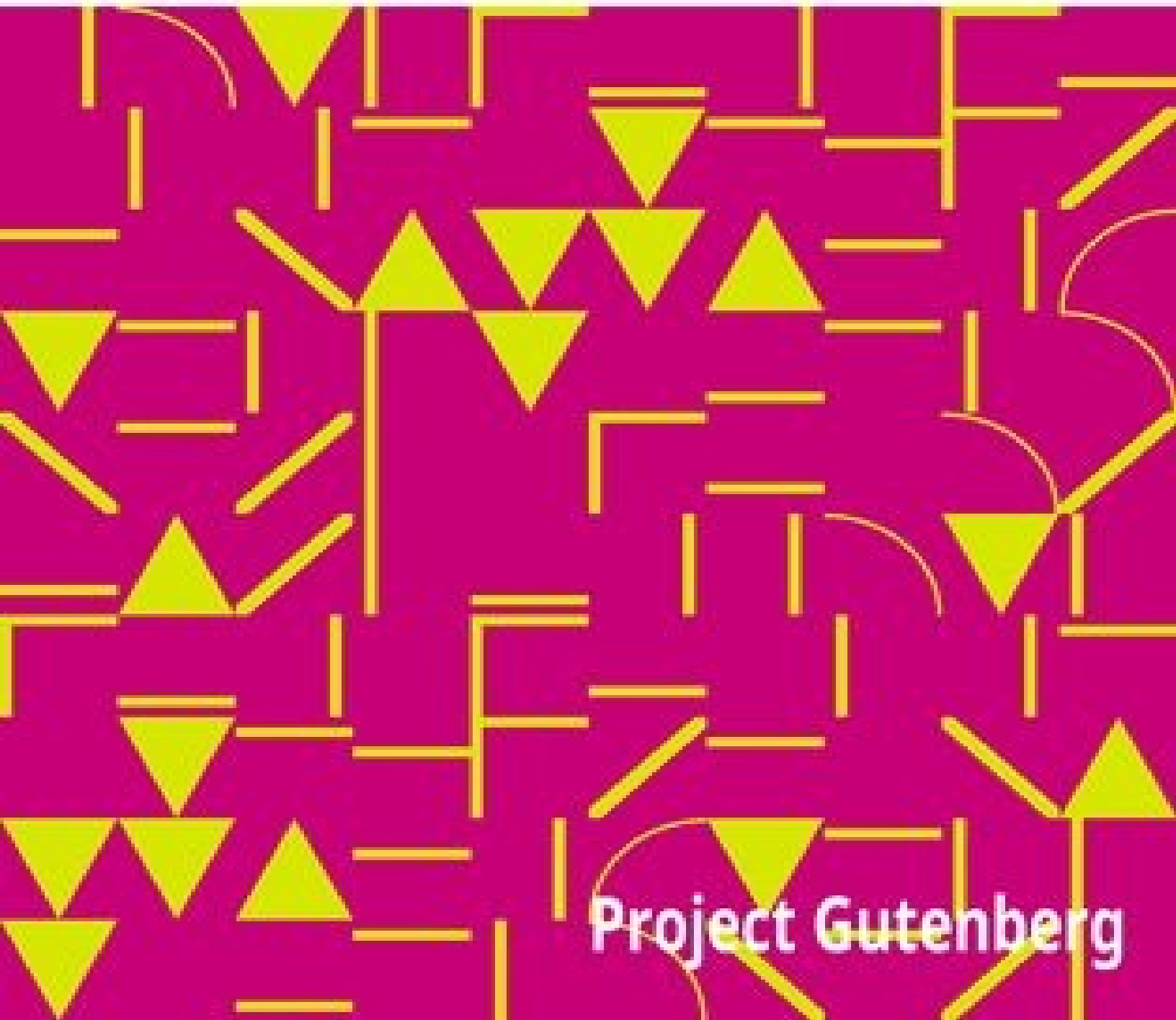


History of the Second Massachusetts Regiment of Infantry

A prisoner's diary—A paper read at the officers' reunion in Boston, May 11,
1877

Samuel M. Quincy



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*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK 2ND MASS. REG. PRISONER'S DIARY ***

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HISTORY
OF THE
SECOND MASSACHUSETTS
REGIMENT OF INFANTRY.

A PRISONER'S DIARY.

A PAPER READ AT THE OFFICERS' REUNION IN BOSTON,
MAY 11, 1877,

BY

SAMUEL M. QUINCY,

CAPTAIN SECOND MASSACHUSETTS REGIMENT OF INFANTRY.
BREVET BRIGADIER GENERAL VOLUNTEERS.

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A PRISONER'S DIARY.

The committee's announcement, that on this evening there would be read by me a paper relating to the history of the regiment, I fear may have awakened false expectations. But it was suggested that a little personal history of my own experiences, from the moment when that terrific flank fire caused the regiment to leave me for dead on the field of Cedar Mountain to the moment when, three months later, I again came under the stars and stripes at Aiken's Landing, would interest former comrades for a short time to-night. It is safe to say, perhaps, that our regiment passed through every possible experience of the war. In all the various scenes of suffering and endurance, both physical and mental, which the war could offer, the Second Massachusetts was represented; and in that view, perhaps, the personal adventures of those who, while separated from the corps, always considered its membership the highest of honors, may be considered as forming part of the general history of the regiment itself.

