FIGHTING BATTLES

Of Bygone Days--Reminiscences of the Sixties. The Paper Prepared by Mr. Joseph L. Pollard

To the Wright-Latane Camp:

Fellow Comrades—The request comes to me through our Brother Beale from you, that I must again take up my pen to finish up the occurrences around Petersburg, in the memorable seige of that city. I have already given you two papers, bringing down the events that occurred from the landing of Grant's army at City Point to the famous battle of the Crater. I can but feel flattered by your request, and should have complied sonner, but the weather has been so intensely hot, and I have felt weak and feeble and not much like writing. This is my only excuse.

After the enemy had been foiled, and beaten at the Crater, Grant busied himself in strengthening his position, in building up his earthworks and mounting his heavy guns.

Nor did the confederates lie idle. Their ditches were dug and made stronger, their cannon were placed on every commanding position, and their mortar batteries were strung along the line wherever it was most appropriate.

Thus the two armies confronted each other, Grant not risking an attack, and our army watching his every move. It may be well here to say something of our life in the trenches, how we lived and what dangers we encountered. A great ditch was dug many miles in length extending from the Appomattox River, around Petersburg on the south to Hatcher's Run, some ten miles to the right of the city. This long stretch of ditch had to be guarded, and the troops had to live in it.

So we had our little fly tents and bomb proofs fixed up all along this line of ditch, to protect us from the weather and the shells of the opposing batteries. We had covered ways, they were ditches too, cut to the rear that the men might go backward to Petersburg when necessity required. These were indispensable, for the picket firing was so sharp and constant that no life was safe outside of these ditches.

Thus we lived under constant fire from the pickets and sharp shooters and nightly visits from mortor shell, for the enemy seemed to select the night mostly for this kind of work.

Copied from the Tidewater Democrat, Tappahannock, Va Jan 25, 1901

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This we lived ander constant thre from the forests and sharp shooters and withhis visits from morth shell, for the every secret to select the vight mostly for this find of worl. Can I describe so that the rising generation may have an idea what horrors we encountered from the mortor shells? I am afraid not. The mortor was a short cannon that threw its shell up in the air at such an angle that it would fall just about where the cannoneer wished it to fall. And these cannoneers became so skillful and well practiced that they could soon get the range they wanted, and pitch their shells right in the ditch where we were. We had no means of defense and had literally to stand and take them. In this way a great many men were killed and wounded and they feared nothing so much as the mortor shells.

Thus we lived through the summer of *64, harassed day and night by the constant fire and every now and then seeing a comrade shot down by a minnie ball or terribly mangled by a mortor shell.

In the meantime Grant continued to extend his line to our right-he seized hold on the Welden Road running down through North Carolina and held it so tenaciously that General Lee was unable to dislodge him.

Now only one road was left for Lee to provision his army with.

Grant built him too a railroad from City Point along his line to provision his army and reinforce it whenever occasion required. Thus all through the summer he was strengthening his position and getting ready for the great encounter.

Winter came upon us, and as we had stood the scorching heat of the sun, we now had to contend with the rigors of winter; the snow and the rain came and flooded the trenches making the mud and slush almost unbearable. I have known the water and mud nearly knee deep in those trenches, still we had to wade through it, for it was nearly instant death to show ourselves outside the trenches. In fact the state of things got so desperate—both for the Confederate and the Yankee as well—that the pickets on both sides made a compact that they would not fire at each other, that there should be no firing. It was then we felt greatly relieved, as we could show ourselves anywhere with no fear of being shot at, and when our pickets would come in in the morning and say boys, there will be no firing today, we could walk where we chose.

