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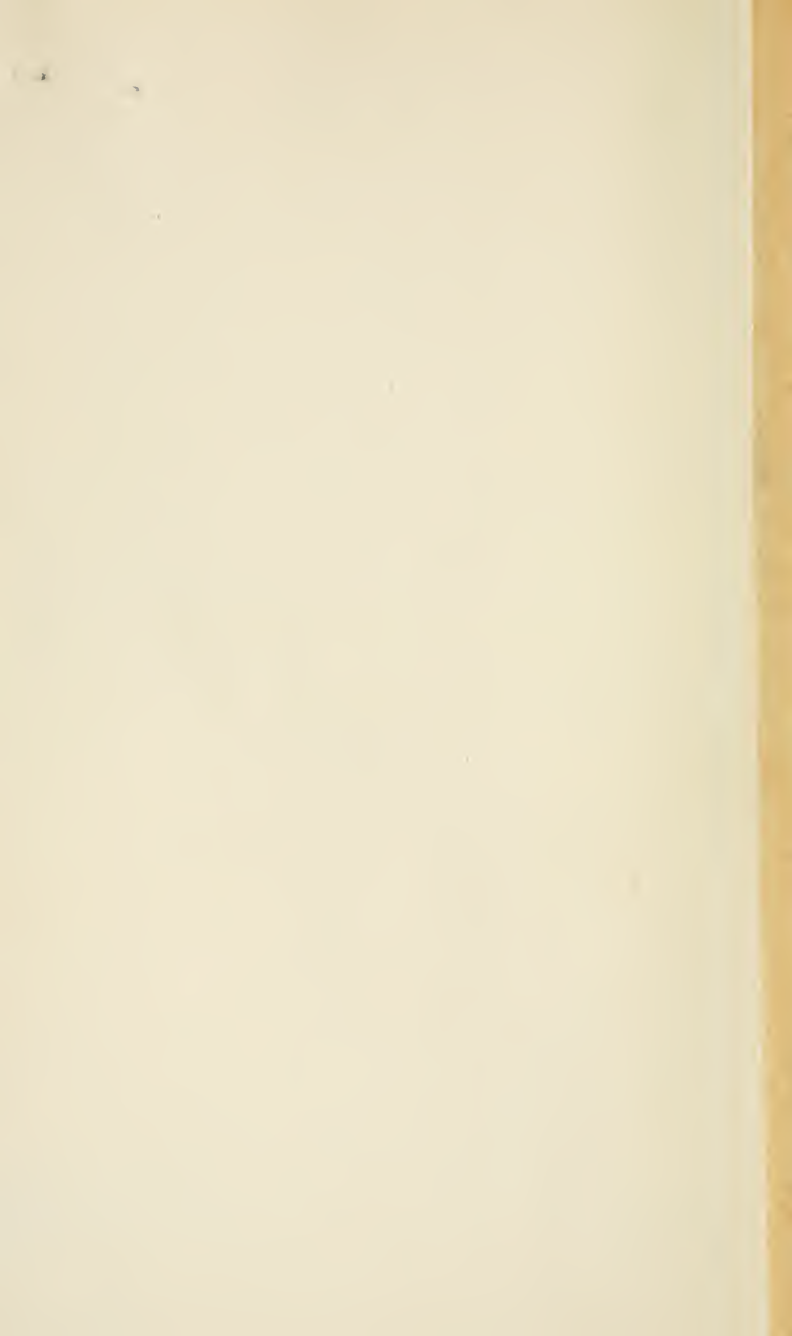


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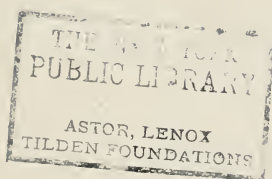
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TELEGRAPHING
IN BATTLE





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LIGHT FIELD SERVICE

TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

BY

JOHN EMMET O'BRIEN, M. D.

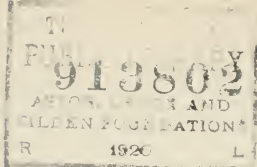
OPERATOR AND CIPHER-OPERATOR U. S. MILITARY
TELEGRAPH, 1862-1866



SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA

1910

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TO
ANDREW CARNEGIE,
WHO CALLED INTO EXISTENCE THE
MILITARY TELEGRAPH,
AND WHOSE EXAMPLE WAS AN INSPIRATION
TO MANY BOYS,
THESE REMINISCENCES ARE FRATEERNALLY
DEDICATED, AS A SUGGESTION OF
INDUSTRY AND PATRIOTISM
TO YOUNG AMERICA.

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PREFACE

The Author is aware that these reminiscences are rather discursive and personal, but hopes that such faults may be pardoned for the sake of some valuable material, first-hand glimpses of great men and events, and heroic deeds of his comrades, which he has felt an imperative obligation to record. The Reader is urged to glance often at the maps, which Mr. Homer D. Cox has skilfully simplified from those of the War Department.

Scranton, Pa., 1910.

TELEGRAPHING
IN BATTLE

TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN OF THE MILITARY TELEGRAPH—ANDREW
CARNEGIE—REMINISCENCES OF MR. CAR-
NEGIE AND RICHARD O'BRIEN.

THE unique experience and observation of two military telegraphers, Richard O'Brien, chief operator, and myself, the youngest telegrapher then in the world, in camp, march, siege and battle, in peculiar contact with great men and events, sometimes behind the scenes, sometimes flung into the very midst of action in the lurid drama of the Civil War, furnish the theme of these reminiscences.

Richard was nine years my senior and had preceded me by two years in the telegraph. His experience and service in the war were of more importance and his story would be more interesting than mine, but one cannot know even a brother's reminiscences so intimately as his own, and so the best I can do is

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to first give an epitome of Richard's career, which will partly explain my own unique position, and then tell our experiences together as I remember them. He was born in Waterford County, Ireland, December 30, 1839, and I, October 7, 1848. Our parents had been living in Philadelphia for some years, but having met reverses by the failure of the United States Bank, they had gone back to Ireland shortly before Richard's birth. They returned, with five children, of whom I was the youngest, to this country in 1851.

American readers do not care for foreign genealogy; they like to trace their own back two or three centuries to the pilgrims or the cavaliers, but a pure Celtic line reaching back a thousand years, or so, does not interest them, though, as is probable in Richard's case, it transmits the brain and intelligence of ancient energy through many centuries. These matters of heredity and ethnology are not well known or broadly appreciated except by scholars, but, after all, philosophy speaks rather for the universal fraternity of men than for racial distinctions.

With a common school education and exceptional individual capacity Richard, in 1856, took up telegraphy, which was the highest development of electrical science in the middle of the century. He operated on the first Morse line extending from Philadelphia, known as the "Atlantic and Ohio," and on the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1856, serving in various

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capacities and at different stations until the outbreak of the Civil War, which found him chief operator of the middle division of that road, stationed at Harrisburg.

When, after the destruction of railroads and telegraphs by the mobs of Baltimore in April, 1861, Mr. Lincoln called upon Thomas A. Scott, vice-president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, for aid in restoring communication between the North and Washington, O'Brien was one of the four telegraph assistants selected by Andrew Carnegie in carrying out that vital enterprise which involved the transportation of troops rushing to the defense of the Capital.

Just how this emergency arose on the Baltimore route we will let Mr. William J. Dealy, a valued comrade of the military telegraph, explain :

“In April, 1861, I was in the service of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad Company, and was sent from my regular station, Magnolia, to a new office at Back River, six miles north of Baltimore. There was a guard of six or eight armed men in the service of the railroad company sent to Back River, to prevent interference with, or damage to, the bridge. April 19th, the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment, on its way to Washington, unarmed and without uniforms, was attacked in the streets of Baltimore by a mob and driven back. These retreating soldiers caused extra vigilance on the part of the guard and myself. I was on duty fifty-six hours, and finally,

TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE

becoming exhausted, went to bed about 2 A.M., April 22nd, only to be awakened and captured three hours later. The night mail train from Philadelphia to Baltimore passed south safely and reached Canton, a suburb of Baltimore, where it was stopped by a force of eighty policemen and eighty militia. A bridge crossing a small creek or canal at Canton had been destroyed to prevent this train from going farther. After the passengers and baggage were landed, the policemen and militia took possession of the cars, and compelled the engineer by threats to start northward. I never fully understood why the police and militia did the very thing that it was our duty to prevent and became bridge burners, but I remember their explanation was that Baltimore was excited, and it was necessary, as a means of cooling the excitement, to prevent troops from passing through the city for the present. The only effectual way to prevent it was to cut off communication by burning the bridges. They claimed to have the authority or sanction of the city officials for their action. The officer in command of these one hundred and sixty men was a Major Trimble, who had previously been superintendent of the railroad, and was subsequently a major-general in the rebel army. The first stop of the train on its way back was at Back River, about 5 A.M., where I was hurriedly awakened, and told to jump aboard. I took my instruments with me, considering myself lucky in being saved from the bridge burners

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that had been long expected, as I supposed the police and militia had come to protect the road. They then cut down several telegraph poles, cut the wire, and started the train. The captain of the militia, whose name, I believe, was Matthews, told me I was the first political prisoner of the war. Our next stop was Gunpowder bridge, nineteen miles north of Baltimore, where we stopped but a few moments. We arrived at Magnolia, two miles farther north, just as the operator, J. A. Swift, now electrician in the Storm Signal Bureau, Washington, was coming down the road from his home to begin the labors of the day, and he was also made a prisoner. Our next stop was on the bridge that crosses Bush River. Bush River is about six miles north of Magnolia, or twenty-seven from Baltimore. The bridge is three-quarters of a mile long, and built of trestle work, the same as Gunpowder bridge, which is about a mile long.

"We were met on the bridge by a south-bound freight train in charge of Conductor Goodwin. It then transpired that the object of the party was to go to Havre de Grace (thirty-six miles from Baltimore), get possession of the railroad company's steamer *Maryland*, used to transport trains across the Susquehanna, and scuttle her. In this, however, they were defeated. Swift and myself were now anxious to leave the train, as we wanted to get to the next telegraph office, Perrymansville, a mile and a half distant, and warn Havre de Grace, but the doors of the car

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were locked, and a sentinel paced each platform. Conductor Goodwin, however, evidently changed their plans, by telling them it was known at Havre de Grace that they were on the road, and that troops were there to receive them. In fact, he intimated that they might, since he left, have received orders to march and meet them. The freight train, after considerable switching, the road being single-track, was then allowed to pass south. The road has since become double-track, and the old steamer *Maryland* has been superseded by a magnificent bridge across the Susquehanna. The *Maryland* is now owned by the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company, and transfers trains, passengers and freight between the Pennsylvania depot at Jersey City and the New Haven depot at Mott Haven. It is a fine ferry-boat, and when on the Susquehanna River, had three tracks and could take seven cars on each, twenty-one in all. She has since been remodeled and can be seen any day on the East River with her trains.

"The draw of the Bush River bridge was then burned and we returned to Gunpowder bridge, the draw of which was also burned. At the southern end of this bridge is Harewood station, where we breakfasted. Swift had been released at Magnolia on the way back. About noon we started again on our backward way, and I found myself again at Back River. The bridge here was about 800 feet long and

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the bridge tender, a Mr. Butler, since dead, who had been a sea captain, and used to salt his vessel to make it fire-proof, had also salted the bridge. His plan and practice was to place salt, rock-salt generally, along the timbers in the evening. The dew of night would dissolve it, and the timbers would become impregnated with the salt. When sparks from passing locomotives fell upon the bridge, the salt would ooze out in moisture and smother the fire. Several unsuccessful attempts were made to burn this bridge, but the salt saved it.

"I expected to be released here, but it was suggested that I join a light artillery company, then in Baltimore, about to start for Richmond, and probably with the hope of securing me, they took me to Baltimore. I was then released, walked back to my station, Back River, six miles, and after resting, walked to Havre de Grace, thirty more miles. Crossing the burned bridges on hands and knees, and the Susquehanna in a row boat, I took train to Philadelphia, and after reporting to A. W. Decoster, superintendent of telegraph, was taken to S. M. Felton, president, and to Mr. N. P. Trist, paymaster."¹

At a reunion and banquet of military telegraphers held at the Hotel Manhattan in New York, March 29, 1907, Mr. Carnegie related to us some of his experiences at the origin of the United States Mili-

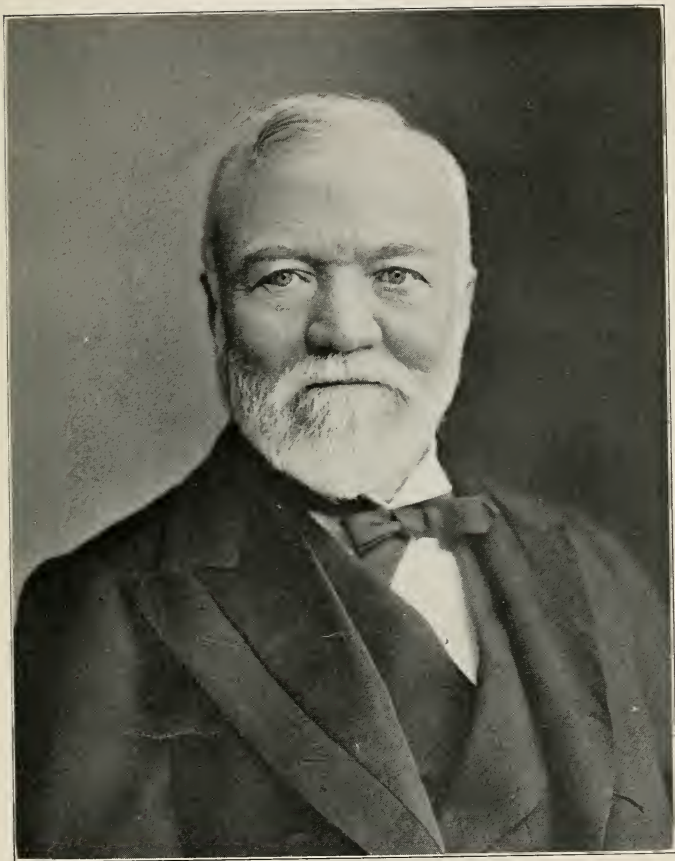
¹Written in 1878 to William R. Plum, historian of the military telegraph.—*Telegraph Age*, April 1, 1909.

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tary Telegraph: In proceeding from Annapolis to Washington on the hastily repaired road he, riding on the locomotive, observed that the wires were pulled down, twisted together and pinned to the ground. Stopping the engine he jumped off and taking hold of the wires and, pulling them up, they flew in his face, lacerating it so that he entered Washington bleeding and grimy. The telegraph corps, therefore, claims that one of its pioneers, Andrew Carnegie—the real father of military telegraphs—was the third man to shed his blood for his country in the Civil War; the first two having been men of the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment, injured in the Baltimore riot of April 19, 1861.

Carnegie remained with Scott about Washington, handling the railroads and telegraphs until November, 1861, when, the emergency at Washington having passed, he returned to the Pennsylvania Railroad at Pittsburg, where his services were imperatively needed, not only in the interest of the road itself, but because its efficiency as a great artery of transportation was of vital importance to the nation in that critical time; but this service, except as to his going with Mr. Scott and these operators to aid the Government at the request of Mr. Lincoln, has been overlooked in the overshadowing marvels of his later career.

At a second Carnegie banquet I made the following notes at the time: The seventy-third birthday of the great ironmaster philanthropist, (erroneously



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Founder of the Military Telegraph

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given as his seventy-first by the New York papers) was celebrated on November 27, 1908, by a banquet given at Hotel Manhattan, New York, in his honor by Mr. Carnegie's old comrades of the military telegraph of the Civil War.

Mr. Carnegie had in the December *Century Magazine* given his views on the tariff, and in his new book, "Problems of To-day: Wealth, Labor, Socialism," he dealt in bold and masterly fashion with those vital topics. In the informal exchange of reminiscences with old comrades at this supper he occasionally let fly a shaft of humor or philosophy, as: "I had no idea that so many eminent men in the different professions began life as telegraphers," said Mr. Carnegie, who himself began to send messages when he was fourteen years old. "And to this day the men the mention of whose names touch my heart most are those who were kind to me when I was a boy. A friend of mine once said he would give five million dollars to feel then as he did when he received fifty-four dollars for teaching school all Summer when he was young—whereupon I said to him, 'You are always wanting something for half what it is worth.' That is the way I feel with reference to my youth, for no boy ever had a happier time than I had among my associates in the work of telegraphy in those days.

"I consider this occasion the greatest public honor ever conferred on me. No man should value too

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much the perfunctory applause that comes to him in a Pickwickian sense. But there is nothing equal to this, that in my mature years—or old age, if I must confess it—the friends of my boyhood are the friends of my old age. I would rather have the certificates of character that you who knew me as a boy give me than all the other signatures obtainable.”

There were 116 men at the banquet, from many parts of the country. Colonel Clowry, president of the Western Union Telegraph, acted as toastmaster, sitting between Mr. Carnegie and Thomas A. Edison. Colonel Clowry was in war time in charge of the military telegraph in the States of Missouri, Arkansas and Texas, and the strong qualities there displayed have since carried him to the head of the greatest telegraph system in the world.

Another guest of honor was William R. Plum, to whose history, “Military Telegraph in the Civil War,” I have been both a contributor, and, sometimes, in the following pages, a debtor.

At the banquet Mr. Carnegie, escorted by Richard O’Brien, was greeted by an ovation which was repeated when Mr. Edison appeared, escorted by Dr. O’Brien. The souvenirs of the evening were miniature telegraph instruments, and Edison, who is very deaf, heard better the tick of the “sounder” than the human voice.

David Homer Bates, author of the *Century’s* successful book, “Lincoln in the Telegraph Office,”

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announced at the banquet that Congress having so far failed to pass a bill putting the military telegraphers on a pensionable basis, that Mr. Carnegie had instituted an honor pension for the needy survivors of the service at the rate of the pay of a private soldier, thirteen dollars per month, to be paid until Congress shall do justice to those worthy and patriotic soldiers. Sixty-nine of the survivors of the corps, which in war time consisted of about fifteen hundred, have availed themselves of Mr. Carnegie's beneficence, and some of the cases of disability, such as blindness, were very pathetic. It is hoped that this pension, which is tendered as a matter of charity by an individual, will be given as a matter of right by Uncle Sam, as was recommended by Grant, Sherman, Sheridan and other great commanders.

The telegraph signal "73," coinciding with Mr. Carnegie's seventy-three years, had grown to mean unutterable things in the way of affection and regard and was the keynote of the occasion. Mr. Carnegie said "73" should pass him by Saint Peter.

In the music programme Miss Morse, a granddaughter of the inventor of the telegraph, sang some charming solos. Of the speeches called out, that of Richard O'Brien may interest the reader:

"GENTLEMEN: When I was very young I thought I could talk, but Mr. Carnegie cured me of that conceit.

"Thomas A. Scott was then superintendent of the

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Pennsylvania Railroad at Altoona. Andrew Carnegie was his assistant. Tom Carnegie and John Pitcairn were the day operators and I was the night operator.

“One day Tom Carnegie and I went trout fishing to a mountain stream near Altoona. Tom took along a valuable spaniel belonging to his sister. We fished all day and when we were about to return the dog attacked a large rattle-snake and was bitten on the shoulder. We managed to kill the snake, but the dog suffered greatly and was soon unable to walk, and, although he was pretty heavy, we carried him home, about two miles.

“We were dead tired, and that night, in spite of all I could do, my head went down on the table more than once. I fear I did not get all that was passing on the wire.

“About midnight there was a freight wreck on the road; fortunately I was not responsible, but I thought I knew who was and in the morning, finding that another was charged with the accident, I spoke up rather freely in his defense.

“That afternoon I was called into Mr. Carnegie's office and asked if I had made such a statement. I replied that I had. By this time Mr. Carnegie had all the facts before him and it did not take him long to show me that I was entirely wrong. He then said, ‘Richard, if you want to succeed in this business you must learn to keep your mouth shut and always remember that a close mouth is a sign of a wise

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head.' I have never forgotten that lesson and have ever since been learning how to do it. It is now too late to change the plan.

"I might add, however, that Mr. Carnegie did not lay that incident up against me. When the Civil War broke out he was appointed assistant general manager of Government railroads and telegraphs, and in response to a telegram from him I went to Washington in company with three of the brightest and best telegraph boys on the Pennsylvania Railroad, among whom was my friend, Mr. Homer Bates.

"We arrived in Washington April 25, 1861, and I reported to Mr. Carnegie at the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad depot. I found he had been working there day and night getting the road and trains into safe running order. He set me to work and stood over me almost continuously day and night, rushing troop trains into Washington until there were soldiers enough to safeguard the capitol.

"Later on he gave me one of the greatest pleasures I have ever had in life by securing for me the appointment of chief operator at headquarters, Department Virginia and North Carolina, at Fortress Monroe.

"This took me to the front, where I wanted to go, and where General Eckert kept me throughout the war, giving me the free hand and strong backing which enabled me to do my share toward proving for the first time in history that the electric telegraph is

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invaluable in war and that it very materially aided in the preservation of the Union.

“I was with them at the front and on the battle-fields of Virginia and North Carolina from the first to the close of the war, and I can truthfully say I do not believe the world has ever produced a braver, more faithful or more efficient body of men than the boys of the United States Military Telegraph Corps, of which Mr. Carnegie was the father.”

CHAPTER II.

EARLY ASSIGNMENTS—RUNNING TRAINS WITH CARNEGIE—THE ARSENAL—DIALOGUE BETWEEN PRESIDENT LINCOLN AND RICHARD—RUNNING NEW WIRES—BALL'S BLUFF—McCLELLAN'S USE OF THE TELEGRAPH.

OF the four original telegraphers with Carnegie, David Strouse quickly succumbed to campaign hardships and died in October, 1861; David Homer Bates served at the War Department throughout the war; Samuel Brown served for some time, and Richard O'Brien served in the field and front throughout the war.

Richard and the other three operators, having been directed to report to Carnegie at Washington, assembled at Harrisburg, April 22, 1861, and proceeded by way of Philadelphia, Perryville and Annapolis. The Baltimore mobs having destroyed bridges over the Bush and Gunpowder Rivers, they were compelled to go by water on the steamer *Maryland* from Perryville to Annapolis, where they found General Benjamin F. Butler with his troops. They then went by rail to Washington, reporting to Colonel Scott and Carnegie at the War Department, April 25th. Their first assignments were: Strouse, as superintendent, and Brown,

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in the War Department ; Bates to the Navy Yard, and Richard with Carnegie at the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad depot, where, as operator, he assisted night and day for a week in running troop trains into Washington. He was then sent to Annapolis Junction, where for some weeks he performed similar duty. He was then ordered to report to Major Ramsey, commanding at Washington Arsenal, and, as operator there, assisted in the distribution of ordnance and ordnance stores. The others were likewise shifted about as required.

It was quickly seen that more operators were needed for the military telegraph, and they were called from the commercial lines and came at first mostly from Pennsylvania, especially from the Pennsylvania Railroad. William B. Wilson, of Harrisburg ; James R. Gilmore, of Chambersburg ; Jesse Crouse, of Philadelphia ; Charles A. Jacques, William E. Tinney, Albert C. Snyder, M. V. B. Buell, Henry W. Benton, Jesse H. Bunnell, James F. Guthridge and N. H. Brown were among the earliest arrivals. Wilson became chief operator at the War Department, while Gilmore took a party to Fortress Monroe and early in July built a line by way of Hampton, twelve miles, to Newport News, which was completed by Jesse Crouse, who ran a covered wire underground out of the fortress.

Mr. Wilson remained as chief operator in charge of the War Department office for nearly a year, being

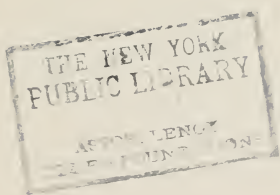


Strouse

Brown
Bates

R. O'Brien

THE FOUR FIRST MILITARY TELEGRAPHERS



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succeeded by Mr. Bates, and then, like Mr. Carnegie, returning to the service of the Pennsylvania Railroad. But he was not done with the military telegraph service, for at the time of Lee's invasions in the Antietam and Gettysburg campaigns, Wilson rendered such important service in scouting and wire-tapping that, in 1903, the Legislature of Pennsylvania voted him a gold medal and a commission of Colonel of Volunteers, which he still holds.

In May, 1861, the military telegraphers in Washington had run lines to connect the War Department with the Arsenal, the Navy Yard, Arlington, Chain Bridge, and outposts. The Arsenal was situated at the point where the East Branch enters the Potomac.

One day in June Mr. Lincoln visited the Arsenal, and coming to the telegraph instrument with Major Ramsey, to write a message, he watched Richard send it and "take" another. Richard, reading, of course, by sound and writing in beautiful penmanship, Mr. Lincoln remarked, "Young man, you do that well. Where do you hail from?"

"From the Pennsylvania Railroad, Mr. President," said my brother.

"Are you one of the operators who came with Carnegie and Bates?"

"Yes, Mr. President."

"Well, you are in a pretty safe place here, surrounded by all these big guns."

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“Yes, Mr. President, but I would much rather be at the front, where I could hear them roar.”

Mr. Lincoln seemed amused at this, and asked his name. Richard told him. He smiled, and, turning to Major Ramsey, said: “He comes of a fighting race. Treat him well or he will run away to the front.” It was not long until Richard was in the field and “heard them roar.”

Major Ramsey's son that afternoon presented Richard with an Allen revolver and the Major furnished Richard a saddle horse, and a mounted orderly detailed as messenger to meet him with the horse at his quarters on Pennsylvania Avenue, near Sixth Street, mornings and to accompany him back evenings, bringing the horse back to the Arsenal.

Richard thought of this dialogue with Mr. Lincoln and pondered Mr. Lincoln's words when McDowell's demoralized army came straggling back from Bull Run, but it did not dampen his ardor to be in the field. Ham Young, the veteran operator for forty years at the capitol, who was then at the commercial office in Washington, says that during the early stages of this battle glowing reports of victory had been coming in from the station nearest the field, Fairfax Court House, ten miles from Bull Run. Then there was a lull and he called up and asked Harry Benton if our troops were advancing. Harry replied: “Advance H'l! They are demoralized and retreating. We must pull out ourselves now or get left.” When

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he and M. V. B. Buell, who was with him, dismounted next day from their jaded horses in front of Willard's Hotel, Young says that Buell cried out, "My God, Harry, I've lost my relay!" He had strapped his instrument to his saddle and it had been torn off in the retreat.

Mr. Carnegie said, at the first reunion, previously referred to, that when he arrived in Washington in April, 1861, he saw an indescribable state of confusion and inefficiency in nearly every department of the Government. He put the management of the telegraph in Strouse's hands, his own being more than full with the railroads; and, the Government being unable to give any material assistance in running lines, the telegraphers had, on the contrary, to assist the Government with the aid of the Commercial Telegraph Company. E. S. Sanford, president of the American Telegraph Company, furnished nearly all the funds and supplies for the telegraph corps for the first seven months. It is, therefore, not surprising that in the first real battle of the Civil War at Bull Run the telegraph reached only to within ten miles of it, at Fairfax Court House. General McDowell undertook to cover this hiatus of ten miles by a line of mounted couriers carrying bulletins of the fight every fifteen minutes to the operators, Buell and Benton. William B. Wilson, chief operator at the War Department at that time, eloquently describes the scenes there that Sunday, July 21, 1861, as these

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reports were received : " In the telegraph office were congregated the President, most of the Cabinet, General Scott's staff officers, Colonel Thomas A. Scott, and others, with maps of the field before them, watching, as it were, the conflict as it progressed. Hour after hour, as the couriers reported our troops forcing the enemy back, hopes beat high ; expectation, satisfaction was discernable on every brow. Suddenly, as the shades of evening were drawing on apace, a lull occurred. Firing could not be heard by the corps of observation. No couriers arrived at Fairfax. What could be the matter ? The most plausible reason advanced was that our army, now victorious, was resting after the hard fighting of that hot Summer day. Every few minutes Buell and Benton, at Fairfax, were called, only to reply, ' No news.' An hour passed, when, like a flash of lightning, came the astounding words : ' Our army is in full retreat.' The reports now were more frequent and exciting. The retreat became a rout, and as the telegraph reported to those assembled the terrible scenes during that never-to-be-forgotten night, all seemed to feel that the hour of the nation's greatest peril had arrived, and clung instinctively around the cool, clear-visioned President." When the rout was complete, Buell and Benton took their instruments and left Fairfax Court House at 1:20 A.M., July 22nd.

The military operators on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad were ordered by the Assistant Secretary



COLONEL WILLIAM B. WILSON
President Society of the U. S. Military Telegraph Corps

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of War to remain until authorized to close their offices. "We stayed," says Operator Rose, whose office at Burke's Station consisted of a railroad tie, until the rear-guard ordered us to close." Jacques, at Springfield, on that road, stayed later on the 22nd. He says: "Colonel Thomas A. Scott ordered me not to leave Springfield until I had permission from him to do so. After awhile the wounded soldiers began passing by, a few at a time, gradually increasing in number, followed by stragglers from different regiments, and later by squads, and finally by companies and regiments, all in full retreat. Colonel Scott still kept me there, telling me if I left my post he would have me shot." Plum says that at this time Jacques thought the whole army had passed, and momentarily expected the Confederates, but an engine came at last, and he, too, at 8 P.M. on the 22nd, came back.

It will be remembered that in 1861 telegraphy was not twenty years old, and that the art of operating by sound was still younger. Most of those who responded to the call for operators to serve in the field were in their teens, but they were enthusiastic, already trained to the faithful performance of duty, and were ready to face danger when necessary. At Great Falls, an outpost on the Maryland side of the Potomac, the pickets were one day withdrawn, and the Confederates began to shell the telegraph office. As steps, porch and roof were successively shot away, the operator,

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Ed Conway, reported progress to the War Department, adding that his office would "now close for repairs," and he withdrew with his instrument as the enemy crossed the river.

It must not be supposed that the military telegraph sprang fully armed from the brain of Mr. Carnegie, like Pallas from the brow of Jove, fully equipped, as it afterwards became, to distribute the lightning on every battlefield. Mr. Carnegie and his small force performed wonders in railroad and bridge building, making the "Long Bridge" practicable for troops to move across the Potomac into Virginia in a week, and his telegraphers did some creditable line building, but Uncle Sam was wanting in building material and equipment. David Strouse, whom Mr. Carnegie had placed in charge of the Government telegraph, having broken down in health under the strain of the service, was granted leave of absence in July, and was succeeded by James R. Gilmore, who was brought up from Fort Monroe for that purpose and acted as superintendent of the military telegraph at Washington until October, when he was sent farther south, and was eventually chief operator of the Department of South Carolina, which was commanded by General Q. A. Gilmore.

To illustrate the transition state of the military telegraph from a civil basis to a war footing at that time, an evolution that, indeed, characterized the army itself and everything connected with it, let us

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glance at an instance of connecting up an army by telegraph with Washington, which will show how unprepared the Government then was and how dependent on civil sources for assistance. General Joe Johnston, with his Confederates, had left the Shenandoah Valley about Harper's Ferry to unite with Beauregard in defeating the Army of the Potomac under McDowell in the battle of Bull Run. This left a small Union army, under General Patterson, in the air, as one might say, in the neighborhood of Charlestown, whence he retreated to Harper's Ferry, where he was relieved by General Banks, who continued the retrograde movement. On a Sunday night, September 7, 1861, Gilmore was ordered to connect up that army with McClellan's headquarters in Washington. The Government did not yet possess the necessary material—wire, spikes, insulators—to build thirty or forty miles of line, but Gilmore appealed to President Sanford of the American Telegraph Company, who hastened to place these materials at his disposal. Arrangements were made for speedy distribution along the Frederick, Maryland, road to Rockville, thence to Darnestown, Poolesville and Hyattstown. Monday morning Gilmore started on horseback and contracted for the purchase and setting of poles for thirty or forty miles of line. Tuesday morning the line-building began, and Thursday Banks was met over thirty miles from the Capital.

Operators William J. Dealy and A. B. Pritchard

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were encamped with the builders near Darnestown one rainy night, and were fairly asleep, when couriers from General Banks arrived with orders to open an office at the end of the line. Groping their way in the dark the boys could find no shelter from the rain but an empty sty, which they roofed with their blankets, and, connecting their instrument with the line, they shivered at it all night. October 23rd a land telegraph cable was laid from Poolesville to Edwards' Ferry, where Charles A. Tinker and J. L. Burucker were stationed, and, December 12th, Parker Spring, afterward very efficient as foreman of line-builders on the Peninsula, completed the line to Point of Rocks, where General Geary commanded, and where operators Thomas Armour and Charles Lounsberry were under Confederate artillery fire on the 19th, these boys courageously working their instrument and being among the last to leave the place.

December 11th, the Frederick City, Maryland, office was opened on this line. General Banks had removed there. The Frederick line was extended, December 20th, by the way of Williamsport to Hagerstown. A loop from Rockville to Great Falls (nine miles), on the Potomac, was built in September, and it was here that Ed Conway stayed by his instrument under shell fire from a section of Confederate artillery on the Virginia side, as related on a preceding page.

It is beyond the scope of this modest record to

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attempt a military history of the war. I will not, therefore, go into that side of the Ball's Bluff fight farther than to illustrate telegraph service therein and to note that the defeat appears to have been one of those many unfortunate affairs due to our inexperience in the art of war. We went into the great conflict necessarily unprepared, like an amateur chess-player who might attempt a championship match without a knowledge of the strategic openings of the game. Our soldiers as a rule did not even know how to shoot, as we understand marksmanship now. It took us at least a year from the opening of the war to learn how to fight. The Confederates were somewhat better prepared at the start, and so had the better of the game in the early period of the war. This lesson should never be forgotten.

In considering the lessons of the war, any one, whether strategist or not, who is thoroughly familiar with its history, must be impressed with the ignorance of the enemy's numbers, position and movements, to say nothing of his intentions, displayed by our officers in the first year of the war. Later, Grant, Sherman and many other commanders, and Sheridan especially, excelled in *knowing* all these things, and this knowledge, however attained, must certainly be a vital part of the game of war. War, like chess, may be played blindfold, but in neither case is the game likely to be won unless the player knows the enemy's position and moves. It was, in fact, in an

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effort to gain exact knowledge of Johnston's position that General McClellan ordered a reconnoissance in force by General McCall, October 19 and 20, 1861, on the Virginia side of the Potomac reaching out beyond Dranesville, about thirty miles southeast of Leesburg. McClellan, at the same time, telegraphed General Stone, who had a division on the upper Potomac about Edwards' Ferry, three miles from Leesburg, to make a demonstration. About seventeen hundred men, with two or three guns, crossed the river to Ball's Bluff, opposite Harrison's Island, between Edwards' and Conrad's Ferries. The first detachment of this small force, five companies under Colonel Devins, reconnoitering towards Leesburg, was driven back by General Evans' Confederate brigade, and finally the whole force of seventeen hundred, under Colonel E. D. Baker, was penned up on the bluff with the river behind them, losing three hundred killed, including Colonel Baker, and six hundred captured. The following telegrams received by Operator Kerner, at General Stone's headquarters, have been preserved, and I transcribe them from Colonel Plum's excellent history, "The Military Telegraph in the Civil War":

McClellan's Headquarters, Oct. 21, 1861.

TO GENERAL STONE:

Call on Banks for whatever aid you need. Shall I push up a division or two on the other side of the river? TAKE LEESBURG.

MCCLELLAN,
Major-General Commanding.

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Darnestown, Oct. 21, 1861. 5 o'clock.

GENERAL STONE :

We send Hamilton's Brigade immediately to Poolesville. (Signed) N. P. BANKS.

*Headquarters of General McClellan,
Oct. 21, 1861.*

BRIGADIER-GENERAL STONE,
Edwards' Ferry :

Do you learn any results of the action ?

(Signed) GEO. B. MCCLELLAN,
Major-General Commanding.

*Headquarters of General McClellan,
Oct. 21, 1861.*

BRIGADIER-GENERAL STONE,
Edwards' Ferry :

Is the battle still progressing, or has it ceased ?

(Signed) GEO. B. MCCLELLAN,
Major-General Commanding.

Darnestown, Oct. 21.

BRIGADIER-GENERAL STONE,
Edwards' Ferry :

General Hamilton's Brigade has started for you, to await orders at Poolesville. General Banks and division are on their way to Seneca, by orders from Washington. (Signed) R. MORRISON COPELAND,
A. A. G.

*Headquarters of General McClellan,
Oct. 21, 1861.*

BRIGADIER-GENERAL STONE,
Edwards' Ferry :

Is the enemy in large force before you ? Please give full detail.

(Signed) G. B. MCCLELLAN,
Major-General Commanding.

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Executive Mansion, Oct. 21, 1861.

TO OFFICER IN COMMAND AT POOLESVILLE :

Send a mounted messenger to the battle ground and bring me information from General Stone. I want to know particulars as to result of engagement, and the relative positions of the forces for the night, their numbers, and such other information as will give me a correct understanding of affairs.

(Signed) A. LINCOLN.

Headquarters, Oct. 21.

TO GENERAL STONE :

Hold your position on the Virginia side of the Potomac at all hazards. General Banks will support you with one brigade at Harrison's Island, or the other two at Seneca. Lander will be with you at daylight. Change the disposition of General Banks, if you think it necessary, so as to send two brigades to Harrison's Island, instead of one.

(Signed) G. B. McCLELLAN.

The above was in reply to Stone's telegram that he was withdrawing his troops to the Maryland side.

McClellan's Headquarters, Oct. 21.

TO GENERAL STONE,

Edwards' Ferry :

Intrench yourself on the Virginia side and await reënforcements, if necessary.

(Signed) GEO. B. McCLELLAN,
Major-General Commanding.

McClellan's Headquarters, Oct 21.

TO GENERAL STONE,

Edwards' Ferry :

I repeat to you, under no circumstances abandon the Virginia shore, but intrench yourself. Hold your

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own, if you can make your men fight. You will be supported by General Banks.

(Signed) G. B. McCLELLAN,
Major-General Commanding.

Headquarters of McClellan, Oct. 21.

TO GENERAL STONE:

As General Banks will join you, his rank will entitle him to the command, and he has been instructed accordingly.

(Signed) GEO. B. McCLELLAN,
Major-General Commanding.

Headquarters of General McClellan, Oct. 21.

BRIGADIER-GENERAL STONE,

Edwards' Ferry:

An advance from Dranesville can not be made to-morrow morning, so that you must rely exclusively upon the support General Banks can give you.

(Signed) GEO. B. McCLELLAN,
Major-General Commanding.

Headquarters of General McClellan, (no date).

TO GENERAL BANKS,

Edwards' Ferry:

You will intrench your command on the Virginia side of the river, observe the movements of the enemy closely, and report to me often, but make no movements without first communicating with me.

GEO. B. McCLELLAN,
Major-General Commanding.

Headquarters, Washington, Oct. 23.

TO GENERAL McCLELLAN,

Edwards' Ferry:

I have ordered Generals McCall, Porter and Smith to be ready to make a movement on Dranesville early to-morrow morning. Have also ordered reconnois-

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sance by Generals McDowell, Smith and Franklin towards Fairfax Court House and Anandale. All quiet in front. (Signed) R. B. MARCY.

General McClellan's free use of the military telegraph, as shown in the foregoing telegrams, was founded on his earlier experience with its aid in West Virginia, where his campaign had resulted in the only considerable successes which had so far attended the Union arms and secured his selection by Mr. Lincoln to the command of the Army of the Potomac. He had been appointed Major-General May 14, 1861, and placed in command of the Department of the Ohio, which included Western Virginia, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. Shortly after assuming this position he issued the following order :

Headquarters of the Department of the Ohio.
Cincinnati, O., May 27, 1861.

GENERAL ORDER, NO. 13.

Mr. Anson Stager is hereby appointed superintendent for military purposes of all the telegraphic lines within the Department of the Ohio, and his instructions will be strictly obeyed.

By command of Major-General McClellan.

N. H. McLEAN,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

Mr. Stager was at that time general superintendent of the Western Union Telegraph Company, located at Cleveland, Ohio, and had been, with his assistants in the civil telegraph, vigilantly coöperating with Governor Dennison, the War Governor of Ohio, in the interests of the Government. The above order was

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only another early step in the transition of the telegraph toward a military organization. For some time Mr. Stager's activities under the order were exercised only through the officers and employes of the commercial and railroad telegraphs. The lines of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad from the Potomac to the Ohio early became threads of military interest and telegraphic activity. It will be recalled that up to the time of the battle of Bull Run the Confederates, under General Joe Johnston, were encamped near its main line at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. Farther west by Cumberland, Maryland, and Grafton, in western Virginia, whence the road divided to reach the Ohio River at Wheeling and at Parkersburg, the destruction of wires and often of bridges, by small Confederate forces and guerrillas, kept the telegraphers under T. B. A. David and W. G. Fuller, busy restoring the lines, at the risk many times, by night and day, of death or capture.

McClellan's troops having won the battle of Rich Mountain, West Virginia, the first real victory of the war, the Northern people were greatly elated by his telegram, dated the 13th, wherein he reported his successes. He also issued a congratulatory order to the troops, which was probably the first order ever printed in a portable printing office, regularly connected with an army on a campaign.

About this time attempts were made in Washington to interrupt military lines by cross-connections

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made with fine copper wire, which could not be seen from the ground ; but these were so quickly detected by electric tests, and the wires were so well patrolled by the linemen, that such attempts became too dangerous in that locality and ceased. Farther south, in many fields, as the war progressed, whole sections of wire would sometimes be torn down at night by raiders and carried into the woods, and the work of repair often proved extremely hazardous.

CHAPTER III.

RICHARD O'BRIEN, CHIEF OPERATOR—FORTRESS MONROE, HAMPTON AND NEWPORT NEWS—THE YOUNGEST TELEGRAPHER—THE FIRST LADY TELEGRAPHERS—SCOTT AND CARNEGIE—THE BLUE JUNIATA.

RICHARD, on the recommendation of Mr. Carnegie, was early in August, 1861, assigned as chief operator to headquarters Department of Southeastern Virginia, then under command of Major-General B. F. Butler, at Fortress Monroe, and arrived there August 5th, replacing James R. Gilmore, who had been called to other fields. Butler had taken command here May 22nd, and had 15,000 troops, which were confronted by 10,000 or 12,000 Confederates under Huger and Magruder. On Butler's arrival his troops entered Hampton, but retired across the bridge over Hampton Creek the same day and threw up intrenchments. On the 27th they seized Newport News, at the mouth of the James River. Early in July, as previously mentioned, the military telegraphers under Gilmore had erected a line from Fort Monroe through Hampton, twelve miles, to Newport News.

On the 7th of August, two days after Richard took charge of this line, the Confederates cut it and set fire

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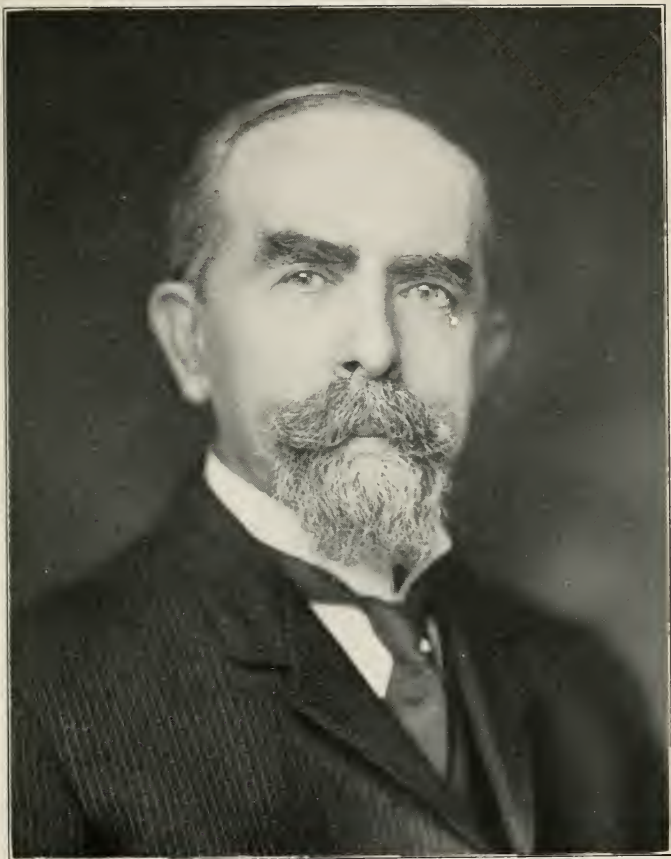
to Hampton. He accompanied a regiment which marched at double-quick to that place. They did all they could to stop the fire, but it had been started in too many places, and a sharp wind was blowing, which made it impossible to check the flames. Richard, with the soldiers, tried to save the old Episcopal church, but failed. This church was said to have been one of the oldest in the United States; the bell to have been sent over by Queen Elizabeth.

General Butler, transferred to other fields, was succeeded in command at Fort Monroe on August 18th by the old Mexican War hero, Major-General John E. Wool. After the battle of Bull Run the forces here were somewhat depleted, leaving the line from below Hampton to Newport News unprotected. The names of the operators who served with Richard before I joined him may be found in Plum's "History of the Military Telegraph."

One of Richard's principal cares was to keep up the line to Newport News, which was exposed to incursions of the enemy, who frequently raided and tore it down at night. The road from New Market, below Yorktown, where the enemy was in force, came into it and was the usual route of the raiders. The following order will indicate the situation :

Headquarters, Camps Hamilton and Butler,
Aug. 25, 1861.

Colonel Weber will detail a company from his regiment to accompany the superintendent of telegraph



RICHARD O'BRIEN

Chief Operator Army of the James, and of Department of North Carolina, etc., 1861-5. Assistant Superintendent Western Union Telegraph, Scranton, Pa.

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upon an expedition to inspect and repair the line. The picket guard will pass the detachment.

BENJ. F. BUTLER,
Major-General, U. S. A.

In "Telegraphing in Battle" (*Century Magazine*, September, 1889), I told Richard's experience on one of these expeditions, as follows: "As we advanced southward, whole sections of wire would sometimes be torn down at night by bushwhackers and carried into the woods, and the work of repairs often proved extremely hazardous. A favorite point for such exploits on the part of the Confederates was the line between Fort Monroe and Newport News. They being camped at Yorktown, and our videttes, after the Big Bethel affair (the first skirmish of the war), only extending to Hampton, they could strike the exposed line anywhere from there to Newport News. This they usually did at night. On one occasion the chief operator at Fort Monroe went out to repair such a break, accompanied by an escort of infantry. Being well mounted, he left the troops out of sight, found the line torn down near Newport News, repaired it, and returned rapidly towards Hampton. As he passed the New Market road he received, simultaneously, a bullet through his coat and an order to halt from a party of cavalry charging down from the direction of Yorktown. Disregarding both bullet and order, he spurred his horse forward and succeeded in reaching his escort, who poured a volley into his pursuers,

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which caused them to wheel and retreat as rapidly as they had come." Throughout the war we had a number of good men of the telegraph corps killed or captured in that kind of work in many fields.

AMENITIES OF WAR.

Our experiences were not always war-like, as the following may indicate :

*Headquarters, Department of Virginia
and North Carolina.*

Fort Monroe, Sept. 17, 1861.

Pass the bearer, Mr. Richard O'Brien, to Hampton Bridge and permit three ladies accompanying him to go beyond our pickets.

By order Major-General Wool, Commanding.

L. G. B. CANNON,
Major and A. D. C.

Near the junction of the New Market road with the Newport News line already indicated, there stood a comfortable Virginia farm house which Richard, on these expeditions, visited to purchase milk and to endeavor to conciliate the people in the interest of his military telegraph line. The family, whose name was Jones, let him know that they were in great trouble and anxiety about their three young daughters, who were at school in Baltimore, and for whom they had been unable to secure permission from General Butler to come through the lines. Richard undertook the chivalrous mission of getting the young ladies restored to their family, and, having succeeded in getting the desired permit from General Butler or

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General Wool, who about that time succeeded him in command, he sent transportation for them to Baltimore, met them at the wharf at Old Point, and escorted them to their home beyond our lines, where the family continued to reside until McClellan's army came on for the Peninsular campaign, when they, like many other Virginia families, abandoned their home and moved farther south, and we never heard of them again.

While the war halts in the Winter of 1861, let me tell how I became the youngest operator in the world, and a member of the United States Military Telegraph Corps. The adult reader may skip this story. It is intended for Young America.

In 1856, when I was not yet eight years old, Richard took me into the telegraph office at Downingtown, Pennsylvania, where he had been learning to operate, and, showing me the instruments, told me what they and the wires were for. It seemed a wonderful and fascinating mystery. From there he was sent to work at "P. O." (President's office of the Pennsylvania Railroad), Philadelphia, thence to Paoli, to Lancaster, and other stations, and in 1858 he was stationed at Greensburg, near Pittsburg.