I was fortunate enough to find in my blouse pocket, after acute physical suffering had in a measure given place to the prisoner's worst enemy, the leaden vacuity of ennui, a little duodecimo almanac and diary for 1862, with half a lead pencil. With these, by dint of fine writing, I succeeded in keeping a sort of journal of daily events, with my reflections thereupon, during the whole period of my captivity, the last entry being comprised in the words, "*A free man at Willard's.*" From this journal, I shall make copious extracts, believing that words then written will reproduce the situation better than any subsequent description from memory.

At about 2 P.M. on the 8th of August, the long roll was beaten in the camp of the Second Massachusetts, at Little Washington. As has often happened, we fell in only to fall out again with the news that it only meant get ready to march; and in fact it was nearly five before we were off. The heat during the first hour or two of the march was severe, but the latter part was by moonlight and very pleasant. Still, I find it recorded that some unfortunate and unseasoned recruits, who had just joined us from home with knapsacks heavy with five times what they really needed, were utterly played out before the sun was down. And here I take up the narration as I find it in the little book referred to, with an occasional interpolation and explanation which will be marked as such in brackets.

August 14, 1862.—One week to-day since the fight. Let us attempt a *résumé*. On arriving at Culpeper, Friday night, after a moonlight march which about played out the unfortunate recruits with their heavy knapsacks, we lay down in a field, Stephen and I cracking my provision box, which had come on with the blankets. [This was Lieutenant Stephen Perkins of Company A with whom I had become intimate, and who shared with me a great and innocent passion for tea. Whichever of us was known to possess a supply of the article was sure of a visit from the other at his camp fire after a march. Before separating that night, I remember he said to me, “Sam, we shall see more fighting soon: I feel it; there is a battle in the air.” There was, indeed, and it ended the battle of life for him.] We then slept on the moor, to the sound of freshly arriving troops and wagons. In the morning, we find an army around us. After a breakfast at the sound of the triangle [for by this unmilitary instrument did Johnson, our caterer, call the officers’ mess to meals], under the sun, we fall in and take arms, but have hardly done so when we stack them again and proceed to stake out ground for a camp. But this is just done and tents beginning to rise when Sherman, of Pope’s staff, rushes by to head-quarters at a rate which “spared not for spoiling of his steed,” and which caused us to hold our hands in expectation for a moment; and, sure enough, in two minutes we were again in line, and this time off under a blazing sun, though for once without our knapsacks. Through Culpeper and about six or seven miles further in a fiery furnace hotter even than that of Shadrach & Co. Near the front, heard a little firing. Sergeant Parsons fell with sun-stroke. Left two recruits with him and pushed on for the right, where at last, panting and half dead, we got into a wood where we stacked arms and fell down behind them. The half hour of breeze and shade which ensued made men of us once more, so that when my company was ordered to skirmish we were actually able to do it. The firing of artillery commenced at about 3 P.M., as I should judge, pretty heavy and well-sustained. Ned Abbott’s company and mine were ordered to report forward, and deployed our skirmishers on the garden fence, with reserves behind; and there, for a couple of hours, we watched the swayings of the artillery fight, timing the explosion of the heavy shells, and watching the varying intervals between the shots of the rebel batteries. At last, as the sun seemed not more than an hour high, and just as Ned Abbott, lying by my side in the rear of our skirmishers, had expressed his disbelief in the fight’s coming off that afternoon, an orderly, followed by Pitman of Banks’ staff, came up to where Gordon was sitting on his horse near us, watching the field through his glass; and it seemed, for the first time, that something was going wrong. I was near enough to hear that he wanted a regiment of Gordon’s brigade to report, as I understood it, to Banks at the centre. “You must take him your regiment, then,”

said Gordon to Colonel Andrews. Abbott and I jumped to our feet, and were ordered to rally our men on the battalion; and hardly, panting and breathless, had we resumed our places in line when the regiment advanced by the right of companies to the front, until we had cleared the garden, and then by company into line.

Then commenced the furious and incessant roll and crash of musketry, leaving, as Copeland expressed it, no interval in which a single other shot could have been inserted. We plunged over the ditch and crashed through a wood, out of which came Crane of the Third Wisconsin, covered with blood, and reeling in his saddle, until after about a quarter of a mile we came to a fence with a wheat-field beyond. In this, a brigade of rebels were in line, but what they were firing at we couldn't see. We opened fire and then were ordered to cease—why, I don't know, as I could see no one between us and them. But, as their line advanced, we soon re-opened fire, as the converging storm of balls hailed upon us.

