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Reminiscences of Jacob C. Switzer of the 22nd Iowa

*Edited by Mildred Throne**

Many of the soldiers of the Union and Confederate armies kept diaries of their experiences; others wrote reminiscences of their army life, often long after the exciting days were over and only the highlights of their soldiering remained fresh in their memories. The following document is of this latter type. Jacob Carroll Switzer was a private in Company A of the 22nd Iowa Infantry Regiment, and his memoirs were written late in life and the manuscript typed for the use of his family. A granddaughter, Miss Katherine Humphrey of the faculty of Iowa State Teachers College at Cedar Falls kindly loaned the manuscript to the State Historical Society. Because of the length of the document, it will appear in installments in several issues of the JOURNAL.

Jacob Carroll Switzer was born on August 30, 1843, at Union Bridge, Carroll County, Maryland, the son of John and Elizabeth (Wolfe) Switzer. In 1857 the family moved to Iowa and settled on a farm in Johnson County. In 1862, at the age of nineteen, Jacob enlisted in the 22nd Iowa, which saw action in the battles of Champion's Hill and Black River Bridge, in the siege of Vicksburg, in the capture of Jackson, Mississippi, and spent some time in the South under General Nathaniel Banks, finally moving east in 1864 to serve under General Philip Sheridan in his Shenandoah Valley campaign. There, at the battle of Winchester, Virginia, on August 19, 1864, young Switzer was so severely wounded that his right leg had to be amputated. Discharged from the service, he returned to Iowa City, studied at the University, served as a clerk of the district court for a time, and then turned to banking, serving Iowa City banks in various capacities for over thirty-five years. He married Mary Evelyn Page in 1871; after her early death, he married Catherine Coover in 1877. The Switzer homestead for some forty years was the former home of Iowa's first territorial governor, Robert Lucas, on Kirkwood Avenue in Iowa City. This house has now been re-

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stored and preserved as an historic site. Jacob Switzer died on May 31, 1914, at the age of seventy-one.[1]

This installment of Switzer's reminiscences covers the period from his enlistment at Iowa City through the famous siege of Vicksburg; the second section will cover the period the 22nd Iowa spent in the far South under General Banks; while the final installment covers the time Switzer spent in Sheridan's forces in the Shenandoah until his wounding at the battle of Winchester and his subsequent hospital experiences. Switzer wrote well, recalling incidents of high drama and low comedy, the intimate details of the soldier's life which do not find their way into official reports. For these insights into the life of the "Billy Yank" of the Union army, these reminiscences are valuable.

Part I

I enlisted on the 18th day of August 1862 in Company A of the Twenty-second Regiment of Iowa Volunteers. I was the first one that enlisted in the morning about 8 o'clock. I was sworn in by Squire Malcolm Murray. I had intended enlisting in the Company raised by Capt. Jim Robinson, who was killed at Vicksburg in the charge, which was Company I of the Twenty-second Regiment; but when I came to town I found that the Company in which my cousin, S. J. Switzer, had enlisted, which was raised for the Eighteenth Iowa, had returned to Iowa City to become Company A of the Twenty-second. I found some of the officers and they hustled me off at once to Squire Murray's office to be sworn in before I might change my mind about the Company which I should join.

An instance of the patriotic sentiment, the deep interest in the prosecution of the war, then prevailing, will be illustrated by my enlistment. When we reached Squire Murray's office, he had just arrived for the day's business and was fixing up his papers in his little office upstairs in an old wooden building, standing about where now stands Lee & Ries Book Store. We went upstairs into his office and an officer (afterwards Capt. D. J. Davis, I think), said: "Here, Squire, swear this man into the service." Squire Murray looked around, saw half a dozen soldiers standing in his office, and said: "Get out of here! I don't swear anybody in up here. Go down

[1] From biographical sketch of Jacob Carroll Switzer in Clarence Ray Aurner, *Leading Events in Johnson County Iowa History* . . . (2 vols., Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1913), 2:871-6; Iowa City *Press*, June 1, 1914.

stairs." He followed down, mounted an old auction table that stood on the edge of the sidewalk, grabbed the American flag, swore me in, waved the flag over me and gave three cheers for the Union. The people on the street looked up and around and began to gather, and during the day probably one hundred recruits were sworn in, every one of whom had three cheers given by the surrounding crowd led by Squire Murray, but in my case the Squire was the only one to give the cheers.

