

"TO CARE FOR HIM WHO HAS BORNE THE BATTLE, AND FOR HIS WIDOW AND ORPHANS."

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## VANQUISHING VICKSBURG.

The Campaign which Ended in the Surrender of America's Gibraltar.

THE SIEGE UP TO JUNE 14.

How Grant's Magnificent Army Conducted Operations.

DIGGING RIFLE-PITS.

A Bold Wriggle to the Hot Front One Moonlit Night.

BY CHARLES A. HOBBS, A. M., FORMERLY FIRST SERGEANT, CO. B, 99TH ILL.; Author of the Epic "Vicksburg," "The Ride in the Valley of Convalescence," etc.

WHEN we began the siege of Vicksburg we of the army knew very little ourselves how to proceed. When the white flags went up July 4 we had learned much, and could have managed better in every way. I do not, in this remark, of course, refer to the Engineers of our Regular Army, or even to those who had as civilians given some attention to engineering. But to the average soldier, I question if the readiness to intrench, as afterward developed, did not have its root in this experience and history.

But Badaeu declares that the lack of skillful engineers did delay the siege; that fortifications would be with much labor thrown up only to be abandoned later for better positions.

And we learn that there were but four Engineer officers with the army, the Chief being, first, Capt. Prime, and when his health gave way, Capt. Comstock. But assistants were ordered by Grant from all officers who had graduated from West Point, who should help them in addition to other duties.

It is here the Commanding General tells his little joke on the Chief Commissary of the Army, Gen. Macfeely, whom some of the soldiers well remember.

AS RATHER SHORT AND CERTAINLY FAT. Being a graduate of West Point, he was also included in the arrangement, but begged off, because he said he was good for nothing, unless it was to be used as a sap-roller. Now



THE SAP-ROLLER.

A sap-roller was a round basket, like a great log, eight or nine feet long, and from two to 10 feet in diameter. Being round it could be rolled over and over, and thus pushed ahead of men who were digging a trench endways—straight toward the enemy. It would thus protect the soldiers digging the trench from the bullets of the enemy, and enable them to get close to the foe's main line.

The worthy Commissary thought he might do for this, if nothing else. We are not to determine his diameter here, but accept Grant's conclusion that it was best to let him off. He would not have done for a sap-roller long enough to pay, and he was needed to get the rations for the boys.

But before the siege ended there were many volunteer officers who could have quickly chosen the best position, and with no little skill have constructed works of defense. Remembering, however, that I was a great officer myself at this time, I do not want to say too much about the officers alone, so I will add—and it happens to be the truth—that there were just as many privates who could have done as well or better.

Our military historians lament the fact that they had no siege-guns, except the six 32-pounders, and that there were absolutely none in the West to draw from, and disclose regret that there was no depot of supplies for regular siege operations anywhere around. Even the commonplace pick and shovel was not on hand in any great quantities. But I do not remember that we troubled our heads about that. We felt ourselves able to hold our positions, and the outcome would be all right, and we thought what we needed would presently be brought forward. Of course, the first thing the commanding officers were to get their artillery well protected where it would do the most good—or harm, as you choose to view it.

Then, wherever the guns went the infantry must go; so camps for the troops as close to the works as possible were secured. Occasionally these were moved, but sometimes they remained where first taken to the end

of the siege. My impression now is that part of our brigade did move somewhat nearer the rebel line.

AFTER THE CHARGE than before; but I know that after the 8th and 9th Ind. took their position upon that hill just to the right of the railroad track (facing the city) we kept it till the city surrendered.

It was from 400 to 600 yards from the rebel fortifications. At least, I did not have to lift the raised sight of my musket more than 400 yards in one direction to graze the top of their breastwork, and in another—the farthest point—more than 600 yards.

In order to tell about the siege for the next few days one must begin somewhere, and I suppose I might as well begin with our hill as anywhere else. That hill ran almost parallel to the rebel works. It did slant outward a little as it stretched to the west, and still more southward after one crossed the railroad track. In fact, it turned away from the rebel line enough to make it necessary for the 18th Ind., and especially the 33d Ill., to get dangerously near the top, and on the level, in order to keep close enough to the rebel defenses, for these two regiments occupied the place on the left of the railroad. Here is a rough sketch from memory:



POSITION OF BENTON'S BRIGADE.

