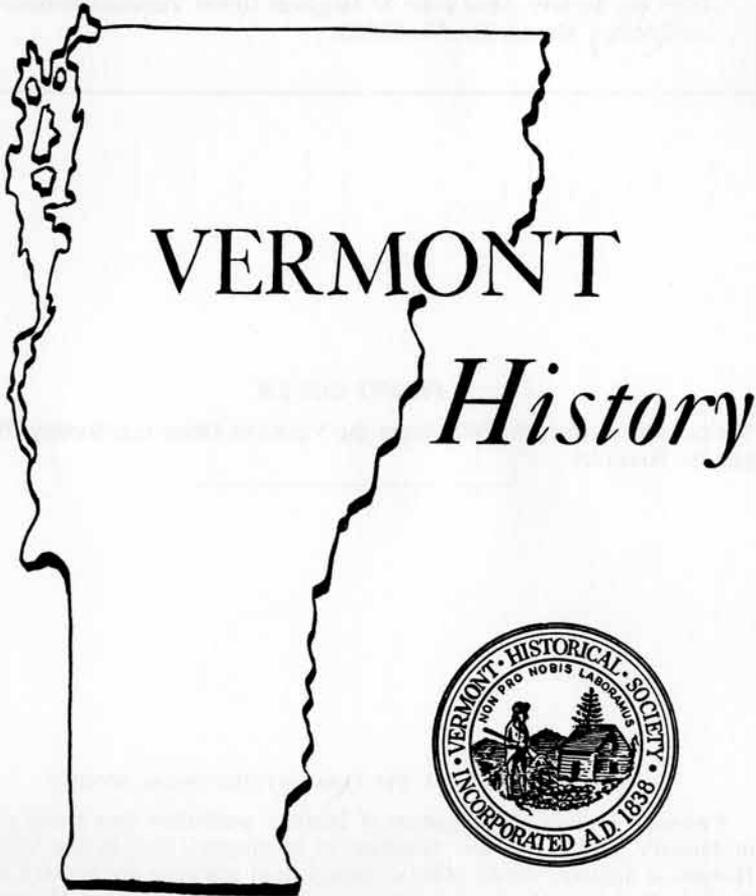


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Officers of Vermont 4th Infantry. Left to right: Capt. Luhn, Maj. Benedict, Capt. Patterson, Maj. Powell, Maj. Cain, Lt. Bothwell. Photo by Matthew Brady. Vermont Historical Society photographic archives.

The Ordeal of Civil War: A Recollection

By HENRY HOUGHTON (1843-1926)

I WAS BORN in Woodstock Vermont, June 16, 1843, and lived in that place until 19 years of age.

August 15, 1862 I enlisted in the service of the United States for three years, or during the War of the Rebellion.

August 16, went to camp on the Fair ground in Woodstock where I was soon taken ill with what proved to be Typhoid Pneumonia, The Surgeon ordered me home where I remained until Sept. 29, when I was sent to the Marine Hospital at Burlington, Vt., where I did some Hospital duty during my convalescence.

The last of October or first of Nov. I was given a ten days furlough which I spent at home. About the middle of Nov. my father came to Burlington to try and get a discharge for me on account of my health remaining so poor, but did not succeed.

Dec. 20 I was formally mustered into the service remaining in Burlington until Jan. 9, 1863, I was sent to the front to join the 3rd Vt. Regiment. I enlisted for Co. F called the West Hartford Co., but on reaching my Regt. they placed me in Co. K, called the Montpelier Co., and I never saw any cause to regret the change the Regt. was in camp near White Oak Church Va. Soon after arriving I had my initiation into the hardships of a soldiers life in the form of a hard march through Virginia mud. We started to go to Fredricksburg, marched all one day then camped for the night, next morning I was detailed to guard the arms and equipments of my Co., while the rest of the Co. were helping to pull the Artillery out of the mud. They worked all day at that and the next day we returned to our old camp and it was always afterward called "Burnside stuck in the mud." During Feb. & March everything was quiet as far as the rebels were concerned, and the Co. were engaged in just the routine of camp duty.

The 25th of Feb. there was a damp snow on the ground about six inches in depth, and the 26th New Jersey Regt. chaledged the 3d & 4th Vt. Regts. to a snow ball battle, they had as many, or more men as both our Regt's. Skirmishers were thrown out and the opposing lines were led by field officers mounted; we captured their officers, Colonel, adjutant and quartermaster and drove them out of their camp. Nearly all the troops in the vicinity gathered to witness the contest.

I remember my Company was on the skirmish line and their Colonel riding on to our skirmish line, I caught his horse by the bit and told him to surrender, but he, feeling a little ugly, tried to draw his sabre, but one of my Co. took him by the coat collar and he concluded to dismount and I took his horse to our Colonel Seaver.

