

ELLIOTT JAMES CARSON

THE SOUTHERN SOLDIER
BOY: A THOUSAND SHOTS
FOR THE CONFEDERACY

James Elliott
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James Carson Elliott The Southern Soldier Boy: A Thousand Shots for the Confederacy

PREFACE

A readable book should instruct, entertain and amuse. The author, outside of the historical interest of this little book, has aimed to cover a broad-enough field for all classes of readers to find some nourishing food – at least in the way of variety and shifting scenes – from the standpoint of a young private.

And in order to understand his viewpoint, a brief sketch of the author is admissible. Born in Cleveland County, N. C., about midway between Charlotte and Asheville, July 12, 1845. His father, a small slaveholder and a farmer, he was brought up to work on the farm and was well practiced in the use of firearms, and was well seasoned in the fox-chase and hunting sports. His father was an ardent Whig, and they got their political inspiration from William G. Brownlow's Knoxville, Tenn., Whig. (See Brownlow's and Pryneis' debate on Negro slavery.) Brownlow proved conclusively that slavery was of Divine origin; that it had

always existed and always would exist, because the Bible said, "The heathen you buy with your money shall never go free, but shall be an inheritance to you and your children forever." But when hostilities began, Brownlow sided with the Union and was the War Governor of Tennessee. The war spirit ran high in our section and all the boys were eager to take a hand in the fun of chasing the invaders out of our country. The first Manassas battle started them back the way our *smart men* said they would go. And I thought the fun would all be over before I would have a chance to share in the glory. But they kept coming in larger swarms. After I had organized and drilled with the Home Guards, I saw there was still a prospect to get to the front in time to take a hand. Two years had dragged along, the battle of Gettysburg had turned the scale, more than half of my early in friends had been knocked out when I entered the army for a three-years' term at the age of 18 years. We had understood at the first that we must fight three to one, but to whip that many Yankees was not thought to be much of a job; but when I waded in, it was quite evident that we must fight five to one. But we still thought they must be whipped, all the same. The numbers come up to our expectations, but we were sadly deceived in their fighting qualities. When they first came our climate did not agree with them, but the longer they stayed the harder they were to persuade away; and they finally worried us out, until we had to let them alone; and after staying with us awhile we learned they are as good as we are. From a distance, they are inclined to view us with a critic's eye,

as through a glass darkly; but when they come down and bring their washing, they get a clearer view. Then, and not until then, the veil is removed away, and all our problems stand revealed in open day. Progress comes through evolution and revolution; where moral forces lag physical force compels the way. The only issue now is in patriotic rivalry of the sections. The heritage of one is the property of all.

“Oh! carry me back to old Virginia,” “The old Kentucky home,” “Carolina,” “Oh, for Carolina,” “Away down in Georgia,” “On the Sewanee River,” etc., are refrains not equaled in the more frigid region. Then we have “Dixie,” covering the whole Southland. All these are now held in common by our whole people. Whoever heard of any one ever wanting to be carried back to New England, where the natural resources are mainly ice, granite, rock, codfish and beans. Still we are all proud of the hardy New Englander who makes the desert blossom as the rose wherever he pitches his tent. His hard environment has been a blessing to every other part of the country, forcing him to seek greener pastures in balmier climes, and to disseminate his energy and frugality in those more leisureful sections that need encouragement to greater thrift. It was the combined qualities of the Virginia cavalier and the New England Puritan that made Stonewall Jackson invincible and Robert E. Lee the highest type of the American patriot.

Jamestown and Its Significance

The English settlement at Jamestown, Virginia, was the beginning of the highest civilization in the liberty of man and the establishment of the purest and best political government the world has ever known – perfected through many vicissitudes, stands as the beacon light of human liberty for all the world.

The Jamestown Exposition

The 26th of April, 1607, is the date that will linger in history after many a dreary record of battle and coronation has been swept away. For on that date the first permanent colony of English speech made its landing on the soil of North America. It is fitting that the three hundredth anniversary of this event should be marked by the opening of the Jamestown Exposition.

The founding of Jamestown was not a step in a struggle, but a trophy of victory. And, though it began the westward march of the Saxon tongue, which has long since encircled the globe, it marked the victory less of a race than of a civilization. It was really the dedication of a continent to individual liberty; it was the definite announcement that the worn-out systems of empire should not usurp the new western land. It was a trophy gained in a hundred years of such warfare as the world has rarely seen, but it was a thousand times worth the price.