In the mean time an effort was made to make peace between the North and South and three commissioners were sent to meet Mr. Lincoln at City Point. These commissioners passed across our lines just where Can I describe so that the realization is an ay have an ideal what horrors we encountered from the morter cheeffe. I am afraid not. The morter was a short cannon that threw its shelling in the air at such as anyle that if would fall just each tweeth its about wether the carbonases wished it to fall. That these cannotiers became so skillful and well practices that they can it soon get increase they wanted, and nitch their shells with in the differ where we were. We had no means of desense and had literally to stand and take them. In this way a great many man were killed and manuar and they feared nothing so much as the morter shells.

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our company was stationed, and for the first and only time I saw Alex Stephens the great statesman. The men thought that now peace would surely come and they would soon go to their homes.

You may guess their disappointment when it was announced that the whole peace move had failed, that Jeff Davis would consider nothing short of southern independence. The men were so disheartened that numbers deserted thereby greatly weakening Gen Lee's army. So we had to go back to killing and shooting each other, and to our miserable life in the trenches, until about the middle of March '65 when great events commenced to cast their shadows before.

About this time we could see their trains loaded down with troops moving to our right. The inference was thus forced upon our minds that Grant was massing large numbers of troops on our right flank, and that there the final blow would be struck.

March was now hastening to its end, when our division (Bushrod Johnson's) was ordered to leave the trenches and occupy the cabins used by General Gordon's men as their winter quarters, some nine or ten miles to the right of Petersburg. Gordon's men were to take our places in the trenches. Lee had determined to cut the line of Grant near Hare's House, and entrusted Gordon with its execution. But Gordon was driven back after he had pierced the enemy's line with great loss and had to retire to the trenches.

Thus being relieved of any trouble in this quarter, for General Lee had attempted to cut his army in twain, Grant commenced his move in our front, which brought on the affair at Burgess! Mill where we were obstinately engaged. After feeling the strength of the enemy we were drawn off and ordered back to the trenches.

The next day we did some skirmishing, but no heavy fighting near Hatcher's Run in which all our company was captured, except myself and six men. After we had fallen back to our trenches Major Perrin came down the line inquiring for Sergeant Pollard. He told me that Capt. Smith had been shot down in the pines to our front, and I must go out and take command of the men he had with him. I shouldered my rifle, mounted the bank and walked straight out to where Capt. Smith lay; not a gun was fired at me, though I was in full view of the enemy's pickets. I found the Captain lying on a stretcher very much hurt, but not mortally wounded as he thought. The next day there was no fighting for a scout came in and informed us that the enemy had left our front, and were nowhere to be seen. But we heard heavy firing to our right, and now Picket is attacked at Five Works and driven from the field.

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Our division is now moved to reinforce Picket and stop the advance of the enemy. But Picket and his men were nowhere to be seen, and I have never heard what became of them. The enemy had now our last railroad, and Gen. Lee's retreat commenced. Our route was to Farmville, but before reaching that town, we had many encounters with Sheridan's cavalry. We held them in check, during the day, skirmishing with them, and charging them off the roads at points where they would make a stand, then we would march all night to catch up with our retreating army. We had a very severe encounter at a place called Sayer's Creek, when our division was nearly surrounded, and When Gen. Johnson ran away and reported to Gen. Lee that his whole division had been captured.