On the 29th of April we started for Fredricksburg again, there was some slight skirmishing by the rest of the troops but my Regt. was not engaged until May 3d we participated in the storming of Maryes Heights where the union army drove the enemy and captured several pieces of Artillery, and a large number of prisoners. The next day the struggle was renewed at Salem Heights, the 3d Vt. Regt. was supporting Motts battery of N.Y. the enemy charged it with three lines of battle, we with the assistance of the battery held our position. That night the 6th Corps fell back across the river at Fredricksburg the 3d being rear guard, the Reb's partly surrounding them in the shape of a horse-shoe and they passing out at the heel, one little circumstance shows the caution we took not to attract the attention of the enemy by anything that would catch their eye: it was quite a light night and we were ordered to take our cups from the outside of our haversacks and place them inside, and trail our arms barrels down, that they would not glisten in the light.

Before we were fairly across the river the enemy had got range of the pontoon bridge and began to shell them. My Company was not fairly off the bridge before the Engineer Corps (who have charge of the bridges) with the assistance of the rebel shells, were tearing them up pretty lively.

We went into camp a short distance from the river, the next morning as soon as we started our fires to get our breakfast, the smoke revealed our whereabouts and the Rebs began to send their compliments in the shape of shell: we soon concluded it was not quite breakfast time, and fell back out of range.

During these engagements Co. K, had none killed and but three wounded, but if it had not been for the watchfulness and bravery of our Colonel T. O. Seaver we should have fared much worse.

We soon returned to a place near our old camp near White Oak Church, remaining there until about the first of June when we broke camp and on June 5th we again crossed the Rappahannock near Fredricksburg with the rest of the Brigade in search of Lee's army: then we marched and countermarched through Virginia and Maryland until July 2nd we found Lee's army at Gettysburg, Pa. on the morning of the second we were about twenty five miles from the battlefield:

the Corps was hurried forward, the 3d Vt. being rear guard, having to stop and scour the woods and drive up the stragglers, did not arrive at the battlefield until about midnight. The next morning we were stationed at the extreme left of the army at the foot of little Round Top. We were not actively engaged but the shell came over the mountain dropping among us quite plenty. On the morning of the 4th we started in pursuit of Lee who had retreated during the night and on the 10 of July was the battle of Funkstown, Md., where the 6th Vt. Regt. and the right wing of the 3d Vt. strongly posted in an old road, repulsed two lines of battle of the enemy.

After the return to Virginia we were for three weeks in a pleasant camp near Warrenton, Va., doing general guard duty, until ordered to New York on the 11th of August to quell the riots on account of the drafting. We marched to Alexandria where we embarked on the 18th on the steamer "Illinois" which narrowly escaped a wreck by a collision with a schooner laden with stone in Chesapeake Bay. One of the side wheels was crushed and they anchored and remained there until the next day for repairs. Arriving in New York on the 21st we were stationed with the 6th Vt. Regt. and 17th Regulars in Tompkins Square where the roughs told what great things we would do if we staid there but finally concluded that they better keep quiet. On Sept. 5th we were sent to Newark New Jersey to mount guard over a New Jersey Regt. which had been recruited from rather poor material by means of large bounties and were deserting in large numbers. On the night of Sept. 7th a number of the Jerseymen undertook to rush past them and run into the relief, consequently got a warm reception: three of the bounty jumpers were killed and four were wounded and there was no more attempting to run guard while we were there on duty although they hated as well as feared us and injured us all they could; A member of Co. H, Alvah T. Bell, was leaning for a minute on his gun with his hand over the muzzle, a Jerseyman crept up slyly and pulled the trigger discharging the musket shattering his hand for life. All the New Jersey soldiers were not like that for there was a New Jersey brigade in the 1st Division of the 6th Corps, that we thought as much of as we did our own men.

Soon after this we returned to Virginia where we rejoined the brigade at Alexandria Sept. 16th then we marched to near Culpepper where we went into camp. We remained in that vicinity some time. On the 5th of October we had a march of fifteen miles and when we camped I with others was detailed to go on picket so near the enemy's picket that we could talk back and forth, we remained two days when

we were relieved, and left to get back to camp the best way we could. We found the regiment had moved so we traveled until after dark and not finding it we put up our tent and camped for the night; there were five of us together and it was raining hard. The next day about noon we found the Regiment.

We remained in the vicinity of Culpepper and Sulphur Springs until about the 19th of October we marched across Bull Run near the old battlefield. On the afternoon of that day there was a lively skirmish at Gainsville by part of the Brigade, but we were not in it. The next day we undertook to run down the rebel cavalry and chased them to Baltimore.

Nothing of consequence transpired in our regiment until the 7th of Nov., [and] the battle of Rappahanock station [where] my regiment was supporting the Jersey brigade when they charged the enemy's works using their bayonets and the butt of their muskets to drive them from their position. Some of the enemy swam the river and a large number surrendered.