When the peoples of Europe landed on the shores of the sixteenth century, they were a curiously assorted company. Germany was still playing the solemn farce of the Roman Empire, whose real existence had terminated a thousand years before. Spain had just driven the last armed infidel from her borders, and was preparing to use in foreign conquest the military excellence she had developed in her long crusade at home. Italy, divided into a dozen small states, had carried civilization as high

as a purely city civilization can go, and was ready to decline. France was halting between two opinions, but, on the whole, leaned strongly toward the course of European aggression, which she pursued for centuries. All these countries were organized on the military plan. The individual counted for little among them; commerce counted for less; all who were not soldiers could escape contempt only by becoming priests. In England and Holland a different organization prevailed. There the civilization was industrial, rather than military. Commerce was accounted a worthy work; not so high as fighting, of course, but still perfectly respectable; and the individual enjoyed a freedom and security unknown elsewhere.

Which type of civilization would endure? That was the great question before the world. Would the soldier and aristocrat, or the merchant and artisan, survive in the struggle which had already begun? The sixteenth century passed, and the contest was decided. The sturdy mechanic had outworn his armored and tinsel lord. Italy was ruined; Germany broken in two; Spain hopelessly wrecked; France, bled white by civil war, was gasping for breath. But England and Holland stood erect and at ease; and, pausing only to make sure that the victory was theirs indeed, went forth to possess the world. Jamestown and New Amsterdam were the first efforts of the free northern peoples to possess the land they had won.

And not only was Jamestown the first English colony on the continent, but it was the first white settlement that deserved the

name of colony at all. The adventures of the Spaniards were not colonizing, but conquest. They were crusaders, going forth to found kingdoms, not settlers seeking out homes. They went to the most densely inhabited parts of the new world, simply because only a dense population of slaves could uphold the costly military type of Spanish civilization. The English came as homemakers. They sought out the unsettled parts of the land, and these they covered with a working civilization. Bad as slavery afterward became in this country, it never had a twentieth part of the influence on our life that the same institution had in Spanish lands. The result is history. The industrial civilization which had beaten militarism on its own ground in the old world, outstripped it with ridiculous ease in the new. Spain had a century's start, yet to-day two-thirds of the white people on the Western continent speak the English language and live within the borders of the United States.

A Tribute to Virginia

Here is to Virginia, “The Old Dominion” State. At last with the young Confederacy linked her fate. Go search the annals of history back to the days of Abraham; trace Jewish civilization; compare Greek and Roman progress; weigh the Crusaders of the Middle Ages and the Reformers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Then look to the English people who first wrested the great Magna Charta – the Bill of Civil Rights – and human freedom from King John, and implanted these principles first in Virginia with the best blood of England, producing a Washington, a Jefferson, a Patrick Henry, a Madison, a Monroe, a Marshall, a Tyler, a Wise, a Robert E. Lee, a Stonewall Jackson – with thousands as high-toned and patriotic. There she stands superb! With her honor, her chivalry, her patriotism and valor. Her high standard of civilization, unequaled and unexcelled by any people in any age, in any land. In the most trying crisis of any age she bore herself grandly, nobly. As Mother of Presidents and Mother of States. It was her lot to suffer most of all. For four years invaded by hostile armies and burdened by her own defenders, in the great struggles that swayed back and forth. Her homes despoiled, her fields trampled, her sons slain, and her soil drenched in blood. She was steadfast, generous and hospitable to the last. She fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and cared for the sick and bound up the wounded. And not a word of complaint

ever came from a Confederate soldier that she ever failed to do what she could for him.

Virginia was all this, notwithstanding she was handicapped by negro slavery, insidiously introduced by Dutch traders. And when it was known that Africans had sense enough to set plants and worm tobacco, New England sagacity and enterprise were quick to supply the demand for slaves and to stock the market until Virginia cried, Hold! Enough! Negro slavery held her on the low plane of an agricultural State – a producer of cheap raw products. Yet history shows no example of such progress as was made in the civilization of the Negro race. George Washington freed his negroes and turned them loose upon the community. Thomas Jefferson foresaw that a government could not remain half slave and half free. But the steady increase in slave property and its broad extension prohibited its ready abolition. Virginians were not the people to be dictated to by the very people that had pressed slavery upon her. She stood for the right to manage her domestic affairs as she pleased, and was quick to resent outside interference. The clash was inevitable and had to be fought to a finish. North Carolina, her faithful daughter, loves to honor and cherish her Alma Mater. As Virginia, so were all the Southern States – brothers all standing shoulder to shoulder in a common cause.