I ought to give a sketch of camp life at "Camp Pope," Iowa City, where my soldier life began. Camp Pope was located on the east side of Summit Street from north of Bowery Street to the Rock Island railroad. The parade and drill ground was on both sides of the railroad up to the front of Governor Kirkwood's house on Kirkwood Avenue. We were all heroes in the eyes of our mothers, sisters, and cousins. With wooden bayonets we challenged the salute of the wooden sword of the officer of the guard as that dignitary made his grand rounds night or day. We halted the fierce school boy as he endeavored to "run the guard line" with his basket of home-made candy, fruit or pies to sell to the unwary veteran for his delectation. We made the day vibrate with the calls of "Corporal of the Guard, Post Number Nine," passing the call around from the farthest post to keep that High Muck-a-muck alive to the importance of the high private on his solitary post and his importance to the safety of this command, to supply his constant need of a chew of tobacco, a drink of water, or to take his gun and keep the enemy at bay, while the private had a private "confab" with his best girl who had just called to see him a few minutes.

It was with a very squeamish stomach that I first took my tin cup, tin plate, tin spoon, and iron knife and fork and went to the soup house for my rations. I looked at the cooks, greasy, dirty, slovenly; and then at the provisions and wondered of what the soup was composed. It didn't seem to me just like "Mother used to cook" but whether I ate or not the meal time only lasted a few minutes and I had other things to think of. One day Mother and the girls and neighbors' girls set us a dinner of good things outside the lines — such as we saw so little of for many weary months after.

Then we drew uniforms and guns — real guns — and the parades of the Twenty-second drew out thousands of visitors every fine day to witness the glitter and pomp of military maneuvers. Those were days of preparation for more serious work, and I must express my belief that, while it seemed to me that we were only playing soldier, they were days well spent and

fully occupied in gaining a knowledge of things and conditions that conduced to make the Twenty-second one of the most efficient regiments in the Union Army.

I was mustered into the United States service with the regiment on the 9th of September 1862, and about the 12th[2] the regiment started at midnight in box-cars, cattle cars, and open coal cars for Davenport to sail for the South. Although we left Iowa City at midnight or later, hundreds of people turned out to see the regiment leave for the seat of war. We left Davenport on a steamer the same day, landed at Montrose, and took coal cars to go around the rapids to Keokuk. At Keokuk we met our first experience in soldiery in a storm. We were quartered in an old foundry or machine shop with less than half a roof, when a tremendous rain storm came up and it was almost impossible to find a dry spot inside of the building large enough to stand on. The boys scattered throughout town and found dry places in stores and saloons. Our stay was very short in Keokuk, we took boat for St. Louis where we landed and made our first march to Benton Barracks, perhaps four or five miles from the landing. In making this march in hot weather through the streets of St. Louis, I concluded if marching was as hard throughout the service I would never be able to stand a day's march for I thought it would have been impossible to march a half mile further.

We remained at Benton Barracks perhaps two weeks, then went by rail to Rolla, Missouri, where we went into winter quarters.[3] Our campaigning in Missouri consisted of forwarding supply trains to the different Union posts in southwest Missouri and acting as escort to the trains. My first day's march was made as escort to a supply train from Rolla to Waynesville. A Company was detailed to guard the train, we made the trip in two days going and two days returning, a distance of thirty miles. About a week before Christmas our Company was detailed to escort a train to Houston, Missouri, fifty or sixty miles, to a post commanded by General Warren.[4]

[2] The 22nd Iowa left Iowa City on Sept. 14, 1862. *Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers in the War of the Rebellion . . .* (6 vols., Des Moines, 1908-1911), 3:559. (Hereafter cited as *Roster and Record.*) Iowa City *Republican*, Sept. 17, 1862.

[3] The regiment left Benton Barracks on Sept. 22, 1862, arriving at Rolla, Mo., the following day. *Roster and Record*, 3:559.

[4] Fitz Henry Warren of Burlington, originally the colonel of the 1st Iowa Cavalry, was promoted to brigadier-general in August, 1862, and was serving at this time under General Samuel Ryan Curtis of Keokuk. A. A. Stuart, *Iowa Colonels and Regi-*

When we arrived at Houston, General Warren, who wished to get the 22nd Iowa detailed to his command, refused to let us return to Rolla and we spent the balance of the winter under his command at Houston with two other Companies of our Regiment detained by General Warren in the same way, making a Battalion under command of Captain Charles N. Lee and in which Captain J. C. Shrader of Company H was detailed as assistant surgeon.[5] This was the first of now Dr. Shrader's duties on the medical staff which resulted in his becoming surgeon of the Regiment, he having begun his medical work while Captain of Company H.

On the trip to Houston we had under our escort a Houston merchant who had been up to Rolla to get some Christmas supplies for his store, among which was a keg of whiskey. Our rear guard secured the whiskey (by what means I don't know) but on the second night out the whiskey had been so generally distributed in the Company that the sergeant in charge of the guard, who had placed me on duty the night before, came to me and said I must stand picket duty that night. I said I had been up all night the night before on such duty and refused to be detailed and asked him the reason why. He said that nearly the whole Company was too full of whiskey to do picket duty and he was afraid of an attack from the rebels. I, however, went to bed and told him if the rebels took the camp they might have me too, I would not stand guard. I don't think the merchant had much whiskey for Christmas to distribute amongst his customers at Houston.

