



BY JOSEPH BECKER, "SPECIAL FOR LESLIE'S."

Attention.

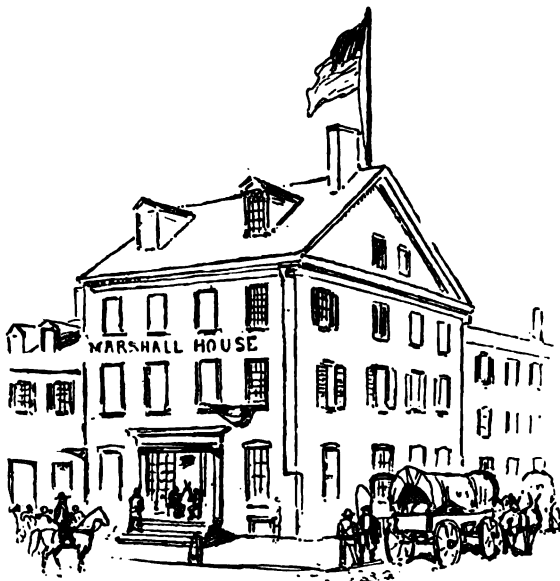


BY all means get to the Army of the Potomac." This command from Mr. Frank Leslie, the father of the illustrated newspaper in America, found me at Annapolis, Maryland, April 26th, 1864. I had been idling here, on the edge of the war, watching Burnside's immortal whiskers, on vague information that he was assembling an expedition to assail by water the Southern outposts in the

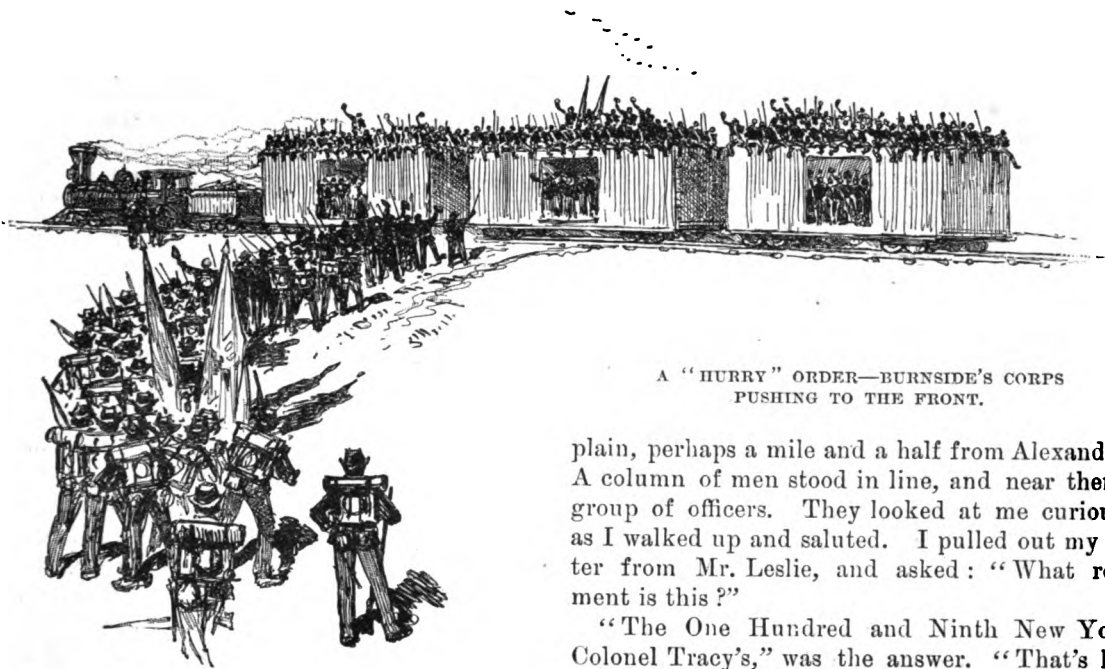
Carolinas. Rejoiced at the prospect of seeing active service under General Grant, who had just taken chief command of the Northern armies, I lost not a moment's time. The next day, April 27th, found me in Washington puzzling over a way to get through the lines to the army.

General Grant had issued strict orders against the admission of non-combatants to his lines. I had a letter from Mr. Leslie certifying to my identity and requesting such favors as could properly be afforded. That was no warrant for a pass to the front, but it sufficed to get me one to Alexandria from Brigadier General John H. Martindale. Alexandria was then the debarking place for the troops sent to re-enforce the Army of the Potomac. Once there, the problem was to reach the front. I figured out that the safest way was to fall in with a marching regiment, numbers of which lay in the route between Alexandria and the main force.

Wandering around in the tangle of wagons and munitions that had transformed the sleepest town in Virginia into a place of prodigious bustle, I came upon a teamster bound out. He was disposed to be sociable. Several pulls at a flask of excellent whisky made him my friend. Several more pulls caused him to love me. Several more led to my curling up in the bottom of his wagon, covered thickly with empty meal and grain sacks. Thus hidden, the mules, after a mild preliminary balk, pulled us slowly through the mud of the sacred soil for an hour. Where there was a lack of mud, jolts made the riding diverting.