We did not for a day or two dig our trench at the top of the hill. I suppose it was because the Engineers had so much to do they could not lay out the line, and probably the picks and spades were not numerous enough to go around. It seemed a first necessity to take care of the general line, especially on our right, because there was where Johnston threatened our forces. This will also probably account for Grant's Headquarters being so much to one side of the lines proper. He was just behind Sherman, and could get first news of things from the interior, as well as keep track of matters around Vicksburg. It is likely, also, that he preferred to be near Sherman. This preference was manifested at other times. Certainly there was nothing in the relations between him and McClelland to make him desire to be close to that General.

I have already expressed the opinion that the Thirteenth Corps, in consequence of such relation, did not always get the notice from Badaeu, and probably Grant, as it deserved.

THERE WAS NO SERIOUS INJUSTICE DONE, but it was manifestly far easier to speak of Sherman or McPherson than of our commander. Badaeu also states that McClelland was indifferent about fortifying our line. If this was true this might account for our delay in digging into mother earth; but I assert that in Carr's front there was plenty of hard work done, and there was anything but indifference shown, after we began, about getting details to go into the business of manufacturing rifle-pits.

What with guard duty and fatigue work we were sometimes up three nights together, and men cannot stand such pressure long. So soon as the spades arrived, in the still hours of the night, we dug the rifle-pit on the top of our hill. It was dug zig-zag fashion, of course. The object of that, so familiar to the old soldier, may not be so apparent to others. When you are in range of the enemy's cannon or musketry from various directions you have to guard yourself against them all. If you dug a trench straight, some foe would get at a place where he could shoot through it from end to end.



SHARPSHOOTING BEHIND BREASTWORKS.

Now, you see that man would kill every fellow whose head was on a level with his gun, provided the bullet would go far enough and they continued to keep their heads together for him to hit.

But if they made the trench crooked, then the ball would strike the dirt first. And so the men in the trench could live a while longer, which most of them preferred to do.

purpose to dig any one of those turns in one direction far enough to make it possible for the enemy to rake it with his fire. Just before he could do that thing then the bank turned again, and chug! the ball would go into dirt. Sometimes, however,

ENGINEERS MIGHT MAKE A MISTAKE as to the place and power of the foe, and give him a chance to plunge his fire the length of the section. In that case, till the rifle-pit was changed, you'd better keep out of it. When we dug a trench straight at the foe, then the turns were very frequent, and though there was lots of work about it, we preferred to work rather than try to stop a cannon-ball ourselves. Besides, we had a habit of digging the pit quite deep where there was special danger of bullets or cannon-balls, and thus the enemy couldn't hit us unless he first dug a tunnel for his ball to go in.

We never dug so deep that we had to use long ladders to get out of the trench next the enemy, and not even the Editor of THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE ever saw a tunnel made to get a ball through.

We dug that pit of ours from the top down. Sometimes, when facing the foe, we had to dig "endways," one man working at a time, and the men relieving one another quickly. And if the enemy knew where we were at



"A SOMEWHAT NOTABLE PICKET POST."

the top of the hill at the railroad cut. It was, in fact, my favorite place to do the work of the sharpshooter, when it was to be done with ease. A man could shoot very comfortably there leaning against the tree.

So much for this porthole, made out of an ammunition-box. I do not know of any other. Till there was time to arrange things we simply shot over the top of the rifle-pit. Our guns might sink in the dirt a little, but still it was necessary to show the top of your head somewhat, and thus you ran the risk of getting a bullet in your forehead—and a man couldn't stand a bullet there any better than anywhere else. Occasionally, if we could get a great log—and in a good many places they (these logs) were altogether too convenient—we lifted it bodily on top of the dirt we had thrown up. Then we could punch holes through the dirt immediately under it, and have a row of port-holes without further trouble. But this log might be splintered some even by minie-balls, and if a



APPROACHING BY PARALLELS.

trench would show itself and get deeper till it would shelter a man was always a wonder!

Then came in good play the muscle developed by the farmer boy to do his work. But every fellow must learn how to do it, if he didn't know before. I have this fault to find with that first trench, however. We did not, for a while, have a trench dug down at the end next the railroad, into our camp, so that we could get into the main rifle-pit easily and safely. Instead, we climbed the hill, stooping over more and more as we neared the top, to avoid being seen, and then we last jumped into the trench. When one or two had been seriously injured, we concluded to fix up things better. So we dug down the hillside, and made an approach deep and wide enough to let a man walk erect to the place of the sharpshooter. The trench wasn't deep enough at our first effort for comfort and satisfactory use. So the days went by we made it both deeper and wider. We always threw the dirt next to the enemy, and doubled the distance, so to speak. As the ditch grew deeper the dirt on the front rose higher, and at the base broader. We digged the trench deep enough, we made a step on the side next the foe, and when we shot at the enemy we got upon that. When we chose we sat down on it. It was

VERY CONVENIENT INDEED.

