

Civil War Experiences

1862-1865

CHICKAMAUGA
MISSION RIDGE
BUZZARD ROOST
RESACA
ROME
NEW HOPE CHURCH
KENESAW MOUNTAIN
PEACH TREE CREEK
ATLANTA
JONESBORO
AVERYSBORO
BENTONVILLE

By
DR. EDWARD M. ROBBINS

Carthage, Illinois, November, 1919

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CIVIL WAR EXPERIENCES

Enlisted in Capt. John Allen's company June 7th, 1862. Went on board the steamer "Jennie Whipple" at Dallas City, Sunday morning, June 15th, and with company went down the Mississippi to Quincy, Ill., place of rendezvous. On the way an incident occurred which I cannot pass without mention. When we passed Alexandria, Mo., the river shore was lined with people and to our ears came the shout, "Hurrah for Jeff Davis!" and to add to the insult they waved the black flag in our faces, (which interpreted meant no quarter to Yankees). Passing on down the river the next town was Canton, where the same greeting was given us, all of which made us very indignant to think so near home we should be insulted in such a manner. I have never had a very favorable opinion of those two towns since, and while I hope there is more loyalty and patriotism now than then, I feel that their forefathers put a blot on their little cities that will never be erased.



At Camp Wood on the 1st day of September, was mustered into the U. S. service, together with nine other companies, forming the 78th Ill. Vol. Inf. (In casting lots for position in line my company drew the letter "H" which placed us on the left of the colors, and Company "C" on the right.) On the 19th day of September we were put on coal cars with boards laid across for seats, no cover over our heads; on arrival at destination were put on provost duty for a few days, until Gen. Buell was equipped for his campaign against Gen. Bragg. October 5th my regiment was marched to Shepardsville, Ky., and on the 14th was divided into detachments under Gen. Gilbert to guard railroad bridges on the Louisville and Nashville railroad. December 26th the guerrilla John Morgan, captured Companies B and C at Muldrose Hill, two and one-half miles from Elizabethtown, Ky., and they were paroled. On the same raid on the morning of Dec. 30th, Morgan attacked Co. H at New Haven, Ky., and was driven away without accomplishing his purpose. About the last of January, 1863, the companies were collected at Louisville and embarked on the steamer "John H. Grosbeck" for Nashville via the Ohio and Cumberland rivers, arriving at Fort Donelson February 3, 1863, in time to relieve the 83rd Ill., which was surrounded by a superior force of Forest's and Wheeler's cavalry. The enemy retired on our approach and we passed on to Nashville, Tenn., where the

regiment disembarked. The regiment was in the command of Brigadier Gen. C. C. Gilbert of the Army of Kentucky, under Major General Gordon Granger, reserve corps commander.

During our stay in Kentucky there were many social features with the citizens that made our stay among them quite pleasant, one of which is worthy of mention. As a few of us wished to avail ourselves of an opportunity to attend a dance to be given by a planter by the name of Sphink, who sent in to our lines an invitation for about a half a dozen to come out on a certain night. Of course we were crazy to go, but how were we to get outside the lines. We decided to ask the officers for a pass, but this failed. Our officers claimed this was a plan made up to get a lot of us out there and take us prisoners, as a lot of Morgan's men were in that vicinity at that time, and we decided it was all off. But as the time came near for the event and there was less news of the Rebel General Morgan's near proximity to us, a few of us Yanks' heels began to tickle for a dance and a desire to have a chance at the roast turkey that was promised for the occasion. So we made up our minds that we would take our chances on getting by the pickets. In the mean time there came a big snow storm, the heaviest, the natives said, that had ever been known in Kentucky. It covered the earth to a depth of a little more than two feet. The night for the party arrived, and not Johnnies, snow, pickets, nor anything else would have stopped that gang. During the day we located the guards on picket duty, quite a ways from the main road, and planned to go as close to them as possible without attracting their attention, then to drop on our hands and knees and crawl through the snow to a safe distance on the outside, which we did, and arrived safely at Mr. Sphink's. We had taken the precaution to take our side arms with us, for we had seen service enough to be always on the alert and trust nobody or allow them to get the drop on us.

When we went into the house almost the first persons we met were men wearing the gray uniform, and the host introduced them to us as Confederate soldiers home on furlough. At first we were just a bit disconcerted until our host assured us that all was on the square, that we need not fear any trouble, as they were home boys and had heard of our coming and for us to pitch in and have as good a time as we could, and we sure did have a fine time, a royal supper, and not a word was spoken to mar the peace and comfort of anyone. When we left for camp we shook hands with the Confeds the same as any one else and bid them goodbye. It was some time before the officers found out about our going out, in fact not until we had left Kentucky, consequently we were not disciplined

for having the good time, and leaving the camp without permission.

February 12th the regiment marched to Franklin, Tenn., where it remained four months. We were diligent in company, battalion and brigade drill, the first good opportunity we had since enlistment. On April 11th we were threatened by a heavy force of Van Dorn and Wheeler cavalry, but no engagement except skirmishing with pickets and outposts, and on June 4th the enemy made a similar attack on our outposts with like result.