In the Spring of 1858, when nine and a half years old, I was sent with a telegram five miles in the country. The man refused to pay for delivery. I felt hurt. As I trudged homeward, the last two miles on the railroad track, it was very dark and lonely in

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Carr's Cut, so that it was a real comfort to hear the night "Fast Line" thundering behind me and to see her headlight blazing out from the east. I crowded against the bank as she roared by on her way to Pittsburg, and envied the passengers. As I stumbled through the tunnel at Greensburg to the station, where brother Richard was the operator, I made up my mind that the vocation of a messenger boy was not to my taste. Andy Carnegie had been a messenger boy at Pittsburg, but he was hardy and might have liked it. At the first banquet, previously mentioned, Mr. Carnegie told us the following :

CARNEGIE'S MESSENGER BOY STORY.

"I tried to be the best messenger boy in the bunch. At the end of the month the pay envelopes were handed to the other boys, but none to me. I threw up my hands—My God! am I discharged? When the other boys had gone my envelope was handed to me and contained \$13.50, instead of \$11.25. My pay had been raised! I ran home, a mile, to tell my mother, taking short cuts and dodging among wagons and horses to get there quicker. On the way I considered how best to break the good news. I gave my mother \$11.25, as usual, and waited until the whole family were assembled at breakfast to proudly hand her the extra two dollars. Talk about your millions,—that was the happiest moment of my life!"¹

¹Told at the banquet of the military telegraphers, Hotel Manhattan, March 29, 1907.

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I resolved to be at least an operator. Father picked me up at the station and carried me home asleep in his arms.

Richard gave me the Morse alphabet, which I quickly memorized and began to practice on the closed key; he cautioned me to never practice on the line until I should become expert; and he taught me style of touch and accent as a great master teaches a loved pupil to make the piano talk. 'Tis a great language, is the Morse, and I had a good teacher; the best in the world, I think.

I soon learned to distinguish, by ear, the sound of our call, "V," three dots and a dash, from other sounds; to answer "I," "I," and start the register, which, by clock-work, ran a paper strip on which the dots and dashes were indented; to give "O. K." when the message ended, and then, without hurry, to read and transcribe it from the tape. To an expert telegrapher there is as much difference between the cold dots and dashes on a tape and the living language of the "sounder" as there is between sheet music and the real music it represents, so that a jumble of badly spaced dots and dashes are much harder to interpret by the eye on a tape than by the ear from a sounder. When I had been a few weeks in the office there occurred one day a wreck in Carr's Cut, and Richard had to take an instrument out there, leaving me to do the best I could. A message came along on the tape addressed apparently to J. C. Clarke & Q. I knew

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Mr. Clarke and delivered the message to him, but he knew Mr. Q. no more than I did. Suddenly it flashed upon me that a dot, a space and three dots might spell Es as well as “&,” and that proved to be correct; the address intended was J. C. Clarke, Esq.

We soon learned to ignore the tape and to read by sound, and I began to send and receive messages over the wires as a full-fledged operator, ten years old, the youngest in the world.

That same Summer, while I was hammering away at the Morse language, Richard one day inadvertently locked me in the office while he went to the ticket office to sell tickets for a train. There was a violent thunder-storm coming up. Lightning began to snap on the instruments, first like gun-caps and then like pistol shots. I screwed my courage to the sticking point and stood upon a chair to place a brass key across the binding posts where the wires came through the window casing, which was the crude way then of cutting out the instruments. As I leaned over the table where the lightning was snapping and crackling there came a tremendous flash and crash and—the rest I know only by hearsay. Richard said he rushed in and found me on my knees in a corner, saying my prayers.

The “relays” stood on half-inch walnut bases screwed to the table; they were torn off and split to pieces; the wires fuzed. Men who stood on the plat-

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form of the station said they saw a globe of lightning alight on the wires and sail into the office.

At a reunion of old-time telegraphers in New York, in 1905, a dear old comrade of ante bellum days told me that after we left the Pennsylvania Railroad to go to the war there was a tradition on the road that electricity ran in our family ; that my brothers and sisters and parents could all telegraph, and that at Greensburg, if none of the family happened to be on hand when "V" was called on the line, my dog "Butcher" would run out and bark. This humorous, though kindly, tradition was an exaggeration, but looking backward now I think that in that stroke of lightning I certainly received enough of the celestial fire to furnish electricity for a whole family.

About this time I wrote, at Richard's dictation, in my best hand and without mentioning my age, to David McCargo, superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad Telegraph at Altoona, modestly stating my fitness, and asking for the position of "extra" operator, to go anywhere I might be needed on the line. I wrote a similar letter to Joe Kerbey, division operator at Pittsburg, and from the latter received a prompt reply, bidding me hold myself ready for a call. Kerbey already knew me over the wire, where my work did not differ from that of many older boys, but neither he nor Mr. McCargo had seen me or knew how young I was. If they had they would have probably advised me to go home to my mother and go to

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school. I never asked my people why they let me launch out so early. It was a good school, at least for me. Could I now return to those days I would choose none other. And these memories: I would not lose them for any university career.

Besides the well-built railroad wire we had, for commercial business, the first line put up by Professor Morse and O'Reilly, from Philadelphia to Pittsburg. It was a queer string, running free in earthenware troughs set in the tops of light poles, so that it was taut in some places and in others sagged almost, or quite, to the ground. When it touched the ground there was trouble. In wet weather there was more trouble. We managed to work messages through these difficulties, but when it broke, which was often, there was such trouble that something had to be done about it. I went out on this line once, as a sort of amateur electrician, with an amateur lineman, to hunt for trouble, and found it good and plenty. The line ran on the old Chambersburg Pike, a picturesque route over the Laurel Mountains and by the romantic Loyalhanna River, the trail of former Indian tribes and of pioneers who followed them in colonial days of yore. I reveled in the glorious scenery and looked with amusement at the old wire sagging between the poles like a clothes-line, until the amateur lineman, who had no climbers, began to boost me up the poles, which I had to shin to the top to fix the wire in the "insulators." We made about ten miles that day and

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slept at Latrobe at night; one of us, at least, very tired. Next morning I told the lineman that I guessed he had learned enough from me how it ought to be done, so he could go on by himself now, and I returned home by train, more resolved than ever to be an operator.

It was still either in 1858 or early in 1859, when, one evening, Joe Kerbey told me over the wire to go by the next train to Latrobe, to relieve Dick Head for a few days. He said the conductor had my pass and not to miss that train. I had a message to deliver up in the town and only a few minutes to do it in, but I made the quickest trip of my life in that uncongenial service and sprang into the side door of the baggage car as the train was pulling out. Richard thought I was still in Greensburg, when I called him up from Latrobe and told him to get some little boy to deliver his messages after this.

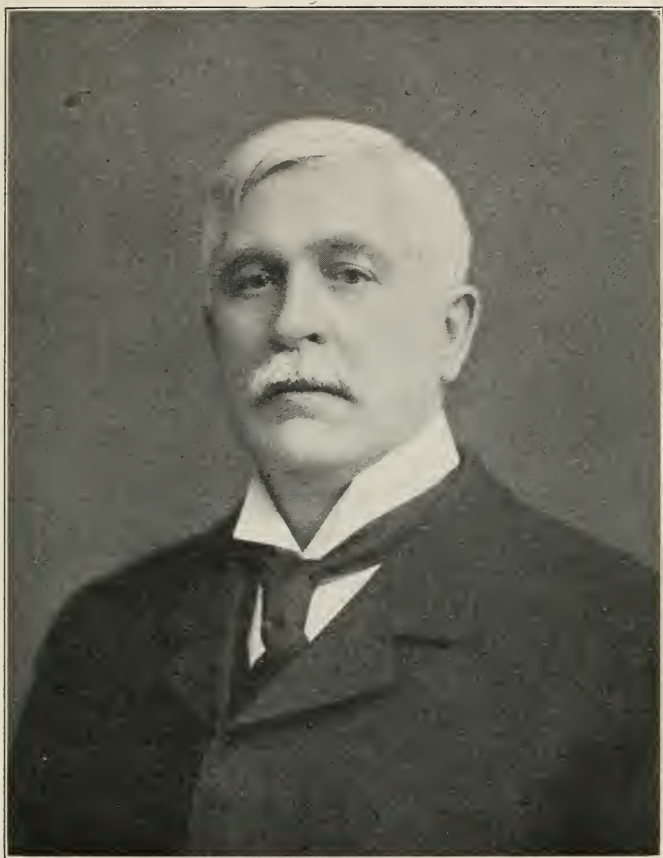
Mr. Head came into his office and stared at me in consternation for some moments. "Who are you?" he said. I told him. "You don't mean to say that Mr. Kerbey sent *you* to relieve me?" I showed him the division operator's message, which I had copied. He sank into a chair. Some one was calling "K" (Latrobe) on the wire and he started up. "Hold on, I'll take that for you," I said, and I took it, writing a pretty fair fist, for a boy, and gave it to him. He put the message in an envelope, addressed it, and went out with it in a dazed sort of way. When he came

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back he said, "Now, Johnny, I see you are an operator, but you needn't tell me that you are a freight agent and a ticket agent." I said, "I never sold a ticket yet, but guess I could." The upshot was that Mr. Head got his brother to attend to freight and tickets, while I relieved him as telegrapher for a week.

There was a messenger boy at Latrobe, and the first unalloyed bliss of my life was sending that boy, who was much older and larger than myself, out with messages. My next happiness was handing to my mother the money Mr. Head paid me. I continued that habit, giving all I earned to my good mother as long as I remained in the telegraph, nine years. It ran about this way: The last year I worked "Uncle Sam" paid me \$1,800.00; it cost me \$600.00 to live in Washington, and I sent her \$1,200.00; the year before I got \$1,600.00 and sent her \$1,000.00, and so on back to the time when I got but \$25.00 per month on the railroad. But none of these amounts seemed so large as that first six dollars I earned at Latrobe.

Railroad work is by no means the most difficult form of telegraphy, and even in it I knew that, though reading by sound, I was only a beginner; and so, when Sam Brown, our crack operator at Pittsburg, dropped in on me one day at Latrobe I watched him take a message in beautiful penmanship with admiration. He later became one of the "Five Immortals" of the military telegraph.



DAVID HOMER BATES

Manager War Department Office, 1861-5
Author of "Lincoln in the Telegraph Office"

THE NEW YORK
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TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

My next assignment was to Wilmore, where I relieved Operator Wolverton for a few weeks. So far my excursions as extra operator had been limited to the western division, which extended from Pittsburg to Altoona. Mr. McCargo, the telegraph superintendent, now sent me east of the mountains to relieve Miss Sallie Kerr, at Spruce Creek, for a month. Mr. Carnegie says Miss Emma Hunter, at West Chester, was the first lady telegrapher he knew. Besides these two ladies there was only one other on the lines, Miss Elizabeth Cogley, at Lewistown.

About this time, in one of my journeys over the road, I chanced, as the train stopped at a station, to be idly drumming a Morse signal on the car window when to my amazement and delight the call was answered from the seat behind me; and, turning round, I met the clear gaze of a handsome young man of strong, clean-cut features, who proved to be David Homer Bates, another of our crack operators, then stationed at Altoona, and destined to be the third man of the "Five Immortals" who started the military telegraph. The acquaintance thus casually begun continued through many a stirring scene in the lurid drama of the Civil War, and still pleasantly endures after fifty years from the time of that chance recognition through the free-masonry of the telegraph.

There was at Spruce Creek a hotel, which had been built with the expectation that trains would stop for meals, but that hope had not been realized and it was

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rather lonesome. The telegraph office was merely a little cozy box up the track for observing and reporting trains. I could close at 9 o'clock and go to the hotel to sleep. For a few days I went from box to bed and meals, and back to the box, with no other relief to the monotony than a word or two over the wire with strange operators; this being the middle division, with its wire working between Harrisburg and Altoona, and not through to either Philadelphia or Pittsburg.

One night, after giving "G. N." to Altoona, I lingered listening to the train reports from the all-night stations, and fell asleep in the box. When I awoke it was after midnight, and stumbling down to the hotel I found it locked and could not get in. I went back to the box, feeling unutterably lonely. I was ten and a half years old,—the great mountains stood between me and home,—my parents, brothers and sisters were all there, safely asleep, no doubt. I wished I had my dog "Butcher" with me.

Not having yet learned to utilize the spare time of lonely nights in studying books, I called up Maize, the night operator at Huntingdon, and said I would run down on a freight and stay with him till morning. He asked what was the matter, and guessing more what kind of a blue funk it was than I was willing to tell, he very wisely advised me to "Go back and raise the devil at the hotel" until some one let

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me in. This I did and the gruff proprietor ungraciously admitted me.

One day a genial gentleman with wisps of brown whiskers, like Thackeray's, on either side of a handsome, kind face whose beauty was marred by the loss of one eye, stepped off a train to visit me. It was David McCargo, our telegraph superintendent, comrade of Andy Carnegie, with whom he had worked as messenger boy, and operator, at Pittsburg, where, in fixing a battery one day, a splash of nitric acid had destroyed one of a pair of the kindest and most beautiful eyes in the world. He said not one word about telegraphy, or my duties,—they were light enough, given faithfulness, which he must have taken for granted,—but he advised me to keep my stockings pulled up and to tie my shoes neatly, which I did immediately, with furious blushes. I worked in fifteen offices under his supervision before I was thirteen years old, and never did I hear a harsh word addressed to myself or any other operator from that good man, David McCargo.

After Spruce Creek I was sent on flying trips to other stations. Mr. McCargo took me with him to open a new office at Irwin's, near Pittsburg; and, in the fall of 1859, when eleven years old, I was put in charge of the Hollidaysburg office and held it for nine months. These details would, of course, seem trivial if the extreme youth of the operator were not considered. I venture to recite them particularly to show

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contrast with present laws and ideas about child labor and to ask if we are not too much "educating" children to despise useful employment.

At Hollidaysburg I began to hear "Bleeding Kansas" and John Brown's mad raid and tragic fate discussed; to recall "Uncle Tom's Cabin," which I had heard my sisters read, and to feel the nameless thrill which was creeping in the air, presaging the coming national storm. This feeling of composite emotion in the plain people of the North seemed to lull again in the Spring of 1860, so far as I knew, and at my next station, with new and delightful experiences, I forgot all about it until the presidential campaign brought up through the telegraph the impending crisis with startling force.

In those days there were no separate commercial telegraph offices along the railroad except at Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Pittsburg, so we handled what commercial business there was. At Hollidaysburg, one time in '59, I received two messages bearing the same information, for a lawyer; one paid, the other collect. We were generally our own messengers, and I gave him the collect message first, for which he paid. Then I said, "There is another message." He asked if it was not the same thing from another man. I said, "Yes; I cannot tell a lie." Then he exclaimed, "I won't take it. No use paying for the same thing twice." I told him that this one was prepaid, whereupon he advised me to enter his

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profession. He thought I would develop the necessary qualifications.

An emergency arose one day during the absence of Mr. McCargo, who was going over the eastern division from Harrisburg to Philadelphia, requiring an extra operator at Altoona, and David Strouse, the division operator there, asked me over the wire if Howard Rollin, who was learning with me, could do the work at Hollidaysburg. I said I was sure he could. So Mr. Strouse bade me leave Howard in charge and run up to Altoona. I did so and found myself for the first time at the headquarters of the great road and in the presence of men whose genius and energy it is impossible for my poor pen even now to portray.

Andrew Carnegie, full of magnetism and electricity, like an over-charged modern dynamo, was there nominally as assistant to Mr. Scott, but really infusing his indomitable energy into the whole railroad system, and Thomas A. Scott, the greatest railroad genius of that time, was then the general superintendent. These two men, not to omit J. Edgar Thompson, president, handled the great road, whose history was becoming the history of the progress of this nation, as Grant and Sheridan afterwards managed armies, or, if you prefer a later example, as Theodore Roosevelt managed America.

I have incidentally mentioned four out of the five young men whose names, I believe, history will

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preserve as the pioneers in the first great military telegraph system of the world: Andrew Carnegie, Richard O'Brien, Samuel Brown, and David Homer Bates. The fifth of this group was David Strouse, division operator at Altoona. He was of refined features, poetic fancy, and patriotic spirit. Since Bates, Tinker, and Chandler have been called, on account of personal association with Mr. Lincoln, "The Sacred Three," may I not call these pioneers among military telegraphers the "Five Immortals" ?

Mr. McCargo returning to Altoona and finding me there, now sent me farther eastward to Duncannon, twenty miles west of Harrisburg, and two miles below the mouth of the Juniata, where it joins the wide-spreading Susquehanna. I had been over the whole road between Philadelphia and Pittsburg before, but this trip down the valley of the Juniata, in the Spring of 1860, when I was eleven and a half years old, I made alone, an independent telegrapher, with eyes wide open to the wild beauty of the wonderful scenery and the rushing river.

Do you know that the Juniata is really blue? It takes that color from the blue limestone of the Allegheny Mountains. Do you know the Susquehanna from the springs of its two great branches to Northumberland, where they join to sweep a glorious stream around the North Mountains to receive the Juniata and flow on by Harrisburg in glory to the sea?

Do you know the Indian legends, the tales of scout,

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and raid, and skirmish ; the romance, pathos, heroism of colonial and revolutionary days that haunt every mile of these romantic streams? Have you floated down the north branch, through the great bend, by Towanda, and so through the Wyoming Valley to Northumberland, catching many a gamy bass on the way, and musing on the legend of the standing rock ; on Sullivan's expedition ; on Campbell's Ledge, and the Massacre of Wyoming? Have you rafted down the west branch, from the Bald Eagle, and remembered the pioneers' advance up that long, wide valley, with its wild alarms, fatal raids and precipitate flights ?

Do you know the story of Logan and his Delawares, crowded westward along the Juniata? I know no more romantic or more beautiful streams on earth than these. At Duncannon, on the right bank of the Susquehanna, the noble stream, nearly a mile wide, sweeps in a majestic curve round the North Mountain on the opposite shore.

These were the scenes that inspired David Strouse to write the following beautiful and pathetic verses :

Written at Lewistown, Pennsylvania, in 1861, on his return to his home from exhausting service in the military telegraph and while seated on the bank of the Juniata River :

“Gentle river, ever flowing,
Where my early days were passed !

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Like your waters, I am going
Sadly to the sea, at last—

“ To that ocean, dark and dreary,
Whence no traveler comes again—
Where the spirit, worn and weary,
Finds repose from grief and pain.

“ O'er the world, I long have wandered ;
Now, a stranger, I return,
Hope, health and manhood squandered,
Life's last lesson here to learn.

“ Calmly on thy banks reposing,
I am waiting for the day,
Whose calm twilight, softly closing,
Bears the trembling soul away.”

At Duncannon, in the Fall of 1860, I took the presidential returns of Mr. Lincoln's election and afterwards worked at Harrisburg, Lancaster, Eagle Station, and four offices in Philadelphia.

AFFIDAVIT.

Personally appeared before me, A. S. Taylor, a Notary Public in and for the District of Columbia, Major Joseph Orton Kerbey, of Washington, D. C., who, being duly sworn, deposed and said : In 1858-9 I was division operator of the western division of the Pennsylvania Railroad, stationed at Pittsburg, and knew John Emmet O'Brien, of Greensburg, Pa. (now of Scranton), as a competent sound operator. I appointed him either in 1858 or 1859, when he was about ten years old, as “extra operator” on my division and sent him to Latrobe, Wilmore, and other stations, where his telegraphing proved satisfactory. David McCargo, superintendent of telegraph, sta-

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tioned at Altoona, thereafter employed him at many points on the other divisions of the road until he entered the military telegraph in the Civil War, when about thirteen years old. To the best of my knowledge and belief the said Johnny O'Brien was, by several years, the youngest telegrapher of our time in both civil and military telegraphs, and worked in so many stations at an extremely early age as to make his experience unique and remarkable.

Sworn and subscribed before me }
this 1st day of May, A. D. 1908. } J. O. KERBEY.

[Seal] A. S. TAYLOR,
Notary Public.

CHAPTER IV.

I ENTER THE MILITARY TELEGRAPH, THE YOUNGEST
MEMBER OF THE CORPS—THE FIGHT IN HAMPTON
ROADS—TELEGRAPHING THE PHASES OF
BATTLE—OPERATOR COWLAM'S
HEROISM.

DURING the Fall and Winter of 1861 I was working at the division superintendent's office in West Philadelphia and in regular correspondence with Richard, whose letters from the seat of war I eagerly anticipated and devoured.

Al Snyder, I think it was, of our wire, who returned after Bull Run in an officer's uniform with brass buttons, impressed me with as much enthusiasm to get in the war as did General McClellan, whom I saw go through Philadelphia to take chief command of the armies. Then there was Richard, at Fort Monroe, in the center of war interest, and I wanted to be with him—a feeling which I have never gotten over, though now sixty years old. We are still together.

At last my ambition was realized; I was to enter the Military Telegraph Corps. The order came in January, 1862, when I was three months over thirteen years old. As I walked home that night, treading on air, in the bright moonlight, I wondered what that

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moon was looking down on in Virginia ; what camps, armies, forts and guns.

I went by rail to Baltimore, and not knowing the way, or how far to the wharf, got into a cab, asking the driver to take me to the bay line steamer. He drove, apparently, a mile or two, through the city to reach it, and charged me three dollars (it was really only a few blocks from the station to the boat); and I got on board the *Georgiana* for Fortress Monroe. It was a glorious moonlit night ; the salt breeze, the undulating waves, the moon-path over them, the phosphorescent gleams in the wake of the boat, may have been seen by others, but they were mine alone—they belonged to a boy who knew and saw no one else there as they bore him to fancied scenes of glory.

We reached Fort Monroe early in the morning, and I followed the other passengers for a little way toward the great fortress, until they filed off to one side (to show their credentials to the Provost Marshal and take the oath of allegiance), but not knowing the regulations I kept on and went over the moat, through the grim gateway, without (and this was strange and never occurred again) being halted by the sentry, across the parade ground among mounds of cannon balls and gleaming brass cannon, until I saw a wire and followed that until it led me into General Wool's headquarters, where I found a telegraph instrument, and, for the first time since leaving Philadelphia, felt at home ! There were officers and trim soldiers in

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the room, but no one spoke to me, and, instead of speaking to them, it seemed natural to me to open the key and say "?." Immediately some one answered and asked who was there. I told him, and asked "134" ("who are you?"). He said, "I'm George Cowlam, at Newport News." I asked him if he knew where Richard was, and he said, "No, but certainly not far away." Cowlam said he had a message; would I take it? There were some sheets, headed "United States Military Telegraph," on the table. I picked up a pen and took the message; it was from General Mansfield, addressed to Major-General John E. Wool. As I finished writing the dispatch I looked up and found everybody in the room looking at me, and beside me was a slight, very old, white-haired officer, with two stars on his shoulder-straps, who reached for the message, and, having read it, patted my head and said, "My boy, you are very young to be able to do that." I said, "General, I have been doing it in fifteen offices for three years." "Then we will need you," he said. It was General Wool. Richard came in, and, greeting me affectionately, properly introduced me to the old hero.

Richard was quartered in a casemate of massive masonry whose deep embrasure looked out across the moat to the bay, and his quarters were cared for by a most mischievous little negro boy, Jim, who had absolutely no respect for my dignity, and whose head and muscles were, as I very soon learned, much

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harder than mine. Whenever afterward I had occasion to reprove him his favorite answer was, "All humbug, Johnny, chuck um in de moke (moat)."

Besides the garrison of Fortress Monroe, consisting of artillery and infantry, General Wool had a brigade at Camp Hamilton, near Hampton, which village had been burned early in the war; two regiments of cavalry, and a brigade, under General Mansfield, at Newport News.

Soon after my arrival, early in 1862, Richard let me go on one of the repair expeditions on the Newport News line. I went in a four-mule wagon with a lineman and some negro laborers. The usual detail of a company of infantry to escort and guard us was ordered from Camp Hamilton, but were slow in getting ready, so we drove on with the understanding that they would follow us. This expedition gave me my first view of the burned ruins of the old and picturesque village of Hampton, where we passed our outer pickets. These pickets informed us (incorrectly) that none of our cavalry was out. On nearing the New Market road we saw a party of horsemen coming down that road toward us. The teamster turned his wagon across the road to retard them, and we piled out pell-mell. The negroes skedaddled for Fort Monroe, some of them, it was said, never stopping till they ran past the fort and out on the wharf, but this was probably an exaggeration. I took to the wood, and, peering out through the bushes, observed

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that the cavalrymen were halted around the wagon and that the teamster seemed to be gesticulating for us to come back. I made my way cautiously back through the trees until near enough to see that the horsemen wore the blue jackets, with yellow trimmings, of our own cavalry. They were, in fact, a detachment of the First New York Mounted Rifles returning from a scouting expedition. We found the wire torn down near Newport News, as usual, and repaired it, returning with our infantry company, which had followed us out from Camp Hamilton.

The operative work at the fort was light at this time and gave me opportunities to explore, armed with a pass, the great fortress, with all its mysteries of moat, casemates, ramparts, and water-battery; the big guns (Columbiads) mounted *en barbette*, some of which I could almost crawl into; the mortars with their piles of shot and shell, and the brick furnaces for heating hot shot, all on the ramparts. I wandered on the beach, listened to the sobbing of the tide, and saw the ships and steamers come and go, and, above all, admired the great sailing war-ships of the old navy. My pass read: "All guards will pass John E. O'Brien, telegraph operator, in and out of the Fort and Water-Battery, and to walk on the ramparts."

At night I was entrusted with the countersign, and, to a boy of my age, it was always a thrilling moment when, in the darkness, a sentry called out to me, "Halt! Who comes there?" I would, of course,

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reply, "A friend," and the dialogue would proceed: "Advance, friend, and give the countersign," the sentry throwing his gun, with bayonet, apart, while I advanced and whispered, "Lincoln," "Chepaultipec," or whatever the word might be; but involuntarily wondering what he would do if I forgot it, or what would happen if his trigger finger should twitch, or if he should just spit me with that wicked bayonet, anyhow, just for practice.

Reveille and taps and bugle-calls were weird and romantic, too; but at last came the day of the *Merri-mac*, which I will tell of later, when the sound of the alarm-gun and the long-roll calling all to arms eclipsed them all. And over all these scenes hung the mysterious presence of actual war.

INITIATION BY THE CAVALRY.

Early occupation in the telegraph had given me absolutely no acquaintance with horses, but as future service might require me to ride, my education was now begun by one of our mounted messengers, William B. Armstrong, of Company B, First New York Mounted Rifles, an excellent horseman and true soldier, who throughout the war always had the best horse and equipments in his regiment and who afterward fought with honor through many battles and skirmishes. He set me on his big cavalry horse, and, as I could not reach the stirrups, put my toes in the stirrup-straps and told me to never hold to the saddle.

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As I rode under the shade trees near General Wool's headquarters I stooped to avoid a limb and the spirited animal threw up his head at the same moment, striking me a hard blow in the face, and then—I shed some blood for my country. This was my introduction to the McClellan saddle, in which I soon felt at home and afterwards rode many miles on many horses in different fields.

One day a message came in for General Mansfield at Newport News, and, our line being down, Richard sent me with it by boat. As we steamed up through Hampton Roads to the broad mouth of James River I saw the Elizabeth River opening out behind Sewell's Point on our left (where the *Merrimac* was soon to come down); noticed the flagship *Minnesota*, with her graceful spars and long tiers of forty guns; the *Roanoke*; the frigate *Congress* and the sloop-of-war *Cumberland*, all peacefully at anchor in the Roads and seemingly invulnerable to any flotilla the enemy could improvise and send down either river against them. Then came the earthworks at Newport News, where I delivered the dispatch to General Mansfield, whom I was to meet again in another field, and found Cowlam with his instrument occupying a log cabin behind the breastworks and in line with the range of gunfire which afterward came from the *Merrimac*. Cowlam was a member of Ellsworth's Fire Zouave Regiment, and had been in the battle of Bull Run. He was an expert telegrapher, and, brave soldier though he had

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proved himself and would again, had been detailed for telegraph service as a duty even more important than that in the ranks. This narrative may show that, as in his case, our service sometimes required as much courage and coolness as service on the firing line. I already looked up to George as to a hero who had been in battle, and innocently asked him if he had killed anybody at Bull Run. He said he had seen a man or two whom he had aimed at fall, but whether by his shots or those of his comrades he could not tell. Though some years my senior, and certainly observing the admiration which I showed for his bravery, his telegraphic skill and beautiful penmanship, George was as modest, I fear more modest, than myself. Of such stuff are true heroes!

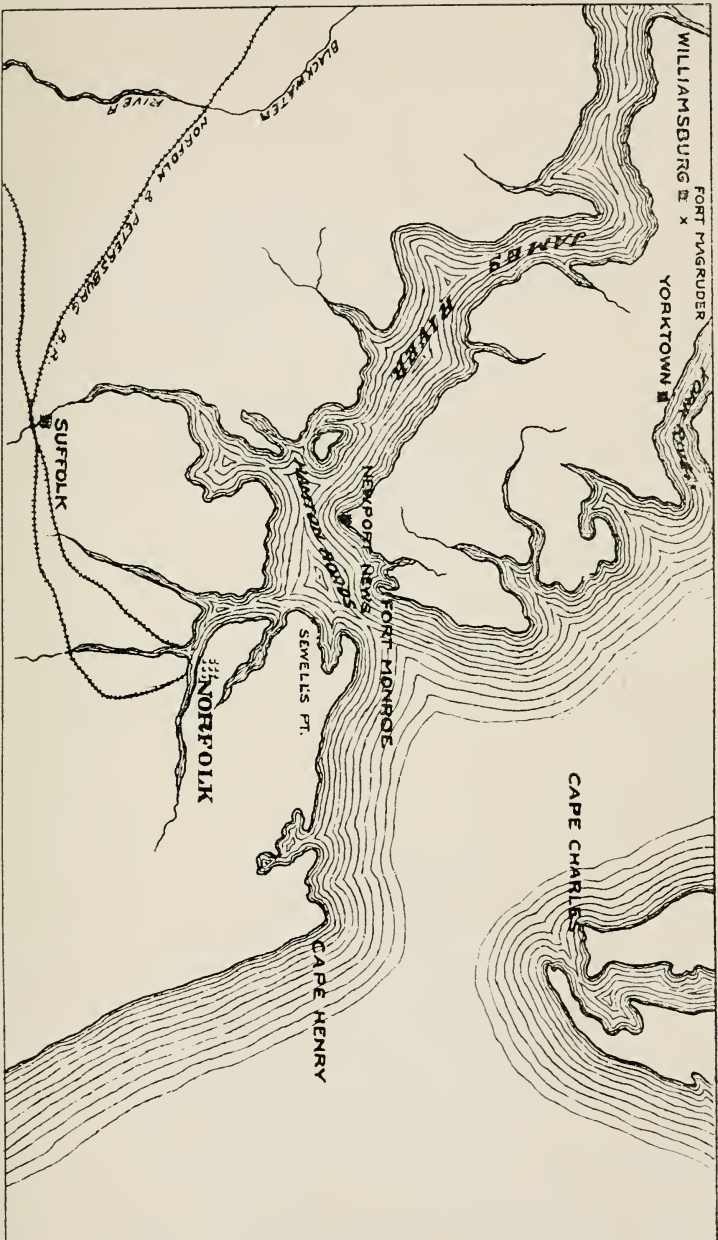
The Confederates had obstructed the channel of the Elizabeth River below Norfolk, by driving piles and sinking hulks, leaving a narrow passageway. Vague rumors had come to us by "contrabands" of something doing at the Gosport Navy Yard, and about the first of March a German sailor swam off to us with more definite information of a floating battery or ironclad constructed by the enemy and rendered ball and bomb proof by being roofed, as was said, with "railroad iron." We were, therefore, in daily expectation of the appearance of this unknown and untried monster.

Daily our field glasses at Fort Monroe and Newport News swept Sewell's Point, Craney Island and the

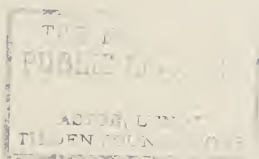
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mouth of Elizabeth River. At last, about noon, on the 8th of March, we saw from the ramparts at Fort Monroe a line of black smoke creeping down behind Sewell's Point toward Hampton Roads. We rushed to the instrument and called Cowlam at Newport News. He was on the alert. The alarm-gun boomed its ominous signal. The long-roll beat all to arms. There was a period of intense and ominous silence; then the roar of heavy guns; and as George Cowlam ticked out to me, "She is heading this way," the first ironclad came into action, and naval warfare was revolutionized. George continued: "She is steering straight for the *Cumberland*"—a pause. "The *Cumberland* gives her a broadside." "She keels over." "Seems to be sinking." "No; she comes on again." "She has rammed the *Cumberland*." "God! the *Cumberland* is sinking," and then, "The *Cumberland* has fired her last broadside, and gone down." These terse messages came to me from George Cowlam's steady hand, interspersed with other remarks like this: "There goes a shell through this shanty;" and again, "That one knocked my bunk away," as coolly as if he were reporting a game of ten-pins, and I found afterwards that one of these shots had filled George's clothes with splinters from the boards of his bunk.

As the black and ugly *Merrimac* came on with sinister deliberation to this work of destruction, destroying and scattering our wooden war-ships as if they had been a flock of sea birds, amid the flash and



MAP OF HAMPTON ROADS AND CONTIGUOUS VIRGINIA



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roar of hundreds of cannon whose reverberations shook the solid ramparts of Fortress Monroe, the sombre panorama was lightened and showed almost a gleam of humor as two wooden consorts of the *Merrimac*, the *Jamestown* and *Yorktown*, ordinary side-wheel steamers, hovered in her rear or darted out and captured some of our quartermasters' schooners, loaded with forage, near the mouth of James River.

Besides the broadsides of all our war-ships directed at the *Merrimac*, and her guns, which were the only ones that did any execution, our land batteries at Newport News, the "Sawyer gun" on the Rip Raps (since called Fort Wool), and the Confederate guns in their fortifications at Sewell's Point, all took part at one moment or another in this tremendous drama, in which the one significant and deadly role was played by the ironclad. Later on I picked up, far back of Sewell's Point, fragments of shell which I took to be from the "Sawyer gun." I cannot recall whether any of the heavy guns of Fort Monroe itself were fired at the *Merrimac* or not, but my impression is that some of them were tried, but, of course, *all* our guns were useless against this new and epoch-making naval monster.

The same steady hand remained at the key at Newport News and continued to give us the further phases of that disastrous onslaught as seen from Cowlam's vantage point. The *Merrimac* raked and set fire to the *Congress*; drove the *Minnesota*, *St. Lawrence*

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and *Roanoke* aground, and, altogether, created such havoc among our wooden vessels, and such consternation next morning at Washington when our dispatches reached there, that a return dispatch ordered General Wool to "Hold Fort Monroe at all hazards." This amazing order—to hold the strongest fort on this continent against a single improvised ironclad and a supposed land force of 15,000 Confederates under General Magruder—may be read with incredulity, but, although I am writing only reminiscences and not pretending to absolute historic accuracy, there are few things pertaining to the Civil War more firmly fixed in my recollection than that dispatch.

Although, so far as I knew, no one at Fort Monroe felt the slightest trepidation at the prospect of the *Merrimac* trying her guns on the fort itself, and all were anxious to have her come within range of our own guns, yet it was fully expected that she would come out next day, sink or fire the remaining wooden ships and perhaps attempt to pass out into the bay, and the absolute futility of any means we then had for attacking her may be best illustrated by a proposal, which I heard gravely discussed, to have the fast side-wheel wooden passenger steamer *Vanderbilt*, then in port, attempt to run the *Merrimac* down and sink her by the momentum of speed alone! On the evening of the first day's fight, March 8th, Richard being at the instrument, I stood on the ramparts at Fort Monroe watching the flames of the frigate

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Congress still blazing near Newport News, thinking of the poor fellows who had gone down in the *Cumberland* firing their last broadside as she was going down; and wondering whether our cousin, Richard Mullin, who had been of the crew of the *Congress*, had escaped, when about 10 P.M. I saw the dim outline of a queer, barge-like craft come into the Roads. I hurried to headquarters and found Richard sending this dispatch :

TO BRIGADIER-GENERAL MANSFIELD,
Newport News :

The ironclad Ericsson battery *Monitor* has arrived and will proceed to take care of the *Merrimac* in the morning.

JOHN E. WOOL,
Major-General Commanding.

Our comrade, David Homer Bates, in a very interesting article, "Lincoln in the Telegraph Office," in the *Century Magazine*, May, 1907, tells of the receipt of a similar dispatch from General Wool and of its cheering effect in Washington.

On the morning of the 9th the alarm-gun and long-roll again announced the appearance of the smoke of the *Merrimac* behind Sewell's Point, and Richard left me at the key to accompany General Wool up the beach for a nearer view of the impending battle of the ironclads, which I will let Richard, in a memorandum made at the time, describe: "At 6 A.M., the *Merrimac* was seen steaming down the Elizabeth River. General Wool, having placed the fort in fighting trim, rode out with his staff through Camp

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Hamilton and the ruins of Hampton, to a point on the shore nearest the *Minnesota*, which was still aground. I accompanied the party. The *Monitor*, which had arrived the previous night, lay under the shadow of the *Minnesota* and seemed to us a feeble defense to lean upon, against the invincible monster which had made such short work of two of our finest war-ships the previous evening. When the *Merrimac* passed Sewell's Point and turned towards the fort, we were about to hurry back to help receive her, but when near the Rip Raps she turned again and came straight for the *Minnesota*, which opened fire upon her. The *Merrimac* slowed up a moment, as if to make out what the strange little craft could be, when Lieutenant Worden blazed away and solved the question for her. She quickly responded. They both 'let slip the dogs of war,' the rebel bull-dogs growling from every port-hole, and the little terrier of the North, more active than her unwieldy antagonist, snarling at every rib of the larger craft. The *Monitor* got around more quickly than the *Merrimac* and tried her sides, quarters and stern, but every shot that struck, glanced from the 'greased rails' into the air, with the scream of a baffled demon. The *Merrimac* fired rapidly and viciously, but seemed equally unable to injure her antagonist, and so turned her attention again to the *Minnesota*. The latter discharged a broadside at her without the slightest effect, and received in return a shell from the bow gun of the

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Merrimac, which burst in the officers' quarters and set the ship on fire. Another shot struck the tug-boat *Dragon*, which was engaged in trying to haul the *Minnesota* off, passing through and bursting its boiler. A terrific fire was kept up by the *Minnesota* from every gun that could be brought to bear. A third shell passed over the *Minnesota* and burst unpleasantly near us. Before she could fire again, the *Monitor* had gotten between the *Merrimac* and the *Minnesota*, forcing the former to change her base, in doing which she got aground, but soon swung off and headed for the Rip Raps, with the *Monitor* close at her heels. They had not gone far, however, when the *Merrimac* turned around suddenly and tried to run into the *Monitor*. The latter made a very narrow escape, the great prow of the *Merrimac* leaving an ugly scar on her iron armor. They then pounded away at each other for some time, when the *Monitor* drew off towards the fort. We feared she had received serious injury. The *Merrimac*, with her consorts, the *Jamestown* and *Yorktown* (or *Patrick Henry*), which had thus far kept at a respectful distance, now started towards the *Minnesota*, which we felt sure was doomed. They changed their course, however, for some unaccountable reason, and heading up the Elizabeth River, left us, for this day at least, masters of the situation."

And so the *Merrimac* went back, and the first battle of the ironclads passed into history—a drawn

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battle. She came down the Elizabeth River once again, but there was no further fighting. In addition to the *Monitor*, the guns on the Rip Raps, those on Fort Monroe and in our remaining ships, there were now mounted on the beach two enormous Columbiads, which were named the "Lincoln" and "Union," which threw cannon balls so large that I could easily crawl into the muzzles of the guns. It was calculated that if the *Merrimac* should attempt to pass out and one of these tremendous projectiles should hit her it would stop if it did not sink her.

I had the opportunity to board the *Monitor* a few days after the fight. There were two prominent dents in her turret, larger than my head. I believe that Commander Buchanan of the *Merrimac* fought his ship pretty nearly to her limit, and that she retired badly damaged.

Soon after the battle of the ironclads I went out on a flag-of-truce boat which was met by one from the enemy in the mouth of Elizabeth River. Newspapers and courteous messages were exchanged, and I was particularly struck by the handsome appearance and chivalrous manner of the Confederate officer who came aboard our boat. Many times afterward I wondered how long that fine grey uniform remained untarnished and its wearer alive and unwounded in the bloody battles that soon followed around Richmond. I regret that I cannot recall the name of the gallant Southron.

CHAPTER V.

ANSON STAGER MADE HEAD OF THE MILITARY TELE-
GRAPH—THOMAS T. ECKERT IN CHARGE IN THE
EAST—EASTERN SHORE LINE—THE CABLE—
McCLELLAN AT YORKTOWN—BALLOON
TELEGRAPHY—BATTLE OF WILL-
IAMSBURG—LINCOLN, CHASE
AND SEWARD.

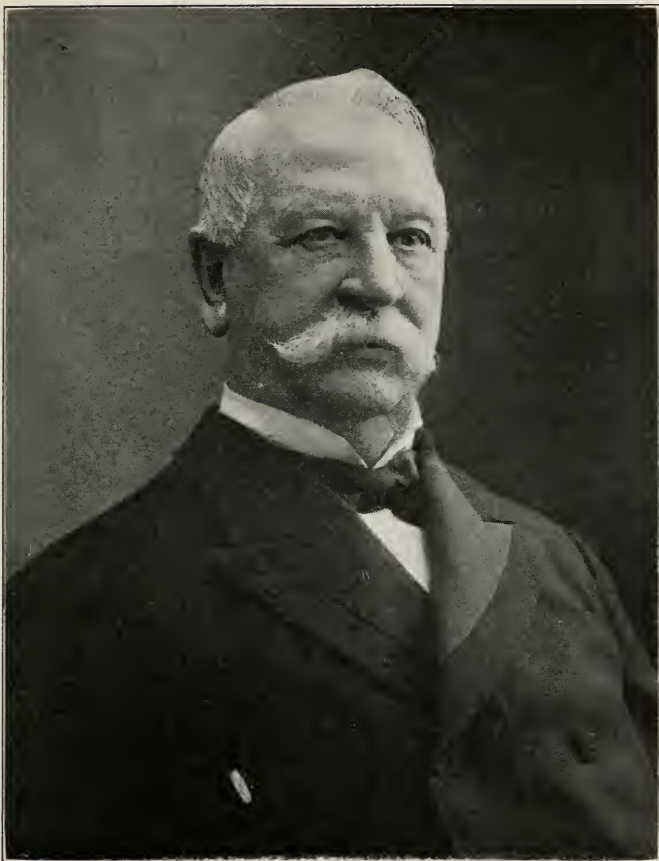
WHILE these events were transpiring at Fort Monroe the Army of the Potomac was lying inactive on that river, about Washington, but was being organized to a state of high efficiency by General McClellan, who had been appointed to command, by Mr. Lincoln, November 1, 1861. About that time Secretary of War Cameron, with the approval of the President, appointed Anson Stager, of the Western Union Telegraph Company at Cleveland, to have charge of all military telegraphs, and Thomas T. Eckert was placed in charge at Washington, first at McClellan's headquarters and later at the War Department, whence he organized and managed the telegraph service in Virginia and North Carolina thereafter, eventually becoming Assistant Secretary of War.

McClellan's plan for attacking Richmond by way of Fort Monroe and York River having been approved,

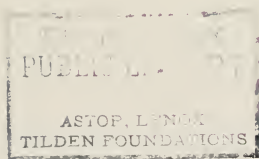
TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE

a line was run down the eastern shore of Delaware, Maryland and Virginia to Cape Charles, which it reached February 5, 1862, giving direct wire connection between Washington and that point, whence a dispatch boat plied across the bay to us at Fort Monroe in three hours. Shortly afterward an attempt to lay a cable across the bay from Cape Charles resulted in the wreck of the vessel containing it on Cape Henry, where the construction party narrowly escaped capture. A second attempt, under Mr. W. H. Heiss, proved successful and gave us eventually direct wire from Fort Monroe ("F.") to the War Department ("D. I."), through repeaters at Wilmington, Delaware, though at first messages were transcribed and repeated at Wilmington. This cable was a piece of the first Atlantic cable, none other being available, and always worked hard. It was also broken more than once, and Cape Charles being a rather stormy point, the land line on the eastern shore was finally run down through Eastville to Cherrystone Inlet, a more sheltered position, and the Fort Monroe cable was relaid over to that point.

Major Eckert assembled at Fort Monroe a telegraph construction party, under Parker Spring, with material to build lines with the Army of the Potomac in the forthcoming campaign, and on April 3rd, with a party of eight additional operators, arrived at the Fort, having accompanied General McClellan from Washington. I will let Mr. Charles A. Tinker, who



GENERAL THOMAS T. ECKERT
Assistant Superintendent Military Telegraph and Assistant
Secretary of War, 1861-5
Lately President Western Union Telegraph



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afterward became one of the "Sacred Three" cipher operators at the War Department, tell, in a graphic letter written at the time, of this incident. He says that Major Eckert selected these eight operators, three from General McClellan's headquarters in Washington; three from the office at Fairfax Seminary; one from Upton's Hill, and another. They were A. Harper Caldwell, Jesse H. Bunnell, John H. Emerick, Charles W. Jacques, Brainard H. Lathrop, Henry L. Smith, Charles Snyder, and Charles A. Tinker. Mr. Tinker's letter, written to his father, follows:

*" On board Steamer Commodore,
" Off Mattawaman Creek,*

" Potomac River, April 1, 1862, 9 o'clock P.M.

"At last the head of the long-talked-of (in these parts, for I think it has been kept too secret to be heralded North) expedition is on its way down the Potomac. Being one of its component parts, and knowing that you at home will look anxiously for a line from me by first mail, consistent with delays in transportation from the seat of war, I have secured a convenient place at a side table amidst the hubbub of social enjoyments in the cabin, among officers of all grades and stripes, from Generals down to corporals of the guard, and will drop you a few lines of my evening's recollections of the past twelve or fifteen hours, hoping you will excuse a pencil sketch.

"I telegraphed you at noon yesterday that I sail

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to-day. So I did. At 3 o'clock I took a hack from the War Department, which brought another operator and myself, with a cook. (By the way, Mr. Eckert has taken to himself Beverly, the cook, who served me so faithfully at Upton Hill all Winter, and he is now with us and will be our servant and cook during the Summer's campaign.) As I was saying, the hack took us, bag and baggage, to the Seventh Street wharf, where we changed to the ferry for Alexandria, arriving there at 6 P.M. Came on board the *Commodore*, expecting to start at once for Fortress Monroe, but soon learned that 9 A.M. to-day was the hour appointed for sailing. Deposited our luggage in a comfortable stateroom. The telegraph office! You will laugh at the idea of a telegraph office on board a steamboat. Nevertheless there has been one on this boat for the last two weeks, where General McClellan has had his headquarters. I was shown to a berth, where I deposited myself for the night and enjoyed a good night's rest. Got up to breakfast at 6 o'clock this morning. It was a soldier's fare, bread and coffee and a little meat. At 9 o'clock steam was up and everything in a stir and bustle, indicating an early start, but General McClellan was not yet on board and everyone looked anxiously for his coming, knowing that until he came we must linger in expectation.

"Here I will tell you of our steamer. She is the large Sound steamer built for, and formerly running on, the Fall River line between New York and Fall

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River. She is splendidly finished and considered a sea-going and staunch craft. There are on board three or four hundred officers, clerks, guards, etc., in Government service, with a hundred or more servants. The boat is loaded with all sorts of war materials; horses, wagons, baggage of all kinds, and innumerable articles which no one could describe. General McClellan and staff are the most prominent of the military dignitaries. Now sitting where I can cast my eye around and see them all as they are enjoying themselves at cards, dominos, backgammon, chess and checkers, and chatting and smoking, are Generals McClellan, Barnard, Williams, Barry; Colonels Hardie, Ingalls, William B. Astor, Duke De Paris, Count De Chartres, Prince De Joinville, and many others I might name, less noted officers of the great Union army. Our party comprises Mr. Eckert, the superintendent, and eight operators, including myself and Beverly, the cook. We are bound for Fortress Monroe, there to accompany General McClellan's army through its Southern campaign to conquer the enemy. We have laid in a stock and supplies to keep us comfortable for the next six months. I hope before that time has passed we may be released from our chosen bondage, to return to and enjoy the society of our friends left so far behind.