History of Co. F

A LIST OF THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF COMPANY F, FIFTY-SIXTH REGIMENT N. C. T., C. S. ARMY, WITH A SKETCH OF ITS SERVICE FROM SPRING OF 1862 TO 1865.

This was one of the last companies raised in Cleveland County, and was composed three-fourths of married men. I joined the company as a recruit, 17th of August, 1863, at Halifax, N. C., and was with it constantly in all its service except from the 28th of July, 1864, to the 15th of October, 1864, when I was away at hospital and on sick furlough. It was organized into the Fifty-sixth Regiment at Camp Mangum, near Raleigh, when its Captain, H. F. Schenck, was elected Major, and B. F. Grigg was elected Captain. Captain Grigg was First Sergeant, and having served six months with First N. C. Regiment, and having participated in the first battle of the war at Big Bethel, Va., and being a good drill master, naturally succeeded Major Schenck as Captain. Lieutenants, Dr. V. J. Palmer, Dick Williams, Alfred Grigg (after Williams was killed); an Irishman by the name of Purse served as Third Lieutenant for a while. Sergeants, A. J. London, Frank M. Stockton, William London, Pink Shuford, Rufus Gardner, Hezekiah Dedmon. Corporals, T. Jefferson Hord, Thomas J. Dixon, Benjamin A. Jenkins, Lawson

PRIVATES

Those still living at this date (June, 1906,) marked by an *.

*Allen, Rufus; Allen, William; *Beam, Joseph; Blanton, Arthur; *Blanton, Frank; Barnett, W. Riley; Beaver, David; Bookout, Silas; Bookout, Marmaduke; Bedford, James; *Blanton, William; Chitwood, J. Marshall; Cabiness, Thos. P.; *Crowder, Spencer A.; *Crowder, Mike; Crowder, Joseph; *Crowder, John; Carter, John; *Carter, W. Jackson; Cogdall, Allen; *Cogdall, Adney; *Cogdall, Perry; Chitwood, William; Davis, Thomas; Davis, J. Pinkney; Daugherty, Samuel; *Elliott, James C.; Eskridge, Simeon; Eaker, Jesse; Finch, James; *Fortenbury, Mark; *Fortenbury, Anglis; *Gantt, Iley; Gibson, Oliver P.; Gaines, Barlet; Green, William; Glodden, Hosea; *Grigg, John; Grigg, T. Goode; *Grigg, Levi; Hoard, Sabert; *Hasten, Samuel; *Hasten, William; *Hasten, Frank; Haynes, Mijamon; Hamy, Judson; Justice, Lewis; Jones, Starlin; Kirby, Monroe; Kennedy, Alexander; Ledford, McKee; Ledford, John; Louis, Peter; *Lutz, Luther; Lutz, Frank; Lucas, Christopher; London, Thomas; London, Anonymous; London, Sidney; London, John; Moore, Spencer; Moore, Asbury; *McMurry, Bartlett; Michael, Luther; Maynard, a South Carolinian; *Nowlin, Anderson; Nowlin, John H.; Nowlin, Thos. L.; Newton, Big Son; Newton; Newton, Little Son; Norman,

James; Powell, James S.; Powell, James; *Powell, Isaac; Powell, Christopher; Price, Peter; *Peeler, David; *Peeler, James; Phillips, Noah; Pryor, Pinkney; Philbek, David; *Randall, Isaac; Richards, Wesley; Revels, Wesley; Sanders, Griffin; Sparks, Albert; Smith, Elijah; Smith, J. Marcus; *Spurlin, Jefferson; Spangler, Johnson; *Suttle, D. B. F.; Thompson, George; *Teseneer, John A.; *Wolfe, W. Cathy; Webb, John; Webb, Frank; Wesson, Dobbins; *Weathers, Sidney; Weathers, Albert; Wellmon, William; White, Moses; *Wright, Sanders; Wright, Winslow; Wright, Riley.