On June 9th a very unhappy affair occurred—two Confederate spies entered camp disguised as federal officers, claiming to be federal paymasters on their way from Murfreesboro via Franklin to Nashville, but when they were detected they acknowledged being Confederate officers, but denied being spies. A court martial was immediately organized, and they were tried and condemned to death by hanging. They requested to be shot instead, but their request was not granted and they were hung June 10. They gave their names as Col. Orton and Lieut. Peters. Col. Orton had been an officer in the Union army before the war. The 78th constructed the gallows and furnished the guard.

On June 23rd marched to Trinne and Murfreesboro, Tenn. The army had now been reorganized and the 78th was assigned to the brigade of Col. John G. Mitchell in General James B. Stedman's division reserve corps, under Major General Gordon Granger. We were glad to exchange Gen. Gilbert for Col. Mitchell, who ably commanded the brigade from that time, with the exception of a few months, to the close of the war.

On June 28th moved south from Murfreesboro in the rear of the general advance against Bragg's army. The brigade entered Shelbyville, Tenn., July 1st., and camped. While at this place Col. Benison, the first colonel mustered with the regiment, resigned and Col. Carter Van Vleck, then lieutenant colonel, was promoted to colonel of the regiment, a change that pleased not only the line officers but the men as well. Sept. 6th, 1863, the regiment moved southward, crossed the Tennessee river, Sept. 12, pursued its march around Lookout Mountain, and arrived at Rossville, Ga., on Sept. 14, 1863, and for a few days previous to the battle of Chickamauga was kept on the move day and night, marching, skirmishing, trying to locate the weak and strong points of the enemy, all signs of an approaching engagement being visible.

On the 17th of September the division made a reconnaissance to Ringold, Ga., and there discovered that Longstreet's corps from Lee's army was reinforcing Bragg. The command was followed closely on its return from Ringold and at

midnight the enemy opened upon us with artillery, with no damage except the briars we incorporated in our feet while getting into our clothes and into line of battle. Unfortunately we had camped where there were some rail fences which we burned to cook our suppers, and the fence rows were full of blackberry briars. (My, but I can feel those briars yet.) We stood to arms until morning. During the commencement of the battle of Chickamauga, the regiment with the division before Rossville guarding the road through the gap to Chattanooga. Before noon on the 20th of September, General Granger, apprehending that Gen. Thomas needed assistance, double quicked two brigades of our division to Gen. Thomas' front, which proved a timely assistance to Gen. Thomas, as Longstreet was getting around the Federal right and rear. The two brigades (Mitchell's and Whitaker's) were put into action at once, made a charge on Longstreet and drove him from the west and south bends of Snodgrass ridge with great loss to both sides. A monument erected to the 78th on the west end of Snodgrass ridge, bears a tablet describing the terrible carnage in the fearful charge. Thirty-seven per cent of the command gave themselves as a sacrifice for Old Glory in just a few moments. The adjutant general's report gives the per cent as forty in this awful charge. The Rebels made three distinct efforts to retake the positions, but each time were repulsed with heavy loss. In one attempt to take a battery they were so near that muskets were clubbed and men beaten over the head in order to prevent the loss of the six-gun battery. We held the position until after dark, when we were ordered off the field.

On the march from left to right, I ran across a Rebel who was shot through the bowels. He was just across the fence, and I did not see him, until he called and said, "Hello, Yank. Have you any water?" I said, "Yes, what's the matter with you Johnny?" His answer was, "I am wounded and waiting to die." I went to him, raked the leaves away from him (for the whole battlefield was ablaze), emptied part of the water from my canteen into his, and Dr. Githens gave him a dose of morphine to relieve his suffering, and left him to die, for he was wounded through the bowels. This occurred at the north end of Snodgrass Ridge, just north of the Snodgrass house. As we started to leave him we started east. We could hear voices just ahead of us, but the smoke from fire arms, cannon and burning leaves was so dense we could not see far. But the wounded soldier I had just befriended called and said, "Hold on, Yank, don't go that way, Johnnies are thicker than hell just beyond those bushes." I asked him if he heard troops pass before I came and he said they did but they turned south down the west side of the ridge. We had gotten behind, ministering to a Michigan soldier who was wounded in the same manner the Johnny was. I have mentioned this

circumstance to show the feeling among soldiers when one is put out of action. I favored the Confederate and he in turn saved me from walking into the Confederate lines, which I would have done. I went down the ridge and came up with my command in time to go into the charge on the west end of the ridge, which we took and a monument marks the place where we were halted on top of the ridge.

I spent the night with wounded comrades, ministering to them as best I could to relieve their sufferings. During the afternoon of the last day's fight, I stepped on Doctor Githens' spur and tore my shoe in such a manner as to permit small gravel to work between the sole of my shoe and foot; after the excitement of battle was over and wounded comrades cared for, I realized I had a very sore foot.

