ROBERT ERSKINE 1846 – 1910

IMPRESSIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR BY AN ALIEN VOLUNTEER

Written entirely for his own amusement forty years after the War was over

(1861-1865)

THE CIVIL WAR U.S.

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In the following pages I have tried to tell in a straight forward way the things I saw during my services as a soldier volunteer in the Civil War in America during the years 1863 to 1865. My reason for writing was to give me some occupation during a short illness.

I got at last to enjoy writing and I realised for the first time what a pleasure it must be to men or women to write books which would give the world both instruction and amusement.

Writing is not in my way, neither do I pretend to have the power of telling interesting events in an interesting way, and envy those who can. The more I wrote the more I liked it, old memories came flashing upon me, scenes were reborn before my eyes, my pulses beat faster as I jotted down my story of the time of tumult and strife in which I figured so strangely.

I began to arrange my thoughts and to mark off that period of my life which was interesting and which, after I was dead and gone, would remain with my medals, my framed commissions of Captain and Colonel, heirlooms in the house of my son Gordon Douglas.

There were two classes of people in the United States, viz: Northern and Southern, the former business people called Yankees, the latter the aristocrats, and with them slavery. Richmond was the capital of the South of America, called the Southern Confederacy, with President Davis the head of the State, and General R. E. Lee, head of the Army. Washington was the capital of the Northern States, President Abraham Lincoln being the head of the State, and General U. S. Grant, at the head of the Army.

Never in the history of the world has there been such a family war. Grant and Lee, and the majority of the officers under both, were trained in the United States Military Colleges. The State expected that if their services were required they would be standing shoulder to shoulder against the enemy. Alas, what a change – countrymen against countrymen, friend against friend, and yes even brother against brother, and for what? Slavery.

The election of Abraham Lincoln in the fall of 1860 precipitated a climax which the statecraft of over forty years had endeavoured to prevent. The previous nullification acts of the pro-slavery faction in South Carolina had been in part strangled by the vigorous policy of Andrew Jackson, President of the United States.

The slave power in the Congress laid its plans to preserve the balance of power between the States. A State admitted as free territory was permitted only by the co-admission of another upholding the custom of negro slavery.

The war with Mexico was a war of the slave power to obtain, in the long run, the vast territory of Texas as a mighty empire out of which in the years to come several slave States were to be found.

The admission of, and the struggle in Kansas between the forces of freedom and the blighting breath of human slavery, was the direct cause of the rebellion of 1861.

In the Congress compromise after compromise failed. Conciliation was swept aside with an iron hand. The power of the slave holder in the Councils of the nation must be curbed, now and forever.

Stephen A. Douglas, who unfurled the banner of squatter sovereignty as a panacea for the political evils of the new territory, gave mortal offence to the democracy of the South, viz: the right of the settlers in Kansas to determine whether the State should, or should not be free territory.

The result was that in 1860 we find four candidates for the Presidency: Lincoln, the out and out anti-slavery candidate put forward by the Republican party; Douglas the choice of the Northern Democracy; Bell, a Southern Union man; and Breckenridge, the pro-slavery candidate of the extreme secession element of the South.

Thus was war to come. In the winter of 1860, and spring of 1861, State after State seceded from the federal compact. Senator after Senator and Congressman after Congressman from the South resigned their seats as representatives. When Lincoln was inaugurated he tried everything that man could do to bring back the frenzied, erring, States of the South. It was of no use. Fort Sumpter was invested by the troops of South Carolina. The Government Dispatch Boat “Star of the West” was fired upon by the same uncompromising force in arms against the Government at Washington.

On April 14th 1861 the flag of the nation was lowered at Sumpter and the Government property therein contained seized by the Confederates. On the next day, April 15th 1861, President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers. The Army and Navy had been impregnated with treason. The Southern States had a more than representative number in the former.
Resignations by the score of Army officers educated at government expense came into Washington. In the South-East, where the brain and vigour of the Confederacy gathered to seize the seat of government, the tide of battle seemed to roll in favour of the South.

It was not written that a new nation with a cornerstone of human slavery should float its standard in the new world, and the magnitude of the War has been attested by the awful sacrifices made to maintain the integrity of the Union.

The total number of enlistments, including Army and Navy, from April 14th 1861 to April 15th 1865, was 2,759,000 men for the North.

I can get no reliable information from the records of the South as to the number of men enlisted on their side. It was always understood that they had a much smaller Army than the North, as the press and the friends of the South in the North were always preaching, even going so far as to say one Southerner could whip three Yankees. It must be remembered however that the South nearly always acted on the defensive.

None but those actually living in the South could realise what victory of the North would mean to these aristocrats. The struggle was begun by most Southerners with a very light heart, and an absolute assurance of success. The Yankees would not fight, but if they were rash enough to do so the Southerners could whip them easily and, until Grant took command, it looked very like it.

One can imagine what the feelings of this proud race must have been when they commenced to see and feel that they were being beaten, and when reduced to misery and despair the question naturally was how would the triumphant Northerners treat their fallen foes when on their knees? To the surprise of the world the North treated the South with a generosity and magnanimity unparalleled. Everyone, as soon as he had taken the oath of allegiance, was restored to his full status as a citizen of the Union. No person's property was confiscated, except General Lee's, and had President Lincoln been alive I feel sure this would never have happened.

The two opposing Generals were U. S. Grant and R. E. Lee, the former representing the North or Federals, the latter the South or Confederates. Both great men. In these notes I will I am sure, call them by their surnames very often, but I do not mean any disrespect as soldiers always spoke of them as Lee and Grant.

General Lee, leader of the Southern Army of Northern Virginia was a highly estimated man, almost worshipped by the Southern Confederacy, and also filled a very high place in the estimation of people and press of the Northern States. He was a fine, tall, mighty looking man, thoroughly trained. His praise was sounded through the entire North after

every action in which he was engaged. The press of the North and South extolled him, which was greatly to his advantage as it gave him the entire confidence of his troops and made him feared by his antagonists. Lee won nearly all the battles at first and, until he met Grant, was a victorious General which made his troops superior to the North, as no troops fighting as well as those flushed with victory, a great factor in a camp. It also proved the opposite when the South began to lose and became despondent and saw the end. They lost heart and the fight qualities were taken out of them. The Northern Army saw the same thing, were encouraged by it, and fought like tigers, indeed at the tail end the Northern Army had no stragglers, and it is generally considered that the Northern soldiers were better and more reliable at the end of the War than at any period of it. There is no doubt that General Lee was a great man, and it is generally thought that had he had the same resources as Grant he would have been victor.

General U. S. Grant was a fine looking man on horseback, indeed I seldom or ever saw him dismounted. He had a strong commanding face, always wore a beard, dressed well, and one would have no difficulty if the Headquarter staff were passing, to pick him out. He was often with our Cavalry being very fond of our Commander, General Sheridan, and when there was quick and important work to be done, Sheridan was his right hand man, a man after his own heart and always selected as the Commander of such an expedition. In the winter of 1863 General Grant became Commander of the Union Armies. He was a tower of strength to the Government because he had the confidence of the people and the Army, and they knew that henceforth systematic direction would be given to the entire Army, as for the past three years there was an entire absence of system which brought failure after failure. From the moment Grant set his armies in motion simultaneously in the spring of 1864, it could be plainly seen that he would be victorious in the end, he was successfully checked by Lee on many occasions, yet he harassed Lee at so many vital points he was bound to win in the long run, having not only a superior force, but unlimited supplies for the maintenance of his troops. Against Lee's army Grant pitted himself, and I think it is generally admitted that Lee had met for the first time a General 'worthy of his steel'. Grant had the tenacity and courage of a bulldog, overcoming almost insurmountable obstacles when the shortcomings of his Generals had led to failures. The only apparent effect these discomfitures had on him were to make him more determined to discharge successfully the stupendous trust committed to his care. He guided every subordinate with a fund of common sense and superiority of intellect, which left an impression so distinct as to exhibit his great personality, being the centre about and on which everything else turned.

The Grand Movement of the Army of the Potomac commenced in the spring of 1864, General Grant in command.

The position of the Army at this time was north of the Rapidan. From this they moved on the morning of May 4th to start upon that memorable campaign, destined to result in the capture of Richmond, the Southern capital, and the Army defending it. This was not to be accomplished, however, without as desperate fighting as the world has ever witnessed, not to be accomplished in a month or in a year.

The losses inflicted and endured were destined to be severe, but the armies now confronting each other had already been in deadly conflict for a period of three years with immense losses in killed, sickness, captured and wounded.

Neither side had made any real progress towards accomplishing the final end. The South had so far held their capital which they claimed to be their sole object.

Previously they had proclaimed their intention to capture some of the Northern cities, New York, Philadelphia and Washington, the capital, and had made several attempts to do so. Once or twice they had come very near making their boast good, on the other hand the North had on one occasion almost captured Richmond.

The campaign now begun was destined to result in heavier losses to both armies in a given time than any previously suffered, but the carnage was to be limited to a little over one year.

Ten days rations with a supply of forage and ammunition were taken in wagons. Beef cattle were driven with the trains and killed as required. Three days rations and fifty rounds of cartridges were served out to each soldier and carried by him.

The country over which the Army had to operate was flat and cut by numerous streams and formed a considerable obstacle to the rapid advance of an Army. The country roads were narrow and most of the country covered with dense forests so the roads had to be entirely utilised, all bridges were destroyed before our troops came to them, consequently pontoon bridges had to be erected by the engineers continually.

The Army of the Potomac was composed of three Infantry and one Cavalry Corps commanded by Generals Hancock, Warren, Sedgman, the Cavalry by one of the finest men of the day, General Phil Sheridan.

The Quartermasters' Corp was well organised, painted on the canvas covering each wagon was the Corps badge with the Division colour and number of the Brigade. At a glance the particular Brigade to which any belonged could be told.

The wagons were also marked whether bread, pork, beans, corn, ammunition, forage, grain or hay. As soon as a wagon was empty it would return to the base of supply for a load of precisely the article that had been taken from it.

Grant's plan was to take the initiative whenever the enemy could be drawn from their entrenchments if we were not entrenched ourselves. He gave orders for a general advance.

There was very severe fighting during the entire day ending at night in favour of the North. Fighting had continued from four o'clock in the morning, sometimes along the whole line, at other times only in places.

The ground fought for and over varied in width but averaged three quarters of a mile. The killed and many of the severely wounded of both armies lay within this belt where it was impossible to reach them. The woods were set on fire by the bursting shells and the conflagration raged. The wounded who had not strength to move themselves were either suffocated or burned to death.

The fire communicated with our breastworks in places and being constructed of wood burned with great fury, but the battle still raged, our men firing through the flames until it became too hot to remain longer.

I very often after a fight when sleeping in the open, and looking at the stars, thought of a piece of recitation I had learned at school called "The Soldiers Dream". I had repeated that over and over again till I fell asleep, my, how true the poet painted. At such times I thought very much of home. I remember once after a very big fight, while lying musing in this way, of a text of scripture which my uncle, Mr. Robert Magill of Sunday School, taught his infant class. It was called our Infant School motto, and repeated each Sunday immediately after school opened. The text was 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul'. Next day I wrote my uncle telling him of my home thoughts and how this motto of the Infant School had been running through my head of late, at the same time asking him to forgive my many foolish boyish actions. He was very strict and I was not an angel, and I know that I gave him unnecessary worry. In due course I received a reply, he told me how proud he was that I had not forgotten him or the motto, and had forgotten and forgiven my all my boyish tricks. He also wished that I would come out of this foolish adventure of mine safely, and now that I was at times on the brink of eternity, he advised me 'to trust in God and do the right', and should I be spared they would all be glad to see me in Ireland. As a boy at home I had always imagined he was too religious and far too strict with children, no man could have written a nicer letter than he did to me. On my return to Ireland, he and my cousin met me at the Great Northern Depot, giving me a very warm welcome, taking me to his house where I remained for years till I got married.

I regret to say that quite a number of men deserted. A great deal of this was caused by the large money bounties offered by each State to fill its complement of men required by the Government. If these were not forthcoming a draft was necessary, so the State offered as high as 500 dollars for men, so as to try and prevent this, in several States it had to be resorted to, New York for one. I remember in Buffalo (which is in New York State) the rush for the evening papers giving the names of those who had been drafted. This drafting was done on the lottery system, the city being divided into wards, the names of those eligible to act as soldiers were put into a revolving box like a churn, the names taken out of this by a blindfolded stranger were soldiers for three years, but those who wished had the privilege of buying a substitute, rich merchants sometimes giving as much as a thousand dollars for a substitute.

This was what caused a great deal of desertion. Men would enlist in one regiment, taking of course the district in which the most money was being paid as bounty, and as soon as possible desert and try this game on under different aliases in all the big towns or cities

over the North. It became quite a common name, Bounty Jumper, some men were known to desert twenty times. We got one of these recruits. He only honoured us with his presence two days. Although desertion was punishable by death, the authorities did not push matters to this point. Desertion to the enemy and caught fighting against us, however, was certain death either by being shot or hanged. I saw seven men hung and two shot. It is a solemn sight to see two or three men walking to the scaffold, the band playing the 'Dead March', three or four thousand soldiers being present, knowing that in half an hour they will be in eternity.

After a fight the first thing done by the fighting contingent was to erect some kind of breastworks on lines laid out by the engineers. We had generally a fair idea whether we were likely to stay long by the style of the breastworks. Grant believed if only for one night to erect breastworks, even if only made like our ditches with no hedges on top, which took a very short time to make, the soil being sandy, but in case of being attacked was of great service, keeping the men in good formation and protecting them from rifle bullets as high as the shoulders. The wounded were looked after by the field hospital, assistance being given by those unemployed at the breastworks, each Regiment looking after their own. The dead were buried (in holes of fifty or sixty) in their clothing, just as they were at the fight. If they had a blanket it was generally wrapped around them. In cases where boys of a regiment discovered some of their chums, they sometimes dug a grave where he was lying and buried him there, or they might put three or four in the same grave, cutting their names on hard tack box lids to act as gravestones. This was useful if friends at home thought of bringing the remains home. It took about two days to get cleared up. If it was Infantry Regiments the trouble was over, if Cavalry or Artillery you would require your nose stuffed for three or four days, as the smell from the dead horses, which could not be burned or cremated, was sickening in the extreme.