Making in all 135 men and officers, with probably a few more that died before I joined the company. John H. Nowlin had served three years in a Mississippi regiment before he was transferred to Company F, and he had been wounded twice. O. P. Gibson was transferred to Forty-ninth Regiment, and was severely wounded. Isaac Randall exchanged with Maynard, and went to a South Carolina regiment, and was in the regiment blown up at the Crater. Christopher Powell was transferred from Thirty-eighth Regiment. William Blanton was company commissary. He was elected Lieutenant in Captain David Magness' company, Thirty-eighth Regiment, and transferred. George Thompson was then company commissary. Dobbins Wesson was regiment mail boy, then Rufus W. Gardner took his place. William Green shot and killed himself while hunting deserters. David Philbeck was the first man to die; he died of measles. Ben. A. Jenkins was the last man to die; he died in Point

Lookout prison.

The Fifty-sixth Regiment N. C. Troops served under Generals Bob Ransom, Martin Pryor, and then under Brig-Gen. Matt. W. Ransom, with Twenty-fourth, Twenty-fifth, Thirty-fifth and Forty-ninth Regiments N. C. Troops. For more than a year the Fifty-sixth operated on the line from Petersburg, Va., to Wilmington, N. C., in protecting that railroad and coast country. In the spring of 1863, the Fifty-sixth was deployed on picket duty in Gum Swamp, below Kinston; the Federals cut it off and attempted its capture. After some resistance by several companies, they all took to the swamp and escaped, losing a few captured, and field officers losing their horses. Company F was detached, and got away in good order. This little escapade was the source of much merriment with the other regiments, who "poked" much fun at the Fifty-sixth for running at Gum Swamp.

The Fifty-sixth represented all sections of North Carolina, as follows: Co. A, Captain Hughes, Pasquotank County; Co. B, Captain Roberts, Robeson County; Co. C, Captain White, Currituck County; Co. D, Captain Graham, Orange County; Co. E, Captain Lockhart, Northampton County; Co. F, Captain Grigg, Cleveland County; Co. G, Captain Lanemills, Henderson County; Co. H, Captain Graves, Alexander County; Co. I, Captain Harrell, Rutherford County; Co. K, Captain Alexander, Mecklenburg County.

About the 1st of September, 1863, the Fifty-sixth Regiment, except Companys B and E, were detained to assist the Home

Guards to arrest deserters and conscripts, and for five months operated in the counties of Randolph, Davidson, Moore, Montgomery, Chatham, Wilkes, Watauga, Ashe and Alleghany. During this time we arrested and sent two thousand men to the front that the militia were unable to manage, killing and wounding thirty-five in making these arrests. During the last two months of this service Company F furnished a provost guard of eighteen men, commanded by Sergeant F. M. Stockton, at regiment headquarters, Ashboro, N. C. About the 20th of January, 1864, the regiment gathered in camp at High Point, N. C., and drilled ten days, and then joined General Pickett's command of six brigades – Hoke's, Ransom's and Clingman's N. C. Brigades, Barton's, Kemper's and Corse's Virginia Brigades. All met at Kinston, N. C., on the 30th of January, 1864, and made an expedition against New Bern, accompanied by a regiment of cavalry, First N. C., under Colonel Dearing, and several batteries of artillery. Set out 31st of January, and struck the enemy at Core Creek on Deep Gully at 3 a. m. on the first day of February, 1864. The Fifty-sixth was with Corse's Brigade. Hoke's Brigade made the attack on the fortified position, supported directly by Corse's Brigade. Some of the forts and block houses were flanked, and the fighting was continuous until 9 a. m., when all positions were taken and the enemy in full flight for New Bern. We got all their camp equipage, five hundred prisoners, four pieces of artillery, commissary and quartermaster supplies, and pursued them ten miles to New Bern,

invested the town, and skirmished around for thirty-six hours, then fell back. While on the skirmish line at 1 a. m., 2d February, we saw a Federal gunboat blown up. Our naval forces had gone down Neuse River in open boats and surprised and captured this vessel, and after taking the prisoners off, blew it up. The enemy were ready to evacuate as soon as we should make the assault, but from some misunderstanding of orders the attack was not made, and General Barton was afterwards court-martialed and acquitted.

