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PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

*As a Staff Officer at Mine Run, and in Albemarle County Raid;
and as Commander of the Forty-Third Regiment United
States Colored Troops through the Wilderness Campaign,
and at the Mine before Petersburg, Virginia, from
November 7th, 1863, to July 30th, 1864.*



KANSAS COMMANDERY

—OF THE—

Military Order of the Loyal Legion ^{of} the United States.

WAR PAPER.



PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

⇒ OF A STAFF OFFICER AT ⇒

Mine Run and Albemarle County Raid,

—: AND AS :—

Commander of the 43rd Regiment U. S. Colored Troops,

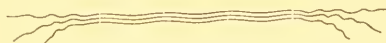
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WILDERNESS CAMPAIGN,

.....AND AT THE.....

Mine - before - Petersburg, - Virginia.

From November 7, 1863 to July 30, 1864.



A PAPER

Prepared and Read Before the

KANSAS COMMANDERY

≡ OF THE ≡

Military Order of the Loyal Legion ^{of} the United States.

October 3, 1894.

By Companion,

H. SEYMOUR HALL,

Brigadier General U. S. Vols., by Brevet.

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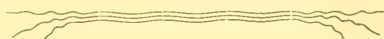
Kan. Sta. Hist. Soc.

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PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

As a Staff Officer at Mine Run, and in Albemarle County Raid; and as Commander of the Forty-Third Regiment United States Colored Troops through the Wilderness Campaign, and at the Mine before Petersburg, Va., from November 7, 1863, to July 30, 1864.



From the brilliant victory at Rappahannock Station, Va.,* where I was serving on the staff of General Emory Upton, then Colonel commanding the Second Brigade, First Division, Sixth Army Corps, to March 27th, 1864, I was on duty with the grand old Brigade in which I had seen nearly three years active service. General Grant was with us in the field as commander-in-chief of all the Armies of the United States, March 26th. General Meade was commander of the Army of the Potomac.

November 8th, in obedience to verbal orders from General Upton, the duties of Assistant Adjutant General of the brigade were discharged by me in addition to those of my former staff office of Assistant Inspector General, our Assistant Adjutant General having been disabled in the battle of the previous night, and sent to the hospital. The work in the two staff departments all devolved on me for over four months, till my promotion by the President, and order of March 19, 1864, took me to Philadelphia, to organize the 43rd Regiment U. S. Colored Troops.

On the 11th of November, General Upton with four officers

*This is one of the battles, the name and date of which, the War Department caused to be engraved on the Medal of Honor from Congress, which was awarded to General Hall for gallantry in action.

who had distinguished themselves in the assault, was detailed to take the EIGHT stands of colors that we had captured from the enemy on the 7th, and deliver them formally to General Meade at his Headquarters of the Army. I had the honor to be one of the four who accompanied General Upton, and with him were received by General Meade, and Generals Humphreys, Warren and Williams in General Meade's tent, in the most courteous and complimentary manner as we performed the pleasant duty of delivering our trophies. Having discharged that duty, we were entertained for half an hour, or more, socially, in a very pleasant way by the Commanding General, and the Generals of his staff whose names I have mentioned.

The routine of camp duty went on without interruption till the 20th, when we were visited by a party of distinguished officers of the English army, consisting of Lieutenant Colonel Earle, his Adjutant, Lord Castlecliff, of the Scots Fusileer Guards, and Captains Russell and Stevens of the Grenadier Guards, both of those fine regiments belonging to the Queen's Household Troops, whose special duty it was to attend their sovereign. After the review of the Sixth Corps, which was given for the entertainment of those officers, by invitation I attended a reception given to them at General Sedgwick's Headquarters, where a fine collation was served, and we had a very pleasant social gathering.

At daylight on the morning of the 26th, we moved out of camp, past Brandy Station and Mountain Run Mills, to Jacob's Ford on the Rapidan, bivouaced toward morning on the north bank of the river, crossed it at sunrise on the morning of the 27th, and pushed out, following the Third Corps. At 3 p. m., our brigade was detached from the Sixth Corps, sent to the left of General Neal's command, to support a portion of the Third Corps, where we participated with them in the hotly contested battle of Locust Grove. At midnight we changed position again, and after a night march took position on the right of the second corps, near Robertson's Tavern, which was our position during that battle and the operations of the latter part of the night and early morning of the 28th, when the enemy having fallen back, we pushed on in the rain till we came upon his new and strongly fortified lines at Mine Run, where we took our place in the line of assault on the right of the Second Corps. We held this place all night and through Sunday the

29th, till Monday morning, November 30th, at 2 a. m., when we moved quietly two miles to the right, our purpose being to turn and assail the left of the enemy at the same hour that Warren would fall upon his right, Warren's guns, at 9 a. m., to be our signal to begin our attack.

The night was extremely cold, we moved to our point of attack as silently as possible, totally concealing our movement from the enemy; we could not make fires to warm us or make coffee without revealing our designs to the enemy, nor stir about to warm ourselves without being discovered, and we would lie down as close to each other as possible and shiver and suffer in silence. General Upton and myself collected what few dead leaves we could get, and each had a buffalo robe, we lay down upon our slender stock of leaves, covered ourselves with the two robes, where we remained till daylight, chilled to the marrow with the intense cold. When daylight came we could see the full strength of the enemy's position and fortifications, which we were expecting to assault, and the sight was not calculated to warm our blood or arouse our enthusiasm, and never before had it been my fortune to see men so coolly and deliberately prepare for death. There was no thought of retreat or of failure, but most of the men knowing that their knapsacks were to be left behind, deliberately put them in order, left some last message with a comrade, or in their knapsacks, and as I never saw them do before, put some mark on their clothing by which they could be identified. The timber hid us from the enemy till 8 a. m. of the 30th, when General Sedgwick ordered his artillery to open, our knapsacks and every other incumbrance were laid aside, and every one prepared for what we expected to be the most desperate assault we had ever undertaken. General Warren on the left of the army had made similar preparation, and we awaited only the sound of his cannon to let go the stern array of our battalions.

After a careful examination of the enemy's position, Warren sent for General Meade to come and see for himself the desperate nature of the enterprise, and the order to assault was countermanded by the commander of the army in person.

We lay all day long threateningly confronting those strongly fortified heights, fully manned by a most gallant army, whose bravery and endurance we had amply tested, falling back at night

unmolested, probably because our movement was unknown by the enemy.

Generals Lee and Early both animadvert upon the barbarity of burning the house and tannery where leather and shoes were made for the women and children of the neighborhood. They do not say that their troops were helped to supplies from the same source, but this was not the reason why the burning was done. I do not know who did it or who ordered it, if it was ordered; this entry in my own hand writing, when I had my right hand to use, made in a book that was carried by me, gives the reason for the burning: "December 1, 1863. Moved at night by a very slow and tedious march to the river, recrossed at Germania Ford about daylight. So ended the Mine Run campaign. Mr. Johnson had his house and tannery burned, because of his brutal treatment of our wounded." The lengthy screed of Lee and Early on Yankee barbarity is fully answered by this simple statement of fact.

We returned to our former camp near Wolford's Ford, and a week later crossed the Hazel river, going into winter camp on the farm of a Mr. Major, none of whose own family were on the place. We made here the finest winter camp that our brigade ever constructed. The timber houses of the men were models of neatness and comfort, and many of them were beautiful specimens of rural architecture. Some troops of the engineer corps were set to building a trestle bridge across the Hazel. Criticisms were made by some of our brigade on the structure and the time occupied in building it, which resulted in our pioneer corps being taken charge of by a captain of the 5th Maine Volunteers, put to constructing a trestle bridge, which they did in a very few hours, taking all material from the standing trees of the near forest, built from them a bridge of great strength and utility.

A fleet of Russian war vessels was at this time visiting our shores, and the Admiral commanding with his principal officers left their ships lying at anchor in the Potomac and came out to visit General Meade and his army. The Sixth Corps was in excellent discipline and condition, and we were ordered out for review by General Meade, who furnished horses for the distinguished visitors to ride with him in the inspection and review. They not being as much at home in the saddle as on deck, when the General gave his horse the rein, their clinging to the pommels

of their saddles and frantic clutches to pull down their trousers, afforded us much amusement. This review was followed by a hospitable entertainment at General Sedgwick's headquarters in Dr. Welford's mansion, at which I was present, and this time General C. A. Whittier emulated the efforts of the chief of one of my staff departments, Colonel J. Ford Kent, when he was especially attentive to Lord Castlecliff and Captain George Meade, son of the General, at the previous festivities of which I have spoken, and with the same doubly happy results. Whittier devoted himself to a young officer of the fleet and with a beer and a sherry glass, intimated by signs that he desired to regale the representative of the Czar, and seizing a flask of what was supposed to be the Russian nectar, old Cognac brandy, began to fill the glasses. The "schooner" was filled to the brim, the diminutive sherry glass nearly so, when quickly the visitor raised the latter, with a courteous bow to his host, and Whittier as courteously launched the well laden schooner, contrary to his hospitable intentions. Our brigade camp was considered a model one to show to distinguished visitors, and a few days after our naval guests departed, General, then Major Whittier came over with Colonel Lyman of General Meade's staff, Mr. Blackmoor, of Liverpool, England, and Captain Farrar. I had the pleasure of entertaining them and showing them through our camps, which were highly commended by them.