On the 27th the Division supported the 3d Corps at the battle of Locust Grove. On the night of the 28th my regiment laid in line of battle near Mine Run, it was so cold that the ground froze considerable, we were so near the enemy that we were not allowed any fires or even to strike a match, we suffered greatly with the cold and several men had frost-bitten hands and feet, and in the 2d. Regt men were frozen to death on the pickets. We expected to charge the enemy's works next morning but did not. It was reported that there was a swamp that we could not cross between us and the enemy.

On the 1st and 2d of December the 3d Regt. with the 77th New York and a battery guarded the Germania Ford and covered the rear while the army marched back to its old camp near Brandy Station.

On the 3d the regiment followed the rest and went into winter quarters near Brandy Station, Va.

On the 18th of Dec. our Division witnessed a painful scene in the execution of two deserters, one George E. Blowers, Co. A from the 2d Vt. and one from the 5th Vt., John Tague. They were recruits and those were more apt to desert than the old men as many enlisted just for the big bounties and not from patriotism. It was a scene I would never wish to witness again.

Jan. 8th 1864 we had our first snow storm of about three inches. In looking over an old letter written by myself dated Jan. 12th 1864, I found this list of the cost of some things in camp. Apples 5 cts apeice, Butter 60 cts a pound, Cheese 40 cts a pound, Eggs 60 cts a doz, Sugar

40 cts a pound, Raisins 50 cts and Candles 10 cts a piece, and if we had anything but coffee, hardtack and salt pork we had to buy it.

The weather was pretty cold through the month of January for camping, and we often really suffered with the cold. Nothing of interest happened in February until the 28th when we marched about twenty-five miles to Orange Court House on a reconnaissance made by the 6th Corps and some cavalry. We were not engaged at all but there was some pretty smart skirmishing by the cavalry: the march was quite severe on us and we were back in camp by the 4th of March.

Soon after the 4th I received a box from home filled with good things, but did not get much benefit from it as I was taken sick in a day or two with black measles, my loss was my tentmates gain as they had the rest of the eatables. I was sent to the hospital and was very sick, was in the hospital until about the first of May when I returned to camp. May 4th the regiment marched into the Wilderness with 600 effective men and one third of them fell in the battles of the 5th and 6th. We marched in on the left of the Orange plank road with Scrub Oak so thick that we could not keep any formation and the first we knew of the enemy we received a volley from a line of battle within a stones throw. One man at my left fell dead, and a bullet went so near the face of the man in my rear that it took an eye out, two bullets went through my haversack and one through my canteen another passed so near my neck that it burned the skin then entered my blanket and when I unrolled it I found nineteen holes in it. On the morning of the 7th we started for Spottsylvania arriving there the 9th, where we lost our beloved Corps commander, Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick.

On the 10th the four right companys A, B, C, & D participated in Upton's famous charge, the rest of the regiment was on the skirmish line at the right of the charging column: the enemy undertook to break through and turn their flank but did not succeed, they charged our skirmish line with two lines of battle. Immediately in front of my company their colors fell three times before they got half way to our lines, when they fell back, the last man to pick up the colors never raised them until he reached the inside of their works.

Our troops took the works and would have held them if they had been properly supported. When ordered to withdraw, some of the Vermonters failed to get the order, Col. Upton rode back to order them away but their answer was "we dont want to go, send us ammunition and rations and we will stay six months."

They did stay two hours after the rest of the column had gone back and then under positive orders from Gen. Russell they were with-

drawn; they fell back to the rear of the skirmish line and lay there that night and the next day. It was on this day that Gen. Grant sent his famous dispatch to Washington: "I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer." The left of the regiment in which my company was, remained on the skirmish line the night of the 10th but rejoined the rest of the regiment the morning of the 11th.

The 12th was the most important day of the twelve spent in the lines at Spottsylvania. The morning opened with rain. They assaulted the enemy's works as soon as it was light enough to see. At first we were supporting Hancock's Corps but soon were called to the front line in the thickest of the battle, nothing but a breastwork of logs between us and the enemy, where we would stab over with our bayonets, men would jump up on the works and his comrades would hand him muskets and he would stand there and fire until shot down when another would take his place and so continue. Sometimes a white flag would show above the rebels and when our fire slackened some would jump over and surrender, and others would be crowded down to fill their places. I saw one man jump over and turn and take deliberate aim at his late comrades and fire, he said he was conscripted into their army but had never fired at the Yanks and he wanted to know what we wanted him to do, stay there and fight or go to the rear, one of our mens gun had got out of repair and he told him to let him take his gun and he better go to the rear. It was a terrible battle, probably the fiercest and most deadly of the war; in this way the Vermont brigade was engaged for about eight hours.

Very soon it became so that we could not stir without treading upon the dead and wounded men, and the brush was literally riddled with bullets. A tree twenty two-inches in diameter was cut down by the constant scaling of the bullets and when it fell it injured several of the enemy's men.

