

Reminiscences of the Civil War by Major J. N. Roberts

With love and affection,
I dedicate this sketch
To my daughter
Mrs. Isabel Roberts Otis

FOREWORD

At the solicitation of my daughter, I am about to undertake to write a sketch of my service in the Union Army during the Civil War, or War of the Rebellion, 1861 to 1865.

This sketch will be drawn from my unaided recollection of events which transpired more than sixty years ago, and yet stand before me as clear and distinct as though but, three months rather than three score years intervene.

The statements which I shall make in this sketch will be absolutely true and devoid of exaggeration.

As nearly as possible I shall confine my sketch of the movements of the several armies in which my regiment bore a part.

As I am now in my eighty-seventh year and dull of sight, I approach this undertaking with grave doubt as to my ability to transfer to paper in a creditable manner the tragic events which stand so clearly before me.

Since the far off days of which I write, the Great World War has disgraced civilization with its chapter of unspeakable horrors; and I take pride in placing beside that shameful record, that of our Civil War, fought in great measure by self-respecting men to whom honor was dearer than life; men who would have spurned with contempt the thought of destroying their enemies en-mass with poison gas; men with whom women and children were absolutely safe from injury or insult; men who respected and protected the hospital flag, whether on the battle-field or elsewhere, regardless of the army to which that flag belonged.

To a spirit of chivalry which pervaded that war, I probably owe my life.

John N. Roberts
Major 6th Regiment Ohio Volunteer Cavalry,
Second Brigade, Second Division
Cavalry Corps, Army Potomac
January, 1925

*Address of President Lincoln on the Battle-field at Gettysburg on the
Occasion of the Dedication of that Field as a National Cemetery*

“Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

“Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

“But in a larger sense we can not dedicate, we can not consecrate, we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here; but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us,—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion,—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

Abraham Lincoln

PREFACE

The physical and financial weakness of the American Colonies made their act of bidding defiance to the great British Empire one of reckless daring. But they had become determined to no longer endure the tyranny of a foreign potentate who seemed to take delight in humiliating them. They were aware that failure meant death and destruction, but they did not falter.

The British army and navy descended [sic] upon them, and with desperation they began a struggle which was to continue for seven years and more, and finally end in victory for the Colonies, which astonished the world. They had won their independence.

Be it remembered to the everlasting disgrace of that foreign power, that in this struggle it armed the American Indians and urged them on to devilish work of murdering defenseless women and children.

With their blood our fathers laid the foundation of the greatest nation the world has ever known. And I thank God that at a later date I had the honor of being one of many who saved that nation from disruption, and blotted out the foul stain of human slavery.

My Grandfather Roberts was a soldier in that war for Independence. He was a member of a body of cavalry known as the Scotch Dragoons, and I treasure his memory with pride and gratitude.

Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States in November, 1860. His election enraged the leaders of the slave states, who declared that he would never live to take his seat in the White House. This opposition to the President-elect greatly alarmed the people of the northern states, who feared that war would result.

When the time came for Mr. Lincoln to appear in Washington to assume his new duties, the greatest precaution was taken to guard his life. The Pinkerton detective force was employed to protect him on his journey to Washington, and his safe arrival there caused great rejoicing throughout the northern states.

On March 4th, 1861, Mr. Lincoln took the oath of office and assumed his duties as President of the United States.

The conditions which confronted him were enough to appall the stoutest heart. A number of the southern states had already declared themselves out of the Union, and others were following rapidly. Jefferson Davis, the retiring Secretary of War, had taken advantage of his official position to transfer to the South the greater part of the arms and munitions of war belonging to the Government. The Secretary of the Navy, another traitor to his country, had scattered the war ships under his command to distant ports whence by reason of slow communication (no wireless in those days), it took a long time to restore them to home waters.

All that treachery could accomplish to render the Government defenseless had been done by men holding high official positions in that Government.

Heavy batteries had been installed on the main land opposite Fort Sumpter, a Federal fortress standing in Charleston harbor, and the inauguration of President Lincoln was immediately followed by a bombardment of that fortress, which swept away the last hope of avoiding war.

The navy yard at Norfolk, Virginia, was now in the hand of the rebels, and of the naval ships lying at that port, one was transformed into the famous Merimac.

J.N.R.

My Experience as Infantryman under President Lincoln's First Call for Volunteers

President Lincoln issued a call for seventy-five thousand volunteers for a service of ninety days.

The enthusiasm with which that call was responded to must have been gratifying assurance to the President that the young men of the North were standing at his back awaiting his orders. He surely needed this assurance.

I was one of a squad of twenty-five young men from the little city of Warren, Ohio, who responded to the President's call. We were accepted and ordered to report at Camp Taylor, in the city of Cleveland, where we were made a part of Company C, of the Nineteenth Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry, then being organized in that camp. When the regiment was fully organized it was shipped to Columbus, where it was mustered into service and received its uniforms and arms. The men had been promised rifles, but were compelled to accept antiquated [sic] muskets instead, which caused much dissatisfaction. We did not know that the Government had no better arms than those we were receiving. Had we been aware that the Government was putting forth every effort, both by purchase and by manufacture, to secure modern arms for its armies, we would probably have done less complaining and our muskets would not have seemed so heavy.

From Columbus the regiment was shipped to Camp Goddard at Zanesville, Ohio, a very fine camp where for about two weeks we worked hard at learning the drill, guard duty and the like. From Camp Goddard, the regiment was shipped to the Ohio river [sic] and by boats to Parkersburg, Va., and marched a few miles into the country and went into camp, where for the first time we pitched our new tents and slept under canvas.

We remained in this camp but a few days. The sun was hot and muskets heavy, and each night the boys were thoroughly fagged out.

One evening after a particularly hot day the boys were almost asleep when an order came to strike tents, pack up and get ready to march. The traps we had to carry were as follows: a leather knapsack, inside of which were our underwear and a few other needed articles, a cartridge-box holding forty rounds of ammunition (we were required to carry that number); a percussion cap box; a bayonet scabbard and bayonet; a canteen, supposed to be filled; an empty haversack (no rations had been issued to us); our blanket strapped to the top of the knapsack, and our musket.

Thus loaded down like pack mules, and dead tired, we started on our march over a mountain road slippery with mud and in the rain, for a march of twenty miles without a stop. Fortunately we did not know what was before us. If we had, I am sure we could never have done it. Our blankets were soon soaked and doubled in weight. These boys had just left stores, offices and factories, and were wholly unfitted for such an experience. But some way we made it, and in the early morning hours arrived at the little town of Buchanan. When the regiment was halted, it dropped down in the muddy road and was soon fast asleep. We were allowed to lie there for a few hours.

I was awakened by hearing our big Irish sergeant, McClery,--the life of the company,--say "there is nothing for the boys to eat, who will volunteer to go with me and try to find something?" I got up and with six other boys followed him.

The Irish blarney of our handsome sergeant easily secured the supplies we needed, and we marched back to the regiment feeling that we had done a nice thing for our boys. During our absence the regiment had established a camp. Soon dinner was cooking, and when ready, the company, including our officers, partook of a fine dinner.

In the afternoon our first lieutenant and several of the boys got into the company wagon and drove out into the country. What they went for, or what they did while away, I have never known, but am certain that they were guilty of no offense which would reflect upon them as gentlemen. They were followed back to the regiment by a man who traced them to their camp and went to headquarters and made a complaint against them, and within an hour the boys were arrested. They were court-martialed and dismissed from the service in disgrace and sent back to Ohio under guard.

A day or two after this drastic blow had descended upon our lieutenant and his comrades, General Rosencrans' brigade (of which our regiment formed a part) was ordered to appear on the parade ground, and when the lines were formed, Company C. Nineteenth Ohio (our company) was ordered to step three paces to the front and stack arms. Then a most scathing order from General McClellan, our commander, was read, charging the company in general terms with being everything which was bad, and ordering it to return to camp, pack up and return to Ohio. Wild over this outrage, but having no recourse, we could see no way but to obey the order.

When ready to begin our return march, our regimental band appeared in front of us and escorted us out of camp and quite a distance down the road, then bade us good-by, and we were off for Ohio.

After we left camp the commissioned officers of the regiment, with our colonel, at the head, marched up to headquarters and asked for General McClellan. When he appeared our colonel said: "General McClellan, we are here to ask that Company C of my regiment be ordered back to its place in the regiment, and if our request is not granted, we respectfully tender our resignations."

When three or four miles on our way, we were overtaken by an officer bearing an order for the company to return to the regiment.

There was not a better company in General McClellan's command or one more ready to obey every order than our company, and General McClellan's spectacular effort to disgrace it (ordering out the whole brigade to witness our discomfiture) was a cowardly act of which he had good reason to be ashamed.

General McClellan adored brass buttons as ardently as General Grant disliked them, and he was desperately stuck on himself. But the record of his procrastination and dead failure as commander of the Potomac army, is abundant evidence that God never intended him to be a leader of men.