Providence provides in hot countries scavengers. In such cases a bird of the vulture type, the local name being Turkey Buzzard, being about the size of a large turkey which followed the Army like camp tramps - at such times they gathered in thousands. Horses when dead about three days in this hot climate swell to about twice their regular size. When these birds consider the carcass ready for food, which might be called gamey, they will descend on the victim like a flock of pigeons for a feed of corn. We need not go into the process of the feast. Suffice it to say that in about 20 minutes only the bones, the tail and mane are visible. What a blessing these birds were to this country, especially in time of war.

Our Captain I held very little respect for, thinking him too old-fashioned to be in the Army. He always knew how to turn one dollar into two at the expense of his men, could always tell when a fight was coming off, could take a fever, which was worth any money to him, always getting better when the fight was over, but at times was very anxious to show he was a brave man. He had purchased a sixteen shooting repeating rifle before leaving Buffalo, this he carried in a leather socket attached to his saddle, just as we had at the camp of instruction. We thought he was a regular fire eater because no officer carried more than a revolver and sabre, but he talked big. He having been at the seat of war before joining us, we looked upon him as the fighting man of the regiment. About a

fortnight after we had arrived at the front we were for some days quiet in camp, he asked me would I go with him to the picket line, he wanted to try his new rifle. I reluctantly went with him. We were in the second line of breastworks so had to pass out of them into the front line. I had no arms except my usual revolver, which I always carried in my right boot leg, to my mind the most useful and handiest place for a horseman to carry a revolver. In the front line the soldiers were all admiring this beautiful weapon, which it really was being all nickel plated and splendidly got up. They advised him to creep along a side breastwork to the picket line as it was very dangerous to expose any portion of the body, the relieving pickets going at night. We crept on our hands and knees to these rifle pits, a distance of some two hundred yards. When we got there we found a number of sharp shooters, these are men who were under no special Army Corps, but were sent to different places along the line to pick off officers of the enemy who they recognised by their clothes. They were splendid shots and the rifles were fitted with telescope sights. I don't think they would have pulled a trigger on a Private or even a Sergeant. The Commander of Brigade or Division was more in the firing line. These sharp shooters took our measure at once, he having his Captain bars on his shoulders they were bound to respect him. We being volunteers, regular soldiers, only looked upon us as children dressed up playing soldiers. They admired his rifle, and he told them he had just brought it out to try it, asked where the breastworks of the enemy's pickets were and was shown, they being some three hundred yards in the woods (I should perhaps say it was woods for miles). He looked through some of the sandbag peep holes and declared he saw a man's head, so they told him to try a shot at him. After firing they all declared that was one, took another shot, another killed then another, with the same result, that was three so he got out his pocket knife, which was everything possible for a knife to be, opened the file part, filed three notches in the silver plated breach part. I was sitting with my back to the bank, after every shot which was a kill a notch was filed till he had seven on. I thought I detected a smile on the boys' faces, but imagined it was the registering the deaths on the breastworks with the file caused it, for I was quite prepared to believe he was a grand shot. The next time he was aiming I looked between the sandbags in front of me when, after his shot, one of the enemy hoisted a soldier's old hat on the point of a bayonet giving a great cheer. I said before I knew what I was doing 'they are only making game of you, it is an old hat you have been shooting at all the time'. The sharp shooters roared with laughter, thus ended our shooting match. We crept back to the first line of breastworks, as though our tails had been cut off and then home to the Regiment liked whipped curs. He never forgave me for my remarks and told me if I ever told the story in the Regiment he would make me regret it. I never told it till he jumped the Army.

Moses Taggart

Mosey Taggart, as he was called at school, occupied the same desk with me for years at Bell's Academy in Arthur Street, Belfast, where the hours used to be from ten till two and from four till six, hours which we boys detested as it spoiled our playtime with other boys, in fact we were at lessons all the time. Mosey left school and went to business, serving his time in Messrs. Brown, Reid & Co's Warehouse, Waring Street. Afterwards he emigrated to Canada. I served part of my time with Mr. Robert Atkinson, left his employment because he was determined to remain boss, so I also emigrated to Canada going to my brother John in London, Canada West. My brother had the best Dry Goods Store in the city and was looked upon as a big pot. On my arrival I was made a great deal of, my brother told me to take a few weeks holiday to myself, which I was only too glad to do. I commenced to fish and shoot in the district, attend all the picnics given in the neighbourhood, also driving about the country with his two horses in great style. My brother I think felt proud of showing me off, to let the people see the stock he came from in the old country, so I for months enjoyed life at his expense. A job I was well qualified to fill, but there never was a greater mistake made. I imagined I was what I was not 'a young swell'. My money began to run out, I at last asked that I be taken into the business and, an opening occurring in the office, I was appointed cashier. My brother used to go to Toronto twice a year to buy dry goods stock. On his return one time he brought two young men for salesmen in the store. One of these happened to be my old schoolfellow, Mosey Taggart, and he and I got quite chummy. My brother resented this and I think was sorry he had brought Taggart to London as he could tell the rest of the hands that we were the sons of a respectable man who kept a grocer's shop in Durham Street, and not the sons of Lord Yahoo. From Taggart's arrival, and my taking him as companion, gradually estranged us and I saw he would like to see 'the heel of my stocking' at the earliest moment. That time soon came. It was the day after Christmas.

On Christmas day, Taggart, two other young fellows and I went for a sleigh ride to a small town called St. Thomas. As we were leaving the town going down the hill, the irons which held the pole in position broke, the sleigh went to the right, I and the horses to the left, I stuck to the reins and got badly cut about the face. It was then about four o'clock, fortunately moonlight, and we had sixteen miles to drive. No blacksmith was to be found it being Christmas day, so after some hours getting ropes, straps, etc., and tying the frame the pole sits into the sleigh, we started for home. It was as light as day and it was just as well as every few miles we had to get out ankle deep in the snow to do repairs. To make a long story short we arrived at the small hours of the morning. I did not go home as I did not wish to give them trouble, so went to Stronge's Hotel, knocked up the boots and got a bed for the night. Next morning after breakfast and getting my face fixed up as well as possible, I made for the store and told my story, but it was not believed. He imagined I was drunk and fighting, etc., etc. I was a plucky youngster although only about eighteen. I said "do you not believe my story" he said "No", I said "that ends it, I would not stay with any friend whose confidence I had lost". So Mosey

and I practically got the sack and both started for Buffalo in the United States, on the banks of the Niagara.

I got employment, he did not, so after loafing around for a couple of months he enlisted in the Navy and I lost sight of him, as we never corresponded after the first two or three letters had passed. Fate so ordained it that we were to meet again. I was on a transport, Orderly Sergeant of a Cavalry Regiment, Mosey was a Jack Tar on a gun boat that was protecting us while we made a landing at City Point on the James River about six miles from Richmond, the capital of the South. This was the goal we were all working towards. I can assure you I was surprised to hear a sailor call out my name from the gun boat, after mutual recognition and a chat across from bulwarks to bulwarks, he said he would write to me if they were going to remain stationed in the James River and for me to come and see him and have a chat over old times. In about a fortnight I received a letter of invitation, so I determined to go. My friend Swift (acting as Captain of the Company) giving me permission. I had then a horse called Reindeer, very fast and very much the colour of his namesake, so we started for City Point, a distance of about nine miles, all this distance was covered by two lines of battle with batteries every three or four hundred yards apart. When I got near City Point, nearly the Base Hospital, I heard the most terrific firing from the vicinity of City Point. I, of course, thought that there was an attempt to take this our Supply Base. I saw a Southern Field Battery firing down on one of our gun boats in the river, the other firing having stopped. It was then only a duel between the battery and the gun boat. As I walked my horse towards City Point, then only a distance of five or six hundred yards, it was very interesting to see with what precision the gun boat dropped their shells over the battery, making them limber up to take a new position every ten or fifteen minutes, until at last they were either put out of action or silenced as they stopped firing. The fire from the battery was very poor, never seemed to be near the gun boat which kept steaming slowly backwards and forwards, so as to make it more difficult for the gunners in the battery to get their proper range. I approached City Point with very great caution, being ignorant of how matters stood and intending to run no risks. I was at last relieved when meeting an orderly from the Quartermasters who was going to the hospital for surgeons. I asked him what was up, he told me there had been an explosion on board an ammunition transport, a nigger had carelessly let a shell fall when disloading, it exploding had set fire to the boat with the result that in a short time the entire ammunition exploded killing and wounding some forty or fifty niggers and eight or ten soldiers. When I got to City Point I met, on the road on top of the hill, some arms, legs, etc., without their owners, lying everywhere, below at the quay, or as they call them landings, there were a row of niggers or rather the fragments of them in the goods shed, the most of them beyond recognition. Such a sight is not easily forgotten. I got my horse taken charge of at the Quartermasters and went in search of Mosey. I found him as arranged at the quay with a boat so we set off to the gun boat. When we got there Mosey had a grand dinner for me, it was evident they got much better fed than we did. We had three or four hours together telling all the news from Belfast, Canada and Buffalo that we knew. We got talking of the engagement which I had witnessed, which he made very light of, as he said, by continually keeping moving, it was almost impossible for land batteries to hit you, in fact he had very little respect for land artillery, he seemed to think the Navy were the only men who could fire straight, he

was of the opinion Cavalry was too rough a life, as he said, every night we are sure of a good dry bed, also well cooked food. I reminded him that we had the advantage if we got it too rough, we could mount our horses and skedaddle; in his case if they got blocked up they had only three chances, to be shot, drowned or burned to death. Mosey presented me with a very nice revolver he had captured from a rebel officer which I kept till the end of the War. I bade my friend goodbye as he put me on the quay again, I regret to say for the last time, as he was killed in the next engagement attacking the gun boats protecting Richmond.

Sergeant Hale

I remember one out of a number of times when we were short of rations, we had stopped in the middle of the day after a forced march, occupying about sixteen hours. One man named George Hale had some hard tack, some of the men asked him to divide, but no use, he would not part, till at last one fellow offered him his silver watch for three 'hard tack' a biscuit about four inches square and half an inch thick, which was accepted. After the fellow had got the biscuits, giving two of them to his chums, the news spread about that Hale had done this dirty trick, he was told to give back the watch, which he declined to do. Although at about starvation point the boys could not allow this to pass, so the usual method was applied, viz: two fellows behind threw a blanket over his head, a dozen of them were on him in a minute. Keeping his head always covered, the watch was taken from him and returned. When he got the blanket off his head all was quietness, he could report no person as he did not see them. Soldiers always punish such mean acts instanter. As soon as this business was over there was a cry of a sow and a brood of young pigs were down in the valley. I, among others, went to the hunt. The valley was about two hundred yards long and about fifty yards wide, we nearly all carried our revolvers in our right boot, a very handy place for a horseman, so were ready if game appeared. When we arrived some other boys had been on the hunt and had bagged two or three young ones, about three months old, and were returning to camp with the spoil. The pigs were running helter-skelter through thick undergrowth of bushes, having to pass two lines of fire. The affair became as dangerous as a real engagement, the balls flying from one side of the ravine to the other, two men being wounded before the fight was over.

Riley Smith

Riley was a mere child of about seventeen years when he enlisted, very childish in his manner, in fact it was generally thought he had a 'slate off'. When he had plenty of money after his enlistment he became a very easy prey for the 'wide awakes' at cards, a favourite game for innocents was the 'Three Card Monte Trick'. The operator has three cards which he lays on the table, backs up, say an ace and two others, he shows you the ace then he passes them over and under each other in such a skilful manner as to deceive what one might call 'Smart Fellows' then asks you to pick out the ace. This some friend or accomplice will immediately do, and of course, get his money. He may also do it a second time. A stranger may win the next time as the operator may only shuffle them slightly, but when the 'pigeon is ready to be plucked' the operator gives his peculiar shuffle, which as a rule deceives the majority of the spectators. There is a member of my family who does it so well that it is almost impossible to pick the correct card. Of course it must be remembered the operator has two chances to one. Poor Riley got relieved of most of his bounty money till at last the authorities had to put a stop to it.

After we had joined the fighting contingent, Riley got enteric fever and was sent to hospital, he was not fit to stand the severe roughing of a soldier. When he was at hospital he must have received some bad training from some of the 'Dead Beats' that were always to be found there, some of these men used to put on something to keep a sore open and make it fester, so as not to be sent to the fighting line. Riley recovered and joined the Regiment. One day it was found that Riley was wounded, the two middle fingers of the right hand shot off, so he was off to hospital again. In about three months Riley was returned with his two knuckle joints taken out, the hand brought together, so that the first and fourth fingers were quite close together. His papers from the hospital said that Riley had self mutilated himself with the idea of removing the first finger, so that he could not pull the trigger of a carbine, and to watch him in future, this of course would lead to his discharge. Riley acknowledged his guilt and said in his excitement he missed the finger and hit the two middle ones, the powder marks on his hand told the tale at the hospital. I never detailed him on any service afterwards which there was anything of importance depending on him. I really think now he was not responsible for his actions. When on guard he often used to go asleep at his post, which was always an unimportant one, such as guard of forage and the horses, or at some of the officers' tents.

I remember once Riley was on guard over some forage, it was merely to keep our own men from sealing corn or hay to give to their horse as an extra. Riley had at first sat down on a truss of hay, it was very warm, and another truss was convenient for his shoulders to lean against, so he was soon sound asleep. I was brought down to the foot of the street to see him. Soldiers having very little to do are always game for a bit of fun, so they said "let us see if we could take the clothes off him without awakening him". His carbine had fallen to the ground when I saw him first, so a lot of the boys commenced and took off his accoutrements, then his hat, next his boots, then his pants. One fellow

ran for a bugle and blew a blast that might awaken the dead. Riley awoke surrounded by his laughing admiring friends. You must imagine the picture, a soldier on guard in his shirt and blouse, as that is all he had on, weapons he had none.