“Returning to my narrative: We passed the hours from 9 to 11 A.M. in discussing the prospects and expectations of our contemplated life and experiences

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with the army in the South, etc. At 11 A.M. President Lincoln and Secretary Seward visited the steamer and inspected her from stem to stern, and I am sure, if their pleasing countenances were tell-tale pictures of their feelings, they had not a fault to find with her appearance, nor a hope lost in her worthiness to undertake the task of conveying the head of the army and its headquarters, also, from Washington to Fortress Monroe. At 12, noon, we dined. At 3:15 P.M. McClellan arrived from Washington and came on board. Of course, he was welcomed by many cheers and joyful demonstrations. At 3:15 P.M. the telegraph wires were cut away, the bow and stern lines drawn in and we floated out into the stream with the steamer's bow pointed for Dixie.

“The sail down the river was most delightful. For a long time Washington, the Capitol, Alexandria and Georgetown were in full view, and their domes glistened in the bright rays of the Southern sun. We passed Fort Washington shortly before sundown. Bands were playing and soldiers cheering and waving their caps and flags, wishing us Godspeed on our journey of deliverance to those in bondage, friend or foe. A half hour later we passed Mount Vernon, the most sacred spot of earth on the American continent, where are entombed the remains of our good old father, Washington, ‘first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen!’ Had he lived in sixty-one I would never have sailed on a mission of war which now carries me almost beneath the

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shade of the weeping willow which marks the sacred ground in which he lies. 'Tis a solemn moment which finds the traveler nearing this enchanted spot, for the common and binding rule among steamboat men on the river is to stop the engine, to toll the bell and dip the ensign, as they float by. A few miles below we came to the first rebel battery (now vacated), which has been such a terror to shipping on the Potomac. Two miles below it we came to anchor where we now are, still and peaceful as at home. General McClellan has gone (out on a gunboat which came alongside) for a reconnoissance up the creek, and we are to lay here until morning. As soon as he returns we will be up and moving once again. We all like the idea of lying still to-night and getting a good night's sleep and to-morrow have a daylight view of the rest of the river and of Chesapeake Bay, which we pass through on our way down.

"I will finish and mail this letter at Fortress Monroe.

"April 3, noon. Off Fortress Monroe.

"We started at daylight from Mattawaman Creek yesterday and came leisurely down the river, entering Chesapeake Bay about 10 A.M. A gentle breeze was blowing, giving a slight ripple to the water, just enough to sway our great craft to and fro as she plowed her way through the briny deep. We came in sight of the vast fleet of ships, in the midst of which we are now anchored, about 4 P.M., and then

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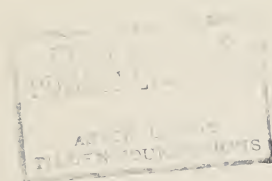
our speed slackened and we steamed down till dark, when we came to anchor where we now lie, midway between the Fortress and Sewell's Point, where the rebels have a battery of nine guns. The morning is warm and bright, not a breath of air stirring. I would call it midsummer weather. I have stolen away into the captain's office, the key of which I have been the possessor since we started, as it contains all our valuables, instruments, stationery and other telegraphic supplies, of which I have charge, until they are distributed for use. I find no pens or ink or writing paper here, so I have confiscated a few blanks (as my own paper is exhausted) and will finish this letter, now fearing I may not have another opportunity.

"I wish you could get one look of the beautiful prospect presented to view from the deck of this steamer. 'Tis magnificent, and I cannot disguise a degree of pride and satisfaction which charms me as I think of the many advantages I have for witnessing with my own eyes the wonders of the age, about which all Christendom is at this moment aroused. Ships (perhaps three or four hundred), of all nations and climes, are now within view. The *Rinaldo*, famed for its part in the Mason-Slidell affair, is just to our stern, with her English ensign flying and all sails set as if in defiance. Two French men-of-war lay but a short distance to the leeward, with their tri-colors flapping and steam up, as ready to take



CHARLES A. TINKER

Chief Operator, War Department, 1862-6
Lately General Superintendent Western Union Telegraph



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a hand in any game that may chance to invite them. The little *Monitor*, that pride of American chivalry and monument to Yankee genius, lies hardly a stone's throw on our larboard bow. You would laugh could you see her. The rebels call her a cheese-box, but they found the mites she contributed to their mess all they could digest. She is being visited by many a skiff load of officers from our steamer. We are looking anxiously for the *Merrimac*, which is expected out from Norfolk hourly, and we hope to witness another great fight and glorious defeat of the rebel ingenuity. The *Monitor*, the *Minnesota* and the *Vanderbilt*, and many smaller gunboats, are ready to receive her when she shall appear. We are going right to work with our telegraph lines and hurry them along where most needed. We have brought five miles of cable to put a splice in the one now laid between here and Cape Charles, and, if successful, we hope to be in communication with Washington direct next week.

"The tug has come alongside to take us ashore, bag and baggage. We go right into camp between Hampton and Newport News.

"I must finish now."

Major Eckert came on himself, as I have said, to Fort Monroe, April 3rd, bringing Captain Lem Sheldon, who had come from Colonel Stager's western lines, to supersede Richard as chief operator at Fort Monroe. This was a very natural proceeding, as

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Major Eckert had never met us, and was then unacquainted with Richard's ability. Captain Sheldon proved to be an efficient manager and Richard continued to work in harmony with him. Major Eckert sent me across the bay to Eastville, on the eastern shore, where I remained for some weeks. There had been a small skirmish in that vicinity some time before, but at the time of my arrival it was understood that there was no regular force of Confederates in that neighborhood. We therefore maintained only a small detachment of troops there, to guard the line against marauders. While stationed at Eastville, where there was little to do but test the line, I sometimes rode over it with a couple of cavalrymen, or visited the operators at Cherrystone to eat the excellent "Cove" oysters found there, or paddle out in a log dug-out to try a shot at wild geese or ducks. There was no ammunition available but minie cartridges, but the boys would beat the bullets out flat and cut them up into small slugs to serve as shot.

There is probably nothing more easily upset in the water than a log dug-out, so in my first attempt to get a wild goose I was excessively cautious and having paddled within gunshot of a flock of geese would lay down the paddle, carefully take up the musket and just about the time I had taken deadly aim the flock would fly out farther and, again alighting, tempt me to follow them. Nothing happened—no casualties occurred to either the geese or myself. I had a hard

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pull back up the inlet against the tide, but enjoyed the unusual experience quite as much as if I had slaughtered a whole flock of geese.

General Wool had missed and kindly inquired for me, and requested Mr. Sheldon to bring me back to Fort Monroe. McClellan being now on the Peninsula with the army advancing on Yorktown, the telegraph work at Fort Monroe was becoming heavy, so Mr. Sheldon requested that I be returned, and Major Eckert so directed. Richard, Sheldon, Jim Norris and myself were then the operators who, at Fort Monroe, handled and repeated McClellan's business with Washington. With McClellan, in the field, were Harper Caldwell, chief operator; Jesse Bunnell, C. W. Jacques, and others whose names may be found in Plum's history. Jacques and Bunnell were the particularly fast senders at the front, and, in view of the fact that Major Eckert had at first judged my telegraphic skill apparently rather by my youth than by trial, it was amusing when, many times, as I was receiving fast business from those boys, to hear Sheldon, as he looked on, swear till all was blue that never before was such fast stuff taken without a break.

On the single wire and cable above described, pulsed and throbbed, during McClellan's campaign, the hurried orders for supplies, the sharp words about McDowell's Corps, withheld for the defense of Washington, fateful lists of killed and wounded,

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news of victory and defeat—all the tidings of glory and of horror that pertain to war.

The telegraph worked not only through sea and land, but invaded the clouds, carrying a light wire skyward by balloon near Washington, at Pohick Church, Virginia, and on the Peninsula. I will let Jesse Bunnell tell, in the following letter to me, how Park Spring, who was foreman of line construction with the Army of the Potomac, made these ascensions, and also describe the evacuation of Yorktown. ("M. C." was the telegraphic call for McClellan's headquarters.)

"New York, Nov. 1, 1884.

"DR. J. E. O'BRIEN, Scranton, Pa.

"MY DEAR COMRADE: Yours received. The aeronaut who took our wire up on the Peninsula was Professor Lowe, better known amongst us boys as 'Lo! the poor Indian.' So far as I (at 'M C') knew at the time, we were in telegraphic communication with the elevated balloon only two or three times. Park Spring, who was a fair operator, was, I believe, the only one who made these ascensions with Lowe. A double conductor flexible cable looped into the 'M C' wire and we worked direct with Park, who sat in the balloon with a pocket instrument, while Professor Lowe did the rope business, swearing at the men down below, etc. Nothing of any consequence was reported or transacted, however. I think there were no other wired ascensions on the Peninsula.

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“At Yorktown, or, rather, before Yorktown, the night it was evacuated, May 4th, I was on duty at ‘M C’ from 2 A.M. until 8 A.M. The previous evening had been made unusually lively for us by shells from the enemy, who seemed to have determined to give it to us very hot all along the line. We accounted for this by supposing that they were aware that all our heavy guns had at last been gotten into position and that the order was issued to open a terrific fire the next day. The fact was, they were evacuating Yorktown and shelling us to divert our attention, in which they succeeded perfectly. The tumult kept me awake long after I had turned in at my tent at 8 o’clock P.M., and when Jacques woke me at 2, all was still as death.

“About 3 o’clock I was sitting in a rustic bower which had been built in front of the telegraph tent door, when I saw a light in the sky over Yorktown. It grew larger and appeared to be from a burning building in the town. Then I heard over the wires questions going between the different operators stationed in the front nearest that point, as to ‘what was the fire?’ Then, a few moments later, an order was telegraphed Professor Lowe, at one of these stations, directing him to ascend, observe and report immediately. Then I could dimly see the balloon as it was allowed to rise a hundred feet or more. The report was indefinite, stating that the fire was either a sloop at the wharf, or a building in town. But

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very soon, about 4 o'clock, a sharp, sudden call at the instrument for 'M C' brought a message from, I forget where, stating that a deserter had come in reporting Yorktown evacuated! By the time I had aroused the General and some of his staff and returned to the instrument, several more messages to the same purport from other points were waiting for me, and 'M C' was being frantically called by every one who could get in. The General came to the instrument half-dressed, the staff crowded in and about the tent, telegrams were written or scrawled and *rushed* to every point on the line, with the result that, in about two hours, our whole army was rushing pell-mell from every point and along every road after the enemy. 'Twas a quick job for 'before breakfast.' They found the enemy, I believe, at Williamsburg. (Near Fort Magruder, two miles before Williamsburg. J. E. O'B.)

"I always recollect this episode as one of the striking occurrences connected with my early experience in the U. S. M. T. I was then but seventeen years old, and felt proud to have been the medium for the transmissions which caused that great army to spring, as one man, from its sleep to pursue the enemy. "Yours truly, J. H. BUNNELL."

Our wires at the siege of Yorktown connected all the corps headquarters. The two operators, D. B. Lathrop and H. L. Smith, in the intrenchments nearest the town, rushed in with the first of our troops and hastened to the telegraph office to try the

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Richmond wire. The wires had been cut and left hanging from the pole, and in going to the pole Lathrop trod on a buried torpedo, which exploded, tearing a leg almost off and otherwise injuring him. He died within a few hours. Lathrop was beloved by his comrades, who had his body embalmed and taken to his home at Mount Vernon, Ohio, and erected a monument over his grave. It may be considered a serious charge to say that torpedoes were planted at Yorktown, but this account was attested to me by my comrades at that point, two of whom, Tom Morrison and another, accompanied Lathrop's remains; and, so far as I know, was never doubted by any one at the time. It is, of course, not believed that the treachery was known to, or authorized by, any Confederate officer or any one acquainted with the rules of civilized warfare.

In the rush of McClellan's Corps after the retreating enemy, they encountered them at Fort Magruder, two miles before reaching Williamsburg, and here the Confederates, aided by their fortification and the nature of the ground, made a determined stand, resulting in the battle of Williamsburg. More vividly than the dispatches of McClellan and his corps commanders, the reports and battle-orders, which I heard on the wire or handled, do I remember the names and regiments of fifteen hundred of our killed and wounded which I "took" from Bunnell or Jacques for transmission North, while the tears were in my

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eyes and the telegraphic speed was too great to give me time to brush them away.

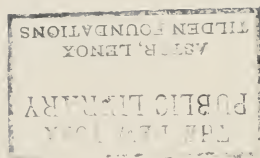
After Yorktown, the construction party kept the main line up with the troops as they marched, stringing wire loops to corps headquarters when they halted, stringing the wires on poles or trees as the exigencies of the route permitted. Comte de Paris, who was then an aid on General McClellan's staff, attests, in his excellent history of our Civil War, that the Generals were surprised and delighted to find the telegraph at hand at the end of each day's march, giving them communication with one another and with the base of operations (Fort Monroe).

The instruments of slight resistance and currents of small electro-motive force employed on the well-insulated lines of to-day would hardly have recorded signals or overcome the "escapes" of our field lines of that time. We used "relays" of high resistance and nitric acid batteries of the strongest kind, though these were improved upon in portable apparatus as the war progressed. The operators at the front, too, were experts. Seated perhaps under fire on a stump or cracker-box, while troops and artillery swept by, they would send or take thousands of words of military dispatches at the rate of forty words per minute, without an error. From the battle of Williamsburg to that of Fair Oaks, and in the seven days' fighting, the telegraph assisted largely in handling the several corps of the Army of the Potomac.



Courtesy of The Century Magazine

A FIELD EXPEDIENT



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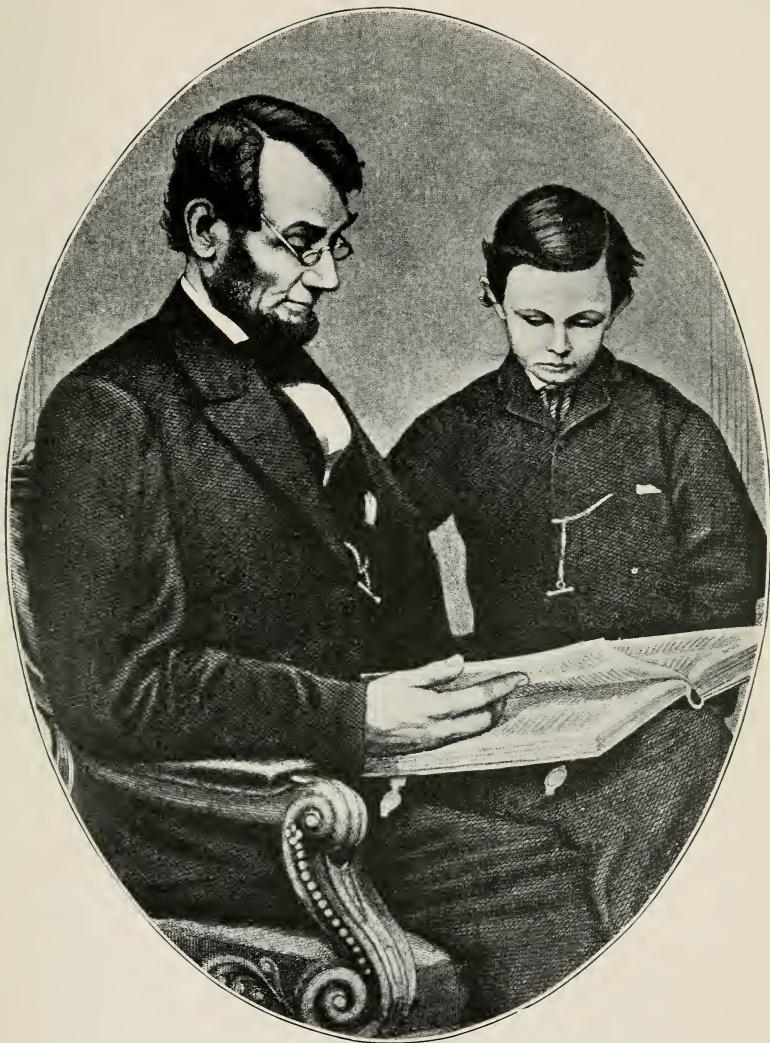
At Gaines' Mill, Porter obtained reënforcements at the critical juncture through the promptness of Jesse Bunnell, who tapped the wire as our line of battle receded, and transmitted the necessary dispatches under a heavy fire which killed some of his mounted messengers.

The inner history of this campaign can be best read in the pregnant telegrams of McClellan, Stanton and Lincoln, found in the official records. These dispatches and all succeeding ones of importance throughout the war were transmitted over the wires in cipher, the keys of which were held by confidential telegraph operators and were not permitted to be revealed even to commanding Generals. The principle of the cipher consisted in writing a message with an equal number of words in each line, then copying the words up and down the columns by various routes, throwing in an extra, "blind," word at the end of each column and substituting arbitrary words for important names and verbs. This code, invented by Anson Stager and improved by Bates, Chandler and Tinker, was frequently changed to insure secrecy, as when a cipher operator was captured. The reader who may be curious on this subject is referred to Plum's "History of the Military Telegraph," which contains a full exposé of the Union and Confederate cryptographs, and to interesting articles by Charles A. Tinker and David Homer Bates in the *Century Magazine*. The Confederate ciphers were always

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solved by our experts, sharing, as they did, the faults of all ciphers constructed on an alphabetical system, while it is believed that no instance is known of the enemy having been able to decipher a telegram in one of our ciphers.

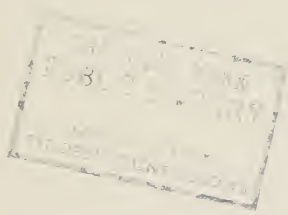
Early in May, 1862, I walked into our telegraph office at Fort Monroe one evening, whistling "Dixie." There were some strangers there, and Richard chided me rather sharply for my levity. It was such an unprecedented thing for him to do that I was much confused, and had only time to feel more surprised than hurt when a tall, lank, ungainly man rose up and told my brother that it was all right, that "Dixie" was his favorite tune. It was Abraham Lincoln! With him were William A. Seward, Secretary of State; S. P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, and Major Eckert. They were there on a mission to meet peace commissioners from Richmond, in a conference which proved unavailing. Next morning this party, surrounded by General Wool's staff, stood on the porch at headquarters, about to start out on a tour on horseback. The most striking figure of that group that I still see in imagination is Mr. Lincoln. There he stands, head and shoulders above the rest, his rugged features illumined by a gleam of humor as the staff searches in vain for gauntlets large enough to fit the firm and honest hand that held the destinies of the nation.



“The honest hand that held the destinies of the nation”

MR. LINCOLN AND HIS SON “TAD”

Mr. Lincoln presented a copy of this Photograph to Albert B. Chandler,
Military Telegrapher at the War Department



CHAPTER VI.

NORFOLK—END OF THE MERRIMAC—SUFFOLK—WIRES
AND CABLES—EXPERIENCE OF CAPTURED OPER-
ATORS—NAVAL DISPATCHES—RELATIONS
OF THE ARMY AND NAVY IN THE
PENINSULAR CAMPAIGN.

BY the 10th of May, McClellan had reached the Pamunkey, and the Confederates, needing all their forces to confront him, evacuated Norfolk. It has been said that Mr. Lincoln, who was still at Fort Monroe, selected the point across Hampton Roads (near where the Jamestown Exposition stands at this writing), where our expedition against Norfolk should land. The selection depended on channel and beach and was, in fact, made by our cable pilot, Captain Evans, who commanded the tug *Geo. B. McClellan*, a rough old sea-dog who knew every foot of all that coast.

On the approach of our troops, under Generals Wool and Mansfield, the *Merrimac* was blown up by her gallant commander, the act confessing that her usefulness to the Confederates was at an end. General Egbert L. Viele became Military Governor of Norfolk. It was expected that an important movement would be made from Norfolk towards Weldon and Petersburg, and Major Eckert sent Richard, as chief operator, to

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Norfolk at once to take charge of military telegraph affairs, I accompanying him, and men and material to follow to enable him to run a line back to Sewell's Point, with cable thence across Hampton Roads to Fort Monroe, and to push lines out to Suffolk, or wherever needed. I went to Suffolk. The Seaboard and Roanoke Railroad ran from Portsmouth, opposite Norfolk, through the Dismal Swamp to Suffolk and on to Weldon. Richard first patched and used this wire, working at Portsmouth, where some days he sent and received messages while lying down too ill to sit up, and at other times sending me dispatches without being able to hear me in return on account of the wire being on the ground and no battery at my end. In these cases he trusted me to be on the alert, even when he got no answering signals, and—I was there.

The Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad crossed the other line a few miles beyond Suffolk and beyond our pickets. Our next makeshift was to connect those two wires at that point, and, by putting a piece of cable under the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad draw-bridge across the Elizabeth at Norfolk, we got a string from General Viele's headquarters in the Custom House to my station on the Seaboard road at Suffolk. Colonel Wyman, of the Sixteenth Massachusetts Infantry, afterwards badly cut up on the Peninsula, commanded the force there at first, but soon General Mansfield came out with more troops.

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My station, though in the village, was somewhat isolated so far as troops were concerned, they being stationed a mile or so away in different directions, and there being but one cavalryman, to carry dispatches, with me. General Mansfield, one of the old Mexican war heroes, used sometimes to come alone at night to see if the line and I were safe. We continued safe, from the armed foe, but they had left some allies which were almost as terrible. Mrs. Pickett, in her admirable book, "Life of General Pickett," tells that in her baby's first review of Pickett's Corps he accumulated some trophies that required the services of nurse and doctor. In a pile of blankets which the Confederates had left in the Suffolk depot my orderly and I met the enemy and—we were theirs! We did battle with them for a month, and then, having negotiated an exchange with another operator, not concealing the facts from him, I buried a suit of clothes, did some germicidal ablutions, and went back to work at Portsmouth.

During the month I was at Suffolk I got time to swim in the Nansemond River, learn to ride bare-back with the cavalry, and to live on "salt-horse" and "hard-tack" with the soldiers.

On one occasion, something having gone wrong with the wire, I had to go to find the trouble, to the point previously mentioned, where the railroads crossed. The horse furnished me by Colonel Wyman ran away with me, passing our outer picket post on a

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dead run. The picket yelled and aimed after me, but fortunately did not fire. While fixing the break I discerned a cavalry brigade in the distance, and, recognizing our regiments, returned with them. They had been on a scout toward Weldon. Suffolk was a nice little town, with its one long street heavily shaded by three rows of elms, one row down the center of the road.

Major Eckert had promptly sent men and material to follow us to Norfolk, and Richard had gotten his lines and cables working in good shape to Fort Monroe. I worked at Getty's Station and other points, as needed, in a sequence which I cannot clearly recall, but, as not only military but commercial business was being now accepted over our line, the only one between Norfolk and the North, the telegraphic work at Norfolk became considerable, and Richard placed me there with him. Our office was at military headquarters, in the Custom House, which became our home for a long time and under successive commanding Generals.

It will be remembered that McClellan's well-laid plans against Richmond were frustrated largely by Stonewall Jackson's valley campaign, which threatened Washington, caused the President to divert forty thousand men, under McDowell, from the right wing of the Army of the Potomac for the protection of the Capital, discomfited three Union armies, and was executed by Jackson's "foot cavalry" with such

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energy and celerity that the same Confederate force was able to return and take an important part against McClellan in the battle of Gaines' Mill, the first of the seven days' battles around Richmond. This short campaign, which placed Stonewall Jackson in the strategic class of Napoleon, resulted, among other things, in the capture of a number of our military telegraphers, among whom were William McIntosh, foreman of construction, who had just built the line to Strasburg in the valley ; Henry C. Buell, operator at that point ; Charles W. Moore, operator at Manassas Junction, and Frank Lamb on the same line ; Frank Drummond, captured at Winchester, where he lingered to transmit important dispatches as Bank's rear-guard was retreating before Jackson's victorious column, and others.

Drummond's diary, for which I am indebted to Plum's valuable work, gives a vivid picture of the experiences of prisoners of war :

" On the 31st of May we were ordered to report at provost marshal's at 10:30 A.M. Started on march 12:30. Marched fifteen miles, and halted for the night in the middle of the road. Sentinels would not allow us into a field close by ; we were, consequently, compelled to lie down in the mud, so deep that Lieutenant Rice, of the Fifth Connecticut, with whom I slept, could not see a particle of his blanket when we got up, and so left it there ; and I can safely say he regretted leaving it for months after. It rained very

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heavily all night, and as we had no rations all day and night, we arose from our soft bed soaking wet, cold, hungry, and very miserable generally. The next day, Sunday, we marched at 5 A.M. for Strasburg. Here the officers got breakfast at hotels, for which they paid. Halted at 4 P.M., eleven miles from Strasburg, and prospects were held out that we would get half rations, uncooked ; which eventually proved true, as we were the recipients of four crackers (hard-tack) each. Monday, June 2nd, marched fifteen miles, camped at Mount Jackson, in hospital ; nothing to eat all day.

“June 3rd.—Marched sixteen miles. Officers camped in a dirty barn. No rations ; oppressively warm. After we were lying down, terribly tired and hungry, not a sound to be heard, I sang as loudly as I could the song, ‘Bacon and Greens,’ which praises these articles of food in a very tempting manner. One verse goes :

‘Oh ! there’s charm in this dish, rightly taken,

That from custards and jellies an epicure weans.

Stick your fork in the fat, wrap your greens round
the bacon,

And you’ll vow there’s no dish like good bacon and
greens.’

“They let me finish, but immediately after cried, ‘Put him out !’ ‘Gag him !’ etc. We were a hungry lot. I’ll never forget that night.

“June 4th.—Marched seventeen miles to Harrisburg. No rations until night ; first regular rations we have

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had. All commissioned officers paroled to report at Staunton. Telegraphers refused, because not commissioned. 5th.—Marched twenty-one miles, over horribly muddy roads, last ten miles without any halt to rest. Feet very badly blistered. No rations. 6th.—Marched twelve miles; arrived at Waynesborough 12:30, noon. No rations; feet very sore. Camped in a field near depot. Rained some during night. Bought provisions; no rations. 7th.—Rained very fast all morning. Drenched and miserable. Sun came out after noon. Went to town with guard; bought shoes, towels and soap. Washed in river, put up tent, received rations and slept well. 8th.—Beautiful day. No rations. Wagons packing, and appearance of moving. Charley Moore very ill. Marched at 4 P.M. Camped six miles from Waynesborough. Slept in clover field. No rations. 9th.—Marched at 10. Rations of fat pork; no bread. Halted at North Garden Station, after marching sixteen miles. Camped in field. Baked some bread (flour and water). 10th.—Got up at 4. Raining heavily all day. Field very muddy. Changed our quarters, in midst of heavy rain, to a worse place. Passed a miserable night.

“June 11th.—Left in box cars this morning. Hustled into a box with about sixty others, like cattle. Very close and warm. Arrived at Lynchburg 5 P.M. Marched to fair grounds, where rations were served out. 16th.—Buell very sick; not extra

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well myself. 17th.—Very bad with diarrhoea. Only allowed half rations of water ; something wrong with well. No rations of food. 19th.—Two prisoners died last night ; great many sick. No better myself ; slept badly. Raining. 20th.—Very ill. All prisoners called out to be counted. 21st.—Colonel Gibbs gave us parole of the grounds. Much better quarters, and separated from soldiers. Rigged up a sleeping place with boards, in cattle sheds. Bought seventeen dollars worth of something to eat. 22nd.—Much better in health this morning. Think we will all get well again. Best sleep of any night since left Winchester. 27th.—Buell still sick. 28th.—Rained very heavily. Our shanty keeps tolerably dry ; quite an improvement on the field. 30th.—Reported General Winder will be here to-morrow to parole us.

“ July 1st.—No General Winder. 4th.—Had good dance to-night ; flute music. Slept finely after the unusual exercise. 5th.—Changed ten dollars, gold, for one-third Confederate, two-thirds Federal paper, fifteen dollars. 7th.—Our mess all cut each other's hair, close to the scalp. Very warm. 14th.—Moore, Lamb, Clark, Burr and I dug for two hours, this P.M., at a trench. After which, officers of the guard sent escort with us to stream, where we had a splendid wash, which we enjoyed immensely, and feel much better. 18th.—Jumping match this morning. Charley Moore beat us all. 19th.—Exercised a little on horizontal bar. All in excellent health.

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“July 22nd.—Prisoner shot before daylight this morning for walking past sentry. Supposed by his comrades to have been walking in his sleep. 29th.—Five men escaped last night. 30th.—Colonel threatens to send us back with soldiers if we aid them to escape.

“August 1st.—Another telegraph prisoner arrived to-day—M. H. Kerner. 4th.—Burr very sick ; fever and chills, particularly chills. 6th.—Joyful news in camp to-day. The Colonel has announced that orders have come for our exchange. Charley Moore fainted twice to-day. 7th.—Confederate officers tell us that we will be on our way home to-morrow or next day. More dancing. 8th.—About two thousand prisoners left for home to-day. We expect to leave to-morrow. 9th.—Got orders to-night to cook rations and prepare to march at 6 A.M. to-morrow. 10th.—Marched for cars at 7. Left at 10:30. Sun so intensely hot, could not possibly have walked one hundred yards farther than depot. 11th.—Arrived at Belle Island this A.M. at 6. On the road, six of us crawled through the windows of the car to the roof, and there slept. It was wonderful we did not roll off, but we could not endure the heat and bad odor inside. Left for Richmond at 1 P.M. Reached Libby Prison about 3 ; where we were informed we could not be released until we could procure an exchange for ourselves. Imagine our feelings ! 12th.—Officers in next room all leaving for home to-day. Spoke to Lieutenant

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Selfridge through hole in floor. 13th.—Saw all officers from Salisbury through hole in door. Spoke to Captain Betts, Lieutenant Rice, and several others. 14th.—Spoke to John C. Gregg (M. T. corps, who was taken at Aquia Creek about six months ago) through hole in door. 17th.—Gregg left for home this morning with officers. No sign of our going yet. 18th.—There are now one hundred and fifty prisoners in this room. 19th.—Charley Moore and I made the raise of a sleeping cot. 23rd.—Hard bread to-night, in consequence of more prisoners arriving this P.M.

“August 31st.—Rations are always soup (very watery), boiled beef and bread; never change.

“September 5th.—Man shot upstairs. The guards on the street are in the habit of amusing themselves by shooting at any prisoner who shows himself at the windows. A man in our room forgot himself and was quietly looking over the James River. He approached too close to the window, and we heard a shot, and immediately after a fall upstairs. The ball had gone close to the man's head, through the wooden floor above and killed a sergeant, who was four or five feet from the window. He was sitting on a table, leaning forward, and was struck through the heart; death was instantaneous. The man who did the shooting was arrested, as a matter of form, but was looking out for a fresh shot next day, and the Richmond papers agreed that he had done his duty and gave him credit for it. 12th.—About forty of us

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volunteered to go to Belle Island and make descriptive lists of about six thousand prisoners. We got at work about 3 P.M., finished about 8 A.M., 13th, having worked all night. Five thousand soldiers left to-day. Rumored we are going home in a day or two. 14th.—About ten of us were called out this morning, quite unexpectedly; no time except to grab whatever was handy. Through a clerical error Charley Moore's name was omitted on the list; but we did not forget him. I went to the Captain and told him it must be an omission, and, fortunately, he was generous enough to look into it, and found the clerk had left off Charley's name. In the meantime, poor Charley thought he was deserted. Left Varina at 4:30 P.M.; anchored at dark. 15th.—Steamed off at daylight; beautiful weather. Arrived at Fortress Monroe about 12 M., and anchored in stream. Weighed anchor 6 P.M. When we arrived at Annapolis and were turned loose, without guards, we hardly knew how to keep together.

“On arriving at War Department, Washington, we were very heartily welcomed, although we were a hard-looking lot, and it was altogether unsafe to come too near us. We got some money, and I got permission for Tommy Armor to accompany me to procure an entire change of wardrobe. I stood in the middle of the floor and directed the purchase from a safe distance; then made for the nearest bath house, rolled all my clothes in a bundle, and threw them out of the

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back window for obvious reasons, too numerous to mention. Before leaving Richmond, we were paroled for exchange. I managed to take a copy of the parole, which was as follows: 'We, the undersigned, do solemnly swear and pledge our sacred word of honor, that we will not, during the existing war between the United States and the Confederate States of America, bear arms or aid or abet the enemies of said Confederate States, by information or otherwise, unless regularly exchanged or released. Richmond, September 14, 1862.' "

As throwing a side light on McClellan's Peninsular campaign, I insert the following telegrams which we handled at Norfolk :

U. S. Flagship Minnesota, 11 A.M.
Norfolk, Va., June 27th, 1862.

HON'BLE GIDEON WELLES,
Secretary of the Navy,
Washington City :

I beg the department to be assured that I will not permit the ignorance or impertinence of any army officer to interfere for a moment with my duty to the Government. I am well aware of the crisis at Richmond, and of the absolute necessity of prompt coöperation on my part with General McClellan. Immediately on the receipt of General VanVleit's telegram, notwithstanding its exceptionable tone and address, I took measures to carry out everything it required, and, at the earliest possible moment, gave orders accordingly. I had supposed, in addressing General VanVleit upon the subject of his telegram, that General McClellan knew nothing of its wording; but, as it



ALBERT B. CHANDLER

Cipher-Operator War Department, etc., 1862-5. Lately President
Postal Telegraph Company



REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

now appears to have met his approval, I beg to express the hope that the War Department will enjoin upon him the propriety of inculcating better official manners ; of addressing me as his equal in rank ; and, least of all, not permitting an officer under his command to address me as a subordinate, and refuse to confer upon me the denomination given me by law.

General McClellan, as I understand from one of his telegrams to me, wishes the Navy Department to give me such orders as will secure a prompt compliance with any reasonable request he may make, he, of course, to be the exclusive judge of reasonableness. This, in effect, is asking to put the vessels of this squadron subject to his disposition.

There is, I regret to say, an evident disposition on the part of various army officers to over-ride and disparage those of the navy, and it is high time a stop should be put to a feeling at once so ridiculous and puerile.

I scarcely need add that all the wishes of the department about convoy, etc., have been fully anticipated, and that I will most cordially and cheerfully coöperate with the army, on all occasions, to crush the enemy. I only demand to be treated with the respect due to my rank, position and responsibilities.

L. M. GOLDSBOROUGH,
Flag Officer.

UNITED STATES MILITARY TELEGRAPH.

Received June 29, 1862. 4:30 P.M.
From Washington.

TO FLAG OFFICER L. M. GOLDSBOROUGH :

Send me by telegraph copy of General McClellan's dispatch to you at 12:30 Friday night, and also any later dispatches.

Paid.

GIDEON WELLES,
Secretary of Navy.

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U. S. Flagship Minnesota.

Norfolk, Va., June 29, 1862.

HON. GIDEON WELLES,

Secretary of the Navy,

Washington, D. C. :

The following is a copy of General McClellan's dispatch to me on Friday night at 12 o'clock, since which time nothing from him has reached me. All his requests were promptly complied with, as you will perceive by copies of letters from Commander Rodgers forwarded to you by the mail of to-day.

L. M. GOLDSBOROUGH

Flag Officer.

(Copy):

Rec'd 12 O. C. night.

U. S. Military Telegraph,

Headquarters Dept. Potomac, June 27, 1862.

FLAG OFFICER GOLDSBOROUGH :

I desire you will send some light-draft gunboats at once up the Chickahominy as far as possible, and also that you will forthwith instruct the gunboats in the James River to cover the left flank of this army. I should be glad to have the gunboats proceed as far up the river as may be practicable, and hope they may get up as far as the vicinity of New Market. We have met a severe repulse to-day, having been attacked by vastly superior numbers, and I am obliged to fall back between the Chickahominy and the James; I look to you to give me all the support you can in covering my flank as well as in giving protection to my supplies afloat in James.

(Signed) G. B. McCLELLAN,
Major-General.

I append a third dispatch of Rear-Admiral Goldsborough which we sent as the Army of the Potomac

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was withdrawn from the Peninsula. The originals of these three dispatches, which mark the culmination of McClellan's campaign, are still in my possession, retained as mementoes of the events and spirit of the time :

U. S. Flagship Minnesota,
Norfolk, Va., August 23, 1862.

TO COMMANDER PATTERSON,
Commanding U. S. S. *Chocura*,
York River, Va. :

Visit the York River occasionally as high up as the neighborhood of West Point, and whatever you may discover with regard to the enemy's movements between Yorktown and there, and also thereabouts, communicate the same promptly to the commanding officer of the army at Yorktown. Should the enemy attempt to take up any position on the York River within reach of your guns, use them against him without hesitation, and dislodge him if possible.

L. M. GOLDSBOROUGH,
Rear Admiral.

As these dispatches show the climax of McClellan's troubles in that campaign, the following marked the beginning of them :

War Department, Washington, April 4, 1862.
MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN :

By direction of the President, General McDowell's army corps has been detached from the force under your immediate command and the General is ordered to report to the Secretary of War.

L. THOMAS,
Adjutant-General.

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This reached McClellan as he was confronting Magruder in front of Yorktown, and meant the disruption of his plan of campaign, which contemplated that McDowell's Corps, constituting the right wing of his army, should traverse the general line afterward chosen by Grant, but more interior, and come up on McClellan's right as his main army ascended the York River route to Richmond.

In 1885, in reply to a severe and, in my opinion, unjust, newspaper criticism of McClellan, I wrote a brief paper on this campaign defending him, and reciting the remarkable exploits of that Confederate Napoleon, Stonewall Jackson, as being the direct cause of the alarm at Washington which induced the administration to thus withdraw McDowell's Corps from McClellan's command, and the following autograph letter shows General McClellan's appreciation of this slight service :

New York, June 4, 1885.

J. E. O'BRIEN, M. D., Scranton, Pa.

MY DEAR SIR : During a very great pressure of business your most kind letter of May 11th has been unanswered, and I now hasten to apologize for my delay in acknowledging it. Will you allow me to thank you for your excellent article, and to express my deep appreciation of the kind regard and confidence which I value so highly from my comrades of the war.

Always sincerely your friend,

GEO. B. MCCLELLAN.

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McClellan may have been cautious and deliberate, but I am glad that the recent unveiling of his statue at Washington and President Roosevelt's eloquent tribute, show that the American people appreciate his great military services.

CHAPTER VII.

SUMMARY OF MILITARY TELEGRAPHING IN 1862—GUERRILLAS—HORSEMANSHIP—D. WILMOT SMITH AND SITTING BULL—SIEGE OF SUFFOLK—TELEGRAPHIC SOMNAMBULISM—THE SONG OF THE BULLET.

IN the whole theatre of war, nearly 4,000 miles of line were constructed during 1862, over the wide territory occupied by our forces. Of these nearly half were taken down or abandoned as the exigencies of the conflict dictated. Over a million dispatches were transmitted.

The Peninsular campaign, with the seven days' battles ending at Malvern Hill, had been fought out, and the tide of battle rolled away to distant fields. The military wires were taken down or abandoned as far back as Williamsburg.

While the Army of the Potomac was engaged on the Peninsula the telegraphic situation nearer Washington consisted of three principal lines radiating thence to McDowell at Fredericksburg, to Manassas Junction, extending by way of the Manassas Gap road to Strasburg, and a line by way of Harper's Ferry to Winchester following Banks to Strasburg.

In Pope's Virginia campaign of three weeks his essential telegraph lines formed a triangle, its base

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extending from Washington along the Virginia side of the Potomac to Aquia Creek and Fredericksburg, its sides from the latter point to Culpepper Court House, and from Washington by way of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad to the same point, whence a single wire accompanied him to the battlefield of Cedar Mountain and beyond. In the retrograde movement, as soon as he uncovered the apex of the telegraph triangle at Culpepper, he lost the Fredericksburg wire, which became more inaccessible the farther he receded on the Orange and Alexandria route, while "Jeb" Stuart rode in and cut the line in his rear at Manassas Junction, capturing our operator, who was shot while attempting to escape. Thus was Pope entirely isolated, while Washington seemed as completely cut off from knowledge of his movements or of Jackson's as it was from the North on the 20th of April, 1861. Again the telegraphers plunged into the work of re-opening communication, this time at far greater hazard. Pushing out on the Orange and Alexandria and Manassas Gap roads, by locomotive or by hand-car, they concealed themselves in woods and cliffs, observing the movements of the enemy's forces and of our own, and giving all the definite information which reached the Administration at that time. The field operators with Pope, too, finding their usual occupation gone, became independent scouts, reconnoitering the country and tapping the wires wherever reached to obtain information of the enemy or to com-

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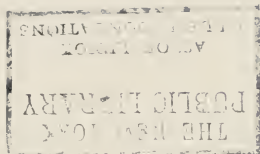
municate news to the War Department. The earliest advices of the second battle of Bull Run, like those of the first, were given by the operators, two of them riding direct from the battlefield to the nearest line and telegraphing their own description of it to the President, who personally thanked them by telegraph. In such hazardous work a number were wounded or captured.

On one occasion an operator started out from Fairfax Station on a hand-car propelled by three contrabands to attempt to restore the line so that Pope's operators could communicate his whereabouts. Finding the line cut beyond Pohick Bridge, he spliced it and got signals from both directions. While so engaged a party of guerrillas emerged from the woods to the track and surrounded him. Bidding the negroes stand fast, he dictated a swift message over the line, which was being repeated back to him and copied as the Confederate leader leaned over his shoulder and read the significant words: "Buford has sent back a regiment of cavalry to meet the one from here and guard the line. If you are molested we will hang every citizen on the route." The instrument ceased ticking as the operator firmly replied, "- - — - —" (O. K.). A painful pause ensued. The Confederate might have suspected a ruse if at the moment a gleam of sabres had not shone in the direction of Fairfax Court House. Hastily starting for the woods, the leader exclaimed, "Come home, boys ;



Courtesy of The Century Magazine

TAPPING A WIRE



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these yere ain't our niggers ;" and they disappeared, while the hand-car, as if driven by forty-contraband power, sped rapidly rearward. Pope's wires were not well guarded at any time.

Later in the war, in attempting to re-open this line for Sheridan, by way of the Manassas Gap road to Front Royal, a railroad and telegraph party, while proceeding by locomotive, were ambushed and five of them killed.

While the billows of war were breaking over another part of Virginia and my comrades of the military telegraph there were suffering hardships, sometimes death, or capture with the horrors of Confederate prisons, we seemed to be in a quiet eddy about Norfolk. The movement that we had expected to be made thence toward Weldon and Petersburg did not transpire, and only long scouting expeditions by the cavalry, with skirmishes about Zuni on the Blackwater towards Weldon, and beyond, occurred.

Richard or I rode over our lines when necessary, usually with a lineman or a single cavalryman, and when I could be spared I roamed on horseback all over the country about Norfolk and Suffolk, either alone or with the cavalrymen. I became more intimate with the Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry and the First New York Mounted Rifles than with any other regiments, and sometimes visited their camps and bunked with them. Armstrong, our mounted messenger, preferring fighting in the field to detail

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duty, returned to his regiment later. We had two mounted messengers from the Eleventh Pennsylvania, Joe Wilson and James Keller, and liked them so well that we kept them permanently detailed, and later, when I was working at Portsmouth and Wilson was my messenger there, I began to teach him telegraphy, which he eventually mastered and made his profession, rejoining us in North Carolina at the close of the war and remaining South as an operator, I think at Weldon, North Carolina, when we came North.

We rode various horses, one beautiful, tigerish sorrel stallion, which threw me, once, at an outer picket post, by the bursting of a saddle girth, but we came eventually to have two, "Pet" and "Lucy," permanently throughout the war. It was not always practicable to take these two horses with us in sudden assignments to different fields, and so we continued to make acquaintance with many others. Richard's brown mare, "Lucy," was strong, enduring and courageous, sure-footed, and a good runner and jumper. She would shy, and come down stiff-legged in a way that was rather disconcerting to a novice, but this, to a fair rider, was a slight fault compared to her good qualities. She will figure again in this narrative.

"Pet" was a good-looking sorrel, with handsome mane and tail. He arched his neck proudly, and had an easy lope. I once rode him bareback, with some cavalrymen, into a branch of the Elizabeth River, for a swim, and as he plunged rather madly into deep

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water I drew too hard on the curb bit, bringing him over backward, and we both went under. I let him go, and swam ashore; it was easy swimming in salt water. There was a pretty strong current and it was undoubtedly "Pet's" first experience in deep water, but after plunging and floundering for a few moments he began to swim, as I believe any horse will, and got safely ashore farther down the bank.

Up to this period I had supposed that our cavalymen were perfect horsemen, though I had already learned to shorten my stirrups more than they did to get the automatic muscular elasticity which should compensate the horse motion, but an experience with "Pet" satisfied me that their mounting technic was all wrong; that they leaned too far back in the saddle, and that as a rule, while good soldiers, they were not really the best of horsemen. In mounting they took the rein and the mane of the horse (or the pommel of the saddle) in the left hand, put foot in the stirrup, and, seizing the cantle (rear) of the saddle in the right hand, drew themselves aboard somehow. This vicious method was so universal that I do not remember to have noticed an exception to it during the war; and, since, I have seen so good a horseman as Buffalo Bill, who undoubtedly learned it from the cavalry, mount in the same way; but his cowboys did not, for the Western mustang, used to springing away the instant foot touched stirrup, would not let them. So, after the experience I am going to mention, I learned

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to mount cowboy fashion long years before I saw a cowboy ride. The trouble with the old cavalry method was that you could not get into the saddle without removing the right hand from the cantle, and if, at that instant, the horse bounded forward, you were completely at his mercy and might not be able to get into the saddle at all. I have owned a good mustang that could certainly not be mounted in that way, and yet I never had any trouble in mounting him on the run. To do so required me to spring to his side and seize the saddle girth as if to tighten it (for which he would stand), while I took the rein and pommel in my right hand, seized the mane near his head with the left (some cowboys prefer to seize the head-stall), and put foot in the stirrup—all instant. By this time he would be on the run, but I could easily maintain that position for any distance and get in the saddle at my leisure. I had been invited by a farmer boy, who lived some miles beyond our lines, to visit and hunt rabbits with him. On the way out, with a shotgun, I dismounted from "Pet" to try a shot at a squirrel. In remounting, with the gun in my right hand on the cantle of the saddle, "Pet" started on a run and by the greatest effort I was only able to get my leg over his back behind the saddle. In that awkward position, with the spur driven into his flank, I clung for a few bounds and then went backward over his rump with the gun still in my hand. The hammer struck the

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right side of my lower jaw as I hit the road, inflicting a slight wound. "Pet" came back after a while to the place where he had thrown me, and I returned to Norfolk, where I had the wound dressed by Dr. Wright, a leading physician of the place. This slight incident introduced me to one who became an actor in one of the most dramatic tragedies of the Civil War, which I will relate farther on.

Besides these riding trips, we varied the daily routine of telegraph work, which Richard and I did together when necessary, or divided between us as it came, sleeping by the instruments. Taking recreation separately, we rowed out and swam in the river at night or attended the theatre, where Sam W. Glenn had a very good stock company and Mary Mitchell (not Maggie) was the leading lady and played everything from *Lady Gay Spanker* and the *French Spy*, to *Juliet*, and *Lady Macbeth*. She was really a good actress. The audience was made up partly of soldiers.

We had a German lineman who first interested me in his great language with its splendid literature, and who taught us the royal game of chess.

Chess is a military game, representing the grand strategy of moving armies, as when Grant moved Meade, Sherman, Crook, Sigel and Butler, with five separate armies, over a widely extended field in one concerted plan of attack. There may be still floating on the Atlantic Ocean somewhere, our board and men

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lost on James River in a hurried movement of the war.

Besides these amusements, we practiced sabre exercises and fencing; and, in exploring the Custom House, I found in the cellar, much to my delight, an Eskimo kayak and other Arctic relics said to have been left there by Dr. Kane, whose account of his polar expedition had so fascinated me at Duncannon.

In the office of Major A. E. Bovay, Provost Marshal, in the Custom House with us, and assisting him as chief clerk, was a very interesting gentleman and old telegrapher, D. Wilmot Smith, who, though much older than ourselves, took a great fancy to me, whom he seemed to regard as a sort of infant phenomenon in the telegraph. He liked to take long rides with me before breakfast, and, being scholarly and world-wise, his companionship was instructive. He had been telegraphing since 1850; was a good operator, had built lines and had been superintendent of them. Later on, he returned to the telegraph, entering our military telegraph corps and serving in the siege of Charleston, where he contracted army dysentery and was sent North apparently dying. Having partly recuperated, he started farther Northwest for a better climate and camped with Sitting Bull and his Sioux, on the Red River of the North, whence he wrote me charming and picturesque descriptions of the Sioux and their country, in after years.

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Besides the efforts of ourselves and linemen to keep up our wires, Richard tried to have the pickets aid us in protecting them, as indicated by the following specimen order :

Headquarters, Norfolk, Va.,

January 14, 1863.

SPECIAL ORDERS NO.

The picket guard at Indian Pole Bridge will send two men over the telegraph line to Sewell's Point at any time of day or night as the chief operator, Mr. O'Brien, may direct ; for the purpose of protecting telegraphic communication.

By order of Brigadier-General E. L. Viele.

J. N. LIEBERMAN,

Assistant Adjutant-General.