We came back to Kinston and hanged twenty-five of those prisoners who were found to be deserters from our army. Then we went to Weldon and put up winter quarters where we had been in camp the summer before. About the 14th of February, a detail was made of twenty-five men from Company F and twenty-five men from Company K, under command of Captain Grigg and Lieutenant Shepherd, to help move the Federal prisoners from Richmond, Va., to Andersonville, Ga. We were on this service until 26th of March. These prisoners were in a pitiable plight and infected with small-pox. William Allen and Pink Pryor caught it from them; don't see why we all did not. During this time or early in March the Brigade made an expedition against Suffolk, Va., and after a running fight with negro cavalry, took that town, but did not hold it long. Capt. Cicero Durham, in command of a skirmish line, drove all before him and charged into the cavalry line and single-handed cut down several men with his own hand. Gilbert Green, of Capt. Jud. Magness' company, was killed in

the town, fired upon by some negro troops from a house. The house was fired, and when the negroes jumped out they were shot down. Green was the only man we lost.

On the 14th of April, 1864, we were under light marching orders to leave our knapsacks and carry one blanket. The men were all in fine condition, and of Company F, one hundred answered roll-call and set out on the expedition for Plymouth, N. C., under Gen. R. F. Hoke. The forces consisted of Hoke's and Ransom's N. C. and Kemper's Virginia brigades, First N. C. Cavalry Regiment, and several batteries of field artillery. We went by rail to Tarboro, and on the 15th set out for Plymouth, 65 miles distant, or three days' marching. We arrived at Plymouth Sunday morning, 17th. The cavalry rushed forward and picked up first picket posts, followed by infantry. As they brought prisoners back, we noticed one horse shot in the nose, and a little further on a dead Yankee in the road.

General Hoke sent a truce flag and demanded the surrender of the post. General Wissils, in command, indignantly replied, "Take it." General Hoke replied, "Remove all non-combatants within twenty-four hours." We threw up earthworks that night. Next day sharp skirmishing took place until the twenty-four hours had expired, then a heavy skirmish line was thrown forward and all the enemy driven inside their defenses; then thirty pieces of artillery were brought into position and we began to shell the town. The enemy replied with great spirit, and a terrible duel raged from near sunset until 10 p. m. We were in front of our

guns, lying flat, while the shot and shells from both sides hissed, whizzed and bursted over us. While we were engaged with the main fortifications, Hoke's Brigade was taking a detached fort up the river by direct assault.

In addition to the land batteries, the gunboats in the river were hurling huge shells at us. The next day, Tuesday evening, Ransom's Brigade worked its way around east of the town and, after a sharp skirmish fight, drove the Yankee pickets away from a deep creek, where we put in a pontoon bridge and crossed over and took position after dark under a picket and artillery fire. Here we formed for the final attack. The firing soon ceased, as we did not reply, and we lay in line of battle and got a good night's sleep. At first dawn of day we were standing in line in the following order; Twenty-fifth on the right next to the river, Fifty-sixth next, Eighth (from Clingman's Brigade, which was with us in place of Forty-ninth) in center, then Twenty-fourth and Thirty-fifth on the left, the field officers walking up and down the line quietly talking to the men. "North Carolina expects every man to do his duty. Pay close attention to orders, keep closed up, and press forward all the time. The sooner we can get into the town the better for us."

Hoke's and Kemper's brigades were on the west side. They fired the signal guns, advanced their picket lines as if they were going to assault from that side, while we quietly moved forward and covered half the distance before the fire was opened upon us. Then began the shower of shot and shell. The two regiments

on the right soon struck their cattle lot, and we had a drove of cattle in front of us, but coming to a lagoon and swamp we had to let the cattle pass back through our line. Then through water and slush four feet deep we made our way through the swamp and re-formed under cover of a little hill. The three regiments on our left passed around the swamp. We then raised a yell and rushed forward upon the intrenchments and were soon in possession of them, the Yankees falling back and taking shelter behind the buildings, kept up a steady fire upon us as we advanced rapidly. Our field artillery soon came in and opened fire, while the Twenty-fifth swept along the river and captured a fort, and the other regiments drove the balance of the enemy into the big Fort Williamson, on the south side of the fortifications. The Fifty-sixth split into three sections. Maj. John W. Graham advanced the center faster than the wings and soon planted our flag on the west fortifications. This was a signal for Hoke's and Kemper's brigades to come in from that side. On Monday night of the first attack, at midnight, our ironclad gunboat, Albemarle, came down the river and cleared it of all the Yankee shipping, sinking and running off all their gunboats. The Albemarle was firing into Fort Williamson. General Hoke demanded the surrender of this fort, but General Wessel was slow in giving answer. When General Hoke began to form his Brigade to assault it, the Stars and Stripes were hauled down and a white flag raised. After three hours of hard fighting, the town with entire garrison, consisting of two fine New York and two Pennsylvania infantry regiments,