Cooking

This is a subject I have often been asked how it was managed. There are two kinds of cooking, viz: company cooking in camp and cooking when on a march during active service. There is a Quartermaster for the regiment who gets from the Brigade Quartermaster rations sufficient for the regiment, according to the regimental returns of the day. A certain amount of coffee, bacon, hard tack, etc., is allowed for each man per day. This is multiplied by the number returned from the regiment and again multiplied by three, which is served out and means three days rations. The regimental Quartermaster in his turn serves this out to the Quartermaster Sergeant of the twelve companies, he in his turn serves out to the two cooks appointed for the Company. In time of peace these cooks prepare the food and at bugle call for meals the men go to the cookhouse, which is always situated at the foot of the street, and get it. The menu was something like the following:- Breakfast: coffee and baker's bread. Tea: This order reversed, baker's bread and coffee. The dinner like in all fashionable establishments was the meal of the day. The hour, twelve o'clock, was not aristocratic but to hungry men a very suitable time. Irish stew one day, the next perhaps, boiled bacon and potatoes or broth, boiled beef and potatoes, boiled onions and beans came in occasionally as extras. In active service each soldier got served out to him four days rations consisting of coffee, sugar, beans, hard tack (biscuits), pork, and occasionally fresh beef. When you halted for a few days the cattle being driven with the Army were killed when there was time to have meat distributed, salt and pepper you could get a supply at any time to do you for weeks. When not marching night and day (for in the case of marching it was coffee, fried pork and hard tack for breakfast, dinner and supper, all the time. Breakfast at other times when you might be a few days in one place). My favourite dish was hard tack left all night in water, bacon fried in the pan, the hard tack which was quite soft, put into the gravy and fried. The water the hard tack had been soaked in boiled, and made into coffee. When you got your 'Little Mary' well lined with this you were in good enough form to fight the whole Southern Confederacy.

A favourite dish for dinner was: Beans boiled about half, then put into a can with a good tight lid, just enough water to keep them from sticking to the tin, place on the top of the beans a piece of good fat salt pork, put a piece of paper over these to keep out dirt and put the lid tightly on. Dig out a hole in the ground, fill in the hole with dying embers of wood and ashes, cover the pan with these and let it remain for five or six hours, see that there is sufficient draught to keep ashes alive, with this hard tack fried as at breakfast, and you had a meal good enough for, well a soldier.

You always took coffee for your tea with hard tack. To all these, which are a choice menu, you sometimes had some plunder, in the shape of fowl, pigs, rabbits and in case a cow giving milk was captured she was beloved by the entire company who gathered her all the grass, hay and oats, they could beg or steal. It was here I learned to milk a cow, which I was quite a dab at. I have often wondered when on a march how at night so

many fires could be lighted and food cooked for so many in such short time. I will try and give you a case. You get the command to bivouac for the night, four men generally chum together. As soon as you halt, off goes saddles, baggage and bits off your horses, he is hitched to a tree, he has generally got a drink before the halt. The great advantage to the soldier is that no Cavalry Regiment will halt for the night without water convenient. Our fellows used to say "Government property first, we poor devils next". So the horse was first attended to and fed. Next one man takes the four canteens and goes for water, probably the river or pond the horses had drank at, and waded through before we stopped. One goes for sticks, sometimes these were handy when near a snake wood fence (which I may say here we cleared Virginia of). This wood was trees split in about six or eight pieces about twelve feet long, dry as a bone, this made splendid fires. When these were not available, dried bramble and that kind of stuff. I will venture to say that if you asked all the men in a regiment half an hour before they stop for the night for a match, not one in a hundred would have one, yet in a regiment consisting of 800 or 900 men you would see a couple of hundred fires alight inside half an hour. The plan was the moment one saw a lighted fire he put a dry piece of wood in the flames and when sufficiently lighted carried it off to your chums. It often happened that number one man's fire was put out by the great number of lights taken from it. You can imagine the language was sometimes very strong but did not mean much. I don't think I saw half a dozen fisticuff fights during my time in the Army. These were always when we were in camp doing nothing but eating and drinking. 'Satan finds some mischief for idle hands to do' is as true in the Army as anywhere else, perhaps worse.

In the Brigade to which we were attached there was one regiment (The First Maine Cavalry) which had a band. This band had all white horses, when on a march, where secrecy was not essential. The band occasionally played during our progress through a new part of the country. There were always negroes who would insist on following, this got to be such a nuisance that men had to be detailed to stop them coming any further. On hasty runs through the country, we had two or three days forage and rations with us, if these people came with us it meant we had to go hungry, they would walk about thirty or forty yards behind us, saying they would go back when they tired walking, they were always delighted in case they should hear the band play while marching. The band when it was possible would wait till there was a good crowd of women and children, then start some marching tune, with a crash of brass and the big drum, with this the boys used to yell to see these people running off tumbling over one another, the children yelling and screaming, they imagined it was death coming to them in some shape.

I remember well one scene in particular, and it was equal to what one has read in the papers of what has occurred in say, a theatre at the cry of fire. However when they had run till they were completely exhausted and had to lie down, their ears soon told them it was music, they immediately got over their fright and resumed their march delighted with the band. Negroes are all very musical, can play banjos, etc., wonderfully well, the majority by ear only. It is a perfect treat to hear the singing during public worship. Of course, they had churches especially for the coloured people. In a Southern white Church no negro would be allowed into it, neither would they be allowed into trains, or tram cars, unless into the coloured department. I have seen in a coloured church, both men and women so white that I could not tell the difference, yet if there is coloured blood in them they must not enter churches, or public vehicles, for whites. I have often thought this queer, as the cooks and house servants are all coloured, in fact the black nurses rear the white children, and the children are very fond of their nurses. The women wait at table, each head of the house has a valet who is constantly at his side, dancing attendance on him, ladies on horseback are followed by coloured grooms, the carriage is driven by a negro, yet if one attempted to enter a public building or carriage he would be expelled. I always imagined they smelled a bit high, but it was not that which was the cause, as they would not have been allowed to wait at table.

The Southerners carried this racial distinction in the War - they would not allow negroes to fight for them. They could, as we did, have formed coloured regiments, but no they made the negroes do the hard work, dig the trenches, make forts, or drive the commissariat and ambulance wagons. They were very much annoyed at the North for sending niggers to fight them, our coloured regiments fought for their lives each battle they went into as it was understood the Southerners took no negro prisoners. I remember hearing at Petersburg of coloured troops getting into such hot quarters that it was bayonet work. One of our fellows assured me he saw a big buck nigger put his bayonet into several of the Southerners, and heave them over his head as though he was pitch-forking hay. This however must be taken with a grain of salt. There is no doubt however that

some of these coloured men could do this as they were very strong, and indeed so were the nigger wenches big powerful women that could stand any amount of hard work, some of them used to follow the Army, doing washing, cooking, etc.

At the close of the War our regiment was sent to a district in Virginia between Petersburg and Richmond to act on police duty, which was principally to see that the negroes were not ill treated, and that those who wished could leave their old masters and work where they pleased. In the good old Virginia families nearly all the coloured people remained, they with our assistance arranging what wages they should receive. Of course on estates where there had been flogging, etc., the moment they knew they were free they left. Our difficulty was to feed, house, and to get them employment. When out on patrol we were always anxious to trade what we had to spare, such as coffee, tea, salt, etc., for milk, butter, fowl and eggs. These people had not tasted coffee or tea for two or three years. One day we arrived at a mansion and when close enough we saw three ladies sitting on the verandah, and riding up close we removed our caps and asked if they would trade eggs or butter for coffee or tea. The old lady, who turned out to be the mother of the two other ladies, said she would be very pleased; these Virginians are all descended from early English settlers, educated to perfection and are a fine race of people. This family was very nice and treated us like gentlemen. We dismounted with our small bag of coffee, etc., and displayed our wares. I had three men with me. The lady of the house told a coloured boy to take our horses to the stables. We got into conversation with the daughters, which was very enjoyable to us. Coffee was ordered which they enjoyed immensely, and indeed so did we, as the addition of boiled milk was a great treat to us. Naturally the conversation started about the War, her two sons had been in the War and were now at home trying to get some crops in with bullocks in the plough, as all their horses had been captured years ago. We were treated so nicely that we presented our goods that we had for trading and were about leaving. The mother pressed us to remain for dinner and promised us sweet potatoes, roast pork and sweet milk and also we would meet her sons. Such an offer we could not decline so we remained. One part of the conversation I shall never forget. I was asked what countryman I was, having replied I was an Irishman they wanted to know why I was fighting against them. I told them I had just enlisted for the fun of the thing, the mother said “queer fun to come and shoot my sons”. I reconciled her with the argument that had I had been in Richmond I would have been fighting for them as they had lots of foreigners on their side. When the sons turned up the mother explained our presence.

After dinner we got talking and we fought a lot of the battles over again on the verandah, our visit ended in us leaving two of our horses to help them to do the ploughing. We were to come back in a week with two others to relieve them. This little plan which was no disadvantage to our Army did these people a lot of good, getting some of their crops planted. Before we left we got butter and eggs, much more valuable than our coffee, etc. These were divided with our chums at the regiment. We visited this house every week till we left and a nicer family it was never my lot to be in. On our leaving for another district they did us the honour to invite some of us to a dance. It seemed strange, men of the North and South in uniform enjoying themselves in this way when a few weeks before we were ready to shoot one another, if we appeared above the breastworks.

Sergeant Burns

Sergeant Burns was a very kind fellow to those he liked, but a great bully and to those under him he was at times very severe. Privates dare not say to his face what they would have liked to have said, and strike him, they dare not. Burns was a great worker in time of peace, but the sound of battle coming was against his nature, he was a clever fellow in his way, could play a part fairly well. I remember one time I was very ill with dysentery, and I may say that is a very prevalent disease in the Army. It is not every stomach that will stand raw beef, or raw salt American pork, such as is sold here in the small huxter shops, and water sometimes covered with green scum. However these are some of the things you must take if you wish to live. We had been on a long march to try and reach Culpepper Court House before the enemy, and to hold it all hazards if we did. We did reach it and had to entrench that night and dare not light a fire. I was completely done, I did not care whether school kept or not. I had been taken to the field hospital almost unconscious, we had nothing to eat nor had we seen a doctor. In a time like this a field hospital is a very rough place consisting of tents, men lying on the grass sometimes without a blanket, feet to feet, with a passage between for the nurse to pass up and down. Those who are wounded naturally get the doctor's first attention, and it is not until the wounded are all attended to is there any attention paid to others, nor indeed can I blame them for they do all they can, yet quite a number of bad sick cases die before there is any chance of attention. I was very ill and lying in one of these tents, when in came a face I knew, dressed as an Hospital Steward, it was my brave Burns. He asked me "what's wrong with you"? I told him "fever, do you not know me"? "That's all right I'll attend to you later on". In the meantime he gave me a dose of whiskey, or brandy and quinine that put me to sleep, some hours afterwards he got me away to his own tent, and got the doctor to give me special attention till I was better and able to return to my regiment.

When I got to the front again our fellows were living in bomb proofs, viz: a cave made in the ground about twelve feet long and six wide, six feet deep, so that a man could stand in, the soil taken out was thrown over trees which had been put across to act as rafters. This was necessary as owing to our people commencing to run a subterraneous passage to the enemy's battery about two hundred yards off, and which the Southerns must have had an idea of, they poured night and day a continuous fire of shells which burst over the first line of breastworks. The regiment next to ours was a Pennsylvania regiment, the most of them coal miners from Pittsburg. One of the Captains was a mine engineer and he proposed the plan to Grant and it had his approval. Everything went well, the tunnel was made, the mine laid and instructions given for it to be fired at four o'clock in the morning. To our delight a coloured Brigade took our place in the front line of battle opposite the fort that was to be blown up about three o'clock, we going to the rear. I still further to the rear being detailed on regimental business, when on my way I heard the explosion which was something dreadful, our instructions, and I suppose the coloured Brigade's instructions were the same, to charge the moment the mine exploded, and the flying material expelled had fallen. This was done, the coloured troops charged into and

around the crater and carried the works, but for some bungling they remained there and did not push on, thus losing their advantage till it was too late. The Southerns took in the situation at once, charged the coloured soldiers, giving them no quarter, and eventually gained the position they lost. Few of the coloured troops that had made the charge came back. I think this was the worst case of general-ship I know of in the War. Had Grant's orders been carried out we would have captured Petersburg. It was said it was jealousy on the part of two Generals, because Grant allowed the coloured Brigade the honour of making the charge, it was a miserable failure, no matter who was to blame. After I had written these remarks I referred to the memoirs of Grant to see if he said anything on the subject. I find he has and his language is very characteristic of the man, he says:-

> "The effort was a stupendous failure, it cost us four thousand men, due to inefficiency on the part of the Corps Commander, who led the assault".

Blanket Tossing

After the War was over, the coloured people had a sort of feeling that something should be done to them by giving them some badge to wear or some written certificate that they were really free. They could hardly realise that they had passed from the cattle stage of being bought and sold to being free citizens of America. The soldiers took advantage of this weakness and when these people visited the camp, offering goods for sale, the soldiers when opportunity offered, viz: no officers being about, but indeed they have enjoyed the joke peeping through the openings in their tents as much as the men, but in case it was going to far stepping out of their tent and putting a stop to it. The proceedings were as follows:- Some would say "Hello Sambo, have you got your free mark on you yet"? If he said no he was told he had better get it on, he was shown the U.S. branded on the shoulders of all our horses, and told that this mark would have to be cut in his hair or wool. They generally consented and one of the boys with a pair of scissors soon marked him, when any nigger was getting so marked, it was the signal among the men to get the blankets ready, two of the strongest blankets were put together, and as many men as could be got around the sides took hold, before the nigger knew where he was he was thrown into the blanket, and with the chorus of one, two, three, he was flying up into the air ten or twelve feet, caught in the blanket, and the performance repeated a few times, then pronounced free for ever. It was an innocent amusement, very laughable to see the fellow struggle in the air, who could not possibly help himself. I never saw any person hurt during a performance. The lady negroes were rather more cautious and in no instance have I ever seen one who allow her hair to be cut. Sunday was a great exhibition day in the camp, the coloured people being off work and our men having only camp guard, the place for fun was at the foot of the street, the officers and non-commissioned officers' tents were at the head of the street. I should perhaps say each company had a street, the man's horse being tethered to a long rail in parallel line with the tents and opposite man's tent. When some great belle of a nigger wench turned up, perhaps more gaily dressed than the other accompanying her, but indeed they all had a weakness for flaming colours, the word would pass round to blanket her. The men with the blanket would get behind her, the man immediately behind her would bend down, someone in front giving her a shove back, she would pop over the man at her back and into the blanket, then there was fun. After the first two or three tosses her own friends commenced laughing at her, and enjoying the fun even more than we did. The more the victim struggled the finer was the performance, especially if she was a good figure.