At this time General Joseph J. Bartlett was in command of the first division, Fifth Corps, and December 23, I rode over to see him, and at his invitation remained and dined with him. As had previously been arranged, I gave him an invitation to come with his staff officers, and meet the officers of our brigade, which he had so long commanded, next day at our headquarters, without informing him of our purpose. He came, and we presented him with a fine gold watch, on the back of which his initials, J. J. B., were set in diamonds, and a First Division, Sixth Corps cross, studded with diamonds, as souvenirs of our regard for him. A few weeks previous I had been present at General Sedgwick's headquarters in Warrenton, when his Division that he had commanded before being assigned to the command of the Sixth Corps, made him a present of a fine saddle and set of horse equipments, and a magnificently jeweled sword. While these pleasant gatherings were occasionally giving us some slight relaxation, the stern-

er duties of the service were not neglected, the greatest attention was paid to health ; fatigue duty, drill, and picket service, were thoroughly done, and at no time in its history was the Army of the Potomac in a higher state of efficiency.

U. S. District Judge Campbell, of Cherry Valley, New York, came down in February 1864, to visit his son, Captain Cleveland J. Campbell, 121st N. Y. V., who was at that time in Washington, both he and myself having taken an examination before the board of which Major General Silas Casey was president, the examinations resulting in Captian Campbell being appointed Lieutenant Colonel of the 23rd, and myself Lieutenant Colonel of the 43rd Regiment United States Colored Troops. In the absence of his son, who was my intimate friend, the Judge became my guest at brigade headquarters, and having expressed a desire to meet General Sedgwick, I took him to see the General, in whose tent we found General Pleasanton and General Todd, a brother of Mrs. Lincoln. After I introduced the Judge, the conversation finally turned to reminiscences of plains service, when General Pleasanton said that he was on duty in the Black Hills country before the war, the gold discoveries not then having been made ; as he was ordered to a different station, the well known missionary priest, Father de Smet, said to him, "Captain if you will resign, and engage in mining here, I will show you where you can literally rake up the nuggets of gold," but, says the General, straightening back with his lofty air of princely indifference, "I did not care anything about the gold, money was no object to me."

February 27, 1864, the Sixth Corps left its camps in charge of guards and we moved out to the support of General Custer for a raid into Albemarle county, Virginia, our route being to Culpepper and James City, near Thoroughfare mountain, the first day ; moving to Robertson's river on the 28th where we remained on the 29th, while General Custer advanced toward Charlottesville, crossed the Rivanna, doing the enemy considerable damage, recrossed, burned the wagon bridge, and having accomplished the object of the expedition, by determining the position and strength of the enemy, we returned to our camp on the Hazel on the second of March. Here my appointment was received on the 20th, my acceptance and oath of office sent to the War Department. General Upton was temporarily absent, and no one at brigade head-

quarters was familiar with the Adjutant and Inspector General's duties, so I remained till his return.

The first of the successive steps that led up to the emancipation of slaves, and their ultimate employment as soldiers, are found in the proclamation of President Lincoln September 22, 1862, in which while he declares that "hereafter, as heretofore, the war will be prosecuted for the object of practically restoring the constitutional relation between the United States and each of the States, and the people thereof, in which States that relation is or may be suspended, or disturbed." His purpose is to declare slaves free in all parts of the country which shall be in rebellion on the 1st day of January 1863, and to ask Congress to provide for emancipation with compensation to those slave owners who may not at that time be the people of a slave State then in rebellion against the United States.

The emancipation proclamation was issued January 1, 1863, and in it is found the first authority to give the colored man military employment, in these words, "And I further declare and make known that such persons, of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service." Limited as is this service, Congress is still more unwilling to fully trust the freedman, and in the Act approved March 3, 1863, set up this standard. Section 10. "The President of the United States is authorized to cause to be enlisted for each cook, two under cooks of African descent, who shall receive for their full compensation ten dollars per month, and one ration per day; three dollars of said monthly pay may be in clothing."

The Congress of the Confederate States of America, passed May 1, 1863, an act declaring that these measures would produce consequences, that may be properly and lawfully repressed by retaliation, and proceed to enact:

Section 4. That every white person, being a commissioned officer, or acting as such, who, during the present war, shall command negroes or mulattos in arms against the Confederate States, or who shall arm, train, organize or prepare negroes or mulattos for military service against the Confederate States, or who shall voluntarily aid negroes or mulattos in any military enterprise, attack

or conflict, in such service, shall be deemed as inciting servile insurrection, and shall, if captured, be put to death, or be otherwise punished at the discretion of the court.

Section 7. All negroes and mulattos who shall be engaged in war, or be taken in arms against the Confederate States, or shall give aid or comfort to the enemies of the Confederate States, shall, when captured in the Confederate States, be delivered to the authorities of the State or States in which they shall be captured, to be dealt with according to the present or future laws of such State or States. (Approved May 1, 1863.)

May 22, 1863, the War Department of the United States established a Bureau in the Adjutant General's office for the record of all matters relating to the organization of colored troops, examining Boards were provided for by whom every person was examined rigorously as to physical, mental and moral fitness to command troops, and the grade of commission for which each person so examined is fit, to be specified by the Board. Commissions to be issued from the Adjutant General's office, when the prescribed number of men is ready to muster into the service. Appointment warrants were given, but no Commissions proper, were ever issued to officers of colored troops, that I am aware of, except commissions for brevet appointments, thus disregarding an express provision of the law.

Slight as had been the recognition of these troops up to this time the only other authorization for their enlistment, is found in the Act of Congress, approved February 24, 1864, which is the Draft Act.

I quote in full the only section which the Congress of the United States saw fit to enact in respect to enrolling a class from which 186,097 men were enlisted during the war.

Section 24. *And be it further enacted,* That all able-bodied male colored persons between the ages of twenty and forty-five years, resident in the United States, shall be enrolled according to the provisions of this act, and of the act to which this is an amendment, and form part of the national forces: and when a slave of a loyal master shall be drafted and mustered into the service of the United States, his master shall have a certificate thereof: and thereupon such slave be free, and the bounty of one hundred dollars, now payable by law for each drafted man, shall

be paid to the person to whom such drafted person was owing service or labor at the time of his muster into the service of the United States. The Secretary of War shall appoint a commission in each of the slave States represented in Congress, charged to award to each loyal person to whom a colored volunteer may owe service a just compensation, not exceeding three hundred dollars, for each such colored volunteer, payable out of the fund derived from commutations; and every such colored volunteer on being mustered into the service shall be free. And in all cases where men of color have been heretofore enlisted, or have volunteered in the military service of the United States, all the provisions of this act, so far as the payment of bounty and compensation are provided, shall be equally applicable as to those who may be hereafter recruited. But men of color, drafted or enlisted, or who may volunteer into the military service, while they shall be credited on the quotas of the several States or subdivisions of States wherein they are respectively drafted, enlisted, or shall volunteer, shall not be assigned as State troops, but shall be mustered into regiments or companies as United States colored troops.

Some states, Kansas for one, others both North, and in the border and southern slave States by direction of commanding Generals, had organized regiments before the passage of said act, which were subsequently designated United States Colored Troops.

Among many of the most gallant and distinguished officers, of the army, there was a very strong prejudice against the employment of colored soldiers. A staff officer of high rank said to me, "Hail you know that we do not want any 'nigger soldiers' in the army of the Potomac, but if any ever do come, I hope your command will be first." Singularly enough my regiment was the first to come in line with the corps in which my friend served. A very distinguished General on whom I called to say goodbye, said "I am sorry to have you leave my command, and still more sorry that you are going to serve with negroes, I think it a disgrace to the army to make soldiers of them." I replied "that it appeared to me that good fighters were needed, and that such would not disgrace the service, whatever their color." His objection, he said, was "not to their color, but that he did not believe they would fight." He was very complimentary to myself, and subsequently wrote to me, "I was sorry to lose you for a command of colored

troops, as I have never believed that to be the best disposition to make of the Africans, whom I have always thought, and still believe, could be made more useful to the cause than by putting a musket in their hands, yet as such has been the decision of the authorities, I have yielded to it, without changing however, one jot of my former judgment."

These instances are a fair example of the sentiment prevailing, and the prejudice against the employment of colored troops, rendered the position of an officer of such troops not altogether pleasant, and the threats of retaliation made in the act of the rebel congress cited, may well have caused, as they did, myself and others careful consideration. But the fact that a great principle was involved, caused many brave and patriotic officers and men to vacate high and honorable positions, won by long and gallant service, counting it an honor to lead the black heroes, that they might aid in their own enfranchisement.

On General Upton's return, March 27, I set out to comply with this order. "Adjutant General's Office, Washington, March 19, 1864. Sir: I forward herewith your appointment of Lieutenant Colonel in the Forty-Third Regiment U. S. Colored Troops. You will report in person for duty to the Commanding Officer, Camp Wm. Penn, near Philadelphia, Pa. I am Sir very respectfully your obedient servant, A. F. Rockwell, Assistant Adjutant General. To Lieutenant Colonel H. Seymour Hall, 43rd U. S. C. T."