How long this lasted, I could not tell. Their red flags advanced, but large gaps were opening in their lines. Finally, the bullets seemed to come from all sides at once. Pattison, my lieutenant, shouted in my ear that Cary was down, and he had been ordered to take his company; and he left. Then the red flags seemed close upon the fence, and it seemed to me that the right had fallen back; and I started across the little gap in the fence to see. Yes, the right had gone; but in that instant I caught it, first in the right leg, then through the left foot, and in that same instant the enemy were upon us, or rather upon me, for what was left of my company had gone with the rest. Though staggering, I had not yet fallen, when one rushed up, aimed at my head with "Surrender, G—d d—n your soul!" which I did. But if I had known then, what now I know, I would have lain there for dead till they were gone, and then dragged myself slowly toward our side. [This refers to the fact that one of the first pleasing pieces of information communicated to me by my captors, who were surprised that I did not already know it, was that, by special orders of Jeff. Davis, none of Pope's officers were to be treated as prisoners of war or paroled, but kept as hostages to be hanged from time to time in retaliation for any such execution of guerrillas as was threatened in Pope's celebrated orders, of which we then had not yet heard.]

But as it was [the journal resumes], I gave up my sword and pistol, sat down, borrowed my captor's knife, ripped my trousers open and shoe off, and examined damages. An awful hole in foot and little one in leg, at the bottom of which the bullet was plainly visible. Seeing this, the Confederate gentleman to whom I then belonged was seized with a desire to perform a surgical operation

with the knife referred to, but yielded to my remonstrance and request that he would be satisfied with having put it in, and allow some gentleman of the medical staff to undertake the bullet's extraction. Two of them then offered to take me across the wheat-field to where their own wounded were, asking me at the same time what money I had for them. They did not offer any violence or undertake to search me. Had they done so, they would have made prize of my money-belt, containing over \$90 in greenbacks and a gold watch. I gave them some ten or twelve gold dollars which I had in my pocket, reserving one by great good luck, as will presently appear. Then they carried me across the field, with each arm affectionately round a rebel neck. As I passed the fence where the right had been, there lay poor Ned,—who half an hour before had joked about being two hours in action without losing a man,—with white, waxen face against the dead leaves. It was just light enough for me to recognize him. Who else of the officers had fallen, I did not know, save that Cary was down, as Pattison had told me, before our lines gave way. With occasional halts, they carried me across the field, and put me down among a groaning mass of wounded of both sides. The men next me gave me water and a knapsack for my head, a man came along with a canteen of whiskey and I got a drink. The moon rose full over the trees, and the cannonade recommenced. I got a piece of the wounded rebel's blanket next me over my shoulder, lay as near him as I could; for, though the day had been blazing, the night mist and loss of blood made me shiver; and I slept. Once I was waked by some one attempting to pull off my seal ring; but he desisted when I pulled my hand away, remarked, "A handsome ring," and went on. Very likely he thought me dead, as my companion under the blanket was by that time.

Before daylight, the pain of my shattered bones brought me again to consciousness. Somehow, I hated to see the sky begin to brighten, knowing how soon the sun would blaze furiously down upon us. And yet I didn't seem to realize the horrors of the position, but looked upon myself as acting a part for which I had expected to be cast, and with the stage business of which I was perfectly familiar; and all the wounded took it more or less as a business matter. As the sun rose, I gradually dragged myself under trees with the rest of the groaning set, leaving those who had died to sleep it out. A rebel soldier passed with two canteens on. "What will you sell me one of those canteens for?" said I. "I'll give you a dollar." He laughed and was passing on. "A gold dollar," said I. He stopped: "What, Yank! Have you got a gold dollar?" "Yes," said I, "you go to the branch, fill the canteen with fresh water, and here's the dollar." If he had been a wretch, he might have taken it away and left me to die, for there was no one else near except wounded; but, after considering a few minutes, he went off

to the stream, filled the canteen, brought it to me, took the dollar, and left. And that canteen, I think, saved my life; for soon the sun rose so that no more shade could be had. I tore up my handkerchief, bound my wounds, and kept them moist, kept the canteen under me and took little sips when my thirst became unbearable, and so got through the day, making the water last until evening. By and by, they began to pick up the wounded by threes and pairs, in ambulances. When, however,—I should think about 3 P.M.,—there were about five or six of us left, and I the only Yankee, a sudden rush of men through the woods and stampede of wagons down the road, with an accompaniment of “Yankees are coming!” swept every sound man away from us. Every man that had legs used them at double quick. Then the prayers of the wounded to the wagoners, as they flogged their teams past: “Oh, take me away from here, help me into a wagon; for God’s sake, don’t leave me to the Yankees!” One poor fellow, all of whose clothes had been taken off by the surgeon engaged on his wounds, raised himself, stark naked and covered with blood, against a tree, and implored every teamster in turn to stop and take him in. The effect was grisly. It struck me that, if they were really coming, some of the rebs then rushing by might take occasion to settle one Yankee “*en passant*”: so I got my blouse off, covered myself with dead rebel sergeant’s coat, and lay low. A section of artillery extricated itself from the wagons, and wheeled into battery; and, finding myself just in point-blank range, I succeeded by painful endeavor in getting behind a big stump.