Deserters from Canada

Buffalo was the city our Regiment was enlisted at, it is situated on the banks of Lake Erie, the Niagara River separating it from Canada, and it is about eight miles from the celebrated Niagara Falls, the current of the river is about six miles an hour in the centre. I used to fish and shoot a great deal off an island in the centre of the river called Strawberrie Island, opposite this the river was about eight hundred yards wide and was about the best place for crossing in a row boat, in fact this was the place that the Fenians attempted to take Canada in 1864, and effected a landing, but were soon glad to be back in their boats again. It was said at the time that quite a number were never heard of, the bullets from the English soldiers having gone through the sides of the boats, allowing the water in, in such quantities that they either sunk, or being water logged, were carried right over the Falls. To those of you who have seen Niagara Falls, it is unnecessary to say that this was the last was ever seen or heard of them, pieces of boats were picked up for miles past the Falls. British soldiers in Toronto, London, Montreal and cities in Canada, especially those convenient to the Niagara, were continually deserting to the States to join as volunteers in the Civil War. Men in Buffalo, at great risk to themselves, went to these places and opened negotiations with likely deserters, providing them with civilian clothes. In some cases there was a perfect system of transportation, arranged horses and wagons were provided to drive from given points to the River Niagara, boats were ready to receive them, and bring them over to American soil, which once they put their foot on they were free men.

Soldiers were each paid two hundred dollars when they enlisted for the Northern Army. The men who brought these deserters over paid all their expenses and got the balance of the bounty money, which in some cases would mean four to five hundred dollars a head. Six to eight was the number that was generally brought over at once, so the successful trips meant three thousand dollars profit. The unsuccessful ones, and these are the ones you don't hear of, meant transportation for life. We had several of these soldiers or rather deserters in our Regiment, one in our Company called Frank Smith. Frank was a great character, he wanted to have some fighting and he left his regiment in Toronto, as others did with the idea of returning in case he was not shot, as a fact this actually happened at the close of the War. Frank returned to Toronto, gave himself up as a deserter and received some slight punishment.

Our Army was only too glad to receive well trained men such as these, knowing it was more their love for adventure than the fact that they were deserters, and in nearly every case they were appointed non-commissioned officers.

Frank Smith was appointed Sergeant within a week of his enlistment, and later Drill Sergeant of the Company. He was the cleanest man I ever saw, he always looked as though he had just come out of a band box. At dress parade each evening he always

looked his best, and every inch a soldier, he was an example to the rest of the Company. Volunteers could not nor would not be expected to compete with a man, who was trained to perfection such as he was, so he shone as a star in our midst. When at drill, Frank's voice sounded very military, in a very short time he brought his men up to a very satisfactory state of perfection. Sometimes when he returned from the city his voice was a little thick, the boys used to pull his leg about drill, etc., till at last Frank would give them an exhibition with a sword or carbine, which was a treat to see. In the mornings if he was not thoroughly cured, as soon as the first bugle note of the reveille sounded he would jump out of his bunk and shout "Men, get up, and hear the little birds singing their praises to God". After waiting about a minute he added the words "Your souls get up" but before the last four words he added the letter which the Captain in the celebrated opera of 'Pinafore' never used, or hardly ever. Frank proved himself to be a credit to the English Army and was as good in the field as he was in the camp. He returned with the Regiment at the end of the War unhurt.

There must have been at least a dozen of English soldiers in our Regiment. Our Regimental Colour Sergeant was an English soldier Pensioner, and wore his Crimean and Indian Mutiny medals on his uniform. He was a very old man, but as hard as nails, and as straight as a rush. I regret I cannot recall his name (Colour Sergt. Lane). I remember one time he got put under arrest for showing his admiration for British soldiers. It was at the Battle of Bethseda Church. Our Regiment had been ordered to advance through a wood which necessitated the men to go as you please, the underbrush being so thick, in fact it was in reality a picket line more than a line of battle, so that the Regimental Colours should have been in the rear. Our men got the worst of it and had to fall back, the old man getting wounded in the head and nearly lost the Colours. I saw him as I came out of the woods, he was quite excited, the blood flowing freely from a wound in his forehead, which he had bandaged with a handkerchief. He was in a wordy combat with one of our Majors. The old man thought that our men had needlessly fallen back and deserted him and was calling them all the cowards he could think of. The Major told him to give the Colours to another Sergeant and for him to go to the hospital and to give less of his old lip, also told him he had no business to take the Colours out on the picket line. The old man was flaming, for in reality he was right, had there been no brushwood, then it was a line of battle, when the troops divided into groups of six to eight and tried to get through the brushwood, it was a strong picket line. I remember him after giving the flag to the other Sergeant, saluting the Major as if he had been on the barrack square, he said "Major, in the British Army the Colours go with the regimental line of battle and although I feel ashamed to say it, a British Cavalry regiment could whip a brigade of such troops as ours". "Consider yourself under arrest and report to me when you come out of hospital". I don't think there was ever anything further done in this business as the old man was back at his post in four or five weeks. We all thought he was a game old buck, although not very complimentary to his present Company.

Surrender of Lee and the Northern Army of Virginia

During the winter of 1864 we had lain in winter quarters opposite Petersburgh, well out of range of rifle bullets. We were camped convenient to a fine wood, from which we obtained wood for our fires and also for building wooden huts. These were built of pine logs laid on top of each other, ends and sides cut to allow of this, plastered inside and out with mud, doors were made of hard tack boxes, the roof had rafters covered over by our regular canvas we used for shelter tents. Each man carried a piece of canvas which could be buttoned onto his neighbour's, the size was about 5 ft. by 5 ft. He also carried a poncho, enough to put your head through. This was waterproof and was very useful when on horseback during rain. These buttoned and would cover a roof five feet by seven wide. Two men could button up to ten feet frontage, seven wide. The huts were, unless for non-commissioned officers, always built to hold four men. It took some time to erect these, but when finished they looked exceedingly well. The huts were built about 12 ft. long and seven wide, in a straight line, three feet between each hut, a sidewalk in front of about eight feet, a passage for carrying off the rain, then a sheet of about twenty four feet wide, a few pine trees cleaned of the branches supported on forks of trees about five feet high parallel with the huts, to this the horses were hitched, heads facing the huts. These poor horses had a very rough time of it, although in hot Virginia it was sometimes very cold and wet. I have seen occasionally the horses in the morning standing in fours and fives, hugging each other, the icicles from the bodies touching the ground. We had very little duty to do, so occasionally we were routed out in the middle of the night to make a raid on some forage wagons or pull up some miles of a railroad track. The style this was done was as follows: About every twenty yards the nuts were unscrewed and a break made, then with levers one side was lifted up, and everything that would come in the shape of sleepers were turned turtle. Where it could be done the sleepers were set on fire and the rails twisted. 10,000 men distributed over a railway track and given sufficient time, say three hours, could do a lot of damage. In case it was on an embankment they could work on longer lengths, throwing the whole thing down the bank. As a rule we never got much time at this kind of work as we were soon found out, and a superior force sent against us, a few shells lighting near us told us the infantry were coming and it was time we were off.

This used to be the nice part of being a mounted rifle man or a Cavalry man, we did not go to fight, and we could skedaddle without being disgraced. I think I could safely say during all the time we were in these quarters there was not five minutes at a time cessation from rifle firing, the lines being so close, some hundred yards in places, this was necessary. A continual zip, zip, of a bullet in its course of flight. The sound was generally interpreted as the ball saying 'I want you -------u'. Many a time we had to go on picket duty on our extreme rear or extreme left. This is a duty which often means prisoner of war. You are sent into the enemy's country and although there is perhaps no visible danger, yet you don't know the moment you may be picked off by the bullet of a gorilla or captured by some band of civilians in the vicinity, for the value of your horse,

saddle, etc. It is rather amusing how an enemy is detected by a horse, if it is cavalry, your horse will give the show away by neighing. When it is very particular picket work you are sitting on your horse, his neighing can soon be stopped by a prick of the spur or by a chuck of the bridle, but if tied to a tree, and you in a favourable position, twenty or thirty yards in front of him, he will have his neigh out, even at the cost of sending you to prison. At night no matter how dark it may be, if you can see your horse's ears he will let you know of danger, as no enemy could approach without being heard by the horse, he may then cock his ears, so you may look out for anything and everything, very often rabbits, hares or wild pigs will drive in a number of pickets, but you are likely to be laughed at if the troops you fall back on discover when they advanced that you have fooled them. I know of nothing which would be so trying on me as on a dark night to sit on a horse for two hours with your eyes gazing between the horse's ears.

Sheridan's Scouts

At the tail end of the War two days before Lee surrendered we Cavalry men had very hard work, in fact we were hardly ever out of the saddle. I don't think I had my riding boots off for days.

Lee was in Petersburg and evidently saw Grant had too many men for him to successfully compete against and was trying to get off by the Weldon Railway to North Carolina to General Johnston's Army, join with him and hang as long as possible.

We were ordered off to cut this railroad which we did, capturing an engine and about thirty wagons of provisions for Lee's Army.

Sheridan's Scouts were men well up in the Southern tongue, thoroughly acquainted with the country and dressed in grey, the Confederate colour, in all their uniforms.

These fellows did a very risky business and must have been well paid by our government. They for instance would leave our lines, go into the enemy's, get all the information they could and return again to Sheridan, running the chance of being shot by the enemy's picket going, and by ours returning, and if caught on the other side strung up to the first tree as a spy. They were wonderful men and must have had nerves of steel.

On this occasion Sheridan sent off his Scouts to overtake and to turn off into a road which would lead them right into our arms, the baggage train (which means say one hundred wagons each drawn by six mules of the Headquarter and Corps of the Petersburg Army). These fellows went off, got ahead of the train and as the teams came up to them on the march ordered them to take the road just opposite to what they should have taken. Of course they were dressed as Confederate Officers and supposed to be sent by General Lee. Our Cavalry was stationed on either side of the road. It was most amusing to see, or rather hear, for it was a dark night, the nigger teamsters urging the poor mules on their last trip as soldier providers. This was a grand stroke of Grant's and must have been a strong factor towards Lee's surrender. Men must eat and if a General cannot provide rations he must give up. When it became morning and our friends saw the trap they had walked into their faces were a study. All the coloured people were glad as they knew they were free men, but the whites were very much put out, especially as we commenced to inspect the wagons for plunder. One of General Lee's Headquarter wagons was right where I was and the boys were helping themselves to shirts, etc., of the Southern Officers, also some of their uniform. Had I only thought the War was so near the end I could have had a splendid double breasted grey full dress uniform with two rows of gilt buttons on it, belonging to Lee or some of his staff. What a souvenir of the War that would have been. Shirts, drawers and socks were more in my line than white elephant's coats.

Sheridan deserved the greatest credit for the manner he carried out this manoeuvre.

The next morning we made a successful move to get at the back of Petersburg to prevent Lee's Army getting away. The Southern Army was in full retreat, they knew they were licked, we knew we were winning, which makes a great difference in the fighting qualifications. We were carrying everything before us, taking prisoners in thousands, the opposition we were receiving was very weak. I remember standing this day, the last but one of the conflict, beside a battery of artillery posted on a hill, having a good view of the entire country. There was a river in the valley about eighteen hundred yards from us, over which was a bridge, the only crossing place near. The Southern troops were congregated at this bridge, it not being wide enough to permit them to get away quick enough. This battery opened fire on them and as every shell burst near the bridge it cut lanes in the retreating Army. The gunner had got his range which was indeed dreadful to witness results, till at last the Officer in command told them to stop firing, saying "This is murder, not fighting". Strange as it may seem that battery never fired another shot as Lee surrendered the next day. Orderlies were flying from one Headquarter to another. We all knew there was something in the air. It was rumoured that Grant and Sheridan had gone to Petersburg to meet Lee. We were not being fired at by artillery in response to our cannonading, so there must be something up, and so there was. Peace was proclaimed the next day. How many thousand lost their lives the day before no one will ever know, what a pity and the end so near.

The majority of the prisoners of war were delighted, yet there were some madmen among them who called Lee all the names available, saying that the South never should have surrendered to a lot of white trash such as these Yankees were.

I think I might wind up this part of my story by quoting the words inscribed on a monument erected at Pennsylvania, in honour of the dead of both sides:-

> "Here Brothers fought for their principles: Here Heroes died for their country: and a United people will forever cherish the precious legacy of their noble Manhood".

Which side would have won?

Having the same Officers and men as they had, other things being equal, viz: same numbers and recruiting facilities. Same finances and the world an open market. From what I saw and heard I believe the South would have won. I will try and show how I have come to this conclusion.

Let us compare the different Armies, the Officers first and the rank and file next. The South at the first of the War from 1861-1863 had Generals Lee, Stonewall Jackson and Johnston (Infantry), Ashby and Stuart (Cavalry).

The North: Generals Banks, McClelland, Pope, Burnside, Meade and Hooker. The North had not only the finest Generals it would be possible to meet in battle to contend with, but they had to please President Lincoln, Secretary of War Staunton, and all the politicians at the War Office in Washington. In fact it was from this Office that instructions often were given, and a General's proposed campaign commanded, countermanded, or interfered with, consequently it made Commanders timid and more inclined to act on the defensive than the aggressive, for fear of failure, and until the spring of 1864, when Grant took command, the Northern Generals were not the men they would have been under different circumstances. McClelland who was one, if not the best, General the North had, was removed just as he had his whole Army ready to attack the enemy. Pope, who was also a good man, was actually put under arrest for not carrying out orders. Both these Generals were great friends and their enemies at court had them removed about the same time. Who could be a successful General under such circumstances?