About the forepart of March — I can't give dates — our detachment with the balance of General Warren's troops at Houston, started towards West Plains.[6] We left camp in the morning, got a mile or two on the way

ments . . . (Des Moines, 1865), 35-50, 541-6; Benjamin F. Gue, *History of Iowa* . . . (4 vols., New York, 1903), 4:66, 278-9. Houston is the county seat of Texas County in south-central Missouri.

[5] Charles N. Lee of Iowa City, a veteran of the 1st Iowa Infantry, was captain of Co. A, 22nd Iowa, from June 17, 1862, until his resignation at Vicksburg on Aug. 8, 1863. John C. Shrader of Shueyville, was captain of Co. H of the 22nd. On May 1, 1864, he was promoted to surgeon. *Roster and Record*, 3:624, 652. After the war Dr. Shrader became one of the foremost physicians of Iowa City and a professor in the University medical school. *History of Johnson County, Iowa* . . . (Iowa City, 1883), 773-4.

[6] The correct date for the move toward West Plains was Jan. 27, 1863. *Roster and Record*, 3:559; Simeon Barnett, *History of the Twenty-Second Regiment Iowa Volunteer Infantry* . . . (Iowa City, 1865), 1; S. C. Jones, *Reminiscences of the Twenty-Second Iowa Volunteer Infantry* . . . (Iowa City, 1907), 17.

when the mud was so deep that the wagon trains stuck and could not be pulled through. We returned to our old camp where we quartered, and the next morning started out again. The weather had turned so cold during the night that the ground was completely frozen and carried up the heaviest wagons and artillery on top of the frozen ground. Two or three days march brought us to our Regiment, the seven Companies that had been left in winter quarters at Rolla, and we were again under our old commander, Colonel Stone.[7]

An incident at the winter quarters at Rolla may never have appeared in history. The Colonel, having somehow obtained an almanac, discovered that there was to be an eclipse of the moon at a late hour at night and feeling sure that none of the boys were aware of the fact, planned a surprise for them. When the eclipse was at its height, he had the long roll sounded, as though the camp was about to be attacked by the enemy, hustled the boys out in line of battle facing the moon, and then showed them the eclipse. After fully enjoying the surprise of the boys and the joke, he dismissed the Regiment and let them return to quarters.

Another incident of the same camp might account in part for the appearance of a battle scarred banner. The boys remaining in Rolla, seven Companies, during the entire winter became very tired of the routine duties of camp life and drill and longed for some amusement. The Colonel, seeing their restlessness, decided that as the rebels would not attack them and give battle that he would have a battle amongst the boys; and just after a snow storm he divided the Regiment into two Battalions, set them in line of battle fronting each other on the parade ground and, placing the banner (the regimental banner, not the stars and stripes) between them, directed a battle with snow balls to ascertain which side could capture the banner. I do not know which side was victorious or who commanded either battalion but I do know that the banner suffered more in the contest than any of the contestants themselves.

Our next encampment or stopping place was at West Plains, Missouri, near the Arkansas line. We were there organized under the command of

[7] Col. William M. Stone of Knoxville, originally colonel of the 3rd Iowa, had been captured at the battle of Shiloh, April 6-7, 1862. After his release he was appointed colonel of the 22nd, in which he served until his resignation on Aug. 13, 1863, having been nominated by the Republicans for the governorship of Iowa, an office to which he was elected in 1863 and re-elected in 1865. See Gue, *Hisotry of Iowa*, 3:253; Stuart, *Iowa Colonels and Regiments*, 7-15; *Roster and Record*, 3:574.

General [John W.] Davidson. Our course from West Plains was directed eastwardly toward the Mississippi River in contemplation of joining the Vicksburg campaign. Leaving West Plains, our next encampment was at a place called Thomasville. (When I mention towns in the State of Missouri or give names of places, you must not imagine any large cities. If there was a house in Thomasville, I did not see it; however, we may have camped some distance from the place.) At this point we were out of rations and stopped to grind corn to supply the place of army bread.

The army sutler is perhaps an individual and an attachment to an army but little known to those not acquainted with war. He is always on hand promptly when his financial interest is benefitted thereby and never to be found when most needed. At Thomasville our sutler came into camp on wheels with a single cheese or two which, in consequence of the scarcity of provisions, he sold out in about fifteen minutes at an enormous profit to himself, charging for a pound or two about what the entire cheese cost him.