But, alas! the excitement subsided, the wagons were stopped and ordered back, officers cursed the originators of the panic, and it was all over. But a real charge or a few shots just then would have started “secesh” with a rush, and saved the captain of Company E, Second Massachusetts Volunteers. After awhile, an ambulance came and picked up the last two of us and carried us to where the hospital flies were pitched. My driver, after making sure that nobody heard him, informed me that he had always been for the Union, and voted against “secesh”; “and when they started this war,” said he, “I swore they’d have to fight it out without me; but I was wrong there, for they’ve got me.” He drove me up to a fly under which were some dozen or twenty wounded on hospital cots. At first, they said there was no room; but then somebody discovered that his neighbor was dead, and suggested that the Yankee might take his place. So they moved the dead man out under the eaves inside the guys, and gave me the cot. The surgeon examined and bound up my foot, relieving me with the assurance that it would probably stay on, though I should be always lame. The bullet came out of my leg very easily, for, oddly enough, it hadn’t pierced my drawers, but had carried them deep into the leg in a sort of bag. A thunder-storm now burst upon us, and

with the first gust down came our house, over living and dead. After a long staggering and flapping, they got her set again. The rain thundered on the canvas and cascaded in sheets over the dead man under the eaves, but he was beyond even water cure. The scene was dismal: in the intervals of rain, they took to burying legs and arms upon the hill, and it would not have made a bad slide for a stereoscope, on the whole. But, as night fell, I took my supper with some relish,—a piece of hard-tack and ham, given me by a rebel private on the field,—and with the help of the dead rebel's blanket of last night, which I had sense enough to bag when they picked me up, I slept once more.

In the morning, they sent me in an ambulance or “avalanche,” as they call it, to head-quarters. Thought at first I was going before Felix or Stonewall himself; turned out to be General Hill. He came and looked into the ambulance. “What regiment?” “Second Massachusetts.” “Let's see, Gordon's old regiment?” “Yes.” “Best regiment in Banks' army; cut all to pieces, though: I've been over the ground,” and exit. He ordered me sent to Orange Court House; countermanded, and they dumped me out by a blacksmith's shop. A surgeon came along and ordered me sent to Rapidan Station, on the box seat of an “avalanche”; and an awful “avalanche” it was,—four men with legs and arms off inside. It was eight miles over rocks and through rivers, and generally such a drive of damnation as never entered into the heart of man to conceive. Luckily, I kept my strength; but why the inside passengers didn't die before we got half way is the marvel. “The lamentable chorus, the cry of agony, the endless groan,” as we bounced and jolted over corduroy road and river bed, was an ill thing to hear. We arrived at the railroad about dusk, just as I was calculating about how much longer I could stand it without fainting, and they put us out on the grass among those already arrived. The train came along after dark, and, finding that I must shift for myself or be left in the field, I made my painful way on hands and knees, among horses' feet and under the awful “avalanche,” to the platform, where, after a while, they picked me up and put me aboard; turned seat back, put my foot up, and slept.

An interval of broken oblivion in the dark car, with occasional wakings to a semi-consciousness of rumbling wheels, brakes, and once familiar railroad sounds, mingled strangely with groans, cries, stench, squalor, and misery. But, as the night was only a succession of frightful dreams, I didn't undertake to decide which was reality, but took the benefit of the doubt, which was a species of relief. But with the gray dawn illusions vanished, and the miserable reality stood out, bald and unmistakable. Where we were going, I didn't know; but after a while the impression seemed to prevail that it wasn't Richmond, but Staunton;

and at about twelve we arrived here. The train at once became a menagerie, wherein the Yankee wild beasts were stirred up and stared at by the town. One citizen, I remember, was turned out of the car by a rebel sergeant for insulting the prisoners. They took us out at last, one or two rebs who had died in the night being first served. Finally, about evening, they took the two Yankee captains, in almost an upside-down position, with heads in straw and feet in air, through the town to the hospital, women coming to the windows with various expressions of countenance, pity being the scarcest. I've often seen them look out to see soldiers pass, but never expected to figure in this sort of a pageant for their edification.

[The reflections and moralizings on my situation, which follow, it was my first impulse to omit from this paper entirely; but on the whole I decide to let them stand as I find them, requesting only that comrades will consider them as given in a sort of family confidence.]

Of my life, if life it may be called [continues the diary], in this place, I desire to make no record, the *olim haec meminisse* principle having no application here. Let the waters of oblivion cover it forever, if I am ever again a free man. To lie a crippled and helpless butt for the exulting Philistine and his women ten thousand times worse than himself, while such tremendous history is being made of which we can only guess at the reality, is a living death. And with such a companion! What is happening behind the impenetrable curtain between us and the North? Until the news that God has abdicated and Satan reigns is confirmed beyond a peradventure, so long will I believe that the right will triumph in the end. But where the end may be, this year or twenty hence, *quien sabe?*

Of my own chances for life and liberty, I cannot even guess. The blackness of darkness surrounds me on every hand, with no perceptible ray or glimmer from any quarter, as yet. But, doubtless, many a man who thinks he sees his path of life stretching away in far perspective is really as blind as I, and can discern no further beyond his nose. When the tide of war shall turn, as turn it will, what will be done with us? where shall I be,—here or in the Libby? Well, each place has its merits: here, enough to eat and no bracelets; there, the company of gentlemen. Oh Harry Russell! if you and I were together to cheer each other with regimental chat, or gallant Major Jim, *sans peur et sans reproche*, in your company I could suffer and be strong unto the end. But I fear that, through desperate wounds, his mortal body has had no longer strength to retain the soul of one of the bravest Christian gentlemen that ever drew sword for the right since the world began.