With the greatest deliberation General McClellan advanced toward Rich Mountain, where a small army of Confederates under command of General Garnett was strongly fortified on the flat top of a mountain. Our term of service had expired, and General McClellan asked as a great favor that we remain with him another month, which we did, but not to please him, but because we would not think of turning our back on an enemy whom we had done so much hard marching to meet.

Rich Mountain was impregnable on its north front, and General Rosencrans with his brigade made a wide detour to find the rear, and would have taken the enemy by surprise but for the fact that a dispatch-bearer was captured by the enemy and gave them warning of our approach. When we arrived at the rear we found the enemy hard at work fortifying it.

We charged over the incompleting [sic] fortifications, drove the enemy out of its stronghold, down the mountain to the south, through the little town of Beverly, at the foot of the mountain and on to a ford across a river known as Beverly Ford, where the enemy made a stand. In the fight which followed, the commander of the Confederate force, General Garnett, was killed and his army surrendered.

The battle of Rich Mountain was a small affair as compared with what was to follow, but being one of the first victories of the war, was given greater importance than it deserved, and gave General McClellan his opportunity. For coming as it did on the heels of the defeat of the Potomac army at Bull Run, it naturally pointed to this officer as the one to take command of the defeated army.

General McClellan was ordered to Washington and placed in command of the Potomac army, and our regiment was ordered to return to Ohio and report at Camp Chase, Columbus, where we mustered out of service.

Thus ends my four months service as a private in the Nineteenth Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry.

A Sketch of My Three and a Half Years of Active Service as a Cavalryman

Soon after receiving my discharge from the infantry service, I enlisted in the Sixth Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, a three year regiment then being organized at Camp Hutchings, near my home at Warren, Ohio. At the organization of the regiment I was made first lieutenant of Company G.

Before starting to follow this regiment through its three and one-half years of active service, I deem it important that you should have a clear understanding of the organizations which made up an army during the Civil War.

A regiment of cavalry consisted of twelve companies (or troops) of one hundred enlisted men each. The field officers of the regiment were a colonel, a lieutenant-colonel and three majors. The company officers were a captain, a first and a second lieutenant. The regiment was divided into three battalions of four companies each, commanded by a major for each battalion. A squadron was composed of two companies, and when so combined was under command of the officer holding the highest rank and the oldest commission. Then came the company, and when acting independently was under command of its captain. The company was divided into two platoons. The right platoon was commanded by the first lieutenant, and the left platoon by the second lieutenant.

The service required of cavalry was of such a nature that the regiment had to be made up of the several units as given above. A brigade was composed of three or more regiments; a division of three or more brigades; an army corps of three or more divisions.

A battery of flying artillery consisted of six guns and six caissons (ammunition wagons) each drawn by eight horses. The gunners were mounted. No fifth wheel was carried.

Flying artillery served only with cavalry. It could go as fast and almost any place that cavalry could go.

A battery of light artillery consisted of six guns and six caissons, each drawn by six horses. The gunners marched on foot. Each caisson carried a fifth wheel. Light artillery served with infantry. A battery of artillery was divided into three sections of two guns each. As a rule the sections were separated in battle.

When the organization of the regiment was completed it was shipped to Camp Dennison in Southern Ohio, a very fine cavalry camp. The regiment remained in this camp all winter learning the drill, but laboring at great disadvantage for want of horses.

In the spring the regiment was ordered to Wheeling, Virginia, to receive its horses and arms. The horses and their riders were equally green and presented a ludicrous spectacle. Then came our arms. Ancient muzzle-loading horse pistols to which a piece of wood had been fastened as a stock, and Remington revolvers which were never known to "go off."

What a stupendous bluff that regiment was as it went forth to do battle for its country. Added to these newly acquired blessings, each man was required to lead two extra horses to be delivered to General Fremont, who was then moving against General "Stone-Wall" Jackson, and to whom the regiment was ordered to report.

The men were given no opportunity to get somewhat acquainted with their horses, and as soon as the outfitting was completed, the march began.

Disheartening indeed was our entry into active service. But the day came when those men could ride anything that had four feet, and were armed with fine breech-loading carbines and Colts revolvers. (Sabres had been issued to the regiment at Camp Dennison.)

We left Wheeling at dark, marched all night and the following day, reaching General Fremont late in the afternoon. When I dismounted I could not have remounted my horse to save my life.

Two days after reaching General Fremont his army reached Strasburg in Shenandoah Valley, where General Jackson was occupying a fortified position. A battle lasting all day ensued, and in the night General Jackson retreated down that beautiful valley. (I think General Fremont's command was the first Union army to enter that valley.)

General Fremont pursued the enemy with great vigor, and a running fight through the entire length of the valley was maintained. Several times each day the enemy artillery was maintained. Several times each day the enemy artillery opened on us and an artillery duel followed. I think this was done to give the enemy infantry time to gain distance in its retreat.

About half way down the valley the river was spanned by a covered bridge and our regiment was ordered to make a rush for it and to prevent the enemy from burning it; but we were too late, the bridge being on fire when we reached it. There was a prison filled with Union soldiers at this place, and the guards having vanished at our approach, the prisoners came flocking out to meet us.

General Fremont having no pontoon train, proceeded to build boats and construct a bridge. It rained nearly all the time and the river was rising rapidly. When the bridge was finished the cavalry began crossing. When about two regiments had crossed, a raft of logs came down the river and carried the bridge away. The water was now flowing over the land to the south of us, to the high land about a mile away, except a small spot near the river, and on this the marooned cavalry had to remain until another bridge was built.

When the second bridge was finished, the army crossed the river and renewed its pursuit of the enemy, who retired down the valley, fighting as they went. We fought through the streets of Harrisonville and beyond several miles, where General Jackson took a stand, and the battle of Cross Keys was fought. General Jackson again retreated in the night, fell back to a large river (I have forgotten its name) crossed over the bridge and burned it behind him.

When General Fremont arrived at the river he found the half-burned bridge in the river, and knew at once that his pursuit had ended.

Soon after entering the valley three men from Company G were ordered to carry a dispatch to General Shields who was occupying a position east of the Shenandoah Valley and near the bridge just crossed by General Jackson, asking him to burn that bridge. Our men told us that General Shields read the communication before them, made some slurring remarks about General Fremont, and did not burn the bridge.

It is reasonable to suppose that General Fremont thought the bridge had been burned and that he had General Jackson cornered.

The jealousy among the higher officers of the army, which was often very apparent, was disgraceful and costly. The determined effort to kill off General Grant was a conspicuous example of this.

General McClellan's wish to leave General Pope to his fate at the second battle of Bull Run, is another.

When General Fremont's pursuit of General Jackson came to a sudden end at the big river, General Pope was placed in command of that army and began his march back up the valley.

When the army reached the north end of the valley it went into camp. Colonel Lloyd, the commander of the Sixth Ohio Cavalry was placed in temporary command of a brigade composed of a regiment of German infantry, a battery of artillery and his own regiment, and sent into Luray valley on outpost duty.

We remained there about two weeks doing guard duty. It was a much needed rest and opportunity for the men to prepare for the hard duty which awaited them. They had been rushed into active service in unseemly haste, and their total ignorance of the things they needed to know and should have been taught, had made their first campaign an exceptionally hard one.

After this short rest General Pope advanced against General Jackson who occupied a strong position at Slaughter Mountain.

The fighting in this engagement was the most desperate we had seen. Finally General Jackson retreated to and across the Rapidan river [sic] pursued by General Pope, who halted at the river for the night. The vast increase in the number of camp-fires in the enemy camp across the river gave notice to General Pope that the enemy had received an immense reinforcement.

To account for this sudden change in the strength of the enemy, it is necessary to return to General McClellan and follow his movements for a time. His promotion to the command of the Potomac army was followed by a masterly inactivity.

Many months passed, and there was no indication that the Potomac army, the largest army in the field, Union or Confederate, was preparing to advance upon the enemy.

The people of the North became frantic over this unaccountable inaction of its principal army, and in many of the leading papers in glaring type, the headline: "POTOMAC ARMY STUCK IN THE MUD" expressed the general discontent.

Finally President Lincoln peremptorily ordered General McClellan to advance upon the enemy without any further delay.

Then the army moved, and its attempt to capture Richmond was the result. General McClellan attacked the city from the east side, and on the famous battle-ground of Malvern Hill was defeated and driven back. Another battle of less importance was fought at Seven Oaks, and again the Union army was defeated, and General McClellan retreated back to Washington.

The campaign had been a dismal failure, and the people were heart-sick.

As soon as General Lee saw the Union army in full retreat, he at once marched his army west and joined General Jackson.

Then began what is known as Pope's retreat, a desperate struggle to prevent the capture of his army. Every day and every night that frantic effort went on. Not for one hour was any regiment in Pope's army off duty. And thus fighting and falling back, the battle-field of Bull Run was at last reached.