The bottom of this rifle-pit was finally wide enough to allow men to pass each other easily, and two and sometimes four could readily go abreast in it, and then meet and pass others. But this became a fact only after we had been before the enemy some time.

We used the side of the pit next our

## THE GREAT DIPLOMATIC BLUFFER.



A DIPLOMATIC ATTITUDE. Oh! a British Tar is a scolding soul, As free as a mountain bird; And his energetic fist should be ready to resist A dictatorial word. His eye should flash, and his lip should curl, His breath should pant and his brow should furl; His foot should stamp, and his chest protrude, And this should be his customary attitude. —H. M. S. Pinchore.

camp—the top of the ground in fact—to put our boxes of cartridges on when we were in the business of sharpshooting. Boxes of ammunition I mean by that, not the leather boxes we carried. They were about a foot square, roughly speaking, and we would knock off the top with an ax, and help ourselves. Sometimes the cartridges were scattered over the top of the ground in easy reach.

We made one port-hole, at least, out of one of these wooden cartridge-boxes—top and bottom knocked away, of course. We smoothed down the bank a little, and set it in the upthrown dirt; then we piled dirt around it and on top of it. It was quite a roomy port-hole, but as we threw the dirt over it more, it gradually narrowed its outward opening to proper size.

This was by that tree that grew right at At first, however, it was a rough ditch, from 18 inches to two feet wide, and about three feet deep. As the dirt had been thrown up TOWARD THE SIDE OF THE REBELS, that side would thus protect the head and shoulders of the men. The most of our rifle-pits were thus narrow to begin with, and sometimes it was difficult for men to pass each other.

But as time went by, this trench on top of our hill became our "reserve rifle-pit," as we called it. It was thus made large and convenient, and could have been filled with men enough in an emergency to have swept everything before it with their musket-firing. This rifle-pit not only was not completed in a day, right on the crest of the hill above us, but was not for some time finished along the entire hilltop to the right. The fact was, when it struck the Baldwin Ferry wagon-road, the hilltop had grown to something of a level surface, and formed in its turn a transverse ridge, along which this wagon-road went toward our rear, and which it followed into the city; that is, till the transverse ridge was cut in two by a hollow, or became some other sort of ridge itself. It would be worth a pretty penny to tell correctly all the windings of these ridges and hills and valleys.

Now, in the Baldwin's Ferry wagon-road was Klaus's battery, of our corps. Our line of rifle-pits extended to the works which held these guns. These works were hastily thrown up on the night of the 22d of May, for I walked over the loose dirt then, much to the distress of an honest patriot in blue there. But of course afterward they were much improved. I had the honor to handle a spade about it myself; and especially the completion of a rifle-trench from it down the hill on our right, where we were supposed to join the division of Gen. Smith.

But again this was farther on in the siege, and for some time we used to climb our parapet just to the left of Klaus's battery, at evening, to put out our pickets, and to go anywhere in our front. When that trench was completed down the hill toward Smith's Division, it became easier to get out toward the rebels.

For a time, I do not remember how long, this trench made up the line before us. Afterward another battery was placed at the side of

THE HOUSE BURNED DOWN, between the railroad the Klaus's guns. Sometimes these cannon were in their places, and sometimes they were engaged elsewhere. But such was the equipment of "our hill," always excepting the 8th Ind. and 99th Ill.—troops that had good confidence in each other—and notwithstanding the repulse of the 22d felt themselves equal to taking in Johnny reb.

While we were getting this first trench into shape, there was more or less of sharp-shooting going on. Some "individual"



"A WILD YELL AT THE COTTON BALE"

rifle-pits were dug on the side of the hill toward the rebels, into which and out of which the sharpshooters would climb at night.

These rifle-pits, somewhat carefully dug in favorable places and protected, afforded

the soldier a good place to shoot from. The man on top of the same ridge behind him would generally get the credit of the volley, and thus the hidden sharpshooter go unreplicated to.

