I know not how). But he went, as many young men do; and, as he rode up to her gate, found, to his surprise, her brother there with a strong guard. They came out with drawn pistols, and he, with his orderly, were taken prisoners and sent to Richmond. We started in search of them, but with no success. The second day, we heard from them by way of the lady, for she came and told the colonel that they were captured. He went to Libby Prison, and there remained about four months; when he and others made their escape. Some being retaken, were treated worse than before; but the major returned home. Prison-life was his punishment for disobedience of orders. He remained at home a short time, and then returned to his regiment, which was lying near the James River. [9]

But to return to the scenes of camp-life. The weather was cold, and the snow often fell to the depth of one foot, but did not last but one or two days, making the ground very splashy. We had to be out, let the storm be ever so hard. When in camp, we had nothing but our log-huts with cloth roofs to keep us warm. Our camp was laid out in streets, one company forming one street.

In a short time, there was a call for soldiers whose time was nearly expired, to re-enlist, and get a heavy bounty and thirty days' furlough. The men thought more of the furlough than they did of the money. The Thirty-second most all re-enlisted, and came home as a regiment, bringing their arms with them, which but few regiments had the privilege of doing. But we could not all come home. There were one hundred and fifty of us that had to remain behind. The service was harder than before, as we had to do fatigue-duty; besides, we built a fort at Warrenton Junction. But time wore slowly away until the regiment came back. We were all glad to see them. [10]

One of my comrades was taken sick a few days after returning, and I took care of him, besides doing my duty on the picket-line, which made my work very hard,—harder than my constitution would endure. After he had got better, I was taken sick with a fever while on the line; I had hard work to get to my cabin. When I arrived there, I could not sit up. The doctor was called, and he did what he could for me, but to no use, I had to go through with the fever. Our beds were constructed by driving a crotched stick down at each corner, and then placing a pole from one to the other. After this, we laid small straight sticks across them, then spreading our rubber blankets over the whole, we thus formed our beds; we used our knapsacks for pillows. How long those days seemed, my flesh burning with fever, and the bed being so hard! But I had as good care as could be expected, in such a place as that. There I remained four weeks, before I was able to sit up; those were the longest weeks I ever saw. I little thought, as I lay there, that I should ever return home to my family, for I was married two years previous. But God saw fit to spare my life, perhaps to aid in conquering the foe.

It was not long after I got well before I started on the campaign of 1864, under the generalship of U. S. Grant. He was appointed to that position March 9, and on the twelfth of that month, he took command of the whole United-States' armies. Then we knew that we were to do some fighting. But that was what we went for; and we thought the quicker we commenced, the sooner we should be through and return home (what there was left of us). [11]

Spring came, and the season was beautiful. Cherry and pear trees were in blossom, then apple-trees took their turn. We longed to remain there, but as the ground became settled, we heard of the forces beginning to concentrate around Brandy Station and Culpepper. As we were left at our old place, we began to entertain hopes that we should remain. But we were not kept in suspense long; for, on the morning of April 30, 1864, the bugle sounded for us to pack our knapsacks and be ready for the march. About noon, we bade farewell to the spot where had been our homes for the past few months, and moved on, bidding good-by to some of our southern friends we were to leave behind. Some of them were very friendly and kind to us. When I had nothing else to do, I used to make axe-handles, and helped one of our neighbors mend his wagon. I also repaired clocks, and for my pay would get milk and tobacco. So I had the privilege of sending my money all home to my family, thinking, that if I lived to return, it would be of use to me. But I was destined to disappointment, for the money was all gone before I returned home. [12]