The Vermont brigade was relieved about dark its ammunition being exhausted. We were sent to the right, stumbling through dense woods in the darkness until permitted to halt and rest through the night. On the 13th we moved back to the left and on the 14th we moved with the rest of the 6th Corps to near Spottsylvania Court House. On the 15th the 11th Vt. Regt. joined the brigade. There were more men in this regiment than we had left in the rest of the brigade, and one hundred and fifty recruits were added to the old regiments at this time. This addition brought the brigade up to about what it was when we broke camp on the 4th. On the 16th the 3d regiment was sent out on a reconnaissance under Col. Seaver.

Gen. Grant decided to make one more attempt on Lees' left for this assault, and the 2nd and 6th Corps were again selected, and in the night of the 17th we were moved back to the vicinity of the captured works so as to be there at daylight next day. It was not a very pleasant all-nights march through woods and swamps but we got there just the same and were in position before daybreak. The troops of the 2nd Corps made the first attack, reached the abatis but could get no further and fell back under cover, and now the 6th Corps with the Vt. brigade in front moved through the woods with the shells crashing over our heads out into the open ground where we halted and prepared for the charge. When we started three brigades of the 2nd Corps were in front of us, but we soon overtook the front line and were kindly permitted to take the front.

Here we halted for orders and lay there until about noon under heavy artillery fire and within range of sharpshooters concealed in trees; finding the enemy so strongly entrenched, about noon we marched back to our old position on the extreme left of the army. After two days and nights we started on the evening of the 21st for Guinea Station. Our picket was so close to the enemy that we had to be sheltered by trees or anything we could get behind, and we could not be relieved in the daytime without crawling on our hands and knees; in the night if we made a sound or motion it was sure to bring a shot.

After a while the order was whispered along the line to withdraw a half mile to the rear, to some rifle pits. We could not withdraw without being seen, so at a given signal we started on a dead run, and the bullets were flying thick after us. The enemy chased us until we got to the rifle pits then they thought it best to stop, they made several attempts to drive us out but they did not succeed.

At nine o'clock on the 23d we were at the crossing of the North Anna river where the 5th Corps were having a brush with the enemy, and in the seventy-four hours previous we had sixty-seven hours of about the hardest duty possible with a fight thrown in. On the 24th and 25th we had two days of comparative rest, the most we had had at any one time since the fourth of May. We started on the night of the 26th and were marching and countermarching two or three days, there was some skirmishing and fighting with the rest of the army although our brigade was not engaged; and on the 31st we started for Cold Harbor, the Vermont brigade as usual leading the advance. It was a hard dusty march and the first day of June the battle of Cold Harbor was begun. In the assault the 3d Vt. was thrown out as skirmishers where we advanced under terrific fire from artillery and musketry until within

five hundred yards of their works, and finding it impossible to advance farther we halted and began to dig pits with our bayonets, cups and plates and held our position until night and during the night entrenched our position. Here we spent ten days, the Vermont brigade in the front line. During all this time hostilities were in progress except a while on the 7th there was a flag of truce up to bury the dead. When their flag was hauled down they shouted to us, "Lay down Yanks we have got orders to fire." During all this time the front line was relieved every day, each relief being in front one day and two days in the rear, and we were so near the enemy that we had to be relieved in the night.

On the night of the 12th we started for the James River reaching Wilcox landing on the morning of the 15th where we lay for two days guarding the bridge. The night of the 16th we crossed the pontoon bridge which I thought was the longest pontoon bridge ever laid. It swayed so that several men pitched overboard but they only lost their guns and got thoroughly wet themselves.

We marched up near Petersburg where we lay until June 21st when we were relieved by the 18th Corps and moved around to the Weldon railroad running south from Petersburg.

On the 23d we had a smart skirmish with the enemy where between four and five hundred were killed, wounded and taken prisoners, all the prisoners were taken from the 4th and 11th Vt. Regt's. Nothing more of importance occurred in my brigade until the 29th when we got orders to go out to Reams station ten miles south of Petersburg to relieve Wilson's cavalry that had been sent out on a reconaissance. We were put in front again as usual and double quicked most of the way. Within two miles of Reams station my regiment was deployed as skirmishers and engaged and drove from the field the skirmish line of the enemy, and as Wilson had got away the enemy concluded not to stop and see the 6th Corps. So this was all the fighting done at this time.

The Vermont brigade bivouacked for the night at Reams station and my company was on picket, we captured a rebel officer neatly: he had been out in the country and had four or five horses and some negroes and as he rode along in the road he mistook our pickets for rebels. When we challenged him he said, "We need not be so scared, there was not a Yankee within ten miles of there." But when he heard us cock our guns he began to mistrust there were some a little nearer than that. The next day we returned to near Petersburg where we remained until July 9th at the request of President Lincoln the 6th

Corps was ordered to Washington on account of a threatened attack by Early upon that city.