A few evenings after the siege began it became necessary to start another line of rifle-pits on the hill between us and the enemy. And it became equally necessary for a goodly number of soldiers to go as guards for the working party. The company to which I belonged (B) was detailed to protect the men with the spades. So we fell into line after nightfall, and were ready for business. But which way should we go? Why, along the railroad, of course! But we didn't take a Pullman coach for the trip. The ties had not yet been removed. The night was one with scattering clouds, but one also when the moon was bright. We started through the cut

AND KEPT IN THE SHADOW

where we could, sometimes finding room at the side and in the old ditch to go forward, crouching low, and thus escaping notice of the enemy. But we came presently to a place where we had to take to the track itself. Now, the ties had an inconvenient hardness, and wouldn't give any when we crawled over them. To make matters worse, the friendly clouds which had done something up to this time to hide the moon now took a stampede; demoralization evidently set in, for they fled from the face of the heavens. Never did the moon shine more serenely. As big as a cartwheel, evidently, it smiled with a brightness that I think I never before saw equaled.

We grew flat at once. We lay stretched out; but, alas, we had to stretch out over the ties, and I have no doubt that lumps of blue could have been seen afar. And there, right before us, on our left, at the next railroad cut as we looked toward the city, was the rebel fort. It was in plain view. I have no doubt we could have easily been seen by anyone there on the lookout. We kept still a little while; but not liking the camping-ground, and being somewhat near the place we were to "disembark," the Captain at the head maneuvered for position. He wriggled a little, and then executed a grand flank movement, crossed over the short space, and was behind the hill! One by one the undaunted soldiery wriggled also; very slowly I will admit, and I knew, for I was at the rear of the column. Now, remember that I was an officer and had to fall into line there, if I couldn't go along one side of the column, and don't accuse me of cowardice. Really and truly I should greatly prefer at that time to have been at the head of the company.

But we advanced thus upon the foe till the last man was over. I have an impression that the working party delayed a while, for I have no recollection of seeing them. DARING WRIGGLE TO THE HOT FRONT, and presently the clouds again returned as before. At any rate, we went up on top of that hill alone and placed our pickets. I was given charge of a part of the line, where we made our "headquarters" just under the brow of the slope.

The actual pickets were a dozen steps ahead of us still, lying in the grass, which at that place was of considerable height. Farther to our right was a cotton-bale, a somewhat notable picket-post then and after.

We watched through the night, while the working party behind us did some preliminary work. The progress, because of beginning, was not very rapid, and I called in my part of the picket-line at dawn, and we hurried back to our hill. Any shots aimed at us did not hit us on that day.

The next evening after, I think, I was on the fatigue or working squad myself. We did a very good piece of business at this time, extending the rifle-pit somewhat to the right, and preparing it for use immediately in front. But we didn't have any "head-piece," and the sharpshooting from that line had to be for the time over the dirt we had thrown up in front.

When it came my time to sleep I cleared away the loose canister-shot that seemed rather too numerous there, and lay down upon my rubber blanket and slept soundly.

In fact, the ground was open to a battery on our left, and these iron bed-fellows were the messages from these cannon. But the battery itself had not fired that way for some time, and we simply took the risk. Speaking of that cotton-bale as a picket-post, I had also an experience with that. It was my duty to post the pickets from that side of our line one evening. We started to the place, not along the railroad, but at the other end of the regiment, to our right. We crossed the parapet of our reserve rifle-pit where it joined the battery (Klaus's). I always

FELT A BIT SENSITIVE as I climbed over the top of our works to go out in front of the enemy. First we came to a little hollow, opening to our left, along which we went till we got nearer the rebel picket-line. Our picket was posted in the bed of a little stream, now dry, where it made an angle, and where the distance to the enemy's outpost was about a dozen feet.

I remember when I told the sentry not to challenge or ask questions of anybody in front, but to fire on occasion, as I had been instructed to, he seemed a little nervous. I told him this, by the way, before we got to the post, and he seemed reluctant to have me leave him. Our feelings were exactly opposite. I didn't want to stay. I need not say that we got up to that post—and I got away—as quietly as we knew how!

Then my duty was to locate the next adventurous spirit at the cotton-bale. Now, I had been up there before and knew its history. So I instructed the man to keep a sharp lookout for the enemy, especially to note any movements that had the appearance of sallying against us. There was a good outlook from this point of quite a long extent of the enemy's rifle-pits and forts.

I was careful to inform him of special danger if he got out of the line of the pro-

(Continued on second page.)