The Southern Generals, although a little at the first were interfered with by President Davis, who by the way was a military man, and had a much better right to interfere than President Lincoln had, who was a lawyer. This interference, however, was at once nipped in the bud by General Stonewall Jackson, who when his instructions were countermanded from Richmond, handed over his Command to Lee and sent in his resignation. Had the North Generals, Banks or McClelland, done this at the start of the War there might have been no Bulls Run or Mannassah Junction catastrophies. Jackson being requested by the War Office and Lee to withdraw his resignation, did so, and again took up his command and kept it (until he was accidentally shot by one of his own troops) becoming one of the greatest Generals of the War. Lee and he were like brothers, their plans were made in secret, and kept secret, which ours were not. When they saw a weak spot in the armour of the enemy, or a mistake in his tactics, they simply jumped on him, taking risks which the Northern Generals dared not do. For instance, although the South were always the weaker side, they would often split up the Army into two or three divisions, Lee, Jackson and Johnston commanding, making individual feints, ten, twenty or even thirty miles from the enemy, often towards Washington, with the object of drawing the North to follow them and if they did, the combined forces of the South assembled and crushed the weakest. This step when successful, which indeed it invariably was, gave the South a tremendous pull over the North in the morale of the

troops, yet the risk was tremendous, and had the Northern Generals the same freedom as Grant insisted on when he took command, they could on several occasions have captured Jackson's entire Army.

The advantages the South had were very great. The Generals were on their own ground, could pick their ground for a battle, they knew every road and byway, the farmers kept them always posted as to the presence of the enemy, and if badly cornered by a superior force, they would hide their artillery in some woods, or planter's tobacco sheds, and the men under cover of night would 'go as you please' meeting ten to twenty miles off in the morning clear of the enemy. They were called "Jackson's Cavalry". The artillery being brought back when the coast was clear, no wonder the Northern Generals were bewildered at such tactics. Jackson who was ably assisted by the Cavalry under Ashby, kept Headquarters always posted as to the doings of the enemy and, after his death, by Stuart, they doing things which would be considered madness by military men, often going round the rear of the enemy. Yet it seemed it was their unexpectedness, and the secret and the quick way the manoeuvres were accomplished which made them successful, and until Grant took command the Northerners were completely out-generaled.

When Lee lost Jackson the combination was broken and the charmed life of these brothers in arms ended. The success of the South gradually decreased until the end came. As to the soldiers, the South in the early stages of the War were vastly superior, at the middle of the War equal. In the first place, the men who enlisted for the South at the start of the War were men who were brought up in the country, who had handled a rifle all their days, were good horsemen and what one may call the 'young blood' of the country, who were on for a picnic, filled with loyal enthusiasm and a feeling of superiority over Northern Yankees. Men like these were well suited to make good soldiers, those especially from Virginia made fine troops and with such a leader as Jackson who they almost worshipped, they never knew when they were beaten. All they wanted to make them good soldiers was drill and discipline, which came in a very short time.

The men of the North at the start were drawn from the towns and militia. Of course there were some regulars who did their duty faithfully and well, but the volunteers were not the class of men to meet Virginians, and it was not till the farming States sent in their backwoods men, farmers, etc., that the North had men accustomed to rough life and in a position to meet hardened troops. For instance, what chance had our regiment against a regiment of Stonewall's brigade? We were all composed of the city type, clerks, labourers, tradesmen, etc., who never fired a shot at a target or loaded a rifle till the day we faced the enemy in the seven days fight in the wilderness, and I would honestly say the first volley we fired was the best and the most deadly we ever did, and that was from ignorance of our work. I acknowledge I thought the first attack of the enemy as that of mad men, and I think the rest of the regiment felt much the same, as they all aimed their rifles, pulled the trigger at the word of command, the same they had done it in drill (of course without being loaded) and what a volley and death roll on the other side. I am sure the noise frightened a good many of our men. Also when we got our horses and were sent of on a raid, within a week, although I had good practice in riding in Canada

years before, my legs were raw in two or three days marching, from just sitting on a horse's back, while he walked in a climate about 100 in the shade. One can guess what the other men were, or what sort of a defence we would have made if attacked by Stuart or Ashby's Cavalry. The Cavalry of the North were very deficient in the early stages of the War, Ashby and Stuart seemed to have a charmed life until Sheridan came on the scene. They could go through the Northern Pickets, sometimes around the rear of the Army, and get information so desirable to Lee and Jackson. It was no unusual trick of theirs when in the Northern Territory to go to a Telegraph Station and wire the Northern Cavalry Commander to immediately proceed to some point exactly opposite to where they intended to escape by. What great risks they took to live on the enemy, liable to be cornered any moment. Of course all these tricks got played out, and the North after serving a hard apprenticeship got to be equal to the enemy. It is not to be wondered at that the South were superior in this arm at the start, as the sons of the planters were all good horsemen, this was the fashionable arm of the service. All the young swells crowded into it, the cavalryman having to provide his own horse, made it to a certain extent, exclusive. The horses in Virginia especially were of the best English blood, these men who were great shots in the hunting field, would soon be splendid shots with either rifle or revolver on horseback.

For one moment let us suppose a regiment such as that with its two years training (which they had before our regiment was in existence) had met ours the day we first got on our horses and on our first march, where some of the men were so ignorant that they could hardly return their sabre into its scabbard without pricking the horse or the man's leg next to him, also who had never fired a carbine or loaded one on horseback, and who, especially if he had his spurs on, found it very difficult to mount his horse. I leave my readers to imagine what the result would have been had they come into close quarters. I could not find language to express it. I would not wish to have my readers imagine why I considered that our regiment as men were inferior, or that they were cowards, nothing of the sort. I believe they would, if they had got their backs to a wall, or their front behind breastworks, fought to the death. But for men to fight on horseback who could hardly sit on a horse with comfort is a thing which no wise General should have expected or permitted, as we should have only been used for guarding the line of communication, certainly not in the fighting line. Our regiment after five or six weeks in the field would give a fair account of themselves, as they did as the War progressed, the weak gradually dropped out into hospital, or became stragglers or deserters, so at the end the regiment ranked as good veterans.

There was this in our service which the South had not. A feeling that we were not led by Generals equal to the enemy. We all knew we were about three against one, we were better fed, clothed, equipped, yet we had not the results we should have had. Grant's ascensions and Jackson's death was the turning point in this War up to that time the South won, afterwards the North. Our men became braver soldiers as they saw their hardships and risks were crowned with success, and the end nearing.

The soldiers of the South must have suffered great privations, from bad feeding, bad clothing, and long marching. I have seen prisoners who were barefooted, their clothes in

tatters, some had on our uniform, partly or in whole, with as a rule our rifles and equipment, a haversack (generally very little in it) with a blanket, was the whole kit, their faces pinched and the look of starvation all over. How they stuck it to the end was a marvel, certainly their fighting qualities and their enthusiasm was greater than mine. Another great point in favour of the South, a great number of the Northern soldiers were aliens, being paid servants they had not the same fight in them, had we been made to go through the same marching, exposure, bad feeding, and bad clothing, as the South had, I feel sure one third of our men who were only fighting for their days pay and the bounty they got, would have played off sick and gone to hospital, or got out of the fighting line somehow. On the other hand the Northern soldiers who were American born, and who were in the Army from love of the Stars and Stripes and to preserve the Union, would have fought to the death under any conditions. What was against such men was that in their heart they felt that our Generals were not equal to those of the enemy, seeing as they would time and again of the mistakes which they made, and no doubt felt that at an early date their life would be sacrificed to bad General-ship.

Seeing that the South had only about one third of the Army the North had, and that her recruiting opportunities were nil, that the Southern ports were all blockaded, and the only assistance they had from the outside world was by blockade runners, viz: steamers who tried to convey to Southern ports food, clothing or ordnance, running the chance of being sunk or captured by the U.S. Navy, that all the white population were in the Army, that the soil of the South was the battle ground for the entire time, and any crops eatable by man or horse were taken by the North, the privations of poor food and bad clothing borne by the Southern soldiers, the Army that the fighting was not knocked out of, and that could exist for four years under such unfavourable circumstances, makes me come to the conclusion that had the South the same advantages as the North had, they would have won by superior General-ship, the blind loyalty and obedience to their commanders, who they almost worshipped, and the superior physique of the majority of the rank and file, who were fighting for their homes and hearth.

Fighting when not Soldiers

At the commencement of the War volunteers were asked to serve for three months or one year, the authorities thinking of course that all would be over by that time. As the War progressed the time of enlistment was extended to two years and the last contract was for three years, or during the War, the last being the one I enlisted under. I, of course, was bound to soldiering as long as the War lasted and would have been held to the letter of my contract if necessary.

Great complaints were made by regiments at the front, whose time had expired, that the Government had broken faith with them. They held and I think properly so, that when their time of service was up that they were civilians, not soldiers, and should have been relieved and sent home, but time and time again regiments were sent into the thick of the fight when they should have been at home at their own fireside. Many were the protests of the men, but it was always the same story "the exigencies of the service must be taken into consideration first, they would be relieved as soon as possible". To entice them to remain soldiers a very large bounty and a furlough of a month was offered them as soon as the worst of the fighting was over, or when in winter quarters, if they would re-enlist for one year longer or during the War, which everyone thought would end in a few months. Hundreds of men lost their lives unfairly and by breach of contract on the part of the Government. According to Military Law you are a soldier till you are officially mustered out of the service, just the same that you are a citizen till you are mustered in, and if you decline to obey a command (as one would think men whose service had expired had a right to do) it would be looked upon as mutiny, punishment: death. Aliens who joined the Army for a picnic, as I did, had great cause for complaint at this treatment. Several regiments were on the point of throwing down their arms, but they were entirely at the mercy of a Military Tribunal, who at the command of say a General, could isolate them and blow them to pieces with artillery. In fact it almost went to this point with our own regiment. We enlisted as Cavalry, horses they said could not be obtained for us, and although dressed as Cavalrymen we had to act as Infantry, becoming the laughing stock of the entire Army in our vicinity, and of course came in for a great deal of chaff from other regiments, which was very irritating. We got such titles as 'Shank's Mare Regiment', 'The Horseless Cavalry Brigade', '2nd N.Y. Dismounted Cavalry', etc. We felt this very much and also that the Government were not treating us fairly, it is quite certain that two thirds of the regiment would not have been soldiers had they for a moment imagined that they would have to walk.

When the summer campaign was nearly over, and when lying in front of Petersburg, our regiment gave notice that unless they got their horses as they contracted for, they would stack their arms on a given day and decline to act as Infantry soldiers any longer. This they actually did. General Burnside who was in command of the 9th Corps sent word that if the men declined to retake their arms before twelve o'clock he would treat them as guilty of mutiny, and ordered a couple of batteries of artillery to cover us. When we saw the guns getting into position we were not long getting into line and retaking our rifles. Whether he would have given the command to fire is very doubtful. One thing certain,

no volunteer artillery would have obeyed such orders if he had. I saw in a printed report years afterwards which said something like the following:-

> "General Burnside advises that the 2nd N.Y. Mounted Rifles be immediately mounted or disbanded, as their efficiency as Infantry soldiers is ended, they could not be trusted in future, in any important movement"

It is needless to say that we were immediately taken from the first line of breastworks and sent to the dismounted camp at City Point to be mounted, getting our horses in about two weeks. The question then asked by the men was, would we ever have got them if we had not adopted the mutinous course we did? Of course this must sound strange conduct to my readers, judging from our standpoint of soldiers in this country, but one must remember we were volunteers, only playing soldiers for as long as wanted, and then to go back to the business we had left when we enlisted. We were all more chummy than it was possible for regular Army soldiers to be, Officers and men mixing on the same footing, and perhaps were in the same business establishment at home, or neighbours, and unless in a fight or on the parade ground Officers never asserted themselves, their dress was also the same, except one gold bar or two bars about an inch long, taken from their Lieut. or Captains badge worn on the shoulder of their good clothes, which by the way had been sent to the Headquarters baggage for safe keeping after the first few days in the fighting line, as it was found that the enemy's sharp shooters were very partial to those who wore double breasted coats with gold buttons and epaulets.

I remember a regiment lying beside us (the day I went to fill the canteens at the well, referred to in some part of these notes) whose time had expired over two weeks, and who were on the point of mutiny at being pushed into the fight that day with us. It was reported that they (who were on our left) were badly cut up on the three or four days fighting that occurred at that time. These men had our regiment's entire sympathy. To my mind this was a great breach of faith on the part of the Government, these men could have relieved others who were doing duty on the line of communication or other posts, where the possibility would be that they would not have to go into action, and run the chance of being killed or wounded. A contract should be binding on both sides. There is one thing certain the Government would not have permitted a man to leave an hour before his contracted time of service, and they would have been perfectly justified, but why keep men against their will after their contract had been filled? Only one reason. The Generals wished to keep all the veterans they could as fresh troops were not reliable and our Army wanted the best they could get to oppose such a splendid fighting enemy.

Hunger in the Army

Anything I may say on this subject must not be considered as grumbling at the Commissariat Department of the Army for I am of the opinion that under the circumstances they did as much as any nation could have done under such difficulties. There were times, however, that we were starving, yet I think we fared better than the South. This arose from a change of the base of supplies, or after a very long march in a part of the country where roads were bad. Our artillery had to keep to the turnpike roads, and as they were always first they cut up the roads very much, so that when our wagons of forage and provisions came they sometimes had a very rough time of it getting along, and when they had to leave the made roads to get up near the front lines it was almost impossible. I have seen the wagons up to the hubs in the mud. These were difficulties very hard to contend with, yet they did their best. We had a very fine fellow as Brigade Quartermaster who worked like a horse night and day when necessary to get his wagons forward and his Brigade fed. If he was stuck in the mud in the rear he would park his wagons, take out his mules and use them as pack mules, so as to get the rations to the men at the front. No man could have done more yet sometimes we were weak with hunger. It is rather off the subject, but as I was writing "worked like a horse" it reminded me of the Quartermaster's horse, which was the finest in the Regiment, but blind. The horse knew nearly everything his master said. To prove this, one day when in winter quarters, he jumped this horse over hurdles. He rode up to the hurdles letting the horse feel the height, then went back a little, and by the pressure of knees, the handling of the reins, and when the horse came near the hurdles and should spring, shouting 'Now', over he went to the admiration of a crowd of soldiers. It was a very clever performance. This horse must have been going blind when someone stuck the Government with him, as the horse would have been worth a large sum over Army price, viz: one hundred and seventy five dollars, about £35 of our money. However as it turned out he was no stick as he suited the Quartermaster well, in fact I don't think he would have exchanged him for any horse in the Regiment.