with cavalry and strong artillery force, and besides the killed and wounded, 2,800 prisoners. The post was strongly fortified and well supplied with military stores and much mercantile goods. As soon as the surrender was made, all our troops were turned loose to help themselves to anything they wished – grocery and dry goods stores richly stocked to select from. Being more than sixty miles from a railroad, and the enemy still close by at Roanoke Island and Washington, we could only supply immediate needs. We were marched out of town that evening.

Nearly all the loss was in Ransom's Brigade, which numbered about six hundred killed and wounded. The Fifty-sixth lost ninety men. Company F – John Webb, shot through the breast; Peter Price, through the lungs; Hosea Gladden, in bowels, and died; Anderson Nolan, Allen Cogdall, Adney Cogdall and William Chitwood were all severely wounded; Thomas Cabiness and several others wounded. Dr. Lieut. V. J. Palmer was very seriously wounded by having back of thigh cut with piece of shell.

After resting until the 25th of April, we struck out for Washington, N. C. Thirty-five miles march brought us there on the 27th at 10 a. m. The enemy's pickets were driven in and we skirmished around there and were shelled from gunboats until morning of the 29th, when the town was evacuated. Leaving the Sixth Regiment of Hoke's Brigade to garrison it, we moved via Greenville and Snow Hill, crossing Neuse River below Kinston on a pontoon bridge that we carried with us, on to New Bern, crossing Trent River on our pontoon, and going down south side

of Trent River, struck the Beaufort railroad, capturing a cavalry picket post of seventy-five men. We laid siege to New Bern and were soon under heavy shelling from the Yankee gunboats. Barton's Virginia Brigade had joined us below Kinston.

After reconnoitering and getting into position twenty-four hours for attack, General Hoke got orders at noon, 7th of May, 1864, to hasten to the relief of Petersburg, Va., that General Butler had landed at City Point with a force of forty thousand, while General Grant was pressing General Lee with overwhelming force through the Wilderness battles. Raising the siege of New Bern, we marched back to Kinston, arriving there the 9th at 8 a. m., where we found trains ready to transport us to Virginia. At 1 p. m. we arrived where Butler's cavalry had cut the railroad between Weldon and Petersburg and were burning bridges and depots and tearing up the road to cut us off. We (Ransom's Brigade) followed close after them all that evening until after midnight, when they left the railroad after tearing up and destroying twenty miles of the road. Here we rested until 8 a. m., May 10th, when trains came out from Petersburg after us. Boarding the cars with loaded guns, we arrived in Petersburg at 11 a. m. As soon as our train rolled in we could hear the popping of musketry on suburbs, and the greatest excitement prevailed. The citizens, women and children, turned out to greet us. Beautiful ladies showered bouquets of flowers upon us as we marched the streets, with such exclamations as, "We are safe now. These are the brave North Carolinians who

have driven the enemy from their own State and have come to defend us. These are the brave boys that took Plymouth," etc. We were marched down the Popular Lawn Hospital grounds to a gushing rock spring, beautiful shade trees and green grass, where we rested until next morning. As soon as we were settled the white ladies and colored aunties began to pour in upon us with great baskets of everything good to eat and gave us a bountiful feast. Early next morning we moved out and took the Turnpike road towards Richmond, leisurely marching all day while our cavalry were rubbing against the enemy on our right with frequent brisk skirmishes. Out a few miles from Petersburg we passed over the ground where Hagood's Florida Brigade had checked the enemy's advance from that quarter a few days before. The thickets were shattered and remnants of equipments were scattered about, and the bloody places where many had fallen were still visible. Arriving near Drury's Bluff, we lay down to sleep in line of battle beside the Turnpike, facing east. About 2 a. m. the rain falling in our faces woke us, and soon our pickets close by commenced firing. We retained our position until day. Then we moved out on a country road to the right and coming to a turnpike turned into a wheat field at a farm house and formed line of battle in a pouring rain. Two good companies were taken from each of our five regiments and deployed as skirmishers under the command of Capt. Cicero Durham. They did not get out of our sight until they opened fire on the enemy. We then marched a mile east of Turnpike and occupied a good line of earthworks

while heavy skirmish fighting was kept up all day. Companys G and I of the Fifty-sixth were on the firing line. Captain Durham made the enemy think we were anxious for a fight. He would charge and drive their skirmishers back on their battle lines and then fall back, and as soon as they advanced, charge and drive them back again, picking up some prisoners every time. Thus it went on all day, while the rain fell in continuous showers.