It is worthy of note that at this time, (May 1894,) Colonel Rockwell is the only surviving officer who was present at the death beds of both Presidents Lincoln and Garfield.

By special permission granted me in person by Secretary Stanton, who gave me hearing while many others who had preceded me waited, I was granted two days to close up my old accounts, which gave me an opportunity to accept the invitation of my friend and former staff companion, Colonel W. W. Winthrop, to dine, and at that dinner I had the pleasure of meeting General A. V. Kautz, who was then the caterer for the mess, the officers composing which, rented a house, and catered in turn. General Robert Williams and General George D. Ruggles, were both among the members who were present at the dinner. My business concluded in Washington, I reported for duty to General Louis Wagner at Camp Wm. Penn on the 2nd of April.

By the 18th there were six full companies, and in compliance with orders from the War Department, I moved with them to Annapolis, Maryland, and reported in person to General A. E. Burnside for duty with the Ninth Corps. From Annapolis we marched by way of Annapolis Junction and Bladensburg to Washington, where on the 25th we were reviewed by President Lincoln from the balcony of Willard's Hotel, as we marched down the street to cross Long Bridge into Virginia. My regiment was the very last in the corps, the constant battalion drill that I had given them the four weeks that I had been in command, and their excellence in the manual of arms, made them appear like veteran soldiers, and the crowd of spectators gave us loud and prolonged applause, so unusual in Washington that the Chronicle called special attention to us the next morning.

Once more on Virginia soil, for the fifth time I passed over the familiar ground from Alexandria to the battle field of Bull Run, thence to Bristow on the 30th, through Catlett's to Germania Ford, crossed the Rapidan on the 6th of May, and my command was placed on the extreme right of the Army of the Potomac, connecting with the Sixth Corps, and in front of the hospital of the old first Division, in which I am proud to have served so long. At three next morning finding that the army had moved and left me alone, I called in my outposts in person, meeting a squadron of cavalry on my return to my reserve, the commanding officer of which said he had orders to fire on any body of troops approaching from the direction in which I was returning with my videttes. My caution and prompt challenge prevented this, and I detailed him as rear guard on our march along the plank road till we joined the main body after daylight.

Near Chancellorsville we first encountered the veteran white soldiers of the Sixth corps, and Generals Sedgwick and Wright, were the first to give me a cordial greeting, and express their approbation of the appearance of the first colored troops they had ever seen. Across the road was General David A. Russell, who as soon as he recognized me, came up almost at a run to greet me with a warm grasp of his hand. We stacked arms and rested not far beyond, where my old friends Generals McMahon and Whittier of General Sedgwick's staff came over to welcome me, and express their surprise at the good appearance of the black

soldiers, who, a few weeks before, were not wanted in the Army of the Potomac. This was on the 7th of May.

Having on the 19th of April been assigned to the Fourth division Ninth Army Corps, commanded by General Edward Ferrero, the 7th day of May I reported to Colonel Joshua K. Sigfried, 47th Pa. Vols., who was in command of First brigade, to which we were assigned by verbal orders, and took position on the right of the army at the forks of the road from Chancellorsville to U. S. and Ely's fords. From this time till we crossed the James river the supply and ammunition trains were the especial care of our division, and we were too of the Army of the Potomac. At Wilderness May 6th and 7th; Spottsylvania May 8th to 18th, on our right near Salem church, repulsed an attempt on our trains the 12th; Chancellorsville the 13th; Silver's farm the 14th; Salem church and Fredericksburg road the 15th to 18th; Guinney's Station May 22nd; Milford the 23rd; North Anna 23rd to 27th; at Wright's tavern on the 25th to 28th; then to Milford; Totopotomy the 29th; Dunkirk the 30th; near Hanover Court House the 31st; Cold Harbor June 1st to 12th. Other troops were ordered to report to me, giving me command of a brigade for detached service, and we went out to the front passing the birthplace of Edmund Ruffin, who fired the first gun on Fort Sumter, and committed suicide when the rebellion was crushed, one mile beyond this old roomy plantation house I established my line, fortified it well, the house of Mrs. Peyte, being about half a mile outside, which position we held through the most desperate battles at Cold Harbor; then took up position at Old Church Tavern midway between White House and Mechanicsville, 13 miles from each; moved to White House June 12th; to Kent Court House the 13th; toward Williamsburg as far as Slatersville the 14th; and to Windsor (or Window) Shades on the Chickahominy, the 18th where we crossed to make our final trial of the James river.

After midnight of the 17th, everything else having crossed the river, the bridges had all been taken up, my regiment was the last body of troops to cross from the north bank of the James, which we did on a New York steam ferry boat, and debarking on the other side, marched to near City Point, where we joined the Ninth Corps, of which we had been nominally a division, but were detached the entire time since May 8th, and received our orders di-

rect from General Grant, who complimented us for the repulses that we had given the enemy, and after the Ninth Corps was made a part of the Army of the Potomac, we received our orders direct from General Meade till we joined the corps after crossing the James river.

During this time the Army of which we were a part, fought some of the most desperate and bloody battles of the war, and in the six weeks since the opening of the campaign fifty-five thousand men had been lost by it in the casualties of battle ; six thousand men more than one half of the number present for duty equipped when the campaign was entered upon.

The loss of the enemy is only given in part, and as we were generally the attacking party, and they were behind strong fortifications, their loss was probably considerably less, but only 24,100 are reported.

Failing to capture Petersburg by rapidity of movement, its seige was undertaken, in which we participated, both as builders and defenders of our fortifications till the 5th of July, when I went with our brigade commander, under the guidance of General J. F. Hartranft, the General Officer of the trenches, to examine the ground in our front under which a mine was projected, that it would be familiar to me in the assault which was to be made when our mine had been extended under the enemy's works and exploded as contemplated.

Soon after this, my regiment then consisting of seven companies, was honored by being selected to lead the assaulting column, and I am able to substantiate that declaration, by quoting from a letter from my brigade commander, in answer to my inquiry if there was a written order for me to lead with my regiment, and he also states why the 43rd was given the dangerous post of honor. He says "There was no order from Corps headquarters as to any specific regiment taking the lead and no written order as to which of the two brigades was to take the lead, but it was a verbal order from Burnside to General Ferrero, commanding the 4th Division, that my brigade was to lead. I gave you the order to take the lead of the brigade, for while I do not wish to disparage either of the other Colonels or their regiments, I knew that I could rely on you in any emergency. You had full control of all your men, the discipline in your regiment was high up, your

officers and men had implicit confidence in you as their Colonel.”

The work that was expected of me was fully explained, and to do as ordered, my command was to take position, just before the mine was to be fired, as near our front line as possible, in double column by division closed in mass, at the head of the division, and when the mine exploded was to move quickly forward, pass through the breach in the enemy's works made by the explosion, then turn to our right behind his works, take him in the flank and roll up his line with the bayonet, by *taking half distance, right companies right into line wheel, left companies on the right into line* and from the time of my assignment to the day before the assault, I practised these movements till they could have been executed as perfectly in the dark as in the light, and the flank being cleared of the enemy by my bayonets, the entire army could advance through the interval, to the crest two or three hundred yards beyond, when Petersburg through which one of the railroads largely supplying Richmond ran, and that portion of General Lee's army on our right, between us and the Appomattox river, would have been at our mercy. The evening of July 29th, our division moved down to the left of the entrance to the covered way leading out to our most advanced line in front of the mined salient of the enemy, and with my regiment in advance, formed double column closed in mass in readiness to lead the assault. No hint of change of plans had reached me and General Ferrero does not state when he was first informed of it, but he writes me that he had been absent in Washington, hence was not present at the conference between Generals Grant, Meade, Burnside and the other three division commanders of the Ninth Corps when the change of plans was discussed and agreed upon, and probably did not know of the change, as he writes me that he returned barely in time to take command for the action after we were in place for assault as first planned. The commander of our other brigade, says that he was not informed of any change till near midnight of July 29th, and as his line officers were apparently in quiet sleep, they were not aroused to be informed of what would do them no service. I did not know of any change till the morning of July 30, when our brigade commander, accompanied by two or three of his staff, came to me and in person gave me this order: “Be ready to advance when I order you forward, with muskets

loaded, but not capped, bayonets fixed, and when the order is given, move your regiment by the flank, through the covered way over our outer works, directly to, and through the breach made by the mine, form line beyond, and strike for the cemetery." I ordered the regiment to "load," "fix bayonets," and while waiting for the order to advance, Lieutenant A. A. Shedd, of our brigade commander's staff, came to me and gave again the orders that his chief had already given me, and with an unusual care, knowing that the Forty-Third was leading the division, called my attention to them by a second repetition of them before he left me. He states that he went with General Sigfried into the crater, and was sent out several times by him with orders to the brigade.