We started at midnight and marched over a road ankle deep with dust and reached City Point at six o'clock in the morning, the distance being fourteen miles. Here we took transports for Washington and it was quite a rest and relief to be on the water out of the trenches and dust for awhile. We landed in Washington on the morning of the 12th which was not an hour too soon as Early was within five miles of the city in plain sight of the dome of the Capitol. We marched up 7th St. and out on Rockville pike to Fort Stevens where my regiment was posted in rifle pits to the left of the fort. The 3d brigade of Gettys division had a fight with Early driving him back one mile and at sundown they were relieved by the Vt. brigade which picketed the front for the night. Early found that the 6th Corps was in front of him and he concluded to fall back that night nearer his base of supplies. The next day we started in pursuit and by noon the 14th we reached Poolsville having marched forty miles in twenty four hours. We remained here until the 16th at daylight we crossed into Virginia fording the



*Camp of the 13th Vermont Volunteers at Wolf Run Shoals, Virginia.
Vermont Historical Society photographic archives.*

Potomac river at Whites Ford and Conrads Ferry. Here the old members of the 3d Vt. Regt. whose three years term had expired took their leave for home. On the 18th of July we crossed the Blue Ridge and had our first view of the Shenandoah valley, and in the next three months we got pretty well acquainted with it.

On the 21st we turned around and marched back to Washington and on the 26th we started away from Washington and arrived at Harpers Ferry the 29th. The Corps marched seventy five miles in two days and twenty hours. Next day we got orders to go back into Maryland to repel the invasion by Early's forces. These were the three hardest marches of the whole war, where hundreds fell by the roadside overcome by the heat and weariness, and many, many horses gave out. These marches cost the Corps more lives than a hard fought battle. About the first of August the President came to the conclusion that there would not be much accomplished until they had a new General and Grant sent Philip Sheridan from the army of the Potomac and he took command on the 7th of August of all the forces in Washington, Maryland and West Virginia and we soon found we had a General to lead us and not to follow us. We went once more to Harpers Ferry, and we were there so often that the boys began to call the place Harpers Weekly. We marched up and down the valley and had some skirmishing until the 21st at Charlestown we were having Sunday morning inspection when Early's army drove in our pickets, we packed up as soon as possible and started for the skirmish line, my regiment with the 4th and 6th were deployed as skirmishers and the rest of the brigade were very soon called on to the skirmish line and we were hotly engaged and held our lines all day against more than double our number. In the afternoon I was hit with a spent bullet it being the third time that they came as near as I cared to have them, also about this time two bullets passed close to me and wounded two comrades named Fuller, father and son, the father afterwards died of his wounds. Lieut. Thompson in command asked me if I could tell where those bullets came from? I told him from a clump of bushes to our right, and he ordered the whole company to load and fire into those bushes, which we did and no more bullets came from there.

That night Sheridan, not liking his position, withdrew his army to Halltown. We remained at Halltown and vicinity (with some marches and the other troops had some skirmishes but no fighting in my brigade) until Sept. 13th when our division with some cavalry was sent to find the enemy.

We crossed a small stream called the Opequan, and met the enemy's

pickets a short distance beyond. We were near a house where there were a number of swarms of bees, and one of my tent mates thought he would have a little honey. He took my rubber blanket and wrapped up a hive and started for the rear, but the bees and enemy's bullets made it a little too warm for him. He said he had lent the blanket to the Rebs to carry the bees home in, but they never have returned it.

We fell back across the creek in the rear of Cowan's battery which had a pretty sharp fight with a battery of the enemy and several men in the brigade were wounded with fragments of shell. We returned to our camp at nightfall.

Nothing more of importance in our regiment until the morning of the 19th. We were up at one o'clock and at two o'clock we were moving across the country in the darkness to Berrysville and Winchester pike, crossed the Opequan about daylight, encountered the enemy near Winchester, and here occurred a hard, hotly contested battle, one of the hardest, considering the number of men engaged. Sheridan was always found in the thickest of the fight, and about four or five o'clock he rode along the lines shouting, "Give it to them boys, I have sent Custer with his cavalry in on the right and told him to give them hell and he is doing it." Soon we saw Custer coming down on their flank, hat in hand and long hair flying in the wind, yelling like demons, and the rebs started up the valley without stopping to bid us good bye. It was the biggest stampede I saw during the war. The rebs had been singing all summer, "Oh Yanks ain't you glad to get out of the Wilderness?". And now we began to sing, "Oh Johnny aint you glad to get out of Winchester?"

At sunrise next morning we began to follow them up, we marched all the forenoon without water only what little we had in our canteens in the morning: we halted for dinner, and soon after starting I was prostrated by a sunstroke, our surgeon gave me a pass for the ambulance and I was carried by that the rest of the day. At night being close to the regiment I joined my company to draw my rations and next day I rode in the ambulance all day, returned to my company that night and remained with them as the ambulance was so crowded that a man must go on foot if he could possibly crawl. Not being able for duty the Captain gave my gun to a man that had lost his and I was excused from duty for several days.