TELEGRAPHIC SOMNAMBULISM.

In April, 1863, Richard, after two years' service, went home for his first vacation, leaving me alone in charge of the military telegraph at Norfolk. When he left, military matters were at a perfect standstill in that vicinity :

"All was as peaceful and as still
As the mist slumbering on yon hill."

Suddenly, Longstreet's Corps from Lee's army, supposed to be about 28,000 men, appeared in our front and put Suffolk in a state of siege. We had 14,000 men there, under General Peck, and a light draught gunboat or two in the Nansemond River on his right. There were two operators at Suffolk, Homan at the

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railroad, and Holloway at Peck's headquarters ; but, as I have said, I was alone at Norfolk.

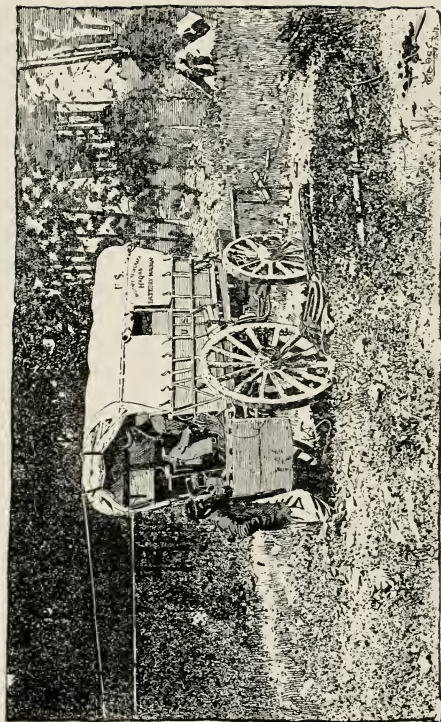
Plum says that Charlie Homan ran trains for four days and three nights without relief, and I am sure Holloway must have endured a similar strain. I kept at my instrument without relief for three days and nights, and had a curious experience which I here transcribe from my *Century* paper of September, 1889 :

“In illustration of the sensibility of hearing acquired by the military operators for this one sound (the gentle tick of the telegraph relay), the writer may be pardoned another personal incident. At Norfolk, in April, 1863, he happened to be alone in charge of the telegraph when Longstreet, with a large force, laid siege to Suffolk. In the emergency he remained on duty, without sleep, for three days and nights, repeating orders between Fort Monroe and the front. Towards morning on the third night he fell asleep, but was roused by the strenuous calls of the fort and asked why he had not given ‘O. K.’ for the message just sent. He replied that none had been received. ‘We called you,’ said the operator at the fort ; ‘you answered, and we sent you two messages, but you failed to acknowledge them.’ The dispatches were repeated and forwarded, when on taking up a volume of Scott’s novels, with which he had previously endeavored to keep awake, the writer was astonished to find the missing telegrams scrawled

across the printed page in his own writing, some sentences omitted and some repeated. It was a curious instance of somnambulism;"—using that term in its wide medical meaning, which is not restricted to sleep *walking*, but covers any habitual waking action done during sleep. A study of the psychology of subconsciousness in the field suggested by this incident will, I think, interest and repay any intelligent reader.

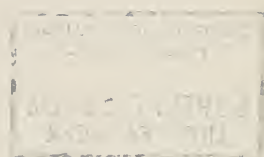
On the fourth day of the siege Richard, who had been apprised of the emergency and anticipated my predicament, arrived, as in every emergency throughout our lives he always arrived, in time, and relieved me. As soon as I had recuperated from this severe strain I went out to visit Homan and Holloway and to see how our intrenchments and Longstreet's looked. Our linemen ran Holloway and me out from Suffolk by a hand-car on the Seaboard Railroad. I was surprised to find our manned intrenchments quite close to the village, and supposed them to be merely an inner line ; another line appearing within gunshot distance beyond. The track was unobstructed and we kept on, intending to pass the first line, when we were halted by shouts of warning from our soldiers behind those intrenchments. We scattered from the car and I began to hear the low buzz of a bee going by my ear at intervals. In a moment I realized that these were bullets and that what I had taken for our second intrenched line was manned by the enemy, and that we were the targets of their sharpshooters.

I cannot decide to this day, whether Longstreet's men were poor marksmen, or were magnanimous. Perhaps their rifles were inferior. At any rate, I would in late years expect, with a National Guard Krag, or even a Springfield, to "get" my man nearly every time at that distance. I think it was about four hundred yards. The siege continued from April 10th to May 2nd, when Longstreet withdrew.



Courtesy of The Century Magazine

FIELD TELEGRAPH—BATTERY WAGON



CHAPTER VIII.

A COLLISION OVER NEGRO SOLDIERS—THE WRIGHT-SANBORN TRAGEDY—TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS OFFERED FOR A TELEGRAM—COUNTERSIGNS—TELEGRAPHIC SUMMARY FOR 1863.

EARLY in 1863 the Government had enlisted negro soldiers. The feeling that this action occasioned in the South, not only among slave owners but among all Southern white folks, may be imagined. A detachment of negro troops landed at Norfolk. They marched up Main Street past the Custom House, led by Lieutenant Sanborn, of New England. Dr. Wright was, I have reason to believe, a chivalrous Southern gentleman whose refined nature and professional training made life-saving his ideal. He had been opposed to secession. But here was a point where the extreme Northern idea and the Southern idea, about the negro, came into collision, as the iron-clads had come together in Hampton Roads. They met on the sidewalk of Main Street on July 11, 1863. There was a word or two between Dr. Wright and Lieutenant Sanborn; then the flash of a pistol, and Lieutenant Sanborn staggered into a doorway and died in a few minutes. The negroes were either well-disciplined or bewildered; they did not attack the

Doctor. He was arrested by the white provost guard, who quickly arrived on the scene from headquarters at the Custom House. Dr. Wright was promptly tried by court-martial and sentenced to be hung. Mr. Lincoln was besieged with petitions for clemency. The President ordered the proceedings of the court-martial sent to him for review, and afterward declined to disturb the sentence. Fruitless efforts were made at Richmond to get some aid for Dr. Wright from the Confederate President and Secretary of War.

Dr. Wright's brave and devoted daughter visited him in prison one evening, and, exchanging wraps with him, he passed by the guards, out of the prison, and emerged on the street, and might have made good his escape had not a passing officer noticed the masculine stride of the supposed woman and re-arrested him. Still, some further word, some reprieve was expected by Dr. Wright's friends from Mr. Lincoln.

On October 22nd, the day before the final date fixed for the execution, Richard was approached, through our orderly, Keller, before mentioned, by an influential citizen with an offer of twenty thousand dollars in gold, to "anticipate" (forge) a telegram from Mr. Lincoln. It was represented that if Richard would do this, and wished to escape any possible consequences, that the freedom of the Confederacy with passage to Europe by blockade runner, would be open to him. Had the honor of the chief operator been

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amenable to the touch of gold there would have been no trouble to get out, as we were in the habit of riding beyond our lines and pickets. The offer was indignantly rejected.

On the morning of the execution our cable across Chesapeake Bay failed; it was a portion of the first Atlantic cable and was faulty, as mentioned in a previous chapter. I was on duty, and, as a reprieve was still hoped for, notified the commanding General of the interruption to our line, and the execution was delayed. In an hour the cable was again O. K. and still no message. It became our painful duty to apprise General Naglee of this fact, and, with feelings of mixed emotion among which sorrow for the doctor who had kindly treated my slight wound, predominated, I mounted my horse, rode to the fairgrounds and from some distance saw the execution. This scene haunted me for many a day, and though I was by accident compelled to see other executions (of deserters) during the war, I never again voluntarily witnessed one.

How we were trusted by commanding Generals may be indicated by the following specimen copy of pass-words which were regularly furnished us weekly in advance :

*Headquarters District of Virginia,
Norfolk, Va., Aug. 29, 1863.*

ORDERS :

Countersigns for the week ending September 5, 1863.

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Sunday, 30th, Pea Ridge.
Monday, 31st, Bunker Hill.
Tuesday, Sept. 1st, Waterloo.
Wednesday, 2d, Buena Vista.
Thursday, 3rd, Norfolk.
Friday, 4th, Hastings.
Saturday, 5th, West Point.

By command of BRIGADIER-GENERAL NAGLEE.
Official :

W. C. NEWBURY, A. D. C.

It was necessary for us to have the greatest freedom of movement for the care of our wires and cables, and for the delivery of important dispatches with which we sometimes rode to distant camps ourselves, regardless of night or storm, but, as our wires often extended beyond our pickets, we were also usually provided with passes beyond the lines held by the Union troops.

During 1863 about 4,000 miles of line were used by the military telegraph and 1,500 miles again abandoned, and 2,000,000 telegrams were transmitted.

In the Antietam campaign McClellan had a line to Hagerstown, looped by way of Poolesville to Point of Rocks, whence a branch extended to Harper's Ferry. Stuart cut this loop as Lee advanced, and an attempt to restore it proving disastrous to the telegraph party, Harper's Ferry remained isolated until captured. Five military operators surrendered with the troops at that point, but they escaped, and at Antietam joined their comrades, who had pushed the line to the battle-

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field of South Mountain and on through Boonesboro and Keedysville.

The electric tongue which had aided him on the Peninsula and in Maryland now proclaimed McClellan's victory at Antietam, and again became the messenger of his humiliation. The telegraph corps revered "Little Mac," both in person and in military genius. Perhaps none knew better than some of its members the extent and scope of his plans or had more confidence in their success. The orders for his withdrawal from the James were reluctantly transmitted, and on his removal from the command of the Army of the Potomac, in November, his chief operator, Harper Caldwell, telegraphed: "We are all grieved at McClellan's removal. The whole army, from Major-Generals down to foot orderlies, feel it. Old soldiers of the regulars wept like boys when he left."

Burnside's lines in the Fredericksburg campaign were the same as Pope's had been in August, but were less extended and less exposed. Three of the operators were captured at their posts, one of whom escaped by his wits and the others joined the considerable delegation of the corps already in captivity, where they suffered the usual horrors of Libby, Belle Isle, and Andersonville, and whence they communicated by many ingenious devices with their friends. A brass button by the hands of an exchanged prisoner would contain a cipher dispatch on tissue paper. A

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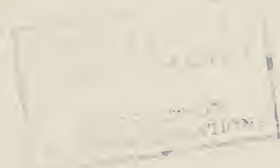
ring carved from bone, and marked with a few Morse characters, told us of our captured comrades.

From the beginning of the war there had been some friction between the telegraph and the signal corps. Early in 1861 the chief signal officer assumed control of the telegraph in Butler's department, from which he was immediately relieved by the Secretary of War. In 1863 he was again in the field with thirty cumbrous "magneto" machines, intended to operate a dial telegraph. The system was operated by the signal officers in the Chancellorsville campaign, and, proving inefficient, it was turned over to the telegraphers, who discarded the machines and worked with Morse instruments the short lines laid by the signal corps. Had Major Myer then had the telephone, he would have succeeded. It will undoubtedly be used with Morse telegraphy in future wars; but the antiquated system introduced, and expected to be worked by officers unfamiliar with electricity, resulted in failure. Had the telegraphic field not been thus divided, and had General Hooker ordered the necessary lines, he would probably have had better control of his forces, particularly of Sedgwick's Corps.

A swift glance Southward and Westward, without regard to chronological order, may indicate the value of the telegraph in other fields than the Potomac.

Military lines were not required in North Carolina until 1863, when they connected Morehead City,





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New Berne, Bachelor's Creek, and outposts. General Palmer credited the telegraph with having apprised him of the approach of Pickett's force against New Berne in February, 1864, and with enabling him promptly to concentrate his forces to meet the attack.

Three of his operators died of yellow fever. Plum says: "On the pay-rolls, which alone indicate that these men were in the service of their country, is written opposite their names, 'Discharged.' An eternal discharge, indeed." Yet that epitaph comprises all of rank, reward, or pension ever tendered an operator of the military telegraph, or his family, by the United States.

The military telegraph service in South Carolina was peculiar in the preponderance of submarine cables connecting the sea islands, and in the exposure of the operators on Morris Island and vicinity to the fire of the Confederate batteries during the long siege of Charleston. On one occasion two of our men were up alternate poles, stringing a wire which had just been cut by a shell, when another well-aimed shot struck the pole between them and brought poles, wire, and men in a tangle to the soft sand.

In September, 1863, a Union operator named Forster tapped the Charleston and Savannah line near Pocotaligo and sent information to Generals Gilmore and Terry which enabled them to foil a concerted attack by the enemy. Forster was captured on the third day and died in prison.

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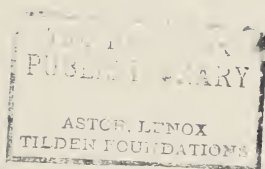
Not pausing to detail the movements of the telegraph with expeditions in Florida, we note in the Gulf Department seven military lines radiating from New Orleans under Butler and Banks, one of them reaching Baton Rouge, after its occupation, another accompanying the Red River expedition, and one connecting New Orleans and Port Hudson with field lines at the latter point during the siege. Experiments by the telegraphers in exploding powder by electricity, such as had been made at Fort Sumter and elsewhere, resulted, in that department, in the successful clearing of obstructions from Bayou Teche. At the close of the war about three thousand miles of military lines in the Department of Mississippi, including Texas, were turned over to commercial use.

In Missouri, Kansas and Arkansas military lines connected St. Louis with Fort Leavenworth and Fort Scott, and by February, 1864, with Fort Smith and Little Rock, from which point three wires radiated to important posts. In March, 1864, three of our builders were killed by guerrillas on the Fort Smith line. By 1865 these lines aggregated seventeen hundred miles. The service in this department was under the energetic management of Captain Robert C. Clowry.

In Tennessee about a thousand miles of lines were constructed for Halleck's and Grant's operations. These, in 1862, connected St. Louis with Forts Henry and Donelson when captured, thence reaching to Nashville and on to Bowling Green, Kentucky.



COLONEL ROBERT C. CLOWRY
Assistant Superintendent Military Telegraph, 1861-5
Now President Western Union Telegraph



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Nashville was connected with Decatur, Alabama, and other points. In the Shiloh campaign Buell carried a line from Nashville with him, meeting midway one from Grant, who was at Pittsburg Landing, so that Grant, Buell, and Halleck were in telegraphic communication on the eve of the unexpected battle of Shiloh. This must have been a source of reliance to Grant when the fight actually opened. During the siege of Vicksburg field lines connected Grant with all his forces, and the telegraph gave timely notice of Johnston's movements.

In the Spring of 1863, when Grant was besieging Vicksburg, two military telegraphers, Frank Van Valkenburg and Patrick Mullarkey, were detailed, at the request of General Rosecrans, whose headquarters were at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, to penetrate the enemy's country and tap the wires between Chattanooga and Knoxville, to ascertain the movements of Confederate troops. These boys accomplished their mission, which involved swimming rivers, wearing out shoes and clothing, and being chased and fired upon by Confederate cavalry. They were more than a month within the Confederate lines.

When Rosecrans was defeated at Chickamauga and retreated to Chattanooga, where Grant sent him timely aid ; and in the concentration of Sherman and Hooker with Thomas, which culminated in the victory of Chattanooga, the telegraph was of incalculable service.

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About this time Longstreet besieged Burnside at Knoxville, and Grant sent Sherman swiftly to the rescue. Plum says: "After Grant had driven Bragg from Missionary Ridge he received dispatches from the advance office at Tazewell, notifying him that Burnside could not hold out longer than December 1st. Secretary Stanton telegraphed for Colonel Stager to 'come to the key.' Stager had retired, but an instrument by his bedside awakened him. Stanton, in Washington, asked Stager, who was in his bed-chamber in Cleveland, Ohio, to forward news to Burnside by the most trusty means. The Colonel instantly called up the chief operator in Louisville, Kentucky, and the latter the operators at four separate points nearest to Burnside. Thus it happened that, in the dead of night, four telegraphers, each with a cipher message notifying Burnside of the approach of Union troops, started on their perilous journey from four separate points." Some of them reached Burnside, and he held out until his army was saved. The episode has not been immortalized, nor its heroes rewarded.

As illustrative of some phases of military telegraph service in the Southwest, I condense the following story of Comrade C. W. Pearson :

"I entered the United States Military Telegraph service at the age of fifteen years in November, 1863, going from New York to Cairo, Illinois. My stay at this place was brief and devoid of interest. I was

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ordered from Cairo to Memphis, and reported to Captain Fuller, at General Hurlburt's headquarters, who immediately assigned me to duty at General Webster's headquarters, located at the Memphis and Charleston depot. Captain Fuller being military superintendent, I was taken care of in Memphis by L. B. Spellman and W. B. Summerville, both of whom had been in the military service some time. I being the youngest operator in the department was often sent out on the Memphis and Charleston Railroad to different stations, Moscow, Lafayette, Colliersville, etc.

"In October, 1863, I was ordered with R. B. Griffen to proceed to Columbus, Kentucky, to relieve Jacob Volney Hill and William Gibson. (Hill was afterwards buried at Columbus, he having died of small-pox.) Everything was quiet at this post until March 21st, when we received news of Forrest's advance upon Union City, Tennessee, and I was ordered to report to General Brayman and proceed by train to Union City with two regiments of infantry and one battery loaded upon flat cars. Our lines being cut we did not know as we proceeded at what moment we would be fired upon by Forrest's cavalry. Before we reached Union City we were met by some negroes who came out of the woods and reported that Colonel Hawkins had surrendered to Forrest. Our operator, E. B. McNairn, was captured at that place, but escaped from Andersonville prison several months

afterwards. General Brayman knowing that Forrest would head towards Paducah, concluded to return to Columbus, and take his command to that place. Forrest, however, reached there first, but did not find Paducah so easy to capture as Union City, and after a hard fight from daybreak to dusk he was compelled to withdraw after suffering a heavy loss. Our loss was but forty-nine killed and wounded, our men being protected behind earthworks on the river bank.

"After the fight I was placed in charge of the Paducah office, relieving Edwin Peel, who went home to Canada, but who afterwards returned to the Army of the Cumberland. There being so many older and deserving operators in the command I was relieved by Peter Fowler in July, after a stay at that point of nearly four months, and reported back to R. B. Griffen at Columbus, Kentucky. I had been there but two weeks when I received instructions to proceed to Memphis, so I reported to R. S. Fowler, assistant superintendent, who immediately assigned me to duty at General C. C. Washburn's headquarters, where I remained until August 21st, when I was captured by Forrest during his raid upon that city. It was Sunday morning about 4 o'clock. I had fallen asleep when I was awakened by heavy firing. Looking out on Union Street, I saw a large force of cavalry, but supposing it was some of our own men, I did not pay any attention to them until the Judge Advocate came running through the hall, and as he

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went upstairs told me they were Confederates. I thought they would fire the building, so I went for the back stoop and jumped off, never thinking how far it was to the hard pavement below—though by actual measurement it was eighteen feet. I landed on my feet, however, and had no more than reached the pavement when I was commanded to halt, but had no time just then. I turned and ran through the lower hall only to find it full of Confederates, so I had to surrender, and as Forrest was in a great hurry to get out of the city the prisoners were hurried away at a brisk run.

“After we were about five miles outside of the city I asked to be allowed to see General Forrest, and to my surprise he was pointed out to me by one of the Confederates as a man lying beside the fence on a rubber poncho. Upon explaining to him my situation, he immediately commenced to question me as to where A. J. Smith’s forces were heading for, but although I knew considerable about his movements I evaded the questions, when he became vexed and told me I was not telling him the truth, and that he would not do anything for me until I did so. The consequence was I was sent South with the rest of the prisoners. We were marched seventy-five miles to Tupelo, Mississippi, in two days, and then allowed to sleep all night in the mud, as it had been raining continually since we started. That was, however, the soundest and sweetest sleep I ever enjoyed. I might

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add that the Confederates took all of my clothing except my undershirt and pants. When we were loaded into freight cars next morning to go South one of the Confederates came into the car with an old pair of pants large enough for Barnum's giant, and told me to haul mine off and put them on. One of the boys spoke up and said, 'Let him keep his pants, that is all he has left of the blue.' He replied, 'Can't do it, his skin is blue, that will do for him.'

"We went from Tupelo to Grenada, then to Canton, Jackson, Duvall's Bluff, Alabama, Selma, and from there to Cohaba, where I remained about thirty days, when I was exchanged, as an order came to exchange all men captured at General C. C. Washburn's headquarters. I found that my chances to be exchanged as an operator were bad, so before going into Cohaba prison I gave my name as belonging to Company M, Second Illinois Cavalry, and was exchanged as such. Our food in prison consisted of coarse corn meal and salt pork of a very inferior quality. I never saw a blanket among the 2,500 men confined at Cohaba. Our prison consisted of an old cotton shed from which they had taken the roof, so we had to lie down in the sand and look to the blue sky; if it rained we had to take it. I saw many strong men lie down and die from exposure, and I myself came near being shot twice. There was an outside yard where we did our cooking. We could pass out to this yard, but must not stop within a circle which

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was called the dead line. I was passing out one morning when some one within called me. I turned round to see what was wanted when one of the prisoners in the outside yard said, 'For God's sake, Pearson, get out of that.' I jumped just as the guard fired, and what was intended for me killed a young man about my age. I shall never forget it if I should live to be a thousand years old. I asked permission to keep the flies off of the dying man, and as they carried him out, he said, 'Boys, if you ever capture a rebel, remember me,' and died on the rude stretcher before they were outside the gate.

"Another time I was not doing just as they thought I ought and they made me mark time in the boiling sun and burning sand until my feet were a complete mass of blisters. So you can imagine it was a happy day when all the prisoners captured at General C. C. Washburn's headquarters were called out to be exchanged. There were seventy-six of us all told. When I reached Memphis I slipped out of the ranks, I was so afraid they would find out I had changed my calling from an operator to a cavalry man and send me back to exchange another in my place. I went up into headquarters and found my old friend Edward Butler, who had taken Fowler's place, but he did not recognize me, tired and dirty, with nothing on but an old shirt and pants and they creeping off me with vermin. When I made myself known to him he took me over to 'H' office, where he burned my clothing

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or rags and put on clean ones, as my trunk was still there. All the boys got up out of bed, as it was then 10 P.M., and we went around to a restaurant and got a square meal, and I tell you it tasted good. After I had recruited my strength, which took some time, as I was reduced from 140 to 110 pounds, I obtained a furlough for thirty days and went home to New York to see my parents.

"I returned to Memphis in January, 1865, and upon landing, saw my friend, S. L. Robinson, at the present writing manager of the Board of Trade, Chicago, sitting on the hurricane deck of a steamer bound north, and nursing about twenty buckshot wounds, which he received while out on a raid with General Grierson. I stayed in Memphis two months, and then proceeded to New Orleans, and reported to Captain Fuller. I remained there but three weeks, when in company with S. L. Robinson, I was ordered to Fort Gaines at the mouth of Mobile Bay. We embarked on the steamer *N. P. Banks*, but on account of a severe storm on the Gulf of Mexico we were driven about forty miles out of our course to Pensacola, Florida.

"The boat finally reached Fort Gaines and we at once went to the telegraph office, but the operator on duty said that he could not keep us, as he did not get enough to eat himself. We then went across the Bay to Fort Morgan, where Mr. Upton, the genial operator, received us kindly and cared for us. It was Captain

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Fuller's intention to establish a line through to New Orleans by way of Fort Gaines and Fort Morgan, to follow the army to Mobile, but the project had to be abandoned, because, as fast as the poles were put in the sand, the heavy winds in that section would blow them down. So our line was but a short one, from Navy Cove, Alabama, to Fort Gaines, five miles of land and five of cable. I soon afterwards was put in charge, and Robinson remained with me. We had a splendid time, as fishing was good, and oysters plentiful. We were soon reinforced by Charles Smith, Dorsey Berry and John R. Frank, awaiting the advance of the army on Mobile, which took place about the middle of March. Frank, Smith and Robinson were then assigned to duty at or near Spanish Fort, where they run lines from one headquarters to another, using field telegraphs in front of the enemy's works where the ground was full of torpedoes which the Confederates had buried.

"After the enemy had surrendered to General Ousterhous we all went into Mobile and opened the office there. After things were running smoothly in Mobile, Charles Smith was made assistant superintendent, Frank, chief operator, and I was sent to Columbus, Mississippi, to report to General Grierson as cipher operator, being the only cipher operator at Mobile, except Robinson, who was under orders to proceed to Texas. I stayed at Columbus about two weeks until General Grierson moved. During that

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time I had caused two Confederate operators at that place to take a stringent oath to support the Constitution of the United States. I then left for Mobile, where I stayed with Smith until July, and was then ordered to Vicksburg, Mississippi, and remained there until November 26, 1865, when I resigned, as the lines were about to be turned over to the telegraph companies.

“I remained in the South until 1869, when I returned to New York, where I have been ever since. The Government should recognize our services in some way, as a better class of operators I have never seen than those comprising the United States Military Telegraph Corps; they were always ready for duty, unmindful of danger. I would also say that Colonels Fuller, Gross and Van Duzer and Major Smith were all boys among us, all of them beloved by the operators.”

CHAPTER IX.

I GO ON OUTPOST FOR KILPATRICK'S RAID ON RICHMOND—RICHARD O'BRIEN CHIEF OPERATOR ARMY OF THE JAMES—GRANT MOVES ALL ARMIES BY TELEGRAPH—TAPPING OUR WIRE—WADE HAMPTON'S CATTLE RAID—CAPTURE OF O'BRIEN'S CONSTRUCTION CORPS AND ESCAPE OF MACKINTOSH—SHERMAN'S USE AND OPINION OF THE TELEGRAPH.

IN February, 1864, I was detached, by Major Eckert, from Richard's lines and sent to Fort Magruder, which was then our farthest outpost on the Peninsula towards Richmond. Our force at Yorktown was increased and put under command of General Wistar, while Colonel West moved up and took command at Fort Magruder. All this was for coöperation with Kilpatrick's cavalry raid on Richmond, by which it was hoped to release our prisoners from Libby prison. Kilpatrick led 3,600 men and a six-gun battery of artillery from the Army of the Potomac in this dash on Richmond. Custer also led a brigade of 1,500 cavalry to the west of Lee's army; by the way of Madison Court House, to near Charlottesville, with the object of withdrawing the

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enemy's attention from Kilpatrick's movements. I have the following mementoes of this service :

*Headquarters U. S. Forces,
Yorktown, Va., Feb'y 23rd, 1864.*

Guards and patrols will pass John E. O'Brien, telegraph operator, to Fort Magruder. Good for this day only.

By command of COLONEL R. M. WEST, Commanding.
J. C. FLEMING, Captain and A. D. C.

And this :

*Headquarters, Fort Magruder,
March 10, 1864.*

Guards and patrols will pass John E. O'Brien, telegraph operator, from Fort Magruder to Yorktown.

By order of COLONEL WEST.

M. G. CUSHING, Post Adjutant.

And to Fortress Monroe and Norfolk. Good until revoked.

Approved :

By Command of BRIGADIER-GENERAL WISTAR.

J. C. FLEMING, Captain and A. A. A. G.

I went by the regular steamer *City of Hudson* from Norfolk to Fort Monroe, and found Captain Evans with the cable tug *McClellan* waiting to take me to Yorktown. Near the mouth of York River we ran into a flock of geese, and Evans, with a little manœuvring of the tug, shot a fine one from the deck and got it aboard. There were two operators at Yorktown, who hurriedly showed me the old brick house said to have been occupied by Washington and Lafayette after the surrender of Cornwallis, and other

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historic landmarks of the ancient town, while an ambulance was being hitched up to take me to Fort Magruder.

Kilpatrick got into the suburbs of Richmond, destroyed military stores and railroad bridges, and captured five hundred prisoners, but failed in the primary object of liberating our men from Libby Prison. He lost one hundred and fifty men, including Colonel Ulric Dahlgren killed, and came in on our front to Fort Magruder, returning to the Army of the Potomac by water from Yorktown and Fort Monroe. I can still visualize that long line of horsemen going by me, two by two, silent, grim, wrapped in the mystery and romance of having been to Richmond, the objective of all our dreams. In "War Recollections" I said that on my way back to Norfolk I saw General W. H. F. Lee, son of General Robert E. Lee, on the boat from Fort Monroe to Norfolk. This was true, but I was mistaken in supposing that he had been captured in this raid. He had been captured in the previous July and held at Fort Monroe as a hostage for some Union officers who, it was alleged, had been exposed by the enemy to our own fire in the siege of Charleston, and, when I saw him, he was going, doubtless on parole, to visit Norfolk. He was a splendid specimen of the Lee family of soldiers.

While at Fort Magruder I had time to visit Williamsburg, the colonial capital of Virginia, two

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miles away, where had stood the House of Burgesses in which Patrick Henry's oratory had been heard, and the College of William and Mary, and where assembled in colonial days the chivalry, beauty and fashion of old Virginia. In a tour through the insane asylum at Williamsburg I was much impressed by a venerable old man and an elaborate and, indeed, ingenious machine, upon which he had been working for thirty years to produce perpetual motion.

Fort Magruder was a strong field work constructed by the Confederates of logs and earth. As evidence of the carnage there in the battle of Williamsburg, a spot at the main gateway was pointed out to me where our men said they had found six dead Confederate sergeants in one heap. Looking over the ground where this battle began, I saw where our men, advancing up some wide ravines, had been raked by field guns excellently posted at the head of the ravines.

Kilpatrick having gotten in, Major Eckert ordered me back to Norfolk, and I started back to Yorktown alone on horseback. If the reader cares to imagine a "solitary horseman," of fifteen, riding on a misty March morning of 1864 on a detour through the woods and fields to see where the greatest carnage of the first Peninsular battle had occurred, he may muse with me on some long, shallow, and depressed trenches with here a bit of faded blue, and there a shred of grey, showing on the surface; and here and

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there where the rains had washed away the earth :— But no, you do not wish to see with me what remained of those brave boys of North and South who had left their loving homes with high hopes burning, to meet and rest here, and on many a field like this.

In Fort Magruder my bunk and relay were in a log cabin near that of Colonel West, the commandant, who was an ideal officer of, I think, the West Point type. The Colonel played the flute melodiously in moments of leisure. There was a banjo and a guitar in the garrison. You can never know the virtues of the banjo unless you hear it accompanying some gay and rollicking soldier songs on a wet night in a dreary outpost.

Our soldiers had in their possession old maps and deeds which they had, alas, looted, dating back to the seventeenth century.

In April, 1864, Richard was appointed chief operator, Army of the James, and left me in charge of military telegraph affairs at Norfolk while he went to build and manage the lines in the important field mapped out by General Grant for the operations of that army under General Butler. Grant was now General-in-Chief, commanding all the armies of the United States, and he proposed to handle all the armies in concert. This he could only do by the aid of the telegraph. His plans are best expressed in his own words: "Sherman was to move from Chattanooga, Johnston's army and Atlanta being his objec-

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tive points. Crook, commanding in West Virginia, was to move from the mouth of the Gauley River with a cavalry force and some artillery, the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad to be his objective. Sigel was in command in the valley of Virginia. He was to advance up the valley. Butler was to advance by the James River, having Richmond and Petersburg as his objective."¹

And with Meade and the Army of the Potomac, Grant was himself to attack, and defeat, or drive back, Lee's army by the route actually followed in the ensuing Wilderness campaign.

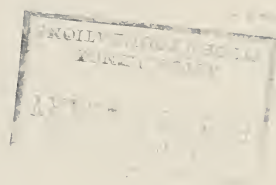
Badeau attests that when Grant crossed the Rappahannock in this campaign he moved synchronously by telegraph Sherman in Georgia, Crook in West Virginia, Sigel in the valley, and Butler on James River, and received responses from each before night, while all the remaining forces of the Union were placed on the alert by the same agency. In addition to the main line, by way of the Orange and Alexandria road, accompanying Grant, keeping him in direct communication with Washington, Major Eckert had at this time perfected a field telegraph system somewhat on the mountain howitzer plan. Reels of insulated cable, strong enough to resist cannon-wheels, were carried on the backs of mules, paying out the wire over the field, where it was raised on lances or on trees, while compact portable electric batteries

¹"Preparing for the Wilderness Campaign," in *Century Magazine*.



Courtesy of The Century Magazine

GRANT, SHERIDAN, MEADE, RAWLINS AND AN OPERATOR



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were transported in ambulances constructed for the purpose. This system was found efficient on the battlefield and at Spottsylvania Court House, where, at one time, operators and cable were within the enemy's lines, and in subsequent battles it was thoroughly tested. Throughout the remainder of the war General Grant received almost daily reports by telegraph from all the armies in the field, and issued his orders, in cipher, over our wires to all his lieutenants in pursuance of one comprehensive plan.

To illustrate the service with Grant in the Wilderness campaign, I condense Comrade Edwards' letter to Colonel Plum in 1878:

"In the latter part of March, '64, I was ordered to General U. S. Grant's headquarters at Culpepper Court House. At midnight, May 3rd, the Fifth Army Corps, commanded by General G. K. Warren, to which I was attached, began its forward movement. Major Eckert had each corps furnished with a two-horse wagon in which supplies were carried for the military telegraphers, usually three in number. Two men were the regular contingent, the third was liable to be called upon to do duty elsewhere—possibly at a brigade headquarters within the same corps. From the fourth until the eleventh of May we were on the march, arriving on the latter date at Spottsylvania Court House, the entire distance being marked by constant battling, day and night. Wires would be strung from the general headquarters of the Army of

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the Potomac, connecting with the different corps headquarters. We used fine annealed wire of seven strands, covered with flexible rubber. A flat reel from which the wire was unwound, would be strapped to the back of a pack mule, the men following with slender pike poles, forked at the top to receive the wire. Frequently when woods and other timber was convenient, the wire would be slung up into a tree. Misfortune overtook us in the matter of supplies, for as we approached Spottsylvania Court House the wagon trains were cut off, and 'hard tack' reduced to a powder from being long carried in a bag, which on numerous occasions had served for a pillow or cushion, was our only food resource for several days. During the march referred to we fought in the Wilderness and at Chancellorsville, at both places wires being temporarily strung for the purpose of conveying a few orders to General Warren, directing him to move portions of his forces in different directions to the support of General W. S. Hancock.

"It was at this time that the colored troops first made their appearance in the Army of the Potomac, they being under the command of General A. E. Burnside. They made an excellent showing, and appeared to be a steady body of men, but met with fearful disaster shortly after, when, on June 30th, so many lost their lives at the explosion of the mine under Fort Hell, as it was called. It was a horrible sight to see the men mowed down the way they were.

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A day or two before the explosion the cry was 'hell next;' afterwards it was said to be 'hell, indeed.' The Johnnies had well named the fort, and said 'all hell couldn't take it.'

"At Spottsylvania we were camped on the Beverly plantation, on which stood a large farinhouse, in one of the capacious rooms of which we established our telegraph office. The dwelling offered a conspicuous mark for the enemy and right nobly did they shell it for two consecutive days, cutting through it many times, and frequently breaking down the telegraph wire. I recollect tossing up a cent with Ed Hall and George Henderson (the former now dead, and the latter located somewhere in North Carolina), once after a shell had broken the line, to decide who should go out and tie up the break. Afterwards, when the wire was cut, an occurrence of increasing frequency, we three would take turns in rushing out and splicing it. On such occasions, before attempting the serious work demanded, the one going out would say to the others: 'If my body stops a shell send my things home.' Shortly after this I was sent to open a side telegraph office for General Warren, who desired to open up communication with a distant brigade, and three orderlies were detailed to accompany me. Once outside the picket lines, and approaching too close to the rebel lines, we were fired upon, but managed to effect our escape, and to reach our destination in safety.

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“All through May, in the advance on Richmond, the fighting was continuous and terrific, the military telegraphers being constantly in the thickest of it, and everywhere exposed to all the hardships and dangers of warfare, sharing all perils equally with soldiers who carried the musket. On May 31, 1864, we camped on the plantation of a Mrs. Vias, twenty miles from Richmond, and opened up telegraph headquarters in a house located on the property. June 5th found us still on the move, performing fatiguing night marches, finding a resting place at Bethesda church. At this place we erected a line of wire, which after an hour or two was shot down, to be re-erected and further extended to the extreme front, only again to have it cut down, taken possession of by the enemy and returned to us shot from out of the cannon's mouth. The wire would come whirling through the air, frequently wrapping itself about a bush or tree encountered on the way. We joked about the matter during the day, facetiously asking each other why the Johnnies did not send an operator along with the wire—Dode Moreland, for instance, captured a short time before, or one of our repairers (whose name I forget) so that his services might be utilized to restore the wire to working order.

“These events occurred in the Chickahominy Swamp, where the water was simply dreadful. The men, hot, dusty and wearied, frequently suffering from wounds, would scrape the scum from off the sur-

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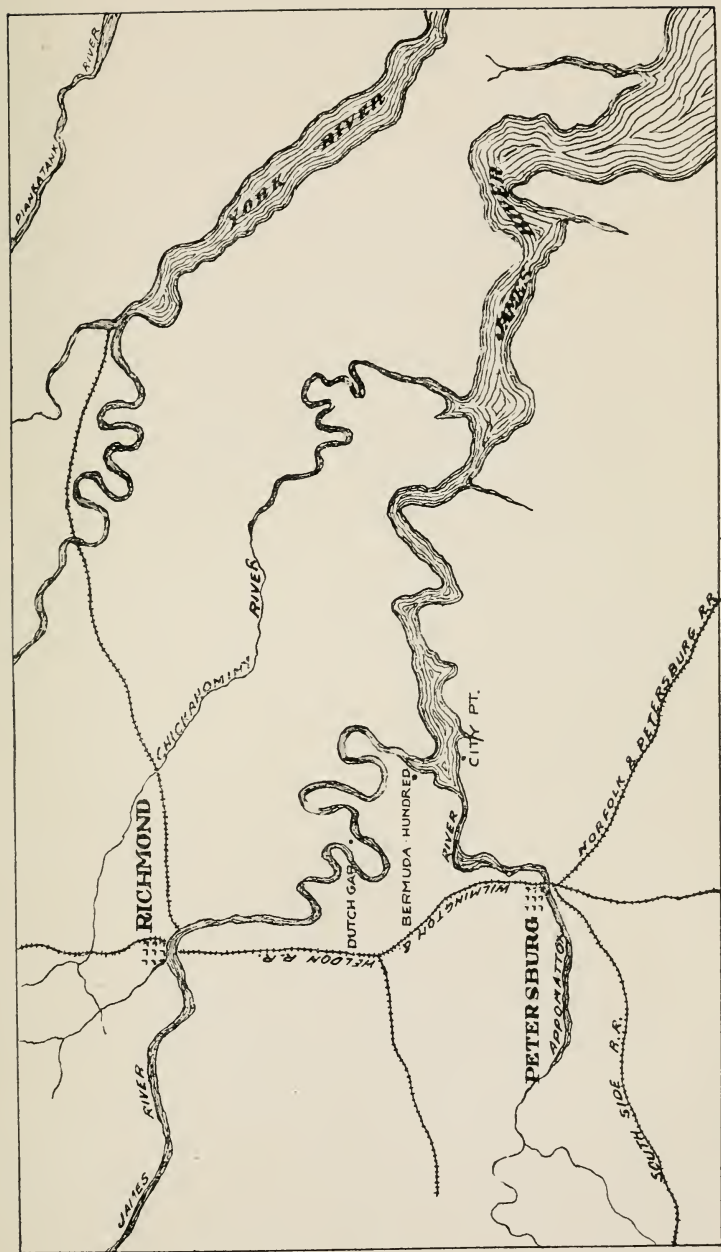
face in order to get a drop of moisture with which to wet their parched lips, although cautioned against so doing by the army surgeons. It was at this point that many were stricken with the swamp fever, numbers of them fatally so. On June 8th, when near Cold Harbor, we operators reached a point where General Warren wished us to open communication again. We could not get ground, the earth being exceedingly dry, and we found great difficulty in getting even a 'dot' from General Meade's headquarters. All difficulty was overcome shortly after, however, by means of a few buckets of water brought from a distance. By June 15th we had crossed the James River, on pontoons, and had a line of telegraph to Charles City Court House. From this place we moved to a point near Petersburg, establishing our camp on the Avery plantation, and opening telegraph headquarters first in front of, and after a day or so inside of the beautiful Avery mansion. Here preparations were made for a long siege. I remember just before reaching this position, and during a very hot engagement, of squatting on the ground under an apple tree, with my instrument placed on a cartridge box and reading some instructions to General Warren sent from General Meade. Bullets were whizzing all around us, shells were bursting overhead, when a minnie ball struck close to our feet. General Warren drew his sword, dug the missile out of the earth, and with the sententious remark: 'A close one; I'll save it,'

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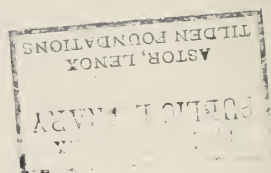
slipped the ball into his coat pocket. Shot and shell fairly rained upon us here, and as I look back upon the scene, I can scarce credit the fact that both the General and myself were not killed. I have now in my possession, as mementoes of other similar occasions, a piece of shell that cut away a portion of the tail of my horse, and a musket ball that passed between Ed Hall and myself, and within two feet of both of us.

“On the 4th of July, 1864, Paymaster A. B. Chandler being ill, Major Eckert himself came down in his stead, both to see us and to pay us off. The military telegraphers had in the Major a warm friend, and it did us good to see the pleasant face of a man whom we held in such high esteem. Both he and Mr. Chandler were, and are yet, men to respect and fairly love.

“While stationed in the Avery house, I became seriously ill on July 20th, with the swamp fever. Five days later, my condition becoming much worse, I was removed on a bed to army headquarters. Here I was advised by Surgeon McNally (who is now dead) to go home, unless I wanted to leave my bones on Virginia soil. I was carried to City Point, and there placed on the hurricane deck of the steamer *John Brooks*, with my blankets under me. I was a forlorn individual, indeed, and it almost looked as though I had been abandoned to die. On reaching Fortress Monroe, my friend William J. Dealy, God bless him! who is now the manager of the Atlantic



MAP OF RICHMOND, PETERSBURG AND VICINITY



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and Pacific Telegraph Company, at New York, came on board, hunted me out from among the many other sick and disabled men, and while the steamer lay at the fort, tarrying only for about twenty minutes, he did what he could to alleviate my condition. Among other acts of the good Samaritan performed, he forced between my clenched teeth some peach juice, which refreshed and stimulated me, and for which I was duly thankful. I reached Washington July 30th, and a week later was brought to my home in New York, as many thought, to die. Careful nursing, however, brought me through, and by the middle of September I was ready to return, and accept the position of chief operator of the Army of the Potomac telegraph lines, which had been offered to me by Major Eckert. Sickness in my mother's family, however, prevented an acceptance of the kind offer, and my career as a military telegraph operator was over.

"I would like to mention in this connection, and in affectionate remembrance, the names of O. H. Dorrance and William Mackintosh, both of whom were at Alexandria, Va., in 1864. They were men whom our boys at the front relied on for the receipt of dainty bits, so acceptable in a strenuous campaign, such as oysters forwarded by the gallon; of pies and other good things without number; of the care they exercised in forwarding our letters to us, and in providing postage stamps, etc. In fact, it seems as if every one in the profession in the rear remembered us

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poor devils at the front, and was anxious to do something to promote our welfare. All that they did for us was fully appreciated."

With Butler's coöperative move up the Peninsula went the telegraph to Gloucester Point, West Point, and White House on the Pamunkey; and when this feint on the York was followed by the real attack on the other side of the Peninsula, May 7th, the telegraph was pushed up the James as rapidly as possible; so that when Grant swung around Richmond he was met at White House and at City Point by these electric nerves. Before Grant's arrival, Richard had run wires from Bermuda Hundred to Point of Rocks, on the left bank of the Appomattox, under fire from the enemy's batteries on the right bank, to Butler's headquarters, midway between that point and Broadway Landing, and to W. F. Smith's Eighteenth, and Gilmore's Tenth Corps. He later ran a line down the south bank of the James from City Point to Fort Powhatan, and another across from Jamestown Island to Williamsburg, whence it completed connection by McClellan's old wire to Fort Monroe and Washington. Richard, with the assistance of Sheldon, from Fort Monroe, then united these links by a submarine cable from Jamestown Island to Fort Powhatan, some nineteen miles in the James River, and a short one across the Appomattox. The James River cable was necessitated by the incursion of guerrillas on both banks. Facilities for the manufacture of telegraph cable in

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this country being still deficient, a portion of the original Atlantic cable was used. It never worked well, and in September Richard's foreman, William Mackintosh, with a construction party of ten men and an infantry escort of one hundred, made an attempt to replace the cable by a land line on the south bank, which resulted in the capture of all but two of the party, six six-mule teams, and twenty miles of wire. The party had camped at night on a tidal creek below City Point, expecting to start out in the morning, all but "Mack" and the colored cook preferring the right bank on account of its being higher ground. About daybreak the contraband heard firing and roused "Mack," who thought it was only his escort killing pigs for breakfast. The old cook started to make a fire and fry some bacon, but a bullet whistling near his head demoralized him and he took to the woods. "Mack" then saw the raiders on the opposite bank of the creek, and heard them shouting to him to surrender. Fortunately the tide was in, and while they were crossing he secured his horse and set off amid a shower of bullets, closely pursued by the Confederates. This proved to be Hampton's famous "cattle raid" around the Army of the Potomac, than which there stands nothing bolder or more curious in the annals of such exploits. It originated in a telegraphic episode, General Hampton's operator, Gaston, having lain six weeks in the woods, with his instrument connected by fine wire to our

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line. All that he heard of importance was in cipher, except one message mentioning that 2,586 beeves, to feed our army, would be landed at Coggin's Point for pasture. Hampton got them all but one lame steer. Doubtless the hungry "Johnnies" blessed the man who neglected to put that message in cipher. The other dispatches which Gaston copied were sent to Richmond, but were never deciphered.

The chase after Mackintosh was kept up for a mile by augmenting parties of cavalry who had forded the creek higher up, and was stopped only when the pursuers were confronted by a regiment of our men, who poured a volley into them and emptied a number of saddles. Mackintosh thus escaped a third term in Libby Prison, he having been twice before captured and exchanged. A week after the capture of the telegraph party a "climber," barefoot and tattered, found his way back to our lines. When asked where his shoes were, he replied, "The bloody rebels scared me out of me boots."

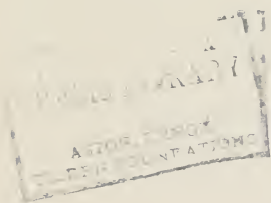
While the armies of the Potomac and of the James approach Richmond, let us glance westward:

While Sherman was preparing his army to start from Chattanooga in the Atlanta campaign the military telegraph spread a network of additional wires in Tennessee for his use, some of them extending into Alabama and Georgia and accompanying him to Atlanta. In his "Memoirs" he says: "There was perfect concert of action between the armies in Vir-



WILLIAM R. PLUM

Cipher-Operator to General Thomas
Historian of the Military Telegraph, etc.



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ginia and Georgia in all 1864; hardly a day intervened when General Grant did not know the exact state of facts with me, more than fifteen hundred miles off, as the wires ran." The operations of Sherman's telegraph in the advance on Atlanta were similar to those with the Army of the Potomac on the Peninsula. For instance, in front of Kenesaw, when about to hurl his whole force on Johnston's center, he says: "In order to oversee the whole and be in close communication with all parts of the army, I had a space cleared on top of a hill to the rear of Thomas' center, and had the telegraph wires laid to it." Sherman further says, speaking of the telegraph on the battlefield: "This is better far than the signal flags and torches." November 12, 1864, the line north from Atlanta was severed as the last message passed, and Sherman went out of the region of the knowable, so far as the telegraph and the North were concerned. He was accompanied by telegraphers, however, who busied themselves in tapping the Southern wires, and who carried the cipher keys. The first use of the latter was on the march north from Savannah in exchanging dispatches through the enemy's country with us for Schofield, who had taken Wilmington, North Carolina, as will be described later.

To return to the eastern field: General Grant says: "Soon after midnight, May 3rd-4th, the Army of the Potomac moved out from its position north of the Rapidan, to start upon that memorable campaign des-

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tined to result in the capture of the Confederate capital and the army defending it.”¹ The military telegraph directly with the Army of the Potomac was in charge of Harper Caldwell, chief operator, and David Doren, foreman of construction, and proved most efficient, but as I am not writing a history of the whole corps, which has been excellently done by Mr. Plum, I will not attempt to follow that line, but return to the Army of the James. General Grant says: “Butler embarked at Fort Monroe with all his command except the cavalry and some artillery which moved up the south bank of the James River. His steamers moved first up Chesapeake Bay and York River, as if threatening the rear of Lee’s army. At midnight they turned back, and Butler, by daylight, was far up the James River. He seized City Point and Bermuda Hundred early in the day, without loss, and no doubt very much to the surprise of the enemy.