I wish here to relate a very peculiar incident which occurred to Dr. Githens and my horses. When we started into the fight on the afternoon of the 20th, we dismounted and turned the horses, with all of our effects, except the medicine case and surgeon's case of instruments, to the care of a negro boy we called Jack, and instructed him to keep in the rear so as to avoid getting lost or being captured by the Rebels; when night came Jack could not be found, nor did he show up during the night; morning came and no Jack, horses, blankets or provisions. I hunted over all that part of the army but no Jack of the proper dimensions or environments could be found, so the Doctor and I gave up all hope of finding the outfit. But to add to the Doctor's discomfort, he had at noon received orders to report to division headquarters to take charge of an ambulance train of wounded men, over the mountains, to Bridgeport. We had exhausted every means we could conceive of, but no Jack, no horses or anything else could be found, and Dr. Githens started to take charge of the train without horse or anything that might minister to his personal comfort, not even so much as a blanket or cracker. As I turned to leave him, to my great astonishment Jack and the horses loomed in front of me. I turned and called Dr. Githens, and then said to Jack, "For heaven's sake, Jack, where did you come from?" "Massa Ed, fo de Lod, I done can't tell you. Wh's you alls been. I done hunt all over dis heah whole country, been in with the Johnnies." I said, "Why did they not take the horses from you?" "Don't know, Sah, dwey done pay no tenshun to me and I just kep on going until heah I is." And I said, "Just in time, too, for the Doctor wants his horse." I have often wished I knew what became of that coon, for he was a dandy.

Rosecrans placed his army around Chattanooga and expected Bragg would

continue the battle, but he seemed to have enough, so all he did was to place Rosecrans' army in siege, thinking it easier to starve us out than to whip us. So he placed a force on Lookout Mountain, which cut us off from our base of supplies and from the 22nd of September until the 25th of November, my regiment, with others of the division, camped on Stringer's Ridge, immediately north and across the Tennessee river from Lookout Mountain, and directly west and across the river from Chattanooga. We occupied this position until the night of the 24th of November. During the interim from Sept. 22nd until the 25th of November, Bragg's siege was so effective that men suffered for food and thousands of horses and mules died for want of forage.

In the early part of October the brigade went over into Sequatchie Valley, to help pursue Wheeler, who was destroying our supply train. October 9th, 1863, Mitchell's brigade was put into Brigadier General Jeff C. Davis' division, and was called 2nd brigade, 2nd division, 14th army corps, where we served until the close of the war. Our corps badge was an acorn—red one for first, white for second and blue for third division.

About 2 a.m., October 27th, we in company with the rest of the brigade, crossed the Tennessee river below Lookout Mountain, on a pontoon bridge, to the assistance of the Potomac troops, who were coming to the support of the Army of the Cumberland, and the enemy were trying to prevent their advance by assaulting Gen Gray's division. The darkness was akin to blackness, and the volleys of musketry, together with the roar of cannon, rendered the night one long to be remembered. This battle in the night is known as the battle of Wauhatchie.

On the afternoon of November 24, 1863, our attention was attracted to Lookout Mountain, which was ablaze with artillery and musketry. The battle of Lookout Mountain was on, and we had it in full view without participating in it, and as the blue advanced and the gray fell back, leaving their breast-works, camp, camp equipage, artillery, in fact everything that goes to equip an army, the scene being enacted filled us so full that we, too, indulged in a hearty, long and loud cheer, which was all we could do as the Tennessee river was between them and us. However, it was soon over and in a short time we received orders to break camp, which we did and left Stringer's Ridge the night of the 24th, crossed the Tennessee river north of Chattanooga and near the north end of Missionary Ridge, on a pontoon bridge, which we constructed after relieving the Rebel pickets. We went in line of battle, connecting with the 15th Corps and by the middle of the day the enemy had been dislodged from their stronghold

(Missionary Ridge) and were in full retreat, with us annoying their rear guard. These two days, November 24th and 25th, were red letter days for the U. S. forces. Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge were ours, besides a large number of prisoners and many stand of arms, a large amount of artillery, and the enemy in full retreat.

But our task was not done. Gen. Burnside was besieged at Knoxville, Tennessee, his supplies of all kinds were nearly exhausted, so we were ordered to his relief by forced marches, which was no small task for an army that had just raised a siege of its own and as yet had no opportunity to draw either rations or clothing. Many of us were without blankets, very scant clothing and but few had shoes and many were compelled while on that march to cut pieces of green cow skin and with strings from the same material sew them on their feet to protect them from the rough, stony and frozen roads. But we were ordered to go, and went. Early on the morning of the 26th of November, we pursued the enemy and before noon reached Bragg's depot of supplies, (Chickamauga Station) in time to see it destroyed by fire. At dark overtook the enemy and had a sharp skirmish in which Lieutenant McAndless of Co. I was killed. We carried him into a cabin and covered him with his blanket. While we were preparing for the night, the faithful Jack, spoken of before, came in with a chicken and we proceeded to cook it and have a supper out of the general order of things. But I assure you there was no levity, for our dead comrade was lying cold and stiff in our midst. Early in the morning we dug a hole as best we could, wrapped our comrade in his blanket and covered him over, found a piece of board and marked it as best we could by carving the letters of his name, with a pocket-knife. (Since the war I visited the National Cemetery at Chattanooga and was gratified to see his name on file. His remains had been found and placed in the National Cemetery.)

On December 5th, at Maryville, we learned that Longstreet had raised the siege and relieved Burnside. December 7th we countermarched and returned to Chattanooga, arriving December 17th, and encamped December 20th with the brigade at Rossville, Georgia, where the regiment went into winter quarters.