On the thirtieth of April, 1864, we marched to Rappahannock Station, and there camped for the night. In the morning, we again set out; but had only a short march before we arrived at Brandy Station, where we again halted and remained two nights, the first and second days of May. While I was there, I called on my cousin, who was a member of the Thirty-seventh Regiment. While I was gone, the bugle sounded the advance, and I was obliged to run to overtake them, but did not until they halted again. At eleven o'clock, the orders for advance were given, and the whole of the great Army of the Potomac was again in motion. We knew not where we were going, but at the dawn of day we were at the Germania Ford. After crossing, we halted to rest. We improved the time in making coffee and getting our breakfast; then we were ordered forward again. We took the plank-road leading to Fredericksburg, and marched to the pike-road running by the Wilderness Tavern; turning, and marching on that about half a mile, we halted, placed our guard, and remained until morning. When we crossed the Rapidan River, we turned and cast a wistful glance back, for we thought it was the last time we should ever cross it; and so it proved.

In the morning, the guard was called in to resume their march. We did not know that the enemy were near, when a squad of cavalry came riding up to headquarters, and the pickets were ordered back with a new detachment. The rest of the troops formed in line, and commenced building breastworks. But we had to work expeditiously to get them completed. We knew the time of action was near at hand. How we longed to see the loved ones at home, ere we entered the deathly strife.

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We had not long to wait before the crash came, and the battle was raging with fearful effect. What feelings of anguish were excited, of which none can know anything except those who have been there. The sound of battle is not pleasant, even if a person is not in danger. We remained a short time behind the works that we had built, and then moved off to the right, and across the pike-road. There we were exposed to a direct fire from the enemy. There my tent-mate was wounded by a minie-ball; I was standing by his side when he was hit. How bad I felt, because I could not assist him or do anything for him! But we were not allowed to stop, and we did not hear how badly he was wounded until the next day, when we heard it was nothing but a flesh-wound. I was glad it was no worse.

After crossing the road, we moved to the right a short distance, and then forward. The ground was covered with pine and shrub oaks, so it was almost impossible to get through. We advanced a short distance before we came near the enemy. We were in strong force, and then commenced our work of death. It was heart-rending to see the wounded, dead and dying, lie on the ground under our feet, and the number still increasing. That was a horrible place of death and destruction in the dense wilderness, with peals of musketry, like distant thunder, sounding from right to left. Sometimes it seemed the hardest on the right, and then in the centre; and so on. The position we held was the centre, being a part of the First Division of the Fifth Corps, under the command of General Warren. But night came on at last, and the shades of darkness put an end to the strife for that day, neither party seeming to gain any advantage over the other. We again moved by the left to our old breastworks, and there remained during the night, tired and weary. We slept on our arms (what little sleep we had), and in the morning, the combat was renewed with increased vigor, as if the rebels were determined to break our lines, or die in the attempt. This suited us, for it weakened their forces more than ours; but they got sick of it in a short time, and then our skirmishers would take some of the guns that lay on the field and put five charges into them, and then tie them to trees, well-sighted at the enemy, and pull them off. Thus we passed a few hours of the day, when the battle again commenced, raging more fiercely than before, and lasted until late into the night.

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Thus ended the second day's fight in the Wilderness. The loss in the Thirty-second was very slight; in Company E, there were only three wounded. Again we slept on our arms, eager to commence again at dawn of day. On May 7th, the fighting was not so severe, little more than skirmishing, and we had some rest, which we needed very much. May 8th, there was not much fighting. We noticed the army in motion again, but we still held our lines until night, when we silently left our breastworks, never to return. We passed the hospital, where were two thousand of our wounded, some waiting to have their wounds dressed. What a horrible sight to behold, men mangled in every form! The line having moved to the left, we reached Spottsylvania. We marched to the left until we arrived at Laurel Hill, where we were again in action, and where artillery was used. The first day was occupied in skirmishing and strengthening the skirmish-line. But as night came on, the line charged, and drove the enemy back, so that we could look into their works. We then formed our rifle-pits on the crest of the hills, within twenty rods of the enemy. We were in those rifle-pits two days, unable to raise our heads above the embankment with safety. It rained nearly the whole time, and we were drenched to the skin, and covered with mud. In the morning, after we were stationed in the rifle-pits, we, with the rest of the brigade, were ordered to charge the enemy's works, and at seven o'clock, the assault commenced. On we went to death. They reserved their fire until we were but a few yards off, and then opened with grape and musketry. They had such a flank-fire on us, that we could not stand it, and all that returned had to crawl away. We lost about half our number in this assault; and the next morning, we were ordered to make another charge. But we knew too well the strength of their lines to go willingly to sure death, and the orders were countermanded. But we had to remain in the rifle-pits forty-three hours, having no sleep and no chance to straighten our limbs. When we were relieved, we had to start for Spottsylvania. The night was dark and muddy; the mud was half-way up to our knees, and all that long night (this being the third night), without sleep. But as the