“This was the accomplishment of the first step contemplated in my instructions to Butler. He was to act from here, looking to Richmond as his objective point. I had given him to understand that I should aim to fight Lee between the Rapidan and Richmond, if he would stand; but should Lee fall back into Richmond, I would follow up and make a junction of the armies of the Potomac and the James on the James River. He was directed to secure a footing as

¹Ibid.

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far up the south side of the river as he could at as early a date as possible.

“Butler was in position by the 6th of May and had begun intrenching, and on the 7th he sent out his cavalry from Suffolk to cut the Weldon Railroad. He also sent out detachments to destroy the railroads between Petersburg and Richmond, but no great success attended these latter efforts. He made no great effort to establish himself on that road, and neglected to attack Petersburg, which was almost defenseless. About the 11th he advanced slowly until he reached the works at Drewry’s Bluff, about half-way between Bermuda Hundred and Richmond. In the meantime Beauregard had been gathering reënforcements. On the 16th he attacked Butler with great vigor, and with such success as to limit very materially the further usefulness of the Army of the James as a distinct factor in the campaign. I afterwards ordered a portion of it to join the Army of the Potomac, leaving a sufficient force with Butler to man his works, hold securely the footing he had already gained, and maintain a threatening front toward the rear of the Confederate capital.”

CHAPTER X.

O'BRIEN'S FIRST MILITARY TELEGRAPH LINES IN FRONT OF PETERSBURG—TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE—GRANT'S ORDER BRINGS ME TO THE FRONT.

RICHARD O'BRIEN, in his notes on the construction of the first military telegraph lines in front of Petersburg, says :

"I first, on May 6th, built the line from Bermuda to Point of Rocks, about five miles, on the left bank of the Appomattox, the Confederates shelling Mackintosh and his builders from guns on high ground on the right bank, about two miles away. Butler's headquarters were about half a mile from Point of Rocks, near Broadway Landing. I had the line carried from that point to the headquarters of Gilmore and Smith, whose corps, the Eighteenth and Tenth, had been thrown out fan-shape, extending from the Appomattox to the James ; placed Operators Applebaugh and Wood with those corps. On the 7th built a line with the advance on the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad to within sight of that road, Operator Maynard Huyck, bravely holding the end of that line with his instruments under fire. On the 16th, Beauregard, having gathered reënforcements,

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made a sharp attack on our front, and General Butler ordered me to 'bring the line within the intrenchments,' at the same time complimenting me on the efficiency and bravery displayed in running and working the wire under fire."

In these trenches one night, Maynard Huyck was awakened from sleep, not by the familiar voice of his instrument, but by the shriek of a Whitworth bolt, a six-pound steel shell, which passed through the few clothes he had doffed, then ricocheted, and exploded beyond. Congratulating himself that he was not in his "duds" at the moment, the boy turned over and slept through the infernal turmoil of an awakening cannonade until aroused by the gentle tick of the telegraph relay. We used no "sounders" in those days at the front.

The heavy battles of the Wilderness campaign, in which the field telegraph, under Caldwell, had kept Grant and Meade in touch with each corps during march and battle, had been fought out, and now, early in June, 1864, Grant echeloned the Army of the Potomac across the Peninsula, in front of Lee's army and Richmond, to a junction with Butler's army on the James. Richard had wires and operators ready at the crossings, and Grant established his new base at City Point. With the combined armies of Meade and Butler, Grant made a general assault on Petersburg on June 18th, and, failing to carry the place, settled down to the long and arduous siege.

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Illustrating the service here, I condense the account of Comrade O. B. Vincent: "My regiment, the One Hundred Forty-eighth Ohio, joined the army of General B. F. Butler near Bermuda Hundred, Virginia, about the middle of June, 1864. After remaining at the front about a week, it was sent back to Bermuda Hundred on guard duty, immediately after which I, together with W. H. Wilson, of the same regiment, was detailed on telegraph service and sent to open an office at a point on the James River, known as Jones' Neck, where General Foster's brigade at that time lay. My office was on the right bank of the river and the brigade on the left bank, a pontoon bridge being thrown across the water at that point. The name of 'Neck' was very appropriate, as a strip of land not more than fifty yards wide separated the river from an immense swamp. Above the pontoon bridge a Confederate gunboat was anchored in which the enemy had a battery trained, and amused themselves nearly every day by throwing a few shells in our direction. From my tent I could plainly see the smoke from their guns, and it was quite interesting to watch the shells, some falling in the river, some on the 'neck,' and others in the swamp; some bursting high in air, scattering fragments far and wide, others not bursting at all. I understood after I left that the gunboat moved further down the river, with the result that the shells began falling so thick around the office tent that W. S. Logue, the operator who relieved me, had

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to retire from his exposed position. Nothing of the kind happened, however, while I was there, which was only two or three weeks, when, my health failing, I was transferred to Bermuda Hundred to assist Horace N. Snow in the telegraph office at that point.

“Our office was in a church. During my stay at this place a barge load of ammunition exploded at City Point which I happened to see, being outside the office and looking in that direction at the time. One morning early I was awakened by a furious cannonading in the direction of Petersburg. It seemed to be an almost continuous roar of heavy guns. I afterwards learned it was on the occasion of General U. S. Grant exploding his mine before Petersburg when he was repulsed with such heavy loss. When my regiment was ordered home I was returned to my company, and was mustered out and paid at Marietta, Ohio, September 16, 1864, by C. C. Brown, paymaster U. S. A. Thus endeth my experience in the military telegraph service which, you see, is exceedingly uneventful. Let me say, however, that Richard O'Brien was chief operator for the Army of the James. W. K. Applebaugh, now a prominent telegrapher in New York, was with the same division. I cannot now call to mind the names of any of the other operators.

“I received soldier's pay only for the entire time I was out. I applied to headquarters at Washington for increased pay while in the telegraph service, but was informed that as I had already been paid as a

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soldier I could receive nothing for the other service unless what I had already received was refunded. I did not know where to find the paymaster who had paid me and as I was quite young and inexperienced and did not know what steps to take, allowed the matter to rest, as the amount could not be very large at the best."

During the siege of Petersburg every salient point on the front of the armies of the Potomac and James was covered with the wires radiating from Grant's headquarters at City Point. One circuit, built by Richard O'Brien, crossing the Appomattox, took in the intrenchments on the Bermuda Hundred front, the Tenth and Eighteenth Corps' headquarters. Later it crossed the James at Deep Bottom by cable, included the "Crow's Nest," Dutch Gap, headquarters Army of the James, Fort Harrison, when captured, and eventually Weitzel's headquarters and Kautz's Cavalry on our extreme right. The second circuit, under Caldwell, followed up the south bank of the Appomattox to our advanced works, and, running to the left, connected Smith, Hancock, Burnside, and Warren, Sheridan on his arrival, and other commands as they arrived or were shifted on this important field as the tide of battle ebbed and flowed, pushing farther to the left as Grant, throughout the Winter and Spring, deployed his forces to envelop Lee's right, until the line reached the Weldon Railroad and beyond. Thus all our forces in front of Richmond

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and Petersburg—a semi-circle of thirty miles of intrenchments—were manipulated in concert by the hand of General Grant. Besides the land lines under his care, Richard had also charge of the cables in the Appomattox and in the upper James. In his official reports, Major Eckert says that Richard O'Brien, chief operator, was "indefatigable in his exertions to render those lines of service to the Government." To preserve the sequence of events in this field and to avoid returning to it from other campaigns, I continue here somewhat out of the chronological order of this narrative.

The result of battles sometimes hung on the continuity of a slender wire, as when, on March 25, 1865, the Confederates, under Gordon, attacked and carried Fort Stedman and cut the wire to City Point. The capture occurred about 5 A.M. According to General Humphreys, who has described this campaign, General Parke, then commanding the Ninth Corps, which received the attack, telegraphed at 5:30 A.M. to General Webb the loss of the fort. Webb immediately replied that Meade was at City Point, and he (Parke) in command. At 6:15 Humphreys, commanding the Second Corps, on Parke's left, received the news also by telegraph that the enemy had "broken our right, taken Stedman, and were moving on City Point." Parke ordered Warren up with the Fifth Corps, the Ninth assaulted, and the fort was recaptured by 8 o'clock. Promptly the telegraph was

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repaired and flashed the news to Grant and Meade, who as quickly projected the Second and Ninth Corps against the enemy, capturing his intrenched picket line, a position of immense subsequent advantage, inflicting a loss of 4,000 men, and losing 2,000 in the whole operation. Thus the cutting of the wire by Gordon removed Meade from control, placed Parke in command, gave him three corps and empowered him to assault, while its repair restored Meade, regulated the assault, enabling Grant to use his whole force as a unit, and secured an advance by our forces, all within the space of a few hours. Thus were forts lost and retaken, and thus were battles won by the aid of the telegraph! Its success in this emergency was due to the field system. But for the portable batteries, the cutting of the City Point current would have rendered the rest of the circuit useless.

In the final pursuit and capture of Lee's army all authorities unite in attesting the efficiency of the telegraph corps. In the rush of fifty miles from Petersburg to Appomattox, Grant, Meade, and all the corps of both the Potomac and James armies, except Sheridan's, were kept connected. Our men found poles standing on the South-side road, which materially facilitated our advance with the army. Where the retreat of the Confederates had been too rapid to destroy wires these were spliced to ours and used, turning the enemy's telegraph against himself, an

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operation which we were able to make on an extended scale in the North Carolina campaign.

The President at this time was at City Point, and later in Petersburg and Richmond, and to him Grant telegraphed the phases of the conflict, beginning with Sheridan's victory at Five Forks, and ending with Lee's surrender. Meantime, over the wire Richard had previously pushed forward north of the James, sped the message, "Richmond is fallen."

I must now go back to more personal reminiscence.

During the Summer of 1864 I did all the commercial and military telegraph business of Norfolk, without any assistance except the mounted orderlies. I still slept by the instruments, and had no time to use a horse, so Richard took "Lucy" to the front, while Keller kept "Pet" busy carrying him with dispatches. All this was educational, for a boy not yet sixteen years old, but was rather sedentary. There were military telegraphers at Portsmouth, Suffolk, Camp Getty, and other points in that vicinity.

In the Fall, Major Eckert sent more operators to Norfolk and transferred me to Fort Monroe, where George D. Sheldon had replaced, as chief operator, his brother Lem Sheldon, who was now in charge of military telegraphs in South Carolina. I worked twelve hours a day, from 2 A.M. until 2 P.M., when Charlie Homan relieved me for twelve hours; and Billy Dealy worked all day. During my night hours the actual operating was not usually very heavy, as

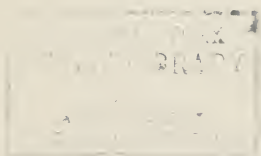
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Hicks' repeaters at Fort Monroe and a better cable than the first in Chesapeake Bay generally permitted "U. S." (Grant's headquarters at City Point) to work through to "D. I." (the War Department), but it was necessary to be awake to keep the repeaters adjusted, and to take or transmit anything that came.

The English language had been passing voluminously through my ears and hands by telegraph for some years, and it now occurred to me to study its anatomy. Diagram grammar, that is books on grammar with the parts of speech set off in diagrams to show their relations to each other, had just appeared. I copied the whole of such a book with the pen. Billy Dealy had a copy of Cobbett's Grammar. I copied that also. It was ancient, and William Cobbett had written it while a soldier, self-educated, in the English army, but it was a treasure, and Cobbett certainly was a master of clear, strong, and correct Anglo-Saxon speech. By such means I was able to keep awake at my post. But I wished to be at the front and with Richard. All the glamour and romance of the great fortress had long since worn away. My greatest difficulty was to sleep. Carroll Hall, the barracks inside the fort, where I was now quartered, was infested by *cimex*. If, later, these enterprising bugs annoyed Jefferson Davis when the ex-chief of the Confederacy was quartered as a prisoner there, as much as they worried me, then I cannot blame his friends for complaining of incidents



WILLIAM J. DEALY
Cipher-Operator U. S. Military Telegraph, 1861-5



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of his incarceration. But the bugs were not the only attendant demons of insomnia; next door to me, in the upper hall, roomed a dreamy officer who, in the evening, when I was trying to sleep so as to get up at 2 A.M., loved to play forlorn tunes, with rather indifferent skill, on a wheezy melodeon, in comparison to which I fancied Dick Swiveler's performance of "Away with Melancholy" on the flute, must have been a joyous and cheerful rhapsody. Haunted by those wailing strains and tormented by the *cimex*, which seemed to infest the whole building, I would often start up from fitful dreams and, staggering across the parade ground to relieve Homan, fancy that in the blinking of the harbor light-house lantern I could detect the shadow of the hateful *cimex lectularius*.

George Sheldon was an excellent chief operator, perfectly loyal to duty, just and fair; but he was of a reticent, saturnine temperament, in marked contrast to Captain Lem, with whom I had previously served there, who had been breezy as a brass band, and whose very sonorous oaths had been cheery and inspiring. Captain Lem used to sleep on a cot in the office, and when I was on nights with him, early in '62, used to read himself to sleep with Sterne's and Smollett's novels, which he cautioned me not to read until I should be twenty-five. And I followed his advice until twice that age. Charlie Homan was a good, steady operator, and Billy Dealy was an ideal telegrapher, and a prince of all cheerful, good fellows.

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We all got on most amicably, and Dealy says the only thing we ever quarreled about, but that was constantly, was ventilation. I wanted air :

“I’ve a touch of gypsy blood i’ my veins
That longs for the light and air.”

I wanted to be at the front. At last, one evening, January 25th, 1865, I was on the City Point wire and got this message from “U. S.”:

City Point, Jan. 25th, 1865.

GENERAL E. O. C. ORD,

Commanding, Fort Monroe :

Send up to these headquarters, by first boat, one of your operators, from Fort Monroe.

U. S. GRANT.

The sending operator suggested it was for outpost, to watch the Confederate rams. I have never learned what induced General Grant to send this message. Richard says he did not inspire it, and knew nothing of it; and I was too happy at the result of it to inquire of Grant’s chief operator, Caldwell, how it originated. I knew at the moment of receiving it that the proceeding was entirely irregular and unprecedented; the normal course would have been for General Grant to express his wishes to Major Eckert, either direct or through Caldwell. However, not mine to “reason why;” I thought that General Grant was just the one man who might and should ignore military ethics in an emergency, and—the order suited me to death. I asked Sheldon to let me

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go. He took the message in to General Ord, and in half an hour I was steaming up the river in a fast tug, the happiest boy in the army. A boy's reflections in a case like this may amuse and—be pardoned. I had seen the great combat of the ironclads; had heard the buzz of sharpshooters' bullets aimed at Holloway and myself at Suffolk; had dared the guerrillas on the eastern shore and on the Peninsula. Now I felt that I might have an opportunity to distinguish myself before the whole army. I was going, perhaps, to hold the end of a wire at Turkey Bend, to signal to the army and navy the expected onslaught of the Confederate rams. On my masterly retreat from Newport News I had felt that discretion was the better part of valor. It could not help the Union to have me killed or captured there, and Uncle Sam might have lost a useful boy; but I had been under fire since then, and I felt confident that in a position of importance I would be able to imitate, and perhaps outdo, all the boyish heroes of history.

It is surprising by what a small chance one may lose a golden opportunity. The tug I was aboard of overtook the propeller *Neptune* above Newport News and placed me aboard of her, as the tug was needed back at Fort Monroe. The *Neptune* drew some eighteen or twenty feet of water, and as we steamed up the river, after dark, she got aground.

I fretted all night, guerrillas peppered at us from the bank, and at daylight she was still fast aground,

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while I was crazy to get forward. The first craft that appeared coming up at daylight was a cattle boat. I put off in a small boat and signalled her to stop, but she never slacked her speed, so I was compelled to seize a rope and scramble aboard as best I could. When I reached Grant's headquarters I was too late; the place of danger had been filled, and for the moment I was unassigned. I took advantage of this to ride over our lines and to see all that I could.

Among the operators at City Point were the Caldwells and Tinneys. All those boys are dead long ago, killed by their service for the Union—service as great as any four men with guns or swords could have rendered. General Grant's immediate cipher operator was Beckwith.

Samuel H. Beckwith, an excellent operator, had early in the war enlisted in the ranks and fought with his regiment at Fort Donelson and Shiloh. In July, 1862, he was detailed for service in the military telegraph, serving at General Halleck's headquarters at Corinth, Mississippi. Halleck being just then appointed to command the armies, with headquarters at Washington, and Grant succeeding him as department commander, Beckwith began his interesting association with General Grant, which lasted to the end of the war. After the capture of Vicksburg, on the occasion of the presentation of a sword to General Grant, he accepted a memento from the telegraphers, as indicated by the following :

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Vicksburg, August 17th, 1863.

MAJOR-GENERAL MCPHERSON,

GENERAL: May I beg the honor of requesting you in behalf of the operators in the field to present the accompanying pair of Major-General's shoulder straps to Major-General U. S. Grant, as a token of respect and esteem. Should you deem it proper to present them this evening, I beg you will communicate to the General the sincere gratitude which we entertain towards him for the many kindnesses extended to us.

I am, with profound respect, etc., yours,

S. H. BECKWITH,

Operator General Grant's Headquarters.

Almost from the beginning of the United States Government there has been, at times, friction between the office of Secretary of War and the General-in-Chief commanding the army, due, I believe, to the fact that, theoretically, the President has been Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of War, representing him, has interfered with or assumed prerogatives claimed by the General in actual command. McClellan, Grant, Sherman and Schofield have complained of this, and, in more recent years, General Miles, while General-in-Chief, suffered greatly from it.

Grant, in his memoirs, referring to an incident in which Beckwith and our cipher were concerned, says: "This was about the only thing approaching a disagreeable difference between the Secretary of War and myself that occurred until the war was over, when we had another little spat. Owing to his natural disposition to assume all power and control in all mat-

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ters that he had anything whatever to do with, he boldly took command of the armies, and, while issuing no orders on the subject, prohibited any order from me going out of the Adjutant-General's office until he had approved it."

General Grant, still referring to a time after the close of the war, goes on to state that he remonstrated with Secretary Stanton in writing, whereupon "the Secretary apologetically restored me to my rightful position of General-in-Chief of the Army. But he soon lapsed again and took control, much as before." The context shows that the cipher incident was no trifling matter and might have resulted very seriously to the Union cause, had not all concerned used tact and patience, and especially, had not our comrade Beckwith been valuable and *persona grata* to General Grant.

As the reader will probably prefer, I will give General Grant's version of this incident (from his memoirs), though it is not quite correct, as shown by his letter of February 4, 1864 (which reverses the sequence of incidents), to Halleck. He was then in command of the military division of the Mississippi, with headquarters at Nashville, Tennessee. The time was late in December, 1863. He says: "The Army of the Ohio had been getting supplies over the Cumberland Gap until their animals had nearly all starved. I now determined to go myself to see if there was any chance of using that route in the

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Spring, and if not, to abandon it. Accordingly, I left Nashville in the latter part of December, by rail, for Chattanooga. * * * * I was at Knoxville, and on my way from there to Lexington, Kentucky. * * * I was back in Nashville by the 13th of January, 1864.

“When I started on this trip it was necessary for me to have some person along who could turn dispatches into cipher, and who could also read the cipher dispatches which I was liable to receive daily and almost hourly. Under the rules of the War Department at that time, Mr. Stanton had taken entire control of the matter of regulating the telegraph and determining how it should be used, and of saying who, and who alone, should have the ciphers. The operators possessed of the ciphers, as well as the ciphers used, were practically independent of the commanders whom they were serving immediately under, and had to report to the War Department through General Stager all the dispatches which they received or forwarded.

“I was obliged to leave the telegraphic operator back at Nashville, because that was the point at which all dispatches to me would come, to be forwarded from there. As I have said, it was necessary for me also to have an operator during this inspection who had possession of this cipher to enable me to telegraph to my division and to the War Department without my dispatches being read by all the operators

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along the line of wires over which they were transmitted. Accordingly, I ordered the cipher operator to turn over the key to Captain Cyrus B. Comstock, of the corps of engineers, whom I had selected as a wise and discreet man who certainly could be trusted with the cipher if the operator at my headquarters could.

“The operator refused point blank to turn over the key to Captain Comstock, as directed by me, stating that his orders from the War Department were not to give it to anybody—the commanding general or any one else. I told him I would see whether he would or not. He said that if he did he would be punished. I told him if he did not he most certainly would be punished. Finally, seeing that punishment was certain if he refused longer to obey my order, and being somewhat remote (even if he was not protected altogether from the consequences of his disobedience to his orders) from the War Department, he yielded. When I returned from Knoxville I found quite a commotion. The operator had been reprimanded very severely and ordered to be relieved. I informed the Secretary of War, or his assistant secretary in charge of the telegraph, Stager, that the man could not be relieved, for he had only obeyed my orders. It was absolutely necessary for me to have the cipher, and the man would most certainly have been punished if he had not delivered it; that they would have to punish me if they punished anybody, or words to that effect.”

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That Beckwith had been in a very embarrassing, if not dangerous, position between General Grant and the War Department, may be further seen from the following :

*War Department,
Washington City, January 1st, 1864.*

ORDERED :

That the cipher books issued by the Superintendent of Military Telegraphs be entrusted only to the care of telegraph experts, selected for the duty by the Superintendent of Telegraphs, and approved and appointed by the Secretary of War for duty at the respective headquarters of the military departments, and to accompany the armies in the field. The ciphers furnished for this purpose are not to be imparted to any one, but will be kept by the operator to whom they are entrusted, in strict confidence, and he will be held responsible for their privacy and proper use. They will neither be copied nor used by any other person, without special permission from the Secretary of War. Generals commanding will report to the War Department any default of duty by the cipher operator, but will not allow any staff or other officer to interfere with the operators in the discharge of their duties.

By order of the Secretary of War.

Official : E. D. TOWNSEND, A. A. G.

T. S. BOWERS, A. A. G.

It is hardly necessary to give the other side of this correspondence. The following letter from General Grant is sufficiently explanatory, and shows a remarkable instance of departure from his habitual reticence :

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*Headquarters Military Division of the Mississippi,
Nashville, Tenn., February 4, 1864.*

MAJOR-GENERAL H. W. HALLECK,

General-in-Chief, Washington, D. C. :

Your letter of the 22nd, enclosing a copy of Colonel Stager's, of the 21st, to you, is received. I have also circular, or order, dated January 1, 1864, post-marked Washington, January 23rd, and received on the 29th. I will state that Beckwith is one of the best of men. He is competent and industrious. In the matter for which he has been dismissed, he only obeyed my orders, and could not have done otherwise than he did and remained. Beckwith has always been employed at headquarters, as an operator, and I have never thought of taking him with me, except when headquarters were moved. On the occasion of my going to Knoxville, I received Washington dispatches which I could not read until my return to this place. To remedy this for the future, I directed Colonel Comstock to acquaint himself with this cipher. Beckwith desired to telegraph Colonel Stager on the subject before complying with my directions. Not knowing of any order defining who and who alone could be entrusted with the Washington cipher, I then ordered Beckwith to give it to Colonel Comstock, and to inform Colonel Stager of the fact that he had done so. I had no thought in this matter of violating any order, or even wish, of the Secretary of War. I could see no reason why I was not as capable of selecting a proper person to entrust with this secret as Colonel Stager; in fact, thought nothing further of the matter than that Colonel Stager had his operators under such discipline that they were afraid to obey orders from any one but himself, without knowing first his pleasure. Beckwith has been dismissed for obeying my orders. A better man cannot be selected for the

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position. I respectfully ask that Beckwith be restored. When Colonel Stager's directions were received here, the cipher had already been communicated. The order was signed by himself and not by direction of the Secretary of War. It is not necessary for me to state that I am no stickler for form, but will obey any order or wish from any of my superiors, no matter how conveyed, if I know or only think it comes from them.

In this instance, I supposed Colonel Stager was acting for himself, and without the knowledge of any one else.

I am, General, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

U. S. GRANT, Major-General.

Beckwith was reinstated, a new cipher was made, and the incident was closed without Secretary Stanton relaxing his control of the military telegraph.

The foregoing story and letters, besides the intrinsic interest of the incident, will give the reader some idea of the peculiar status given by the Secretary of War to the United States Military Telegraph in the army in the Civil War, which unjustly, we think, prevented it from receiving full recognition as a military organization, and has ever since prevented its survivors from obtaining a pensionable status.

General Grant, when I saw him at City Point, in January, 1865, as I entered his headquarters cabin with Jack Tinney, who carried a dispatch, was seated in a group of officers, among whom were Rawlins, his chief of staff, General Meade, commanding the Army of the Potomac, and others; and Grant was the least

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conspicuous figure in the group, wearing a soldier's blouse, without belt or sword, and smoking a cigar. Looking back to that time now, it seems to me that General Grant was a most modest, unassuming, great commander. As to his military genius, his strategy was so simple, comprehensive and effective, and he was so imperturbably reticent that, to the observer, the results seemed inevitable, and his military skill was scarcely credited. I doubt that the world has ever seen two greater commanders pitted against each other than Grant and Lee.

My brother had a corps of operators at the front of whom he was proud, and who were devoted to the service and to him. Most of those who outlived the war have been successful in business enterprises. Some who are dead were as bright and promising of genius as any young men I have known. I remember one named Sheridan, who was a perfect genius as a tragedian. A little later he played his last part and died for his country. Another operator, who had been educated for the Methodist ministry, entertained us one night with recitations, and I have never since heard elocution that seemed so fine to me. Among the operators here was J. Hervey Nichols, one of the most reliable and intelligent men in the service.

January 27th I went with Richard to the "Crows' Nest," where the signal men so much distinguished themselves, and where we also had telegraphic communication, and to Dutch Gap Canal. All around



J. HERVEY NICHOLS

Cipher-Operator Army of the James, etc., 1861-5
Now of Denver, Colorado



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and back of that excavation the ground was ploughed up by shells. Richard rode down to the edge of the canal to see how a cable which Butler was anxious to get across the river might be best secured, and I sat on my horse on the river bank looking up toward Pickett's Confederate battery at the Howlett House, two miles away, which had gotten the range so accurately that its guns had pitched their shells right into Butler's ditch. As I looked I saw a puff of smoke at Howlett House, and a few seconds after a shell dropped in the river just in front of me.

I told Richard that I appreciated this honor, but would like to go back, so we galloped up along the river bank where the negro pickets were keeping close behind log breastworks. Several of them shouted, "Look out, dar!" and then a volley came out of the brush just across the narrow river and rattled around us. Richard was quite cool, but I suggested a horse-race to Butler's headquarters, and led off at once, and I think I beat him.

I was put on duty south of the river, at Bermuda Hundred, with Operator Snow. Our office was in an abandoned church.

Richard's diary will best describe telegraphic affairs at this point.

CHAPTER XI.

RICHARD O'BRIEN'S WAR DIARY OF A CHIEF OPERATOR IN THE SIEGE OF RICHMOND AND PETERSBURG.

HEADQUARTERS Army of the James, on the Peninsula before Richmond, Sunday, January 1, 1865.—This book (pocket diary) was handed me as a New Year gift by my friend, J. C. Rhodes, who distributes newspapers to the army.

At 9 A.M. Hervey Nichols, my chief assistant, handed me a note signed by all the military telegraphers of the Army of the James (eighteen operators and the construction corps, under Mackintosh), accompanying a very beautiful album as a New Year gift, their photographs to be included when they can get them. I was very much touched by this proof of affection from the brave boys.

At 11 A.M. went out with Nichols to witness the blowing up of Dutch Gap to complete the excavation of the canal, which General Butler hopes is to change the channel of the James River and circumvent the formidable Howlett House fortifications of the enemy.

Operation delayed. General Butler, his staff, Mr. N. and I returned, and went out again at 1 P.M. Waited in the cold until 3:45, when the mine exploded, blowing out the earth to the water's edge, but

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failing most miserably to meet our expectation. It will require some time and much labor yet to enable our vessels to pass through. The Confederates shelled the gap and us.

Monday, January 2nd.—Mr. King came into our mess. Smith received three lanterns for our men to use in patrolling the wires at night.

I sent monthly report to A. B. Chandler, "D. I." (War Department.) Received a short letter from brother John at Fort Monroe: he wants to come to the front. I secured standing order from Lieutenant Merrill, quartermaster, to have our horses shod at all times. John Tinney was over from Grant's office at City Point; also Painter. They seem to think there is not much to choose in point of danger between some of our exposed telegraph stations on these lines in front of Richmond and Caldwell's on Grant's lines, on the other side, in front of Petersburg.

NEWS OF OLD COMRADES.

Received a letter from Billy Tinney, Virginia City, Nevada Territory. He is getting a hundred dollars a month in gold and his board. Billy and his brother, Jack, were, like John and myself, with McClellan on this Peninsula in '62. The campaign damaged Billy's constitution, so that he resigned and went West to seek health. Wonder how John and I will come out of this? Billy mentions my old telegraph teacher and comrade on the Pennsylvania Railroad, Vanden-

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burg. He is building lines out there. At "P. O." (president's office, P. R. R., Philadelphia), where we worked together, Van, who was fond of the foils, used to prod me all over the office and stand me in a corner. I was patient, so he liked me. If he still cares for swordsmanship he might enjoy the real thing down here. Van walked the whole Pennsylvania line, then a state road, and was the first to realize the importance of glass insulation. Tinney also mentions that W——, an old railroad operator, is out there in prison for tampering with the wires, by which he hoped to make \$30,000. He was always a wild boy. Perhaps a little military service, say under fire at Point of Rocks, the Crow's Nest, or at Dutch Gap, might tame him.

Tuesday, January 3rd.—Major-General Terry ordered on expedition; with his corps embarked at Deep Bottom. Peter Zeroni reported for duty, Dick Whelan got another lantern for night repairs of wires, Colonel Kensel, with some Swedish officers, here. General Butler very affectionate to Colonel Dodge, quartermaster of this army, who is going away with Terry. Said "God bless you." Letters from home. Snowing.

Wednesday, January 4th.—Nichols got up first time he was called—something unheard of before. Very busy all day with ciphers. Colonel Dodge making arrangements with Colonel Webster, quartermaster at Fort Monroe, in cipher, for Terry's expedi-

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tion. Tom Morrison and Loucks, operators, over from the Petersburg front to see me. We bunk them for the night. Mail is not in yet, 10:45 P.M.

Thursday, January 5th.—General Butler went to Fort Monroe. Letter from John. He is tired of Fort Monroe; has worked there three times during the war; wants to be at the front. Beat Nichols at chess, giving him a rook odds. Gave Morrison \$245 to send per express from City Point to Philadelphia for clothes for operators. Gave Huyck, one of my operators here, \$5 for our mess, making \$10 I have advanced. Application from D——. He won't suit for the military telegraph. Wrote John and home.

RUMOR OF RICHMOND'S EVACUATION.

Friday, January 6th.—Raining all day; roads impassable. The "sacred soil" and water mixed together make the worst mud on earth. Fierce cannonading toward Petersburg. The result is not yet apparent. Applebaugh reports to me by wire that "An actor just escaped from Richmond," says "the Confederates are evacuating that place." Exceedingly improbable, but not altogether impossible. General Butler not yet returned. Wrote Sister Lizzie.

Saturday, January 7th.—Rode over the line to Fort Burnham. Letter from Chandler to-day; very favorable for John. Letter from John. Answered, inclosing Chandler's and advising to stay at Fort Monroe, which is safe if monotonous. Letter from Brother

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James at Portsmouth and one from Joe Wilson, our old mounted messenger of the Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry. Answered both. Mail late.

Sunday, January 8th.—All human greatness hath an end! The feared, the hated, the respected, the renowned Major-General Benjamin F. Butler is relieved as commander of the Army of the James, and is ordered to report by letter from Lowell, Massachusetts. He left to-day, and thus his play is ended and thus he is shuffled off the stage. The administration has no further use for him, and is forced by the popular voice to depose him, but he may appear again. I know him well, and can safely say, "The devil is not as black as he is painted." He has been very kind to me. General Ord succeeds him.

Monday, January 9th.—General Ord up to see me. He is very particular in matters of detail.

Received a cipher from General Grant, which may change our base very materially. It is a bold idea, but one which I have often thought of. If undertaken it will cost many a gallant fellow his life. (This referred to assaulting Fort Fisher and the impending North Carolina campaign.)

Some talk of Rosecrans assuming command of this army (of the James), under Grant. Ten Confederate deserters in to-day. S. Holbrook, operator, reported for duty; have ordered him to Point of Rocks station. He has been in the corps since November 19, '64. Received a letter to go to Richmond from George B.

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Cowlam, our brave boy of the *Monitor* and *Merrimac* day at Newport News. Letter from John. Rebel ram just sent a shell very close to us.

TROUBLE IN JAMES RIVER CABLE.

Tuesday, January 10th.—Raining all day. Roads impassable. Line down. I fear trouble in James River cable. Williams left. M—— absent without leave; I reprimanded him. Richmond papers say great fire at Charlotte, North Carolina, and heavy loss of their government stores.

Sent General Butler five photographs for his autograph. I want to send four to my friends. I understand he is determined to fight the administration, and should not be surprised if he forced them to place him in some important position. Lieutenant Davenport of our guard resigned. Accepted. Charley Hammond, operator, very sick; wants to go home. All quiet along the lines.

Wednesday, January 11th.—James River cable leaks badly. Went down and found the current had floated and strained it badly. Could do nothing, as a steamer had carried away part of the pontoon bridge.

Copies of General Butler's farewell address to the army received. Strong language. General Grant says they can be distributed. Letters from John, James and Sister Mary.

Brigadier-General Lee sent in a flag of truce asking permission to take away an old man and woman

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on the Darbytown road who are represented to be starving. Thirty deserters in to-day.

Thursday, January 12th.—Steamer *Sylvan Shore* caught our cable at 7:45 A.M. and broke it. Ordered the reel at Bermuda Hundred brought up on tug. Had all ready, but it got too dark to work.

Received a letter from Benjamin F. Butler with his photograph. The letter is very complimentary on my services, etc. Painter, Tinney and Snow, operators, here; Snow staying all night. Seven deserters came in. Wrote John and James. All quiet along the lines.

Friday, January 13th.—Up at daylight. Started with Snow for James River. Found our men all ready. Went to work, laid the cable and had everything working at 10 A.M. It is a very hard thing to lay cable well off a tug in a strong current; it should always be laid off a barge, where there is room to work. I took up and coiled the old cable. T. W. Davis left for Meade's headquarters to get his furlough. General Ord gone to Fort Monroe. General Turner ordered to report at Washington for committee on the conduct of the war. John I. Sabin, operator, reported at City Point. I ordered him to Jones' Landing.

Saturday, January 14th.—Sent battery wagon, old pony battery and one tent to Bermuda Hundred. At 1 P.M. a steamer came down the river so fast she

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could not stop for the pontoon bridge ; she let go her anchor, which caught and broke the new cable I laid yesterday. (This cable across James River connected Grant's two wings, speaking roughly, the Army of the James on the Peninsula in front of Richmond, and the Army of the Potomac in front of Petersburg. It was in Richard's charge, which included not only the lines on the Peninsula, but also those on Grant's side of the James above the Appomattox, while those from Grant's headquarters at City Point to the extreme left of the Army of the Potomac, were in charge of Harper Caldwell, chief operator at Grant's headquarters, who had the excellent builder, Denis Doren, as foreman of construction. J.) Colonel Mulford and Mr. Ould exchanging prisoners to-day. Letters from John, Mary and James. Answered all of them.

Sunday, January 15th.—Down to the river to make splice in cable, which was leaking, making it work hard for the operators. Gutta-percha gets brittle and porous. General Gibbon arrived and took command of the Twenty-fourth Corps. Letter from mother. Blair and two commissioners from Alabama came from Richmond en route for Washington ; no doubt on a peace mission. God grant that it may be productive of good, and that the dawn of peace may be near.

Monday, January 16th.—Several citizens escaped from Richmond ; say they paid \$200 apiece to those who smuggled them through the Confederate lines.

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Richmond papers say our troops (Terry) effected a landing five miles above Fort Fisher, North Carolina, yesterday. Say we can't take the fort. Wrote Mary and James.

Tuesday, January 17th.—General Grant ordered work on Dutch Gap Canal stopped, thus driving another nail in Butler's coffin. The canal will, nevertheless, be one day the channel of James River. Rode over the pontoon to Bermuda, stopping in to see Sheridan (operator) at Broadway Landing. He was shaking with malaria. Got him some quinine.

Received report Fort Fisher was taken by assault on the 15th with forty guns, 1,000 prisoners. Our loss heavy. General Terry says he hopes it will not exceed 500. This will seal Butler's doom after his failure in the first expedition sent to take that fort.

Wednesday, January 18th.—Received operators' clothes from Philadelphia; they are very good and all are pleased. Received letters from John. Wrote James and Lizzie. Borrowed Snow's new work on electricity. Very quiet on the lines.

Thursday, January 19th.—Deserters report Wilmington, North Carolina, taken, with \$33,000,000 worth of cotton, which the Confederates set on fire, but our troops arrived in time to extinguish the flames. (This report was premature, but prophetic. When the event did occur Richard and I were, strangely enough, there to see it. J.) Snow, Painter and others up to get their clothes. (I retain these

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slight items of the diary to indicate Richard's care of his boys, and his capacity for detail, which I have always admired and envied. These details also preserve the vraisemblance of life at the front. He was all this time doing heavy cipher work and operating, as well as executive work. J.) Jim Norris, who enlisted in the cavalry and was detailed to work with John and me in McClellan's campaign, arrived at "U. S." (Grant's headquarters. Jim was a fine operator, both in sending and receiving, and a very handsome fellow in Buffalo Bill's style of beauty. J.) General Ord wants two miles of railroad iron laid near here. A move on foot! The army will have work to do before the Winter is over. No letters today. (Richard strangely omits to voice in this diary the thunder of Grant's and Lee's guns in those days. I suppose he had grown oblivious to their music. It was not an incessant bombardment, however. Grant's game then was largely one of endurance and strategic extension of his wings. J.)

Friday, January 20th.—General Grant has gone to Washington; General Ord to Fort Monroe; General Gibbon commands this army in Ord's absence. Grant telegraphed in cipher to hold the flag of truce boat until Mr. Blair arrives. This is significant, Blair going as a possible peace commissioner a second time to Richmond. T. W. Davis, operator, reported at "S." (Bermuda.) Went down into Dutch Gap Canal and brought away a piece of petrified wood, which is a

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little soft now, but gets hard by exposure to the air. (The bottom of the canal was composed of this peat in process of formation into coal—one of the conditions that made excavation difficult and, with the accurate fire of Pickett's guns in the Howlett House battery and his field guns, rendered temporarily unsuccessful Butler's attempt to cut off that wide bend of James River. Richard says that, "Besides the Howlett House guns, the enemy brought a battery of four pieces and raked the gap with grape and canister, and after several boat loads of dead and wounded had been taken from the excavation, our people had to abandon it, leaving us to take down our wire or abandon it. We took it down." J.) Colonel Mulford, in charge of exchange of prisoners, up to see me. He looks well. Received thirteen bags of oats, two bales of hay.

READY TO RECEIVE IRONCLADS.

Saturday, January 21st.—McKenna, operator, reported for duty. Ordered him to Point of Rocks, on the left bank of the Appomattox. General Gibbon wants an office with General Kautz, commanding the cavalry now moving farther out on our extreme right. General Grant telegraphs Ord he has important news from Richmond. General Gibbon telegraphs General Ferrero the Confederate ironclads are expected to come down the river soon, and to have the river batteries on the lookout and prepared. Two deserters

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just in. One was sent for water and the other sent to guard him; the latter, true to his orders, did guard him right into our lines. Good soldier!

Sunday, January 22nd.—North Carolina transferred to the "Department of the South" under Sherman. Frank P. Blair, supposed peace commissioner, passed through into Richmond. One of my team horses died. I have the application of Davis, Fourth New Jersey Battery, for detail as military telegraph operator. McKenna arrived at "K" office (Point of Rocks). Many deserters in. All quiet along the lines.

Monday, January 23rd.—Captain Lafayette Plato, quartermaster, took dinner with us. He was at Norfolk when John and I were running the wires in that region. Looks well. Deserters report the Confederate rams preparing to come down and take advantage of the high water now in James River; the late freshet having washed away the obstructions we placed near Crow's Nest. If they get below these there will be trouble. Fort Brady is ordered to be on the lookout and prepared. Lee may throw the main body of his force against us on this, the Peninsula side, while the ironclads destroy our bridges over James River. But he will find us ready to receive him.

Tuesday, January 24th.—Three Confederate rams ran down the river, engaging Fort Brady and passing it about 4 A.M. They got around the bend and under

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their Howlett House battery, and at 5 A.M. attempted to pass our obstructions, which the late freshet had displaced. They were engaged by General Ferrero's batteries, and one reported blown up, but it was only a small tug. One ram, the *Fredericksburg*, got through, but did not come down. One went aground, and, for a time, it was supposed we could destroy her, but they all got away. Our monitor, the *Onondaga*, backed down the river and showed "the white feather," for which her commander is relieved, by telegraph. I was out to see the fight. Ran a line, two miles of wire, to Kautz's cavalry on our right. Sent Davis there.

COULD NOT PHASE THE IRONCLADS.

Wednesday, January 25th.—At 4 A.M. the Confederate ironclads started up the river with no sign of life visible. They moved slowly and regularly, appearing in the darkness like huge phantoms of a disordered dream. Fort Brady again opened fire on them with its 200-pounder and other heavy guns. Our riflemen on shore could see our heavy shot strike fire against the iron sides of the monsters, but they paid no more heed to it than they would to so many hailstones. They kept on, not deigning a reply. F. P. Blair came into our lines from Richmond. Peace is not in sight. John Thompson, lineman at Fort Powhatan, killed by the enemy while repairing the line near Cabin Point. Two letters from James.

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Sent him one. Colonel Mulford ordered before the military committee of Congress.

Thursday, January 26th.—Sent horse, bridle, saddle, etc., with Woodbury to Fort Powhatan. Sent Mason to headquarters Twenty-fifth Corps. John reported to General Rawlins at City Point. I want him here; he was delayed on the way up from Fort Monroe; got aground. (I cut loose for the front on a special order of General Grant for one of us operators at Fort Monroe to come up to watch the Confederate rams. J.) Picket firing on our left. It's of no account. The *Ironsides* aground. *Atlanta* up. (Armored gunboats. J.) No mail. Gold on 23d 2.06 $\frac{1}{4}$. I opened another office at Broadway Landing at 10 A.M. Placed Rand there.

Friday, January 27th.—John and Tinney started from Grant's headquarters; Rhodes joined them at Hatcher's. I started with Huyck to meet them. Met them on the pontoon bridge at Aikens' Landing. They had given John an uncommonly good horse. (It had been captured in battle and had killed two of our men by running away with them. Richard's "Lucy" was a good one, too. J.) Glad to meet the boy. We celebrated the reunion by a race from the river. Neck and neck for a mile, with the others far behind, and then I began to see that John could not pull in his horse, so I pulled "Lucy" sharply to the right among the ditches of an old camp and she went down like a shot. Struck on my head and turned a

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complete somersault. Was right under her feet when I scrambled up, but she did not move an inch or I might have been severely hurt. Got off miraculously with only a few bumps on my head. (This may seem ignominious, but General Grant was lame at Shiloh from a similar accident. J.) We went to Dutch Gap, and were treated to a big shell or two from Howlett House battery, which astonished John.

HOPE OF PEACE.

Saturday, January 28th.—John went to City Point, reporting again to Caldwell, who kindly let me have him, and returned to Bermuda for present duty. Nichols went to City Point. General Singleton and five Southern ladies came from Richmond and went on to Washington. Perhaps the Southern beauties may make an impression on the heart of "Old Abe," and thus smooth the way to peace negotiations! Those Southern girls have a winning way about them. I hope they may be successful. It is time that Americans should know each other, and know that it would be almost as logical to think of two kings in heaven as of two governments between the Gulf of Mexico and Canada. It must and will be a Union.

Sunday, January 29th.—Alexander H. Stephens, Hunter and Judge Campbell applied to come through our lines, claiming to have an understanding with General Grant, who is absent at Fort Fisher. The

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matter is referred to Washington. No decision yet. General Ord hesitates to take the responsibility of letting the Southern commissioners through. Old Ben would not have hesitated in such a case. I can almost forgive Butler's many faults in admiration of his original and decisive legal talent. One drawback in this struggle has been the fear of our Generals to take responsibility. (Richard soon saw that as good a man as General Sherman got into serious trouble by assuming responsibility in regard to peace negotiations. We were all terrible critics in those days. J.)

Monday, January 30th.—Secretary of War Stanton replied that a messenger would be sent to meet Stephens and party. Richmond papers speak openly of their departure for Washington, but profess to have little faith in the mission. Ord telegraphs corps commanders to have all ready for a move. He thinks the enemy may attack. John up. Rode over the lines with him. Received a barrel of oysters from Dr. Suckley. Tom Morrison left for Washington. D—— here. Don't think much of his operating capacity. McGill left. Sent Rand to Jones' Landing office, Sabin to Broadway Landing.

Tuesday, January 31st.—Rode over the lines to Bermuda. The pontoon bridge is very dangerous on account of floating ice. Received an important cipher while at Hatcher's and made "Lucy" fly back, coming four miles in twenty-five minutes, including

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walking across the pontoon. The cipher will upset our affairs considerably, but trust for the best. Some troops leaving for General Terry. General Grant returned from Fort Fisher to City Point and means to go to work at once. He may possibly be ordered to Wilmington. General Ord wants me to place my operators under oath. I have perfect faith in them.

Wednesday, February 1st, 1865.—Major Eckert, superintendent of the military telegraph, up from Washington. General Turner told me thought there would not be a move soon (?). Letter from James.

LEAVING ARMY OF THE JAMES.

Thursday, February 2nd.—I am ordered to North Carolina to take charge of all the lines in that department. John to go with me as cipher operator for General Schofield.

"United States Military Telegraph.

"Washington, Feb. 2, 1865.

" RICH'D O'BRIEN, Chief Operator,
Army of the James :

" You will proceed, at once, to North Carolina and take charge of all the military lines in that department. John can accompany you as cipher operator if you desire it. " THOS. T. ECKERT,

" Major and Superintendent."

Friday, February 3rd.—Alexander H. Stephens and party arrived from below and will leave for Richmond early in the morning. No prospect for peace, except by unconditional surrender of the Confederates.

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Saturday, February 4th.—Left the Army of the James at 8 A.M. John joined me, with my horse, at City Point, where we got "Lucy" aboard the *City of Hudson* and started down James River. John and I played chess and, both speculating on the chances of war in our new field, forgot our chess board and men and left them on the boat. Arrived at Fort Monroe at 4 P.M. Saw Colonel Webster, who told us General Schofield had not yet arrived. Went to Norfolk, leaving "Lucy" in Mr. Fulton's charge at Fort Monroe. Went to Portsmouth and surprised James, who had known nothing of our new movements. We slept in our old military telegraph office of 1862 in the Custom House at Norfolk.

Sunday, February 5th.—Up at 6. Went to church with John at 7. Went to Mrs. Mayhew's to breakfast. While there received a dispatch that General Schofield arrived at Fort Monroe and would leave for North Carolina at 12. Got a tug and went to Fort Monroe with John. Got aboard steamer *Atlanta* and saw General Schofield.

CHAPTER XII.

CAMPAIGN OF THE CAROLINAS—WITH GENERAL SCHOFIELD AND THE ARMY OF THE OHIO—FORT FISHER—CAPE FEAR RIVER—CAPTURE OF FORT ANDERSON—WILMINGTON—BUILDING LINE WITHOUT MEN OR MATERIAL.

THE Army of the Ohio, about 21,000 strong, under General Schofield, had been brought east from Tennessee to proceed to the coast of North Carolina, to take Wilmington, and, with Terry's troops at Fort Fisher, 8,000 men, and Palmer's at New Berne, 4,000, to advance into the interior to coöperate with Sherman, whose march northward was to be longer, more hazardous, and more decisive than his march to the sea had been.

GRANT'S INSTRUCTIONS.

The scope and objects of the North Carolina campaign are best explained by Grant's orders to Sherman and Schofield :

*Headquarters Armies of the United States,
Washington, D. C., January 21, 1865.*

MAJOR-GENERAL W. T. SHERMAN,
Commanding Military Division
of the Mississippi.

GENERAL: Your letters brought by General Barnard were received at City Point, and read with interest. Not having them with me, however, I cannot

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say that in this I will be able to satisfy you on all points of recommendation. As I arrived here at 1 P.M., and must leave at 6 P.M., having in the meantime spent over three hours with the Secretary and General Halleck, I must be brief. Before your last request to have Thomas make a campaign into the heart of Alabama, I had ordered Schofield to Annapolis, Maryland, with his corps. The advance (six thousand) will reach the seaboard by the 23rd, the remainder following as rapidly as railroad transportation can be procured from Cincinnati. The corps numbers over twenty-one thousand men.