Our halt at Thomasville was but for a day or two and we again took up the march over the Ozark Mountains toward rations. The mill had supplied us but very little in the way of provisions. A short way out from the camp, an orderly came back from the front along the line, saying, "Boys, a mile and a quarter to hard tack." Of course that was good news and the boys stepped off lively, but a mile and a quarter stretched out to two and a half, then to five and perhaps it was ten miles before we came late at night by the side of a wagon train loaded with provisions.

An incident on this march was the sight of the first dead rebel seen by any of the members of the Regiment who had not been in the service in the 1st Iowa.[8] Marching over the mountains the column of troops came upon a tall red-headed "bushwhacker" dressed in butternut clothing, lying dead in the middle of the road, with his wife and children crying over his remains. As the troops came up, the column opened and the front and rear ranks marched one on each side of the party and took a look at their first dead rebel. The touching part of the scene was the weeping and wailing of the dead man's family, the wife and mother calling upon the soldiers to witness that he was a brave man and was not running away but faced his

[8] The 1st Iowa was a 90-day regiment, mustered under Lincoln's first call for troops, and had served in Missouri, taking part in the battle of Wilson's Creek. After the regiment was mustered out on Aug. 21, 1861, many of the men joined the other Iowa regiments being enlisted for three years.

enemy. He evidently was shot in the forehead, killing him instantly. He, however, was known to the Union cavalry as a dangerous man and relentless bushwhacker and they, getting upon his trail that morning, were determined to capture him and reported that he refused to surrender when commanded to. To most of the soldiers of the Regiment, who passed through many scenes of carnage and bloodshed during the war, this was the most affecting scene witnessed by them during the entire service.

Crossing a branch of the Currant [*sic.* Current] River, shallow but very swift, was another experience of soldier life. The river was filled with wagons placed in the water, end to end, and the soldiers climbed into the wagon beds and by constant climbing from wagon to wagon crossed the stream. This was the only pontoon bridge of the kind met in my experience.

After crossing the Currant River, we struck a stream known as Sinking Creek. Crooked Creek perhaps would be a better name for I think we crossed it twenty to forty times before we got to its head where a spring came out of the mountain boiling up into a very large stream at its source.

Our next lengthy halt was made at Iron Mountain on the St. Louis & Pilot Knob Railroad.[9] We camped on the side of the mountain which is said to be composed of the richest iron ore in the country. There I first saw the process of smelting iron ore and extracting iron pigs from the original ore. . . .

From Iron Mountain we went to St. Genevieve on the Mississippi River across the country. St. Genevieve is said to be the oldest city on the Mississippi River and the country westward from it toward Iron Mountain, of which Farmington is about the center, is a very old settled country and the finest country I saw in Missouri. We were preparing to sail down the river and join Grant's army then concentrating for the investment of Vicksburg. Our camp at St. Genevieve lasted two or three weeks, perhaps,[10] and a number of our weak-kneed patriots learning that we were about to get near to the rebels deserted while we were in this camp, thinking it easier I suppose to get to the north from there than further south.

We took steamer at St. Genevieve and our first landing place, as I recollect, was Helena, Arkansas, prior to which our boat halted at Columbus,

[9] The troops reached Iron Mountain on February 26, 1863. *Roster and Record*, 3:560.

[10] The regiment remained at Ste. Genevieve from March 12 to 22, 1863. They left on the steamboat *Black Hawk* and reached Milliken's Bend on March 27. Barnett, *History of the Twenty-Second Iowa . . .*, 2; *Roster and Record*, 3:560.

Kentucky, and Memphis, and we passed Island Number Ten — so long a rebel stronghold, now entirely washed away, I am informed. But we made only a short stop. Helena was a swampy malarious hole where the soldiers were dying of disease very rapidly. We pursued our course south and landed at Millikens Bend, a few miles north of Vicksburg where we found in advance of us thousands of soldiers encamped for the purpose of marching around Vicksburg on the west side of the river and approaching it from the south side and rear. I do not know how long our camp continued at Millikens Bend but in a very few days the army began to move southward. Our Corps was the first to move.

I might add here that we were placed in the Third Brigade of the Second Division of the 13th Army Corps.[11] Our Brigade was commanded by General Lawler, the Division by General Carr, and the Corps by General McClernand. Our Division took the advance in the first movements of the Army.

After our Regiment had proceeded on the march from Millikens Bend about two or three miles, our Company was ordered back to the Bend to unload wagons and provisions from the transports to follow the army with supplies. I think the Company was engaged two or three days in this work and when we started after the army it was with a wagon train of many wagons, quite a number of our Company being detailed as teamsters. But as soon as we returned to our old camp, I was taken sick and broke out with something like small pox and became very sick for a day or two. Our assistant surgeon was still in camp and he was called in to see me and I asked if it was small pox. He said he could not tell until the next day and would come back and see me again, but he did not come. There had been small pox in the camp before the army moved. However the breaking out on my face disappeared in a day or two and I got much better and was able to climb upon a wagon and start with the Company when the train moved.

