

Recitals and Reminiscences

Stories Eminently Worth Telling of Experiences and Adventures in the Great National Struggle.

THE RED RIVER CAMPAIGN.

The Skirmishes and Fights Around Pleasant Hill—The Blockade on the Roads—The Defeat and Capture.

Editor National Tribune: I enlisted in Co. B, 174th N. Y., and was sent to Louisiana after the Fort Hudson campaign to western Louisiana. We fought the Sabine Pass fight. We were ordered to serve their time out in Bayou City, Bayou Texe and Opelousas. Later we went to Franklin, and while there 50 men of our regiment were ordered to serve their time out in Bayou City, La. I thought it could not be much worse than infantry, and I volunteered.

We were sent to New Orleans, and found the headquarters in a cotton press on Orange street. We drilled there until about March 1. I think they got orders to join the Fifth Division. We were then assigned to the Fifth Brigade, Cavalry Division, Thirteenth Corps. We arrived at Alexandria in a few days, and one night about the middle of the month we got breakfast and start after the rebels. We got out of town, and saw

the Johnnies running across fields seeking shelter. The infantry was close behind us. We were just out of range of their guns and halted. They had four brass guns on a knoll. The rebels lined up and left, and we were ordered to the left into the pine-woods and sand hills, so as to get in the rear of the rebels. Our guides missed their bearings, and we floundered around there all night. In the morning we got out of the woods, and in going down into a gully got stuck. The rebels tried to haul the caisson up with the horses, but couldn't, so we got a rope, and the infantry gave us a lift. Another charge of the battery wrecked a bridge, and the infantry found the rebels, and captured the whole bunch.

We started shortly after on the Red River campaign, and learned the rebels were crossing the river. We followed them up pretty close. What cavalry there was got ahead of the infantry, but they kept pretty close to us. When the rebels got to the pine-woods, there was a stock of cotton which we formed a line in the woods if possible and get us out in the open field, and when the cotton got scarce, the rebels mounted their horses and be off. They would play that every time. We went on, and participated in quite a number of skirmishes until we got to Pleasant Hill. We heard before we got there that the rebels were going to make a stand, but not a Johnny could be seen. We marched along until quite late in the day. It began to rain, and that awful shower I ate my supper sitting on my feet, like a frog, with my rubber blanket over my back.

The next morning we came to an open field, and found the rebels on the west side of St. Patrick's Bayou in a thick woods. We fired quite a number of rounds. This was about 9 a. m. Here in the open field the rebels were mortally wounded. In an hour or so they fell back, and when we got across the bayou we found there had been a large cavalry force engaged. We marched on thru the woods to a plantation, and found the Johnnies just over a ridge that ran across the highway about half a mile in advance. We halted the battery alongside of the road, and stopped there some time. The Fourth Division of Infantry was in front, and the Thirteenth Division was marching up on quick time.

I remember we went to a log barn, and got some corn on the ear and filled the nose-bags for the horses. Sergt Semmonds pronounced a shot from where they were firing at us. We went down almost to the woods and also near the highway. I fell asleep after lunch. The first I knew the wheel driver, Peter Semmonds, was saying we were going to move. I jumped onto the caisson, and we fled into the woods toward Pleasant Hill. As we turned into the road I saw quite a lot of wagons that were coming along. The wagons would just halt right in the road and wait until the skirmishing was over, then go again. The road was very muddy, and Sergt Semmonds was chief of caisson, and after getting into the woods he halted and waited until he saw our line broken and some of the men had thrown away their arms.

The rebels were not firing on them, but were trying to get around them to capture them, and they succeeded. A cavalryman sent to the rear for a box of infantry ammunition came up and found the line had broken, and he came very near running into the rebel line. He dropped the box and put spurs to his horse and galloped away. When Sergt Semmonds saw that the line was a break that when the rebels began firing up the road. The teamster of the caisson would not get up to the top of the road and dismount, and we tried to get between two wagons, and were caught and locked between them. Another man and I were riding on the top of the caisson, and we got the key out, but could not get the lunet over the pintlehook. I looked up, and there was not a man on their horses. The Gen. and some of the staff, and some of the staff, came galloping along and sang out: "Every man look out for himself."

The wheel driver was shot in the hip and fell from his horse. He lay there all night, and was taken to Camp Tyler, Tex., and got back to the battery by July.

aid of Gen. Pope in front of Washington. Then follow that army from the disastrous campaign of Gen. Pope, culminating in the defeat at Antietam and the retreat to South Mountain and Antietam, and Frederickburg, Chancellorsville and the three days of desperate fighting at Gettysburg. It is to Gen. McClellan that we are indebted for the three last battles named, but the fighting was done by the army he had created and organized, and commanded and led by his lieutenants. Most of them had received their first lessons in actual warfare under his leadership. And it was this army that at Gettysburg inflicted a mortal wound upon the so-called Southern Confederacy and was later placed under the command of Gen. Grant, by whom the war was brought to a successful termination.