He was not thirty miles from Washington where lay the largest army in the Nation, despite which fact General Pope was left to his fate. In obedience to a positive order from the President, General McClellan reluctantly sent to General Pope at Bull Run, General Fitz John Porter and his company, who arrived in the midst of the battle which General Pope was fighting in desperation; but took no part in the fighting, did not unlimber a gun or fire a shot. For this dastardly conduct General Porter was cashiered and dismissed from the service in disgrace.

In great disorder General Pope's army fell back to Centerville where something in the way of reorganization was effected, and in the night began a retreat to Fairfax Court House, was attacked and a fierce night battle was fought in which General Phillip Karney, a distinguished officer who had lost an arm in the Mexican war, was killed.

Our company had been ordered to guard the headquarter train of General Pope from Centerville to Fairfax Court House. When we arrived there we were relieved of our charge. In the confusion which prevailed, we could not find our regiment and finally attached ourselves to the Ninth New York Cavalry which with a battery of artillery was ordered to fall back to Washington. We left Fairfax Court House at dark, the artillery in advance, the cavalry regiment following, and our company bringing up the rear. In the night when within five or six miles of the fortifications surrounding Washington, we ran into an ambushade, and the battery and the front portion of the cavalry regiment were sadly cut to pieces. Our company being in the rear, escaped without loss. Finally we reached the fortifications and halted until morning, then found our regiment and went into camp with it.

The protracted struggle which General Pope had made to save his army from capture by the overwhelming forces brought against him, was now over, his army safe from further pursuit, and he entitled to the highest praise for what he had accomplished.

It is incomprehensible that General McClellan with his large army would stand idle within sound of the battle being waged against General Pope and render him no assistance; and yet such is the fact.

A golden opportunity presented itself to General McClellan to wipe out the stigma which attached to his Richmond campaign, but he failed to grasp it. There is no room for doubt that if he had advanced to the aid of General Pope at Bull Run, as was clearly his duty to do, the two armies united would have defeated General Lee; the raid into Maryland would have been prevented; and the battle of Antietam would not have been fought.

Having forced General Pope back to the very gates of the National Capitol, General Lee continued his march north, almost within sight of General McClellan and his army, crossed the Potomac river and passed into Maryland. In this audacious move he showed his utter contempt for the commander of the Union army. The average man would rather be pounded than ignored.

General Lee was now reveling in the luxuries of a northern state, fresh horses and supplies and faring sumptuously every day.

General McClellan followed him into Maryland, and the battle of Antietam was fought, with no decisive or satisfactory results. General Lee took his time to march back into Virginia with his spoils, while General McClellan marched back to Washington, where he was relieved of his command, and it is my understanding, retired from the army.

In prosecuting the war for the preservation of the Federal Union, President Lincoln was terribly handicapped by the fact that no military leaders of marked ability were available.

General Robert E. Lee, the most able commander in the Federal army, had resigned his commission and cast his lot with the rebelling states, and other able officers, all of whom had been educated at West Point at the expense of the Government, followed the example of General Lee and arrayed themselves against the Federal Government.

Under these circumstances the President was forced to select from the incompetents who presented themselves. He was not a military man, and by reason of this fact labored under great disadvantage. That he was a long time in finding the man who could measure swords with General Lee is not greatly to be wondered at. The impecunious wood-hauler of East St. Louis was on his way to the top, but no one, not even himself, dreamed of such a thing. Honored by being placed in command of a regiment of infantry by the Governor of Illinois, he started on his wonderful career. From the very start his growth as a military commander was phenomenal. Fort Henry, on the Tennessee river [sic], first surrendered to him, then followed the surrender of Fort Donoldson with 14,000 troops.

In the desperate battle of Shiloh he was the victor, and so from one victory to another he climbed the ladder of fame.

He had now become a shining mark, and the most determined effort was made to kill him off with the President, drunkenness the charge. But drunk or sober, he was always victorious.

Despite General Grant's defamers he went to the top.

Colonel Lloyd had been relieved of the command of the brigade which he commanded during the Pope campaign, and was now back with his regiment. He was a particularly fine looking officer. Over six feet tall and perfect in form, and clothed in a native dignity which was admirable, and a stranger to pomposity [sic].

The adjutant of the regiment informed me that the colonel wished me to report to headquarters, which I did promptly.

The colonel said to me: "I am ordered to send an officer to General Segal to serve on his staff, and I have selected you."

It was with profound regret that I received this information, and I said all I felt at liberty to say to the colonel to induce him to relieve me from this duty. He heard me through, then said: "You are the only officer in my regiment whom I dare send to General Segal, and you must go." The colonel had paid me a very high and underserved compliment, and I thanked him and retired.

General Segal was a Prussian officer of high rank, a major general, with a large command. I reported to him and was appointed ordnance officer. The department placed under my charge supplies, all arms, accoutrements, and horse equipments for cavalry.

Of the manner of drawing, issuing and accounting for Government property I was totally ignorant and began a careful study of the army regulation, to which I devoted every hour possible. I had only begun this study when the adjutant general called on me and said that the quarter-master general had given out and had received a thirty-day leave of absence, and that General Segal desired me to take charge of this department in addition to my own until his return.

As there seemed no way to do otherwise, I took on the double load. This second department placed under my charge, supplied horses for all purposes, everything pertaining to transportation, clothing, camp and garrison equipage, forage, etc.

General Pope's army, of which General Segal's command was a part, was in a sadly demoralized condition, and its re-equipment made a very heavy demand on the two departments under my charge. When the quartermaster general returned, he told me that I had issued more quartermasters stores in the thirty days of his absence than he had ever issued in any ninety days of his service. In addition to this I

had drawn and issued a mountain of ordnance stores. I was aware that the Government held my receipts for a fabulous amount of property and the smallest article I had drawn must be properly accounted for or paid for. I could not help feeling very anxious over the matter. But I had taken the greatest pains in making my returns to the Government and hoped for the best.

I served on General Segal's staff for eight months, when he was ordered to one of the western departments, and I was ordered back to my regiment.

When mustered out of service I called at the departments at Washington to settle my accounts with the Government, where I learned that my returns had been examined and found correct, and received a letter from the fourth auditor stating in substance that I had accounted for the Government property issued to me, and was entitled to receive my last pay and mileage home.

General McClellan having been retired from the command of the Potomac army, General Burnside was next place in that important position. He led his army against General Lee at Fredericksburg where it was thrown into a trap and defeated with terrible loss. General Burnside assumed all responsibility for this unfortunate affair, and gave up the command of his army.

The battle of Antietam and the battle of Fredericksburg were fought while I was on staff duty, and I have only a very general idea regarding them.

General Joe Hooker ("Fighting Joe Hooker") was now placed in command of the Potomac army. It was with this change of commanders that I returned to my regiment. I think of this officer as a very excitable man, a desperate fighter who demanded the impossible of his troops.

In refitting his army for its next campaign, he made one important and valuable change, viz: The cavalry regiments which up to this time had been serving with the various army corps, were brought together and formed into a separate command and officially named The Cavalry Corps, Army Potomac. This corps consisted of three divisions of three brigades each. The corps was first commanded by General Stoneman who soon retired from that position, then by General Pleasanton, a very fine commander who held that office until General Grant was made commander-in-chief of all the Union armies, when he placed General Sheridan in command of the cavalry corps. It was under this distinguished officer that the corps rendered its most arduous and valuable service.

General Pope's army had now been merged into the Potomac army, and that able officer transferred to a western department.

General Hooker advanced against General Lee who was occupying his favorite strong-hold, the Wilderness, a vast body of trees and under-brush. Into this jungle General Hooker led his army.

The fighting was desperate, the woods dense with battle smoke. (Black powder was alone used during the Civil War.)

The bursting shells set the woods on fire, and the smoke of the burning under-brush and timber added to the smoke of battle made this jungle a veritable inferno which those who were engaged in that battle will never forget.

Desperate effort was made to rescue the wounded from the conflagration, but to what extent this was accomplished I have never known.

My brother-in-law, Sheldon Gilkey, perished in that battle. In his death our family lost a valuable and much loved member. He left a son, Mr. E. Howard Gilkey, who from childhood has been an honor to himself, to his father and to our family.

After four days of terrible fighting under very distressing conditions, General Hooker retreated, and another defeat was recorded against the Potomac army. He fell back to and across the Rapidan river [sic], but a few miles north of the Wilderness, and went into camp.

As soon as the Union army had retreated, General Lee started on his second and last raid into the Northern states, which was to end in the battle of Gettysburg. He took the route west of the Blue Ridge mountains [sic] which placed that range of mountains between his army and the Union army, and enabled him to get quite a start on his way north before General Hooker discovered that his enemy had vanished.

When General Hooker discovered that General Lee and his army had disappeared he ordered General Pleasanton to go with the cavalry corps in all haste and find the enemy; and with the balance of his army he started by forced marches to throw it between the National Capitol and the invading army.