The Adjutant General's report on the march to Knoxville, has the following to say: "The march was a very severe one, as the men were poorly clad, having just emerged from the battle of Missionary Ridge, and many being without shoes or proper clothing. They were also without rations and were obliged to subsist on the country which already had been nearly devastated, hence many suffered from hunger as well as exposure."

Sherman complimented Davis' Division on its good behavior on this march. (The 78th was in the above Division.)

We remained in camp at Rossville until the commencement of the Atlanta campaign. On the 2nd day of May, 1864, we broke camp and the battle was on again and the enemy were forced into their works at Buzzard Roost and Dalton. They were flanked out of Dalton and May 13th, finds the regiment in line of battle in front of Resaca. From now on we were scarcely out of hearing of gun shot or cannon. Resaca and Rome, Georgia, were taken and the Rebel line was constantly being driven back, until the 27th of June, when Gen. Sherman determined to make a grand assault on Kennesaw Mountain. The brigade to which we belonged was massed in front of the Rebel entrenchments and at 9 a.m., on the 27th of June, the command jumped the works on a charge to capture the enemy's entrenchments. The brigade was received with a rattling fire of both musketry and artillery, which was deadly. The assault was a failure, because of the entrenchments being deep and wide and the dirt being thrown upon the Rebel side of the ditch, and a head log on top, which made it impossible to scale in face of the deadly fire; the enemy were pouring into us, but the brigade maintained a position within seventy or one hundred feet of the enemy's works, and that night entrenched itself. The loss in the charge was very great. A day or two after, by common consent, hostilities ceased, and details from each side buried the dead between the lines. On the morning of July 4th it was discovered that the enemy had abandoned their works the night before, and we immediately followed them, skirmishing with them constantly until July 17th, when we crossed the Chattahoochee river and at Peachtree creek had quite an engagement just at sundown. Comrade Samuel Naylor of Co. E of my regiment, was wounded. From this wound he suffered all the rest of his life, and still many begrudged him the insignificant pension he got. Samuel Naylor, attorney, of Carthage, is his son. There were many more casualties in my regiment, as we were on the skirmish line. After heavy skirmishing we forced the Rebels into their Atlanta intrenchments.

On the morning of the 22nd of July the battle of Atlanta was fought which was a peculiar and unfortunate affair for both armies as nothing was accomplished by either army that benefited them in the least. It was brought about by a strategic movement on the part of the Rebel forces. They evacuated their works in the night, deceiving the Federal forces, causing them to think that they had evacuated Atlanta, which was not the case, as the Confederates marched east around the left flank of the Federal forces and attacked the Federal forces in the rear. When skirmishing first commenced Major General

McPherson, with his staff rode back in the direction of the firing and rode into an ambush of Confederates which arose as one man and demanded him to surrender, which he refused to do, and was shot off his horse; his staff were taken prisoners, but in twenty minutes we retook the staff and put their captors under guard. Four 20-lb. Parot guns with muzzles planted in the ground, mark the spot where General McPherson fell.

July 28th the command was ordered to assist Gen. Howard and we kept moving to the right round Atlanta, skirmishing, fighting and building works until August 25th. Aug. 23rd our colonel, Carter Van Vleck, died from wounds received in front of Atlanta. He was much beloved by us all. Aug. 26th, abandoned the works in front of Atlanta and struck south, skirmishing as usual. On Sept. 1st, assaulted the enemy's works at Jonesboro, Georgia, and after a desperate resistance, mounted their works, capturing men, cannon and battle flags, performing a feat that was not often equalled on either side during the war. The regiment did not lose more men than at Kennesaw but the result was far more gratifying.

I must not pass without mentioning some circumstances which occurred during this battle. Soon after we crossed the fence and entered the open field, Capt. Black of Co. D of the 78th, was shot and instantly killed. Capt. Black was from Carthage, Ill. Lieutenant John B. Worrell took command of the company and was afterwards promoted to captain. He was father of Bertha Worrell, now Mrs. Bertha Seger, and was as brave a man as ever faced the enemy, and was loved by his men and all who knew him. With him it was never go, but come on, boys. He was wounded at Chickamauga. When we had charged about half way across the field, the officers saw that owing to the enemy's line of works, the charging line would not all get to the enemy's line at the same time, so a halt was ordered, guides thrown out and the charging line ordered to dress on the guides. This movement was executed under a galling fire from the Rebel line. The coolness with which this maneuver was executed, I have heard commented on, many times since the war. But I think it was the most trying ordeal I ever experienced during my three years of service. When the battle line was properly dressed, the command forward came and we went forward with a yell that sent terror to our opponents and we carried the line, taking a battery of six guns and many prisoners, among whom was a general and staff officers, taken by Thos. Brodes of Co. I. After he had relieved them of their arms he addressed the general and said, "General, I took a good many chances on your arrest with your staff." The general said, "I don't know, why do you say that?" "Because my gun was empty. I fired my last shot as I entered your works." This private, Tom