At the battle of Fishers Hill Sept. 22d I was near enough so that the bullets flew around pretty lively. At the close of the second day our army sent the rebs scampering up the valley again. Sheridan always at the front shouted, "Run boys run, don't give them a chance to rally,"

and added to those too tired to run," If you can't run then cheer." It was a victory sure enough, there were many prisoners, guns and battle-flags captured. Our brigade headquarter's flag was afterwards mounted on a handsome staff captured at this time. The 24th we marched all day chasing Early. The artillery would shell them as long as they were in range, then limber up and make a dash for the next rising ground and shell them again as long as they were in range and so on all day. There was some slight skirmishing with the cavalry but the infantry could not get near enough to shoot. Ambulance and supply train filled the turnpike, 6th Corps on the left, and 19th Corps on the right of the pike. At night the tired troops of the 6th Corps were some two miles ahead of the 19th Corps when they went into camp almost within range of Early's guns. Early made a show of halting, but after dark he left his camp fires burning and "folded his tent and silently stole away" and we saw him no more until the morning of the battle of Cedar Creek.

About the first of October there was a report in camp that the mountains were full of rebel soldiers, forming themselves into guerilla bands and a detail was made up of my regiment and the 1st Vt. cavalry to break them up. We soon ran across a cider brandy distillery and some of the men helped themselves pretty freely to the brandy. We captured a man belonging to the 3d Virginia that was after some old rye whiskey that he knew where there was a barrel buried. He said that if we would let him have what he wanted we might have the rest. We also got some cattle and sheep and returned to camp that night, some of the men in not a very good condition to hunt guerrillas.

We spent the rest of the time until the 10th marching up and down the valley destroying mills, grain and everything that would help the enemy. And we captured a great many cattle. Rations being short we had to live a great deal upon what we could forage.

About this time, Sheridan, thinking Early had left the valley detached the 6th Corps and started it to rejoin Grant's army. We had just crossed the Shenandoah river when orders came from Sheridan to return. We immediately recrossed in water about hip deep and camped for the night near the bank of the river. We started the next morning (our clothing still wet from fording the river) and after a hard day's march we joined the rest of the army at Cedar Creek. Everything seeming all quiet, on the 16th Sheridan started for Washington having been called there by Secretary Stanton to confer with him in regard to future plans.

Every thing remained quiet until the morning of the 19th at two or

three o'clock we were aroused by firing on the picket line. As it soon began to die down, there were but few that got up and dressed and packed up. I was among that number. We remained in that shape until about daylight the firing became much heavier and the men of the 8th Corps began to rush through our camp in light marching order, in shirts and pants, some with guns without equipments and some with equipments without guns, fearfully demoralized. You would have thought by their story that not a half dozen men of their Corps had escaped being killed or captured.

About this time we had orders to "fall in, right face, march" with nearly one half our men asleep in their tents: but the racket soon sent them pouring out of their tents and our Corps was soon on the move, we fell back behind a slight elevation where we held our ground for some time with our customary stubbornness, then we were ordered back to another position. During this move a shell passed, it seemed as though within an inch of my head and took the heel off the boot of the Captain who was a little ways in front of me farther up the hill, entered the ground but did not explode. We took our position at the top of a hill, in the open ground without as much as a bush to shield us, where we held our lines until ordered back. Here Corporal Voodry was killed very close to me. Then we continued to fall back stubbornly resisting every foot of the ground, until about ten o'clock, we took another stronger position and prepared for a final stand.

Early's men were becoming scattered pilfering our camps and he did not follow us up as he had before. About this time we began to hear vigorous cheering in our rear, everyone was surprised we could not think what it meant. Soon we saw Sheridan coming in sight with his black horse, white with foam from his two hours mad gallop from Winchester. I thought I had seen horses run before but I concluded I never had. Of all the cheering I ever heard, that beat it. I should have thought it might have frightened Early's army out of the valley.

When Sheridan met Gen. Getty he asked "What troops are on the skirmish line?" Gen. Getty replied, "The whole of the Vermont brigade." We are all right, says Sheridan, "We'll have our old camps back to night." If he had been with us in the morning or our beloved Sedgewick had been alive this stampede would never have happened, because the troops had confidence in them. Sheridan began to ride among the troops encouraging them and reorganizing the lines. There were two or three slight attacks by Early which were easily repulsed.

About four o'clock the 1st division of our Corps charged the enemy who were posted behind a stone wall; the first charge was repulsed

but they soon reformed and went for them with a rush, and then commenced another headlong rush up the valley until we came to the crossing of Cedar Creek. There we found Sheridan, he would not allow any of the infantry to go farther but said, "Every regiment to its camp of the morning"; and he sent Custer and his cavalry on after the fleeing Rebs. Our captured cannon was all retaken and most of their artillery, and many prisoners, and most every thing they had. So ended the battle of Cedar Creek, our defeat of the morning was turned into a glorious victory at night, all by the reinforcement of one man, although the Rebs thought we must have large reinforcements. The prisoners asked us how many, and when we told them they said they thought he was in Washington or they would not have attacked us.