Now let us hark back to our subject: Hunger. Have you ever been hungry? If not pray that you never may. It is a very indescribable feeling. Had it not been for chewing tobacco we would many a time been much worse than we were. There were two cases which I remember, and which was my worst experience. One was stealing corn (not oats) from a team of mules, having to fight the teamster for a handful and eating it as I ran away from his whip. The other, a number of us catching a cow, killing her, and eating the flesh still warm without even salt, for which we nearly all suffered by an attack of dysentery. Before this raw pork sandwiched between hard tack was a luxury. One can imagine what a country would be like after a starving Army had passed through it. Locusts could not be worse. The wonder is how the Southern farmers' wives, children and slaves, kept alive after our Army had passed, especially in the early stages of the War, having had months, and perhaps one or two years, to wait before it was over and relief came.

Army Officers

Often have I been asked how English Officers would compare with American Officers. This is a difficult question to answer, judging from their luxurious style of living, and the limited source our Officers are drawn from. Owing to the fact that the pay is insufficient to keep them (which is a disgrace to our Government) and without financial assistance, or having a private income, it is impossible for a born warrior to become an Officer. I imagine in time of war some would be too soft for such rough work and that they would compare unfavourably with other nations who permitted the best men to go to the top. Any other procession or business worked on such exclusive lines would spell failure. Also there is as much difference between the Officers of certain regiments as there is between gold and brass, and may be described as gentlemen by birth, and made gentlemen by purchase. I would prefer the former to command me were I in the ranks. Our army during the last few years are working hard. Our Boer experience was an object lesson we have profited by.

In the early stages of the Boer War our General-ship was the laughing stock of the world, defeat after defeat taking place, and regiment after regiment being ambushed, principally Cavalry (what a great loss to us and what a Godsend to them) and this by a lot of farmers and untrained citizens. Had our troops landed on the shores of a military trained nation, such as Japan, they would have been 'wiped off the slate'.

It was not until General Roberts, a very old man, took command, that our Army made any advance. His General-ship marking the beginning of a successful end.

Our Irish Rifles, which left Belfast, went through an experience out there that one can hardly credit. Their Commander, who lost his life in the adventure, was enticed by a spy of the enemy to make a night march on a supposed Boer encampment, with the idea of bagging the lot.

They allowed themselves to be led by this coloured guide. When he arrived at the valley arranged he struck a match which was the signal for the massacre to commence. From both hills volley after volley was poured into the Rifles, and but for the darkness of the night, the whole regiment would have been annihilated. As it was over half the regiment were killed or wounded. One of the Sergeants told me "if we had been going for a march from the Belfast Barracks to Holywood we would have sent out two or three squads of advanced guards, but evidently this precaution from surprise was considered unnecessary in time of war. Had there been advance guards this disaster would not have occurred, we were led like sheep into the shambles, and the wonder is that a man of us was left to tell the story".

English veterans will tell you that the non-commissioned Officers are the mainstay of the British Army, and I quite believe it as they are a fine lot of men and would compare favourably with any troops I have ever seen. There is no doubt however that there have been some of the finest Officers the world has ever seen turned out by the British Army.

The American Officers on both sides were those trained in Military Colleges, also men from all stations in life, such as lawyers, statesmen, shopkeepers, farmers, etc., who were all filled with enthusiasm for the flag they had chosen, nearly all enlisting as Privates and working their way up the military ladder. I think our Company had a most unfortunate experience as two of the Officers were frauds. I could not point out another instance in the whole regiment. However the Officer that was left us of the three (Lieut. Swift) was a host in himself and could have handled a Brigade as easily as a Company, yet he was only a young man right from college and as green as grass when we started. The American Army permitted and encouraged the appointment of the best men to lead. Generals Grant or Phil Sheridan, if they found a good man, would never stand upon ceremony to promote on the field over the heads of older men. Yes, a Private to Captain, or even to Colonel, if they saw he was the right man. Of course there were such opportunities for promotion, there being so many killed. Also they would ask an Officer who was thought inefficient to send in his resignation just as quickly. I remember, at the last few days of the War, we Cavalry had been away on the extreme left, and had done our part, viz: starting the fight, and were to be relieved by the Fifth Corps Infantry at five o'clock. Sheridan was very much annoyed at them not turning up and sent Orderlies and Staff Officers to see what was keeping them. They at last arrived, hours late. When General Warren arrived with his staff and Headquarter flag flying it must have been very humiliating to him to hear Sheridan tell him to report to General Grant, saying "he had no use for Officers who could not carry out his instructions". There was a great row over this, but General Grant endorsed Sheridan's action, and if I mistake not, there was an official enquiry after the War, which lasted for weeks.

There was rather a comical thing happened at this place while we were standing there waiting for the Fifth Corps. A band on the Southern side played its (Confederacy) National Air, a blind to show they were prepared for any emergency. Sheridan, who must have been very angry sitting on his horse waiting, ordered one of our bands to dismount and go into the woods in front of the enemy and play 'Yankee Doodle'. Such a scene and such music, each bandsman behind a tree blowing away, you can imagine how it sounded. Sheridan, who was a very rough customer, had just taken over the Command of the Cavalry of the Potomac, of which our Regiment was a unit. He thought we had been doing very little fighting, and that but poorly, in fact he got the credit of saying "he would give five dollars to see a dead Cavalry man". Not very complimentary to us who thought we had a rough enough time. Those who have read the great American poem of Sheridan's ride to Winchester, will know he was a born fighter and was a great personality with his men. He had been with the Army Generals at some distant place discussing the situation. In his absence his Army was attacked, beaten and routed. He was on his return to the front when he heard this news, after which he rode for life and death some ten miles, rallied his defeated troops, and won the day. I would give it as my opinion that the Officers of America were as brave men as could possibly be found, and were in perfect touch with their men.

Peter and Alex Kirsch

Having received notice from America of the sudden death of Peter Kirsch, who dropped dead in the streets of Buffalo caused by sunstroke, reminds me of a little incident which I had not thought of before.

These boys lived in Black Rock, convenient to Buffalo, belonged to a very lively lot who used to 'run the guard' nearly every night we were at Fort Porter, to which I have referred to in the first part of these notes. These boys were highly strung, nervous and excited Germans. They had been ten or twelve years in America, speaking both English and German very well. They were very well educated and very much attached to each other (Peter at the time of his death, June 1908, held a very good appointment in the City Hall, Buffalo). One night at the time of the seven days fight of "The Wilderness" our instructions were to fall back out of the breastworks, get into line of battle, and prepare for a march at any moment. Some firing took place which prevented us from leaving the shelter of the breastworks, evidently our Commander thought his move was anticipated. An Aide-de-Camp came along with instructions to remain in line of battle, and in case there was further noise of musketry, to get into the breastworks, which were only about twenty yards off. It got very tedious work standing under arms, so after about an hours waiting, Lieut. Swift gave the command – rear rank four paces to the rear, then to lie down so that we could get up into position when ordered. The men nearly all fell asleep, so after waiting nearly two or three hours the command came to march, the Sergeants commenced to awaken the men. I awoke the Kirsch boys, they no doubt thinking it was the enemy who had surprised us, fell on me, giving me a very rough five minutes. The marks of their fingers on my throat remained for days. Being only half awake and the excitement, it was sometime before they could be quietened. They were both good reliable soldiers, went through the Campaign without being a day absent, were always together, in fact their love and loyalty to each other were the admiration of the Company. They came home to Buffalo with the Regiment and I think the half of Black Rock were there to welcome McRoberts (also a Black Rockite) and them. Poor me, I had nobody. By the way I am wrong, a man called Cole who I had known before I went away, gave me a very warm shake hands and wanted to borrow fifty dollars when I got paid off the next day. "Not for Joseph".

I saw the Kirsch boys and McRoberts when in Buffalo at the Exhibition 1901, receiving a very hearty welcome, they being delighted to see their old Orderly Sergeant in the flesh, as they understood he had joined 'the majority'.

Sunday in the Army

A gentleman who had read these sketches said he was surprised that I made no mention as to the state of religion in the Army. I might answer this in a very few words, a very good reason why, I never saw such, evidently it was not the fighting line required any sermons or ministerial assistance, it was only when we were at the camp of instruction this was necessary.

Although I was not what one might call 'Gospel Greedy', yet I had been brought up in a home under Covenanter discipline, and although I used to kick at its rigid strictness, yet I could not help but respect its followers, in fact I used to think my father and uncle were too good. I have often asked myself was religion a farce, only playable in safety and luxury, and quite unnecessary on the battlefield. War has been a necessity in all ages, but if religion is not a sham, why does it not accompany it, especially when men are being daily sent into the great unknown, yes, by thousands, in most cases with curses on their dying lips. I am afraid it is only on the stage and in novels where these last rites of the Church are practised. Certainly I never saw it on the battlefield. I have seen men reading their Bibles, but principally aged men.

The American Government were not in any way to blame for this want of ministerial attention. They paid a good salary to a Chaplain for each Regiment, he ranked as a Commissioned Officer and was supposed to go as a non-combatant with the Regiment. This meant if he was taken prisoner he would have been passed back to our lines. I remember the first Sunday at Fort Porter, service was held in the dining hall which would hold eight or nine hundred men. The attendance was not compulsory, yet the room was almost filled. I saw our Chaplain then for the first time, and heard him for the first and last. I shall never forget a few words of his sermon. He was pointing out our duty to our Country and urging us to fight our enemy to the death and said "if you are to die on the field of battle, see that you are never shot in the back". That expression was criticised then and afterwards by 'the boys' becoming a byword in the Regiment. It was his duty to be with the Regiment as he was well paid for it, yet he remained in the rear, he occasionally visited the Regiment when we were in safe breastworks, but I never saw him on the fighting line, nor did I hear him preach but the once. If ever he was shot, it would likely be where he told us to try and avoid.

I have seen Lady members of the Christian Commission (already referred to) reading and praying in the hospital at City Point. I cannot recall seeing any regular preaching service during active service.

Sundays we used to notice were Grant's fighting days, when we were 'in the thick of it', it was the days his moves were started on. At the early part of the War each Sunday the regiment was formed up into a hollow square. At first it was expected it was for service, but no, it was for the Adjutant to read to us 'the articles of war' telling of the pains and penalties for all crimes the soldier could commit. After this Company inspection all these after a few weeks were abandoned as unnecessary, like our drill style of marching, all adopting the 'go as you please' plan. I think after our appearance in the front line of

battle till peace was proclaimed I only saw two religious services, both by coloured people, one preaching the other baptism. The preaching was at what was called a Camp meeting by negro Baptists, lasting two or three days. The negroes, who of course felt perfectly safe near us, kept this meeting going for four or five hours each day it lasted. The preacher I saw was an old coloured man, his hair and eyebrows white, in contrast to his very black skin, also with glasses on, he looked like what you would see in the Zoo. I listened to this old man during his entire discourse, which for earnestness could not be surpassed, delivering his oration standing on the block of a cut down tree. Except for the preaching it looked more like a picnic, the assembly consisting of entire families squatted on the grass in groups, eating mush pie, etc., and drinking milk. All very orderly and devotional, the older ones giving attention to the speaker while eating.

The baptism was in the river at Petersburg. The negroes had the loan of two tents from the Regiment. These were to be used as dressing rooms erected within twenty yards of the river. It was Sunday afternoon, quite a number of coloured people had assembled on the other side of the river from where we were camped. We were not allowed to cross the river, which was just as well. An old coloured parson waded out into the stream, sticking in a pole when he was in about three feet of water. The men came out of the tent one at a time to where the old preacher was, and he dipped them. Both the men and women seemed to us to have only a covering like a white nightshirt on, which clung to the body showing their figure after immersion. This was the first of this kind I had ever seen and I am sure it was a new sight to the Regiment, who all came down to watch the performance. I climbed a tree of which there were quite a number along the banks. From the time the first went into the water till the last, some fifteen or so, the entire audience sang hymns. The men went through the ducking fairly well, but the fun started when the women came, in fact in some cases the women had to be forced into the water. 'Our boys' commenced to shout over at the girls when they hesitated to take the water, this making them nervous and afraid, the old man in some cases having to come to the water's edge to force them out. The thing was becoming more of a farce than a religious sacrament as the girls clung to the old man he had not the strength to put them under water, and sometimes he had to duck with them. In one case the pair went right down and stayed for a little, our fellows yelling as at a football match. It would be almost impossible for about eight hundred men to stand watching this without enjoying the girls' discomfiture. They determined to have a Baptismal Service on their own account, so they got ready their usual method of amusement, viz: the blanket, caught three or four of the niggers of the Regiment (Officers' servants) into the blanket with them, one at a time, and after a good tossing in the air, ended with the last toss into the river. After getting a dip they made for the shore, but one either could not swim, or the wind had been knocked out of him going up into the air so often, he spluttered and sank. Then there was the real fun, about fifty fellows all sprang to the rescue off the branches of the trees, etc., into the water, which was about five feet deep, and with difficulty rescued him. There was a hat

sent round and the nigger got a presentation of a few dollars to keep his mouth shut. The other side enjoyed our performance immensely as they laughed heartily as only niggers can, it broke up their meeting.

It was a disgraceful proceeding on our part and had the boy been drowned all those who surrounded the blanket would have been sorry boys, 'Satan finds some mischief still', etc. Sunday with the Army in the field was hardly recognisable.

Serio-Comic

There were two Dutchmen in our Company, one called Henri Bunke the other Philip Betz.

The first was small in stature but as strong as a bull. He could hardly speak a word of English, in fact neither could more than make themselves understood. Henri was always prepared to sell his horse for a consideration. I should perhaps explain that all the horses were the property of the Government and stamped U.S. on the shoulder. Each man got a horse by ballot, for which you were responsible, so that if you were discharged you would have to return a horse with U.S. on it.