Brodes, was the son of Major Wm. L. Brodes, who was killed at Chickamauga, almost a year before. Among the killed was a young man who belonged to Co. K, Perry Lashore. His death was a willing and willful sacrifice for his country. He was visiting friends in Quincy when he enlisted and he being the only son of aged parents, they at once set about to get him discharged. He enlisted in June, 1862, and the battle of Jonesboro was fought the first of September, 1864. His discharge came in the morning and was handed to him by his captain, and he said, "Captain, what would you do if you were in my place, go into this fight or not?" The captain's reply was, "You don't have to go, you have always been a good soldier, and we all know the circumstances under which your discharge was obtained, and it is for your father's and mother's sake. This will undoubtedly be a hard battle, and were I in your place I would turn in my musket and take no chances." The members of his company by this time had gathered around him and all urged him not to take the chance. But his answer was, "I have been lucky for two years, never had a wound, and I believe I will be now, and I am going with you." Which he did, but never reached the enemy's works.

Atlanta was evacuated on the 2nd of September, 1864, and our regiment camped on the outskirts of the city. On this (known as the Atlanta campaign) the regiment was hardly out of the sound of guns any day during the entire period from May 2nd, 1864, to the fall of Atlanta, Sept. 1st, 1864.

During the Atlanta campaign there were a good many things happened of much interest to the Federal forces, also to the Confederate forces. The time weighed heavy on our hands at times, and we as well as our enemies were alive to create something to relieve the monotony. So we conceived the idea of creating an armistice and visiting the Rebel outposts. In order that you may more fully understand what I am going to relate, I will state that the Confederate commissary issued their men tobacco in quite liberal quantities, while the Federal army did not have it to issue and there was a demand above the supply and it was expensive; while on the other hand the Federal army had an abundant ration of coffee and the Confederates had absolutely none. So when our armistice was arranged we conceived the idea of trading coffee for tobacco, and this arrangement lasted all thru the Atlanta campaign. We had an agreement by which should an advance be ordered we were to let the other side know and that condition was never violated by either side. The officers forbid the arrangement, but nevertheless it was not abandoned for the Yanks liked the Johnnies' tobacco and the Johnnies liked the Yankee coffee. So we were both naughty about disobeying orders. On one occasion an officer was visiting the Rebel picket post and the Rebel officer of the day was making a tour of the many picket posts and

one of our host heard more than a usual commotion and looked up and at quite a little distance saw the officer of the day and his escort approaching and said, "For God sake there comes the officer of the day. You Yanks better git and that P. D. Q." The picket post said when the officers came up they inquired what that meant, Yanks visiting outposts. The boys said they did not answer for a time for they were fairly caught, but after the officers had sworn around for a while he stepped over by the end of a log to inspect something he thot did not belong on a picket post. After kicking a couple of bundles around, he asked what was "in that sack." The reply was: "It's Yankee coffee." "How did you come by it?" "The Yanks brought it over to trade for tobacco." "Whose tobacco is that?" "By rights it belongs to the Yanks." "Why didn't they take it with them?"

"Don't know, Captain, without you-all were too close for them to think about more than one thing and that was the quickest and shortest way to their own post."

"Why didn't you shoot them as they ran?" "Because we could not on our honor as gentlemen. Those are a mighty fine lot of Yanks and we are having some very pleasant times with them. Why, Captain, one of those Yanks is a cousin to Bill Harrison, and they were both born and raised in Tennessee."

"The hell you say?"

"Yessir."

"Well, you boys seem to be ahead, as you have both tobacco and coffee."

Charles Henderson was sergeant in command of the post and had acted as spokesman. He told us that when the Captain had mellowed down and become more sociable, he said to him:

"Captain, you have asked me quite a few questions and you expected me to answer them truthfully, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Now may I ask you one and will you be as frank with me as I have with you?"

"Yes."

"Would you like to have some coffee for your breakfast?"

"Yes."

So the Johnny fixed up a good liberal ration and handed it to him, and when

the Captain started away, he said:

"Charley, you see that the Yanks get their tobacco."

There were hundreds of similar places along the line where similar exchanges were made, and as far as I ever knew there never was any armistice abused or violated.

Casualties were of almost daily occurrence. More than two hundred and fifty comrades are buried from the 78th between Chattanooga and Atlanta.

On September 29th, the regiment and division were moved by rail to Athens Alabama, and then marched to Florence in pursuit of Forest's cavalry who were in the rear and doing a great deal of damage; the division had a skirmish with him and drove him across the Tennessee river near Florence, Alabama. The division returned to Athens and to Chattanooga by rail. After we had drawn clothing and rations, we took up our line of march for Atlanta via Gaylesville, Rome and Kingston to Atlanta, as the R. R. had been torn up between Chattanooga and Atlanta, arriving at the last named place November 14th. The grand march to the sea commenced November 16th, when the command moved from Atlanta after the city was burned. We reached Milledgeville about November 23rd. About November 26th, 1864, passed through Sandersville and thence to Louisville and on to Savannah.