* * * * *

Thomas is still left with a sufficient force, surplus to go to Selma under an energetic leader. He has been telegraphed to, to know whether he could go, and, if so, by which of several routes he would select. No reply is yet received. Canby has been ordered to act offensively from the seacoast to the interior, toward Montgomery and Selma. Thomas' forces will move from the north at an early day, or some of his troops will be sent to Canby. Without further reinforcement Canby will have a moving column of twenty thousand men.

Fort Fisher, you are aware, has been captured. We have a force there of eight thousand effective. At New Berne about half the number.

* * * * *

If Wilmington is captured, Schofield will go there. If not, he will be sent to New Berne. In either event, all the surplus forces at the two points will move to the interior, toward Goldsboro, in coöperation with your movements. From either point, railroad communications can be run out, there being here abundance of rolling-stock suited to the gauge of those roads.

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There have been about sixteen thousand men sent from Lee's army south. Of these, you will have fourteen thousand against you, if Wilmington is not held by the enemy, casualties at Fort Fisher having overtaken about two thousand.

All other troops are subject to your orders as you come in communication with them. They will be so instructed. From about Richmond I will watch Lee closely, and if he detaches many men, or attempts to evacuate, will pitch in. In the meantime, should you be brought to a halt anywhere, I can send two corps of thirty thousand effective men to your support, from the troops about Richmond.

To resume: Canby is ordered to operate to the interior from the Gulf. A. J. Smith may go from the north, but I think it doubtful. A force of twenty-eight or thirty thousand will coöperate with you from New Berne or Wilmington, or both. You can call for reinforcements.

This will be handed you by Captain Hudson, of my staff, who will return with any message you may have for me. If there is anything I can do for you in the way of having supplies on shipboard, at any point on the seacoast, ready for you, let me know it.

Yours truly,

U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.

To this Sherman replied :

*Headquarters Military Division of the
Mississippi, in the Field,
Pocotaligo, South Carolina, Jan. 29, 1865.*

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL U. S. GRANT,
City Point, Virginia.

DEAR GENERAL: Captain Hudson has this moment arrived with your letter of January 21st, which I have read with interest.

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The capture of Fort Fisher has a most important bearing on my campaign, and I rejoice in it for many reasons, because of its intrinsic importance, and because it gives me another point of security on the seaboard. I hope General Terry will follow it up by the capture of Wilmington, although I do not look for it, from Admiral Porter's dispatch to me. I rejoice that Terry was not a West-Pointer, that he belonged to your army, and that he had the same troops with which Butler feared to make the attempt.

Admiral Dahlgren, whose fleet is reinforced by some more ironclads, wants to make an assault *a la* Fisher on Fort Moultrie, but I withhold my consent, for the reason that the capture of all Sullivan's Island is not conclusive as to Charleston; the capture of James Island would be, but all pronounce that impossible at this time. Therefore, I am moving (as hitherto designed) for the railroad west of Branchville, then will swing across to Orangeburg, which will interpose my army between Charleston and the interior. Contemporaneous with this, Foster will demonstrate up the Edisto, and afterward make a lodgment at Bull's Bay, and occupy the common road which leads from Mount Pleasant toward Georgetown. When I get to Columbia, I think I shall move straight for Goldsboro, by the way of Fayetteville. By this circuit I cut all roads, and devastate the land; and the forces along the coast, commanded by Foster, will follow my movement, taking anything the enemy lets go, or so occupy his attention that he cannot detach all his forces against me. I feel sure of getting Wilmington, and may be Charleston, and being at Goldsboro, with its railroads finished back to Morehead City and Wilmington, I can easily take Raleigh, when it seems that Lee must come out. If Schofield comes to Beaufort, he should be pushed out to Kinston, on the Neuse, and may be Goldsboro (or

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rather, a point on the Wilmington road, south of Goldsboro). It is not necessary to storm Goldsboro, because it is in a distant region, of no importance in itself, and, if its garrison is forced to draw supplies from its north, it will be eating up the same stores on which Lee depends for his command.

I have no doubt Hood will bring his army to Augusta. Canby and Thomas should penetrate Alabama as far as possible, to keep employed at least a part of Hood's army ; or, what would accomplish the same thing, Thomas might reoccupy the railroad from Chattanooga forward to the Etowah, viz., Rome, Kinston, and Allatoona, thereby threatening Georgia. I know that the Georgia troops are disaffected. At Savannah I met delegates from several counties of the Southwest, who manifested a decidedly hostile spirit to the Confederate cause. I nursed the feeling as far as possible, and instructed Grover to keep it up.

My left wing must now be at Sister's Ferry, crossing the Savannah River to the east bank. Slocum has orders to be at Robertsville to-morrow, prepared to move on Barnwell. Howard is here, all ready to start for the Augusta Railroad at Midway.

We find the enemy on the east side of the Salkie-hatchie, and cavalry in our front ; but all give ground on our approach, and seem to be merely watching us. If we start on Tuesday, in one week we shall be near Orangeburg, having broken up the Augusta road from the Edisto westward twenty or twenty-five miles. I will be sure that every rail is twisted. Should we encounter too much opposition near Orangeburg, then I will for a time neglect that branch, and rapidly move on Columbia, and fill up the triangle formed by the Congaree and Wateree (tributaries of the Santee), breaking up that great center of the Carolina roads. Up to that point I feel full confidence, but from there

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may have to manœuvre some, and will be guided by the questions of weather and supplies.

You remember we had fine weather last February for our Meridian trip, and my memory of the weather at Charleston is, that February is usually a fine month. Before the March storms come we should be within striking distance of the coast. The months of April and May will be the best for operations from Goldsboro to Raleigh and the Roanoke. You may rest assured that I will keep my troops well in hand, and, if I get worsted, will aim to make the enemy pay so dearly that you will have less to do. I know that this trip is necessary; it must be made sooner or later; I am on time, and in the right position for it. My army is large enough for the purpose, and I ask no reinforcement, but simply wish the utmost activity to be kept up at all other points, so that concentration against me may not be universal.

I expect that Jeff. Davis will move heaven and earth to catch me, for success to this column is fatal to his dream of empire. Richmond is not more vital to his cause than Columbia and the heart of South Carolina.

If Thomas will not move on Selma, order him to occupy Rome, Kinston, and Allatoona, and again threaten Georgia in the direction of Athens.

I think the "poor white trash" of the South are falling out of their ranks by sickness, desertion, and every available means; but there is a large class of vindictive Southerners who will fight to the last. The squabbles in Richmond, the howls in Charleston, and the disintegration elsewhere, are all good omens for us; we must not relax one iota, but, on the contrary, pile up our efforts. I would, ere this, have been off, but we had terrific rains, which caught us in motion, and nearly drowned some of the troops in the rice-fields of the Savannah, swept away our causeway

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(which had been carefully corduroyed), and made the swamps hereabout mere lakes of slimy mud. The weather is now good, and I have the army on *terra firma*. Supplies, too, came for a long time by daily dribblets instead of in bulk; this is now all remedied, and I hope to start on Tuesday.

I will issue instructions to General Foster, based on the reinforcements of North Carolina; but if Schofield comes, you had better relieve Foster, who cannot take the field, and needs an operation on his leg. Let Schofield take command, with his headquarters at Beaufort, North Carolina, and with orders to secure Goldsboro (with its railroad communication back to Beaufort and Wilmington). If Lee lets us get that position, he is gone up.

I will start with my Atlanta army (sixty thousand), supplied as before, depending on the country for all food in excess of thirty days. I will have less cattle on the hoof, but I hear of hogs, cows and calves, in Barnwell and the Columbia districts. Even here we have found some forage. Of course the enemy will carry off and destroy some forage, but I will burn the houses where the people burn their forage, and they will get tired of it.

I must risk Hood, and trust to you to hold Lee or be on his heels if he comes South. I observe that the enemy has some respect for my name, for they gave up Pocotaligo without a fight when they heard that the attacking force belonged to my army. I will try and keep up that feeling, which is a real power. With respect, your friend,

W. T. SHERMAN,

Major-General Commanding.

P. S.—I leave my chief-quartermaster and commissary behind to follow coastwise. W. T. S.

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*Headquarters Armies of the United States,
City Point, Virginia, January 31, 1865.*

MAJOR-GENERAL J. M. SCHOFIELD,
Commanding Army of the Ohio.

GENERAL: I have requested by telegraph that, for present purposes, North Carolina be erected into a department, and that you be placed in command of it, subject to Major-General Sherman's orders. Of course, you will receive orders from me direct until such time as General Sherman gets within communicating distance of you. This obviates the necessity of my publishing the order which I informed you would meet you at Fortress Monroe. If the order referred to should not be published from the Adjutant-General's office, you will read these instructions as your authority to assume command of all the troops in North Carolina, dating all official communications, "Headquarters Army of the Ohio." Your headquarters will be in the field, and with the portion of the army where you feel yourself most needed. In the first move you will go to Cape Fear River.

Your movements are intended as coöperative with Sherman's movement through the States of South and North Carolina. The first point to be obtained is to secure Wilmington. Goldsboro will then be your objective point, moving either from Wilmington or New Berne, or both, as you may deem best. Should you be unable to reach Goldsboro, you will advance on the line or lines of railway connecting that place with the seacoast, as near to it as you can, building the road behind you. The enterprise under you has two objects: the first, to give General Sherman material aid, if needed, in his march north; the second, to open a base of supplies for him on the line of his march. As soon, therefore, as you can determine which of the two points, Wilmington or New

TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE

Berne, you can best use for throwing supplies to the interior, you will commence the accumulation of twenty days' rations and forage for sixty thousand men and twenty thousand animals. You will get of these as many as you can house and protect, to such point in the interior as you may be able to occupy.

* * * * *

The movements of the enemy may justify you, or even make it your imperative duty, to cut loose from your base and strike for the interior, to aid Sherman. In such case you will act on your own judgment, without waiting for instructions. You will report, however, what you propose doing. The details for carrying out these instructions are necessarily left to you. I would urge, however, if I did not already know that you are already fully alive to the importance of it, prompt action. Sherman may be looked for in the neighborhood of Goldsboro any time from the 22nd to the 28th of February. This limits your time very materially.

If rolling stock is not secured in the capture of Wilmington, it can be secured from Washington. A large force of railroad-men has already been sent to Beaufort, and other mechanics will go to Fort Fisher in a day or two. On this point I have informed you by telegraph.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,
U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.

Little time had been given to provide men or material for telegraph extension in the important movement thus begun, and this fact influenced my situation materially. The emergency required all of Richard's efforts to provide these essentials for the North Carolina campaign, and to get his lines run

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

from the coast in time to meet Sherman, so that we usually had to work separately, I was generally at some front, and, sometimes, in situations of considerable interest and responsibility.

The transport which conveyed us South had part of a brigade aboard. I played chess with Colonel Boynton, the famous correspondent, and studied our General and staff. They were as fine looking Western soldiers as I ever saw, and further acquaintance with General Schofield confirmed a boy's impression that he was a very superior man—calm, wise and energetic. Colonel Wherry, our chief of staff, proved later to be the handsomest soldier I ever saw on horseback.

We passed Hatteras in a storm. I happened to be on deck while about a regiment of soldiers were deployed at the rails in all the horror of sea-sickness, when one soldier went overboard. The engines were stopped. The boat waited a little while, the bell was tolled, and—then we went on again.

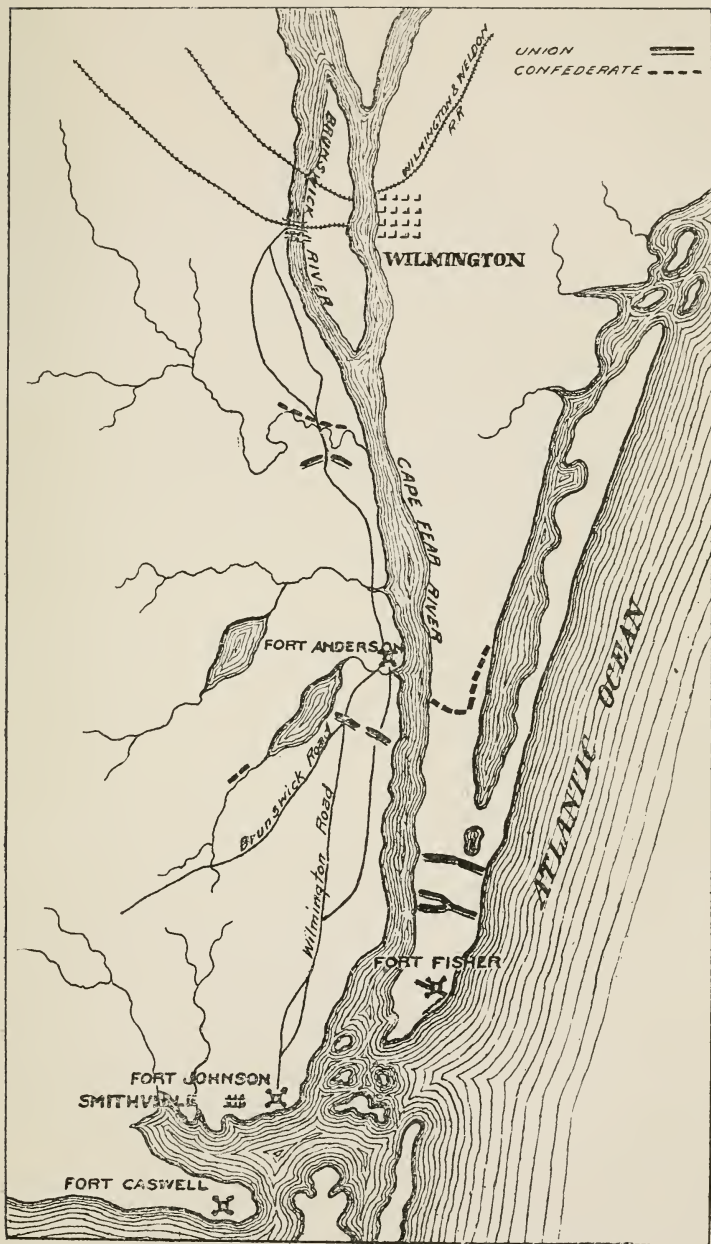
As we approached Cape Fear the beach was seen to be strewn with the wrecks of blockade runners. We ran through Porter's fleet of ironclads and anchored near Fort Fisher, which Terry had just captured in one of the most desperate hand-to-hand assaults of the war. Participants told me how, inside the fort, the Confederates fought from gun to gun, from traverse to traverse.

The scene here was the most desolate I ever looked

TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE

on. There was nothing to break the monotony of the low, sandy beach between the Cape Fear River and the ocean but Fort Fisher and the high mound battery, both built of sand and logs, and the racing of the white horses of the ocean across the reefs outside ; while the eternal booming of the surf seemed to hold an echo of the terrible bombardment of the fort. Between us and Wilmington there still remained Fort Anderson and Hoke's army. The one must be captured and the other routed, and then General Schofield would start half his force from Wilmington and half from New Berne, to converge westward in aid of Sherman.

We already held Morehead City and New Berne, and there was a small telegraph establishment with General Palmer's force there. Having learned General Schofield's plans, Richard hastened to New Berne to bring on men and material which Major Eckert had ordered there. I remained with General Schofield in Cape Fear River to communicate with Sherman in cipher. Our headquarters were on the steamer *S. R. Spaulding*. We had nets out from the bows of all our vessels in the river to catch torpedoes, which the enemy were floating down to us. For some time I never turned in at night without expecting to wake up and find myself blown to pieces. After we took Fort Anderson we compelled Confederate prisoners to remove the torpedoes they had anchored in the river. General J. D. Cox, afterward



MAP OF FORT FISHER AND WILMINGTON, N. C.

200 AL 1-2 131

ASTOR, LENOX
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

Governor of Ohio, has written a book on this campaign. Under Schofield, he and General Terry manœvered our forces on both sides of the river while our gunboats poured a storm of shells into Fort Anderson at short range for days, the Confederates replying deliberately and regularly. The *Spaulding* lay just out of range, and from her deck I could see every shell strike the fort and send a volcano of sand on high. Sometimes a few of us would launch a small boat, step a sail, and run up among the gunboats under fire just to taste the excitement of danger. It was the second great naval spectacle I had seen, but was not equal in terrific grandeur to the fight in Hampton Roads.

One day, as I was idly lounging on deck, watching the signal officer with our headquarters directing his assistant, who was wigwagging a message for one of our land columns, from the deck of the *Spaulding*, to a distant point on the shore, I heard the officer utter a sharp exclamation, and, throwing my field glasses up, I saw a group of horsemen surround the distant signal officer and take him off with them in the woods toward Wilmington. They were Wheeler's Confederate Cavalry. About forty years later, at a social party in Scranton, Pennsylvania, where we both had been living and meeting for many years, unconscious of previous acquaintance, some remark about the war led to the following dialogue. I asked Mr. Nicholas Rice what branch of the service he had been in. He

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said, "In the signal corps." "With what army?" "With the Army of the Ohio, in Tennessee." "Then," I said, "You must have been in the battle of Franklin." "Yes," he replied, "I was there." "Did you come east with that army for the North Carolina campaign?" "Yes, I was signal officer at General Schofield's headquarters." "Not on the *Spaulding*?" "Yes, on the *Spaulding*, in Cape Fear River. Where and what were you?" "I was cipher operator to General Schofield. By the way, I saw one of your men captured on shore while taking a message from one of your men on deck." "Yes," he replied, "I was sending it at the time." Reader, you may imagine the pleasure of such meetings and coincidences as this.

Fort Anderson, for days under terrific naval fire from the river, and outflanked and cut off in the rear by our land force, surrendered. I went ashore and chatted with prisoners. They had no rations in their haversacks, if my recollection is correct, except "cornfield peas," but these little black-eyed peas are good nourishment. Those gallant Virginians and North Carolinians seemed undismayed by all they had suffered, and spoke calmly of the fortune of war which had now made them prisoners. It was amazing to see what comparatively little damage had been done, and how few casualties had resulted from the terrible bombardment I had witnessed. The fort had been constructed by the Confederates of logs and earth

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

and had bomb-proofs which seemed impenetrable to the fiercest fire, while repaired and defended by stout hearts, unless completely demolished. If memory serves me they had electric wires from Fort Anderson connected to explode floating torpedoes in the river, and these our people compelled the prisoners to take up. Not far from Fort Anderson, which was on the right bank of Cape Fear River, were the ruins of an old church which marked, if I mistake not, the site of an ancient village. (Was it Brunswick or New Brunswick?). A curious feature of the ruins was a tall and graceful sapling springing from the top of the thick stone archway, and waving its graceful branches in the air. Some bird, or the listless wind, had dropped a seed there on that high wall, and time and sun and dew had made the little shrub to grow and triumph over ruin and decay, as whole forests were to grow and thrive over the graves of combatants in this sad strife.

At Wilmington, General Schofield gave me the hardest problem, I thought, that ever confronted a boy. He told me to run a line down the river to Fort Fisher at once. I reminded the General that there was not a foot of wire, a spike, an insulator, nor a lineman with that part of the army. Richard having gone to New Berne, I was the only representative of the corps present at the moment. He said I should take a regiment if necessary, take down the commer-

TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE

cial wires south and string them to Fort Fisher. There were no horses with the army at Wilmington.

I took a company of infantry, got ladders, carts and mules from the negroes and went to work. It rained incessantly. All my soldiers got sick from wet and from eating sweet potatoes; but I got the line run down the river half-way to Fort Fisher when Richard arrived, with good old Mackintosh and his builders, who relieved me.

CHAPTER XIII.

WAR DIARY RESUMED.

AT Sea, Monday, February 6, 1865.—We started from Hampton Roads at 4 A.M. Paid \$20 for four days' board for John and self. Weather a little rough. Part of a brigade aboard. Many contributed their breakfasts to Neptune. Concluded to hold on to mine, as I had paid well for it. I think we are bound for Fort Fisher instead of New Berne. I very much fear Major Eckert will be too late in sending me men and material for this coming campaign.

At Sea, Tuesday, February 7th.—The sea is a little smoother. I find we are going to Fort Fisher. Dreary prospect, as there is nothing there in the way of shelter. Colonel Wherry, chief of staff, says one of us must remain at headquarters as cipher man. Sorry we cannot be together. I must leave John for the present and go to Beaufort to see how telegraph matters stand there and at New Berne. General Schofield's staff consists of Colonel Wherry, chief of staff; Major Campbell, assistant adjutant-general; Lieutenant-Colonel Schofield, chief of artillery; Lieutenant-Colonel Hartsuff, inspector general; Lieutenant-Colonel Boyd, chief quartermaster; Dr. Shippen, surgeon; Major Latta, chief commissary; Captain Lord, aid-de-

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camp; Captain Twining, and, I suppose we might say, ourselves, if the military telegraph had the recognition it should have, and must get in future warfare.

Fort Fisher, Wednesday, February 8th.—Arrived at Fort Fisher, running through Porter's fleet of iron-clads. The weather too rough to land to-night. The shore presents a dreary prospect. In front of Fort Fisher it is strewn with the wrecks of blockade runners. Stern proofs of the fortunes of war: After crossing the wide ocean they were wrecked only a few miles from their destination. Several vessels in, loaded with troops.

Thursday, February 9th.—Colonel Dodge came aboard; also Captain Ainsworth, who was captain of the port at Fort Monroe. I was very glad to see them and they appeared no less so to see me. General Schofield went ashore; also Colonel Wherry. I went on board the *Hancox* with Ainsworth and Dodge, and found my old friend, Richard Wall, there. Also found two telegraph registers in good repair, which they had captured from the Confederates. Left John aboard the *Atlantic*. He is impatient to get ashore. Landed at Fort Fisher. Find it a very strong work. Supper on board the *Spaulding*.

Friday, February 10th.—We commence operations against Wilmington this A.M. The navy moves up with flood tide about 10 o'clock. John came aboard the *Spaulding*, which is to be headquarters, with our baggage, at 12 M. 2 P.M., nothing done yet. I left

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with Colonel Dodge to go to Beaufort. Got aboard the *Russia*, a captured fast blockade runner, which is to take us to Beaufort. 9 P.M., still at Fort Fisher. I fear we will not get off to-night. Supper aboard the *Russia*.

Saturday, February 11th.—8 A.M., still at Fort Fisher. Colonel Dodge not ready yet. Navy firing on Fort Anderson up Cape Fear River, half-way to Wilmington. General Terry pushed forward a little, capturing one hundred prisoners after a sharp skirmish. John is having a good view of all this from the *Spaulding*, which has followed up the river. More troops arrived to-day, preventing Colonel Dodge from going to Beaufort. It is most exasperating to have no telegraph material here.

Cape Fear River, Sunday, February 12th.—More troops arrived: General Cox's Twenty-third Corps of the Army of the Ohio. I came aboard the *Spaulding* at 5 P.M. At 7 P.M. General Schofield and staff started out on an expedition to throw a pontoon across the Cape Fear River, but the weather proved too rough for the attempt to-night. John is happy. I am worrying about men and material for our lines.

Monday, February 13th.—On the *Spaulding*. Colonel Dodge promised to send me to-day, but failed. Preparations to advance on both sides of the river.

Tuesday, February 14th.—Same conditions.

Fort Fisher, Wednesday, February 15th.—Weather very rough. A violent rainstorm in the morning,

TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE

clearing up about noon. Dodge too busy moving troops to spare me a steamer.

Thursday, February 16th.—One division sent from Fort Fisher to Smithville. Gunboats opened on Fort Anderson. Looks like an advance on both sides of the river and an attempt to flank Fort Anderson.

Mackintosh, my foreman, arrived with dispatches, etc., from New Berne at 6 P.M. He looks well.

*Office U. S. Military Telegraph,
War Department,
Washington, D. C., Feb'y 8, 1865.*

RICHARD O'BRIEN,

Chief Operator Department of North Carolina.

SIR: Mr. R. B. Vanderhoef, acting chief operator, District of North Carolina, at New Berne, has been directed to turn over to you, all men, material, etc., under his charge, and to report to you for duty.

Mr. Vanderhoef has rendered himself very efficient during his temporary charge, and I desire that you will treat him with every respect, as it is probable that, with his change of position, he may feel some embarrassment.

I have directed Mackintosh to go to New Berne with ninety miles of material, where he will await your orders. In any event, that will be the best point from which to construct a line. Should our forces capture Wilmington the line can easily be extended to Goldsboro, at which place you intersect the rebel wire to Wilmington. At New Berne, too, the railroad furnishes additional means of transportation, while from the mouth of Cape Fear River there will be great difficulty on account of transportation, and the river affords a means of speedy communication between the advance of the force and the mouth of

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the river. Besides this, there can be no great necessity for a telegraph line from Fort Fisher up the Peninsula, as that place cannot be used for a base of supplies, and, if Wilmington is taken, communication by way of Goldsboro will be much more desirable.

If General Schofield asks to have any line constructed, please present these my views.

Instruct John in the working of the new cipher, so that when necessary to be absent from headquarters in the discharge of your duty he can be left with the cipher.

Three operators left New York to-day with orders to report to Mr. Vanderhoef at New Berne. They are not first-class men, but will, I think, be able to get along very nicely.

Please advise me frequently of your movements and wants. Every effort will be made to keep you supplied with all that is necessary.

Mackintosh takes down sixty cups of portable battery, similar to what is used in Army of Potomac, where it has given full satisfaction.

Very respectfully, etc.,

THOS. T. ECKERT,

Major and Assistant Superintendent.

At Sea, Friday, February 17th.—Went ashore to get transportation for Mackintosh and took him with me aboard the *Perit*, which got under way at 10:30 A.M. Fine morning. About 2 P.M. it began to blow and towards 7 a perfect storm was upon us. The steamer, having no ballast, rolled fearfully, breaking the stove and a good many dishes, etc. I got tired of rolling about, so tumbled into a berth and was soon

TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE

as comfortably asleep as if my mother had rocked me to slumber. Came near falling out several times.

New Berne, North Carolina, Saturday, February 18th.—Arriving off the bar at Beaufort, North Carolina, at 5 A.M. At 7 “Mack” and I went aboard the gunboat *Montgomery* in a small boat, through a rough sea. Was very kindly received by the officers; took breakfast with them and came ashore on the tug *Goliath* at 1 P.M. Started from Morehead City on 2 P.M. train and arrived at New Berne at 5 P.M. Called on General Palmer, commanding here, at 6, and delivered General Schofield’s dispatches. Delivered those for Colonel Wright, who is in charge of military railroads, at 6:30. Colonel Wright wants a second wire put up for exclusive railroad use.

New Berne, Sunday, February 19th.—This line extends from Morehead City to New Berne, Newport, Bachelor’s Creek, General Palmer’s advance post; all on the North Carolina Railroad. Operators, some of whom have just arrived for me: Vanderhoef, Chamberlin, H. K. Clarke, Clapp, T. S. Clark, Powers, Smith, Brannan, and Raymond. I went to church, and walked around New Berne. Find it quite a nice little town.

Monday, February 20th.—Saw General Palmer, who gave me an order for a store-room for material. Received a letter from Captain Whitney, Washington, about material on the way. I sent report to Major Eckert, and wrote Nichols and James. Report

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

that Fort Anderson is ours. Took a long ride over the lines on "Lucy." (Mackintosh had shipped her down from Fort Monroe with him. J.)

New Berne, Tuesday, February 21st.—Material on hand: At New Berne, two combination instruments, ninety miles material, sixty cups of battery, three new Clark relays, three sections of pony battery; Morehead City, one combination instrument; Newport, one relay; Bachelor's Creek, one combination instrument.

New Berne, Wednesday, February 22nd.—Planning for the telegraph campaign from here and from Fort Fisher and Wilmington, when taken, towards Goldsboro. Received the following letter from John:

About ten miles above Fort Fisher,
February 21, 1865.

DEAR RICHARD:

Fort Anderson flanked and captured with ten heavy guns. I asked Colonel Wherry to let me go for that construction party, but he thought I could not be spared. Am getting along very well, messing with the signal men on hospital rations, which are better than other rations. If you send to Norfolk I wish you would get "Pet" for me. A horse could not be gotten here. I think we will be ashore soon. The *Spaulding* is filling up with wounded and has very little coal. General Cox captured 275 Confederates yesterday. There has been a fire in view all day, by some supposed to be cotton burning at Wilmington. Our troops are within four miles of that place. I gave those captured telegraph instruments to Ainsworth. Write to me first chance. "73," JOHN.

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Thursday, February 23rd.—Steamer *Russia*, from Fort Fisher, with dispatches for me from General Schofield. Received them at 5:30 P.M. Orders to take men and material to Fort Fisher to run lines to Wilmington.

Wilmington, February 22, 1865.

DEAR RICHARD :

We got in here to-day. Nice town. I went first to Confederate headquarters; captured some telegraph instruments and batteries. They were using bichromate solution. General Schofield wants a line to Fort Fisher at once. No transportation. No tools. Will start with a company of infantry and do the best I can. Please hurry Mackintosh or other linemen here quick.

"73," JOHN.

Morehead City, North Carolina, Friday, February 24th.—Left New Berne at 8 A.M. with Mackintosh's building party, three operators, Clarke, Clapp and Brannan; three relays, thirty cups of battery, etc. Arrived at Morehead City at 12 M. Found *Russia* ashore, having been blown there by a gale at 10 A.M. *Russia* off at 5 P.M. Got material aboard the *Shepley*, but the captain failed to get it on the *Russia*, the sea being very rough. I slept on the *Russia*. Heard Wilmington was taken on the morning of 22nd.

At Sea, Saturday, February 25th.—Did not get material on the *Russia* until 8 A.M. The captain said we would have to lie outside the bar at Fort Fisher to-night, and would make nothing by starting until evening. Wanted to coal up. Left Morehead City at 3 P.M. Anchored at 1 A.M., having run aground.

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

Wilmington, North Carolina, Sunday, February 26th.—Arrived at Fort Fisher 8 A.M. and Wilmington 11 A.M. Sent order to Major Eckert for one hundred miles of material, twenty operators, twenty instruments, eight construction men, tools, etc.

Monday, February 27th.—John is out with a company of soldiers trying to string a line to Fort Fisher. Started "Mack" and party after him at 11 A.M. Started Wiggins and four men to build lines at New Berne. *Russia* left with my dispatches at 3 P.M.

Tuesday, February 28th.—Quite sick. Took medicine. Arranged with Mrs. B—— to take charge of our mess. She is very poor, but appears respectable. She has had to support herself and four children for the past four years.

Wednesday, March 1, '65.—Feel better. At 1 P.M. heard from "Mack," two miles north of Fort Fisher. He hoped to get through by to-night. *Sent cipher message to General Sherman.* A great number of Andersonville prisoners coming in. They present a horrid appearance. Half-starved, sickly, filthy, wretched beings. They must have suffered fearfully.

Thursday, March 2nd.—"Mack" completed the line to Cape Fear Point. Had to haul poles five miles in deep sand. I sent the steamer *Lady Lang* for him and party. She got aground ten miles above Fort Fisher. Had to go to bed in the afternoon, I felt so weak.

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Friday, March 3rd.—“Mack” and party up at noon. Brought two registers, one relay and some telegraph material. (Captured. J.) I sent Major Eckert letter of explanation, and Chandler monthly report. Line to Fort Fisher is twenty miles. *Sent cipher to General Sherman*, supposed to be near or at Fayetteville. Confined to bed. Very weak. Not much pain. John wrote James and mother.

Saturday, March 4th.—Had wire run through the city. Difficult job on account of the great number of shade trees. Got up at 1 P.M.; took more medicine at 3. *John sent cipher to General Sherman*. General Schofield told John to be prepared to go with him on Monday, as I am sick.

Sunday, March 5th.—I am somewhat better. John went to church.

CHAPTER XIV.

EXCHANGING CIPHERS WITH GENERAL SHERMAN.

I HAVE italicised the statements in Richard's diary, that we sent ciphers from General Schofield at Wilmington, to Sherman, on March 1st, 3rd, and 4th, because in his memoirs General Sherman does not mention them, but says: "On the 8th of March reached Laurel Hill, North Carolina. Satisfied that our troops must be in Wilmington, I determined to send a message there; I called for my man, Corporal Pike, * * * * * and instructed him, in disguise, to work his way to the Cape Fear River; secure a boat and float down to Wilmington to convey a letter, and to report our approach. I also called on General Howard for another volunteer, and he brought me a very clever sergeant. * * * * * Each of these got off during the night by separate routes, bearing the following message, in cipher :

'In the Field, Laurel Hill, North Carolina.

'Wednesday, March 8, 1865.

'COMMANDING OFFICER,

'Wilmington, North Carolina.

'We are marching for Fayetteville. Will be there Saturday, Sunday and Monday, and will then march for Goldsboro. If possible, send a boat up Cape Fear River, and have word conveyed to General Schofield

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that I expect to meet him about Goldsboro. We are all well and have done finely. The rains make our roads difficult and may delay us about Fayetteville, in which case I would like to have some bread, sugar and coffee. We have abundance of all else. I expect to reach Goldsboro by the 20th instant.

‘ W. T. SHERMAN, Major-General.’ ”

The ciphers may have miscarried, but the General's memoirs, written from memory, may cover a slight lapse excusable and perhaps inevitable in that mode of writing history. Was he not "satisfied our troops were in Wilmington," because our ciphers had reached him and told him so? On page 295 he describes, dramatically, the actual opening of communication between Schofield's army and his by boat, as if it was the first time he had heard from us, but I have still in my possession a cipher from him to General Terry, in which he acknowledges the receipt of one from us at an earlier date. His description of the arrival of our boat is so dramatic that I will transcribe it, and will then insert the cipher referred to, with its translation, to show that he had previously heard from us. Wade Hampton, with his Confederate cavalry, had broken across the line of Sherman's left rear to make junction with General Hardee in Fayetteville, "captured the house in which General Kilpatrick and the brigade-commander, General Spencer, were, and for a time held possession of the camp and artillery of the brigade," but the Confederates were driven off with

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“Kilpatrick’s private horses and a couple hundred prisoners,” and Hampton had then joined Hardee, covered his retreat from Fayetteville across the Cape Fear River and burned the bridge; Sherman then occupied Fayetteville, and says: “Sunday, March 12th, was a day of Sabbath stillness in Fayetteville. The people generally attended their churches, for they were a very pious people, descended in a large measure from the old Scotch Covenanters, and our men, too, were resting from the toils and labors of six weeks as hard marching as ever fell to the lot of soldiers. Shortly after noon was heard in the distance the shrill whistle of a steamboat, which came nearer and nearer, and soon a shout, long and continuous, was raised down by the river, which spread farther and farther, and we all felt that it meant a messenger from home. The effect was electric, and no one can realize the feeling unless, like us, he has been for months cut off from all communication with friends.

* * * * * But in a very few minutes came up through the town, to the arsenal on the plateau behind, a group of officers, among whom was a large, florid sea-faring man, named Ainsworth, bearing a small mail-bag from General Terry, at Wilmington, having left at 2 P.M. the day before. Our couriers had got through safe from Laurel Hill, and this was the prompt reply. As in the case of our former march from Atlanta, intense anxiety had been felt for our safety. * * * * *

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Sherman's cipher to Terry of March 11th acknowledging receipt of ours of 7th.

This cipher was written, as usual with those entrusted to scouts, on tissue paper, for convenience of being secreted, or, if necessary, swallowed or destroyed in case of the bearer being captured. It is written in ink in the beautiful handwriting of Charles G. Eddy, Sherman's cipher operator; and, of course, shows no indication, until deciphered, of place, date, or name of the General sending or addressed. It read as follows:

RICHARD O'BRIEN:

Enemy warm victim time I we with consent arse
done pike Haddock my cabbage yacht Summer will
just Gardner La Fayette Humphrey tulip ward plum
wedlock calculate I we amount I I calendar spit
negroes Flora Temple country welch of as spit tulip
yacht vast tulip yacht can wallace a roland cushioning
rye whiskey for received wherry and we on arrival
warner and the E rated the have may hows Mr Big
that tulip pike thing this and well the of for wafer
sprague Fayette have enoch Jones will yacht we with
cape and the will are of will want as as and having
the goods Humphrey number Ed as lie damage a son
weather you the pewter vomiting talbot Ter to spark
despatch Jordan the pocket tulip the Fay quivered
irreparable utter or finish large to in through a refugees
possible possible every quack stores all strike
time start fear Nelson entered I Libby prison spunky
your pike burning will young by about have raven
nal at walnut a send all done. CHAS. G. EDDY.

173 words.

The first word, "Enemy," means ten columns; the next word, "warm," means ten lines, and the third

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word, "victim," means six lines; so this message should be written for translation in ten columns of sixteen lines, beginning at the bottom of the fifth column and writing up to the top, dropping a word there (and one at the end of each succeeding column), then down the first column, up the tenth, down the sixth, up the fourth, down the second, up the ninth, down the eighth, up the third and down the seventh. This cipher, when written into the frame of ten columns and sixteen lines in this way, can then be read from left to right in the ordinary way after the cipher expert has substituted for certain arbitrary words, as "Flora," the real names he knows they stand for, as "Major-General W. T. Sherman." The following is the translation of the preceding cipher dispatch :

Fayetteville, 6 P.M., March 11th.

RICHARD O'BRIEN, for Major-General Terry,
Wilmington, North Carolina.

I have just received your dispatch of the 7th. We entered Fayetteville to-day, Hardee retreating eastward with 20,000 men and burning the bridge across Cape Fear River. We will cross the river to-morrow and start for Goldsboro on Tuesday. You can calculate the time of my arrival by the weather. I will strike the Wilmington Railroad about Faison. We are all well, and have destroyed a vast amount of stores and done the enemy irreparable damage. I will destroy this arsenal utterly. I want everything concentrated at or as near Goldsboro as possible, with the railroad finished as near as possible. We

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have a large number of negroes and refugees that I may send to Wilmington.

W. T. SHERMAN, Major-General.

Having a big time. How's all in God's country?

CHAS. G. EDDY.

In addition to General Sherman's own statement, in his memoirs, that on March 8th he was "satisfied that our troops must be in Wilmington," and his acknowledgment, in his cipher of March 11th above translated, of the receipt of ours of March 7th, I quote from General H. W. Slocum's "Sherman's March, from Savannah to Bentonville," *Century Magazine*, Vol. 34, p. 933, to show that Sherman may have received some of our ciphers: "Three or four days prior to our arrival at Fayetteville, General Sherman had received information that Wilmington was in possession of General Terry, and had sent two messengers with letters informing Terry when he would probably be at Fayetteville."

Cushing, the dare-devil of the navy, who had blown up the Confederate ironclad *Albemarle*, had been operating in Cape Fear River, under Admiral Porter, with us in this campaign. He had penetrated the Confederate camp at Smithville by night, carrying off the commandant a prisoner in his launch; had buoyed the channel of the river under fire, dodging Confederate armed boats and batteries; had run up to or past Wilmington before we captured the place, and, altogether, had been doing those extraordinary feats

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

of daring, some of which I witnessed, that have made his fame unique and immortal. Now, my strong conviction is that Cushing took a scout or two, with our ciphers of March 1st, 3rd and 4th, up the Cape Fear River from Wilmington and started them for Sherman about those dates, and that one or more of them reached General Sherman before he reached Fayetteville.

Another curious feature of General Sherman's memoirs in this connection is that, in them, he seems to have overlooked the fact that General Schofield was in command of the Army of the Ohio, over 30,000 men, including Terry's Tenth Corps of 8,000, at this time, and that the operations resulting in the capture of Wilmington, in which the Twenty-third Corps, under General Cox, took at least as great a part as did the Tenth, were entirely under General Schofield's direction.

I account for this lapse of memory on General Sherman's part by the fact that after taking Wilmington General Schofield went from there on March 6th, as noted in Richard's diary, farther on, to New Berne (where Cox had been sent by sea with the Twenty-third Corps), to prepare the advance of Cox's column, with Palmer's force, from that point toward Kinston and Goldsboro, leaving Terry at Wilmington to open direct communication by the Cape Fear River with Sherman on his arrival at Fayetteville, and then to move from Wilmington with the Tenth Corps,

TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE

synchronously with Cox's column, so as to converge with it on a point between Kinston and Goldsboro. Thus Sherman, on arriving at Fayetteville, where Captain Ainsworth reached him March 12th, as described, found that General Terry was in command at Wilmington, and, very likely, assumed that the hero who had so gallantly taken Fort Fisher had also taken Wilmington. Sherman seems to have been unable, ever after, to correct this impression, which extended to Slocum and other of his lieutenants, although Schofield, with the Army of the Ohio, was closely associated with him from this time on until the surrender of Johnston and the final close of the war. This lapse was, perhaps, less excusable because the memoirs were written when Sherman was General-in-Chief, and had at hand all the data and facilities at Washington that could be needed to write correct history.

I do not wish for a moment to detract from the credit due General Terry. His assault and capture of Fort Fisher, after Butler's failure, was one of the keys to the campaign of the Carolinas and ranks him among the bravest of the brave; but the successful working out of the North Carolina campaign, like the smooth strategy of a game of chess, from the time of the arrival of the Army of the Ohio until the end, was due to the genius and energy of General Schofield and his lieutenants, and, in my observation, the most conspicuous and efficient member of that sol-

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

dierly group, both in the river campaign and in directing the succeeding operations from New Berne, in which I was in position to see them all, was the gallant chief of staff, Colonel William M. Wherry. This brave officer, who had already been brevetted for conspicuous gallantry on Western fields, appeared to be ubiquitous in moving the heads of columns at every front, and in inspiring energy and enthusiasm wherever he appeared throughout the campaign. Had the war lasted longer he would, I believe, have undoubtedly commanded large bodies of troops, and have ranked with the more distinguished Generals for energy and success. In the war with Spain, the last I heard of him, and it was from his own men, was that at San Juan Hill, as commandant of the Second Regular Infantry, Brigadier-General Wherry was dangerously exposing himself at the head of his regiment.

Wilmington, Monday, March 6, 1865.—John started to-night with General Schofield and staff in the little side-wheel steamer, *Eliza Hancox*, for New Berne.

Tuesday, March 7th.—Got the Bank of Wilmington as office; Major Tucker, paymaster, moving out. Moved office in; Loomis, detailed operator, reported from Van Dusen's department.

Wednesday, March 8th.—Received from Major Eckert three boxes, containing one dozen clips, one dozen books, four Clark relays, two pocket relays, stationery, etc., per steamer *Everet*.

TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE

[Rec'd in cipher, by steamer, at Fort Fisher, and telegraphed from there.]

New Berne, March 7, 1865.

RICHARD O'BRIEN, Chief Operator,
Wilmington.

We ran into a gale soon after leaving Fort Fisher ; waves washed the deck ; the boat tossed tremendously, and even the crew were seasick. Very cold, driving spume and rain. Looked like the *Hancox* was bound for Davy Jones' locker, but she weathered the storm better, perhaps, than a bigger boat. I laid over the boiler and kept half dry and half warm. Got into Morehead City safe, and came up here by train. The General will remain here two or three days to organize the advance of Cox's column from here. As any ciphers from Sherman must come to you at Wilmington and none are expected here just now, I got permission through Colonel Wherry to start at once to the front, where the end of our wire is with General Palmer, nineteen miles out from here. No builders or tools yet arrived. Shall have to get soldiers to run wire, somehow, if we advance before Mackintosh comes. These operators on this line seem all fine fellows, but very unequal in operating. Some are first-class, but the "Morse" of some of them would astonish the boys at "U. S." May I shift them in your name, as I think best, when we advance?

"73," JOHN.

Wilmington, Thursday, March 9th.—Opened office at General Terry's advance, ten miles from Wilmington on Weldon Railroad. Sent Loomis there.

Friday, March 10th.—Sent "Mack" and party to take down the Masonboro Inlet wire. Drew rations. Got an old horse, old saddle and old bridle from Cap-

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

tain Gordon, quartermaster. Gave receipt in my own name. Sent one of "Mack's" men with ten miles material, two Clark and one pocket relay, to John at New Berne. Drew forage for the balance of the month.

Saturday, March 11th. — Received ciphers from General Sherman. He will reach Fayetteville to-day or to-morrow and expects to be in Goldsboro on the 20th. Sent copy of cipher to John at New Berne for General Schofield, and copy to General Grant, City Point, and Major Eckert, Washington. General Terry told me he would try to send up supplies for Sherman by the Cape Fear River but for the fact that the Confederates have obstructed it. Wrote James. Received letters from Nichols and Charley. Telegraphed Major Eckert for another good foreman. John must need one badly for the advance from New Berne. Received cipher from him from General Schofield, stating the enemy have checked his advance near Kinston, North Carolina. I doubt that he can do much till Sherman gets up.

CHAPTER XV.

BATTLE OF KINSTON—GUM SWAMP—I TELEGRAPH IN
BATTLE—GENERAL COX THANKS US ON THE
FIELD—JUNCTION WITH SHERMAN
AT GOLDSBORO.

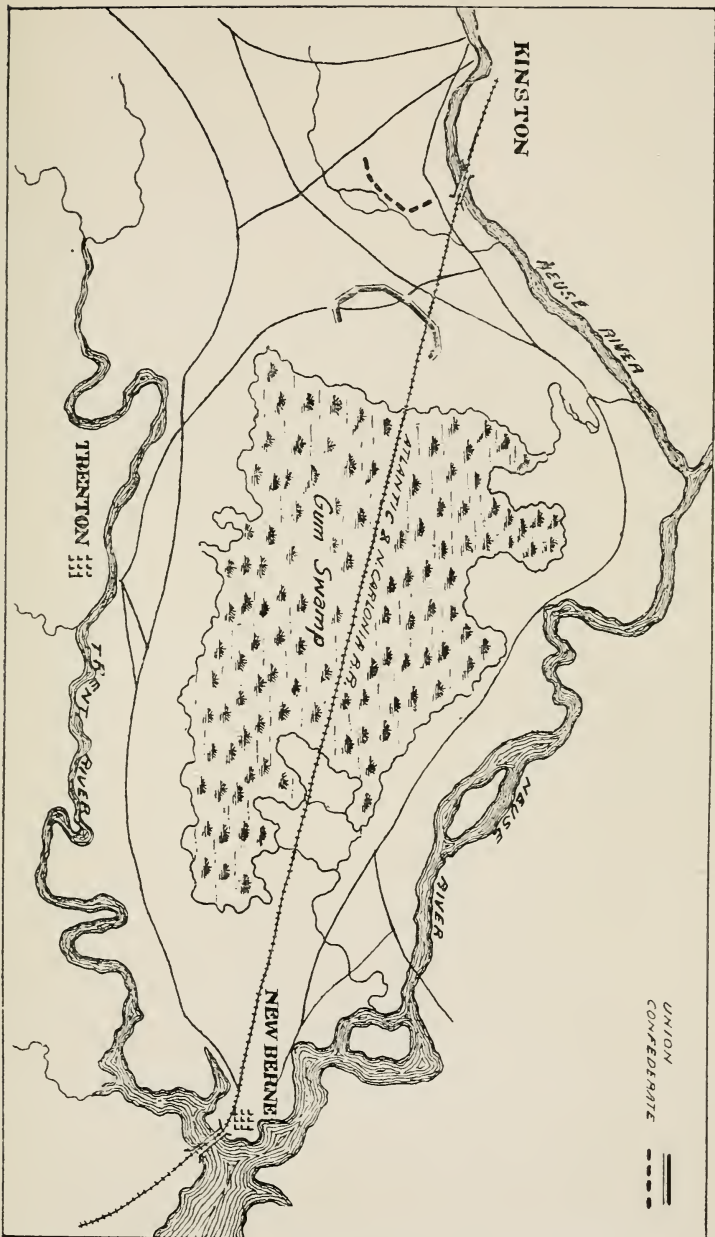
[Rec'd in cipher by steamer.]

Front, Gum Swamp, March 10h, 1865.

RICH'D O'BRIEN, Chief Operator, Wilmington.

With our brave foreman, Charlie Wiggins, and his three linemen and a company of infantry to handle wire and poles, I got the line run ahead of General Palmer's pickets on the railroad, on the 7th. General Cox had up Carter's Division on the left of Palmer's nearly through this swamp; with Ruger's Division a few miles in our rear on the edge of this horrible swamp to support either wing as needed. I left Clark with instrument on wire with Ruger. On the morning of the 8th the Johnnies attacked Carter's Division on our left in great force, capturing a regiment or two of Upham's Brigade at once. The signal men who had stations with Carter and me gave quick notice, and I had Generals Cox and Schofield, at New Berne, on the wire in a few minutes. They brought reinforcements up, while Cox ordered a brigade of Palmer's to the left from here, and took up Ruger's reserves. The "rebs" were checked, and prisoners taken say that Bragg, with Stewart's and Lee's Corps, of Hood's Army of Tennessee, is with Hoke, in front of this column, to dispute the crossing of the Neuse into Kinston.