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morning dawned, we arrived at Spottsylvania. We had nothing to do until nearly night, so we had a chance to rest our weary limbs. But late in the afternoon, we had to form, and move to within a few rods of the court-house. Here we entrenched ourselves, having good rifle-pits and good breast-works; so we were confident they could not drive us away. The next morning, the artillery opened their deadly fire on both sides. The sound was almost deafening; the shells howling through the air and over our heads (for I lay between the two lines, on the picket-line).

We were well supplied with rations, but the hardships were too much for us; we daily grew weak and poor, and at that time, it did not seem that I could keep with them much longer. But I little knew then what a man can stand if obliged to.

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When we left Spottsylvania, we marched in a southerly direction, crossing the Po and Tar Rivers, and after a long and tiresome march, we arrived at the North Anna River. This we crossed at one of the fords, the first that we knew the foe were near; and the orders given to make no noise in crossing. The banks were very steep on the southern side. After crossing and ascending the hill, we formed our lines (there was not more than a brigade that crossed at that time), and commenced our advance. We had not far to go before coming in contact with the rebel pickets, to whom we paid no attention, but kept steadily along, when they broke in utter confusion, and retreated back to their general lines. We advanced but a short distance before halting and building breastworks; but we could not get them completed before the rebels were upon us again, with twice our number. They halted a moment at our first volley; but again they started and pressed on, but to no purpose, for the incessant stream of fire and leaden hail was more than they could stand. They succeeded in turning our right, which brought them in range of our artillery, when seventeen pieces opened on them. This was more than they could endure, and what were left fled back, leaving their dead and wounded in our hands, with many prisoners. Their loss was heavy, while ours was very light. The next morning, we advanced to Nolen's Station, on the Virginia Central road, and commenced tearing up the track. After we had completed this, the weather was rainy and the night dark.

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We recrossed the river, and started towards Richmond. After marching about two miles, we halted to draw rations, and the rations for the picket were left behind. The company commissary and myself were left to guard them. We remained until ten o'clock the next day, when we started in pursuit of our corps, they having twelve hours the start. We marched nearly all night, and on the second morning came up to the regiment just as they were starting out on a reconnoissance. I there got a pass to march in the rear, but to come to the regiment that night. Oh, how thankful I was to get a chance to rest my feet, for they were badly blistered and very sore. That morning, we had for breakfast fried chicken (one that we had captured on our march) and sweet potatoes. It was the best meal that I had while I was in the service. When we got a little rested, we started again in pursuit of the regiment, which we found without any difficulty. We had a good night's rest, but when morning came, we had to take the advance. We moved about two miles, skirmishing most of the way. Finally, we made a charge, and drove the enemy from the heights. There we rested a few moments, and charged again, but to no purpose; we could not drive them away from their works. The fighting was very hard; our loss was very heavy. We lost in that charge some of the best men of the regiment, and we mourned their loss as we would a brother. But owing to the hardness of our work that day, we were allowed to fall back, and rest for a few days, which we needed very much.