## WAR ROMANCE.

Rebel Powder Mine Under Libby, and the Tunnel Escape.

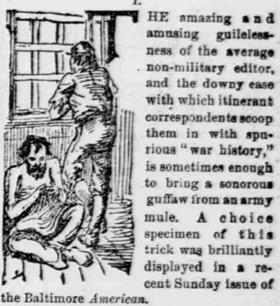
INHUMAN BARBARITY.

A Fat Cavalry Officer Sticks Fast in the Tunnel.

THE TUNNEL DIGGERS.

Capture of Yankee Gunboats by Rebel Cavalry.

BY CAPT. FRANK E. MORAN, 73D N. Y., BALTIMORE, MD.



THE amazing and amusing guilelessness of the average non-military editor, and the downy ease with which itinerant correspondents scoop them in with spurious "war history," is sometimes enough to bring a sonorous guffaw from an army mule. A choice specimen of this trick was brilliantly displayed in a recent Sunday issue of the Baltimore American.

The correspondent,—perhaps I should name him better as the "operator,"—in cold-blooded disregard of the venerable laws of the American, founded in 1795, and managed, but I fear not very closely edited on the occasion of the disaster, by our genial comrade, Gen. Felix Agnus, took as his instrument's two noted events in Libby's career, viz., the tunnel escape of Feb. 9, 1864, and the rebel powder-mine plot of a month later. This production was embellished with pictures, one of which showed the midnight burial of a "bogus powder-keg" in the prison cellar, and also the portraits of E. W. Ross ("Little Ross"), the Prison Clerk; Adj't La Touche, Gen. John H. Winder, and "Dick" Turner, the latter outrageously labeled "Major" Dick Turner.

Every old Libby prisoner of course knows that Maj. Thos. P. Turner was the military commandant of Libby, and that Dick was a civilian, whose peculiar official status was euphoniously described in orders as the "Inspector."

Dick was formerly a Baltimorean, of the PUG-UGLY OR BLOOD-TUB BREED, and it is said that climatic reasons lured him farther South just after the mob attack on the 6th Mass. in April, 1861. Wherever Dick was born, it was impossible to mistake how he was bred. But more of him further on.

The writer who perpetrated this pictorial fraud on the American concealed his name, and possibly, in spite of appearances, from feelings of innate modesty. His modesty was, however, not excessive enough to prevent him from appropriating whole chapters from the narrative of the tunnel escape which I published in the Century magazine for March, 1888, nor from offering as history a series of absurd misrepresentations about the powder mine and other prison incidents with which I chanced to have a personal connection.

Having spent 10 months within the grim walls of Libby Prison, Richmond, and 10 more in the prisons of Georgia and the Carolinas, in 1863, '64, and '65, I feel the keen and natural interest of a participant in all reminiscences on the subject. But the luminous display of historical ignorance of the American's anonymous correspondent, who dubs his pictorial misstatement "the only true and complete story of the tunnel escape," is enough to give the survivors of Libby the grip. Affecting an air of exactness, this war romancer indulges in some alleged "corrections" of my Century account, to which he had so liberally helped himself in making up the solitary portion of truth that his whole article contained.

For instance, he says that my statement that the number of Union officers retaken in the escape was 48 is incorrect, and that the real number was 68. My means of knowing the correct number is that

I WAS ONE OF THAT 48 and took a particular personal interest in the other 47 comrades, who lived with me in five other prisons for more than a year afterward. Where is his evidence as to the number 68?

He declares that he has information from one William F. Crane, of Cowike, Barbour Co., Ala., who claims to have been one of the Confederate guards on duty at Libby in 1864, when the tunnel digging was in progress under the supervision of the leader in the plot, Col. Thomas E. Rose, of the 77th Pa., and now of the 16th U. S. Inf., in Texas. He (Crane) confesses that he connived at the escape and assisted Rose and his secret party of 14 by selling them occasional bottles of whiskey and other comforts.

I directly and positively pronounce the alleged confession of this man Crane a flimsy invention from beginning to end. Crane's confession is scarcely less absurd and untrue than that said to have been made to the American's romancer by Mr. George W. Libby, of Richmond. This gentleman startles us with the statement that the Confederate authorities never, for a moment, contemplated blowing up the 1,200 Union officers in March, 1864, and that the rumor to that effect was

PURPOSELY CIRCULATED AMONG THE CAP-TIVES through the medium of an old dork called "Uncle Harry," and was a mere ruse to pre-