General Pleasanton marched rapidly for the Blue Ridge mountains [sic], Upperville Gap his objective point. When he reached Aldie, twenty miles from the Gap, he encountered a heavy body of the enemy, infantry, artillery and cavalry.

Fighting began at once. One portion of this engagement took place in a large meadow, and as our regiment is to be called into that field, I desire to make an explanation.

This meadow was on the north side of the road; along the west side of the field was a stone wall; about the middle of the field was a wide and deep wash-out. Then on the north of the field and near the wash-out were a lot of haystacks. There was a regiment of infantry secreted in the wash-out, another body of infantry behind the haystacks, and still another body behind the stonewall.

The Second New York Cavalry, a very fine regiment known as the Harris Light Cavalry, had been driven from the field twice before our regiment was called.

Our regiment was about a mile in the rear when an officer came down the road rapidly and gave an order to our colonel and we went up the road on a run. When we reached the southeast corner of the field we went through a gap in the fence and rode rapidly along the east fence until the whole regiment was in the field.

When we rode into the field we knew nothing of the fighting which had taken place, nothing of the wash-out or the troops secreted therein, or those back of the haystacks. The enemy back of the stone wall opened fire on us as we rode into the field, and so far as we knew, these were the only troops which we had to encounter.

While we were still on a trot, the order came "Four left into line!" and "Charge!" and we were off at top speed for the stone wall. Just before reaching the wash-out the troops hidden therein fired up into our faces and those back of the haystacks fired a volley into the right of our regiment as it passed. Major Stanhope who was riding at my side, fell from his horse mortally wounded, and the captain of our company riding on the other side of me went into the wash-out, as did many of the regiment.

Those who made the leap turned back upon the enemy, and all surrendered. The colonel ordered me to dismount my command and all run for the stone wall. We found that the troops back of the wall had vanished, but in front of us and within carbine range was a battery of artillery in action. We climbed over

the wall and secreted ourselves behind some large trees in the yard of a little log cabin, and opened fire. As soon as the battery discovered us it began shelling us with shrapnel (round shells filled with lead balls. A gun throwing shrapnel shells is a giant shot-gun.)

We found that after the flash of a gun we had time to dodge back before the shell reached us. While the guns were being loaded, we used our carbines. This strange contest, a squad of dismounted cavalry fighting artillery at close range, lasted about thirty minutes, when the battery retired.

I rode my handsome outlaw in this charge, and the ease with which he jumped that wash-out made me more than ever proud of him. This horse is entitled to a place in my sketch, and I will introduce him to you.

Once while on staff duty I called on the regiment to see my boys. They were telling me of an outlaw which they had drawn with some other horses, and that they could not do a thing with him. I asked them to bring him out and let me see him, and they led out a horse, dark mahogany in color and very handsome. The lordly way in which he walked, added to his great beauty, was very attractive and I admired him exceedingly. The boys bantered [sic] me to try to ride him out of camp, so I asked them to put my saddle on him and I would try.

When in the saddle I spoke to him, and instead of going forward, he ran backward rapidly, threw himself over and landed on his back. In doing this he threw me so far away from him that there was no danger of him falling on me, and as I could get to my feet quicker than he could, when he regained his feet he found me in the saddle. Without waiting an instant he did the same thing right over again and continued to do so six or eight times without an instant's pause, and each time he found me in the saddle.

On regaining his feet the last time he stood still. I let him stand a moment, then spoke to him, and he started off all right. I waved my hand to the boys and went on my way. This is only a sample of many determined efforts he made to defy me. Running away with me was another way in which he tried to get the better of me. In one of these efforts my fine steel bit broke in his mouth, and he had things his own way.

I substituted a heavy and severe bit which did more to subdue him, than all else, and finally he gave up the fight and became the finest saddle horse I have ever had the pleasure of riding.

That I am indebted to this horse for escape from capture, I have no doubt. I will refer to that experience later.

My beautiful outlaw could outrun and outjump [sic] any horse in the regiment, and his endurance was wonderful. I never knew him to act tired.

A thousand horses in double rank running abreast and at full speed. A thousand sabers flashing in the sun; a thousand riders yelling like devils [sic]. And this is a charge of cavalry. None but those who have had this experience can comprehend the fact that the yell, an ordered part of every charge, is the most powerful weapon carried into the charge.

It thrills men and horses alike with reckless frenzy which must be experienced to be comprehended.

In my first charge I gave one yell, and a shock went through me like a bolt of electricity. I nearly or quite lost my reason. The sensation which possessed me was awful, and nothing, absolutely nothing would have induced me to open my mouth again in a charge.

At night the enemy fell back a few miles toward the mountains and placed themselves in a very strong defensive position, where we fought them all day without gaining any advantage until just before dark when we drove them out of a body of timber which had been their strong-hold during the day.

The third day we drove the enemy to the gap, over an open country. Late in the afternoon our regiment made a charge in which I was badly wounded in the right thigh. The ball was extracted on the field, and that night the wounded were carried into a barn, and the next morning loaded into ambulances and started to Washington. But two men who are compelled to lie down are carried in an ambulance. My companion was a member of my company who had been mortally wounded without shedding a drop of blood. A ball had passed over his head just close enough to leave a streak across his scalp without breaking the skin, but he was totally paralyzed, could not move or speak. His constant moaning added to my own trouble nearly drove me frantic.

At night we were carried into another barn, and here my companion died. I was alone in the ambulance during the second day. Late in the afternoon we reached Fairfax Court House where we were carried into box cars and shipped to Washington (twenty miles). I arrived at the officer's hospital about one o'clock that night.

In the morning the ward surgeon visited me and finding my leg black from my knee to my body, called the chief surgeon, an elderly white haired gentleman. They made a careful examination of me and did a lot of mumbling, but left me in ignorance as to the cause of the discoloration.

When I had so far recovered that I could be sent home, the chief surgeon in handing me my leave of absence, said: "Young man, you had a mighty close call!" I asked him what was the matter, and he told me that the sciatic nerve in my leg was nearly destroyed and that my leg came as near mortifying as it could and miss it.

When I had so far recovered that I felt I could go on duty again, I returned to Washington and reported at the hospital.

The chief surgeon examined me, then said: "You can never ride in the saddle again, and I must order your discharge."

This was a great shock to me, and I begged him to not do that. I called his attention to my wonderful general health, (I was never off duty for a day from sickness during my whole service) to my strictly temperate habits, (I did not use tobacco in any form, did not use a drop of liquor. I never had a drop in my quarters or accepted a drink from others I have never been intoxicated in my life) and I felt very confident that my wound would continue to improve.

The surgeon said: "You think you know best, and you may go and try it, but you will find that I am right."

I thanked the surgeon most heartily, and with my discharge from that institution, I left.

I rode with my regiment a year and a half after I was wounded but never for one hour was I free from pain.

General Lee and his army were now in Pennsylvania helping themselves to fresh horses and supplies, burning bridges, destroying railroads, and marching toward Washington. The Potomac army was hurrying forward to intercept its powerful antagonist. With all its desperate fighting it had never won a victory. Defeated at the first battle at Bull Run, again defeated in the several battles in front of Richmond; at

Antietam it had fought desperately but failed to win a victory. At Fredericksburg it had met defeat with exceptionally heavy loss, and in the battle of the Wilderness after four days of desperate fighting, it had again been defeated. And now, foot sore and leg weary, it was about to engage in the most sanguinary, the most vital battle of the war. The fate of the Union seemed to hang on the outcome of the approaching battle.

The signs of defeat for the Union army were never so apparent as now. And at this hour General Hooker the commander of the Potomac army, resigned—resigned in the face of the enemy. I do not know the reason for this dastardly act, but I do know that no valid reason was possible.

General Meade was ordered to take command of the army. This officer was a total stranger to us, even his name was new. Whatever may have been his qualifications for this important office, he had no opportunity before the approaching battle to become our commander in fact.

General Franklin and his corps were marching at the head of the column when he encountered the Confederate army a few miles west of the little town of Gettysburg. Desperate fighting began at once and the Union forces were driven back and General Franklin was killed.

When the fight began, the rear of the Potomac army was twenty miles away.

General Howard with the Eleventh Corps, marching in rear of General Franklin's command, took up the fight and was slowly driven back, fighting every foot of the way until he reached Gettysburg, where night came to his aid. The first day of the famous battle had ended in defeat for the Union forces.

(General Howard had lost an arm in one of the battles before Richmond.)

While General Howard was fighting and being driven back, General Hancock "The Superb," with his famous Second Corps, arrived on the field. In the absence of the new commander who had not yet arrived, General Hancock assumed command and proceeded to make his plans for the coming contest.

Missionary Ridge, a slight elevation extending south from near Gettysburg to Little Round Top, a more pronounced elevation, was reserved for the artillery. At the foot of the west side of Missionary Ridge, General Hancock placed his command in battle line facing west over a fairly level plain of large extent. As the several commands arrived during the night they were conducted to the positions they were to occupy. The artillery was deployed along Missionary Ridge back of General Hancock's battle line.