We remained in that camp two days after the battle and then moved to a pleasant little village called Strasburg where we remained about two weeks. I put in my time as guard at the house of a shoemaker who was left at home to make shoes for the rebel army. On the 9th of November we moved back to Newtown, and on the 10th to Kernstown where part of Early's army and our cavalry had a little brush, and that was the last of Early's army in the Shenandoah valley.

We remained at Kernstown a month and got our quarters fixed up and was in hopes to stay there all winter. Our wishes were not consulted and on the 9th of December we broke camp marched to Stevenson Depot took the train and about midnight in a driving snowstorm we passed through Harpers Ferry where I bade farewell to the Shenandoah valley forever. We arrived in Washington somewhere about noon the 10th at once embarked on transports and arrived at City Point the 12th then we marched to the Weldon railroad where so many of the 4th and 12th regiments were captured the June before. There we took the place of the 2d Corps. The Rebs hallooted to us and asked us what troops we were we told them the same troops that had been there, and they said, "You need not lie to us, we know better." That night one of our men was shot and they stole his cap and then they shouted back, "Yes you d----d 6th Corps, got back again haint you."

Some time in November I sent for a box from home and did not receive it until near the middle of January and it had been so long on the road that most every thing was spoiled; it was quite a disappointment as rations were short. Many times the rations for one man a day would not be more than what they might eat at one meal to satisfy their hunger. but still the rations allowed by the government would be more than sufficient, and we concluded that if we were among the Romans we must do as the Romans did.

One night when I was on brigade guard, I was stationed as guard over the quartermaster's supplies. I borrowed a box of hardtack and next day it was a great wonderment to the rest of the regiment how Co.K had hardtack to issue. When we had been there sometime some of the officers of the 11th Vt. began to think they were of considerable importance. One morning one of their Captains was detailed for brigade officer of the day. When he inspected our guns, one of his regiment's mens gun was loaded and he gave him an awful damming. While this was going on several from my regiment loaded our guns. When the Captain came to one of our men he said, "Is your gun loaded?" He answered, "Yes sir." How do you know it will go, said he, "Dam you, step out there and let me try it and see." And he had got about enough of the 3d Vt; when we were relieved he wanted we should march about two miles by the brigade headquarters, when directly to camp it was only one fourth of a mile and the detail from my regiment and the 4th thought the nearest way home was the easiest so we started and had gone but a short distance when he saw us and started after us with his horse. About half way between us and camp was a row of abatis; we dodged through them and as he could not get through with his horse he had to turn around and go back, and that was the last of our trouble with him.

The winter was passed in hard picket and fatigue duty. When we were on picket we were very close to the Rebs' pickets so that we talked back and forth and there was a good deal of blackguarding. Wood being very scarce only between the lines, one day I went out after some I met a reb and we cut down a tree together, he chopping one side and I the other — after it fell I chopped down one side of the log and he the other, then we split it and he had one half and I the other, then we swapped hats and went back to camp and I am quite sure I wore that hat until just before the last review in Washington.

One day the Rebs sent out a six mule team and twelve men after wood between the picket lines, not having a very good chance to get wood the teamster said he had a good mind to go over to the Yanks, and the sergeant in charge of the detail said "go ahead" and they came team and all.

All through February and March there were a great many deserters coming into our camp. On the 25th of March we had another fight with them when we took quite a strip of their picket line and a large number of prisoners; on the 27th they attempted to retake it but failed. It was nothing unusual to have firing on the picket in the night and the long roll would be beat and we would have to crawl out of our warm



Colonel Whiting, Lieutenant Colonel Stannard and Assistant Surgeon Carpenter of the 2nd Vermont Regiment before the Battle of Bull Run, July 1861. Vermont Historical Society photographic archives.

bunks at three or four o'clock and stand under arms shivering until daylight. Nothing more occurred of any account until the 2nd of April when we were called out about one o'clock in the morning and marched about two miles to the left where my brigade formed in three lines of battle, my regiment in the second line. We lay on the damp ground shivering until daylight when the signal was given for the charge. With a volley and a yell, enough to scare the nations we started for their works, and there has always been a great controversy about what men were first upon their works, but we always claimed that our color bearer and Col. Kennedy of the 5th who was promoted from Chaplain of my company to that position, in the winter preceeding, were the first two men of our brigade upon the works. If there were any before them they had done some pretty tall hustling. The enemy soon got out of there in a hurry, without stopping to put their house in order. With hard fighting on our side and stubborn resistance on theirs we passed the day. The old brigade captured a large number [of] artil-

lery and baggage wagons and sent them to the rear for others to take back and they got the honor of capturing them.