And Stephen, my friend, man of culture, reading, and intellect, whose only complaint of camp life was the loss of time and opportunity for the growth of mind,—that such lights should be forever extinguished by the bullets of men so few degrees above the brute level, saddens the soul. And shall all this have been in vain? Answer, freemen and gentlemen of the North, with unborn generations waiting: to bless or curse your memory,—answer now!

[The above allusion to “no bracelets” refers to the assertion of a Richmond paper, immediately communicated to us by way of cheering our spirits, that Pope’s officers, on arriving at the Libby, had all been handcuffed. But, although this proved to be erroneous, yet my own boast of no bracelets in the hospital was somewhat premature, as the following incident will show. One evening after supper, just as a half-drunk rebel officer had become so abusive to us that I almost expected the cowardice of a blow, entered the sergeant of the guard, who put a stop to that fun, but, to our great disgust, after the officer had gone, produced a pair of handcuffs, which he informed us he was ordered to apply to “that Yankee,” indicating Captain Bush of the Twenty-eighth New York, who, being wounded in the arm, was walking up and down the room, which no one else was able to do. (This officer, by the way, had voluntarily accompanied his regiment into action, armed with a cane, being under arrest and deprived of his sword.) His wound was severe, and the surgeon had expressed doubts of saving the arm. We all remonstrated against the barbarity of handcuffing the only man whom it would really hurt. No use: he had got his orders, and on went the irons. Bush didn’t say a word, but, after the sergeant had gone, with a sharp stick which his neighbor whittled out for him, and a piece of string poked into the lock of the handcuff, succeeding in pulling back the catch, and slipped one wrist out. The other, he didn’t mind. Before the ward surgeon came round the next morning, he slipped it in again. The surgeon was indignant,—not at the barbarity, but at the interference with his case,—and off he rushed to the surgeon in command, to have the handcuffs removed. But all he obtained was an order that Bush be sent to Richmond, handcuffs and all. We heard, however, that the ward surgeon had them removed as soon as Bush was clear of the hospital yard.

The story we heard, probably true, was that Hay, the medical director in command, reading the account of the Richmond handcuffing, one night when he was tight, was fired with the idea of emulating such a noble example, and ordered the bracelets to be applied at once to any Yankee who was well enough to be walking about. Even our visitors were rather ashamed of this performance, and invented an absurd story that Bush had tried to escape,—a man with a

shattered arm trying to escape from the only chance of saving it!]

[Journal resumed.] It seems that an opportunity may turn up for sending this little book off to the North by a man who will shortly get his parole, and I think will undertake to smuggle it through. These jottings have been almost my only resource to pass away the leaden hours. With no companion to whom I can open my soul, I must soliloquize, if only to convince myself that I have not yet sunk to the level of my surroundings.

Saturday, September 20.—Six weeks to-day since the fight in which we became dead to the world. “Hope springs eternal,” etc. If it didn’t, how many would turn their faces to the wall! One man got his everlasting furlough the other day, just at supper time; but they pulled the sheet over his face and went on with the bread and molasses; and, when that was over, down he went to the dead-house.

This, in my opinion, is for the country the very moment of convulsion and travail, out of which some new state of things,—the commencement of some new era,—for better or for worse, will surely come. “When the pain is sorest, the child is born; and the night is darkest before the dawn of the day of the Lord at hand.” But at this critical moment to be walled up alive, where only faint echoes and uncertain sounds from the great fields reach us,—the fields where our fellow-soldiers are playing out the great game of the age is,—a chance of war, and nothing to complain of while we still live. A great battle has been in Maryland, and, although they make it out that we were worsted, yet from signs and tokens we draw our own inferences. First and greatest, the women haven’t been up to crow victory over the Yankee prisoners, *ergo* the first despatch did not announce a success; the doctors have said nothing, and last night Dr. Hay, with a dozen others and all the dressers that could be spared, left for Maryland. Charley, the nigger, yesterday reported that the folks in town felt very bad about it. Reports fly about of fifty thousand killed and wounded on both sides; and, as they can’t know ours, theirs must have been tremendous to have started such reports. (Here come the women to the menagerie.) At all events, it’s such a victory as they can’t stand a repetition of; and now, if the North will pour in reinforcements, there may be a glimmer of daylight for the cause, if not for me.

A man has come into this room, wounded at Port Republic, First Sergeant Seventh Ohio, the most awful specimen of emaciation that I ever saw or would have believed consistent with the vital spark. The articulation of each joint, covered only by the tense polished skin, is as distinct as in a skeleton.