THE MARSHALL HOUSE, ALEXANDRIA, VA., WHERE COL. ELLSWORTH WAS KILLED.—THE ORIGINAL CONTEMPORANEOUS SKETCH.



A "HURRY" ORDER—BURNSIDE'S CORPS PUSHING TO THE FRONT.

By and by I heard the sharp challenge of a sentry. Then in a moment more the hoarse voice of the driver said: "You're all right; get out." I crawled out, looking like a miller and frescoed with "shorts" and bits of straw. I saw before me the field camp of a regiment. It was a little after noon. We were in the middle of a great

plain, perhaps a mile and a half from Alexandria. A column of men stood in line, and near them a group of officers. They looked at me curiously as I walked up and saluted. I pulled out my letter from Mr. Leslie, and asked: "What regiment is this?"

"The One Hundred and Ninth New York, Colonel Tracy's," was the answer. "That's him over there with the short man."

It took me but a moment to find that I had fallen among friends. Colonel Benjamin F. Tracy, since the able Judge of the New York Court of Appeals, and the distinguished Secretary of the Navy under President Harrison, glanced at my letter and handed it to the short man, who was short only in comparison with himself, saying with a smile: "I don't see any objection to this

Head Quarters Military District,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Sept 27 1864.

Pass to Mr. Beaven, Joseph Justice

within the limits of the Fortifications to ALEXANDRIA, and return.

Reason: Visiting

This Pass will expire On return trip

By order of JOHN H. MARTINDALE,
Brig. Gen. and Military Governor

[Signature]

PHIL & SOLOMONS, ARMY STATIONERS, WASHINGTON, D. C.

young man's going with us if he does not mind roughing it."

To this, Lieutenant Colonel Isaac S. Catlin, now major general, retired, and an eminent Brooklyn lawyer, gave his hearty assent. I had arrived in the nick of time. A "hurry" order had come from General Grant to push to the front. The preparations for the start were well under way. The regiment had been raised in Elmira, Binghamton, Owego and Rochester. The colonel and the lieutenant colonel were both from Owego. Moreover, they were brothers-in-law, and their wives were with them. The time for parting had come, and I recall the last meeting with the ladies, in the old farmhouse where they were quartered, when Mrs. Catlin, with womanly *naïveté*, declared that she didn't see why they could not "wait until to-morrow." Mrs. Tracy had to bid both a husband and a brother good-by.

I marched with the men. The long thin line straggled out along the muddy Virginia road. Once we touched upon the railroad and viewed with envy another regiment going forward by rail. They were packed in freight cars and overflowed upon the roofs, with their legs in a muddy blue fringe over the eaves.

The march of a dozen miles ended as twilight came. The level Virginia fields were soon dotted with the white shelter tents. The rails from the adjacent fences furnished fuel for a camp fire at the head of every company lane. Colonel Tracy and Lieutenant Colonel Catlin invited me to share their mess and tent. The restless soldiers explored every inch of the ground. One squad ran down a frightened rabbit, and another located a possum up a tree. The Virginia possum is the finest of his marsupial kind, and the hunt aroused intense interest. By and by the possum was pulled from a beech-tree branch by a nimble private, and with its litter of three little possums

taken to camp. Two cages were improvised out of cracker boxes, and then the animals were presented with much ceremony to the colonel and lieutenant colonel. We went to bed—if curling up in a blanket on the damp Virginia soil can be so described. I lay between the two warriors, with the menagerie at my feet. In the night the menagerie produced a series of startling squeals. "Kick that blanked possum, Becker!" commanded the colonel. I kicked the box vigorously, and the noise ceased. We slept until the sentry calls awoke us. Then we found that, like a true Confederate possum, our prisoner had chewed off the bars of the cage, gnawed her way into the rabbit's quarters, and after eating up that gentle *Lepus* had safely escaped with all her progeny.

The tragic fate of the rabbit was not the only melancholy discovery of the morning. Colonel Tracy's spare horse was not much of an animal. The colonel was a judge of horseflesh, and has since become almost as eminent for his horse knowledge as in law and naval matters, but the spare horse was a pick-up and of little account. He had, however, been carelessly hitched to the tail of a feed wagon the night before, and having gnawed through several sacks, treated himself to such a meal as no colonel's spare horse had ever had before. Indeed, he had overexerted himself so much in stowing away provisions as to distend his thin sides visibly. His manner was *distrain* and uncomfortable.

"Shoot the brute!" was Colonel Tracy's command, after a moment of silent but disgusted contemplation. The hostler pleaded for the horse's life. Meals were scarce and infrequent for men and horses. Why find fault with an abuse of opportunity? He thought a little gentle exercise would restore the steed to his slender symmetry. Permission was given. There was a ten-acre field of freshly plowed laud near by into which the horse

Age 22
 Height 5 6
 Complexion Light
 Hair 1
 Eyes 1

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.