That night we went into camp and threw up breastworks and the next morning started in pursuit of Lee's army. When Lee found he must abandon his strong position in front of Petersburg, he started with the intention of joining Johnson's army near Danville but on the evening of the 5th he found his way blocked by Sheridan's cavalry. Then he turned and was in hopes to reach the mountains where he could make another stand. During all this time we had been following him and on the morning of the 6th we started, my division in front. After marching several miles we found Lee was in another direction; we about faced, which brought my division in the rear, marched back through our camp of the night before, then started after Lee again and overtook his rear guard near Sailor Creek where the 1st and 3d division had a smart little fight with Stonewall Jackson's old Corps which had faced us on so many a hotly contested field. They succeeded in capturing most of the Corps, when my brigade was put in front again with the 2nd Vt. thrown out as skirmishers. Soon after crossing the creek we overtook them where we had a slight skirmish and there was the last time I heard the song of the rebel bullet. Next morning we pushed on and about dusk passed through Farmville where the streets were crowded with cavalry and rebel prisoners. We crossed the river on pontoon bridges and marched pretty much all night. Next morning my brigade was detached from the rest of the Corps and sent back to Farmville for guard duty where we remained until the 10th when we started to rejoin the Corps and had marched several miles when we received the news of Lee's surrender.

About this time we met large numbers of rebels going to the rear and they were begging for hardtack. We divided with them. The next day we marched to Burksville Junction.

On the 15th we received the sad news of President Lincoln's assassination, it was received with indescribable grief and indignation. We knew that our brigade stood high in his estimation and we mourned with almost a personal sorrow.

We received news that Sherman had not succeeded in capturing Johnson and on the 23d Sheridan took the 6th Corps with his cavalry and started for Danville. He told Gen Wright to march to the river, and he would be there with his cavalry and have the pontoon bridges laid, but when we got there we found we were several miles ahead of Sheridan. It was as hard a march as we had had during the whole war, but as we thought we were going to be in to the death of it there

was but little straggling. In four days we had covered more than one hundred miles. We marched through the village of Danville and camped near the line between Virginia and North Carolina and here we learned that Johnson had surrendered.

Next day in conversation with a rebel Colonel he told me there were more men in our Corps than in Johnson's whole army. Our brigade took cars on the 13th and arrived next day in Manchester near Richmond. We made the journey a little easier if not quite as quick as we could on foot: the engine was out of order and the track likewise, and to show the speed we had I will relate a little incident that I saw: we were on flat bottom cars; a small rabbit ran across the track and a man in my company sitting beside me jumped off caught the rabbit and jumped back on again while the train was going.

We stayed in Manchester four days and here I had the honor of visiting Libby prison for the first time and I brought away a memento in the shape of a splinter which I cut from a door. I had never had any great anxiety to visit it before but had had two or three polite invitations.

Gen. Wright failing to get transportation to Washington decided to march his men there. There was some growling as we thought we ought to be used as well as the rebel prisoners who were transported to their homes. It has been called an easy march of about twelve miles a day but I called it anything but easy; I never saw so many stragglers in all my army life; there would hardly be enough men with the officers for a body guard. If we had tried as hard to keep up with the column as we did when following the enemy many would never have reached Washington. We usually joined our company at night, being so well acquainted with the country we could take to the fields and avoid the mud, and cut across lots to save distance, which made it much easier for us.

June 2nd we went into camp near Baileys Cross Roads; on the 7th we were reviewed by Gov. Smith of Vermont and on the 8th of June we were reviewed by the President in Washington. It was a terrible hot day and just from our long march and our review of the day before it was very trying and many were prostrated by the heat. We got many compliments on our fine appearance and Maj. Gen. Casey said we were the only brigade that saluted the President properly.

The morning report of June 7th showed 320 men present for duty out of over 1200 which had been in the regiment since its organization. There had been about 200 discharged on account of expiration of term of service and some were discharged because of disability; the

rest were killed, wounded or died from disease. On the 11th of July we were mustered out of the service, I started for home, reached New York on the 13th and when we got there we had no rations and they said we must wait until next day for transportation home. Our Colonel told the railroad officials if they would not run the train, he had men that could, and would; they concluded to run their own train and we were soon on the road.

The Colonel telegraphed to Rutland that we should be there next morning at daylight and his men had been without rations since the morning of the day before, and he wanted them to furnish some. When we got there, there was no sign of any provision; after the Colonel had preached to them a few moments they began to roll out their barrels of crackers and bring out their cheese, and we made out — what we considered at that time — a pretty good breakfast.

We arrived in Burlington in the afternoon of the 14th and was met at the Depot by an escort of citizens and escorted to the City Hall where we were welcomed by showers of bouquets by the ladies and speeches by several leading citizens, after which we had dinner, the best dinner I had tasted for nearly three years, then we marched out to the Marine Hospital where the regiment remained for several days when we were paid off and started for home.

I arrived in the village of Woodstock about one o'clock in the night, shouldered my house and clothing, took "old trusty" and started for my father's home about three miles out: after some loitering on the way, I reached there about three o'clock.