Of all Gen. McClellan's alleged failures, for no one has been so severely and unmercifully criticized as that of not destroying Lee's army at Antietam. But Gen. McClellan had a much better opportunity to do that important service for the Union at Gettysburg—had more fresh troops and better physical condition as a result than had McClellan after Antietam, and yet he let Lee and his army withdraw from that field and retreat into Virginia without interference worthy the name. And still the criticism of McClellan for his stupendous failure was mild and inoffensive compared to that against Grant.

It would not be in good taste to go into details here as to the divided councils, conflicting aims and ambitions, and the unharmonious relations of the authorities and in the army at that time. Suffice it that until Gen. Grant was made Commander-in-Chief, there was an unchangeable head of the army, and there was a commander who could order his subordinates without interference.

Had McClellan been given the same authority that was given to Grant at Richmond would he have been captured in 1862. But the War Department incumbent and the office-chair Commander-in-Chief there had the honor of not allowing McClellan to press his Malvern Hill victory by the aid of the troops at Frederickburg, the largest battle in the army's history, and which made up largely of the men who fought the battle of Bull Run, placed there for the very emergency that had arisen.

McClellan made the Army of the Potomac, but it took three years of more defeats than victories to create a public opinion that would have been strong enough to send the War Department and its office-chair Commander-in-Chief and their sympathizers and abettors to the rear with orders to get out of the conduct of the war was placed in the hands of a soldier with sufficient nerve to direct its operations from the front.

Finally, McClellan made mistakes; and so did Grant, some very serious ones, as witness Cold Harbor and the Petersburg mine explosion fiasco. But history, and the opinion of the people, much more correctly diagnose the errors and the credits than has yet been done. The material for such service as McClellan performed at Summit Avenue, St. Paul, Minn.

Editor National Tribune: I am surprised that you, posted with the facts as you are, should permit such matter as was contained in a letter written by Gen. W. S. Stevens, sergeant, Co. H, 37th Ind. This incident is a very slender one of the best fighting corps in the Army of the Cumberland (the Fourth), and to appropriate for the Fourth the glory belonging to the Fourth, and your knowledge of the facts should have prevented the publication. It is painful to me to tell the truth and make comparisons between divisions and corps, but I will not shirk the responsibility. In the first place, he states, as to the battle of Chickamauga, that the Fourth Corps, under Thomas after the terrible disaster on the second day was the Fourteenth Corps. There were less of the Fourteenth Corps in the battle than the Fourth Corps, and your knowledge of the facts should have prevented the publication. It is painful to me to tell the truth and make comparisons between divisions and corps, but I will not shirk the responsibility.

Editor National Tribune: I have been a regular reader of The National Tribune for years, and am an admirer of its policy and its editorial. For its hope and expect, will be the next Commander-in-Chief of the G. A. R. I have also been, and am still, an admirer of Gen. McClellan as the commander of the Army of the Potomac in 1861-62, with which I served for more than four years. Being such a fan of Gen. McClellan, I am sure that at times, as I consider, your unjust criticism of that officer, has caused me much regret. Hence I greatly appreciate your issue of the 17th inst., in which you gave space to a strong defense of him by Gen. Le Duc, of this State, and to that of Comrade Masterson in your issue of the 10th inst. My admiration for Gen. McClellan, while great, did not blind me to the fact that he had serious faults. Comrade Masterson mentions one, in my opinion this was the chief of his faults as a commanding officer. Still, I think this has been made altogether too much of by your issue of the 17th inst. It must be borne in mind that he was suddenly elevated to the command of the greatest aggregation of fighting men ever gathered together. He had no military training whatever, while a much larger percentage had had no experience in actual war.

FREE TO THE PICKET SHOTS

From Alert Comrades Along the Whole Line.

Forrest's Memphis Raid.

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J. W. Mareum, 14th Cav., Ridgely, Tenn., wants to call Comrade Henry Ely's book "The Memphis Raid" and his comrades' raid on Memphis—Gen. Grierson had gone out with Gen. A. J. Smith with part of the regiment and part of the 11th Cavalry, to Memphis, Tenn., on the night of Sept. 1, 1862. Then Forrest made a dash into Memphis with 2,000 picked men. In Memphis were mainly volunteers of the 11th Cavalry, and some 100-day men. They were not at all surprised when the first shots were fired, but supposed it was the 100-day men retreating. Forrest's men were camped on the right side of the road leading to Memphis. Part of the 2d Iowa Cav. and part of the 7th Ill. were in camp on the left side of the road, and just a little ways from there were the 100-day men and the militia. The 100-day men came running from the camp, their uniforms with their pants in their hands. Forrest's idea was to capture Gen. Washburn and Hulbert and liberate the Confederate prisoners. Comrade Masterson and his comrades went into line at the elmwood, and tried to get the 100-day men with them. They made three desperate charges. The 100-day men were back from the horses and from the cemetery building. Col. Starr led these charges, and was killed toward the close of the night. The regiment never got a shot for about an hour. Forrest lost 18 men near the cemetery, and one of his flag-bearers had 13 bullet holes in him. Every rebel gunner was shot down, so that they were unable to use the artillery.

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