I must here give credit to brother James, who was in the same Company, for his care and attention to me at this time, as he refused to go to work

[11] At this time the 22nd Iowa was assigned to the 2nd brigade of the 14th Division, 13th Army Corps, Army of the Tennessee. The brigade consisted of the 21st, 22nd, 23rd Iowa, and the 11th Wisconsin, and was commanded by Brig. Gen. M. K. Lawler. The Division commander was Maj. Gen. Eugene A. Carr; the Corps commander, Maj. Gen. John A. McClernand. *War of the Rebellion . . . Official Records . . .* (128 vols., Washington, D. C., 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XXIV, Part I, 138. (Hereafter cited as *Official Records.*)

with the others but stayed and took care of me during the entire time, regardless of the danger to which he exposed himself of taking small pox. I think I had a light case of varioloid because afterward during the war I was exposed to small pox again but did not take it.

The train stopped at about 1 o'clock in the morning — we had moved in the evening — the teamsters unhitched their teams and James and I, finding it cool on an open wagon, dismounted and made a bed on the porch of a house close to where our wagon stopped and both fell asleep. When we awoke in the morning the sun was high and our train gone. We slept so soundly that the noises did not wake us. So I had to take my accoutrements and march. On this march we encountered the 8th Wisconsin Regiment that carried the eagle known as "Old Abe," which went with the regiment through the war and was in every battle in which the regiment was engaged and lived many years after the war. I think his stuffed body is now in the capitol at Madison, Wisconsin.

On this march, until we reached what is known as Hard Times Plantation, our Company was detached from the Regiment and we had varied experiences. At one point we struck a bayou or old arm of the river where provisions were loaded into flat boats — I suppose they were coal barges; they could not be managed by oars or sails or poles and were let down into the Mississippi River by a process called "snubbing up."

The process of snubbing up is perhaps of sufficient interest to bear description. The boat is tied to trees, roots or stumps along the bank or standing in the overflowed grounds, with long ropes and let down by loosening the line while another rope is caught to a tree lower down. The snubbing up seemed to be the round turn with which the boat was brought to a halt as the end of the slack rope was reached and preparation made to fasten another line — when I say the boat was brought to a "halt," you understand I am speaking as a soldier and not as a sailor. You may suppose our "sailing" without sail or oar was a slow process and to me, sick as I was, it was torture in the extreme. The boats were very deep which prevented any circulation of air and, having no coverings to keep off the sun, we were nearly broiled in the hot southern rays. We could climb to the edge of the boat for a moment to get air but had no way of hanging on or keeping such a position for any length of time.

When we reached the mouth of the bayou our boat was let loose and floated out into the Mississippi and was heading directly towards Grand

Gulf where the rebels had fortifications which would have blown us out of the water. But we had not been in the river long until *Queen of the West*, if I remember correctly, one of the transports that had run the batteries at Vicksburg[12] for the purpose of transporting troops across the river below, came to our rescue, picked up our boat and landed us near our camp at Hard Times Plantation. As soon as the steamer attached itself to our boat, I climbed out and got aboard the *Queen of the West* and was greatly revived by the fresh breeze in the cool shade of the cabin deck. This steamer had received two shots clear through during its passage past the batteries at Vicksburg; one cannon shot passed through the saloon of the steamer, breaking the large looking glass and wrecking the fine furniture of the vessel.

As soon as the troops had gathered in sufficient force at this last landing, preparations were made for crossing the river and entering upon the active campaign of Vicksburg. General Grant's plan was to take his gun boats down, shell the batteries at Grand Gulf, silence their guns and land his troops under shelter of the gun boats and make that his crossing point for the army. And to carry out that plan, he loaded his transports with troops, our Regiment being among the number, ready to land as soon as the gun boats had performed their duty; but Commodore Porter found the batteries too strong for him, he failed to silence them after several hours vigorous battle and the troops were again landed and marched further down the river on the west side, while the gun boats again shelled the batteries and during this battle the empty transports were run by for the purpose of