At Louisville we camped a few days in order that the several commands might adjust their lines of march so that the generals could proceed to the best advantage, for we were on a perilous trip, no one knew where we would show up, not even ourselves. But we were bound to be heard from somewhere. While we were camping at Louisville we had to be doing something, and as we had been compelled to forage off the country some of the forage squads had picked up some race horses, and there was a difference of opinion as to who had the best one, so we took this opportunity to test them. We had to go some little distance from camp in order to find a suitable piece of road that would make a race track, but just as we were in the zenith of our expectations of seeing a horse race, Wheeler's Rebel cavalry showed up and we had to form a skirmish line in order to protect ourselves from being captured. Needless to say, our ardor for a horse race was cooled to the extent that we did not care who had the best horse.

Our march was conducted in a very systematic manner. The brigade or regiment that was in the advance to-day was put in the rear tomorrow.

We marched fifty minutes and rested ten. On the occasion of one of these rest periods our regiment stopped in front of one of those beautiful southern

mansions. It had been raining all day and was still raining. We had only stopped for a few minutes, when an old man came to us from the mansion and asked to see the flag. It was taken from its cover and unfurled. The old man took its folds in his hands and said, "Beautiful emblem flag of our country," and tears came to his eyes, and then he walked away.

About fifteen miles from Savannah we were confronted by earthworks and artillery and on December 10th the enemy retired to their intrenchments at Savannah, Georgia. On Dec. 21st, the enemy abandoned the city, but we skirmished with them quite a little before the evacuation.

We spent the holidays in and around Savannah, putting in the most of our time trying to get something to eat, as our supplies were exhausted and we had to rely on the rice plantations. We went into the planters' fields, hauled, threshed and hulled the rice in order to subsist while we were getting into communication with our fleet, which had been sent there to meet us, but knew not where. I thought it was the best rice I ever tasted but since coming home can't say that I am partial to rice. After getting supplies we broke camp about Jan. 20th, 1865, and marched northward through the Carolinas. This march was a very hard march, because of the swamps which were covered with water in many places and in many instances there was ice frozen over the water, which the officers broke by riding their horses through. The soldiers were then ordered to take off shoes, stockings and pantaloons, and wade this icy water, sometimes for more than a quarter of a mile, coming out so numb with cold that their legs were almost void of feeling. Our line of march was via Boonville and Lexington, passing to the west of Columbia. February 17th, we proceeded to Winnsboro and arrived there February 21st. On our march we were to destroy railroads and other property of value to the enemy. While on the march we were annoyed with hundreds of negroes who followed us, and at Broad river we were obliged to take up the pontoon bridge and leave them behind. It is hard to imagine the hardships these poor people endured.

On March 9th we arrived on the field in time to help Gen. Kilpatrick regain his camp from Rebel Gen. Hampton. March 11th we reached Fayetteville, North Carolina, skirmishing with Gen. Hampton's cavalry. The march thru South Carolina could be easily traced, for it was a track of desolation and devastation. The regiment proceeded in a northeasterly direction towards Averysboro, South Carolina, and at this point the Rebels made their first positive resistance. Since leaving Savannah, Georgia, on March 16th, we had quite lively engagements with some loss.

On the morning of March 19th, near Bentonville, North Carolina, we found the Rebels in force across our line of march. The brigade formed line and the 78th was put out as skirmishers, which soon developed a heavy rebel force, which completely surrounded our brigade and we had to fight from both front and rear. The enemy was repulsed several times and soon our entire division was engaged. The enemy did not fall back until other troops came to the assistance of the division. We lost very heavily in this engagement. The last commissioned officer of my company, Lieut. Burr, was killed in this battle.

On the morning of the 21st in a skirmish the Rebels seemed to want to give us a parting shot and fired two cannon shots before retiring, the last one taking the head off of Capt. Summers of Co. K. This was the last man lost by Sherman in battle, during his march to the sea and through the Carolinas. From Bentonville we marched to Goldsboro, North Carolina, and encamped until we were supplied with clothing, rations and ammunition. On April 10th, we advanced on Raleigh, North Carolina, and on to the Cape-fear river, where we went into camp. In a few days we heard of Lee's surrender and a few days later heard of Lincoln's assassination. On April 26, Johnson surrendered to Sherman and the war was over, and we poor weary soldiers a long ways from home, but flushed with victory and hearts filled with gratitude that the end had finally come, and that Old Glory still waved over an undivided country, we started north via Richmond, Va., where we camped for three days taking in the sights around this historic city, then took up our march for Washington, arriving at Washington, D. C., May 19, and participated in the Grand Review, June 4, 1865.

Sherman's command went on in this review just as we had been on the march, for we had no Sunday clothes, and for that matter, wanted none. I think, however, the vast crowd that greeted and cheered us had rather see us as they did than otherwise, for I don't believe a finer body of men ever marched down Pennsylvania avenue than those of Sherman's army, for when we left Chattanooga every weakling was culled out, and when we got to Savannah, Georgia, the sick or march worn were culled out again, and at Goldsboro, North Carolina, all disabled men were sent to the coast and we were all down to fighting weight. One feature of our parade in the Grand Review that seemed to please the onlookers was our pack mules that carried officers' equipage, camp equipage, such as tent flies, headquarters clerical supplies, medical supplies, etc. These mules were led by negroes and during the march these negroes had picked up a good many fighting cocks, in order to have something to amuse themselves; while in camp they would have cock fights and many a negro and soldier for that matter, would stake their money on the result of these fights, and

when on the march, these cocks were fastened on top of these pack mules, and they were on this Grand Review just as on march.