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At this place, General Grant rode along the lines. The men's cheers were almost deafening. We were then near Shady Grove Church, but in a short time the move commenced for Coal Harbor. On account of a colonel in the Ninth Corps withdrawing his men before orders, we were left in a bad position, for the enemy were on three sides, and near enough for the shells to come among us from all directions. This was a critical position. But as darkness overspread the field of action, we had stopped their advance. In the morning, our lines were strengthened, and were ordered to charge. The enemy had fortified during the night. The Twenty-first Pennsylvania Cavalry, dismounted, here joined our brigade. They were a grand set of men, numbering eleven hundred; while our Thirty-second was now reduced to two hundred, and we had lost about five hundred. We formed under the enemy's musketry fire, after getting over our breastworks. Then the order to advance rang through the lines. On we went, until nearly out of breath, when we saw the enemy leaving their first line of works, and retreating behind their second; but their artillery made sad havoc in our lines. When we got to the breastworks, we opened fire on them before they could recover from the panic.

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I beheld several vacant places in my company when I looked round. There was a man who fought almost by my side, who was shot, the ball passing through the jugular vein of the neck. He fell at my feet, and died in a few moments. We had four to bury belonging to Company E, and there were two mortally wounded.

The next morning, the enemy had left, and we started for Coal Harbor. At this place, we did not have much fighting to do, our duty being picket in the Chickahominy Swamps. Here I saw where General McClellan's men were stationed, the trees being marked with name, regiment, company, and depth of water. I should have thought more would have died than did, for the water was nearly waist-deep; and there the men had to stand, when they might have stood a few rods in the rear, and had dry ground to stand on. These swamps are a dismal place. The river at this point is so narrow that you can fell a tree across it, and then cross on the tree. It is very muddy and deep. The two picket-lines were friendly. We did not fire at each other, but often passed to the centre of the stream, and there traded coffee for tobacco and hard-bread for corn-meal. We tried all we could to get them to desert, and were often successful. A good many of

them got tired of the war, and wished it would close. I did not blame them for that, for their cause looked dark, and there was not much probability of success. Still, they thought we could not take Richmond. After doing picket-duty a few days, we were ordered to cross the river, and move toward White Oak Swamps, and destroy the bridge there. We were in support of the cavalry, which went and did the work; it took all day.

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We started on another flank movement towards the James River. It was a hard march, all day and part of the night, not leaving us much time to rest. When we arrived there, we pitched our tents in a wheat-field, and commenced gathering wheat for bread. The guard were stationed about half a mile in advance of the camp, under the command of the major of the Twenty-first Pennsylvania Cavalry. We arrived on the line after dark. In the morning, he ordered an advance of fifty rods, which brought us into the woods. We hurried and got our breakfast, for we saw that the major wanted to show his authority, and we expected another move; and so it was, for in the course of an hour, he ordered an advance of a mile and a half in line. The men were stationed five paces apart. The advance commenced, but we had not gone more than half the distance, before the line was broken, and it was noon before it was formed again. We made some raids; I got for my share two nice salt shad and a small bag of corn-meal. Thus wore away the day. Late in the afternoon, we returned to the old line, were relieved, and went to our camp for the night. The next morning, we crossed the James River. At what point we landed I never knew; our brigade was among the first that crossed. At last, the lines were ordered forward, although it was four o'clock in the afternoon. The sun was pouring down its intolerable heat, and it did not seem as though man or beast could live. There was no air in motion; but we must go, or die in the attempt. We marched from four o'clock until about seven without halting, when the doctor rode ahead of the column and directed a halt. The orders then came that we should stop five minutes every hour, and that every man should keep in his place who possibly could, for we were to be at Petersburg at two o'clock that night, a distance of twenty miles. We could, at this time, plainly hear the sound of the cannon. On we went, our road being lighted by the burning of the houses on the way, not one of which was left, for miles. At twelve o'clock, we halted for refreshments and rest, within two miles of our destination. Here the roll was called, and the officers were ordered to see that none fell out; and when we arrived at our destination, the roll was called again. This was what we called a forced march. One member of Company E (although I am sorry to say it) was in the habit of falling out to keep out of battles, and on this march he tried his luck, but was picked up by the cavalry provost-guard which followed in the rear. They marched him to the front, where he was compelled to fight, while we rested for a day. We then advanced, and passing the outer works of Petersburg, beheld scenes too horrible for description. The ground was thickly strewn with the dead and dying, showing what havoc had been made in their lines. Driven from their works, they rallied and tried to retake them, which they could not do. Their loss must have been more than ours at this place of action. We marched on for a short distance, then forming our lines, awaited orders. In about an hour, they came; and we moved into a wheat-field and charged the enemy's lines, driving in their pickets, and capturing the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroads.