We entered the covered way, moved part way through it, when our progress was delayed for quite a time by white troops filling up the passage in front of me. About half past seven o'clock, General Sigfried ordered me to move past the troops of Humphrey's brigade. He wrote later to the Philadelphia Press that he called up Colonel Hall, and that I might know where to go, pointed out the direction that I was to lead my regiment as the leading regiment of the division, to prevent the accident of getting led in the wrong direction. With considerable difficulty, I crowded my regiment along, passing by those troops of Humphrey's brigade, to our outer line, where I saw General Ferrero, our Division commander, with his staff, to whom he said, "Here comes the Forty-Third, let's give them three cheers", took off his hat, waved it above his head, and led in the cheering. I call attention to this as this was his position while his division went out over our outer intrenchments, and he knows exactly which regiment was first to go forward, and saw every regiment of his division as each went over our works, saw here the number of prisoners sent in by the Forty-Third, and it was at this point that the colors captured by that regiment were delivered to him, in spite of the effort made by one of the commanders of another regiment to take them from their captor. No preparation had been made to facilitate our passing our line, and my men climbed out over the embankment, which was nearly as high as their heads, with difficulty, and the delay caused thereby, elongated the column, and the effort to close up between our line and the crater, impaired the momentum.

My adjutant, afterwards Captain James O'Brien, was with me at the right of the regiment, and at the double quick, under a most deadly cross fire of artillery and musketry, I led the regiment up the slope directly to the plainly visible mass of earth and debris, thrown out of the crater by the explosion of the mine, some of which covered the abatis and facilitated the passage of my command as well as of almost the three divisions of white troops of the Ninth Corps that had preceded me, they accomplishing nothing, but crowding into the crater for shelter from the shot and shell of the enemy, who had now reoccupied their original line on both flanks of the crater, pouring their fire into it, making it a trap in which to hold our helpless men and destroy them at leisure. As soon as I reached and mounted the rim of the crater, I saw all this, realized that to pass through the crater as ordered would be impossible, the attempt to do so would render my command as helpless as the others, and add to the horrors of their situation. To our right of the crater the enemy held their line fully manned, those of them nearest the crater, directing their fire on the troops within. The impenetrable abatis was behind a line of chevaux de frise fastened together with strong wires, rendering an assault on their front hopeless, but from my position on the crest of the crater's rim I saw a narrow space at the foot of the outer slope of their intrenchments, beyond which their abatis was staked down, and determined to lead my regiment that way, carry that part of their line, thereby open a gateway to the nearest and best route to the cemetery, which was the desired point of vantage.

Ordering my adjutant to remain at the crater, to close up the companies and direct them after me, I led the head of the regiment to our right, still at a double quick, along the foot of the enemy's intrenchments, so close that some of my officers and men were wounded by the bayonets, others burned by the powder flames of the foe, and when the left of my regiment had cleared the right of the crater sufficiently, commanded: "BY THE LEFT FLANK, MARCH." As we faced the enemy, I gave the command: "CHARGE." In that instant, with resistless valor, officers and men threw themselves over his works upon the enemy, using saber, pistol and bayonet with the most terrible deadly effect, the men killed numbers of the enemy in spite of the efforts of their

officers to restrain them, and we took prisoners in those intrenchments 200 South Carolina soldiers, and with them their colors, and retook from them a stand of National Colors that they had that morning captured from a regiment of white troops. These were the only colors or prisoners captured by any regiment of our division that day, as no others are reported by our brigade commander, nor by the commander of the other brigade of our division. After a short time taken to send these to the rear, as was acknowledged by our division commander, I planted my colors and reformed my regiment inside the captured entrenchments, facing the ridge and cemetery, intending to lead to, carry and hold that objective position, though my command had just lost nearly one half its number in killed and wounded. The fire directed upon us at this moment, and to which we were entirely exposed, was terrible, and as I stood upon the crest of the parapet, to examine and select the route over which to charge to the ridge in front with my command, a musket ball from the enemy went through the bone of my right arm, near my shoulder, and turning over the command of the regiment to the reliable and gallant Captain Wilkinson, securing my saber, which had fallen from my hand, was soon assisted from the field.

It is stated by both Generals Meade and Humphreys, that the total number of prisoners captured by the army of the Potomac that day was 246. The Forty-Third Regiment U. S. Colored Troops, is entitled to be credited with the capture of TWO HUNDRED of them, and with ONE stand of colors of the TWO reported by General Meade, besides the recapture of one stand of National Colors, all achieved as the result of my leading the regiment to the right and charging the enemy in his intrenchments contrary to the instructions of my brigade commander, and in direct violation of orders given him, a fact of which I had no knowledge at the time.

The great loss of blood and my shattered and useless right arm, made me suffer from pain and weakness, and a stalwart soldier supporting me with his arm, held my handkerchief twisted around above the wound as we returned by the same route over which we had charged. Near the crater, between the enemy's line and our own, I saw at this time, the Colonel whom Captain Wright and other officers charge with attempting to deprive the

Captain of the rebel stand of colors, which he captured in his charge with his regiment, the Forty-Third.

Here also I saw the other troops of Sigfried's brigade, which was my first sight of any of them since my advance with the Forty-Third to the assault, and I call particular attention to the fact that General Sigfried says in his official report, that the balance of his brigade was halted at this place about an hour, and that it was impossible to *advance* them to the works carried and held by the Forty-Third regiment, United States Colored Troops.

These regiments of the brigade to which we belonged lost their connection with mine by reason of Humphrey's men closing in, after mine had forced their way to his front, so that I had no support or assistance whatever, in the operations that have been described, and which constituted the chief successes of the day. After my charge had cleared the enemy from the right of the mine, a large number of the troops of the other divisions of the Ninth Corps came out of the crater and took position on my left, so that when the balance of our own division came up they could not get forward to the advanced position which we had carried and now occupied. Having a long ago written account of the facts, when they were fresh in mind, it is a satisfaction to find so perfect a confirmation as there is in the Official Records, and in the reports of my officers neither of which had been seen by me till recently, and a few of them are cited. General J. K. Sigfried, then Colonel of the 48th Pa. Vols., commanding our brigade; on 31st of July, 1864, next day after the battle, when everything was fresh in his mind, made his official report from which I have cited. It says also that his brigade moving down the covered way was stopped by the halting of Humphrey's brigade some time, he moved his troops *by Humphrey's* at a flank as directed. The Colonel who attempted to wrest the rebel colors that Captain Wright had captured from the enemy, from Wright, writes me that he *followed* Humphrey's brigade.

My regiment being in the lead of our brigade, did "move by that brigade at a flank," on over our outer works, to the crater, then, as I have related, and as General Sigfried says, "The Forty-Third regiment U. S. Colored Troops moved over the crest of the crater toward the right, charged the enemy's intrenchments and took them, capturing a number of prisoners, a rebel stand of col-

ors, and recapturing a stand of National colors. This line was part of the continuous line connecting with the crater. The balance of my brigade was prevented from advancing into this line by the number of troops of the First, Second and Third divisions in front of them." As I have stated, these troops of those three divisions came out of the crater, and formed on the left and rear of my regiment, after our charge had routed the enemy, before the other colored regiments of our division had reached the crater. Continuing his report, Sigfried further says, the balance of his brigade was halted by the rebel line of intrenchments, which was filled with the troops of the First, Second and Third divisions; behind this line it formed in good order. Here it was very much exposed for at least an hour, and owing to the crowded lines of troops of the stated divisions immediately in front it was impossible to get my brigade on, (to where the 43rd was advanced). Just as the troops in front were about to make a charge, a white color-bearer with his colors, crossed the works in retreat.

My brigade held its position, until pushed back by the mass of troops, black and white who rushed back upon it, and until the enemy occupied the works to its left and front when it fell back to the line where it originally started from. In this same report General Sigfried further says "Lieutenant Colonel H. Seymour Hall, commanding Forty-Third Regiment, U. S. Colored Troops, lost his right arm bravely leading his regiment. His adjutant, First Lieutenant James O'Brien, deserves honorable mention, having displayed the most heroic courage and daring, standing on the summit of the crater cheering the men on amidst a terrific fire of shot and shell. He received a severe wound through the breast. Captain A. D. Wright, Forty-Third, in charging the rebel line with his men, personally captured a stand of rebel colors and five prisoners, bringing all safely to the rear, although receiving a wound through the right arm. I regret that it was not possible for me to see every officer and man, well enough to describe the gallant conduct of each, for they were heroes every one, and those who passed unnoticed through that fiery trial, won imperishable fame could their deeds be known. I have made efforts to perfect the record of their achievements, and will supply what is possible, which is very little, in a brief summary of the evidence that I have been able to obtain. Adjutant O'Brien was carrying out my or-

ders to close up and direct the regiment to follow me when he so conspicuously displayed his gallantry spoken of by the brigade commander. He mounted an elevated mass of debris, and with voice and sword sent them after to charge with us in front, while himself was a shining mark for the bullets of the enemy. He later received a shot through the left breast, that went entirely through his body, a frightful wound, from which he never fully recovered, and which doubtless hastened his death some fifteen years since in San Francisco. Before he came to my regiment he had served in the 61st N. Y. Vols., when General N. A. Miles, U. S. Army, was its Colonel. While he was still in the hospital, he was at my request promoted to Captain, and ordered by the War Department to report to me at Camp Casey, Washington, D. C., for duty as Adjutant of that Post, rejoined the regiment with me in March, 1865, in front of Richmond, entered that city with the command on the 3rd of April, served with it in Texas till its muster out of service.