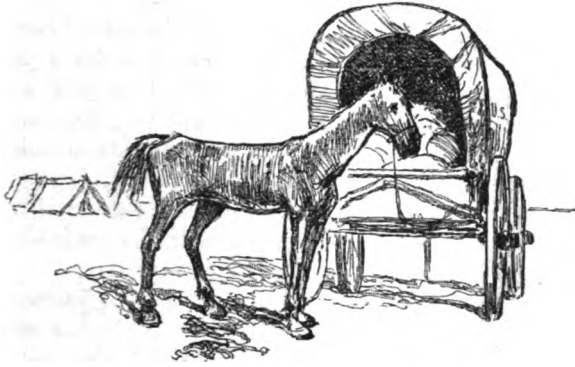
In availing myself of the benefits of this Pass I do solemnly affirm that I will support, protect, and defend the Constitution and Government of the United States against all enemies, whether domestic or foreign; that I will bear true faith, allegiance, and loyalty to the same, any ordinance, resolution, or law of any State convention or legislature to the contrary notwithstanding; that I will not give aid, comfort, or information to its enemies; and further, that I do this with a full determination, pledge, and purpose, without any mental reservation or evasion whatsoever: So help me God.

Joseph V. Becker

The "hurry" order from Grant was repeated. There followed a forced march of thirty miles across the Rappahannock to the Wilderness. Eager to get material, I pushed forward with the regiment. There was no time wasted in sending it in. Yet, as we marched along past the bivouacs of other commands, there was visible but little of the tremendous excitement that stirred me with every heart throb. Men moved about leisurely. One fellow propped himself against a tree while a comrade coolly lathered and shaved him, to receive a similar service in return. But soon the rapid rumbling of the guns began. Shells crashed through the trees, splintering and felling them to earth. Wounded men were coming out on stretchers borne to the field hospitals in the rear.

"Say, young feller, you'd better get out of this; there's going to be some fighting," advised a trooper. I followed his sage suggestion, and dodging from tree to tree as the bullets whistled, worked my way back to the half-dismantled Wilderness Tavern, where Edwin Forbes, then a veteran war artist, undertook to break me in at illustrating a great battle.

With twenty other artists and war correspondents I took possession of an upper room in the tavern. Here, around several rickety old tables, we contrived to accomplish some work for immediate forwarding. The correspondents could get a few lines through recording the progress of the fight, and the artists used the time to the best possible advantage—not knowing when the next chance would come. Suddenly we were appalled by the most unearthly yell that ever came from human throats. Distant as it turned out to be, the volume of sound raised by ten thousand tongues seemed to be all about us. The old campaigners waited not an instant upon the order of their going. In this they were emulated with



THE COLONEL'S SPARE HORSE.

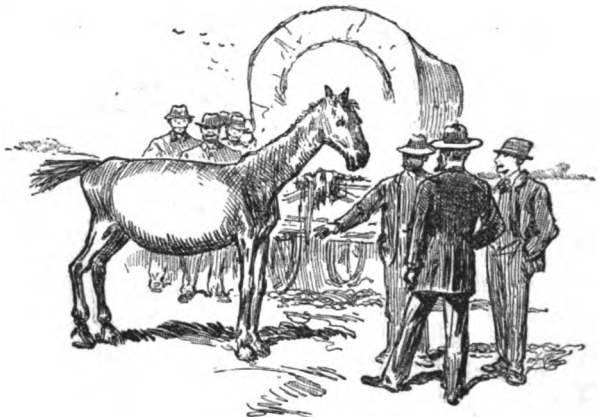
was turned. Then half the regiment spent an hour chasing the luckless animal and pelting him with clods. The treatment was heroic but successful. The spare horse went back to duty a little out of breath, but in good order.

The chaplain of the One Hundred and Ninth was anything but a religious character. He was called parson, but this was the only deference shown his cloth. I think he held service but once while I was with the regiment, and this was at the peremptory command of the colonel. I helped him hunt his Testament from the tangle of dunnage in his camp chest, and it was too near the bottom to indicate recent usage. But what he lacked in piety he made up in cheer. He was a famous forager, albeit something of a glutton. His green umbrella was ever an accompaniment of spoils. After a couple of meals on hard tack Colonel Tracy said, sharply: "I'm sick of hard tack, parson! What good are you anyhow? Get us some fresh meat!"

The quartermaster had turned some live cattle over to the troops that morning. Shots and bellows told that the summary process of turning them into beef was under way. The parson disappeared in the direction of the noise. When he came back the waist of his clerical coat bulged perceptibly. He had brought off twenty pounds of beef in triumph, and the colonel's mess had a feast, and something left for haversacks.

I can sing the praises of army hard tack because I owe my life to it, but I should not care for it now. The kind served to the One Hundred and Ninth was alive with "skippers." Tenderfeet threw the uninviting biscuit away when they saw it garnished with these weevils. The veterans smashed it on a rock, and after giving the animals time to escape ate the fragments with great satisfaction.