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#### TWO KINDS OF OFFICERS.

Here we lost our colonel, an officer we all loved for his bravery and for his kindness to his men. We thought more of him than of all the rest of the officers in the regiment. He was a man beloved by all at home, and was willing to fare as his men did. There was a great difference between Colonel Prescott (for that was his name) and another Federal officer who would ride his horse over the men, when they got tired and exhausted on the march, even if they had a pass to march in the rear. And then, look at a certain captain who left us at Spottsylvania under the pretence of being sick; but the sound of the battle is what made him sick; for he was a coward, in my opinion. He never returned to the regiment again. The next we heard of him, he was boarding in Washington, and then in New York State, in good health.

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Company E was commanded by the orderly sergeant the most of the time. Occasionally, there would be a lieutenant detailed to take command, but would soon be relieved by wounds. The company as well as the whole regiment suffered great loss after taking the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad. We were relieved and arranged for another charge; this time, to take a ravine running lengthwise of our lines, that the enemy had possession of. We formed on the railroad behind its high banks, cutting steps so that we could climb up; and then the order was given to forward. "Forward! forward!" rang through the lines, and with deafening veils we went on. The ravine was cleared, and we had possession of it. But our day's work was not yet done, for we immediately formed for another charge; this time with fixed bayonets and for their main works. When all was in readiness, the orders again rang through the lines, and we were in motion. On, on, we went, their shot making sad havock in our lines; but still we kept on, until the Twenty-first Pennsylvania Cavalry, dismounted, broke, and fell in our rear for us to protect them. What a shame it was, for, in a few moments more, the works would have been ours. The enemy had commenced to retreat, and were drawing away their artillery, when they noticed the break in our lines. But we rallied, and held our lines until late in the night; when we were relieved, and moved off to the left, and stopped to rest. Fatigue, hardships, and sickness had worn me down, but I would not ask to go to the hospital, for I would rather be with the company as long as possible. I think this was the eighteenth of June, 1864. We did not move out of range of the enemy's fire; and there was a good many wounded without being able to do anything to prevent the fire. I was hit four times during the day with spent-balls. This was the twentieth or the twenty-first of June, 1864.

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## SEVERE FIGHTING—WOUNDED.

We again moved to the left, and halted in the woods, where we remained until the afternoon of the twenty-second, when we were again called into action, the enemy having succeeded in breaking the lines between the Second and Ninth Corps. We were hurried on to death or victory. We succeeded in stopping them, when we were ordered to another point still farther to the left, where the enemy were concentrating their men for another break. We moved by the left flank, which brought the dismounted Twenty-first Pennsylvania Cavalry ahead. The artillery-fire here was the worst I had seen. The air seemed to be full of the deadly missiles. It was almost impossible for a man to stand for a moment. But through this fire we must pass. We started as fast as we could run; but when we had got into the heaviest of the fire, we found, to our horror, that the dismounted Twenty-first Pennsylvania Cavalry had become frightened and lain down. We could not pass them, and so were obliged to stand under the awful shelling until they could be got out of the way. [26]