In giving brief mention of the gallant company officers, I shall follow the order of companies from right to left. Following my adjutant and myself, came my senior Captain, Jesse Wilkinson, a most brave and reliable officer, who says, "We went over our works by the flank to the crater, Colonel Hall called my attention to a stand of rebel colors, on the rebel works about fifty yards to our right, and ordered me to move in that direction. We passed down along the rebel works, within reach of their bayonets, their shots carrying off one boot heel, my sword scabbard, and some of my hair, some going through my hat. In getting over their works with my company, I received a slight bayonet wound in the neck and left arm. Six or eight men in one group surrendered to me, and another squad, one with a white towel on his bayonet gave themselves up, and I at once sent them all to the rear. Captain Wright went over the works in rear of my company, and got one of the flags. I then went to the angle of the works, opposite the woods to try to cut off a cross fire, and cleared the angle.

Lieutenant Hayman was killed, Lieutenant James Scully wounded in the leg and lamed for life, a squad of rebel prisoners carried him to our lines. While in the rebel works, I was informed that our Colonel had been shot and notified to form the regiment, for a charge on the Cemetery ridge, with General Thomas'

brigade, which would form on my left, and to guide on his colors, we had advanced but a few steps in a rather broken line, when the rebels poured over the hill from a ravine in our front, in solid column, firing with deliberate aim; advancing to within a few feet of us, they started on a double quick, with a yell, in such numbers as to drive us back to the trenches, where standing on the works above us, they clubbed their muskets, and eventually drove us out of the works the Forty-Third had captured, back to our own works. They being on higher ground, their constant fire kept us under cover, and they directed their fire on the helpless wounded between the lines who showed any signs of life. On the morning of August 2nd, a truce was had, and with a detail of 300 men I participated in the burial of the dead."

Lieutenant James Scully, who bravely led his company, after Lieutenant James T. Hayman was killed, and Captain Wilkinson had a higher command, relates that we were at the extreme right of the brigade, he heard the order to advance, and that we went with alacrity directly to the crater, "where huddled the remnants of the forces that preceded us. We at once changed direction to the right, along the foot of the enemy's front line, which we charged headlong upon, capturing a number of prisoners. Lieutenant Hayman was killed. Lieutenant Scully had his sword broken in his hand, and some time after, while in the works was shot through the right leg. While trying to get to the rear, I saw Colonel Hall who had just been shot through the right arm, but could give him no assistance. I was taken to our lines by a party of rebel prisoners."

Company E followed A, Lieutenants George R. Williams and Sherman P. Hand of that company in most gallantly endeavoring to hold the right of our line against the flank attack, were overwhelmed and made prisoners by the enemy. After enduring indescribable horrors, Lieutenant Williams escaped from prison, rejoined his regiment after a long series of thrilling adventures and marvelous escapes. Unfortunately his story was not obtained in his lifetime and cannot now be told here. He was a most gallant and accomplished officer, whose career of honorable service was terminated by his resignation after the surrender of General Lee.

Lieutenant Hand had a most horrible experience, the details of which are so historically valuable, and so intensely interesting

that they ought to be published to the world. In the limits of this paper the bare outline can scarcely be given.

In the report of Lieutenant Hand, he states, "I well remember the gallantry of Colonel Hall in the fatal charge he led at the 'Mine explosion.' Our direction in the charge he ordered, was somewhat diagonal, and toward our right, along the rebel breastworks, at the double quick, till he earnestly and distinctly gave us the order to charge by the left flank, at which we carried the line of rebel intrenchments, which we held till I was captured, I should think about 11 or 12 o'clock. This position was about 200 to 250 yards to our right of the Mine, and was the extreme right of our line of battle. The last I saw of our Colonel, he was being assisted to the rear in consequence of wounds which incapacitated him from doing more." "Nothing impeded our advance but the missiles from the enemy's line until we reached the line of their intrenchments, where a large percentage of our men fell in less time than it takes to tell it. Finally the graybacks broke in upon us finishing or capturing the few left. I was pinned to earth by a bayonet wound through the arms and ribs. My assailant withdrew his steel and raised his arms to strike, when an officer by his side angrily cried out, "Unbuckle that belt and give up your sword, if you don't want to die." I obeyed with alacrity, and was boosted over the parapet, made my way painfully to the rebel rear, where I found Lieutenant Williams and many other prisoners both black and white. The officers were at once put under guard, and about 10 o'clock the next morning, were formed in double file, two officers between four 'niggers,' and marched through the principal streets of Petersburg, much after the style of a circus."

The people gazed at us as curiosities, and we were greeted with insults and sneers all along the route, and greeted with cries of 'See the white and nigger equality soldiers.' 'How do you like it Yanks?' 'Yanks and niggers sleep in the same bed, etc., etc.' We were paraded thus for two hours and more. The colored soldiers, were confronted with the officers drawn up in line, to have them point out their officers for disgrace, but not a lisp, or hint as to identity was given. Their mouths were sealed in honor and fidelity to their friends. After being starved for three days, we were huddled into rickety box cars and started south, the only thing Williams and I had to eat in the meantime, being a loaf of

sour bread, half the usual size, for which we paid a greenback dollar, those who had no money not getting even that. From Danville to Columbia S. C., where his quarters, like all others were in Richland jail no distinction being made between the officers of colored and white troops. From this jail Lieutenant Williams made his escape. His friend and companion Lieutenant Hand, being too weak from his wounds, lack of food and medical treatment to accompany him, drained the bitter cup of his prison life to the end. As cold weather of December set in he was transferred to the Asylum yard, wounded, sick, starving, nearly naked, almost dying, with no shelter but the cold pitiless sky, no food but coarse corn meal, ground cob and all, this without salt, or vessel to cook it in. That he survived the unspeakable horrors, privations, and sufferings of that winter is most wonderful. But he says there were some slight gleams of hope even in the darkest days, and that one of his comrades in this place of horrors, Lieutenant S. M. H. Byers, wrote both the words and music of 'Sherman's March to the Sea,' at the time that both were enduring the miseries of the frightful place. He was hastily removed from Columbia to Charlotte, a few days before General Sherman's army occupied the former city, was paroled in a few days, and finally rejoined his regiment at City Point, Va. The writer has urged him to publish his wonderfully interesting experience in full.

Next came Company C, my color company, Lieutenant W. F. Silverwood in command, Lieutenant Daniel J. Hogan also serving with that company. Lieutenant Silverwood was so severely wounded in defense of the colors, a most heroically gallant deed, that he was never able to return to duty with the regiment. His opinion differs somewhat from that of all the other, and more experienced officers of the command, and he thinks there were two or three other regiments in front of ours, and that they stopped at the crater, but he is positive that no other charged to the right except the 43rd. He says, just as he reached the right of his company, Colonel Hall gave the command, 'right face, charge,' or 'by the rear rank, charge.' "I forced my way through my men, and took a course to strike the line of works at the angle to our right by those trees. The firing was so heavy that I sat down in an out picket post. The colors and some men gathered around me, a dozen muskets were shoved over the breastworks by the enemy and fired.

I gave the order to charge, we were soon in the works capturing 15 prisoners." He proceeds but cannot be quoted in full for lack of space, but says in part, I planted the colors farthest to the right, the staff was shot off between my hands, Company A was the extreme right of our line. At last the enemy appeared to rise out of the ground, the first line was repulsed, the second halted, the third broke our line between me and the crater, were closing in on both my flanks. I ordered the colors to the rear, and kept the enemy in check with my smoking revolver. I was hit as I sprang over the works, my sword knocked from my hand, two ribs and part of a third cut off left side. I walked back to a small ravine, attempted to stop and organize my men, but when I began to speak the blood gushed from my mouth and nose, hemorrhage of the lungs being caused by the concussion."

Lieutenant Daniel J. Hogan, reports that at the battle of the Mine, he saw General Ferrero and staff at the front line. The Lieutenant at that time was with C, the color company, and is positive that the 43rd, had the right of the division, and led its advance, and that his company followed the right of the regiment, which Colonel Hall led so close to the enemy's works that they could reach us with their muskets, and Captains Wilkinson and Brown were wounded by rebel bayonets. We got the order to charge from the Colonel, dashed upon the enemy's works, carried them, capturing prisoners and colors. The enemy resisted the gallant assault of our regiment with the most determined courage. Captain Wright captured a rebel color, and Lieutenant Armstrong recaptured a National Color. The enemy brought up fresh troops and finally we were compelled to retreat, which all did reluctantly, frequently turning to exchange shots with the enemy, whom I gave a few shots from my heavy Colt's Navy pistol.

Conspicuous among these were Captain Burr and Lieutenant Warson. Lieutenant Silverwood showed great coolness and bravery, had the regimental colors saved, and as he stepped upon our works was struck by a bullet in the ribs, and fell severely wounded. Other wounded officers were Colonel Hall, Captain Wright, Lieutenants Steele and O'Brien. Lieutenants Williams and Hand were taken prisoners, and Lieutenant James T. Hayman killed."