These were the slender humors of the march. The tragedies were coming.



THE MORNING AFTER.



TURNING LIVE CATTLE INTO BEEF.—(FAC-SIMILE OF ORIGINAL SKETCH)

zeal by the rawest recruit—myself. By uncommon vigor I reached the top of the banisterless stair, neck and neck with the valiant war correspondent of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. In our eagerness to lead the rout we fell together headlong down the long flight, amid a flutter of sketches and copy grabbed instinctively as we made the rush. The others rolled down on top of us, and by the time we were disentangled the cause of our fright was over. It was the fierce and famous "rebel yell" welcoming approaching reinforcements in the sanguine belief that with their aid the Yankees would be whipped and that Grant had started

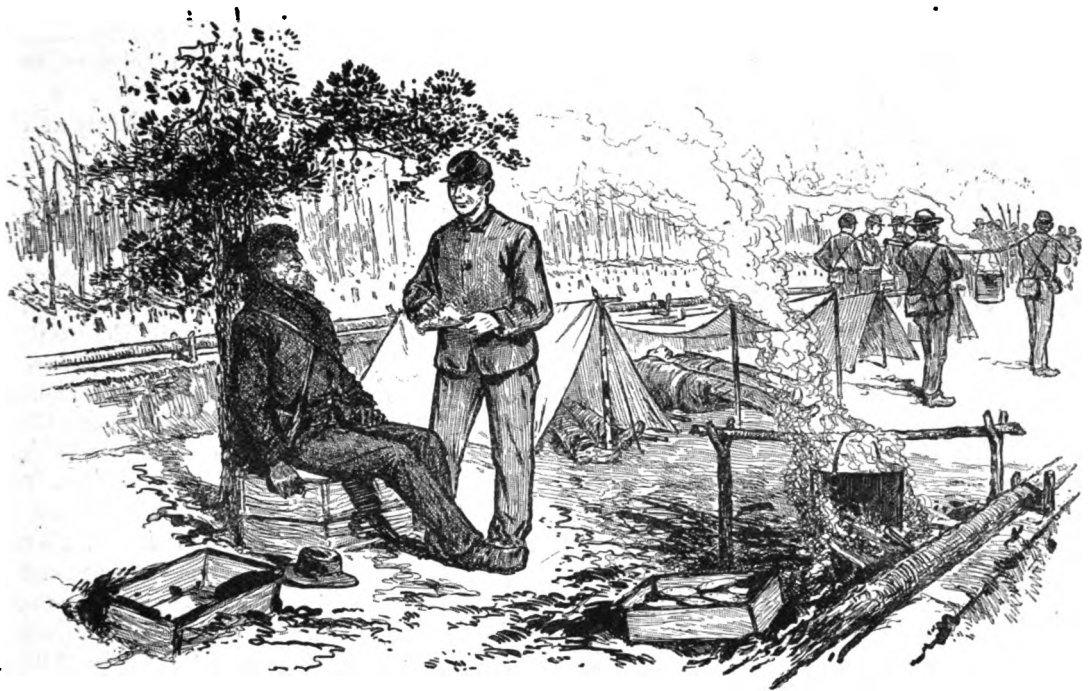
for Fredericksburg. This was a mistaken notion, it turned out, though circumstances seemed to favor the theory. But that yell was most terribly real; I did not believe that the human voice could express such ferocity. I can now, thirty years after, scare myself by thinking about it.

Outside the Wilderness Tavern General Grant and his staff watched the course of the battle. It was my first view of an engagement, but I remember that I was more interested in observing General Grant's manner than in the clash of the armies. His imperturbability was complete. In time a considerable group of orderlies, staff officers and correspondents gathered about the neighborhood, and the rebel

gunners, imagining that perhaps a new line was being formed, started in to demoralize it. At the first shriek of a shell, that went wide of the mark, there was an instant



RETURN OF THE CHAPLAIN WITH FRESH MEAT.