On June 7th, 1865, was mustered out and sent to Chicago, where the 78th was paid off and discharged.

The regiment participated in the battles of Chickamauga, Mission Ridge, Buzzard Roost, Resaca, Rome, New Hope Church, Kennesaw Mountain, Peach Tree Creek, Atlanta, Jonesboro, Averysboro and Bentonville. The regiment mustered in 962 men, recruited 140 men, mustered out 393 men, lost in killed and wounded 423 men and 24 died in Rebel prisons.

The 78th was in active service from the time it was mustered in until mustered out.

Owing to the late writing of these incidents of army life many things worthy of mention have been left out of their proper place. A few of which I believe will be of interest to those who care to read them.

On the second day of our advance from Rossville on the Atlanta campaign, after passing through Ringold Gap in the mountains, our cavalry was skirmishing with the Rebel cavalry, but as the infantry advanced the Rebel cavalry gradually fell back to the west foothills of Buzzard Roost mountain. We saw in advance of us what we supposed was an intrenched line, but owing to the lay of the surrounding country we advanced very cautiously. We also saw what we supposed to be a masked battery which made us all the more cautious. But as we neared the supposed line to our surprise the battery was nothing more than the front wheels of a wagon with a small log mounted on them to represent a piece of artillery, covered with bushes in order to disguise it. That and the fact we were looking for trouble and a strong picket force in near proximity made the deception more easy. We did not experience much difficulty in taking that particular piece of ordinance. But as we advanced a number of the Rebel rear guard threw down their guns and came running towards us with hands up and a white cloth indicating they wanted to surrender, and they were permitted to enter our lines.

There were many instances of this kind during our campaigning in east Tennessee, owing to the fact that there were a great many Union people in that section of Tennessee. Colonel Brownlow's 1st East Tennessee cavalry was made up of the loyal men of that district and joined the Union army, and they were a brave and fearless lot of men. They never allowed themselves to be taken prisoner from the fact that if they were detected as southern men they said there

would be no mercy shown them, from the fact they thought they should be fighting for the South. During our advance on Chattanooga, Tenn., during the summer of 1863 there were several men from this Tennessee country joined Co. F of my regiment, one of whom was killed at Chickamauga and another wounded. The wounded man recovered and came back to us just before starting on the Atlanta campaign, and as stated before, there were many times when the two army lines were in close proximity, times when a man's head above ground was an inviting target. On one of these occasions the skirmishing fire became so annoying that one of these Tennessee recruits jumped up on the front of the works with his gun and told the rest of his comrades to load their guns and hand them to him. The boys begged him to come down as it was simply suicide for him to stay up there, but he stayed until wounded twice. The second wound proved quite severe and he was sent back to hospital, which was the last I ever knew of him.

Before closing I wish briefly to note something of camp life, camp equipment, both in the early part of our term of service and at the last end. When we went to Quincy there was no camp equipage and for a time we were placed around the city at the different hotels until such time as we could secure tents and other necessary articles which would enable us to take care of ourselves. We knew absolutely nothing about camp life. When we got our tents there was issued us what was called Sibley tents, five to the company. They were round with pole in the center to hold them up, and guy ropes to hold them from blowing over. When we lay down at night heads to the outside, feet to the center. It was some time before we got used to those guy ropes, for we were constantly getting too near and falling over them. What was said on those occasions would hardly bear repeating here. Each man drew a tin plate, tin cup, knife, fork and spoon. The company drew five camp kettles, all of different sizes, to be used in cooking different kinds of food. The greatest trouble we had for a time was how much rice to put in the kettle. The first time cooking before we had it cooked done we had everything around camp filled with rice. It kept swelling beyond what we had any conception of. At first the company was formed into one big mess and a couple of men did the cooking. It was some experience. When we left Quincy we went to Louisville, Ky., where we drew arms and accoutrements, also our quota of six mule teams, which was one mule team to each company, and three for headquarters, which made thirteen to transport regimental supplies, with the addition of two ambulances to our outfit of teams to transport regimental medical supplies and care for the sick and march worn. When we got to Louisville a detail of men was made to go to the stock yards and get the teams. I

don't think there was one mule in ten in those yards that had ever had a halter on, and to see those men catch those mules, harness and hitch six of those unbroken mules to one wagon and start out of those yards was a sight long to be remembered. Most of the time was spent by those men in untangling those teams, all piled up and tangled to the extent of having to unhitch and unharness in order to get straightened out. But it was astonishing how soon those teams were brought into subjection. It was not long, however, before orders came for us to turn over our Sibley tents, and instead we were issued what we called dog tents. Each man drew a piece of canvas cloth 4×6 feet, buttons on one end, so that two men could button their respective pieces together and sleep together. At this particular time there was a general move toward a decrease along the line of things that had to be cared for in the way of forage and what it took to transport supplies for teams and what was considered unnecessary appurtenances for the use of the army, for each day we were getting further from our base of supplies and it became a necessity to do away with everything that could be dispensed with. So our regimental teams were reduced from thirteen to three for a time. Then all teams except one to a regiment and the ambulances were reduced in numbers and put into a brigade ambulance train.