Another horror: a rebel deserter, who was put in with the Yankees in order to be under guard, has just been sheared, on account of one of the plagues of Egypt; and his head was a sight to dream of, not to tell. He had been living in the woods since he deserted, was immediately taken down with typhoid fever, and I thought wanted to die.

The room now consists as follows, beginning with my next neighbor: Corporal James Shipp, known as Jimmy, the pet of the room, doctors and nurses inclusive: a nice, simple-hearted boy of seventeen, brave and good; shot in shoulder, scapula taken out; recovering. Private Smith, Forty-sixth Pennsylvania: good fellow, apparently; has taken laudanum enough to float a ship, and seems to be getting fat on it.

The skeleton sergeant comes next. He keeps a journal, and his wound drives me from the room, whenever opened.

The deserter and company. He wouldn't have needed John Phoenix's tape-worm, in order to use the editorial "we."

A bragging squirt of a Georgian, who got scratched in the finger in Maryland, and marched all the way here to save his precious hide and boast of the Yankees he had killed.

George Peet, Fifth Ohio: a good young fellow; lost his foot the other day, after six weeks trying to save it.

Henry Shaw, One Hundred and Second New York: a little, white-headed Harlemite, a little conceited; talks a little better English than the rest of them; shot in back; recovering.

Arthur Jordan, Tenth Maine: obliging, pleasant, nice fellow; had the measles, and was sent to the "measly ward," from which he has just made his escape on his own hook, returning here at the risk of being put in the guard-house.

Sergeant Henry Holloway, Fifth Connecticut: the only one with whom I can fraternize at all; a railroad man, engine driver, etc., infected with the insubordinate ideas natural to his regiment; otherwise, a good fellow.

Captain ——, —— ——, selfishness incarnate. It takes all sorts of men to make up a world, but let us hope that it takes few such as he.

Thursday, September 25.—Great news in yesterday's paper. It seems Pope's

officers have been paroled. That is a glimmer of daylight, and looks as if the winter might not be passed in shop ward No. 7, or the Libby. General Prince is courteously alluded to as “the ringleader of the gang.” For pure malignity of venom, these Richmond editors would beat even the witches’ toad that was stewed after his month’s nap under the stone.

Sunday, 28th.—Away with visions of home and ease! Wilder Dwight has been killed, and I am Major, I suppose.... Now to play the man and be prepared to go to the majority in either sense, when God’s will is.

Just had a visit from Joshua Munroe,—and a cheering visit, indeed,—a descendant of Israel Munroe of Lexington fight, and here an Israelite among the Philistines. Rebel soldier, just leaving for his regiment, shakes hands all round with our men, who enjoin him to take care of himself. And how soon these men may be putting daylight through each other! Note: I have experienced from rebel privates almost uniform kindness, good-fellowship, *camaraderie*; they treat one as fellow-soldier. And as for our men, they fraternize as though the strawberry mark of brotherhood was on every arm. All the insult, all the bitterness and ill-treatment, have come from officers and citizens of high position in society, and from the women, whose envenomed tongues are let loose upon the wounded prisoner without mercy. This space [referring to the space in the diary under the printed date of Saturday, May 24] is the date of our midnight fight on the dark road; and this [Sunday 25] of our fight and flight to the Potomac, when hell broke loose in Winchester town; and this Sunday is just such another, cool and bright; and this morning [Monday, May 26] A, B, E, and K, were left on picket at the fence and in woods, with a section of Cothran, under Lieutenant Peabody. That was the work that tried our souls. Ned and Dick, brave fellows, both gone before. “We a little longer wait, but how little who can know!”

Two men have died on this floor within the last twelve hours,—the old man Carter with the consumption, and the lieutenant with the typhoid, the former last night and the latter just now. This afternoon [Wednesday, May 28], we crossed the river; and how good camp was!

Monday, October 6.—Got letters from home last night, through Jim Savage, who still lives,—God be praised!—though with one leg off, and a shattered shoulder. Add to that that we are promised the parole of the yard; add to that orders expected for Richmond in a few days. I’ll bet my knapsack will be packed when the assembly beats. However, we’ll not count this chicken before he chips the shell, as old —— has tried to addle the egg all he could.

Tuesday, October 7.—One chicken incubated and made his appearance. Hay, yesterday afternoon, in the intervals of carving below (the hospital operating room was immediately beneath us), sends up word that, if we will write out our parole of the yard, he will sign it. And old —— not being on hand to botch the thing, I cooked up a document, got it signed and sent down, to which the illustrious chief then affixed his sign-manual, and we are henceforward free of yard and grounds. Bully for that! [I remember now, I was the first to test the document's efficacy, for we could hardly believe that it would really pass us out. The guard stopped me, of course, called the corporal, and finally decided that it was a genuine thing; and I hobbled painfully down four steep flights and out,—looked up and saw the rest all crowding to the window and waving hands and hats to see me actually emerge, like a rat, from the trap which had held us through long weary months.] I find that the art of crutch progression is quite a science, and has its outside edges and its backward rolls, etc., which are not to be learned without much practice and balancing. Up and down stairs with ease, confidence, and grace, is somewhat of an attainment.