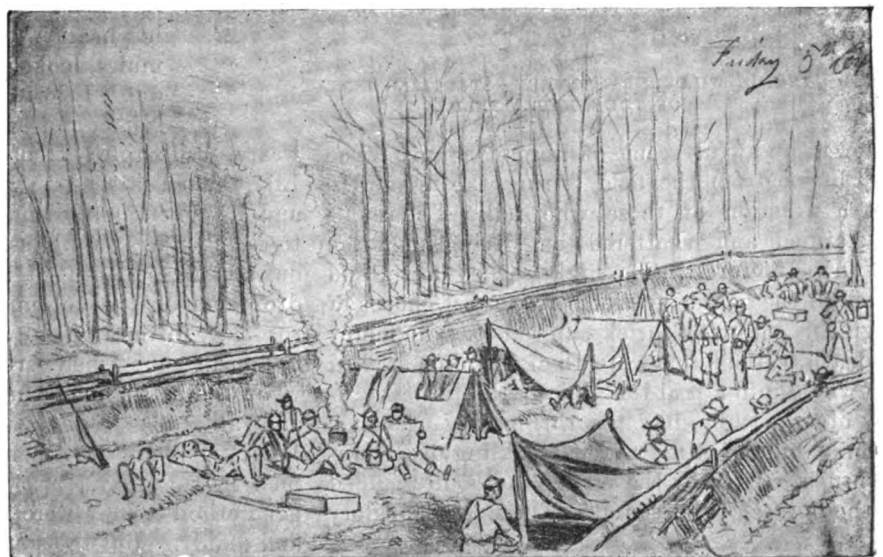


"ONE FELLOW PROPPED HIMSELF AGAINST A TREE WHILE A COMRADE COOLLY LATHERED AND BEAVED HIM."

scattering. The staff officers ducked their heads, and were distinctly uncomfortable. Not so the general. He was not a very large man, but somehow he loomed up into an impressive figure on horseback. He gave no sign of interest in the screaming missiles, and moved only as he occasionally took his cigar from between his lips, or replaced it there. He had an odd way of holding his weed. It would rest on the back of his thumb and middle finger, with the forefinger lapped over it like a clamp, not between thumb and finger, as most men handle cigars.

stations awaiting the orders of the slender young officer who leaned against a caisson to strip them for battle. A devil's chorus was howling through the air, but they paid no heed; they were ready for whatever fate might bring.

But when the roar of the battle died away there



THE "FIGHTING FOURTEENTH" OF BROOKLYN—EXTREME FRONT, LEFT CENTRE, FRIDAY MORNING, MAY 6TH.—(FAC-SIMILE OF ORIGINAL SKETCH.)

The members of the battery protect headquarters. The guns were covered with tarpaulins, and the men were at their



IN THE WILDERNESS TAVERN—STARTLING EFFECT
OF THE "REBEL YELL."

followed an awful scene of human agony. The men borne from the field during the fight were but a fraction of those who fell. Thousands of maimed and shattered but living men lay about in the forest. The night settled down, and through the gathering gloom rose a vast chorus of anguish. Piercing shrieks, appeals for the mercy of death, with an underbreath of moaning, swelled the whole into a peal that voiced the pitiless cruelty of war, while, like the thrumming of a rude accompaniment, the strange crackling of the underbrush, stirred by the struggling bodies, added to the horror of the sound. There was no glory here.

Passing through this inferno, we took up the march by the Brock Road toward Chancellorsville.

As if this grand tragedy of war were not enough,

fire from smoldering gun wadding broke out in the underbrush, lighting up the way for the marching column, and alas! ending in its blazing embrace the lives of the helpless wounded who lay within its reach.

General Grant had turned the Army of the Potomac from a strategic organization into a sledge hammer. Every battle, however enormous his losses might be, left Lee permanently weaker. With Grant it was not even a question of awaiting fresh troops. They were always coming in to replace shattered regiments. There was no repose. The fighting of great battles went on remorselessly and resistlessly. Reshaped after the Wilderness, the Army of the Potomac, following close upon the heels of that of Northern Virginia, found it at Spottsylvania. I had by this time become a perfect type of a tramp. Aside from a little packet of heavy drawing paper and my precious letter, there was nothing about me to excite either respect or consideration. I was ragged, unclean, unkempt and unutterably hungry. But I had in this short time developed into a campaigner of no mean qualities. I could march with the column, drink the gravylike fluid that represented water in the roadside pools, and eat anything I could get.

It rained almost ceaselessly. The roads were deep with mire. Stranded, half-submerged army wagons blocked the seething streak of mud called a road. Here and there a teamster, his stock of curses exhausted, and his heart weakened by his obstinate mules, looked willing to lie down and die. I lost the One Hundred and Ninth and became a vagabond. The weary, bedraggled troopers were no better off. Like them I learned to wrap myself in a blanket and lie down in the mud, amid a pouring rain, to slumber as soundly as on a bed of down, without a creak in a joint on awakening. Men would drop out of the column and lie down by the roadside, in the rain, to wake up hours after and tag on to some other part of the procession. But when the battle hour came the ranks were strong and full.

Strange how soon men become callous! The men in this grand army were the best of their generation. They were at home tender-hearted and manly. But the war had made them hard, and horrors did not move them. On this march to Spottsylvania we rested on the field of Chancellorsville. The heavy spring rains had laid bare

thousands of soldiers' sepulchres. But the living ate, drank and slept among the ghastly trenches quite undisturbed. Some even hunted for shoes among the skeletons, and others played a merry game of bowls with unexploded three-inch shells until stopped by their officers.