So admirable was General Hancock's plan of battle that every position occupied by the Union troops was held throughout the battle. What would the Union army have done at that critical hour but for that able commander, General Hancock?

The left flank of the Union army rested on Little Round Top.

For the FIRST and LAST time during the war the Union army was to fight this battle on the DEFENSIVE, a very marked advantage which in all the other battles fought by these armies was enjoyed by the enemy.

(In making this statement I do not consider the second battle of Bull Run a battle, but a part of a long struggle to avoid capture by an overwhelming foe.)

During the entire second day and the forenoon of the third day of the battle the fighting was desperate along the whole line, and particularly so around Little Round Top where many desperate attempts were

made to turn the Union left flank, all of which failed. In one of these attempts a Confederate battery was causing great havoc on Little Round Top, and the Sixth Ohio Cavalry was ordered up to charge that battery. The regiment responded promptly, but, thank God, some change had taken place before the regiment reached there, and the charge was not ordered. General Hancock was wounded during the second day and temporarily turned the command of his corps over to General Caldwell, but resumed command as soon as his wound had been cared for.

On the afternoon of the third day of the battle something happened, and before attempting to describe this spectacular feature of the battle, I desire to say that some years after the war I had the honor of a long private conversation with General Alexander who at the battle of Gettysburg had command of all the artillery of the Confederate army. What he told me will help to make clear what was about to happen.

General Alexander said to me, "General Lee had decided to try to cut the Union army in twain. For this purpose he had held the division of General Pickett in reserve, and that command took no part in the battle until he made the charge on the afternoon of the third day. General Lee's plan also provided for a charge of his cavalry corps into the rear of the Union army. These two charges were to be made simultaneously." In my effort to describe these charges I will take one at a time, and will first follow General Fitz Hugh Lee and his famous Black Horse Cavalry. Circling around the right flank of the Union army he appeared in rear of the center and was ready to execute his part of the undertaking. But he found General Gregg and the Second Division of the Union cavalry corps (one third of the corps) confronting him, and a desperate cavalry battle was fought in which General Lee was defeated and driven from the field.

I want it remembered that the Sixth Ohio Cavalry was a part of General Gregg's command and did its full share in winning the victory over General Lee.

Returning to the front of the army I will now try to describe the movements of General Pickett. General Alexander further said to me: "I was ordered to begin a heavy bombardment, and when I thought the time had arrived for the charge, I was to send word to General Longstreet, who with other prominent officers was bitterly opposed to the charge. Finally, I sent the following communication to General Longstreet: "If the charge is to be made, it must be made now, as I am about out of ammunition."

General Pickett mounted on his beautiful white horse, led his command out into the open and formed lines for the charge.

The guns on Missionary Ridge were now cool and ready for action, and as that human avalanche came rolling across the plain, each gun began its work of destruction. The result beggars [sic] description. But let us never forget that a small body of that shattered division, led by a general officer, actually pierced the battle-line of General Hancock and died amid the guns on Missionary Ridge.

The battle was ended. At last victory crowned the Union army, a victory the importance of which cannot be over-estimated.

That grand war chief, General Lee, led his vanquished army back to the Potomac river [sic]. For the first time he had suffered defeat. But far worse than that, was the fact that he alone was responsible for that defeat.

Was it by chance that General Gregg stood across the track and was able to defeat and force back the powerful foe which had traveled far to perform its part of a set plan to destroy the Union army?

Was it by chance that the guns on Missionary Ridge were cooled just in time to break the powerful blow aimed at the heart of that army?

Surely, "THERE IS A POWER WHICH SHAPES OUR ENDS, ROUGH-HEW THEM AS WE MAY."

At intervals along Missionary Ridge, as though guarding that sacred spot, stand cannon mounted on iron carriages with iron wheels and resting on iron posts set in the ground, imperishable representatives of the one hundred and forty guns which from this stand broke the famous charge of General Pickett's division.

Many handsome monuments adorn the battle-field at Gettysburg. Of these the most elaborate one stand on the site of the battle between General Gregg and General Fitz Hugh Lee, about four miles east of Missionary Ridge.

The state of Ohio placed on that field five monuments, one for each Ohio regiment engaged in that battle. One of these monuments is dedicated to the Sixth Regiment Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, the only Ohio Cavalry regiment engaged.

On one side of this monument, carved in bold relief and about three-fourths life size, is a charging cavalryman.

On July 4, 1863 the day after the Union victory at Gettysburg, General Pemberton surrendered to General Grant the fortress at Vicksburg, the Gibraltar of the Southern Confederacy, and his army of 40,000 men. This strong-hold had long effectually blockaded the Mississippi river.

From this hour there was no reasonable hope that the Southern cause could win; and yet nearly two years of desperate fighting was to follow, and many thousand lives sacrificed for a cause which was doomed. The institution of human slavery died hard.

General Grant was called to Washington and promoted to the rank of lieutenant-general, the first officer to receive that high rank, and was appointed Commander-in-Chief of all the Union armies. But one man in the Nation outranked him, and he was President of the United States.

The work of reorganizing and strengthening the Potomac army received the personal attention of General Grant, who from that time was present with that army. General Meade was retained as commander of that army, but was so over shadowed by the commander-in-chief that we were apt to forget the fact.

General Sheridan was called from the West and placed in command of the cavalry corps. It was under this distinguished officer that the corps did its hardest and most important work.

From the beginning of the war the forts around Washington and Baltimore had been fully manned by troops who had been called upon for no other service than to perfect themselves in the operation of the large guns mounted on the forts and in the evolutions and use of the rifle as infantrymen.

General Grant ordered this fine body of troops to join the Potomac army. This order enraged Secretary of War Stanton, an able and self-willed officer who had long been almost a dictator in military matters, and he demanded of General Grant a revocation of that order, but the silent Grant did not revoke, and the matter was carried to the President who declined to take any action.

The wisdom of this order of General Grant may be questioned when it is remembered that while he and the Potomac army were in front of Petersburg, twenty miles south of Richmond, and there were no Union troops between General Lee's army and the National Capitol, General Early and his army stole up the Shenandoah Valley and by forced marches came dangerously near occupying the empty forts surrounding the National Capitol.

General Grant learned of this move on the part of General Early just in time to forestall it. He sent from the Potomac army the Sixth Corps and other troops to Washington as fast as ships could carry them. When they arrived they went at double-quick to the forts on the north side of the city, where they found President Lincoln standing on the top of one of them watching the approach of General Early's army.

(General Early had lost a leg in battle, and commanded his army from a wheeled vehicle.)

The army with which General Grant advanced against General Lee was probably the largest single army ever assembled in this country for national defense, and was composed largely of veteran soldiers who had the experience of years of hard service and were well schooled in the art of war.

With General Sheridan in advance the army began its forward movement. Arriving at the Rapidan river [sic], some fine miles north of the Wilderness, it halted for the night.

In the evening we noticed a circle of torches on poles illuminating a space of some forty feet in diameter. An officer called for our colonel and escorted him to the circle, inside of which he found Generals Grant and Meade and the corps commanders. He received the following order: "You will muffle your horses' feet and your sabers, and at one o'clock tonight silently leave your camp, cross the river and hold the opposite bank until the pontoon bridge is in place and the army crossing."

This order was executed with the greatest care. We were possessed with a feeling amounting to almost certainty, that General Lee would contest the crossing of this river so very near his army, and from the moment we rode into the water, expected each instant to receive evidence of this fact, but not a shot was fired, and we climbed the bank and place the regiment in position for defense.

The battle of Chancellorsville was fought on practically the same ground as was the battle of the Wilderness under General Hooker, a jungle of trees and underbrush dense with battle smoke.

This was General Lee's favorite stronghold, added to which he fought on the defensive in each of the two battles in this jungle.

The battle of Chancellorsville was one of desperate fighting and heavy losses. General Grant was a human bulldog who when he set his fangs in the flank of an enemy, never let go his hold. His one rule in war was said to be: "Seek the enemy and fight him." This battle was simply the beginning of a continuous battle which was to almost nearly two years and end at Appomattox by the "unconditional surrender" of General Lee's army.

In the battle of Chancellorsville General "Stone Wall" Jackson was killed by his own men. From the Richmond papers we learned the cause of this sad accident. From this source we learned that General Jackson gave orders to his pickets to shoot anything in their front without challenging. Seemingly forgetting this order he got out in their front.

General Jackson had few equals among the Confederate officers. Recklessly brave, a strategist, and a night-hawk with many unpleasant surprises for his enemies, a very devout man who was said to begin each day with a prayer to Almighty God to grant victory to the Southern cause. As General Jackson was

reported to be a poor man and a non-slave owner we seem to find in him one who believed that slaves were held by Divine right.