On the morning of the 9th General J. D. Cox, commanding Twenty-third Corps and this column, came



MAP OF BATTLE OF KINSTON, N. C.

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REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

with his staff, all mounted, to my post, which is a railroad tie in this swamp (worse than the Dismal Swamp), to thank you for the prompt service here the day before, which he says was very timely and important. I fear the General and staff, who all looked very splendid, must have felt disappointed in the appearance of your little brother; muddy, and exhausted, at the end of this string. I have John A. Raymond with me here, not because he is a good operator, but because, alone at his station in the woods, before I came out, he was attacked by two guerrillas, and captured one of them. You know that he is a detailed soldier from a New Jersey regiment and has his musket and bayonet with him. So, while he looks out for bushwhackers, I hold this instrument to my ear night and day. This swamp is full of snakes and bugs. There's a jigger here that bores into you and, when you pull him, leaves his head in your flesh. No trouble to keep awake nights with 'em.

“73,” JOHN.

Wilmington, Sunday, March 12th.—Our boat reached Fayetteville all right; found the Confederate gunboat *Chickamauga* sunk in the channel, but passed round it. Sherman's army in excellent spirits. The Confederates, under Hardee, on retreating from the place, burned the bridges and moved toward Goldsboro.

Monday, March 13th.—Received two ciphers from Sherman's army. My old friend, Captain Ainsworth, went up Cape Fear River and worked his way, in a tug-boat, to General Sherman at Fayetteville. He received \$2,000 worth of cotton from the General, as a present, for his daring. Sherman will destroy the

TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE

arsenal and all Confederate military property at Fayetteville and march for Goldsboro, where he expects to be on the 20th inst. I sent out a party to take down the Masonboro line. Sent ten cavalry to protect them. Have collected, to date, about thirteen miles of wire and three hundred yards of cable. Built thirty miles of line from Wilmington. Found two Mexican saddles and bridles, one for John and one for self.

Tuesday, March 14th.—Received letters from Major Eckert, ordering Charles G. Eddy, cipher operator to General Sherman, to send all the operators of that army to report to me for duty. Forwarded copies of all the letters to Eddy, by boat going up to Fayetteville with supplies to General Sherman. Received message from John reporting the arrival at New Berne of Joe Finnegan and thirteen linemen, two carboys of acid, etc. John has, with a company of soldiers, built the line up to near thirty miles from New Berne on the 13th. Replied by steamer *Russia*, ordering Finnegan to report to John, and take charge of all that building party until "Mack" arrives. Received message from Major Eckert, dated 9th, saying six operators and seventy-five miles of material sent me to New Berne.

[Rec'd in cipher.]

Front, March 13, 1865.

RICH'D O'BRIEN, Chief Operator, Wilmington.

Skirmishing kept up on the 9th; and on the 10th Bragg made another attempt on our left, but was

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

beaten off. Our loss, so far, over 1,200. Enemy's supposed about the same. General Schofield is up. We had the wire strung on the railroad a mile ahead of the troops before they advanced this morning. I am a mile from Neuse River. Colonel Wherry has just put the only skiff found on the river at my disposal to take the wire across: bridge destroyed. Confederate ironclad said to be sunk at Kinston. Hope to be over and probably reach Kinston to-morrow. Finnegan has received an outfit of material at New Berne, but has no repair tools. Please let me know what you get from the north so I may know what to ask for. General Eastman wants another operator at Morehead City, and others wanted along the railroad. I must ask you to give me one more operator here at the front when men arrive. Work is hard, but Raymond and I will do it until "M. C." and other points are supplied. How many operators do you wish kept at New Berne? I got a poor horse from quartermaster, and we just help ourselves to hard tack from the boxes on the road.

"73," JOHN.

Wilmington, Wednesday, March 15th.—Sherman moves on Goldsboro from Fayetteville to-day. I had all my telegraph material, baggage, horse, and men shipped aboard the steamer *Escort* to join General Schofield at New Berne, leaving a construction party with Terry's column. The steamer will leave at daylight to-morrow. Saw a Southern operator from Columbia, South Carolina, who came with General Sherman to Fayetteville. He describes the burning of Columbia.

Thursday, March 16th.—(Here follows a harrowing picture of devastation at Columbia, which I omit, as

TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE

neither Richard nor I saw it. To transcribe the operator's story would only revive harsh criticism and controversy which are, I hope, dead and buried. The only gleam of comfort in it was the statement that Sherman left the homeless women arms to defend themselves, and a large number of cattle for their subsistence. J.)

New Berne, Friday, March 17th.—Arrived at New Berne with my party.

E. P. Wortman, C. L. DeForrest, C. Gifford, and G. C. Felton, operators, arrived at Morehead City and reported for duty. Placed Wortman and Felton at the railroad office at New Berne, and sent Chamberlin to Bachelor's Creek.

The line is O. K. to Kinston. John lost one soldier, on the 14th, drowned, while getting the wire across Neuse River before Kinston. Received three sets of repair tools from Major Eckert.

New Berne, Saturday, March 18th.—Saw Colonel Wright, superintendent of military railroads, and showed him Major Eckert's order (for coöperation), endorsed by the Secretary of War.

Started "Mack" to the front with building party and fifteen miles of material. Started DeForrest and Gifford, operators, to the front.

New Berne, Sunday, March 19th.—Went to church. Five operators arrived on evening train from Morehead City. Sent four to the front.

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

Cipher from Major Eckert, telling me if any operator refuses to go where I wish, or is inclined to give trouble, not to hesitate to discharge him, or take such action as may be necessary. I replied by cipher from Portsmouth.

Received from Major Eckert three boxes containing five sets tools and five relays.

New Berne, Monday, March 20th.—General Schofield and his army advanced from Kinston this morning. John went with him, and has a saddle horse, an ambulance with tools, Colin Kinney, lineman, and a detail of ten cavalymen as escort and messengers. He is to get on the wire when he can, but keep within reach of Colonel Wherry, for ciphers.

Line built ten miles beyond Kinston. Impossible to get even a cart to work with. Line broken at Neuse River bridge by boats and repaired. John camps to-night on the end of the line.

New Berne, Tuesday, March 21, 1865.—Could get no teams or even carts at Kinston. Got a hand-car and a push-car from Colonel Wright and had Mackintosh to start Finnegan with ten repairers from Kinston to repair the railroad wire to Goldsboro, sixty guards to follow. It is evident that neither the railroad nor wire have been so badly damaged by the enemy beyond Kinston as they were this side. Though badly hampered by the late arrival of men and material, we may be able to meet Schofield and Sherman with the wire at Goldsboro.

TELEGRAPHING IN BATTLE

New Berne, Wednesday, March 22nd.—The line is O. K. to Goldsboro. Schofield's troops reached there late last night. John is on the wire there, and reports our line by the Weldon railroad from Wilmington is O. K., with Terry's column well up from there.

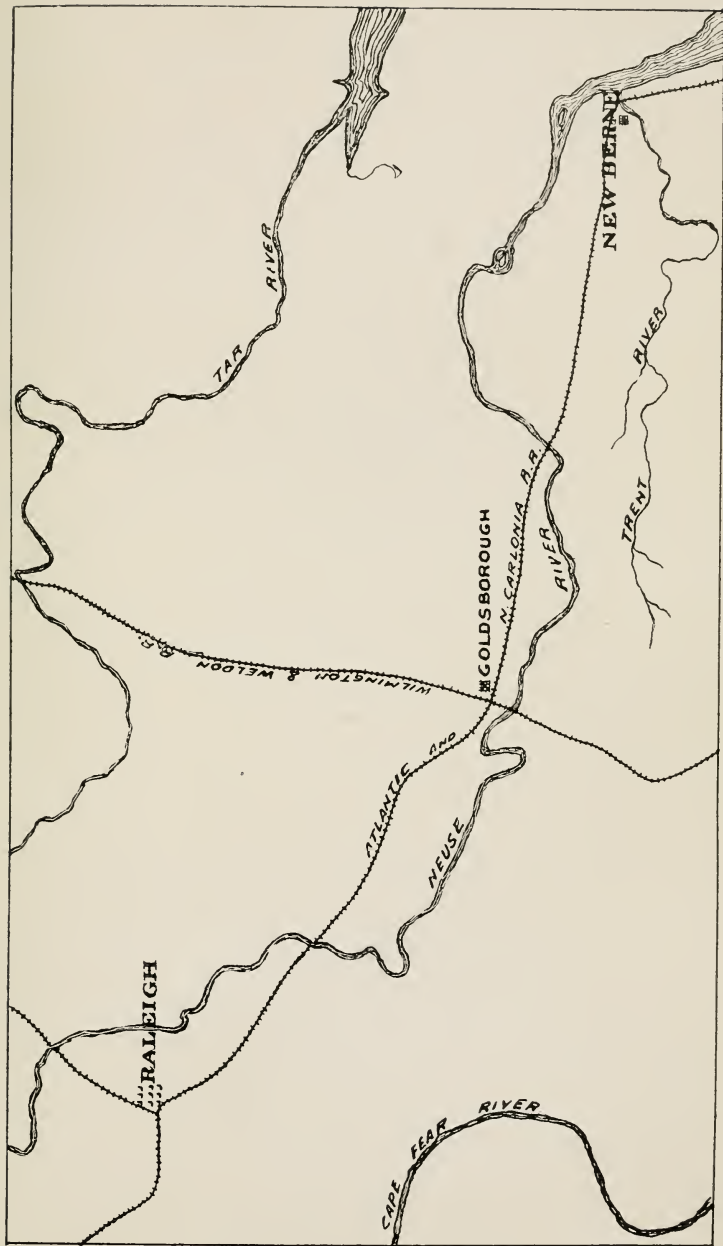
[Cipher.]

Goldsboro, North Carolina, March 22, 1865.

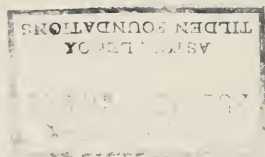
RICH'D O'BRIEN, Chief Operator, New Berne.

Woke at daylight yesterday to find the army gone, and only ten cavalymen to protect me in case of a raid by Wheeler's Cavalry in Schofield's rear. Was in doubt whether I ought to stay by the wire or by the General. Decided to find out from Colonel Wherry. Sent "Curley" and "Shorty," who are best mounted, ahead on a dead run. They overtook the General and got back in good time with orders for me to abandon the wire and come on to the front. It was hard getting through, the troops blocking the road, so I left Colin with the ambulance, and, by detours through woods and fields, got in here late last night. I must have a better horse than this if we go further. I abandoned the poor devil, utterly exhausted, yesterday afternoon, in a field, to rest or die; taking "Shorty's" horse and letting him wait for the ambulance; and what do you think?—this morning here comes the poor, one-eyed brute moping in here with some bummers, loaded down with plunder. So I thought, if he could stand that, he deserved a better fate, and I resumed possession of him.

Great guns! think of getting circuit from you, and from Wilmington, on both these wires on our arrival here! What would Doren and Eckert say to that? Schofield was very anxious yesterday until he got in



MAP OF A PORTION OF NORTH CAROLINA, SHOWING NEW BERNE, GOLDSBOROUGH AND RALEIGH



REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

touch with Terry's column from Wilmington at Cox bridge, across the Neuse, which he now holds for Sherman's coming. The ride to communicate with Sherman was made most gallantly by Major Wm. J. Twining of Schofield's staff, through the enemy's lines and country.

Sherman is behind time. Rumored he had big fight with Johnston. "73," JOHN.

At this point in preparing these reminiscences, I got in communication with Brigadier-General William M. Wherry, U. S. A. (retired), who was chief of staff to General Schofield and an active participant in the military events mentioned, and he has most kindly favored me with his recollection of the following additional incidents of the fighting before Kinston :

Wequetonsing, Mich., July 28, 1907.

MY DEAR DR. O'BRIEN :

I have read the MSS. enclosed, with much interest, and return it herewith. It recalls with vividness many incidents not within your experience as an operator, one of which was, when in the fight at Kinston Hoke threatened our left so obstinately, and the camp followers pulled down our tents and fled with headquarters to a safe place, and necessitated our occupying wet ground, standing in pools, when I had the camp re-pitched.

And another was when General Carter's Brigade, sent on a reconnoissance to his front, ran unexpectedly into the enemy and lost a battery, or part of one. We came up with Carter, just as he was forming and ordering another brigade out to try to recover the guns.

I shall never forget Carter's amazed expression

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when General Schofield said, "Never mind, General, let the guns go." "What!" said Carter, an old Navy officer, "leave my guns in the hands of the enemy?" "Oh! yes," replied Schofield, with a twinkle in his eye, "I can give you more guns, General, but I can't give you another division." And the incident was closed by Carter's disposing of his troops to meet the enemy, under General Schofield's direction, and my impression is the guns were later recovered. But I am not writing my reminiscences, only thanking you for the sight of yours.

My part in that battle, as in so many, was to make it easy for others to carry out the purposes of the commanding General, and to help him to make his wishes known.

I am, as ever,

Yours sincerely,

WM. M. WHERRY.

[Diary Resumed.]

Kinston, North Carolina, Thursday, March 23, 1865.
—Started from New Berne at 6 A.M. with Colonel Dodge and Colonel Wright. Gave Dick Perin set of tools. Arrived at Kinston 11 A.M. Started repairer with two mounted men at 12 to inspect wire to Goldsboro.

Ed H. Demorest and Jas. C. McCutcheon reported at Morehead. Say they reported for duty on 11th. Ordered them to Wilmington.

Friday, March 24th.—Remained at Kinston. Transportation impossible to get.

Sherman's army arrived near Goldsboro; had fight with Joe Johnston at Bentonville.

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

[Cipher.]

Goldsboro, March 23rd.

RICH'D O'BRIEN, Chief Operator, Kinston.

Sherman rode in. Saw Joe Anderson, cipher operator with Kilpatrick. Eddy is with Sherman; Loneragan with Howard, right wing; Berry with Slocum, left wing; all coming up. They had a battle with Johnston at Bentonville, 19th and 20th. Losses, each side, about 2,500. Wilmington wire keeps O. K.

"73," JOHN.

Saturday, March 25th.—Sherman's teams into Kinston for supplies. They are a hard-looking set, and steal everything they come across. Have some fears for my mare. Have spiked the stable door and left three men to sleep overhead to watch her. I leave with General Dodge and Dr. Hand at 8 P.M. for New Berne in a stock car. Shared my blankets with the General. He and I tried to steal a sack of oats for a pillow, but the guard caught us just as we were getting it into the car and made us drop it.

New Berne, Sunday, March 26th.—Went to church. Received a message from Kinston that my mare was stolen and no trace of her could be found. Poor "Lucy!" She has carried me many a long mile and few could do it in so gallant style as she. I fear I shall not recover her, but I will know her in ten thousand and will be on her track as long as there is the shadow of a chance. Sent "Lady of the Lake" to ———. Started Finnegan and party to build line to Wilmington from Goldsboro.

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Monday, March 27th.—Set Smith to work repairing line to Morehead City, from New Berne. Left at 2 P.M., by rail, for Goldsboro. Saw my old friend, Tom Boones, supervisor on track. Arrived at Goldsboro 1 A.M. Took a good sleep with John on a pine plank. Find the poor boy has been “roughing it.”

General Sherman went to City Point to see General Grant.

Tuesday, March 28th.—All quiet about Goldsboro. Find it a nice little town, though badly torn up and very dirty, from Sherman's troops crowding every place in it. Saw Eddy, Berry and Lonergan, cipher operators with Sherman's army. They are all nicely situated and have been in the march from Atlanta.

“Lucy” found by John here at Goldsboro. She had been badly abused, but is gay as ever. (When on Sunday morning, 26th, I learned, at Goldsboro, as Richard did at New Berne, by wire from Kinston, that Richard's mare had been stolen by “Sherman's bummers,” I left Raymond, Joe Sears and Sherman's operators on the wires at Goldsboro, and rode back half-way to Kinston, looking for her. On the next day, Monday, I rode through Sherman's camps on the same errand without success. On this day, Tuesday, while working at the instruments at Goldsboro and looking out of the window I saw her pass, carrying an officer. The telegraph office was on a second floor with exit by a flight of outside steps to the street. I ran out, bounded down the steps, untied and sprang

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

on my own horse and chased after the officer. "Lucy" was the better horse, but was not going fast, so I overtook and demanded her from the rider. Supposing that *he* had stolen her I made the demand rather peremptory. He took it rather coolly ; said the horse was his and asked who I was. He was an officer, with shoulder straps of I forget what rank, and I had nothing of that kind about me. But I had something better and thrust it before his eyes. It was an order signed by General Sherman himself to take Richard O'Brien's mare "Lucy," wherever found. The officer said he would, of course, surrender the mare, but requested me to accompany him to his camp, where he could satisfy me that he had obtained her legitimately from his quartermaster. I rode with him to his camp, and, sure enough, the quartermaster said the mare had "followed" his wagon train from Kinston. I was well satisfied to get the mare, if not to get the story, and Richard rewarded me for recovering her by letting me ride her afterwards with Schofield's staff in the march from Goldsboro to Raleigh. And she was not, by any means, the last in that bunch of good horses. J.)

Richard's arrival at Goldsboro relieved me of a physical and mental strain of three weeks, in which exposure, loss of sleep, and an intense sense of the importance of my unique duties in connection with a great campaign, together with the dramatic events by sea and land of siege, march and battle, thrilling,

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lurid, grotesque, which had been crowded on my observation, combined to furnish an experience such as must seldom or never have come to another boy of sixteen and a half years of age.

It must not be supposed that the actual telegraphing was limited to strategic dispatches. Our wires were kept constantly busy by the scarcely less important business of the quartermaster's, commissary, ordnance, and all other departments that go to make up an army organization.

Let me insert here a short synopsis of the career of another young telegrapher who was getting in touch with the military telegraph in this campaign. Thomas E. Clarke, aged 13, in 1862 organized a little band of eight or ten drummers and fifers at Connersville, Indiana, where they drummed and fided and drilled like soldiers and were satisfied, all but one, with playing at war; but Clarke's ambition and patriotism demanded the real thing, so in March or April, 1863, when thirteen and a half years old, he enlisted as a musician in the One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Indiana Volunteer Infantry, and served with his regiment in many engagements up to and through the Atlanta campaign. In that campaign his curiosity was aroused by seeing our telegraph construction corps stringing wires on trees, as the troops marched or fought. Musicians were often used as messengers, and in this way young Clarke came in contact with the military operators and began to learn the art of



JOHN EMMET O'BRIEN
In 1864



THOMAS E. CLARKE
Musician 124th Indiana Volunteer Infantry
The Drummer Boy of Kinston

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telegraphy. When Sherman started from Atlanta to the sea, Confederate General Hood, instead of following, elected to attack the forces left behind, and so marched on Thomas at Nashville. Sherman had sent Schofield back from Atlanta to gather up the scattered forces of the Army of the Ohio and join Thomas at Nashville. This resulted in the bloody battle of Franklin, and later in Hood's defeat at Nashville. By this time young Clarke had been detailed as chief clerk to the adjutant-general of his brigade. They reached Franklin early in the morning, and from an elevated view-point which he had sought to view the position Clarke saw the Confederates coming on in several lines. Rushing back across the railroad bridge to join his brigade he found it drawn up in line of battle across the railroad awaiting the enemy's charge. It came. The carnage was furious. Again and again the Confederates charged our lines. Clarke, too small to effectively handle a gun alone, busied himself loading and handing the guns of the wounded to his comrades. His cap was shot off. The Confederates were finally beaten off with great slaughter.

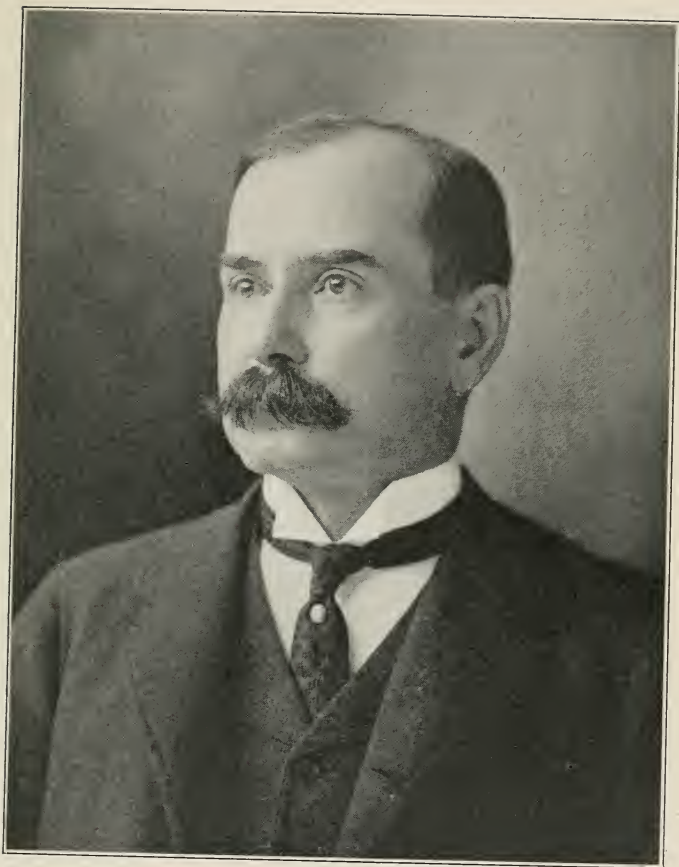
In the North Carolina campaign Clarke was still chief clerk to the adjutant-general of Orr's Brigade, Ruger's Division, Twenty-third Corps, and still interested in the military telegraph. It may have been just as well that he was not yet detailed for telegraph service, as during a fight nothing could keep him from rushing to the firing line and handling the guns.

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In doing this at Kinston, when Orr's men were sent in to save Upham's Brigade, Clarke got into the enemy's lines and narrowly escaped capture. As it was, he was small enough to hide behind the roots of a water cypress in Gum Swamp as the Confederates passed by him and he escaped.

Clarke continued to practice telegraphy with us, while, at Goldsboro, he was promoted to division headquarters and, at Raleigh, to corps headquarters. At Charlotte, North Carolina, he worked in the telegraph office, and was finally mustered out with his regiment at Greensboro, North Carolina, in September, 1865.

I have given this inadequate synopsis of the war history of this heroic boy on account of his extreme youth, like my own, at that time ; though I make no claim to the love of danger on the firing line which he displayed. His subsequent history is interesting and inspiring. Returning to his home at Connersville, Indiana, he found himself an orphan. He went to school for a year, then entered a railroad telegraph office, was soon made train dispatcher of the Cincinnati, Hamilton and Dayton Road. In 1869, went to Minnesota as superintendent of telegraph, St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad. In 1875, he was master of transportation of the Cairo and Vincennes Railroad, at Cairo, Ill. In 1883, general superintendent, Minneapolis and St. Paul Road. January, 1900, general manager, Iowa Central Railway, and, since



THOMAS E. CLARKE
General Superintendent D., L. & W. Railroad

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REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

September, 1900, general superintendent, Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad, Scranton, Pennsylvania. There is a record worthy of Mr. Clarke's boyish war history and of the emulation of Young America.

CHAPTER XVI.

WIRES AND RAILROADS AT GOLDSBORO—GREAT NEWS
FROM GRANT—FALL OF RICHMOND TELE-
GRAPHED OVER WIRE BUILT IN
FRONT OF IT BY RICHARD
O'BRIEN.

IT had been an important feature of Grant's plan for the campaign of the Carolinas to utilize the railroads from New Berne and Wilmington to Goldsboro with the special object of supplying Sherman's army with ammunition, shoes and clothing, as well as food and forage. The Confederates took off the rolling stock, as had been anticipated, and damaged the roads, by tearing up tracks to some extent. Between New Berne and Kinston I saw where they had heated and bent rails as skillfully as Sherman's men themselves could have done. It was the business of the military railroad department, under Colonel Wright, to repair these roads, and it was done with wonderful promptness and efficiency, considering that Colonel Wright labored under the same difficulty that embarrassed Richard, of being compelled to wait for material to arrive by sea. The operation of the military railroads depended a good deal on the telegraph, as do civil railroads, and that also helped to keep our wires busy.

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But we now had plenty of operators in Richard's department, and while the army rested at Goldsboro I had time for some recreation, which usually took the form of horse exercise.

One day we had a horse race among the cipher operators, in which, I think, Richard, with "Lucy;" Eddy, with a beautiful cream-colored horse that had carried him on the march; Berry, Lonergan, and myself, were to take part. I had exchanged with some quartermaster for a big, raw-boned animal that had a queer gait, and had no hope of winning. Joe Anderson was away with Kilpatrick's Cavalry. Berry became indisposed and asked me to ride his horse, which was a fairly good one, and I gladly did so. Now, I have long forgotten who won that race, but a year afterward, when mounted on a strange horse in Washington, his motion seemed so familiar that I felt sure I had ridden him before, and inquiry proved that I had—for a few minutes—in this race. It was at Goldsboro that I first met Kentucky saddle-horses. When Colonel Campbell and Colonel Wherry came down the road on those splendid big sorrel, and roan, gaited animals, it was worth coming through Gum Swamp to see them.

[Richard's Diary, resumed.]

Wednesday, March 29, 1865.—Arranged with Mrs. Smith for a room.

The enemy appeared in some force at Mosely Hall. Line cut a great deal by our own men, "Sherman's

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bummers." General Schofield ordered me to have any parties found troubling it arrested and brought to headquarters, and if they resisted, or attempted to run away, to have them shot down.

Goldsboro, Thursday, March 30th.—General Sherman back to New Berne. Says Grant has swung around to Dinwiddie; that Lee must come out and fight him, or attack his defenses at City Point. Says we must be all ready to cut loose from here on the 10th, and establish a new base at Winton and Norfolk.

Goldsboro, March 31st.—Line working all right to Wilmington. Bridge over the northeast branch Cape Fear River not yet done; will be in three days. Report of Confederates showing themselves in force at Mosely Hall. Think it only a party of observation.

The stolen horses are all being taken from "Sherman's bummers," as they are called here.

Saturday, April 1, 1865.—Called on General Sherman. Mr. Eddy introduced me. Found the General a quiet, unassuming man. But there was something about his head which indicated strength of character, and great confidence in himself. He has made himself famous, but I do not consider that he has ever been subjected to the stern test which some of the Generals who have fought Lee have had to go through. He expressed himself pleased with the energetic manner in which I got up telegraphic communication, and informed me what would be the future program, and what I was expected to do.

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New Berne, Sunday, April 2nd.—Ordered Finnegan to return with his party of line builders from Wilmington to report back to Mr. Doren at Army of the Potomac.

Told Colonel Campbell, assistant adjutant-general to General Schofield, that I am going to Portsmouth. Got on train with General McCallum, general superintendent military railroads. Arrived in New Berne at 12, night.

At Sea, Monday, April 3rd.—Mr. Douglas, operator reported at Morehead City. Ordered him to New Berne. Got transportation on steamer *Massasoit* to Portsmouth, through canal. Left New Berne at 10 A.M. with Mr. Douglas, Smith, four men, one box insulators and two coils wire. (I suppose Richard, thinking he now had enough men and material in North Carolina, proposed to return some to Norfolk or Petersburg to work from there to put Sherman in direct communication with Grant and Washington. J.)

When out some hours a storm arose which compelled us to put back for a safe anchorage.

Richmond taken. General Weitzel's troops the first to enter. (Weitzel commanded on our right on the Peninsula, in front of Richmond, and it was over the line which Richard, when chief operator, Army of the James, had constructed for him that the first telegram announcing the fall of Richmond passed from General Weitzel, addressed to General Grant at City Point. This telegram was sent by Operator

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"Billy" Wood from the Twenty-fourth Corps headquarters, April 3, 1865. Richard's entry of the fact in his diary under date of April 3rd must have been made later than that date, as he could not have known it at New Berne that day. If he had known of it there he would undoubtedly have told me by telegraph. The great news reached us at Goldsboro on April 6th and created intense enthusiasm in the whole of Sherman's army. It also changed Sherman's plans materially. Heretofore his intention was to move northward to join forces with General Grant in the neighborhood of Weldon, and establish a new base for supplies for his army at Norfolk and Winton; and it was with these plans in view that Richard went to Norfolk to prepare telegraphic facilities for Sherman's army. J.)

Roanoke Island, Tuesday, April 4th—Left our anchorage in Neuse River at 6 A.M. Arrived at Roanoke Island at 5 P.M. Stopped there all night. Saw a tug putting out in the morning, and got to the wharf in time to learn it was going to Norfolk, but too late to stop it. Tried to get steamer *Massasoit* to overtake the tug-boat, but that miserable old tub could not do it. Tried to stop the tug by firing shot at her, but could not reach her. Fired twice. Remained until 12, midnight, on the Island.

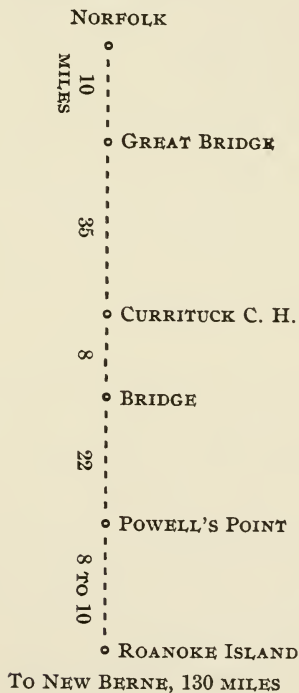
Wednesday, April 5th.—Had a good time on Roanoke Island, in company with Captain Whipple, of Portsmouth, Third New York Infantry, Douglas,

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and a colonel, playing euchre; and had plenty of Scuppernong wine, which is an excellent beverage made from grapes which grow on the Island, and does not intoxicate. The island is a miserable, cheerless place, full of large mosquitoes, which, even at this early season, are very troublesome.

Got aboard the steamer *Ulysses*, which touched Roanoke Island with dispatches.

Thursday, April 6th.—Route of a possible line from Norfolk to Roanoke Island:



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Norfolk, Virginia, Friday, April 7th.—Left Roanoke Island in the morning at 2 o'clock. Passed through canal without difficulty and reached Portsmouth at 5 P.M. Saw brother James and sister Mary. Also M. and P. Mullin. Had not seen Mary for two years, and she was delighted. So was I. She does not look well, but appears cheerful and contented. Think the change will prove beneficial to her. Stopped with Joe Wilson in our old military telegraph office in the Custom House. Joe is the favorite orderly of the Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry, whom John taught telegraphy at Portsmouth, where brother James is now doing the telegraph business.

Fort Monroe, Saturday April 8th.—Left at 6:30 A.M. on *City of Hudson* for Fort Monroe. Had a talk from there by telegraph with Major Eckert, superintendent military telegraph, at the War Department. He complimented me on my management and success in North Carolina. Assured me he had perfect confidence in me, and said he had no suggestions to make; that I should act as my judgment dictated.

Major Eckert wished me to consult George Sheldon, chief operator, Fort Monroe, on the practicability of a line from Fort Monroe to North Carolina. I replied I thought Grant's victory over Lee would enable us to run direct through Weldon.

Left Fort Monroe at 4:30 P.M. Arrived at Norfolk 6 P.M. Got Smith's party aboard. Left one box insulators and two coils wire in quartermaster's ware-

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house. Gave James pass from General Weitzel to Richmond. He leaves in the morning. Got John's favorite horse, "Pet," and rode around to see my friends. Called on O'Briens. Miss Annie and her mother at theatre with Mr. Nilligar. Called on Mrs. Mayhew, but she had retired with sick boy, and I did not wish to disturb her.

Roanoke Island, Sunday, April 9th.—Left Norfolk at 5:30 A.M. I find it practicable to build a line to Roanoke Island, eighty-five miles wire, ten miles cable. Don't approve of it.

Monday, April 10th.—Stopped over at Roanoke Island until this A.M. Arrived at New Berne 5 P.M. Sherman's forces moved from Goldsboro towards Raleigh at 10 A.M. John went with General Schofield; our party following up with line. Firing going on all day near Goldsboro. McCutcheon and his instrument captured on 9th at Burgaw station on the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. That line down! Wrote Major Eckert and James.

During this journey of Richard's to Norfolk and Fort Monroe he had left me at Goldsboro in charge of military telegraph lines and affairs in North Carolina.

Among the operators who had arrived to assist us was a comical young fellow named McCutcheon. He took pride in wearing better clothes than any of the rest of us wore while roughing it, and would in these days be considered a dude. The boys at Wilmington

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used to twit him about his fastidiousness in dress, and tell him what a prize he would be to the Johnnies if he were captured. McCutcheon always took this sort of banter good-naturedly, and used to rehearse the part that he would enact if he should fall into the enemy's hands.

McCutcheon was stationed with a guard at Burgaw station, on the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. About midnight, April 8th, McCutcheon called me up over the wire and said there were rumors, brought by negroes, that Wheeler's Cavalry was making a raid in our rear and liable to strike the line at his station.

I find it impossible now to remember whether General Schofield or myself was responsible for "Mac's" capture. I cannot recall whether I referred the point to the General or not, but I know that I told "Mac" to stay at his post until morning and to give us notice of any approach of the enemy. That was the last we heard from him; the line suddenly snapped, and when we sent a hand-car with a guard down the road they found the wire cut, the station burned, and "Mac" and his guard missing.

After we reached Raleigh, and while General Sherman was negotiating with Johnston, there came into our office, April 29th, the ghastliest-looking tramp I ever saw. He was barefoot and tattered. The orderlies were about to fire him out, when he struck a forlorn attitude and said in hollow accents, "Boys! you may not believe it, but I'm McCutcheon!"

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After we got him cleaned up and fed, he told us how the Confederate cavalry had captured him, and one officer after another had taken his hat, coat, boots, and so on, giving him some of their own war-worn duds in exchange. They then marched him on foot around Sherman's army two or three hundred miles to western North Carolina, and during the negotiations for Johnston's surrender he slipped through to us.

We sent him on to Washington, where his appearance of hard usage and his humorous descriptions of his experience made such an impression on the officials of the War Department, that Major Eckert treated him as handsomely as possible. His experience of little over a month in our field indicated what danger and hardships many of our boys were exposed to for a much longer time.

[Diary resumed.]

Tuesday, April 11th.—Line up twelve miles from Goldsboro towards Raleigh. Nothing indicating fighting from Sherman yet. Dispatches from Grant announce the surrender of Lee with his whole army; his men and officers to be paroled and allowed their side-arms, private horses and property. Now, indeed, "the back-bone of the Rebellion" is broken and we can see light ahead. Received from Captain Judson, for Clark Brannon, \$63.50, being the amount due to December, and all that he will pay. I paid Wort-

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man's board bill, \$10.00. Lent him \$5.00, Douglas \$10.00.

(The diary contains no entry on the 12th or 13th. J.)

Goldsboro, Friday, April 14th. Started Mr. Spagnale with instrument and guard of six men to Raleigh at 1 P.M.

Sherman had a communication from Johnston in reference to cessation of hostilities. Presume he is about to surrender his army. Line working to Raleigh; John is there. He has been talking with Southern operators on lines beyond Raleigh.

Sherman's advance from Goldsboro is best explained in his own words :

" But the whole problem became suddenly changed by the news of the fall of Richmond and Petersburg, which reached us at Goldsboro on the 6th of April. The Confederate Government, with Lee's army, had hastily abandoned Richmond, fled in great disorder toward Danville, and General Grant's whole army was in close pursuit. Of course, I inferred that General Lee would succeed in making junction with General Johnston, with at least a fraction of his army, somewhere to my front. I at once altered the foregoing orders, and prepared on the day appointed, viz., April 10th, to move straight on Raleigh, against the Army of General Johnston, known to be at Smithfield, and supposed to have about thirty-five thousand men. Wade Hampton's cavalry was on his left front and Wheeler's on his right front, simply watching us

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and awaiting our initiative. Meantime the details of the great victories in Virginia came thick and fast, and on the 8th I received from General Grant this communication, in the form of a cipher dispatch :

*'Headquarters Armies of the United States,
'Wilson's Station, April 5, 1865.*

‘MAJOR-GENERAL SHERMAN,

‘Goldsboro, North Carolina :

‘All indications now are that Lee will attempt to reach Danville with the remnant of his force. Sheridan, who was up with him last night, reports all that is left with him—horse, foot, and dragoons—at twenty thousand, much demoralized. We hope to reduce this number one-half. I will push on to Burkesville, and, if a stand is made at Danville, will, in a very few days, go there. If you can possibly do so, push on from where you are, and let us see if we cannot finish the job with Lee's and Johnston's armies. Whether it will be better for you to strike for Greensboro or nearer to Danville, you will be better able to judge when you receive this. Rebel armies now are the only strategic points to strike at.

‘U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.’

“I answered immediately that we would move on the 10th, prepared to follow Johnston wherever he might go. Promptly on Monday morning, April 10th, the army moved straight on Smithfield; the right wing making a circuit by the right, and the left wing, supported by the center, moving on the two direct roads towards Raleigh, distant fifty miles. General Terry's and General Kilpatrick's troops moved from

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their positions on the south or west bank of the Neuse River in the same general direction, by Cox's Bridge. On the 11th we reached Smithfield, and found it abandoned by Johnston's army, which had retreated hastily on Raleigh, burning the bridges. To restore these consumed the remainder of the day, and during that night I received a message from General Grant, at Appomattox, that General Lee had surrendered to him his whole army, which I at once announced to the troops in orders :

[Special Field Orders, No. 54.]

*'Headquarters Military Division of the
Mississippi, in the Field,*

'Smithfield, N. C., April 12, 1865.

'The General commanding announces to the army that he has official notice from General Grant that General Lee surrendered to him his entire army, on the 9th inst., at Appomattox Court House, Virginia.

'Glory to God and our country, and all honor to our comrades in arms, toward whom we are marching !

'A little more labor, a little more toil on our part, the great race is won, and our Government stands regenerated, after four long years of war.

'W. T. SHERMAN,

'Major-General Commanding.'''

CHAPTER XVII.

I RIDE WITH SCHOFIELD AND SHERMAN FROM
GOLDSBORO TO RALEIGH—THE LONE CAVALRYMAN
—BEAUTIFUL RALEIGH—ON SOUTHERN WIRES—
A FATEFUL CIPHER MESSAGE—GRANT'S
VISIT—JOHNSTON SURRENDERS—CAP-
TURE OF JEFFERSON DAVIS.

SCHOFIELD had united with Sherman at Goldsboro, as planned by Grant, having cleared eastern North Carolina of the enemy and established safe communication from the coast. We then started for Raleigh, with the news from Richmond stimulating every nerve, Johnston retreating in our front. We came upon some strong positions where he had made preparation for battle on the wooded hills, cutting down the forest to form abattis, but, except a small engagement at Smithfield, there was no battle.

Sherman swept on, with Howard on the right, Slocum on the left, Schofield in the center and Kilpatrick's Cavalry thrown out in front to feel the way. It was a magnificent army. The Westerners swung along with that careless stride which distinguished them from the Army of the Potomac, and which had carried them through one of the most remarkable marches of history.

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Sherman rode alternately with either of the three columns. The first time I saw him on this march we came upon him in the road; he was dismounted and lounging with his staff, on the ground, in a fence corner, waiting for General Schofield to join him. He was then, as ever, careless, nervous, magnetic—a great commander whom a great opportunity found equal to the occasion.

In the march from Goldsboro to Raleigh I had a good horse, "Lucy," and the same ten cavalymen who had been with me from Kinston. I had become attached to them, especially to "Curley" and "Shorty," and had not released the detail while we remained in Goldsboro. Their captain came to me and wished to replace them by ten others from his company, and finally the colonel of their regiment courteously explained to me that in the interest of discipline he would like to change the detail and, as a convincing argument, said that he would give me ten *better foragers* than these! Now it was a wonderful thing to see some of those horsemen disappear in the morning and return to our bivouac at night with poultry or a young shoat strung to the saddle and perhaps a tub of sorghum balanced on the pommel, and I could not help wondering where those things came from and who must be suffering for their loss. The wanton destruction of household goods by Sherman's bummers, too, evidence of which we met on the way, amazed and shocked me, and embittered a

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march of fifty miles that otherwise would have seemed a path of glory. I will not say that I did not eat any plundered food, but am certain that, as a rule, my meals were hard-tack, munched as we rode. This was the first time that I had traveled with an army of 90,000 men. All roads seemed filled with them, and interminable lines of pontoon, artillery, and wagon trains made progress slow and tiresome. Our staff seemed to be always riding, from early morning until night, and then I would drop off of "Lucy" and lie where I lit until the orderlies brought her up in the morning for me to climb on again. Frequent showers wet us, and one morning I awoke to find that I had slept in a puddle of rainwater. But a single incident out of many interesting experiences more than repaid every hardship of the march. I was intensely romantic. Napoleon, Ivanhoe, Tom Burke of Ours, Charley O'Malley, and Richard Coeur de Leon were my ideals at that time. In some novel, probably one of Lever's, there was a picture called "The Bivouac," that seemed to realize youth's ideal of romance and glory. Now we came to a little river that had to be bridged, and while waiting for the canvas pontoons, which themselves seemed magical, to be laid, "Old Pop" Sherman, with his staff, who were riding with us that day, and General Schofield, with our staff, lounged about the bosky dell and talked of battles and campaigns; of the evacuation of Petersburg; the chances of Lee and Johnston uniting against this army; the prospect

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of fighting ahead. And—I was with them! That night, April 12th, we got the dispatch from Grant that Lee had surrendered. It is impossible to describe the enthusiasm this produced as it was announced to the troops; they went wild and executed all sorts of grotesque antics as the news spread down the lines.

Kilpatrick had a little brush with the enemy's cavalry at Smithfield.

A delegation of citizens came out by locomotive from Raleigh, running through both the Confederate cavalry and ours with a flag of truce to surrender the keys of the city to Sherman. We entered Raleigh on the morning of April 13th. Whittier describes Frederick :

“Fair as a garden of the Lord
To the eyes of that famished rebel horde.”

Had I his poetic genius I would try to describe how fair Raleigh, embowered in the shade of its ancient oaks and stately elms, and invested with dreams of historic romance, appeared to the eyes of at least one youthful invader who had come up from the coast through dreary miles of sand, swamp and forest, and now rode into the beautiful city with the head of this triumphant army.

On the Confederate side there must have been romance and dreams as fantastic and wild as mine. As the rear-guard of Confederate cavalry left the city,

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one of Wheeler's young men sat silently on his horse in front of the gate of the Capitol, at the head of Fayetteville Street, calmly gazing down the wide street toward the Governor's mansion which closed its lower end, where Kilpatrick's Union troopers would appear in a moment.

Picture that mere boy sitting on his horse like a statue, there to face, alone, a horde of Yankee invaders! What strain of heroic blood from chivalric ancestors, what dreams of reckless courage, of beauty's smiles, of dare-devil bravery, must have inspired him to sit motionless there while Kilpatrick's men rode in at the Governor's mansion, and, seeing him, came thundering on a charge up the wide avenue! Perhaps he relied on his spirited steed and superb horsemanship. He waited until the charging troop was within pistol range and fired his revolver point blank at them; then, wheeling and putting spurs to his horse, was off to the South like the wind. Our men raced after him by every street. He was splendidly mounted, and, bending low on his horse, took the turn to the right to reach Hillsboro Street. Another turn to the left on that road and it would be straight away flight to reach his retreating comrades. And here was a noble horse, carrying him like the wind, and able, perhaps, to distance any war-horse in the Yankee army: Was it a pebble in the road? It was not a bullet, for such had been the swiftness of his flight or, perhaps, the amazement of our men, that if

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they fired at all, no bullet had reached him; but, going at full speed as he made the turn to the left on Hillsboro Street, down went horse and rider together in dire disaster on the road. He was immediately surrounded and captured. A drum-head court-martial—a scene in a grove,—the same horse and rider, but ah! a rope and a noose! And then—the slash of a sabre, and away springs the horse, alone. * * * * There are flowers on a lonely grave * * * *, a sad-faced girl. Oh, War! “The path of glory leads but to the grave.”

Kilpatrick moved on beyond Raleigh, and Joe Anderson, his operator, tapped the Greensboro wire and heard a message to General Johnston, stating that our cavalry, under Stoneman, from East Tennessee, were in the Confederate rear at Salisbury, North Carolina. We also learned that General Wilson's Cavalry Corps was fighting Forrest about Selma, Alabama, and soon we had a cipher from him at Macon, over the Southern wires.

Kilpatrick was now at Durham Station, twenty-six miles from Raleigh, with the wire intact, and on the 14th Anderson sent us a cipher from Kilpatrick to Sherman, stating that a flag of truce from the enemy had brought a letter from General Johnston addressed to General Sherman, who ordered it sent in, and it proved to be a proposal for an armistice.

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[Richard's Diary resumed.]

Goldsboro, April 15th.—Clapp left Wilmington for New York, sick. Mackintosh left New Berne for home, sick.

Goldsboro, April 16th.—Started Gus Nohe, operator, to open an office for Smeed, at bridge over the Neuse. General Sherman arranged with Johnston to meet him at 12 M. to-morrow, about thirty miles from Raleigh (five miles beyond Durham, on the Hillsboro road. Sherman's memoirs. J.) to negotiate some terms by which the war in North Carolina may be stopped. Our lines working twenty-six miles from Raleigh, to Kilpatrick's Cavalry Corps, Joe Anderson, cipher operator, at Durham, North Carolina.

Goldsboro, Monday, April 17th.—Received a message from the Secretary of War to General Sherman, saying President Lincoln was assassinated in Ford's Theatre, Washington, on the night of the 14th; also that Secretary Seward was stabbed several times, at his home, but may recover, and that his son was also mortally wounded at the same time.

Washington, April 15th, 1865, 12 M.

GENERAL W. T. SHERMAN:

President Lincoln was murdered about ten o'clock last night in his private box at Ford's Theatre in this city, by an assassin who shot him through the head with a pistol ball. The assassin leaped from the box, brandishing a dagger, exclaiming, "*Sic semper tyrannis*," and that Virginia was avenged. Mr. Lincoln fell senseless from his seat, and continued in that state

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until twenty-two minutes after seven o'clock, at which time he breathed his last. General Grant was published to be at the theatre but did not go. About the same time Mr. Seward's house was entered by another assassin, who stabbed the Secretary in several places. It is thought he may possibly recover, but his son Frederick will probably die of wounds received from the assassin. Vice-President Johnson now becomes President, and will take the oath of office and assume the duties to-day. I have no time to add more than to say that I find evidence that an assassin is also on your track, and I beseech you to be more heedful than Mr. Lincoln was of such knowledge.

EDWIN M. STANTON,
Secretary of War.

Sherman had an interview with Johnston, which developed the fact that Johnston is negotiating for Davis and his cabinet. He could not give a definite answer until he would see General Breckenridge again, and will meet Sherman to-morrow.

(The message above referred to, by Richard, conveying the news of Lincoln's assassination, was coming to us in cipher at Raleigh as Sherman was about to step on a train at 8 A.M., April 17th, for Durham, to meet General Johnston in the negotiation for the surrender. We had the operator at the depot (Grasby, I think) to run down and tell Sherman, who held his train while Eddy deciphered the message. Sherman cautioned us operators to give out no word of it until his return, for fear that "some foolish woman or man in Raleigh might say something or do

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something that would madden our men, and that a fate worse than that of Columbia would befall the place." He then went on to the conference with Johnston. J.)

Tuesday, April 18th.—Lent De Forrest \$10.00. Sherman went out to see Johnston and remained out all day. I presume Davis is endeavoring to get the best possible terms for the dying Confederacy. I trust Sherman will be generous. This is not a time to stand on trifles. We must show the people of the South that we can be generous as well as brave, and that we do not desire their humiliation, or destruction, but only the restoration of the Union.

Goldsboro, North Carolina, Wednesday, April 19th.—Sherman announced that he had arranged terms with Johnston and other prominent Southern officials, which needs but the sanction of the President or General Grant to establish peace from the Potomac to the Rio Grande. An officer has started to Washington on a special boat. Several men from Lee's army arriving here. They all say large numbers of Virginians broke their guns and went home before the surrender, swearing they would not fight outside of their State.

Goldsboro, Thursday, April 20th.—Sent vouchers of Wortman and De Forrest to Major Eckert for \$15 each. Sent also report of (——)'s outrageous conduct; also report of work done, etc., in March. Had a good long ride on "Pet."

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Friday, April 21st.—Met Mr. Griffith, General Beauregard's operator, on his way to his home in Wilmington, Delaware. He says the operators in the South have had rough treatment and rough times. I discharged (———), with loss of pay. He drew nearly two hundred rations in one month over what he was entitled to, and sold them. He is a notorious rascal.