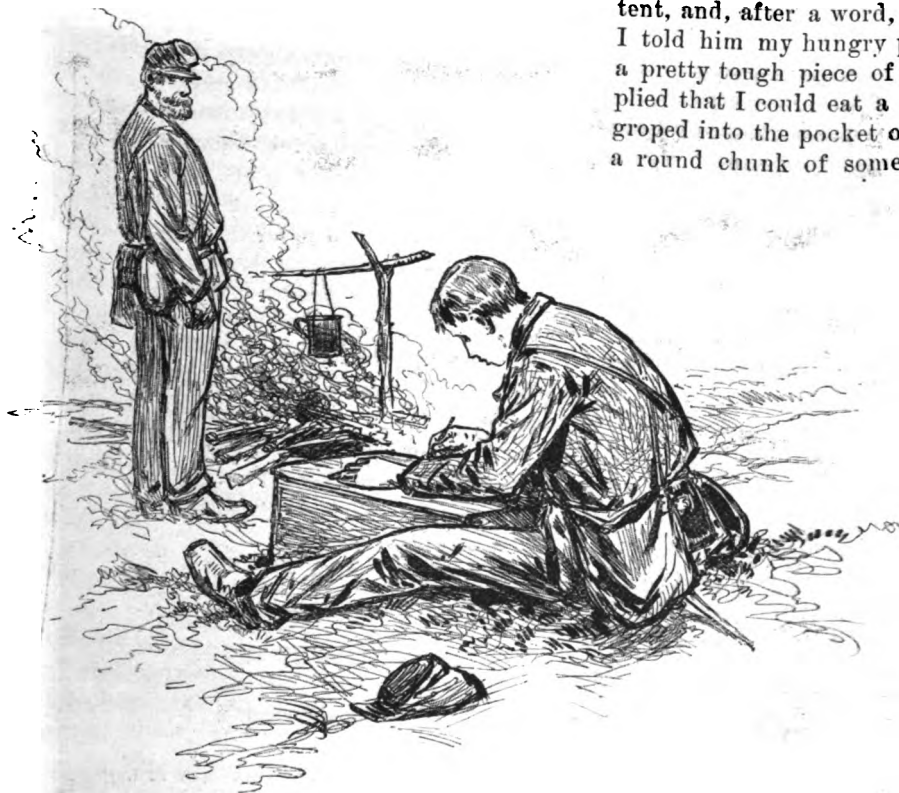
Just before the battle began at Spottsylvania I fell in with the One Hundred and Ninth. I was literally starving, and tried to beg a biscuit or two from the men. Each refused. They did not know when they could get more, and had nothing to spare from their slender store. They were right. I was a non-combatant and had no claim to share a sol-



"ALL OUT OF CUSS WORDS."

dier's substance. It chanced that Colonel Tracy was ill, and Catlin was to lead the regiment. I found Tracy and the adjutant lying helpless in a tent, and, after a word, went in search of Catlin. I told him my hungry plight. "Could you eat a pretty tough piece of beef?" he asked. I replied that I could eat a horse if I had him. He groped into the pocket of his blouse, brought out a round chunk of something black, coated with fine-cut tobacco, and carefully dusting off the latter, handed it to me with a courtly bow. It was the beef. He had been nibbling at it off and on, but I was welcome to it. No morsel ever tasted sweeter than this half-burnt bit of gristle.

The road was blocked with wagons, and during the halts thus caused I fell in with Hancock's corps. There were some wounded men in the wagons who noticed my occasional sketching. They saw, too, that my haversack was empty and my face



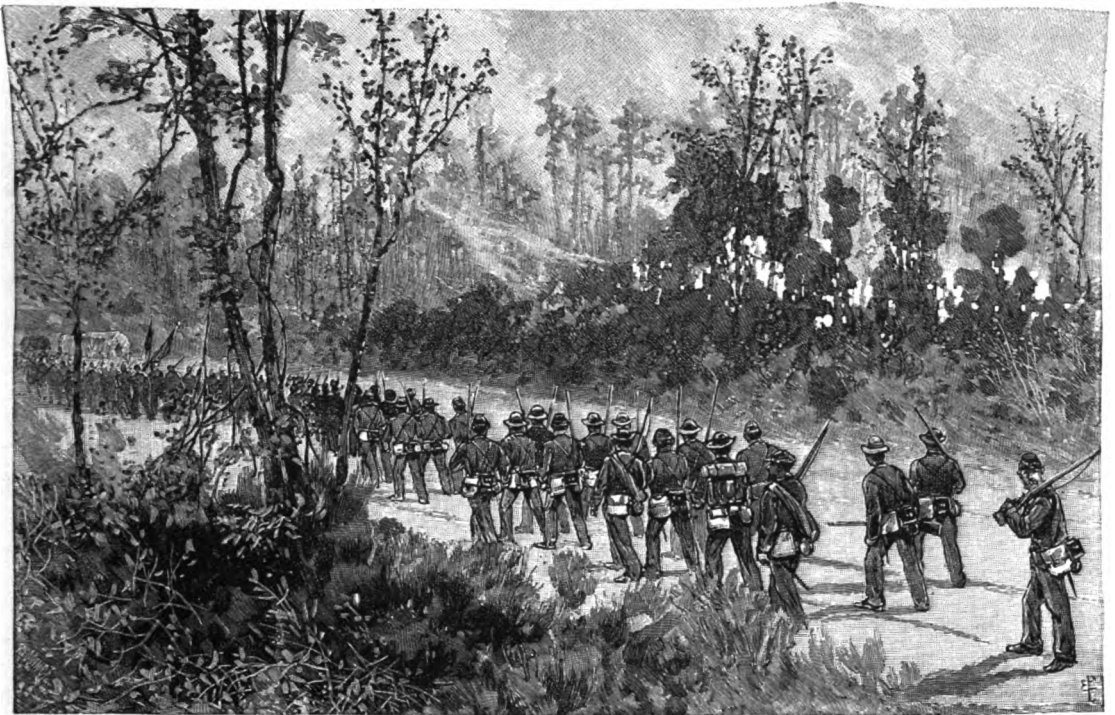
"MOTHER'S BOY" WRITING HOME, AFTER A BATTLE.



BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS, MAY 6TH, 1864.—(FAC-SIMILE OF THE ORIGINAL SKETCH.)



WILDERNESS—LEFT CENTRE—A BURYING PARTY AT BREAKFAST, FRIDAY MORNING, MAY 6TH, 1864.



CONFLAGRATION OF THE WILDERNESS BATTLEFIELD.

gaunt with hunger. "Hey, Mr. Artist!" called one of them. "The Sanitary Commission has been along and left us a load of crackers. Help yourself." I did not need a second asking. I cracked my stomach and my haversack, and was a new man again.

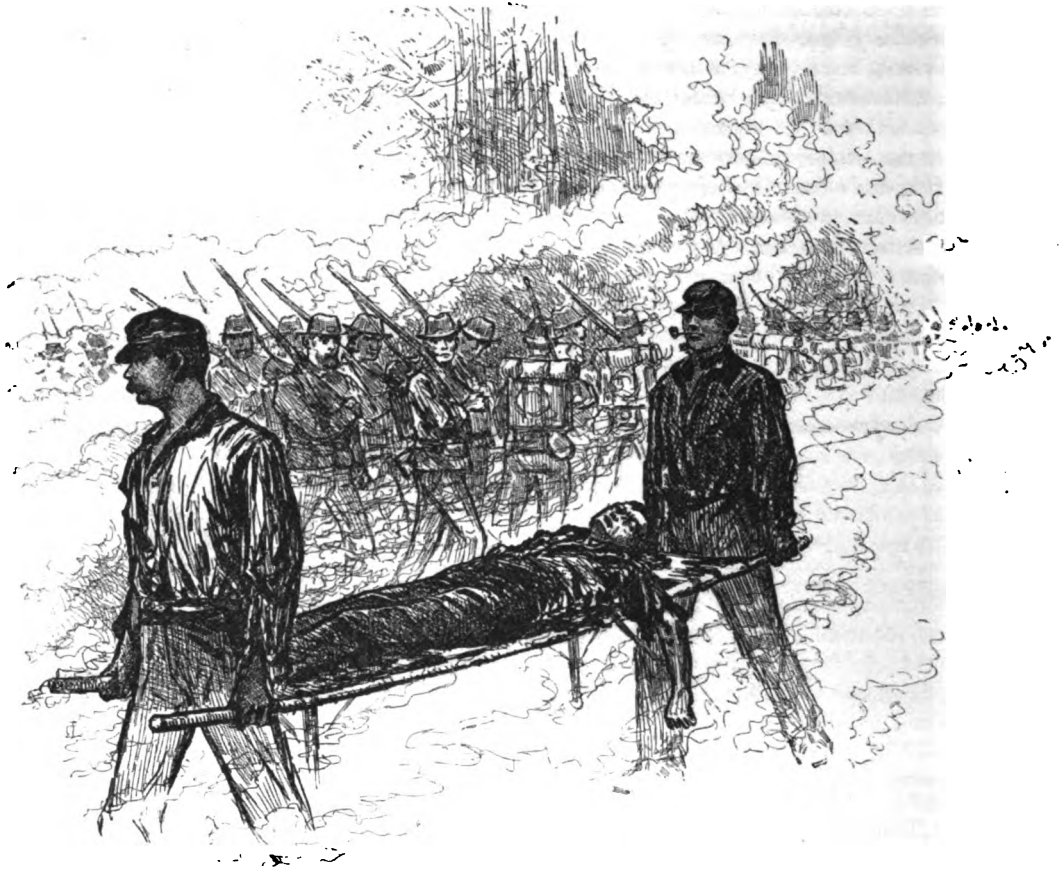
My most vivid memory of Spottsylvania was Hancock's corps going in. Their route led by a field hospital in active operation. The dull "swish" of the surgeon's saw was ceaselessly

sounding, and the amputated arms and legs were thrown out in such a direction that the troops stumbled over them as they marched in toward the beginning of these horrors. The faces of the men were as faces of the dead. They moved like automatons, but the look upon them was as if they had given up life. That they were roused from this in the storm of the battle their record shows.