The conditions attending the battle of Chancellorsville were of such a character that cavalry could not be used to any great advantage, and after the battle was well under way, General Sheridan started on his famous raid to Richmond.

We began our march after dark, and much of the night was spent on passing through woods and by-ways; but in the morning we found ourselves on a broad road which later we found to be the so-called telegraph road to Richmond. The Sixth Ohio Regiment was in the rear, and in the center of the regiment was placed a section of artillery (two guns) and we recognized the fact that within a few hours we would have the southern cavalry corps on our backs.

My company was squadroned [sic] with Company A, and Captain Northway of that company was in command of the squadron. He was the finest line officer in the regiment. This squadron was the rear squadron of the regiment, and my position was at the rear of the squadron.

About four o'clock I looked back and saw the road full of cavalry on the run. I rode to the head of the squadron and reported the fact to Captain Northway, who turned the head of his command into a large field at our left, faced the road and advanced carbines. Soon a squadron of the enemy came dashing up the road and when opposite us received a volley from our carbines which unseated many, and the balance retreated.

Then a regiment passed us at full speed. A volley was fired into them as they passed, and now as there was a regiment of the enemy between our regiment and ourselves, Captain Northway shouted "every man look out for himself."

We rode rapidly to the west end of the field where there was a body of timber, but we found along its side a thick growth of young pines as impenetrable as a wall. It looked as though we were in a pocket and certain to be captured. I rode rapidly to the left and found a cow-path through the pines and called to the men, and a portion of the command came at my call. Evidently other paths through the pines had been found. The men rode rapidly into the path, and I followed. There were hundreds of the enemy now in the field riding rapidly after us.

I had gone but a few rods when a limb knocked my hat off, and I was in the act of dismounting to get it when a call rang out: "Surrender, you damned yankee [sic]!" I glanced back and saw the path behind me filled with the enemy and the head man drawing his revolver. Had the call been delayed a second I would have been on the ground and a prisoner, but I was able to pull myself back into the saddle and my horse started on a run, but I well knew that I was entirely at the mercy of the man behind me, and each instant expected to receive a shot, but it did not come, and I am still wondering why.

There was an almost universal sentiment in the army that to shoot an enemy who was in a position where he could not defend himself was an act of gross cowardice, and I am inclined to think that I owe my life to that sentiment.

My horse ran rapidly up the path through the underbrush and out into a piece of open timber, and while running at full speed had the misfortune to strike a tree with his shoulder which brought him to a full stop, and I shot over his head like an arrow. He waited until I got my foot in the stirrup, then started into a run, and I was standing at his side when he jumped a fence which I knew nothing of until we were up in the air. This fence separated the woodland from an open field, and in the road opposite I saw our regiment engaged in a hand to hand fight with the Confederate regiment which had rushed past us.

All organization had been broken up and each man was fighting in his own way. At the approach of the enemy the gunners and drivers of the artillery vanished leaving their guns standing in the road where they became a terrible incumbrance [sic] to us. They were captured and re-captured a number of times, and many horses were injured in charging over them.

From first to last this contest was a fight with sabers. We could not use our carbines, and no opportunity was found to re-load our revolvers. We had to keep falling back to keep in touch with our corps which was constantly marching away from us. From about four p.m. until dark our regiment fought the head of a column reaching back as far as we could see.

A terrible feature of this fight was the fact that we could render no assistance to our wounded, who we were compelled to leave where they fell. About dark we backed up against a battle-line which had been thrown out, and passed through, taking the artillery with us, which we delivered to the battery to which it belonged.

Our regiment had seen some hard fighting, but nothing which would compare with this experience.

Had my handsome outlaw been endowed with human intelligence he could not have more perfectly performed his part in saving me from capture. That his reward for that splendid service should come in the form of a shock which ruined him, has always been a source of profound regret to me. With his unequalled nerve, he ignored his mortal hurt until the battle was over, then collapsed. I was never on his back again.

General Sheridan marched steadily on toward Richmond, beating back the constant assaults of the Confederate cavalry corps with one hand while with the other he destroyed railroads, locomotive and depots of supplies, and arrived at the city just before daylight.

As the arrangements for the reception of this distinguished officer and his command were very elaborate and his destruction almost certain, I propose to precede [sic] him and explain the reception which had been more carefully prepared for him.

First—An elaborately prepared bomb-field awaited him within the empty forts surrounding the city.

Second—A brigade of infantry and a battery of artillery were stationed in the vicinity of the bomb-field.

Third—Meadow Bottom, a low marshy valley lying east of Richmond, and which it was necessary for General Sheridan to cross in order to reach his destination, the James river south of the city where supply ships awaited him, had been prepared for him as follows: The bridge over a small river running down the valley had been removed and a strong force of the enemy was stationed on the east bank of the valley opposite the bridge-site to prevent the building of a bridge and the crossing of the valley.

It was, doubtless, believed that the little which remained of General Sheridan's command after the explosion of the bombs could easily be taken care of by the Confederate cavalry corps.

Led by the young man who had been acting as guide for General Sheridan, the Union cavalry corps was marched into the city and halted on the bomb-field exactly where the enemy wanted it.

After coming to a halt on the bomb-field, events transpired as follows: The bombs failed to explode, because of a technical defect in the arrangement for exploding them. Electric cables and batteries were not in use at that time.

Daylight revealed the fact that we were standing on an immense plowed field with many ropes under our horses' feet.

The cavalry was moved off this field, and our prisoners were brought forward and compelled to dig out the bombs. With trembling hand they dug out of the ground we had been standing on EIGHTY-THREE unexploded bombs.

General Buford with the First Division of the corps fought and held back during the entire day, the Confederate cavalry corps which fought desperately, seemingly with the belief that the Union cavalry corps would be captured or destroyed.

General Buford sent for help, but General Sheridan replied: "I have not a man to send you."

While General Buford was maintaining this desperate fight General Sheridan forced back the enemy on the east bank of Meadow Bottom, built a bridge over the river and began marching his command across the valley.

In the morning as soon as the troops had been removed off the bomb-field, our regiment was dismounted and conducted to the south edge of a body of timber overlooking a very large open field to the south of us. Soon after taking this position a battery of artillery at the south side of the field began shelling us. Fortunately the shells went above us, and our principal danger was from falling tree tops cut off by the shells.

After a somewhat protracted bombardment a brigade of infantry marched into the field near the battery, formed in line and advanced across the field. They outnumbered our regiment about three or four to one. Their gray uniforms, apparently new, were very handsome, and they marched in as perfect alignment as though passing in review. To our great surprise they did not charge on us, but maintained their careful alignment and perfect step. They had passed the middle of the field, and yet were not within range of our carbines, and we waited. It seemed a shame to fire into that handsome line of troops, but we had no option in the matter.

Finally they were within range of our carbines, and we opened fire. The men began dropping along the line, but for a little time this seemed to be disregarded, and it began to look as though they were going to walk right over us. Then the line began to waver, then break, then retreated on a run.

The battery again began shelling us, and after several hours the brigade again marched into the field, formed in line and advanced on us as before, and with the same result, and that was the last we saw of the infantry.

At dusk we were ordered to remount, and were conducted to the west bank of Meadow Bottom, opposite the corduroy road across the valley, over which General Sheridan's command was passing, and ordered to hold that position until the rear of the column reached the bridge, then close up rapidly.

Much to our surprise we were not molested while holding that position, and when the rear of the column reached the bridge, lost no time in joining it.

That General Sheridan performed a master stroke in extricating his command from the well-laid trap set for him at Richmond will not be questioned.

But he deserves no credit for the fact that a large portion of his corps was not blown to atoms, for like a sheep led to slaughter, he allowed himself to be led at night and by a stranger, inside the fortification of the Capitol city of his enemy and placed on an elaborately prepared bomb-field, just where his enemy wanted him.

For the young man who acted as guide for General Sheridan on his raid to Richmond, and by taking this position dedicated his life to the Southern cause, setting the time and place where he was certain to suffer a tragic death in her interest, I feel that profound respect which I feel for that noble woman, Charlotte Corday, who voluntarily gave her life to rid France of that monster, Murat.

The man who voluntarily gives his life for a cause, be that cause right or wrong, proves his sincerity, and challenges our high respect and admiration. And though he be our enemy, we freely accord him the honor he has nobly won.

General Sheridan marched around the east side of Richmond, over Malvern Hill, the battle-ground on which General McClellan was defeated in his attempt to capture Richmond, and down to the James river south of Richmond, where supply ships convoyed by two monitors, awaited him. Both the men and horses of the corps were sadly in need of rations and rest. Two days were spent on the bank of the James, and then we took up the march again, going north to find the Potomac army which had disentangled itself from the Wilderness and was on its way south. At the North Anna river [sic] General Grant and General Sheridan again met, and the cavalry corps counter-marched and led the army to the James river [sic] where pontoon bridges were put in place, and the army passed over and took up its position in front of Petersburg, twelve miles west of the river, where many months of hard fighting awaited it.