[12] Switzer is mistaken in the name of the boat. The *Queen of the West* had indeed run past Vicksburg, but on Feb. 2, 1863, and in broad daylight. Two weeks later, after doing considerable damage to Confederate shipping, the *Queen* ran aground under the fire of Confederate batteries and had to be abandoned to the enemy. The Confederates repaired the *Queen* and used her to good effect against Union boats in the river. See James Russell Soley, "Naval Operations in the Vicksburg Campaign," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (4 vols., New York, 1956), 3:564-5. Many other Union gunboats and transports ran the batteries at Vicksburg on the night of April 16, 1863. Grant, having failed to take Vicksburg from the north, had decided to move his troops south of the city, on the west side of the river, and then cross them to the eastern bank just below Grand Gulf, some fifty miles south of Vicksburg. His troops would need the supplies which were all north of Vicksburg. A number of gunboats and transports ran past Vicksburg, sustaining considerable damage, but managing to get the supplies through. One of these transports was the *Forest Queen*. Possibly this was the boat Switzer had in mind. See *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* (2 vols., New York, 1885), 1:460-64. (Hereafter cited as Grant, *Memoirs*.)

crossing the army below. Our regiment was the first to land on Mississippi territory in this memorable campaign and the first to open battle with the enemy.[13]

I had not recovered from my sickness entirely and was not permitted to go with the Regiment when they left Hard Times Plantation. About fifty of the Regiment were left back sick and had charge of the camp which was left standing. During the few days we remained, we lived high on fish and also dew berries which we found in abundance in the fields.

The army crossed the river at a place called Bruinsburg, a few miles below Grand Gulf, and marched into the enemy's country. About I o'clock the next morning, May 1st, they encountered the Confederate army and the battle of Port Gibson was fought. As soon as Grant's army got into the rear of Grand Gulf batteries, they were evacuated and our troops and supplies following the first were landed at that point.

We were ordered to strike camp and follow, and taking boat we landed at Grand Gulf. Remained there one night when a train was loaded with ammunition and provisions to follow the army. Our surgeon, Dr. White, was in Grand Gulf and when we were called into line as escort to the train, the Doctor informed us that no sick men were wanted at the front; unless a man could carry "forty rounds," a knapsack, and three to five days rations he must remain back. I had been refused permission to go when the Regiment started from Hard Times because I had not yet fully recovered and I made up my mind that I would not be left at Grand Gulf. I shouldered my knapsack, took my forty rounds, took charge of a wagon, and started bravely up out of the low ground into the hills. I found that my ambition was greater than my strength. Before I got half way up the first hill my knapsack was in the wagon, soon my cartridge box and haversack followed, and before we had proceeded a mile I was in the wagon myself. I found that I could not stand hard marching in my then weakened condition. We took the first provision train that reached the army after crossing the river below and overtook our Regiment the evening before the battle of Champion's Hill on the 15th day of May. I stood on the side of the road when the Regiment passed me going into camp and I thought for some time that it was a strange regiment — I hardly knew the men of my own Company, so changed were they in a few days' hard campaigning on

[13] This was on April 30, 1863. *Roster and Record*, 3:560.

short rations. I knew I did not feel worse than they looked and I joined the Company and went into camp, glad to get back to the Regiment again.

The next day, May 16th 1863 occurred the battle of Champion's Hill, the first battle in which I was engaged.[14] The 13th Corps was in reserve that day until towards evening and we did not see very much fighting. However, late in the afternoon, we were moved forward into line of battle toward the left of the army and took a position in the edge of a piece of timber, receiving a severe shelling from the enemy. The solid shot and shell went whistling and roaring over our heads and we were lying on arms unable to do anything towards defending ourselves — this is considered the severest trial to the soldier. But inaction did not last long. Our Company, together with Company B, were deployed as skirmishers and commenced an advance over the field, feeling for the enemy. During our waiting spell in the timber we witnessed a very stubbornly contested fight on our left, a regiment of Union troops endeavoring to capture a battery in a little strip of timber in their front. The little band of Union men were slowly driven back, leaving the open field strewn with dead and wounded, but stubbornly contesting every inch of the ground. This sight, very often witnessed in war, to a soldier who had not been in battle before, was anything but encouraging — it was not calculated to steady his nerve. However, after

[14] After the capture of Port Gibson and the evacuation of Grand Gulf, Grant began to move his troops northeastward to cut off the Confederate troops at Vicksburg from those at Jackson, Mississippi, some 50 miles to the east and connected with Vicksburg by a railroad. "It would not be possible for Pemberton [the Confederate commander at Vicksburg] to attack me with all his troops at one place, and I determined to throw my army between his and fight him in detail," wrote Grant. He now had with him three corps: the 13th under McClernand; the 15th under Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman; and the 17th under Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson. In the three-pronged movement toward the railroad line between Vicksburg and Jackson, McPherson's corps met 6,000 Confederates at Raymond on May 12 and defeated them. Grant now decided to send his whole force against Jackson before turning west to attack Vicksburg. Meanwhile, he had learned that the Confederate General, Joseph E. Johnston, had just reached Jackson to take command of the Confederate forces in Mississippi. On May 14, Grant attacked and took Jackson, while Johnston withdrew his troops northward, planning to flank Grant and join Pemberton, preferably at Clinton, on the railroad some ten miles west of Jackson. Johnston sent a message to Pemberton to that effect, one copy of which Grant intercepted. Grant quickly turned his forces around and started westward. Pemberton, unwilling to leave Vicksburg unguarded, had moved out slowly and with only a portion of his troops, in spite of Johnston's orders. Grant and Pemberton met at Champion's Hill, about halfway between Jackson and Vicksburg. Grant, *Memoirs*, 1:485-513. See also Kenneth P. Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General* . . . (4 vols., New York, 1949-1956), 4: Chap. 12, for description of Grant's movements up to battle of Champion's Hill.