At this place, I lost my arm,—a place never to be forgotten. Here Fort Hell was built. As we were standing there, a shell came through one man, and then exploded, taking my right arm off, and killing four of my comrades, making five lives destroyed and one wounded. I never expected to get home, or even off of the field, but I was bound to do all I could. When the shell hit me, it took part of my arm off, and I never saw the hand afterward. I was at this time one mile from any surgical assistance, and walked that distance, while the blood was fast leaving me, notwithstanding I had bandaged the arm as tight as possible. Only by the assistance of kind friends did I reach the ambulance. The surgeon examined my arm, and could then do nothing more than to cord it again, and give me morphine. I was so weak as to be unable to walk or hardly stand. I got into the ambulance to go to the Division Hospital, which was seven miles distant over rough roads. It was eight o'clock in the evening when I arrived at this hospital. I had for a bed, a straw bedtick spread on the ground (but no straw in it), and no pillow to put under my head. I had not long to wait before the surgeon came along; and, at my earnest request, I was taken to the amputating-room, and placed on the table. This is the last that I remember until after my arm was amputated. After I had fully come to my senses, I was conducted back to my bed on the ground, and there I remained during the night with my bloody clothes on. [27]

What a long and sleepless night, with no one to console or comfort me. My thoughts ran back to the happy days I had spent at home, and to the loved ones I had left behind. I never expected to behold them again; But morning came at last, and the bombardment around Petersburg was renewed. We could hear the firing distinctly. How often I thought of my poor soldier friends that were still remaining in the regiment on the morning of the twenty-second of June, 1864. We could only muster ninety guns; how many were wounded on that day, I never knew. At about ten o'clock on the day of the twenty-third, one of my company came in and saw me lying there with my bloody clothes on. He brought a pail of water, and washed off the blood which had dried on very hard; he also got me some clean clothes; and I felt some relieved after getting cleaned up, but I had no appetite to eat anything. All I could do was to lay there and think of home, and think how they would feel when they came to know of my misfortune,—to hear that I was crippled for life. These were the thoughts that passed through my mind, as I lay on the ground at the hospital. I was cared for as well as I could be in such a place; but it was different from being at home, with a dear mother or wife to care for one. But I was not destined to remain at this hospital long, for on the twenty-fourth, we were sent to City Point. I thought I should be nearer home, so I was anxious to go; but when I found I must go in an army wagon, my heart failed me. I had seen men with nothing but flesh-wounds get into the ambulances, and I in an army-wagon; but this was my lot; and I had to stand it, or die. The roads were very rough, and we were a long time in going seven miles. How glad I was when I got to the end of my journey. There I met one of my company that was slightly wounded. He met me at the wagon, and helped me out, and I was placed in the ward with him. The scenes at City Point are beyond description. The dead were being carried out at all hours of the day, and I expected to go in a short time. The heat was awful. I remained a few days, and then went to Washington. The very thought of City Point is enough to make one sick; it was the worst place I ever saw; thousands of men lay mangled in every form. The sight was too horrible for description. When I was informed that I was to go to Washington, my heart beat with joy, for I knew that I should be near my friends who were living there. While I remained at City Point, I wrote to all my friends at home, for I never expected to come home again. We were treated well, and had all the comforts that could be expected. Never but once while at City Point did I have occasion to find fault with my treatment; and then the nurse would not dress my arm, which was fly-blown, and the worms began to work into the amputation. This was more than horrid. I reported the nurse to the ward-master, and for my reply was told to mind my own business, which I thought I would do by reporting him to the sergeant; but the ward-master was anxious to buy me off, when he found that the surgeon belonged to my regiment. From that time, to the time I left City Point, I had good care; and I think that he did all that he could to get me away, and was also glad when I was gone. When I was asked if I could walk to the boat, my reply was that I could. I was told to be in readiness at ten o'clock. I had not attempted to walk at all; but, with the aid of my comrade, I managed to get to the boat. I hated to part with a friend so dear as he had proved to me; but we bade each other farewell, and parted. At about noon, the boat started down the river; I was not able to sit up, so I could not see the landscape down the James River. I rested better on the boat than I had done since I lost my arm. We halted at Fortress Monroe a short time, and then moved toward the Potomac River; and ascending that, we arrived at Washington between eight and nine o'clock in the evening of the twenty-seventh of June. [28]