General Sheridan operated very largely as an independent command, and for weeks at a time we did not see the army. The service under this commander was particularly arduous, limited only by what the horses could endure, and General Sheridan lost many horses.

Having already given a somewhat detailed description of one of General Sheridan's raids, I shall not attempt to follow his movements at all closely.

In one of his battles we were sitting in line awaiting orders, when an officer rode up and called for a battalion, and our first battalion under command of its major responded. They rode into the battle, made a charge, and were captured bodily, and we never saw them again. In this battalion was my old Company G, and if I had been allowed to do as I very much wanted, I would have gone into captivity with it.

A short time before this battle I had been commissioned a captain, but much preferred to remain in the company with which I began my service, rather than accept promotion, but the colonel would not allow me to do so, and ordered me to take command of Company D, and again I was made to feel that I was a favorite with "That power which shapes our ends."

The capture of our first battalion was a terrible loss to our regiment. By this unfortunate event our strength was reduced by one-third. We were deprived of many able and valuable officers and of many warm personal friends.

To a great extent a regiment was depended upon to do its part, regardless of its numerical strength. I will give one illustration of the disadvantage under which we labored. When our horses required rest, General Sheridan would return to the army. While there the cavalry would take the place of the infantry

which guarded the rear of the army. A line of videttes covered the entire rear of the army, and some five or six miles distant from it. Regiments performing this duty were relieved weekly. Our regiment having been detailed for this duty, our colonel placed it under my command.

I had the ill fortune to relieve a regiment which had many more men than I had. I could only relieve the videttes on the front, and was compelled to leave vacant all guard posts in my rear. This was a most unsatisfactory, even dangerous thing to do, but I had no option in the matter.

While I was in this fix, General Sheridan accompanied by his staff and body-guard, rode in upon me, and finding no rear guard to halt him, was mad, terribly mad, and abused me roundly for what seemed to him criminal carelessness on my part. Each word smarted, for I prided myself on doing duty as well as it could be done, and felt that I could do guard duty as well as General Sheridan could do it with the same force. When he got through abusing me, I said, "General Sheridan, every man in my command is on duty, and I have placed them where in my judgment they are most needed."

The general was so mad that he did not do me the honor of asking me to ride over the line of videttes with him. When he returned from his inspection, the two reliefs [sic] off duty were in line to receive him. He dismounted, lighted a cigar and asked me to go with him. We wandered through the grove as he smoked, he as pleasant a man could be. He did not refer to the cussing he had given me, did not intimate any change in the manner in which I was doing guard duty. Finally we walked back to his horse, and the cavalcade rode out of the same hole it came in at, and I finished my week of guard duty exactly as I began it.

No officer would so far forget himself or the position he occupies, as to intimate that the force under his command was not strong enough to perform any duty required of it.

"His not to ask the reason why?"

The position which General Grant occupied on the James river [sic] had many marked advantages. All supplies for the army were floated to the back door of the army,--City Point,--where immense storehouses were built and extensive repair shops installed, where wrecked gun carriages, wagons, harness, etc., were repaired, thus making a marked reduction in the wastage of war. A railroad was built from this point to and along the rear of the army. The wounded were floated from this point to northern hospitals with the greatest ease and care. A camp was established here for dismounted cavalymen who during the time they were without horses, guarded government stores and such other service as they were called upon to perform.

In all other campaigns, with the possible exception of General McClellan's effort to capture Richmond, ammunition, rations, forage and all other supplies had to be transported in wagons, and the army trains for this purpose were miles long, and had to be heavily guarded. This guard duty made a heavy drain on the battle line. The wounded also had to be sent back in ambulances, which was another terrible handicap.

Against the advantages enjoyed by General Grant, was the fact that there was no Union force between the enemy and the National Capitol. But fortunately only one attempt was made to take advantage of the helpless condition of our Capitol, that of General Early, and that was prevented.

In the long list of achievements standing to the credit of General Grant, there stands one failure; the only one so far as I know. I refer to the exploding of a mine under one of the Confederate forts in front of Petersburg.

The effort was a mechanical success; the result a dismal failure. I will give a brief sketch of this undertaking.

A tunnel was dug from back of the Union forts, under the long space lying between the Union and the Confederate fortifications and under one of the forts of the latter. In the vault under the fort was placed a large amount of explosive and a train of powder from that explosive to the mouth of the tunnel.

(No electric batteries and cables in those days, for which those who stood on the bomb field at Richmond, have reason to be thankful.)

Troops were selected and specially drilled and instructed for rushing through the gap made in the line of forts.

General Hancock with his second corps and General Sheridan with the cavalry corps were sent to the east side of the James river to make an all day attack on Richmond. The object of this was, of course, to force General Lee to draw heavily from the army at Petersburg to defend the Confederate Capitol.

When all was ready, the second corps, was shipped to City Point and taken on board ships, and with bands playing, sailed down the river. After all noise was stopped, all lights extinguished, and the boats turned back up the river to the point where the troops were to land.

It took all the hours of night and a few of the early morning to reach our destination. The two corps united in an attack on Richmond, which was pushed with vigor all day.

At dark the cavalry began a hurried march back to Petersburg, intending to arrive there before the exploding of the mine but were a few moments late, for which I was thankful, as I had no desire to see a mass of earth, heavy guns and men shot into the air.

The Union troops rushed into the crater caused by the explosion, and fought desperately to hold it, but were overpowered and driven back, and this stupendous effort to break through the Confederate fortifications was an utter failure.

General Hall, who during the last years of his life was a citizen of Lawrence, led his regiment into this struggle, where he lost an arm.

What he told me of the horrors he was forced to witness, I shall never forget, and have no thought of repeating.

“PUT YOURSELVES, OH! THAT YOU WOULD PUT YOURSELVES ON A FIELD OF BATTLE AND LEARN TO JUDGE OF THE SORT OF HORRORS WHICH YOU INCITE.”

A “Reconnaissance in Force,” is an advance made on the enemy’s lines to secure, I assume, certain information. It is always made by a force strong enough to sustain a fierce fight which it is practically certain to encounter. As a sample of these engagements I give the following sketch of a reconnaissance undertaken by General Gregg and his second division of the cavalry corps.

This officer and his command is the force which defeated General Fitz Hugh Lee at Gettysburg.

Of this officer, General Sheridan says in his memoirs: “He was the finest dragoon officer in the cavalry corps.”

This time General Gregg is to suffer utter defeat, is to see for the first and last time his division stampeded, not a regiment or company in line, and is to be saved from capture by night coming to his aid just in time.

General Gregg was entirely surrounded by a heavy body of the enemy who made desperate and determined efforts to capture his command. He was assailed in front and rear, and fought desperately to push back the enemy, but without avail, and as darkness descended, his command was in a thoroughly demoralized condition. With darkness there came to General Gregg a friend which was to save him. The ambushade so much dreaded by all troops, was available. Only in very desperate case will troops continue an advance into the night.

Until in the night I was in total ignorance of what had transpired with our command. In the afternoon I was ordered to take my company and support a section of artillery which was going into action on a hill some distance in our front.

When we reached the hill we found in the valley below us and within easy rifle range, a small army, at the very least a hundred men to each one of us. The artillery opened fire, but in a few moments its horses were being killed off so fast that it retired while it had horses enough to drag the guns back. In its hasty retreat it left an uninjured horse attached to a dead one; we cut him loose.

Ordinarily I would have retired with the guns I had been ordered to support, but I received an order to remain on the hill. In front of us were some stumps, and I ordered three or four of my best marksmen to dismount and use the stumps for better aim. I placed their horses in the care of a man who I knew would stay there as long as I did, and sent back asking permission to do what I had already done, and the reply came back: "Keep every man in his saddle, we are surrounded." I called to the men behind the stumps and rode out toward the man holding their horses, and was calling to him when I saw he was falling from his saddle. I reached him in time to get hold of the reins before the horses scattered.

Our colonel rode up to me to say that the need of holding that hill was to enable them to get the artillery back through a deep cut in the road. He was not with me half a minute before his horse received a bullet, and he left me.

The enemy seemed to be waiting for something, and while waiting, put in their time disposing of my little command, which was rapidly growing smaller, as with each badly wounded man I sent a man to help him to the rear.

I had now but seven men beside myself, and knew that we could not last many minutes in that terrible rain of bullets, when a colonel rode out of the woods beside me, a stranger to me, and asked, "What are you doing here?" "I am ordered to hold this hill," I replied. "Well, I order you back," he said.

God bless that officer. Never was a military order so joyfully received or more promptly obeyed.