It is my good fortune to have reports from the two most gallant and efficient officers who that eventful day served with the

company next on the left of the colors, Company F, was commanded by its brave Captain, Horace F. Burr, and from his clear and concise report it is stated that "The officers were called together, by the Colonel, and advised of the work in hand, just before the 43rd advanced to the assault. It was the leading regiment of the 4th Division, and we went forward at the double quick, by the right flank, company A leading, Colonel Hall at the head of the Regiment.

We were under a hot fire as we left our lines and our men began to fall as we moved direct to the crater, which was literally packed with white troops who had preceded us. The 43rd pushed on to our right, still by the right flank, along the enemy's front works, under a hot fire, at close quarters, till the regiment was fairly clear of the crater, and beyond, when Colonel Hall gave the order to march by the left flank, and charge. He was at the center and in front of the regiment, as he gave the command, and led in the execution. Adjutant O'Brien was near him and as we faced to the left, I saw the Adjutant spring forward, then drop. Our regiment went over the works at the command, so quickly that a great number of the enemy were unable to escape, and we captured certainly not less than one hundred. One squad of about ten gave up their arms to me, and I saw groups of them scattered along the regiment and going to our rear. The Colonel next reformed the regiment, in the intrenchments we had captured, some 250 yards or more to our right of the crater, and there were none of our troops in front or to the right of our regiment in those lines that day. I am very sure that the right of the 43rd might have shaken hands with the rebels in the works beyond, had the proper frame of mind existed on both sides. Word was soon passed along that the Colonel was wounded and taken to the rear, his final order being for the regiment to keep steady. We were in those works an hour or more, exposed to a destructive fire of artillery from our right, and a most spitefull and galling fusilade of musketry on our front and flanks. The line was first broken on the left of our position, and it was there the retreat commenced, our falling back not being all at once, but successively as our flank was uncovered. I am positive that the 43rd was the first to occupy the rebel lines to our right of the crater, and equally sure that it was the last to leave them." After reading it, he writes:

“The Colonel’s letter published in the Century Company’s War Book ‘Battles and Leaders of the Civil War’, is admirable, and my recollection is quite in accordance therewith.”

The well deserved praise which Lieutenant M. L. Warson, has received from his brother officers, gives added value to the brief extracts submitted from his report: “The 43rd had the honor of being selected to lead the division, and DID lead it in the charge, for which we had been especially drilled, the object of this drill being well known to every officer of the command, all of whom felt proud of the honor of our being chosen for the dangerous distinction. We took our place on the night of July 29th, massed near the entrance to the covered way, into which we moved next morning, to find our way obstructed by white troops, whom we finally pushed and crowded by, went to their front, where and when the line officers of the regiment first knew that a change of plan, had put our division in the rear of the white troops of the 9th Corps. My view of the explosion was unobstructed, and was preceded by one or two slight motions of the earth, something like a heavy swell at sea, a dull rumbling sound (not loud) like distant thunder, then the uplifting of earth like an island which seemed suspended in the air and held as by invisible hands, supported as it were by gigantic columns of smoke and flame, all this but for a moment then, like the vomiting of a volcano, it burst into innumerable fragments and fell a confused inextricable mass of earth, muskets, cannon, men: an awful debris. Nearer we moved and awaited orders, my breakfast was brought by my servant, (other officers state the same fact), after eating, the Colonel called the officers to the right of the regiment, and quietly said: “Gentlemen we have a little work to do this morning. I hope every man will do his duty. Good morning, gentlemen.” Modest words, modest as the man who spake them, for a braver and more gallant officer never led soldiers into action than Colonel H. Seymour Hall. He lost his right arm in that charge.”

“Over our works, up the slope swept by the fire of the enemy to the crater, to its right the Colonel led the regiment, along the front of the enemy’s works, so close that both officers and men were wounded by bayonet thrusts, and their clothing burned by powder flashes from the guns of the enemy, faced us by the left flank, and charged; the regiment went over the intrenchments, capturing

more prisoners than we numbered men. Was this achievement ever surpassed or even equalled? Later a confused mass of troops were to our left, near the crater, white and black mingled, seven flags were in close proximity there. Some of the 43rd remained till the final charge of the enemy, about 2 p. m., AND THINK IT WAS THE LAST TO LEAVE THE ENEMY'S WORKS." He concludes by saying that he was proud of the regiment, and felt that it had done its duty, capturing the only prisoners and only flags, and achieving the only semblance of success in that disastrous battle.

The fifth company from the right, had only been with us a few days when we crossed from the north side of the James, and its Captain, Albert D. Wright, has the proud distinction of having captured and brought off a stand of rebel colors, which I am informed he delivered to General Ferrero, our division commander, in person. It is reported that he worked his way through a picket passage in the abbattis, and went over the enemy's works toward the right of the regiment, followed by about ten men, some of G and some of F company, saw a rebel color sticking above a rifle pit in rear of the line we charged, jumped on the mound of earth, aimed his empty pistol down at the color guard, and demanded their surrender. He says that at the same time, some of the men with him came in at the entrance from the breastworks, and the color guard of about six at once surrendered, praying him to protect them from the "niggers", and were sent to our lines. We then went to our right to a curve in the rebel works, and in throwing sandbags across to protect us from their fire, I was wounded in the right arm, and started back taking my captured flag with me, passing Captain Wilkinson, and as I kept on back along the works saw the most of our officers who were not killed or wounded. At a point indicated near the crater, where Gen. Sigfried says the balance of his brigade halted, I met Colonel — with his regiment, and as soon as he saw the flag in my hands, he asked me for it, and when I refused him, went so far as to take hold of it and try to wrest it from me. A number of men from our regiment shouted at him to "drop it", and I ordered him to do so, he did it but very reluctantly. I then went into the crater, and back to our line, where General Ferrero received the flag from me. When I first reached the rebel works they were fully manned, and the fire from them was the most terribly murderous ever encoun-

tered by me. Nearly every man who went over the works with me struck down one of the enemy with the bayonet, and thrust every man they could overtake. It is a satisfaction to the writer of this paper to state that he collected additional evidence of the fact of the capture of this stand of colors by Captain Wright, as stated in the report of our brigade commander, and he recommended to the War Department that a Medal of Honor be awarded to Captain Wright, which was done.

Lieutenant Robert W. Armstrong, was the only other officer with Captain Wright's company that day, and he distinguished himself by the recapture of a stand of National Colors, taken from some other of our troops, that morning. I did not see this, and as the Lieutenant was killed a few days later, no report was ever had from him, nor have I been able to get any further information from eye witnesses. He was a very bright and promising christian young man, whom we all respected and were coming to love in so short a time as he was with us, but I do not know where was his home, or the name and address of any of his relatives.

To the left of G, was company D, led that day by its Captain, Benjamin B. Blackman, who died after a few years of exceptional success in the practice of law. No report of his has been found by me, and I can say nothing of his experience, but his bravery is admitted by all who knew him, and his memory is deserving of honor. His Lieutenant, Ezra S. Dean, the only other officer on the field with the company in that battle, has left a brief account. He has failed to give much of his experience, and his coolness and brave devotion to duty, entitle him to much higher praise than his brief story shows. It does show that he was doing his duty, when it says: "We started forward as the command was given, but the left of the company had to rush to close up, some of my men fell out between the lines, I went after them, and brought them up to the company just as it turned by the left flank to take the intrenchments. After we carried the works and our Colonel reformed the regiment, our loss was so great, that our line was very short; it did not appear to be more than a few yards from me to Colonel Hall when he was hit. A short time after he was taken from the field, an officer started up to give the command "forward," which was the last effort, so far as I know to move forward. Later the rebel line came steadily forward at trail arms,

came up on us, and as we fell back, gave us a tremendously severe cross fire." This is all that I can find from a most gallant officer and estimable gentleman.

The extreme left of my regiment was Company B, whose able, efficient, and brave Captain, John D. Brown, rose from a sick bed and voluntarily took his place with his company, when utterly unfit for duty, and was compelled to take to his bed again as soon as the battle was over. He has left me no record of what he saw and what he did, greatly to my regret. Some papers written by his lieutenants have come into my possession that will have to supply the deficiency.

Lieutenant James W. Steele, was with the right of his company, and his statement shows that the enemy did hold his works down to the crater when the 43rd charged to our right and took them. This accomplished officer, who was subsequently a Captain of the U. S. Army and is a celebrated author, says "I know something about the prisoners, for there was a half determination on the part of a good many of the black soldiers to kill them as fast as they came to them. They were thinking of Fort Pillow and small blame to them. The first batch I saw had been driven together just in front of the line of earthworks we had taken and occupied. I climbed over and rushed out there to save them from the group of men of my own company who in two minutes would have bayoneted the last poor devil of them. It was a queer place for an argument, but I was met by cries that 'they would kill us, and had killed us wherever they could find us, and we were going to change the game.' I put up the pieces with my hands, argued and cursed alternately, until the scared little crowd had been got over the earthwork and had scurried off to our rear. For one reason or another I crossed that enfiladed space between the lines four times; also I was spattered with the brains of a soldier who was running beside me. I have since been in some warm regions, but that 30th of July was the hottest day I ever felt in any land. The funniest thing was that old Remington revolver of mine. It would shoot the side off of a tree at a hundred yards, and I had it with me. When I saw that the game was up, I reluctantly and with a feeling of despair began to get ready to cross the enfilade for the last time. There was one man among the rebels who were coming who seemed to have a personal feeling in the matter. He

would stop to load, and while doing so would grin diabolically, and shake his head. I thought that he thought he was on a nigger hunt, and it made me mad. So I climbed to the top of the earth-works, turned round and deliberately fired four times at that particular soldier."