getting into action, moving over the field in skirmish line, and finding no considerable body of the enemy in our front, the tension of the nerves, caused by the suspense of waiting, was relieved and we moved along as if we were simply marching into camp. Having found no rebels, Captain Lee rallied our Company into column and we were marching forward over the field in the direction the enemy had taken, when without any warning, from a little bunch of timber to our left front, we received a volley of musketry which stopped our march for the time being. Hardly had we time to consider whether to retreat or advance on the enemy, when a battery of our light artillery came flying past us to our right, unlimbered within a hundred yards of us, fired a shot or two into the little strip of timber, and the enemy were gone. They were at the time we entered the battle in retreat and our movements only assisted in hastening their flight.[15] The enemy were completely routed in the battle, in which the 24th Iowa did the hardest fighting and received the severest punishment. We camped with the Regiment about 1 o'clock the next morning at Edwards Station, on the railroad leading from Jackson to Vicksburg, and at daylight we were moving in advance after the enemy in the direction of Vicksburg.

Before going into the battle of Champion's Hill, we had stacked our knapsacks and at night when we camped had no blankets or anything to make a bed. Finding it difficult to sleep without any accommodations, I began to look around for supplies. I found a small house adjoining what I supposed was a large plantation house, and some of the boys had got the door open and were helping themselves to feather beds, pillows, and other kinds of bed clothing. They were making their investigations by the light of a piece of tallow candle about an inch long. Just as I got inside and saw the character of the find, the candle went out; the others had taken what they desired; I reached down, grabbed an armful in the dark and went to our quarters to see what I had. I found several blankets and a beautiful white bed quilt. Our mess made a bed of the articles and the next morning I took the white bed quilt and gave the remainder to the others as we did not know when our knapsacks would be returned to us if at all. I intended to preserve the quilt and send it home but it got lost in the campaign or

[15] McClernand was in "easy hearing" of the battle, Grant wrote, but did not come up as rapidly as the commander wished. McClernand arrived when the enemy was in retreat, and Grant sent Carr's division of his corps in pursuit of the enemy. For battle, see Grant, *Memoirs*, 1:513-21; Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General*, 4:375-80.

stolen. Our knapsacks were returned to us after the battle of Black River Bridge which was fought on that day, May 17th.

The battle of Black River Bridge[16] was at the point where the Jackson & Vicksburg railroad crossed the Black River, crossing a low valley on the east to a high bluff on the west bank of the river. The rebel fortifications consisted of heavy batteries on the high bluff on the west and a rifle pit extending across the bend of the river on the east side from a strip of timber on the north to the river below. This rifle pit was dug in the rear of a deep bayou filled with water and also filled with brush, trees and other debris, making it impossible for troops to cross. The field in front of the works was level and open on the right and left, but covered by a little patch of timber in the center on the railroad.[17] Here, our Brigade being in advance, we were deployed on the right and formed in line of battle and stood thus for a long time in plain view of the enemy, receiving a brisk fire from their sharp shooters. Their batteries were shelling the woods in front and cutting through the trees and endangering many lives with falling limbs, splinters, etc.

It is my opinion that General Grant did not intend to force the fighting at Black River Bridge, as Sherman was advancing on Vicksburg by the Clinton road further north and I think he intended to hold the troops in front of us until Sherman could get into the rear of the rebel army.[18] But Grant had censured General McClernand for not bringing his troops into action at Champion's Hill the day before and, while I have no authority for saying so, I believe that McClernand determined to show Grant that the 13th Corps could do some lively fighting.

[16] For battle, see Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General*, 4:380-82; Grant, *Memoirs*, 1:523-6.

[17] Brig. Gen. Michael K. Lawler, commanding the 2nd Brig., 14th Div., 13th Army Corps., of which the 22nd Iowa was a part, wrote in his report on May 26, 1863: "We came upon the enemy at Big Black Bridge, strongly posted behind skillfully constructed rifle-pits, extending across a neck of land formed by the Big Black River, his flanks well protected by this stream, and having in his front, in addition to the rifle-pits, a bayou filled with brush and fallen trees." *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, 135.