Next morning, 13th, all was quiet on the lines. In the afternoon we, the Thirty-fifth, Forty-ninth and Fifty-sixth, moved west of Turnpike and, crossing the railroad, occupied some earthworks on a commanding position. The lines ran west then southwest. A nice dwelling stood back of the corner. Generals Hoke and Ransom had dismounted and gone into the house. The Forty-ninth on right, Thirty-fifth center, Fifty-sixth on left. We were stretched out single file to cover the ground. The enemy was drawing our attention down the railroad towards Petersburg by firing some shells at us, all of which were falling a little short. We were in fine spirits, hoping to see the enemy advance to the open in front, but it had been discovered that the enemy had outflanked us and a force gone around. Captain Durham was deploying his skirmishers in a small field near the house and in our rear. Company H of Fifty-sixth was sent on the skirmish line. Colonel Faison, of Fifty-sixth, was out there, and sent orders to Captain Grigg for eighteen men. I went with them, and we lined up with Company H. Just back of the field was a dense pine thicket. Colonel Faison said: "They don't need you; you

Company F men can go back to your company,” and he walked back with us. Then the Yankees massed in that pine thicket, ran up to the fence and poured a volley into us. Generals Hoke and Ransom mounted their horses and came over the earthworks through Company F. Ransom, seeing a part of the Fifty-sixth on turn or angle would be exposed to an enfilading or flank fire, said: “Colonel Faison, take your regiment down and form on the railroad.” Colonel Faison said, “Major Graham, take those three companies on the left we had about-faced down and form on railroad.” Company F went with Major Graham, while Colonel Faison kept the other seven companies there and helped to repulse the Yankees until all could get out. The Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth were nearby, and came to the railroad and we formed with them. Captain Durham followed us and was taken off his horse in Company F. One arm was broken and he was shot in the side. His arm was amputated and he died in a few days. Thus ended the career of one of Cleveland County’s bravest boys that did battle for that cause. A battalion of picked men was being organized for him to do all the sharp-shooting and skirmishing for the brigade.

Our company, H, had not deployed, and one over half was shot down. We privates all thought had Colonel Faison obeyed Ransom’s order to take his regiment out, Thirty-fifth and Forty-ninth would have been captured. As soon as they could stand the Yankees off, they came to the railroad, and we all went up the railroad to the next line of defense, abandoning that line. The

Yankees followed us up and fortified a position, and kept up a fire on us all day and night during 14th and 15th. General Ransom was wounded in the arm about 9 a. m. on 15th, standing in rear of Company F, exposing himself, I thought, unnecessarily, in company with some other officer. I was looking at him and expecting it when he was hit. Beauregard had now come up from Charleston and gathered up eighteen or twenty thousand men. Tradition says Jeff Davis told Beauregard to drive Butler away from there; Beauregard said he could not take the responsibility with the force he had.

Jeff Davis told Beauregard to drive Butler away from there. Beauregard said he could not take the responsibility with the force he had. Jeff Davis: "I will take the responsibility." Beauregard: "All right, then I'll do the fighting." On the night of the 14th and 15th of May our Company F was ordered out in the open field in front of our breastworks on picket or vidette duty, and lay all night in the open field under fire from the enemy's sharpshooters.

We did not return the fire, or they would have killed us all. As it was, they could only guess at our position in the dark. The bullets were striking the ground around us with a noise as if they were as large as goose eggs. Mike Crowder was severely wounded while we were taking position.