Thursday, 9th.—Struggled out to pond and washed; first decent wash for three months. Had to steal a piece of black soap, and push out a board over the mud,—hard work for a cripple. Stopped in at carpenter's shop and saw Dr. Hay slice an arm off, *secundum artem*.

October 13.—Suffering with the first cold snap. The sergeant's wound keeps every window open, and we might as well or better be *sub Jove frigido*. Rumors of small-pox pervade the air.

Tuesday, 14th.—An alarm of small-pox yesterday afternoon in our ward turned out false, I believe, but has scared everybody most out of their wits. It seems, however, there were cases elsewhere; for, endeavoring to visit the pond again, I was stopped by a guard, and told that some tents just pitched by the shore contained the small-pox patients, whom no one was allowed to approach within one hundred yards. After they had recovered or died, the tents were set on fire as they stood.

Wednesday, 15th.—To-day, I followed Dr. Hay's trail all day, bent on a personal interview, until I earthed him at last in his office; and the result is that we are off for Richmond to-morrow. [I had seen the Richmond paper with the official list of Yankees paroled from the Libby, among whom were several whom I knew to be Pope's officers; and I determined not to rot another day, as food for Confederate vermin, without claiming my rights as prisoner of war. So when, after repeated

rebuffs, my obstinacy prevailed and Hay gave orders to let me in, he wasn't in a good humor. But I told him, I forget in what terms, that I had discovered that I was no longer a hostage liable to be hanged in retaliation for the execution of guerrillas, but a prisoner of war, with all that that implied, and that, in behalf of all who were able to travel, I demanded to be sent to the Libby. He said we were better off where we were. I agreed, but told him I would suffer anything to know that my name was on the list to be paroled when my turn came, and that it was my right to have it there. Finally he said, "Will you be ready to start before light to-morrow?" "Let me go back for my blanket," said I, "and I'll start now." "Well," said he, "go back, and tell all who the ward surgeon says are able, to be ready by half-past four." I saluted, faced about, and was in the doorway when he stopped me and, seeming to recover his temper, asked me and any of my friends who could to come over to his office after supper and take a farewell drink.] In the evening [the journal resumes], we attended in Dr. Hay's office, to take a social drink. Hay talked fire and fury, "secesh" running up as the whiskey ran down. A lawyer and colonel joined in, and the telegram of the Governor of North Carolina to the Governor of South Carolina was so often quoted that I was fain to back down from what was fast becoming a three-minute crowd. We had an amputation to diversify the spree,—soldier brought in, who I suspect had applied for a discharge by shooting off two fingers of his right hand. They were badly mangled, so Hay put him down on the floor and took them off again, short metre, not without cutting his own in the operation, he was so tight. I came away then, fearing that my crutches might not be as whiskey-proof as erst was wooden leg of Sawin, and the descent of the front steps requiring that eye, hand, and foot (literally, foot) should keep true time. There wasn't much sleep in No. 7 that night, and early next morning we were off, leaving George and the skeleton sergeant, who is fast going down to the dead, though he doesn't know it. We had an awful trip, being detained six hours by a smash-up of the night before, killing seven and wounding seventy-five,—a mere skirmish. Shortly before we arrived, at about 1 A.M., an officer came through the car, caught sight of my shoulder-straps, stopped: "You are a captain?" "Yes." "Have you got any federal greenbacks?" "Yes, a few." "Well, I want some to pay a debt I owe at the North, and I'll give you Confederate money for them. You'll want some, for you'll probably lie for months in the Libby, and you'll die if you don't send out and buy good food." Said I, "Thank you, I guess I'll hold on to my greenbacks till I get there."

The fact that nearly all the hospital officials had made the same request on various pretexts was significant enough to me. At 2 A.M., we arrived, where I

now write, in the Libby prison, being received with the once familiar cry of "Corporal of the Guard, Post No. 1." The corporal came and let us in. The officer, cross and sleepy (the infernal traitor, Peacock, by the way), sent us to the hospital department, up three flights,—immense room in large tobacco warehouse, lighted with a single dip, which only made darkness visible. A ragged young nurse, with his hair on end, welcomed us to the scene of despair. We were put on cots of sacking, with nothing under or over us, and shivered ourselves into oblivion. The next morning, the familiar notes of reveille on the fife, accompanied by the bass and snare-drum of the side-show, which Andrews used to detest so, brought us again to consciousness. I was about to put my head out of the window, but was forcibly informed that I'd better not, unless I wanted it shot off. This day, a party went off which we had hoped to join, but were disappointed; and a squad of sixty odd came in from Macon, Georgia. I thought that I had seen filth, squalor, and wretchedness before, but I never even conceived the meaning of the words; and what these men had been through would have been incredible, except to those who saw them. They said the Libby was heaven, in comparison to what they had come from. Saw a dress-parade of the regiment on duty here, which would have shamed the cadets for measliness of turnout.