On the march each man had to carry three days' rations, gun, accoutrements, forty rounds of ammunition, haversack, canteen, blanket, if in winter, overcoats and change of underwear. Of necessity our company messes were broken up and messes were composed of two to four men except in some instances some mean cuss no one cared to be with, then his mess was confined to one.

A few facts and figures clipped from the Blandinsville Star will not be out of place here and will enable the reader to form a better idea of what the Civil war meant to our nation.

Don't Belittle the Civil War.

Blandinsville Star: We think of the present war as the most terrible experience of humanity, and are apt to think of our present sacrifices as something unheard of before. But any of our old veterans who went through the civil war know that measured by any standpoint—cost, men engaged, casualties, property loss, or general awfulness the civil war was enormously more costly and terrible to America than this war was or could have become if it had lasted for several years.

In fact we have only had a mere taste, a faint suggestion of what the men and

women of the '60s went through.

The world war has cost us eighteen billion dollars. The civil war cost us \$5,160,000,000. The amount of wealth now in the country is fifteen times what it was in 1860. Had the cost mounted up to 77 billion we might begin to feel it pinch as they did. We should have to spend sixty billion more before we should make the money sacrifice they did.

The lives lost in the civil war was in round numbers 600,000. The population was then 27,400,000—about one-fourth of what it is now. Four times 600,000 is 2,400,000. If every soldier sent over seas were killed we should have a smaller proportion of gold stars by a quarter of a million than they did.

Out of a population of 27,400,000 there were mustered in during the '60s 3,730,000. Multiplying again by four we get 14,920,000. If we had kept on sending two million a year to France for six more years to come we would begin to feel the drain on our male population here at home as they did in 1865. And this takes no account of the billions of dollars' worth of property destroyed and the disruption of business in nearly half our territory. In this war we have faced nothing of this kind.

Nor has the fighting been anything like so savage and terrible as when both sides were Americans, the best soldiers in the world. Phil Sheridan sat on his horse beside Prince Charles when Metz was taken from the French in 1870. Looking at the serried lines of Germany's best soldiers he said to the Prince, "Give me two divisions of the Sedgwick sixth corps of the Union army and I could cut my way through your army of Prussians."

In the last hundred years the world has seen no other such fighting as was done by the Blue and Gray. The three most destructive battles in the last century outside the civil war were the battle of Waterloo in 1815, where the victors lost 20 per cent of their men; Vioville, between the Germans and the French in 1870, where the casualties were 20 per cent, and the battle of Plevno in 1870 where the Prussians lost 8 per cent in their battle with the Turks. But in the battle of Antietam the casualties of the victors were 23 per cent, at Gettysburg 20 and at Chickamauga 27 per cent.

Germany boasts of her "shock troops." In the civil war our boys were all "shock troops." And they were only boys. We see the few gray haired veterans with us to-day and forget that of those wonderful boys of 1860, 1,151,438 of them were mere striplings under 18 years old. But what terrible fighters they became! They were shock troops, for they knew but one way to fight. That was

at close quarters after the roar of musketry, with bayonets and clubbed rifles.

The present method of long range shooting and trench fighting shows no such savage intensity of fighting or terrible slaughter as these men faced, and it knows no such losses.

At Gettysburg the First Minnesota lost 82 per cent of its men in fifteen minutes of the second day. At Petersburg the First Maine lost 70 per cent of its men in seven minutes. At Gettysburg the 141st Pennsylvania lost 76 per cent. And remember, these were killed or wounded and not a man "missing," as they didn't surrender.

And how about the Gray? First Texas at Antietam 82 per cent, 21st Georgia at Manassas 78 per cent, 26th North Carolina at Gettysburg 72 per cent, 6th Mississippi at Shiloh 71 per cent. They printed no casualty lists then. The day after one of these battles the whole Chicago Tribune would not have been big enough to hold the names.

An eminent British officer recently said, "The Americans still hold the record for hard fighting." And now the sons and grandsons of the men who shook hands at Appomattox, lineal descendants of the best infantry that ever marched on the globe, have had a chance to send the shivers of fear down the spine of the Hun and America has repeated itself under the Stars and Stripes. But let us not forget the deeds of their heroic fathers who set a world record for terrific fighting that is not likely to ever be broken.

The author of this enlisted June 7, 1862, returned home July 3rd, 1865. Never asked for furlough. Was not absent from his regiment during term of service, except two days and three night, absence caused by the enemy being between him and the Union forces. The 78th Illinois was in active service from beginning to end of service, always at the front.

Transcriber's Note

Some inconsistent hyphenation and spelling in the original document has been preserved.

Typographical errors corrected in the text:

1964 changed to 1864

Chickamaugee changed to
Chickamauga

Johnnys' changed to Johnnies'

Gaylsville changed to Gaylesville

Averyboro changed to Averysboro

cheerd changed to cheered

Oldsburg changed to Goldsboro

Resacca changed to Resaca

invantrty changed to infantry

mountd changed to mounted

Appomatox changed to Appomattox

Murphysboro changed to

Murfreesboro

***END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CIVIL WAR
EXPERIENCES, 1862-1865***

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