Goldsboro, North Carolina, Saturday, April 22nd.—Carroll, operator, reported at New Berne. Kennan sick at Wilmington. Relieved him. Sponagle's father sick. S. wants to go home. Relieved him. Gave Colin permission to go home. (Colin Kinney, an inexperienced lineman, who took care of my horse and baggage from Gum Swamp, near New Berne, to Goldsboro. A comical Lancashireman, who enlivened the hardships of that march with unfailing cheerfulness and with Coster songs that were very funny, as sung in his Lancashire dialect. His favorite ditty referred to a gorgeous young "loidy" whom he casually met; whereupon, as he sung:

"I asked her her residence, I asked her her name,
She said, 'Sir, with pleasure, I will tell 'e the same,'
Putting up her umbereller, 'My name is Isabeller,
And me father keeps a shaving shop in Islington.'"

It is surprising how this good fellow, with his rollicking humor and senseless songs, cheered our spirits drooping under rain, mud, and sleeplessness. From Goldsboro to Raleigh, being free from wire work, I rode with General Schofield's staff. J.)

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Douglas sick. Will get him up here, when he will have some care.

A Confederate brigade wanted to surrender near here to-day, but General Sherman preferred to let them wait and have a general surrender. Wise in "Old Billy."

Lent Sponagle \$15.00, including \$4.00 from John. Sent his vouchers to Washington.

Goldsboro, Sunday, April 23rd.—General Grant arrived at Morehead City this P.M. Passed Goldsboro at 9:30 en route to Sherman's headquarters at Raleigh. Looks like work of some kind.

Monday, April 24th. This leaf of the diary is partly torn out. The writing probably referred to Confederate General Johnston's situation, and continues: "hopeless, and that he cannot stop Sherman's desolating march, and that the coming campaign will result in nothing but the ruin of the country through which our troops pass. Sponagle left for home."

(Richard, up to this time, had remained at Goldsboro, where the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad crossed the railroad from Morehead City and New Berne to Raleigh, because it was a central and advantageous point from which he could manage the telegraph lines and men, and I was taking care of the Raleigh end with Schofield and Sherman, which included the southern wires north to Weldon, and west to Greensboro, whereon we were pleasantly fraternizing with the Southern operators. Eddy, Berry,

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Lonergan and Anderson remained with Generals Sherman, Slocum, Howard and Kilpatrick, respectively; Anderson being on the wire at Durham and in touch with me. J.)

Raleigh, North Carolina, Tuesday, April 25th.—Sherman's army getting ready to move. I leave for Raleigh at noon. Arrived there at 7 P.M. Found it a beautiful place; almost every house surrounded by trees and shrubbery. The town does not appear to have been injured by our troops. There is a sentry posted at every house for the protection of the place. Found John hard at work, but looking well.

Raleigh, Wednesday, April 26th.—Sherman went out early this morning to meet Johnston near Durham. Johnston was delayed by an accident on the railroad. He accepted the same terms given Lee, and surrendered his army. Sherman arrived in Raleigh at 6 P.M. General Grant is stopping at Sherman's headquarters. Everything passed off quietly and pleasantly. All the Southern soldiers appear glad to see an end to the war, but I am at a loss to see how they can subsist in this country now, and have serious fears that many of them will lead irregular lives for a time.

Thursday, April 27th.—Received a message from Major Eckert to hold on until further orders and to call on General Grant for instructions. I met the General at the train and rode with him to Goldsboro. He endorsed Sherman's policy. Said he was going out to Red River to wind up matters there. We

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

made fast time to Goldsboro, but before the train had fully stopped one of the truck wheels of the engine broke off, letting the fore part of the engine down. Had it occurred while we were running fast we might all have been in eternity before this time. Glad on Grant's account, but more so on my own. The General went on to Morehead City to take steamer.

Raleigh, Friday, April 28th.—Returned to Raleigh. Sherman is going to Savannah and Charleston. His late policy, in extending the scope of the terms of surrender beyond Johnston's forces, has considerably dimmed his reputation and destroyed his influence at Washington. He said to-night that he "would not now accept any political position in the power of the people to bestow;" that "the American people were a fickle, thankless race."

Raleigh, Saturday, April 29th.—Sherman left this morning for Wilmington, en route to Charleston.

Lent C. G. Eddy \$30. Line working to Charlotte, North Carolina. Repaired it near Hillsboro. Southern party who undertook to build line to Petersburg, Virginia, returned to-day. They could not go nearer than sixteen miles to Petersburg for want of transportation. I reported the fact to Major Eckert; also said that I could have had the line working several days ago if I had had charge of the matter.

McCutcheon came into our lines. The Confeder-

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ates took all from him, and marched him 200 miles. He was captured at Burgaw Station, April 9th.

Sunday, April 30th.—Sent McCutcheon and Wortman home, sick.

Received cipher messages from General Wilson, Macon, Georgia. Jeff Davis will certainly escape, owing to Sherman's unfortunate policy of tying Stoneman's hands by that armistice.

Monday, May 1, 1865.—General Schofield moved to the Governor's mansion. I have opened an office in it for him. Arranged to board at Mr. Johnson's house. Called there with Lieutenant Pool. Saw several nice ladies and heard some good music. It is amusing to notice the behavior of our officers and the Southern people when they meet at social gatherings. Much of human nature to be learned there.

Tuesday, May 2nd.—General Schofield went to Greensboro to arrange details of surrender with Johnston. Several Southern operators coming to Raleigh.

Wednesday, May 3rd.—Finished reports for April. Telegraphed Major Eckert for instructions. He replied to report to General Schofield and await further orders from him.

Thursday, May 4th.—Saw General Schofield. He wishes me to repair the line to Fayetteville and put an operator there; to take charge of the Petersburg line, and also the Morehead City line, and to turn over the Charlotte line to responsible parties to keep up and do private business on; but to station cipher

REMINISCENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR

operators at important military posts and reserve the preference of circuit for military business. I arranged to send Finnegan and party of builders out to-morrow on Fayetteville line.

Friday, May 5th.—Finnegan started out on Fayetteville line with two six-mule teams and two ambulances. General Wilson telegraphs from Macon that he is on the track of Jeff Davis. Major Eckert telegraphed me to take charge of all the lines in this State, place reliable operators, with cipher keys, in the principal offices, and put the lines in good condition. Big job!

Saturday, May 6th.—General Sherman at Morehead City, on his way from Savannah to City Point. Telegraphed General Schofield that he had seen Halleck's perfidious order disregarding his (Sherman's) armistice, etc., but telling Schofield to pursue a straightforward course and that he would sustain him as far as his influence extended, which, he supposed, was not very far now. Told him he was going to see if he could not command his own department.

Sunday, May 7th.—Sherman telegraphed me, asking "what caused delay in construction of the line to Petersburg and if any obstacles were thrown in the way by parties in Richmond or Washington because part of the line was out of our department?" I replied that "the delay was caused by the Southern party who undertook the work giving it up from inability to complete it;" that "no obstacles were

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placed in their way, and that the line was finally completed by a United States Military Telegraph party from Petersburg, after the others had been tried and found wanting."

Monday, May 8th.—General Sherman telegraphed me that General Schofield would approve all bills for work done on the Petersburg or Norfolk lines. He leaves for City Point to-day.

Tuesday, May 9th.—Started Lieutenant Pool to Charlotte to administer the oath of allegiance to all operators along the line; all who refused, to be removed from their offices.

Wednesday, May 10th.—Several applications from Southern operators for situations; all willing to take the oath and go to work for Uncle Samuel. Employed S. A. Howard and J. C. Duncan, operators at Greensboro, North Carolina, and Chris. Fields battery-man and repairer at same place.

Thursday, May 11th.—Employed J. C. McCall, operator, for Lexington, North Carolina, to go to work to-morrow. The original operator there refused to take the oath and was arrested by General Kilpatrick.

Friday, May 12th.—General Wilson, at Macon, Georgia, telegraphs that every avenue of escape for Davis is well guarded; that Davis has distributed his gold among his escort and the people; that he found it too inconvenient to carry, etc.

Saturday, May 13th.—President Johnson telegraphed to have Governor Brown of Georgia and

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Governor McGrath of South Carolina arrested and sent to Washington under guard. Old Andy evidently intends handling them without gloves. The murder of Lincoln is being revenged on his enemies. The South will find their best friend has been murdered.

W. Hancock, Southern operator, went to Smithfield.

Sunday, May 14th.—Governor Vance's arrest ordered by the Secretary of War, by telegraph. Whitaker, Confederate operator, went to Magnolia; Evans to Weldon. We sent about 2,500 words of cipher from General Wilson, Macon, Georgia, to Major Eckert, Washington. Received it direct from Columbia, South Carolina. (Capture of Davis. J.)

Monday, May 15th.—General Wilson reports the capture of Jeff Davis; telegraphed Grant he was shipped safely to Augusta, in charge of Colonel Pritchard, who would deliver him safely in Washington. Poor Jeff will probably be hanged, but I hope not. The death of a thousand men would be no atonement for the injury he has done his country.

Richard's diary ends here, but his service continued longer. His headquarters were, soon after, moved to Petersburg, Virginia, from which point he continued to manage the telegraph lines in North Carolina. The diary gives but a slight and modest indication of his services, but Major Eckert, superintendent of the United States Military Telegraph, justly reported that

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“Mr. O'Brien is deserving of special notice for his energy and perseverance in establishing prompt communication by telegraph in this department, and the men under him for their vigilance and faithful attention to the interests of the service.” Richard certainly displayed the strong qualities praised by Major Eckert, and by his example and personal magnetism he inspired hope, courage and ambition in his subordinates, and good feeling and respect in all others with whom he came in contact. When the Military Telegraph Corps was disbanded, December 31, 1865, and the lines relegated to the commercial telegraph companies, he was appointed superintendent of the ninth district of the American Telegraph Company, which more than covered the military telegraph department he had been managing, and he set to work to reconstruct and manage the lines from Richmond, Virginia, to Wilmington, North Carolina, and from Morehead City to Charlotte. Later he was transferred to the seventh district, with headquarters in New York City, and has ever since retained his connection with telegraph and telephone companies.

In July, 1866, Richard, with nine other military telegraphers, received, by order of the Secretary of War, as a memento of “meritorious and valuable services,” one of the ten silver watches marked “United States Military Telegraph” which had been used to establish uniform time in the Army of the Potomac.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE "O'BRIEN" UNDER MANY FLAGS—LAST DAYS OF
THE MILITARY TELEGRAPH—RICHARD SURREN-
DERS TO A FAIR VIRGINIAN—IN THE WAR
DEPARTMENT—GOOD-BYE TO GENERAL
GRANT AND SECRETARY STANTON.

OTHER O'Briens have served under the Stars and Stripes. The torpedo boat *O'Brien* was named for a party of them headed by Jeremiah O'Brien, who captured the first English war-ship in the American revolution. They have fought under the flags of Spain and Austria. Carrying the Fleur-de-lis, in the service of France, the Irish Brigade was commanded by one of them, Jean Charles O'Brien, Lord Clare, at Fontenoy, and by others of the family in all the other battles of the brigade for fifty years. Members of the sept, rather consistent in devotion to the sword, have been at times impartial as to the flag they fought for. So it is not surprising that we should have had a cousin in the Confederate army. Captain Frank P. O'Brien, of the Third Alabama Regiment, upheld the Stars and Bars with the traditional courage of the sons of Brian, of whom he is a direct descendant. On detached service as chief of scouts in North Carolina, in 1864-5, some of his exploits rivalled those of our Cushing. One of them

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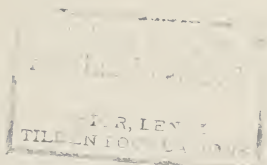
was the capture of the United States mail boat *Fawn* in the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal, September 24th, 1864. The following account, written in 1908 by his Confederate comrade, Mr. Perry M. De Leon, of Birmingham, Alabama, is so characteristic of Southern eloquence and enthusiasm that I transcribe it here :

“ A brave soldier in war, a model citizen in peace, dear to the hearts of his comrades, is Captain Frank P. O'Brien. Enlisting at the first call to arms in 1861 as a private in the Montgomery Blues, of the famous Third Alabama Regiment, commanded by that peerless soldier, Colonel Tennant Lomax, young O'Brien, then 17 years old, received his baptism of blood in the fights around Richmond, which cost the lives of his noble commander and hundreds of his gallant comrades, the very flower of Alabama's youth.

“ In the Spring of 1864 it was my pleasant fortune to be stationed with him (and among other delightful friends, Captain Harney, the father of Mrs. Fulenwider of our city) at the same post, Plymouth, North Carolina. At that time he was commander of scouts, and I was an officer on the ironclad *Albemarle*. This boat, commanded by the gallant Cooke, of North Carolina, owing to an accident to her machinery, failed to reach Plymouth until the night of the first day's fight, which cost General Hoke over 700 killed and wounded. At about 3 A.M. the ram attacked the Federal fleet, sunk the *Southfield*, killed Commander



CAPTAIN FRANK P. O'BRIEN, C. S. A.
Now Mayor of Birmingham, Ala.



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Flusser, and dispersed the three other vessels, converting what would have doubtless otherwise been a disastrous reverse into a glorious victory. The next day, his situation being hopeless, General Wessels surrendered to us some 7,500 men and an immense quantity of stores, munitions of war, etc.

“As commander of scouts, O’Brien was daring and untiring, always on the go, and of the greatest value in keeping us informed of the movements of the enemy, who had massed a fleet of nine vessels in Albemarle Sound, carrying 70 guns. These, our little ram, with but two guns, later on fought to a standstill in the Sound, narrowly escaping destruction, they really the victors, but believing themselves whipped, having one vessel, the *Sassacus*, sunk, and about two hundred men killed and wounded. In this fight, O’Brien, a type of his fearless race, participated, although it was an unnecessary piece of dare-deviltry, he being a soldier and not a sailor.

“On one occasion, with two of his men, he captured six Federal sailors, whom he caught laying torpedoes in the mouth of the Roanoke River to blow up the ram should she again sally out, but we knew when we had enough. Again, alone in a canoe, O’Brien went off on a scout, through the dark and silent waters of eastern North Carolina, then in the possession of the enemy. This was an enterprise of great hazard; not only did he risk being shot by “Buffaloes” (lawless guerrillas) who preyed on both armies, but of being

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captured, and perhaps executed as a spy by the Federals. However, after some thrilling experiences, he got back in safety, bringing valuable data and full of a daring scheme to capture the mail steamer *Fawn*, which he had learned would leave Norfolk by way of Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal, on a certain day, with a large sum of money to pay off the Federal troops on Roanoke Island. Colonel Wortham, who commanded the post, and Captain Maffitt, of glorious memory, who then commanded the *Albemarle*, approved; with seven of his own men, among others Mortimer Williams, Lieutenant Shelley of the navy, two junior officers and five sailors detailed by Maffitt, he started on his perilous mission. It was a complete success so far as the destruction of the steamer and the capture of her crew and passengers were concerned, about thirty in all, including several officers of rank.

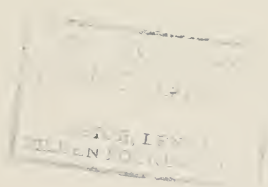
“For this gallant deed, executed in the very heart of the enemy’s line, O’Brien was publicly thanked by both the army and the navy, both commanders lauding him in their reports to Richmond.

“Such was O’Brien in war. In peace his record as one of the best, most progressive, public-spirited, big-hearted citizens of Birmingham, whose progress and prosperity he has done so much to promote, since he settled here when she was but an unkempt hamlet, is too well known to require further comment.

PERRY M. DE LEON.”



MRS. RICHARD O'BRIEN



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Cousin Frank might have captured Richard in one of his raids on the canal, as Richard traversed it both ways, as indicated by his diary entries of April 7 and 9, 1865. But Richard was destined to surrender to a fairer foe.

Among the gallant Virginians who, with Pickett, reached the "high water mark" of the great charge at Gettysburg, Captain Dick Marks was desperately wounded. Recovering, he again, with Pickett, helped to hold Lee's thin line in front of Richmond against Grant's incessant blows. Meantime, his young sister, Miss Sarah Harrison Marks, descendant, on the mother's side, of General William Henry Harrison, ninth President, had, with a few faithful slaves, fled before the Northern invaders from the old home near Fort Powhatan to Petersburg, and even there one of her trusty negroes was killed and another wounded in her house by the bursting of shells from Grant's guns. It chanced that Richard was able, after the surrender, to extend some courtesy to the gallant Captain, which introduced my brother to the lovely sister and to ideal domestic happiness for forty years.

I remained in charge at Raleigh. Our wire was the only first link to bind the North and South together again. Over it began to flow a tide of commercial business; silent harbingers of peace. Jim Norris, splendid operator, Raymond, and myself, taking it from Columbia and rushing it, sixty messages an hour, to Petersburg; or taking it from George Hen-

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derson and other fast senders at Petersburg and shoving it to Columbia as fast as the Southern boys could take it. Other lines and routes under Richard's reconstruction, after a time, eased up this strain, and gave me time to enjoy the delight of living in the sunny Southland and of learning to know some of its charming people and their traditional hospitality. I lived in the pleasant home of Mr. Albert Johnson, who was president of the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad and one of the most unique and interesting characters I have ever known. He had taken the first locomotive to North Carolina, and fifty years later he and the negro fireman who had run it with him were conspicuous figures in an anniversary celebration. There were charming ladies and music there. I had my horse, "Pet," again.

"Now," asks the gentle reader, "could this stupid boy have passed through all those romantic adventures without an *affaire du cœur*?" No, there was a slender golden thread that has run through a lifetime, and reaches to the stars! There was a cottage there, embowered in roses. A giant oak stood before the door. No other soprano voice has ever * * * *. Have you heard Nordica sing? Her voice has a quality that reminds me of Laura's. A tone attuned to Israfil's, when all the stars stop to listen to his singing, would be nearer to it. And there, I dream, she still sings: "From out the choir within the sky." My dear Superior Officer here warns me that only Shakespeare

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should dare brush the gossamer wings of early love. But what did even Shakespeare know of such starry brown eyes and lovely brown hair as Laura's? Nor had Juliet or any other of his fair ladies her wit and wisdom, her smiles and laughter. Does this seem extravagant? Such are the dreams of youth:

“ When like the rising day,
Love sends his early ray, Eileen Aroon ! ”

Pronounce it Eilyeen, please.

Two nephews of Mr. Johnson returned from the war. One had been in a Northern military prison and showed the hard effects of captivity. He told me this story: A Confederate soldier in the same prison camp had preserved through all mischances a battered silk hat, which distinguished him from other prisoners. They were guarded by negro soldiers, with sentries stationed on elevated platforms about the stockade. One day the man with the hat approached too near the dead line, when a sable sentry shouted: “Git back thar. Git back thar, yo Johnnie Reb, or I'll blow dat nail kag off yo haid!”

Some fine fellows returned from Lee's army. Tall, spare, clear-eyed young men, who had been through it all, they looked and were as good soldiers as the world has seen. One, who had been with Jackson in the Stonewall brigade, told me that his regiment went into the war with 1,600, and came out with 16 men at Appomattox. The rest had not all been killed,

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but most of them had. He said that in his rapid marches Jackson marched his "foot cavalry" forty-five minutes per hour and rested fifteen minutes, and when they rested he made them lie down. That, like flanking and fighting, was "Stonewall Jackson's way."

Andrew Johnson was President. He had lived in Raleigh, the house was shown me, and was expected to be kind to the South, especially to North Carolinians.

With reference to the number of soldiers of foreign nativity who fought in the Union army this story was told: A "Tar-heel" wanted to be appointed postmaster at some little village. The test oath was presented to him. He said, "Dunno as I kin subscribe to those, suh." "Well," said the officer, "you didn't give any aid or comfort to the enemy, did you?" "Dunno, suh, if thar was much aid or comfort in it, exceptin' an' reservin', that I fit with Uncle Robert endurin' of the wah."

This looked alarming, but the officer was still anxious to favor a citizen of the "Good old North State," so he said, rather hesitatingly, "Well, you didn't kill many Yankees, did you?" "Well, suh, I can't say that I killed any Yankees, but I jist natchelly slayed a right smart chance o' Dutch and Irish."

It was curious to note, in riding about the country in those days, how many white folks, as well as black, had vague notions of distance. "'Bout a mile"



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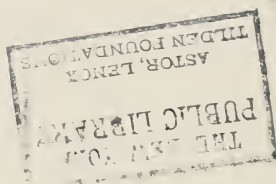
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RICHARD O'BRIEN (2nd), AND FAMILY, INCLUDING RICHARD THE THIRD



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might mean any distance from one to five miles. "A right smart jump," which seemed to be a favorite phrase, was still more indefinite.

Although the Military Telegraph Corps, as a whole, was disbanded December 31st, 1865, a skeleton organization still remained, with a few cipher operators retained for Government business, at important points. I remained at Raleigh for a year and was then called to the War Department, where Charles A. Tinker was still chief operator, and, with George A. Maynard, shared the telegraph work with me. The office was in rooms adjoining those of the great War Secretary, Edwin M. Stanton. The most important cipher work remaining was with General Sheridan at New Orleans. Some one connected with General Grant's staff invented a cipher to communicate with Sheridan, apparently to supersede our cipher, which had been invented by Anson Stager and improved by Tinker, Bates and Chandler. The officer handed us, one evening, a message in his cipher for Sheridan. I asked him to take a seat for a moment, and Mr. Tinker, stepping into the inner cipher room, glanced at the message and saw that it was the simplest kind of a riddle; so he deciphered it on paper, and, handing the translation to the inventor, asked him if he thought it worth while to use a code that could be so easily made out. The message was forwarded to Sheridan in our cipher. As Mr. Bates has shown in his interesting book, "Lincoln in the Telegraph Office," there was

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not much in the shape of a cryptogram that could not be made out by one of the "Sacred Three."

In the Fall of 1866 Mr. Tinker and myself handled a message that, from a telegraphic point of view, was remarkable. The Atlantic cable had been successfully laid. The State Department used a very cumbersome cipher. Apparently, it consisted of taking a dictionary, setting figures opposite the words, and then sending the figures. This dispatch was from Secretary of State Seward to Minister Bigelow at Paris, and presented an appalling array of figures. Our part was to telegraph it to New York, spelling out the figures and taking a copy at the same time, so that each letter could be counted. Mr. Tinker, a first-class operator and rapid sender, transmitted it. My part was to take it by sound from another instrument and make a correct pen copy ; and Hutchinson, afterward manager of the Associated Press and one of the best telegraphers then living, took it in the same way in New York. It was considered somewhat of a test. I have long forgotten the speed and time, but I know that, for hours, Charlie Tinker kept those sounders humming, while "Hutch," in New York, and I, put the stuff down with our pens and waited to see which of us would "break " first. Supper-time came and Tinker was still ripping away, apparently in the middle of the message. He had taken the precaution to order in some sandwiches, which we handled with the left hand and munched while still working

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away with the right. Twilight and evening came, and still that interminable string of spelled-out figures was humming along, but, oh, joy! At last "Hutch" broke (asking the sender to repeat a word). That was the only break, for either of us, in the whole affair. The message was repeated back and every letter of our copies found to be correct. The cable tolls for this dispatch were nineteen thousand five hundred and forty dollars, gold. There was a lawsuit about the charge, which was compromised some years later.

I was in another telegraph test in Washington, before quitting that profession forever. The American Telegraph Company, under its president, Marshall Lefferts, instituted speed tests to determine whether transmission could be improved in that way. Billy Kettles, the boy who, in the military telegraph, had received at the War Department the message announcing the fall of Richmond, was the holder of the prize (a golden telegraph key) for fast sending, at the rate of about fifty-one words per minute, and he had been selected to send fifty messages from the commercial office in Washington to Plaister Cove, Nova Scotia, which was then the cable station. This part of the test had been made, and now the telegraph people invited me to go down to the commercial office and take fifty messages from Plaister Cove.

I went down from the War Department on a Sunday, when the boys had leisure to look on; making it a point of honor with Mr. Marean, the manager, who

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was himself a fine operator, that no one should be permitted to prompt me with a word, on penalty of my quitting the test. The boys at Plaister Cove relieved each other in sending. Some of the stuff, as stock messages, was unfamiliar. The only interruptions were occasional inquiries from Plaister Cove to know if I was getting it, to which Marean would reply, "send faster." Had Billy Kettles, Jim Norris, Morrell Marean, Bunnell, Jacques, or any of the fast senders of the military telegraph, been sending their inspiring music, it had been easy, but the boys at the Cove were trying to send faster than they could, and, at last, in a stock message, one of them flung the word Erie (- - - - -) at me in the midst of a message, in one bunch of dots (- - - - -). The Washington boys looked disgusted. Marean raised a warning hand and not a sound but the hum of the sounder was uttered as I leaned back in my chair and thought of the context for half a minute. Then the word came to me and, dashing it down, my pen raced automatically over the twenty words between it and the sender and kept on with him. The fifty messages were taken without a break.

In August, 1866, General Eckert had become superintendent of the telegraph company and moved to New York. I had been studying the science of electric telegraphy, and was made very proud when, on a newly invented set of repeaters arriving at the commercial office in Washington, and it being

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reported to General Eckert that there was no one there who could put it up, he suggested asking me to try it. I set it up and working. The General, who had taken Richard, Chandler, Bates and Tinker, and many other of his best military telegraphers, with him into the service of the telegraph company, also very kindly offered me, when I was eighteen years old, choice of desirable positions if I would remain in the telegraph. But our good mother had always wished me to be a physician. I regarded the telegraph as only a school, though a good one; and many things in the Civil War, association with army surgeons, the fascination of anatomy and physiology, the hope of saving life and relieving suffering, had inclined me to leave the newest profession, Electricity, wherein I knew that Richard would be the best representative of our family, to enlist in the oldest and most philanthropic profession of all.

I did not wish to quit the service without a farewell look at General Grant, and, with that in view, received from Colonel Wherry the following note of introduction to Colonel Babcock, of General Grant's staff:

Chesapeake Hall,
(Near Ft. Monroe, Va.)
Sept. 7, 1867.

COLONEL O. E. BABCOCK, A. D. C., &c.,
Headquarters Armies U. S.,
Washington, D. C.

COLONEL: This will be handed you by Mr. John E. O'Brien, who was for some time in charge of the

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Telegraph Corps at General Schofield's headquarters, where he proved himself faithful, zealous, and efficient. He is at present cipher operator in the War Office. I commend him to you as one worthy of your courtesy.

Your obedient servant,

WM. M. WHERRY,
Brevet-Colonel U. S. A.

I never presented this kind note, but took the more informal course of delivering a dispatch to General Grant at his house. He was sitting alone, smoking, on his porch, the same quiet, imperturbable figure that he had appeared at City Point when directing all the armies of the Union. That was my last view of the great commander.

When I finally resigned, Mr. Stanton called me, by Colonel Johnson, into his private office, where even Generals had trembled, and, shaking hands, thanked me for my services in the military telegraph and bade me "good-bye." I never saw him again. The great Secretary had been a steadfast and portentous figure, one of the strongest pillars of the Government in the Civil War.

I have now given a simple story of a few incidents of Richard's and my own observation and experience in the military telegraph, omitting details of hardship, sickness and danger. It may serve to slightly indicate the service of some twelve hundred other young men, my comrades, many of whom endured greater hardships and made more costly sacrifices for the Union than I.

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I will close by saying, in brief, that the telegraph was a potent force, a silent intelligence, which pervaded the whole field, synchronized the movements of all our armies and contributed very largely to the triumph of the Union. No such system was ever used in war before. Its operations were little known or noticed, except by the great commanders. The silent wire exhibited no spectacular effect to the superficial observer who became a historian. It could furnish no such scenic pictures for the dramatist as the waving flags of the picturesque signal service. Its influence on the strategy of the war has been little understood, and has, therefore, not been adequately credited by military critics.

I believe that without the telegraph we would have had a still harder task to conquer the South, with our million of men distributed over a wider area than had ever before formed a theatre of actual war (from the Potomac to the Rio Grande). Not only the unity of strategic movements, in widely separated fields, depended on the telegraph, but the prompt and adequate supply of the sinews of war—food, clothing, ammunition—depended on its efficiency as much as the civil business of the country now depends on the Western Union and the Postal systems. All these splendid systems—the military telegraph and the commercial telegraphs—owe their triumphs largely to the same head, General Thomas T. Eckert, and his former lieutenants of the military telegraph.

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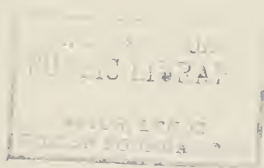
The statement that over 15,000 miles of lines were constructed in the field is official. It appears in Stanton's last report to Congress. Millions of important dispatches were flashed from point to point. Timely reënforcements, concerted action, often hung on the continuity of the wire. My twelve hundred comrades were skilful, faithful and brave. Their Iliad is unsung; but they served and suffered on the battlefield, at their posts in Southern swamps, in Confederate prisons, in heroic expeditions through the enemy's lines. And the pathos, humor and patriotism of their lives, and the romance of their environment, might form a worthy theme to inspire the pen of poet or historian.

Although they were younger men than the average soldier, there are but one-fifth of their number now alive.

When the last one severs his earthly circuit and answers the final call, let this be said of the whole corps, that "not one of its members failed in his duty."



JOHN EMMET O'BRIEN, M. D.



CHAPTER XIX.

SOUTHERN TELEGRAPHERS AND SOME OF THEIR EXPLOITS.

THOUGH the Confederates had not an organized military telegraph with their armies, they had the faithful service of the Southern commercial and railroad telegraphers throughout the war, and, as the movements of the armies in nearly all the campaigns were within their own territory, the civil railroads and telegraphs served them well.

It is interesting to note what happened at Antietam and at Gettysburg to Lee's splendid fighting machine, the Army of Northern Virginia, in the two campaigns of invasion when it came into Northern territory, and to speculate on how much the lack of a military telegraph figured in the defeats, to which that army had been, until then, unaccustomed on its own ground. It appears that the want of coördination in the movements of Lee's columns, and his ignorance of the whereabouts of his cavalry under Stuart, precipitated the battle of Gettysburg at a point which he would not have chosen, and that, in the actual climax of the battle, the wings of his army attacked separately and not together. Therefore, it seems logical to suppose that if Lee had had a military telegraph, such as ours,

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or like that by which the Germans afterwards moved their separate columns in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, he might have been able to avoid Gettysburg or select more favorable ground for the battle, and, in the actual fight, to have attacked with all his forces synchronously. I do not intimate that the final result of the battle, much less of the war, would have been different, for there was the Army of the Potomac! Books have been filled with theories and alleged reasons why Lee lost the battle of Gettysburg, but it has always seemed to me that the best explanation was that of the Texan-Confederate veteran, who said something like this: "I was thar, fighting under Uncle Robert endurin' of the battle. I was in Pickett's charge, and it was my opinion at the time, and I've seen no reason to change it since, that the reason we lost the battle of Gettysburg was on account of them damn Yankees."

The civil telegraphers of the South were, on account of the importance of their telegraph service, exempted from military duty in the Confederate army, and had their loyalty to the Confederacy wavered it was liable to be stimulated by the threat of conscription into the army.

One of the earliest labor union movements in this country was started by the commercial telegraphers of the South in the Fall of 1863, with objects startlingly like those so familiar in all lines of labor now regarding pay, hours, strikes and boycotts. Let us

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see how the Southern Confederacy dealt with the movement at its capital, Richmond, Virginia.

Mr. James T. Cassidy, a Southern telegrapher, at that time, says: "A lieutenant and squad of infantry marched down Main Street to the Southern Telegraph Company's main office, halted his squad outside on the sidewalk, and walked into the office.

"The affable, polished, gentlemanly William Anderson waited on the lieutenant at the counter, and the following conversation took place:

"Lieutenant: 'Is Mr. Charles A. Gaston in?'

"Anderson: 'No sir. I believe he is working in Augusta, Georgia office.' (Gaston was said to be the head of the union.)

"Lieutenant: 'Is Mr. W. D. S. Anderson in?'

"Anderson: 'Yes, sir. That is my name.'

"Lieutenant: 'Is Mr. Lee Jackson in?'

"Anderson: 'No, sir. I think he is working at Fort Malvern.'

"Several others were then named, and called to the counter.

"Lieutenant: 'Gentlemen, I have an order from the commander of Camp Lee for your arrest; please put on your coats and hats and come at once with me.' The operators smiled at each other, wondering what was the trouble, and filed out of the office door.

"Lieutenant (turning to the squad): 'Attention. Carry arms.' (Turning to the operators): 'Gentlemen, please fall in line, about face, march.'

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"They marched out to Camp Lee, about four miles. The commander was not there, having an engagement that evening elsewhere. The operators were placed in the guard-house for the night. Early the next morning they were brought before the commander, who lectured them severely on the absurdity of such a thing as a telegraphers' strike at such a time, when so much depended upon them, appealing to their manhood, as the enemy were at our very doors. He told them plainly that if any further action was taken towards a strike, he would conscript every one of them and see that they were placed in the ranks and that each one carried a musket. All promised to be good and the strike was over. They were then discharged by the commanding officer, who requested them to return to their duties. That was the last heard of the first telegraphers' strike."

Many of the Southern operators performed individual military telegraphic duty, being stationed at military posts or headquarters; and some of them accompanied commands in the field, or raiding expeditions into and through our lines, as did Operator Whitthorne with Forrest, the great Confederate cavalryman, and Ellsworth with Confederate Colonel John Morgan in his audacious raids through Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio. The individual work of some of these Southern boys was so clever and important, and it required so much skill, courage and audacity, that I am glad to compare it favorably with the exploits of our own

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boys of the United States Military Telegraph, and am now proud to claim the work of both sides as all American.

Elsewhere in this book is mentioned the remarkable wire-tapping exploit of Charles A. Gaston, in the service of the Confederates, on our James River line, in the rear of Grant's army, during the siege of Petersburg, which resulted in the great cattle raid of General Wade Hampton's Confederate Cavalry. It is believed that this was not the only military telegraph service of young Gaston, but that he served with Lee's lieutenants at other points around Richmond and Petersburg, and was even in the immediate confidence of General Lee, himself.

As showing the interchange of civil and military service of these Southern telegraphers, I quote further from the interesting reminiscences of Mr. Cassidy, who appears to have been working at Petersburg, Virginia, at the end of 1863 :

“ Within a few weeks I was ordered to Lynchburg * * * *. I was next ordered to Goldsboro, North Carolina, at General Whiting's headquarters * * * *. A few weeks later I transferred my services to Wilmington, North Carolina * * * *. After a few weeks I was ordered back to Richmond, stopping at Weldon, North Carolina. Here I found orders to report to Stony Creek, Virginia, at General Wade Hampton's headquarters. On my arrival there the General had left in the morning in hot pursuit of

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General Kautz's United States Cavalry, who had raided the railroad and destroyed the telegraph wires and railroad tracks. I thereupon returned to Weldon, taking the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad, intending to reach Richmond, via Raleigh and Greensboro, North Carolina, over the Richmond and Danville Railroad. At Raleigh I called at the Southern Express Telegraph Company's office, Rufus B. Bullock, president. (After the close of the war Mr. Bullock was elected Governor of Georgia.) John C. Courtney was superintendent; Bowling W. Stark and John Bragg (nephew of General Braxton Bragg, Confederate States Army), operators. Every wire north was cut, and not a single circuit was working to Richmond. Superintendent Courtney asked me to go to Charlotte, North Carolina, and help him out there, as Richmond was well surrounded by General U. S. Grant's army, and it was doubtful if I could get through the lines. I went to Charlotte, where I worked for a few days, when I left for Richmond. I arrived at Burkesville Junction, fifty miles south of Richmond, where James Harris was manager. Here the trains were tied up on account of General Kautz's raids, which had destroyed the tracks and the telegraph lines. Three or four days afterwards I reached Richmond, where I began working a double-trick, one for the Southern Telegraph Company, and one in the general superintendent's office of the Richmond and Danville Railroad.

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"I was called upon frequently to make trips to Petersburg, a distance of twenty-two miles, to help out. On one occasion, before leaving for Petersburg, I bought a new suit of gray clothes for which I had to pay \$400 in Confederate money, the supply and demand ruling. Printing presses were running freely, but cloth was scarce.

"On another occasion I was ordered to Petersburg, and on reaching that place I found the shelling of the town going on furiously from the Union batteries, and a cannon ball passed through a room in the hotel near the one I was occupying.

"At this time, Lee's army having been reduced to a mere skeleton, with no resources to draw on, and General Grant pressing him hard on all sides with the world to supply his wants, the great struggle appeared to me to be rapidly drawing to a close.

"Operator Edward Smith accompanied General Lee on his retreat from Petersburg to Appomattox, after the battles with General Grant at Chancellorsville, the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, and other places. I recall vividly the evacuation of the city of Richmond, Sunday, April 2, 1865. I had worked part of the day at the key in the main telegraph office. A telegram from General Lee at Petersburg, to President Jefferson Davis, was received by another operator in the forenoon to prepare to evacuate the city at once. Preparations on the inside commenced during the afternoon; heavily loaded wagons, each pulled by

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four-mule teams, were hauling the treasure and government archives down Main Street, passing the telegraph office en route to the Danville railroad depot. The people generally did not know what was going on."

Mr. Cassidy then gives a vivid description of the scenes in Richmond during the evacuation, and the entrance of the United States colored troops, which is too long to be quoted here. (See *Telegraph Age*, July 1, 1900.) But I cannot resist the temptation to quote his description of his last sight of General Lee :

"General Lee surrendered at Appomattox, April 9, 1865. Two or three days later I was walking down Seventh Street towards Main Street, and passing across Franklin Street, I saw General Lee with his staff officers, riding up Franklin from Ninth Street, to his Richmond residence between Seventh and Eighth Streets. They had just arrived from Appomattox. He dismounted in front of his residence, one of the staff taking the bridle of his horse. He immediately walked across the sidewalk into the low iron gate, turned around, saluted his staff, then lifted his hat, without speaking a word, bowed to the crowd of about one hundred people who had recognized him on entering the city, noble looking and dignified as ever, and walked into his front door, alone. That was probably the last time he ever wore the Confederate uniform."

Mr. Cassidy was soon given employment by

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Mr. J. H. Emerick, who had taken Richard O'Brien's place as chief operator, Army of the James, when we were sent with General Schofield on the North Carolina campaign.

In July, 1862, Colonel John Morgan, with a brigade of Confederate cavalry and George Ellsworth, telegrapher, made his first remarkable raid through our territory in Kentucky, the results of which he, with some bravado and exaggeration, summed up in one of a number of audacious telegrams which Ellsworth sent to Union men over Northern wires, as follows :

Somerset, July 22, 1862.

HON. GEO. W. DUNLAP,
Washington, D. C.

Just completed my tour through Kentucky ; captured seventeen cities, destroyed millions of dollars' worth of United States property. Passed through your county, but regret not seeing you. We paroled fifteen hundred Federal prisoners.

Your old friend,
JOHN H. MORGAN,
Commanding Brigade.

In this raid Morgan traversed nearly a thousand miles, mostly in (our) the enemy's country, in twenty-four days, and owed his success in dodging superior forces, largely to the skill and ingenuity with which Ellsworth kept our detachments in confusion, by means of bogus telegrams and information which he dealt out to them over the wires, with superb audacity.

He began operations by tapping the wire, between stations, on the Louisville and Nashville road, and

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intercepting orders from General Boyle, commanding at Louisville, to the forces at Bowling Green, which orders directed the very movements intended to capture Morgan's force. Ellsworth then sent a bogus message purporting to be from Stanley Matthews, provost marshal at Nashville, to Henry Dent, provost marshal at Louisville, describing an alleged attack by Confederate General Forrest on Murfreesboro, routing the Union forces and moving on Nashville. This was on July 10th. Two days later, Ellsworth established himself on the line at Lebanon, fooled the operators at Lebanon Junction, got all the information Morgan wanted, and repeated his scheme of bogus telegrams successfully.

One of his telegraphic swindles was to capture a Northern operator at his station, and, at the mouth of a revolver, compel him to ask a question over the wire, so that Ellsworth could discover and successfully imitate that operator's telegraphy, and assume the prisoner's identity to carry on conversation over the wire, or in sending bogus telegrams. He got the name of a station from which an operator was talking by telling him a gentleman present bet the operator could not spell it correctly, whereupon the operator cheerfully spelled out L-e-b-a-n-o-n J-u-n-c-t-i-o-n.

In reminiscences which Ellsworth published after the war, he says :

"Again I answered, and received the following message :

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'Lexington, July 15, 1862.

'TO GENERAL FINNELL, Frankfort :

'I wish to move the forces at Frankfort, on the line of the Lexington Railroad, immediately, and have the cars follow and take them up as soon as possible. Further orders will await them at Midway. I will, in three or four hours, move forward on the Georgetown Pike. Will have most of my men mounted. Morgan left Versailles this morning at 7 o'clock, with eight hundred and fifty men, on the Midway road, moving in the direction of Georgetown.

'(Signed) BRIGADIER-GENERAL WARD.'

"This being our position and intention exactly, it was thought proper to throw General Ward on some other track ; so, in the course of half an hour, I manufactured and sent the following dispatch, which was approved by General Morgan :

'Midway, July 16, 1862.

'TO BRIGADIER-GENERAL WARD, Lexington :

'Morgan, with upwards of one thousand men, came within a mile of here, and took the old Frankfort road, bound, as we suppose, for Frankfort. This is reliable.

(Signed) WOOLUMS, Operator.'

"In about ten minutes, Lexington again called Frankfort, when I received the following :

'Lexington, July 16, 1862.

'TO GENERAL FINNELL, Frankfort :

'Morgan, with one thousand men, came within a mile of here, and took the old Frankfort road. This dispatch received from Midway, and is reliable. The regiment from Frankfort had better be recalled.

'(Signed) GENERAL WARD.'

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"I receipted for this message, and again manufactured a message to confirm the information General Ward had received from Midway, and not knowing the tariff from Frankfort to Lexington, I could not send a formal message, so, appearing greatly agitated I waited until the circuit was occupied, and 'broke in,' telling them to wait a minute, and commenced calling Lexington. He answered with as much gusto as I called him. I telegraphed as follows :

'FRANKFORT TO LEXINGTON :

'Tell General Ward our pickets are just driven in. Great excitement. Pickets say the force of the enemy must be two thousand. (Signed) OPERATOR.'

"It was now 2 P.M., and General Morgan wished to be off to Georgetown. I ran a secret ground connection, and opened the circuit on the Lexington end. This was to leave the impression that the Frankfort operator was skedaddling, or that Morgan's men had destroyed the telegraph. We arrived at Georgetown about sundown. I went to the telegraph office ; found it locked ; enquired for the operator (Smith), who was pointed out to me. After tea I put in my own instruments. After listening an hour or two at the Yankees talking, I opened the conversation, as follows, signing myself 'Federal Operator' : 'TO LEXINGTON—'Keep mum. I am in the office reading by the sound of my magnet in the dark. I crawled in

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when no one saw me. Morgan's men are here, camped on Doctor Gano's place.' TO GEORGETOWN—'Keep cool. Don't be discovered. About how many rebels are there?' TO LEXINGTON—'I don't know. I did not notice, as Morgan's operator was asking me about my instruments. I told him I sent them to Lexington. He said, "Damn the luck," and went out.' TO GEORGETOWN—'Be on hand and keep us posted.' TO LEXINGTON—'I will do so. Tell General Ward I will stay up all night, if he wishes.' TO GEORGETOWN—'Mr. Fulton wishes to know if the rebels are there.' TO CINCINNATI—'Yes, Morgan's men are here.' TO GEORGETOWN—'How can you be in the office, and not be arrested?' TO CINCINNATI—'Oh, I am in the dark, and am reading by the magnet.' TO GEORGETOWN—'Where is your assistant?' I replied, 'Don't know.' Lexington then asked me, 'Have *you* seen him to-day?' I replied 'No.' That was the last telegraphing I could do in Georgetown, as it exposed the fraud, the operator having no assistant."

I have here attempted to give only a slight indication of Ellsworth's exploits. They may be found more fully recounted in Plum's "History of the Military Telegraph."

Ellsworth, who was a Canadian boy, remained in the telegraph profession and died at the key while

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sending a train order on the Missouri Pacific, some years after the war.

As soon as Lee and Johnston surrendered, many of the Southern operators applied to us for employment. Finding them splendid fellows and good material, Richard employed several of them in North Carolina and Virginia. Among these Southern gentlemen were Mr. David S. Ryan, at Goldsboro; John W. Brown, Wilmington; Nat Topping, New Berne; Duncan, at Greensboro, and others.

After Richard was returned to Virginia and I remained in charge at Raleigh, North Carolina, I was intimately associated, personally and over the wires; with all these gentlemen, and those mentioned by Mr. Cassidy, and, from acquaintance with them, formed a very high and pleasant regard for Southern courtesy and manliness.

Some of the Southern telegraphers performed other service than telegraphy, sometimes at great personal hazard, for the Confederacy. Mr. R. O. Crowley, for many years secretary to the general superintendent of the Western Union Telegraph Company at Atlanta, Georgia, was, in the Civil War, electrician, with a force of about fifty men in the Confederate torpedo service,¹ and, by an interesting coincidence, most of his fine work was done in positions immediately

¹See *Century Magazine*, June, 1898.

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fronting Richard and myself, in James River and Cape Fear River.

Though mining and countermining, in siege operations, were almost as old as gunpowder, torpedoes were then a novelty in war, and the ingenuity of the Confederates in developing them, handicapped as they were by the extreme scarcity of all the materials necessary for their construction, especially electrical essentials, was only equalled by their courage and daring in a service involving unusual danger. In the South it was understood that the Federal authorities considered this service outside the pale of honorable warfare, and might hang any one engaged in it, if captured.

After preliminary experiments, early in 1862, in James River, below Richmond, Mr. Crowley, in the Fall of that year, planted three torpedoes containing one hundred and fifty pounds of powder each, in the Rappahannock below Port Royal, and taking them up to save the wire, in anticipation of the battle of Fredericksburg, he was captured by Kilpatrick's Cavalry on the raid on Richmond, mentioned in a previous chapter, and, though Mr. Crowley had a paper signed Mallory, Secretary of the Navy, and countersigned by Jefferson Davis, President of the Southern Confederacy, attesting his regular service and offering to exchange any captured general for him, in case of his

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capture, he preferred to take the risk of appearing as a civilian to our General Kilpatrick, and, in that character, escaped.

He next placed torpedoes, each containing one thousand pounds of powder, in the James River near Drewry's Bluff, about five miles below Richmond, one of which damaged a Federal gunboat; and, at Deep Bottom, about five miles above Bermuda Hundred, he anchored some two-thousand-pound torpedoes, one of which destroyed the Federal gunboat *Commodore Jones*, with her crew, in Butler's advance, in 1864. All these torpedoes were exploded by electricity and required explosive fuses, insulated wires and chemical batteries, concealed on shore, with men to watch for (our) the enemy's boats and close the electrical circuit at the critical moment.

When General Butler and Admiral Porter made the futile attack on Fort Fisher, Mr. Crowley's attentions were transferred to that point, and by the time Terry had superseded Butler and was ready to make the final attack, Crowley had anchored seven two-thousand-pound torpedoes in the channel of Cape Fear River with battery in a bomb-proof, and wires carried to it. This information was conveyed to the Union fleet by a deserter, and saved them, Mr. Crowley thinks, from serious disaster. He also planted a number of lighter torpedoes in the sand on the land-

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ward side of Fort Fisher, but the heavy shells of Porter's fleet in bombarding the fort, tore up the wires and rendered these torpedoes useless.

Mr. Crowley planted other thousand-pound torpedoes in the Cape Fear River, between Fort Fisher and Wilmington, and they, with perhaps other mechanical torpedoes contributed by the Confederate army, were the articles that disturbed my slumbers at General Schofield's headquarters on the *Spaulding*, as noted in a previous chapter.

It would be impossible, in a book of mere reminiscences, to name all the gallant Southerners who deserve mention in connection with the military telegraphy of the Civil War. I have attempted only to give a few instances of their exploits, as specimens merely of what was done on their side of the conflict. I cannot refrain, however, from mentioning two gentlemen who were at the head of telegraphic affairs in the South, Doctor William S. Morris, president, and Mr. J. B. Tree, general superintendent of the American Telegraph Company lines, which, as I have intimated, were handled for the Confederacy as if they were part of a military telegraphic system. At the outbreak of the war the name of this company was changed to the Southern Telegraph Company, and Doctor Morris, who had been a director of the former, was made president of the latter, with headquarters at

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Richmond, Virginia, where Mr. Tree also was stationed during the latter half of the war, and devoted exceptional energy and enterprise to the maintenance of these Southern lines and their usefulness to the Confederacy for military purposes.

The only other telegraph companies of importance then in the South were the Southwestern Telegraph Company, of which Doctor Norvin Green was president, and John Van Horne, general superintendent, and the Southern Express Company, Rufus B. Bullock, president, which had a telegraph line from Raleigh, North Carolina, to Augusta, Georgia.

The Confederate Government, early in the war, assumed nominal control of all telegraph lines.

THE END.