"Just at the close of this somewhat boyish proceeding, I, myself got a little slice taken out of the shoulder. I looked back just as I started to go, amid cries of 'come in heah Yank, or we gwine to kill yeh,' to see if I could again discover my man amongst the ranks of the chargers. I do not after all this time to think about it, know whether I am glad or sorry that he was not there.

I remember the scene as the mine exploded, how it appeared after all that it had contained was about a hundred and twenty feet in the air, and before they came down again, I met Colonel Hall on his way out, his arm dangling and spoke to him. In reply to my recent request that he would write up the story, he says, "as leisure permits I am at your service to tell my own story of that day in my own way. But I should like first to go again and see the place. I have always wished to. To many living men the Mine at Petersburg is the most vivid memory of their lives, and for them more than for the establishment of any military fact should the story be told. I was then a boy; I am now middle aged. To me the story must be told with its personalities to be of interest and value, I am like others." The writer awaits with interest Captain Steele's volume. It will be classic and enduring.

The positive statements of personal experience of the cool, clear headed, clear sighted, intrepid officer, First Lieutenant L. H. Parkhurst, fittingly close up the story on the left of the command. He states that Captain Brown was on the sick list, but took command of his company when it was ordered forward, this placing Parkhurst as he says, "with the rear of the regiment moving by the right flank; a few of our men took shelter in the crater whom I drove out, and know that there were no colored troops in the crater, when our left had passed to the right of it, except some wounded of the 43rd."

"As I reached the left of the regiment, it had faced by the left flank, and was charging over the rebel works, I did the same. It was some time after this, before other colored troops connected with our left, which was some considerable distance beyond the

crater, where we remained a long time, when I saw the line of rebels coming a few rods off, saw that I was nearly alone, and returned to our own line, which had opened fire on the enemy, miraculously escaping unhurt the terrific fire to which I was exposed from both lines. Captain Wilkinson commanded the regiment from the time Colonel Hall was wounded, till the arrival of Major Horace Bumstead, two or three days after. I think there were only 7 officers left for duty, Captain Wilkinson took one for adjutant, leaving 5 line officers to command 7 companies. Captain Brown was still sick, and I had command of two companies. Before the battle, I was in charge of the detail that finished the covered way through which we advanced, and on the 3rd of August, in command of a burial party, laid away our dead, in a wide and deep trench, between the lines, as the rebs delivered them to me at the truce line. How many I cannot say. Quite a number were blown to pieces, by bursting shells, and I could not tell where the fragments belonged; they were buried with the others. After three days the bodies were so black and bloated, as to be beyond recognition, and colored could only be told from white by the hair. I buried them all side by side, regardless of color or rank, and leveled the ground as smooth as possible."

The report of General Meade, as well as his testimony before the commission of which General Hancock was President, shows a strong feeling against the colored troops, but space prevents little more than reference to his report and other documents. He has no good word to say for them, although the evidence of the records proves conclusively, that my seven companies of colored soldiers captured more than four fifths of the 246 prisoners, and one of the two stands of colors that he reports were taken by his entire army that day, he gives us no credit whatever, but blames the colored division for the failure, though his own orders kept us out of the fight till his other troops had given it up as a lost battle, refused to allow us whom General Burnside selected, and whom after an inspection an officer of his own staff had pronounced best fitted to lead the assault as Burnside proposed and urged, and which General Grant subsequently stated on oath, he believed we would have made a success, though he did hold with General Meade before the action. General Meade admits while testifying before the investigating commission, with some show of reluc-

tance, "From the reports transmitted I cannot perceive that the colored troops were more to blame than the others."

General A. A. Humphreys, Meade's chief of staff, in his "Campaign of '64 and '65", says of our, (Ferrero's) Division: "A part of them were led off to the right, and got off into the entrenchments there, where they had some fighting, capturing 200 prisoners and a color". I repeat that no regiment of our said division is reported as having captured any prisoners or colors, or being in any position where such captures were possible on that day, except the Forty-Third. No other regiment went to the right at that time when it charged and carried the enemy's intrenchments and captured those prisoners and colors.

General Burnside, our Corps commander, says: "a part of the column was deflected to the right, and charged and captured a portion of the enemy's line with a stand of colors and some prisoners. Of the enemy's first counter charge and its result, he states, "But not all of the colored troops retired, some held the pits, severely checking the enemy till they were nearly all killed, and this corroborates those officers of the 43rd, who state that it was the last to leave the captured works. Captain Sanders, of General Meade's staff was with General Burnside, and at 8:45 a. m., sent a dispatch to Meade, "One set of colors just sent in captured by the negroes." As I have before stated, no official report shows any colors or prisoners captured by any colored regiment but the 43rd that fixes the hour of our charge at about eight o'clock in the morning.

General Edward Ferrero, our division commander, was sworn thirty days after the battle, and testified that his leading brigade engaged the enemy a short distance in rear of the crater, where they captured some 200-odd prisoners, and a stand of colors, and recaptured a stand of colors belonging to a white regiment of our corps. In a letter to me he says that it is correct in all particulars, that he went to our first line of works, and there remained to see his command go through. The 43rd was the first over, then Colonel Humphreys' brigade, followed in on the left of Colonel Hall's regiment, cutting off the rest of my division from its leading regiment, THE 43RD, for some little time; it went on charged and carried the rebel works at the right of the Mine, before the balance of my division could get up to the assistance of the Forty-

Third, and it alone, unaided and unsupported, captured a stand of rebel colors, recaptured a stand of National colors, and took and sent to our lines two hundred prisoners belonging mostly to a South Carolina regiment, the only prisoners and colors captured by my division that day. General Ferrero is referred to in what General Burnside says about the originator of the first plan of assault, and General Ferrero states General Grant said he believed that it would have given us success, had it been carried out.

General Joshua K. Sigfried, then Colonel 48th Penna. Vols., who did the mining, was our brigade commander, and I use him freely as heretofore, as undoubted authority, and to show how the conduct of the regiment was regarded by others at the time. He writes that, "in the evening before, after we had marched down into the woods back of my bomb-proof, General Meade ordered a council of war, objected to the colored troops making the charge, on account of want of experience, as he put it, but really, as I think, because he was opposed to the colored troops anywhere, and General Burnside finally agreed to leave it to General Grant, who sided with General Meade, and we were kept until the last. Had the original plan been adhered to, I am PERFECTLY satisfied Petersburg would have been in our possession before 10 o'clock that day. Generals Grant and Meade both admitted that to me afterwards. The Forty-Third went farther, did better under the most destructive fire from the artillery and infantry of the enemy, after giving them some three hours time for concentration than could be expected."

A further recognition of the conspicuously gallant services of those officers and men of the 43rd on this bloody field, was the subsequent promotion by the President, by and with the advice and consent at the Senate, of its commander on that field, Lieutenant Colonel H. Seymour Hall to be Brigadier General U. S. Volunteers, by Brevet, "for gallant and meritorious services in the assault on the enemy's works at the Mine before Petersburg, Virginia," as is stated in his commission. General Sigfried writes, after making his official report that:

"No man ever led a regiment under such a severe fire through several divisions of other troops who had preceded them, and who had squatted in a place of shelter, as did General Hall the 43rd U. S. C. T., that 30th day of July, 1864. When the order came for

us to go in, I asked permission to charge on the line direct, without going through the crater, and I said, I will take it now, and I am confident, had I been permitted to do so, with General Hall in the lead, we would have been successful. I can see him yet brought back to the crater, as he made the remark 'I took the rifle pit, but I am done, my arm is all shattered.' Major Frank Holsinger, then a Captain in the 19th Regiment U. S. C. T., states that his regiment was still inside our own works, when General Hall was taken past them wounded, that he raised his left hand toward the enemy, and said, 'go in boys there is plenty there for all of you.' This further proves that the 43rd, must have been far in advance of the rest of the division, as it had already charged the works, captured the colors, and taken the prisoners, which as Harper's History of the rebellion says, 'was the only semblance of success on that fatal day.' A few weeks after the battle, before he could have forgotten, General Grant was testifying under oath, before the committee of Congress on the conduct of the war, and in answer to a question said, 'General Burnside wanted to put his colored troops in the lead, and I believe if he had done so we would have been successful.'"

"The reports of the enemy are few and brief, and are silent about any surrender of works, colors, or prisoners to the negroes, but General B. R. Johnson, commanding the division that we assaulted, reports that Elliott's brigade, occupied the mine and to our right and left, its loss being 698, 351 of whom are reported missing. All the Infantry of this brigade, were South Carolina regiments, commanded by Colonel McMaster, after General Elliott was wounded. The 200 prisoners taken by the 43rd were doubtless some of the missing."