[29]

After remaining at Washington a few moments, we crossed the river to Alexandria; there the ambulance took us and carried us to Slough Barracks (a portion of the Third Division Hospital), a distance of one mile. This hospital is situated about one mile from Alexandria, on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, and also near Leesburg pike-road. Fort Ellsworth stands on the right, and Fort Lyon on the left. Thus they were strongly fortified. It was very pleasant around this place; the ground was kept neat and clean, and everything was neat about the building and tents. We were treated kindly; and as I gained strength, I would go to walk every morning. This, I think, did me more good than anything else. I sent word to my uncle that I was there, and they received the word Saturday night, and came Sunday to see me. How glad I was to see them, they being the first friends I had seen since I left home. I began now to long to come home. I little thought how tiresome it was to ride; but the surgeon knew better than to let me go. I had by this time become acquainted with the assistant-surgeon of the Third Division Hospital, Dr. Elliott. I thought everything of him, as a man and as a doctor. I was finally taken with the jaundice, which, but for the friendship of a young widow lady, would probably have caused my death. She was very kind in bringing me everything that she thought would do me good. She was from Ohio, and came there in company with her husband. He entered the army; and she, with two children, were left behind. He was mortally wounded at the battle of the Wilderness, but lived until he arrived at Washington. He sent for his wife, but died a few hours before she reached there. I was one week so sick, that my life was despaired of; but with good care, I began to improve, and it was not long before I was able to go round the hospital and call on my soldier comrades. For a morning walk, I would go through the whole hospital, and say and do what I could to cheer the men up. When I was able to go out, my strength gained rapidly. Here I remained from the twenty-eighth of June until the twenty-sixth of August, when I was discharged. During the time that I remained at the hospital, I visited my uncle on Monson Hill, and had a good time and plenty of fruit.

[30]

[31]

The kindest people I ever met in the South, were the Quakers. They would call and see the inmates of the hospital, and bring them berries, peaches, custards, and, in fact, everything that the men needed. I was sorry to leave the hospital, for I had found some friends that were friends indeed. Reports were in circulation at home at the time, that I was wounded, and had died from the effects of my wounds. I had written, but the letters did not reach my friends. On the twenty-sixth day of August, I bade farewell to the hospital, never expecting to return. But at Washington, I found that my papers were not made out right, and I must go back to get them rectified. When this was done, I returned to Washington, remained there three days, and then started for home. After riding all night and until four o'clock the next day, I arrived in Hartford, Ct., where I met my wife, and remained there until the next morning, when we started for Springfield. This was the first day of September, 1864, having been away eleven months and eighteen days. I worked as watchman at the Water-shops in Springfield, Mass., until the spring of 1865, when I was obliged to resign the position on account of the law made by Congress, depriving me of my pension, if employed by the Government.

[32]

While I was in the army, I endeavored to do my duty as became a soldier, always trying to do as I was ordered, and doing my whole duty. I was sorry that I could not remain with my regiment. I have fought and suffered for my country; and thank God that the war has closed, and peace once more reigns through the land; and should war again break out, I would willingly sacrifice my other arm, or life, if need be, to sustain our liberty and independence.

In conclusion, I must say, that I am glad to see so many that are mindful of the invalid soldier, and appear to realize what he has sacrificed for their benefit as well as his own; but, on the other hand, there are a large number that have made themselves independently rich out of this war, that would see the soldiers starve before they would lend a helping hand. I have often had it said to me, "You draw a pension." My reply is, "I do; but what are fifteen dollars a month toward supporting a man and wife?" It is something, to be sure. We are thankful that it is so large. We all feel as though the Government was doing all it could for the benefit of its soldiers that have been crippled in its defence. Long may the Stars and Stripes wave "O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave."

PRATT BROTHERS, Book and Job Printers, 37 Cornhill, Boston.

**Transcriber's Note:**

[Page 27](#), "o'colck" changed to "o'clock" (about ten o'clock on the)

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