Saturday.—In hell, *alias* the Libby prison.

Sunday.—This morning before breakfast, little spitfire clerk came up to take our paroles. I could have embraced the little devil, but I didn't, only waited till my name was called, when I toed the mark *instanter*, and quite won his heart with the promptitude with which I recited my descriptive list, insomuch that he asked me to take a letter to his sweetheart. After this, the wretched crew were packed into coaches and wagons, under command of the black-hearted traitor Captain Peacock, and we left Libby, the sergeant and I being in with two half-dead wretches of the Macon crowd, swarming with vermin.

But after a miserable jolt of fifteen miles, our nigger driver pointed out the boat lying in a distant bend. "And dar de flag," said he with a grin, "ober de starn," indicating a small red streak, which was "the star-spangled banner, Oh, long may it wa-a-ve," etc. I confess to embracing the staff when I got aboard, and realized that Jeff. Davis himself couldn't take me away without a fight. But before they let us go aboard there was a long and to us incomprehensible delay of nearly two hours, during which we lay on the grass just above the landing and watched the boat, the flag, and the blue uniforms, with longing eyes. [We learned afterward that Captain Peacock, while strutting up and down the wharf in full Confederate

uniform, had been recognized by one of the deck hands who had belonged to his former New York regiment. The said deck hand pointed him out to a friend, with the remark, "Look at his forehead, and you'll see traitor written there." This being overheard by Mr. Peacock, he demanded an apology for the insult, swearing that, if refused, he would march us all back to the Libby. How they pacified him I don't know, but at the end of two hours he had cooled off enough to let us go aboard. I was the first who received permission to go, whereat I bounced on to my one foot and two crutches, picked up my blanket, and charged down the hill. The rebel sentry, who hadn't yet got his orders to pass us, charged bayonets on me for an instant, but, on a sign from Peacock, shouldered arms again; and the next moment I was embracing the flag-staff, as afore mentioned. The Sanitary Commission received us with open arms and some delicious milk-punch, and in a few minutes we were under full steam out of rebel-dom, Sergeant Holloway and I leaning on the guards, watching the foam fly past, and singing, *sotto voce*,—"We're going home, we're going home, we're going home to die no more!"

We were two days on board the flag-of-truce boat. The next cot to mine was occupied by a man of a Massachusetts regiment, taken at the first Bull Run. He was almost a skeleton, and the worst case of chills and fever I ever saw. The second day being a shake day, he couldn't eat his rations, and offered them to me. He said he thought he was dying. "But," said he, "I don't complain now I've got out of hell, and I shall live long enough to get back into God's country and die there, which is all I've been praying for for months."]

Monday.—Aboard the "Commodore," off Fortress Monroe, waiting for orders, which have just come, for Washington. And here we are at Washington, waiting orders again. When I find myself once more a free man in Willard's Hotel, I shall turn down the leaf of my experiences as prisoner of war to the rebels.

Now for philosophy. Captain gone ashore, and fearful rumors pervade the boat about Annapolis, New York, etc. Well, it can be but a day or two, and we are out of rebel-dom. I've kept well so— ["Far" would have been the next word, but marching orders intervened, and the next entry, in big letters at the bottom of the page, reads] A FREE MAN AT WILLARD'S!

And the first act of the free man aforesaid was to purchase some underclothes at the furnishing store, which luckily had not closed for the night, and to proceed therewith to the bath-room, where hot water and soap speedily restored that self-respect which is so difficult to retain after one is conscious of not being the only

inhabitant of one's garments. The next day, I drew my pay and replaced my ragged blouse, bullet-pierced trowsers, and torn Confederate cap (given me on the field to replace my broad-brimmed felt, which a Georgia gentleman fancied), by the jauntiest uniform clothes I could find, after which I sallied out on the avenue; and the first man I met was the captain of the "Commodore," who at first insisted that I was mistaken, as he had never seen me before in his life; and only my crutches and wounded foot at last convinced him that I was the same man who had talked to him about Harry Russell, the day before. The next day, it was just the other way. Smart young officer rushes up: "Hallo, Captain Quincy! thought it must be you. How are you?" "Well," said I, "I'm glad you thought it was I; but whether it's you or not I'm sure I don't know, for I should say I had never set eyes on you before." "What, you don't know the man you identified yesterday?" And it turned out to be a lieutenant of a Western regiment, and fellow-prisoner, all of whose clothing in the Libby consisted of shirt, trowsers, and army blanket pinned over his shoulders. Arriving in Washington, without a cent, I had identified him at the pay department, while still in his blanket, from which chrysalis the all-potent greenback had evoked as shiny a blue-and-brass butterfly as any on the avenue.

This concludes my prison history. I was never again taken, though coming pretty near it once or twice in Louisiana, where, as an officer of colored troops, my experiences might have been much more severe than those above recounted. If the story has interested former comrades or assisted in drawing closer the link which binds together the survivors of the old regiment, I can only rejoice that the committee asked me to relate it to you.

Transcriber's Note

As much of this work is a direct extract from a diary, spelling, grammar and omission of words are preserved as printed.

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