Our accomplished and efficient Assistant Surgeon, Dr. A. B. Lowe, had no assistance till three days after this battle, when Surgeon A. Waterhouse joined for duty as did the other three companies, under the scholarly gentleman, and gallant soldier, Major Bumstead, then late graduate of Yale, now the Rev. Horace Bumstead, D. D., President of Atlanta University. The Major served with honor in the field till the regiment was mustered out in the fall of 1865. He has been solicited by General Hall to write the balance of the record of service of the 43rd, a task for which he is preeminently qualified.

Captain Joseph Forbes was sick, Lieutenant J. C. Hankey, in charge of the ambulance train, Lieutenant M. W. Sawyer, acting regimental quartermaster, many enlisted men were on detached service. The 43rd Regiment went into action with only 18 commissioned officers, and 328 enlisted men. Of these 1 officer and 40 men were killed, 10 officers and 94 men wounded, 2 officers wounded and captured, a total of 147, or 42 1-2 per cent. Our colors were cut in tatters, the lance shot off by musket balls, and the staff of our regimental color partly cut off by the fire of the enemy, less than 200 of these brave officers and men retired at the last moment, safely bringing off the bullet riddled remnants of their colors, before an overwhelming force of the enemy, led against our right by Generals B. R. Johnson and Ransom, and against the crater and our left by General William Mahone, leaders and men whose bravery had been tried on many fields, and in its contest with these worthy representatives of southern valor, it cannot be said that the Forty-Third regiment United States Colored Troops disgraced the military service, but in truth it must be stated that it won imperishable renown.

APPENDIX.

The following letter was written by the writer of the foregoing paper, before he had the Official Records, or the reports of his officers. It was not intended as a criticism on General Thomas, whose warm friend the writer is, but to set right some things of which the General had no personal knowledge, his article as published in the book was changed from the magazine paper in the matters referred to by me, and part of my letter inserted therein in "Battles and Leaders," as is referred to by Captain Burr. I quote it from my retained copy in full:

"MONTHALL FARM, CARROLL CO., MISSOURI,

Bogard Post Office, January 11, 1888.

To The Century Co., New York:

PETERSBURG MINE—BATTLE OF JULY 30, 1864.

In his article on the colored troops at Petersburg in the last September Century Magazine, General Henry Goddard Thomas states that, "The First Brigade, (Fourth Division, 9th Corps,) worked its way through the crater and was halted behind the honeycomb of bomb proofs." I can give no account of the move-

ments of the rear regiments of the First Brigade, but as to the advance, this is erroneous. The Forty-Third Regiment U. S. C. T. having the advance of the 1st Brigade, was leading the division, and besides having only seven companies present, was the newest regiment in the Division. After an inspection of the Division by an officer of General Burnside's staff, the Forty-Third was selected to lead the assault which was to follow the explosion of the Mine, in the *first* plan of attack, and it still had the advance when the Division *finally* went into action. In command of, and the only field officer present with the Forty-Third Regiment at any time, in compliance with special orders, I drilled the command and carefully inspected the ground over which we were to advance, for this latter purpose accompanying General J. F. Hartrauft in his rounds when he was General Officer of the Trenches.

When the order to lead out from the covered way was given me, we marched by the flank, scrambled, climbed, or jumped, as best we could, over our outer works, double quick swept up the slope, already the center of a tornado of shot and shell, through which leading my command directly to the crater, mounting the crest of the *debris*, I saw at once the utter hopelessness of passing the enemy's lines through and over the mass of soldiers in the yawning gulf. Without an instants pause the Forty-Third followed my lead to our right around on the crest of the crater's rim till near the enemy's main line of intrenchments on our right, which was at that time fully manned by the rebel forces, who were concentrating on us a deadly fire of musketry, and flaunting their colors defiantly almost in our very faces. Still at the double quick, changing direction to the right, leading the command in front of and parallel to the intrenchments held by the enemy, as soon as sufficient distance was taken, I gave the command to march by the left flank, and as the line thus formed faced the enemy, gave the order to "*Charge.*" Officers and men swept resistlessly on, over the enemy's intrenchments, without an instants pause or waver, capturing nearly all the force in our immediate front, probably over 100 prisoners, the stand of rebel colors mentioned, and recapturing a stand of National Colors. All this occupied seemingly few minutes from the time we left the covered way, but we were exposed to the most terrific concentration of musketry and artillery fire it had ever been my lot to encounter, serving from Bull Run July 21st 1861, to this 30th day of July, 1864, and our losses were fearful. We had opened a gateway, but the crest of the ridge beyond the crater, our objective point, was not yet gained. Gallantly the survivors closed up their ranks, and nerved themselves for the struggle as I reformed them inside the captured intrenchments.

Probably the halt mentioned by General Thomas, was when

the balance of the brigade was halted behind the line on the left of my regiment as is stated by General Sigfried. Just as I was about to give the order to my regiment to advance and charge Cemetery ridge, my right arm fell useless to my side, pierced and shattered near my shoulder by a musket ball. Recovering my saber, which had dropped from my hand, I retired from the field of battle to an ambulance, thence to the amputating table. This ended my campaigning till my return to the Forty-Third in the field in front of Richmond, March 25th, 1865, in time to make the entry into Richmond on the morning of April 3rd, with General Thomas' Brigade, then in the 25th Corps, and by his order I was Provost Marshal of Manchester District.

At the battle of the Mine before Petersburg, Va., the Forty-Third Regiment United States Colored Troops had not more than 19 officers and 330 enlisted men in line; 1 officer and 28 men were killed, 10 officers and 94 men were wounded, 2 officers and 12 men were missing—total 147. The colors were tattered, and the color lance splintered and shivered into a dozen pieces by musket balls. No report was made by me of the operations of the regiment, by reason of the loss of my right arm, my transfer to the North, and my subsequent detail by the War Department to command Camp Casey, and as Chief Mustering Officer of the District of Columbia, till my amputation healed. This extract from the Official Report of Colonel Sigfried, our brigade commander, was sent me in October 1864, (I have it yet) showing as originally, "A true copy, D. Bates, Colonel 30th U. S. C. T." It says: "The 43rd U. S. C. T. moved over the crest of the crater, and towards the right, charged the enemy's entrenchments, and took them, capturing a number of prisoners and a stand of rebel colors, and recapturing a stand of National colors. This line was part of the continuous line connecting with the crater. Lieutenant Colonel H. Seymour Hall, 43rd Regiment lost his right arm while bravely leading his command."

General Thomas was misinformed about my Adjutant, O'Brien, being shot through the heart. He was shot through the left shoulder, promoted to Captain, served with me at Camp Casey, entering Richmond, in Texas after the close of the war, though suffering painfully at times from his wound. The limits of this letter forbid mention of names and incidents well worth a place in history. Let me only state here, that no officer of my command hesitated to lead his men to what seemed certain death, and heroes with skins of darker hue, grandly proved their title to freedom, on the soil of the state that once ranked many of them as slaves.

H. SEYMOUR HALL."

While speaking of General Thomas, I wish my readers to note particularly and investigate; he does not claim either in his official report, or paper, that his brigade, which was the only other

brigade in our Division of Colored Troops, besides ours, (Sigfried's,) captured any prisoners or colors, as he certainly would have done had it done so. Neither does General Sigfried report, nor claim, that any of the regiments of his Brigade, except the 43rd, took a single prisoner or color. Major General Ferrero, our Division commander, who was where he could know, confirms all that I claim for my regiment in these respects. After the reading of the foregoing paper, Colonel Brown, U. S. Army, said to me that he was on General Turner's staff, and saw our charge, saw O'Brien as I describe him, and that General Turner and he were lost in admiration of his gallantry. Colonel William H. Powell, U. S. A., was on the staff of General Ledlie, 1st Division, and tells what he saw, thus: "But the leading brigade, (of the colored troops,) struck the enemy which I had previously reported as massed in front of the crater, and in a sharp little action the colored troops captured some two hundred prisoners and a stand of colors and recaptured a stand of colors belonging to a white regiment of the Ninth Corps. In this almost hand to hand conflict the colored troops became somewhat disorganized, and some twenty minutes were consumed in reforming; then they made the attempt to move forward again. Had any one in authority been present when the colored troops made their charge, and had they been supported, even at that late hour in the day there would have been a possibility of success."

See also the full and very interesting account of the Reverend George L. Kilmer, then a soldier in the 14th N. Y. Heavy Artillery, he had also served two years in the 27th N. Y. Vols., Gen. Slocum's regiment, when I was also a member of that regiment, a fact of which he is not aware; all three papers in "Battles and Leaders," Dr. Kilmer says, "The last rally was when the colored division moved out from our works in splendid order, which promised us success. Growlers were put to shame now, and most of them fell into line to go forward. Some few declared that they would never follow 'niggers' or be caught in their company, and started back to our own lines but were promptly driven forward again. Then the colored troops broke and scattered and pandemonium began. The bravest lost heart, and the men who distrusted the negroes vented their feelings freely. Some colored men came into the crater, and there they found a worse fate than death in the charge."

H. S. HALL.

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