At this ballot you might get a kicker, a bucker or a vicious brute. This you had to keep unless you could trade. Bunkey, as he was called at the battery, got the best horse in the Company which as soon as the horses were saddled and tried, passed to someone else, so before the day ended he had a small cob hardly fit to carry him, as we thought, a good few dollars and a pair of homemade new boots, four horses having passed through his hands. I shall never forget the time we broke up camp, about all you could have seen of Bunkey when on the cob was his head, the rest of him was surrounded with blankets and cooking paraphernalia. In fact it would be almost impossible for him to dismount without throwing some of the things on the ground. You may say why did we allow this, a man in that state was not a fighting unit. This overcrowding and overloading soon rights itself – three days marching clears off all extra unnecessary luggage. It turned out that this despised cob, or as it was called pony, was about the toughest and most reliable animal in the Regiment. So again Bunkey got another change, this time a black horse with a weak back. It was all the same to Bunkey providing there was enough money in the trade. This black horse only showed weakness in the back when the saddle was first put on, he had however a great fault, at the first sound of artillery he would not move in the direction the sound came from, so friend Bunkey had to go to the rear and act as cook till he got the horse condemned and exchanged.

On one occasion I got orders to put two men on guard on the breastworks. We expected the pickets to be driven in our breastworks were very high, so high that one could easily walk behind them without running the chance of stopping a straggling bullet. We have a regular cut platform in the soil for the front rank to stand on. When detailing these same two men I told them to walk the breastworks and keep a good look out for the pickets being driven in, I of course expecting they would walk on the platform. To my horror and amazement when I came out of my tent after being told to look at them, there they were walking on the top of the breastworks, making themselves cock shots for the Southern sharpshooters and had been so for ten or fifteen minutes. You can be sure they did not stay there long after I saw them, poor fellows their ignorance of our language and the fear of doing wrong made them risk their lives unnecessarily.

We had a number of Germans in our Company and although I did not consider them smart they were brave and obedient and would have been much more useful and better soldiers if in a German Regiment of which there were plenty. I remember that there was

a Pennsylvania Regiment which arrived at the front when we were lying at Petersburg who were so clean and so drilled that we and other Regiments used to go to see them on Dress Parade. I never saw a U.S. Regiment that could beat them at drill, marching or appearance. The entire performance was like a piece of well oiled machinery.

They were about 1,000 strong and of course never had been in a fight. I feel sure they would give a good account of themselves in action as their Officers seemed well up in military tactics and the men under perfect command.

There were also Irish Regiments. In fact we had in the Ninth Corps the Irish Brigade under General Magher. Never shall I forget this Brigade. One day we had a fearful fight and at night we had to throw up some kind of breastworks before morning for protection. We had nothing to eat all that day and when night came between cooking and working at the breastworks we got no sleep. We were so pressed for tools, the pioneers only having two shovels to dig a front for forty men, this would mean eighty two deep, we had to put into use saucepans, tin plates and to get the work passable before daylight, when we expected we would be attacked. We were lying behind this trying to get some sleep, you will naturally say "poor fellows, they were not fit for fighting". However, at break of day the artillery opened fire on us, their shells bursting right over us.

One fellow in our Company, Mick Coates, got hit with a piece of shell in the foot. As he got it he exclaimed "Wounded at Four Oaks Antietam, and here again". He was a veteran having served during the entire War and re-enlisted in our Regiment. The Southern artillery, after the heavy fighting of the day before, must have had all their ammunition exhausted for they commenced to fire railroad iron. The sound that this makes passing through the air is horrible and at close quarters mows its way through troops. On this occasion a piece came along the top of the breastworks in the Company next to ours and decapitated three men who were standing there thinking there was no danger, as before it was all passing over our heads and sticking into the ground like big arrows. When you are rigorously shelled for some time, you can make up your own mind that you will soon see the Infantry advancing. We were waiting for this when to our surprise Magher's Irish Brigade came up behind us in line of battles. Oh, what a grand sight that was for us and how many "Thank Gods" came from the troops in the front line.

These men went over our breastworks as though they were on parade and inside fifteen minutes we heard the yell which we knew meant 'charge'. There were woods in our front so we could not see them, but we knew they were successful from the fact that only wounded were brought back. If unsuccessful they would have fallen back on us for support.

I question very much if we had been ordered to attack that there would have been the same results, as we were unfit for such work at the time, and I feel sure Grant knew that as well as we did.

After that fight a nigger took some of us to a place in the woods where silver and silver coins were buried in pots. I got as much as I could pocket of silver quarters and half

dollars. This was the best haul I ever made, but what was I to do with the money? I could not buy anything as there were no sellers or shopkeepers with the Army when on the march. I lent the money over the Company taking the boys' IOUs to the Paymaster, the most of which was paid at the next pay day. I also gave silver for paper money at face value, although silver was worth half as much more. Carry it you could not, sell it you must.

Next morning we were off on another grand move and I passed over the most expensive bridge for the size of it I ever heard of.

One Artillery gun carriage had sunk into a marsh swamp and it was impossible to get the guns forward, or this one out, without something in the shape of a bridge. There was no timber available and the guns were mounted at the front, and Orderly after Orderly were coming with the orders "Get the guns forward". A couple of wagon loads of new Enfield rifles were laid over this ten or twelve feet swamp, crossways and lengthways, so as to bear the weight of the guns which were pushed over, the horses, which had waded through further down awaiting them on the other side, limbered up and off to action.

Expense when it is life or death is not taken into consideration in the Army. We passed over after the Artillery, the rifles being almost out of sight in mud and slush. When we got into our proper places to support the Artillery we found our fellows had driven the enemy a great distance, we had to march on the most of that day.

Next morning we were off again but evidently the enemy got strengthened in the night, as before we got very far we met strong opposition from which we fell back in great disorder and suffered severely. I remember there was a field of wheat stubble. One fellow who shall be nameless had blistered feet so that he could not wear boots (we were dismounted at this time). He had his feet covered with rags, we were all on the run but my friend beat us all. He struck me as he passed almost knocking me over with his rifle. There was a large gully in the centre of the field in which there was a very small stream. It was far too wide for any ordinary person to jump over, we in our haste went down one side and climbed up the other, but my friend with the sore feet cleared the place like a thoroughbred hunter. When we had run about two hundred yards further we were stopped in our flight by an Aide-de-Camp who tried to rally the frightened runaways striking my friend with the flat of his sword. He told him to halt, he told the Officer that he ought to be ashamed of himself to strike a wounded man on his road to the hospital, at the same time showing him his feet which were bleeding profusely. He was allowed to pass onto the rear, the Officer remarking "You run too well for many bones to be broken". I asked this man afterwards why he had been so frightened and how could he run on the stubble with his bare feet. "I don't know" says he "how it was, I was in a blue funk, I saw you all hooking it and I made up my mind there was a poor chance for me when you Officers ran", that was one for us, "so I determined I would not be last in the race, never felt my feet a bit sore till I got out of danger, as to the river I could have jumped it if it had been as big again".

We rallied under the command of this Staff Officer, formed in line and went back to our friends and took part in general engagement later on in the day. This was the only time I can remember we showed the white feather.

The number of men killed and wounded during the five weeks preceding this was dreadful, I might say appalling. Our hospitals at field and base were crammed with sick and wounded, the dead thrown into large pits off the stretchers, and when full, covered up. To make sure I got Government statistics. The loss was 39,259 – average 1,000 per day.

Risky

It is always easy to tell when there is going to be a move. There was always an inspection of arms and horses, all sick horses sent to the corral, men to the dismounted camp. Next ammunition and rations were given out. After that you would see Orderlies flying about with official envelopes in their belts. You could tell the time was near approaching.

We had been under arms for hours one day waiting for the order to go, but my canteen was empty. We had dug a fine well about five minutes walk from the camp, sinking a barrel with a lot of holes bored in the side. I did not like to ask any of the men to go, so telling Lieut. Swift the case he told me to go myself as he was sure we would not move for some time yet, as our Colonel had no orders.

I took two or three canteens and off to the well, which was in a wood. I had two canteens filled and, when putting down the canteen into the barrel my face was on a level with the ground, to my surprise I saw a column four deep of the enemy marching past within about one hundred and fifty yards from me. I was, I can assure you, cold as I had no idea the enemy could be there, as our picket line was much further out, they of course must have been withdrawn.

The bush was very thick with undergrowth of bramble which acted as a good cover for me. I soon made for the Regiment telling the boys what I had seen. In my excitement I found I had not filled my third canteen at the well. In a few minutes an Orderly appeared with the blue envelope in his belt. As soon as he got the length of the Colonel's staff, off he went at a quick trot. Evidently to head off some more, we poor soldiers had no idea of the game that was being played, all Grant asked of us was implicit obedience.

During the march that night it was pitiful to see the number of magnificent Southern mansions on fire. It seemed hard, but it was found in former years that it was cruel to be kind, and that these houses which had been respected by our troops and not touched, turned out to be bureaux of information for the South and a sleeping and feeding ground for Southern spies, as long as we were in the vicinity.

Grant would have none of this and Sherman went so far as to capture all he could take with him for food or service to the Army, and burnt the rest saying he would "only leave the women their eyes to weep with". All this seems very hard language yet war should be carried out in the way that a termination would soon take place for one side or the other.

We had, in our own Boer War, this mistaken kindness in war times and it was not till Roberts went to the front that this playing with war was changed. How many of our poor soldiers were shot from the abuses which we gave protection to.

During our march the next day we passed burning wagons, wheels of artillery carriages and lots of poor infantry fellows lying dead and dying from sickness or weakness, all showing that the enemy was on the run, either on the skedaddle or to try and get to some point of advantage before us. That night we drove in the enemy's pickets, took possession of some vantage ground which we held till during the night when we were relieved by the Infantry. This was a point I always admired about Cavalry, they start the row and allow the Infantry to finish it. Next morning both sides went at it in earnest, the sounds of rifles and artillery were booming all day, we quietly resting our horses in the rear.

Third and Last Part

There is one very dark blot on the Southern escutcheon, viz: the treatment of their prisoners of war. The negroes or coloured people who enlisted in the North as soldiers for the purpose of helping to free their own people from slavery in the South were, in nearly every case, given no quarter in the field, and if taken prisoners with white soldiers, as in the case of a surrender such as at Plymouth, North Carolina, 365 were tortured and murdered by the command of General Hoke, Confederate States Officer.

Southern soldiers looked upon coloured people as slaves, in fact as so many marketable brutes, worth so much money. During the War their negroes were not permitted to act in any capacity but as servants, teamsters or labourers, to work on the forts, and looked with abhorrence on these men dressed in the uniform of Northern soldiers, also on the Yankee Government who allowed them. The possibility is, however, that had the South allowed the negroes to be armed and to act as soldiers, they would have deserted and fought for the North and freedom, and who could blame them. From a strong Southern standpoint there might be some excuse for this treatment to these negro prisoners, but none for their treatment for the Northern prisoners of war in Florence and Andersonville stockpens.

In January 1864 General Winder, the Confederate Commissioner of Prisons, boasted that he would build a pen that would kill more Yankees than could be destroyed at the front in the same time, and he kept his word, as you will hear as I give you evidence of both North and South taken from historical records in Richmond and Washington. I know that it is said that the South were put to such extremes they could not feed or treat them better. We shall see.

I have in every case, except one, referred to Southern records to prove anything I have to say against the South. Me being a Northern soldier the possibility is that I may be more or less prejudiced in favour of the North. I cannot believe for a moment that such men as Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, two of the finest men in the South, or I might add North or South, who were at the head of the Army, would approve or countenance the treatment given to Northern prisoners. I believe that the Government of the South never ordered it, as the same time during the last two years of its existence, they winked at anything that was being done, as can be proved from the records found in their own offices in Richmond after the surrender, which proved they were cognisant of what was taking place. I also believe that some of the Officers such as General Winder, Capt. Wirtz, Capt. Dunn, Lieuts. Barrett and Luck would have done anything in their power to humiliate and kill by inches the accursed Yankee. Only one of these men, Capt. Wirtz, was captured after the War, the rest having skedaddled. He was tried in a Civilian Court on only one case of a thousand which could have been brought against him, was convicted of murder and hanged, which was too kind a death for such a fiend.

I now give a few passages from Capt. Williams' book. He was a Southerner, serving some three years in the Texan Rangers. In his own words he will tell you how Capt. Dunn treated some Northern wounded prisoners, so as to save him the trouble of finding

transportation and hospital attendance for them. It is more like what one would read of savages, certainly not Christians:

> "The enemy suffered greatly. In the narrow space inside their lines lay sixty dead and twenty wounded. The scene was a ghastly one, and for a time there was plenty to do separating the wounded from the dead, and dressing the wounds as best we could as we had no surgeons with us. There were about two hundred horses badly wounded, after I had put the worst of the injured ones out of their misery I hurried over to where we had left the wounded men to see how they were getting on, and was surprised to find them gone. Asking what had become of them, I was told that they had been moved to better shade a short distance away. With this answer I was quite satisfied, and never dreamed the brutes with who I served would be guilty of foul play, especially after the gallant fight the enemy had made.
>
> Just then one of our own wounded called for water, and I brought him some from the cool spring. As I was giving it to him, the sound of firing was heard a little way off. I thought at first they were burying some of the dead with the honours of war; but it did not sound like that either. Then, possibly it might be an attack on the camp; so I seized my rifle and ran in the direction of the firing. Presently I met a man coming from it who, when he saw me running said "you needn't be in a hurry, it's all done; they have shot the poor devils, and finished them off".
>
> "It can't possibly be they have murdered the prisoners in cold blood" I said, not believing that even Luck would be guilty of such an atrocious crime. "Oh yes; they're all dead, sure enough – and a good job too". Feeling sick at heart, though I hardly even then credited his report, I ran on and found it only too true.
>
> It seems they were asked if they wouldn't like to be moved a little way off into better shade. The poor creatures willingly agreed, thanking their murderers for their kindness. They were carried away, but it was to the shade and shadow of death, for a party of cowardly wretches went over and shot them in cold blood.
>
> This was Lieutenant Luck's work – the remorseless, treacherous villain.
>
> The greater criminals, such as Wasp, Dunn and Asa Minshul, had made themselves scarce before the arrival of the Federals; but some of the smaller fry rashly remained behind and suffered the penalty of their crimes, after trial by Court Martial. But I can vouch for it that no-one was shot or hanged who did not richly deserve his fate.
>
> So, not only the leaders of the Secession movement, civil and military, but all those who had taken an active part in the War, had grave cause to fear

> for their liberty and their property. But to the surprise of all the world, and especially of the Southerners themselves, the victorious Federals behaved with a generosity and magnanimity for which no parallel can be found in history".