We made for the deep cut in the road. While on the way we met Captain Lehman, commanding Company C of our regiment, with fourteen men. Before reaching the cut in the road we saw some ammunition on the ground, and finding it was right for our carbines, filled our pockets. We rode through the cut and up through a body of timber and into a large field. The dreadful rebel yell notified us that the enemy was now in hot pursuit. When we got far enough into the field to be carbine range from the timber, Captain Lehman said, "Let us stop here and give them one more round as they come through the woods." While waiting, a young woman came running out of an old house beside us, and said, "What can I do to save my mother?" As there was nothing in sight which would stop a bullet, I said, "Run in and lie down on the floor."

Though we knew nothing of the fact, Adjutant Baldwin of our regiment was lying in the field we were in, severely wounded. Men were carrying him to the rear and had reached this field, when hearing the rebel yell and knowing well what was coming, Adjutant Baldwin said to the men, "You cannot save me, lay me down and run for your lives," and the cavalry which received our last volley as they rode into the field, trampled [sic] him to death.

We rode into a large body of tall brush near us and escaped. It was growing quite dark and we were not pursued.

We went through the field of brush and came out into what seemed open country, though it was now so dark that we could not see any distance. We had no idea where our troops were; we knew nothing of the trouble they were in. We were completely lost, and wandered on aimlessly. Finally we heard far off to our left, the call of the regiments. Will say that when troops get scattered in the night, men are stationed along the road and continuously call their regiments. Stragglers hearing the call rally to that point.

It was a mighty welcome call to us, and we were soon with our comrades again.

In the night, General Gregg reorganized his command and made a dash against the troops surrounding him, and cut his way through.

Major A. McQuin Corrigan of the Ninth New York cavalry who served on the staff of General Segil when I did, and to whom I was warmly attached, had a leg shot off in this battle, and died that night.

At about the time at which my sketch has arrived, an order was issued by the War Department at Washington to the effect that all commissioned officers of the army who had rendered three years service under their commissions, were entitled to be mustered out of service, regardless of subsequent musters.

Each time that an officer was promoted to a higher rank, he was sworn into service for a new term of three years or during the war. By reason of this fact, the above order came as a great surprise to us. The officers who had entered the service with the regiment as commissioned officers were now free to leave the service, as they had served three years and about two months. They were delighted to learn that the Government considered that they had fulfilled their contract.

We were all most anxious to see home once more, and began to make our arrangements to be mustered out.

I was in the midst of my day-dream when our Colonel came to me and urged me to remain with the regiment at least for a time. He thought it dreadful for all of the old officers to abandon the regiment at once, giving those who were to take their places, no opportunity to acquaint themselves with their new duties or to acquire confidence in themselves, etc., and as I had no wife and babies calling for me, he felt that it was almost a duty I owed the regiment to remain with it at least for a time. The tears came into his eyes as he talked to me, and that settled it for me, and I promised to remain with the regiment until the close of the fall campaign. So I cast aside my beautiful day-dream and buckled my saber on again.

After the officers had departed, I was dreadfully lonesome and it took all the will power I had to hold me to a fulfillment of my promise to our Colonel.

And when it was too late to draw back, I became very anxious over the thought, what will it mean for me if by reason of the radical changes which have taken place in the regiment, it should, while under my command, tarnish its glorious record?

But my anxiety was needless; for with the old time readiness, the regiment rendered every service required of it in a manner absolutely satisfactory to me.

The Weldon railroad coming up from the south to Petersburg and on to Richmond, ran through the whole length of General Lee's army, and was a factor of great importance to him, and was carefully guarded. General Grant wanted to deprive his enemy of this advantage, and, I think, but am not certain, that several attempts were made to capture it. If so, they failed, and General Grant finally adopted the same plan for its capture that he employed in connection with the mine under the enemy's fortifications, and again General Hancock and General Sheridan with their commands were sent to the east side of the James River to make an all day effort to capture Richmond.

At dark the cavalry corps was rushed back to Petersburg and onto the coveted railroad, driving back the depleted guard, and proceeded to tear up the track, but were soon forced back by the enemy. Cavalry is at a terrible disadvantage in fighting infantry, and if it cannot bring to bear its most powerful weapon, the charge, the sooner it gets out of range of those rifles, the more cavalymen will be left for the next fight.

The enemy was in turn attacked by a strong body of Union troops, driven back, a division of their force captured, and the railroad was permanently in the possession of the Union army, and Fort Warren was built on its track.

I was present when the wagons filled with rations for the captured troops drove in among them, and the frantic struggle of those half starved men to get their hand on something to eat, was a very unpleasant sight, and a feeling of indignation possessed me that these brave men (no better soldiers ever stood on a battlefield) should be compelled, or even allowed to fight on for a cause so evidently lost.

I wonder if the Continental army at Valley Forge was in worse condition than was the Confederate army during the last few months of the war?

In connection with the final surrender of the Confederate army at Appomatax [sic], four items stand out in glowing colors to the credit of General Grant.

First. He declined to accept the sword of his vanquished foe.

Second. His first and immediate order was to supply the surrendered army with rations.

Third. All commissioned officers of that army were allowed to retain their side-arms.

Fourth. All men with horses were allowed to ride them home.

Terrible as was General Grant in battle, he was kind to the vanquished.

I have now arrived at the last important move of General Sheridan in the fall of 1864, and the last in which I was to bear a part.

This movement was, as we understood it, an attempt to turn the right flank of General Lee's army. If such was its object, it failed. But was repeated the next spring with results which speedily brought the war to an end. But this is not my story.

General Sheridan and his command left the army after dark. I was ordered to take the head of the column with my regiment.

We marched south to our furthest [sic] outpost and halted until just before day, and then advanced into the enemy country.

Soon after daylight my regiment captured a wagon train, a picket post (the men jumped on to their horses bare-back and escaped, leaving all else and their breakfast cooking) and a signal corps in transit from one station to another, with flags, glasses, rations, etc., in five wagons.

I was ordered to patrol for two miles a road running off to the left. When we returned to the main road I found the column halted, and passed along the side of it to the head and reported to General Sheridan who had halted on the top of a hill and was using his glass on a cluster of tents on the opposite hill, which later we knew to be the headquarters of General Dade Hampton, a distinguished Confederate cavalry officer. At the foot of the hill we were on a small river. I was ordered to dismount my command, cross the river, lie down in the edge of the field beyond and await the order to charge.

As soon as we entered the field we received the fire from rifle-pits along the brow of the hill above us. The soldier lying beside me as we awaited the order to charge was shot. The order came, and we charged up the hill under a galling fire, climbed over the rifle-pits and the enemy retreated, we after them. As we ran past the tents I saw on the ground a young officer very handsomely uniformed, with an elegant sash, a brace of fine revolvers and fine cavalry boots. The men caught up with him as they ran, divested him of his sash, revolvers and boots, and dropped him.

We ran into and through a body of timber and came out against a road, where we waited until our horses were brought up. After mounting we rode a few miles when I was ordered to dismount my command and let the men make some coffee, but a gentle rain had been falling for hours and the men could not make any fires, so did not get any coffee.

Soon I was ordered to bring my regiment out dismounted. As the men were falling in line, Captain Austin came to me and said: "I am so tired that I do not feel able to go any farther on foot. May I get on my horse?" "Certainly," I said, and he rode out at my side. When near the front a shell came very close to us, and Captain Austin dodged nearly out of his saddle. I looked at him in astonishment, for there was not a braver officer in the regiment or one less likely to pay any attention to a shell. In thirty minutes Captain Austin was dead, and I wondered if sometimes men are forewarned.

We fought until after dark, the rain still falling. We were then ordered to fall back and remount. Ammunition was distributed to the men as they sat in their saddles, then, wet to the skin, dead tired and hungry, we started on our long march back to the army.

Captain Austin was engaged to our Colonel's daughter, and we strapped him to his saddle and took him back with us, and wired the Colonel.

Very soon after our return, I was mustered out.

Thus endeth my service in the Union army.

In this sketch I have reduced to narrow limits three and a half years of active service. In the interest of brevity I have passed over many tragic events which are legitimate parts of this service, but quite enough have been recorded to brand in its true colors GRIM VISAGED WAR.

J. N. ROBERTS.

NOTE

Since closing my sketch it has occurred to me that those who read may wonder how it came that many of the commissioned officers of the regiment were mustered out by reason of expiration of term of service, while the enlisted men of the regiment remained.

In explanation I will say that a short time before the expiration of their term of service (three years) inducements were offered the men to re-enlist. Prominent among these inducements was a thirty-day furlough for each man who re-enlisted, and were sent home, one or two companies at a time. Their officers were sent with them with orders to open offices and recruit while the men were having their frolic.

It was in this manner that my ideal squadron commander, Captain D.R. Northway, visited home for the first time in three years. He was about to be married when the war began, but postponed that even and enlisted in the army.

He found his lady-love awaiting him, and married her. When he returned to the regiment he told me of the happy even, and added, "I shall never see my wife again."

Soon after returning he was promoted to the rank of major. Never was an officer more worthy of promotion.

Not two months had elapsed after the major parted with his bride, when I found him on the battle-field shot through the heart.

J.N.R.