But twenty days had passed since I joined the



"I HEWED THE BREAD AND MEAT INTO SLICES."



A GLIMPSE OF THE HORRORS OF WAR.

army. In fourteen of these, from May 5th to May 18th, inclusive, 10,000 Union soldiers had been killed in battle in the Wilderness and at Spottsylvania, and 40,000 had been wounded. These losses, the most terrific of all the war, filled the North with mourning. Looking backward now, it seems incredible that these battles had the effect of victories in crushing the Confederacy. Of the volume of human suffering that attended them there can be no estimate. Where the dead are counted by thousands and the wounded by tens of thousands the horrors of war become too great for computation.

Spottsylvania ended my first campaign, though not my last. It was necessary to get back to a point of communication—to New York if I could—for fresh resources and recuperation, and to work up the material gathered. I joined a convoy of the wounded on a weary journey to the transports at Belle Plain, via Fredericksburg. Wounded and stragglers were my companions. Men who seemed too desperately hurt to live tramped along, watching eagerly for a chance in the wagons. These came often. I gained a seat

with the driver on one wagon after a weary walk. One of his passengers was grievously hurt. His sufferings were so intense that he begged for a release—for a revolver that he might hasten the end. In a little time he became still. It was dusk. A voice from below said: "Say, driver, better hold on. He's gone."

Like every wagon, this one carried two picks, two long shovels, and half a dozen boards one foot wide and three feet long. With the tools we made a grave by the roadside, marked the name, corps and regiment of the soldier upon one of these headboards and went on.

Once at Fredericksburg, the lack of a pass began to make trouble for me. I was arrested as a spy, while a throng of idlers hooted, "Shoot the reb!" My appearance was indeed against me, but there was no other evidence, while my letter from Mr. Leslie stood me in good stead. But where, then, was my pass? Without it I would not be allowed to proceed. I informed the provost that my pass had gone astray in the course of my adventures. He was too busy to bother about me, and I slipped away for Belle Plain. I

was halted by a German sentry, who luckily could not read and accepted the Leslie letter as a pass.

Here I saw the *attachés* of the Sanitary Commission sitting in a tent with a floor, eating cooked food off real plates, laid on a clean tablecloth. The sight quite upset me.

It was night when I was hustled on board the transport with the wounded. By this time I was able to say fluently that my pass had been lost at Spottsylvania, and my letter was accepted as all right. The officers were happy and comfortable on the upper deck, but the wounded men were packed together on the lower deck in a mass of wet straw. I had been with the boys for weeks, and decided to stick to them to the end. So we snuggled together in the straw. A man came along and gave each of us a loaf of army bread, coarse but fresh, and a pound of boiled salt beef. They could not eat the stuff in such shape. I then had a chance to make a slight return for the kindness shown me. With a big clasp knife I hewed the bread and meat into slices, and thus constructing rude sandwiches, fed them.

When at last the slow transport turned into the Potomac and headed for Washington my fears were again aroused. The orders were most strict in Washington on the pass question. The precious civilians who were managuing the war at a

more or less safe distance were most particular that no one should approach them from the south without proper credentials. I knew that here my letter would not vouch for me. It was after one o'clock in the morning when, worn out with worry, hunger and fatigue, the slamming of the gang plank on the wharf told me I must do something smart if I wished to escape a sojourn in the Old Capitol Prison. The first man to land was the major in charge of the invalided detachment. He had a small hand bag, and made a rather hurried start up the plank. I followed at his heels like an attendant, and as we passed, the sentry made a reach for the bag, but of course did not touch it. The next man with a gun poked his bayonet tentatively toward me, but with a hand wave in the direction of the major I kept right on. It was nearly an hour's walk to Pennsylvania Avenue, but I managed to drag myself up to the door of an ancient hotel, small, but good enough for a change after my adventures. The only man in the bar as I fell in was the proprietor, and to do him full justice he was prepared for me. He reached for a navy revolver, and gave me a minute to get out. There was nothing wrong in judging me by appearances. I was a miserable mockery of a man, and lacked even the quality of picturesqueness. Under cover of the



LUNCHING ON THE FIELD OF CHANCELLORSVILLE.



"LIKE THEM I LEARNED TO WRAP MYSELF IN A BLANKET AND LIE DOWN IN THE MUD."

revolver I produced the warworn letter; he read it and was appeased. With a big horn of brandy for a nightcap I rolled into the first bed I had seen in weeks, and slept undisturbed until the negro boy of all work roused me in time to take the eleven o'clock train for New York. In a few hours I was back at my desk in the office of the

Illustrated Newspaper, grinding out the notes in my grimy wad of drawing paper.

The last tremendous chapters of the War of the Rebellion were on. There was need of artists at the front. I soon became restless, longing to go back again; and this longing was soon to be gratified.

(To be continued.)



IN THE WILDERNESS.—(FAC-SIMILE SKETCH.)