On Monday morning, 16th of May, a very dark, foggy morning, Hoke's division, I think, with Barton's Virginia Brigade leading the charge, assaulted Butler's right next the river,

breaking his strongly fortified line and capturing two thousand prisoners the first dash. Then pressing his broken flank with a strong force and throwing regiment after regiment against his front, carried the entire line by 10 a. m. Ransom's Brigade, commanded by Col. Leroy McAfee, made a front attack west side of Turnpike road, Twenty-fourth, Twenty-fifth and Forty-ninth leading, supported by Thirty-fifth and Fifty-sixth regiments. When our regiment got in the enemy's earthworks their whole line was falling back. James S. Powell and W. Cathey Wolfe, Company F, were wounded. We saw President Davis and General Beauregard together on the field.

Our loss was three thousand killed and wounded. The Turnpike road, over which the wounded were carried, was drenched with blood. The Yankee loss was five thousand killed, wounded and captured. Butler fell back to Bermuda Hundreds, under cover of his gunboats. General Hoke took his old brigade, Clingman's North Carolina, Barton's, Kemper's and Corse's Virginia brigades and hastened to General Lee at Cold Harbor, leaving Ransom's North Carolina, Grace's Alabama, Walker's South Carolina, and Wise's Virginia brigades to look after Butler. These were put in command of Gen. Bushrod Johnson, and remained as Johnson's Division until the close of the war.

Next day we followed Butler and fortified a position close to him and where we were shelled from his gunboats. We extended our picket line to within a few hundred yards of Butler's. On the morning of the 20th of May we got orders to wash our shirts. We

had left our knapsacks at Weldon, N. C., on the 14th of April, and had had four weeks of strenuous campaign in North Carolina and two weeks in Virginia. Six weeks without a chance to wash or change our shirts, and now we had no vessels to warm water, so the only chance was to wash in a small creek. Our shirts from sweat and grime had gotten so dirty and stiff they would almost stand upright. Shirts were washed and hung on bushes to dry, but before all got dry, or at 1 p. m., we were ordered to fall into line for another battle. We wanted Butler's picket line for our line to crowd him closer and fortify our picket line. Both picket lines had rifle pits and were hard to take at best. The Thirty-fifth and Fifty-sixth were ordered to take the picket line in front of our brigade. The Thirty-fifth deployed and charged forward, followed by Fifty-sixth in line of battle. The Thirty-fifth was driven back, and Fifty-sixth charged up and found a strong line of battle in the rifle pits. When we got in forty or fifty yards of them we were ordered to fire, lay down, load, shoot. When we had fired five rounds under a terrible hail of bullets at so close range, some one said, "They are flanking us." Then the order to retreat. We were in an old pine field with some undergrowth of oak bushes, while the Yankee line was on the edge of a dense wood. We fell back and rallied when some regiments of Walker's South Carolina Brigade came in on our right and with a yell charged on the Yankees, who were advancing on us. The Twenty-sixth lined up with them and helped to drive the Yankees back to their line of rifle pits. Our line lay down and kept up

our fire on them until our ammunition was pretty well spent. The Fifty-sixth had ninety-six killed and wounded. Company F lost four killed and nine severely wounded and several slightly wounded. Our killed were left where they fell and were buried by the enemy. They were Second Lieutenant Dick Williams, a brave soldier and a man loved by all his company; privates Thomas P. Cabaniss, Christopher Powell and Winslow Wright, all good soldiers. Powell and Cabaniss were single men. Cabaniss was killed by my side, and my left cheek was blistered by a hot bullet. Frank Webb and J. M. Smith died of their wounds. Jefferson Spurlin lost a leg and Johnson Spangler lost an arm. Sam. Daugherty, Peter Louis, Morman Bookout, B. McMurry and Monroe Kirby were all severely wounded. That night we fortified our picket line, and General Walker reconnoitering his position was wounded and captured. We were so close to them that firing was kept up all night and for several days following. On the evening of the 22d a truce was had to bury some dead between the lines. And the graves of our dead were visited. A few days after this a skirmish line from our brigade charged and took this Yankee skirmish line which had cost us so much on the 20th of May. Here we lay in the burnt woods, within a few hundred yards of the enemy, firing and shelling every day until the 1st of June. Our brigade crossed James River on a pontoon bridge and passed through the Seven Pines battle ground to the Chickahominy River, where we spent a few days in sight of the enemy's position on the north side, the picket of each making the

river the line. We then came up to Chafin's farm or bluff and spent about a week, until the night of 15th of June. We marched all night to Petersburg, Va.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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