Sheridan hovered around our flanks pressing us to the utmost, thereby throwing our men in disorder. It was there Gen. Wise came on foot among us for his horse had been carried away by his son Dick and said: "Men stand by me and I will carry out out," We told him that was our intention and he did carry us out, and that night we arrived at the High Bridge at Farmville. We crossed over during the night and the next morning as we made the hills overlooking the town I saw Gen. Lee sitting on his horse watching our division as it filed past him. It was here we got our last rations, and I heard the order "Johnson's division in front." We had been in the rear all the time fighting Sheridan off the retreating army. Now we must take the front. Our course was the road to Appomatox C. H. which place we reached in the evening of the 8th of April. We were told we could cook some of the rations we had gotten at Farmville, and went about to prepare something to eat for we were nearly starved. While these preparations were going on a man rode up and inquired for Sergeant Pollard. It turned out to be Thos. E. Henshaw, who wished to know if I were safe, well captain he said I should never have known you, starvation had gotten the best of me. We had hardly gotten a mouthful to eat when orders came "Johnson's division in line of battle". We were quickly thrown into line and as night came on we laid down on the ground in line of battle to await the development of the next day. By early morn on the memorable 9th of April (who will ever forget that day) we were marched under the hills a little above the town and formed in a line of battle ready for the charge now to be made. The enemy's cannon was on the road above the town and this we had to charge and take. Up the hill we went, across the field at a run, drove the cannoneers away and sieged the cannon. We had not proceeded far across the field when orders came for us to fall back. General Lee had surrendered. Yes the great drama is ended, the scene is finished, the curtain falls, the Army of the Northern Va., goes down before overwhelming numbers and Lee the Hector of the Southern army lays down his sword. As Hector was God like as described by Homer when he led his Trojans to battle: so Lee was the embodiment of all that is grand and noble and God-like.

In divising is now moved to reinforce a feast and stop the advance of the enemy. His Fighet and his measures a nowhere to be a seen, and I have here here what estance of them, "The enemy had now our that a alignar, and den, hee's retreat commences, what roace was to example, but before reaching that town, we had many entered the entity another." The analysis with them is not check, during the align them in check, during the approximation of the coests, during the whore they work here they we had a stance, then we would not not alignar where they are not at a stance, then we would not not alignar at a stance of the avery severe a countered that the content at a fine content at a fine content at a fine content at a fine content of the content at a fine content and the content of the content at the content of the content and the content of the content

Included hovered around our flower mession we to the attituate thereby throwing but then in disender. It was there don, with a same Matther a for the course and been carried and a condition as should be ard said: "We thank of the how I will out to nothing. The this him that was our h tention and he eld energy us one, and that might we and you at the At a Wilde at Farmy Mie. We drossed over dering the named and tribipalizate action and the major as a gradulous transmission in his I saw Con. The Sitting of his horse watching our division as it filed nest him. It was nere we got our I st rations, and I nearly the order "I meson's division i dreat." " We had been in the chart and the chart. Apathon Societies of the gettesting rung. New wearnist take the front. Jun defines who the nowd to Ary an atra C. in. which class we reached in the evening of the oth of April. We were told we could cook some er the retions we had gotten at Termylle, and went about to his hare w something to est for we ware no mly starved. Walle these proper than it . Diale to sense with the and the sense of the sense of the contract. It truned out to be " nee. If. Seishav, who hidned to was 1 I were called well captain be a sid I snown agour laye known ton, at mich as Head cotten the cast of me. We man narely gotten a monthly to est that riders came '& mean's dwiston in line of builte'. We were outcury into we into it as a doc at his text as on we let I known on the ground take Time of battle . The serit the development of the Merit days . By early mount on the meanwhile Pilin of America (The Will even for the Collection) we were to sail a fi bearrot the that and said evens surface life and representation outle nearly for the curacy not independ and that energy sequence was on the road ways the try was that to ball to coat we will true. Up the till ve went, serote ine tidia to a we to be to be to be to and sland the can be construct to accept the best series that the first orders caine for us to take colon, becar i latended frui brdersd. Top the rest orders as day, the London been the smrtain sake, the Army of the Northern Va., poer a ver being reverse to the paint and the lector of the property army to a down his amore. As Bector was Coullies as decided by themser was he hed als divisans slear but brank at tentille to me mile us entile weed as jeited of .enii-bot bas

Yes the Southern Sun set on the hills of Appomattox, and as it went down it threw a hallo of glory in effaceable around the army of Northern Virginia and around the name of Gen. Lee.

And now, my friends, my narrative is finished, your writer passed through many dangers, he can boast that he was in every engagement his company went into, and above all that he was in the last charge on the heights of Appomattox.

Very Respectfully,

Jos. L. Pollard

1st Serg't Co I 26 Va.

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