Grant captured 28,356 prisoners at Appomatox Court House. He did what the South, and the world, acknowledge to be the most Christian and diplomatic act of his life. He paroled the men on their own personal guarantee that they would not take arms against the U.S. Government, until properly exchanged, also those that owned horses, he allowed them to retain them to work on their farms, as it was the springtime. What was to hinder the South, if they could not feed our men, to parole them in the same way and pass them into our lines? Someone else must answer that question, I cannot. I can honestly say I never saw a Southern soldier treated with disrespect or an article taken from him. I was register clerk at the Corps Hospital for some time, and all the men that came under my notice were fed and medically attended, exactly as our own.

A. Lyth says in "Andersonville Prison":-

"The rations issued to the prisoners, and the allowance to each were so insufficient in quantity, and poor in quality, as to leave grave doubts in our minds if they were sufficiently strong in constitution to be able to stand its weakening effects for any length of time. They consisted of one piece of corn bread made from unbolted meal, mixed in water and baked without even salt for seasoning, and weighing eight ounces, a piece of boiled fat bacon from three to four ounces for a days rations. This was the regular issue. As luxuries we were treated twice or three times per week to half a pint of worm eaten beans, we were on other remote occasions treated to a bit of what they called fresh beef. It had ceased to be so however when it reached us, for the festive fly, and very numerous they were, had stolen a march on us, the surface giving abundant evidence of their handiwork. This may seem incredible but is nevertheless true. In support of which we are not compelled to rely upon the evidence of the prisoners or their friends. Dr. Joseph Jones, Prof. of Medical Chemistry in the Medical College of Georgia, under instructions from the Surgeon General of the so-called Confederate States says:- "I carefully examined the bakery and the bread furnished the prisoners, and found that they were supplied almost entirely with corn bread from which the husk had not been separated. This husk acted as an irritant without adding any nutriment to the bread, the long use of salt meat, oft-times imperfectly cured as well as the almost total deprivation of vegetables and fruit, appeared to be the chief causes of scurvy. The sanitary condition of the prison was horrible indeed, especially so during the months of June, July and August". Our numbers were becoming daily augmented by fresh arrivals until the latter month the number had reached 35,000. Imagine that number of human beings packed into an enclosure containing about 13 acres, giving space to each individual of less than 30 square feet. We could scarcely move at all, yet were we compelled to endure starvation and exposure through these long weeks and months, without any hope of release excepting perhaps by death. The Confederate authorities were compelled at this time to take measures for our relief, which was done by building an addition to the stockade, extending the north about 600 feet. The relief thus afforded was a welcome one indeed.

The mortality among the prisoners was daily becoming larger owing to the exposures they were subjected to. It is estimated that but 1-3 of all the prisoners confined at Andersonville had shelter of any kind. During the month of June there were twenty-two days of rain, and the sky was not clear of clouds during all that dreary period. At times the heavens opened and poured floods of water upon us. The men were drenched during the day and at night were compelled to lie down to sleep upon beds of sand which were saturated with water. When the long rain ceased at last, the hot sun burst forth upon them, raising deadly vapours which we breathed. It was not an uncommon sight to see scores of prisoners dead and dying, lying about the camp entirely nude in pools of water formed in holes they had dug and over which they had stretched their blankets for protection from the storm. Gangrene, scurvy, diarrhoea, and dysentery were the principal diseases, and from these death busily plied his relentless work. I can best give you an idea of this frightful mortality through the following table.

Deaths in Andersonville 1864

Month	Whole Nº Prisoners	Average Daily Death	Total Nº of Dead
February	1,600	-	1
March	4,603	9	282
April	7,875	19	576
May	13,486	23	708
June	22,252	40	1,201
July	22,689	56	1,738
August	32,193	99	3,081
September	17,733	89	2,678

Total deaths 12,968. The average life of an ordinary constituted man at Andersonville was about four months.

From this time on until the prison was finally abandoned the number decreased very rapidly, owing to their removal and distribution among other prisons. The greatest number of deaths in any one day occurred on the 23rd day of August when 127 died (I have heard this number stated as high as 180) or one death every 2 minutes. All efforts at cleanliness were futile as we were denied the privilege of soap during our entire imprisonment".

The animosity of the Winders towards the prisoners, and the horrible condition of the stockade and hospital had long been a subject for earnest discussion among the residents of the Southern part of the Southern States.

"I know", says Ambrose Spencer of Americus, in his testimony on the Wirtz trial, "that the ladies of my County made efforts to relieve the prisoners at Andersonville by contributions of clothing and provisions. Some three or four wagon loads were sent up there, but the effort failed through the refusal of General Winder to allow them to pass, at the same time remarking with an oath that he believed that the whole country was

becoming 'Yankee' and he would be damned if he would not put a stop to it. When told that they did not think was any evidence of 'Yankee' or Union feeling to exhibit humanity, he said there was no humanity about it, that it was intended as a slur upon the Confederate Government, and a covert attack on him, and as for his own part he would as lief the damned 'Yankees' would die there as elsewhere, and that upon the whole he did not know but it would be better for them to do so.

In the early morning the dead were gathered and removed from the stockade to the dead house located just outside and opposite the south gate, soon after, the dead cart came for the bodies. This was an army wagon without covering drawn by four mules, and driven by a slave. The bodies were tossed into the cart without regard to regularity or decency. In this manner with their arms and legs hanging over the sides, and their heads jostling and beating against each other, they were hauled to the graveyard for burial.

The prison rules regarding encroachments upon the dead line owing to our crowded condition became very difficult to obey, and scarcely a day passed but some of the prisoners were shot. Indeed so frequent had these occurrences become that we could not help asking ourselves is not starvation and exposure doing its hellish work fast enough to satisfy the fiendish natures of our tormentors. A key to this murderous inhuman practice was found in a standing order at rebel headquarters that any sentinel killing a Federal soldier approaching the deadline should receive a furlough of sixty days, while for wounding one he shall receive a furlough for thirty days. This order not only offered a premium for murder, but encouraged the guard in other outrages against which we had no defence whatever.

The Rev. Wm. John Hamilton, Pastor of a Catholic Church at Macon (and by the way the only Minister of any denomination who ever entered the stockade to administer spiritual consolation to the dying) in his testimony on the same trial says:-

> "I found the stockade extremely filthy, the men all huddled together, and covered with vermin. The best idea I can give the Court of the condition of the place is perhaps this: I went in there with a white linen coat on, and I had not been there more than ten minutes before my attention was called to its condition, it was all covered with vermin that I had to take it off, and leave it with one of the Guards to perform my duties in my shirt sleeves".

There were two documents taken from the rebel Archives when Richmond was captured by Grant, which are of much interest in connection with this prison, one was a letter from a private citizen of South Carolina, and the other a newspaper article. The letter was directed to Jefferson Davis. It is as follows:-

Stateburgh S.C.

Oct. 12th, 1864

Dear Sir,

Enclosed you will find an account of the terrible sufferings of the Yankee prisoners at Florence S.C.

In the name of all that is holy, is there nothing that can be done to relieve such dreadful suffering?

If such things are allowed to continue, they will most surely bring down some awful Judgment upon our country. It is a most horrible national sin that cannot go unpunished. If we cannot give them food and shelter, for God sake parole them, and send them back to Yankee land, but don't starve the miserable creatures to death. Don't think I have any liking for the Yankee, I have none. Those near and dear to me have suffered too much from their tyranny, for me to have anything but hatred for them; but I have not yet become quite brute enough to know of such suffering without trying to do something even for a Yankee.

Yours respectfully
Sabina Dismukes

The newspaper article referred to and which accompanied the above letter was clipped from the 'Sumpter Watchman' and entitled:

"The Prisoners at Florence"

Mr. Editor,

It may not be uninteresting to your numerous readers to hear something from the Yankee Camp at Florence:-

The Camp (says the Correspondent) we found full of what were once human beings, but who would scarcely now be recognised as such.

In an old field enclosed with a living wall of sentinels, who guard them night and day, are several thousand, filthy, diseased, famished men, with no hope of relief except by death. A few dirty rags stretched on poles give them a poor protection from the hot sun and heavy dews. All were in rags, bare-foot, and crawling with vermin. As we passed around the line of guards I saw one of them brought out from his miserable booth, by two of his companions, and laid upon the ground to die. He was nearly naked, his

companions pulled his cap over his face, and straightened out his limbs. Before they turned to leave him he was dead, the Captive was free.

From the Camp of the living we passed to the Camp of the dead – the hospital. A few tents covered with pine tops were crowded with the dying and the dead in every stage of corruption. Some lay in prostrate helplessness, some had crowded under the shelter of the bushes, some were rubbing their skeleton limbs. Twenty or thirty of them die daily, most of them as I am informed, of the Scurvy. The corpses lay by the roadside waiting for the dead cart, their glassy eyes turned to heaven, the flies swarming in their mouths, their big toes tied together with a cotton string, and their skeleton arms folded across their breasts. You would hardly know them to be men, so sadly does hunger, disease and wretchedness change the 'human face divine'. Presently came the carts, they were carried a little distance to trenches due for the purpose, and tumbled in like so many dogs: a few pine tops were thrown upon the bodies, a few shovels full of dirt and then haste was made to open a new ditch for other victims. This we saw at a glance, the three great scourges of mankind – war, famine, and pestilence: and we turn from the spectacle sick at heart, as we remember that some of our loved ones may be undergoing a similar misery. Soon 8,000 more will be added to their number and where the provisions are to come from to feed this multitude is a difficult problem. The question is, are we not doing serious injury to our cause in keeping these prisoners to divide with us our scanty rations? Would it not be better to at once release them on parole?

Howard

If these statements were not from their own side, you would regard them as incredible, I can vouch for the truth of them in every particular. 442 of my own Regiment had been captured, 382 were buried in the Southern prisons, leaving but 60 survivors, showing a mortality rate of nearly 90%. I had intended giving all the statistics I have on this subject, but I have withheld more than half, as it is too sickening a subject to go on with. I wrote to two men who are still alive, one a Northern and the other a Southern, the latter the uncle of Mrs. Geddis, Holywood P.O. I give copies of letters written to them, also replies.

Almost half a century has passed since this unfortunate War commenced, nearly all the participators have joined the majority. It is however very pleasing to think that the rising generation have forgiven and forgotten everything, that Slavery is abolished for ever, and that they are now one Nation under one flag, the Stars and Stripes, a flag which I will ever honour and respect. For services rendered them in their hour of trial, they have been very kind to me. They pay me a good pension, which increases every five years. They have on several occasions paid me little compliments, the last the greatest of all, an honour I never expected and which I question if I deserved, viz: appointing me as Honorary Colonel on the Head Quarter Staff of the Grand Army of the Republic at Washington.

Now that I am approaching 'the seer and yellow leaf' of life I often think of this wild adventure of my boyhood, the risks I ran of being wounded, killed or captured and sent to Andersonville Prison. I also feel sure that had it not been for the example of bravery shown me by my dear friend and Officer, now Judge Swift of Buffalo, I would on many occasions have shown the white feather, as there was lots of them in my composition, but in his presence I dared not exhibit them, of course, in my case it was different, I was a paid servant without his enthusiasm of what he called the honour of fighting for the fatherland, to put down rebellion.

I have in my dreams at night re-fought many a battle as vividly as when it occurred, and I oft-times thank God for his protecting care over me 'a stranger in a strange land'. Three hundred thousand men lost their lives on the Union side, no statistics are procurable of the losses on the side of the South, but I feel perfectly sure that there was as many if not more. The War cost the Union Government at Washington £1,237,986,202 Sterling, the entire Southland Bankruptcy, over one million of widows and orphans were scattered through the Northern States. How many in Dixieland I cannot say, as there are no records available of the South.

What is considered as most creditable to both the North and South is that these immense armies, composed of a number of reckless dare devils of men, at the close of the War, being disbanded and sent to the district from which they were recruited, having both pay and bounty in their pockets, that they immediately settled down to work, and the entire change was unaccompanied with the slightest evidence of disorder in any part of the Union.

Slavery in this country and America is now a thing of the past. Had America purchased the slave interest from the Planters of the South as we did in the West India Islands, what a saving of life and money it would have been to that country. I am of the opinion that in the very near future Americans will have a coloured problem before them, which will require some great statesman to solve. Education has brought some of these coloured people to an intellectual equality with the white people, what is the future to unfold? Are the educated coloured people to be allowed to mix and intermarry with whites? I think not. I have seen in Canada long before I ever saw a Southern negro, some of these mixed marriages, generally common, course, well developed Irish or German women married to a coloured man, as a rule the men were barbers or kept a laundry. The woman was looked down upon by the entire female population of the neighbourhood. No white woman would be seen in this woman's company, nor would the children of such a couple be allowed to play with the very commonest white children. I cannot believe that a white woman in the middle class of life would marry any coloured man, no matter how the blackness was shaded off by the mixture of white blood.

A short time ago President Roosevelt invited all the members of a Christian Convention, which was being held in the City, to dine with him. A coloured Bishop was among this Assembly. This Bishop got a letter signed by his clerical brothers stating that his absence at the dinner would be more preferable than his company. It is needless to say he did not go. When that is done by Christians in convention what is to be expected from 'the man

in the street'? I have now come to the end of this manuscript and I can honestly say I have never enjoyed anything better than the writing of it.

I know it must be full of grammatical errors, as it has been type-written direct from my notes, without any corrections, so it may be looked upon by any readers as a 'Rough Proof'.

Addendum

I have allowed some of my most intimate friends to read this narrative. Evidently it must have interested them as they have told others, who have requested a similar privilege.

Mr. Richard Patterson, J.P. who signs my pension papers, having expressed a wish to see it, I made up my mind to re-read it, and had Mr. Patterson not in a joking way said "No more signatures on pension papers till I have read the book" I think I would not let it go out again until it had been rewritten, as it is not a creditable literary production by any means. Strange to say no member of my own family have seen it yet. If they had it would likely have been condemned as not up to Fifth Class Standard in a National School.

My old schoolboy friend and neighbour, Mr. McBride, later Chief of the Reporting Staff of "The Whig", offered in case I would think of publishing it to make it presentable, but I have decided not to.