[18] Sherman had come up from Jackson, reaching Grant at the Big Black at 2 A. M. on May 17. Grant told Sherman he would "endeavor to hold the enemy in my front while he [Sherman] crossed the river" and flanked Pemberton. Had Pemberton obeyed Johnston's orders, Grant wrote, he would not have stopped at the crossing of the Big Black, but would have turned northward to form a junction with Johnston. This would have meant giving up Vicksburg, and this Pemberton would not do, in spite of orders from his superior. Grant, *Memoirs*, 1:522-3.

Our Brigade was massed in column of regiments; the 23rd Iowa in advance, the 21st Iowa next, the 11th Wisconsin following them, and the 22nd Iowa in the rear. The 23rd Iowa advanced on the open field in front of the works, the ditch and obstructions being invisible. They reached the obstructions and were compelled to abandon the field and were very badly used up. Col. Kinsman in command was killed leading his men. The 21st Iowa following lost a great many men; the 11th Wisconsin suffered less. Our Colonel, William M. Stone, seeing the situation and observing that no fire came from the timber on our right, asked leave to charge his Regiment into the timber and we advanced on the double quick. Reaching the timber, we found the rifle pit ended with the open ground and we took an enfilading fire of the works. The rebels fled in confusion, many of them jumped into the river and it was said that many were drowned in attempting to cross in that way. The battle lasted but a very few minutes after the troops started into the charge.[19] The Confederates fired the railroad bridge before leaving and continued to fire upon us from their batteries on the west side of the river but the shots went over our heads, doing us no damage as they could not depress their guns sufficiently to hurt us who were in front. . . .

I had not recovered fully from my severe spell of sickness; and having had issued to us in the campaign three days' rations which was to last us five days, and being out of hard tack and our usual provision, I went on to the battle field and gathered up a rebel haversack or two that had been thrown away in their flight and found some corn bread. I call it "rebel corn bread" for I think it was about as deadly as the rebel that carried it. I ate some and it made me very sick indeed. I was unfit for marching or campaigning but as the army was on the move and our ambulances and wagons had gone ahead I was compelled to make the march.

We started the next evening and marched till 1 o'clock in the morning when we overtook the Regiment and went into camp. The next morning I reported sick and unable to march but was informed that the ambulance was full of sick and I must march or stay behind. I was determined not to be left behind so I started out with the Company but fell out of ranks

[19] Grant called this attack by Lawler's division a "brilliant and daring movement." Lawler himself gives credit for the idea for the movement to Col. William H. Kinsman of the 23rd Iowa. Kinsman, as Switzer mentions, was killed in the attack. Samuel Merrill, Colonel of the 21st Iowa, and later Governor of Iowa, was severely wounded during the fight. *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XXIV, Part I, 54; Part II, 136; *Roster and Record*, 3:455, 685.

frequently to rest and, after marching a half a mile or perhaps a mile and taking a short rest, I found that it was almost impossible for me to go at all. I, however, made a few rods between rests and had about given up, when one of my Company, H. D. Carson (who had been detailed at Milliken's Bend as teamster) came along with the wagon of the Corps medical director. I told him my situation and he asked me to get in and ride. I went with him to the Corps director's headquarters near Vicksburg, and camped under his wagon and began to think it was my last camping ground. I was terribly sick. Finally Carson said he was going to call the doctor to see me or I would die there. The doctor looked at me, asked me where I belonged. I told him to Carr's Division. He said, "Go up on the hill, there is the Division Hospital, and tell them to take good care of you. You are a very sick boy." I replied, "I can not get there myself to save my life. I cannot walk that far." He called a man who took me to the hospital in a buggy which had been captured somewhere in the campaign. I started to go into the building to convey the orders of the Corps director, when I met a hospital steward or some one filled with brief authority at the steps and he asked, "Are you wounded?" I answered "No." "Well, get out of here, none but wounded are allowed inside." So I went out under the trees and lay on the ground.

It was just after the terrible charge of the 22nd of May[20] and hundreds of wounded were in hospital and others coming in constantly from the field.

In a few minutes it began to rain and I picked up my accoutrements, went around the house, crawled into a shed kitchen attached to the house, got into the dry, and made my bed beside several others, sick and wounded. By getting into the building, I obtained some hospital supplies, i. e., good hard tack and coffee. Having been fed on rebel corn bread and hot biscuit, very heavy and indigestible, I needed only a little rest and good provisions on which to recuperate.

While I was there, every morning in front of the hospital would be laid out on the grass a row of from ten to twenty dead soldiers, who had died during the night from wounds. I recollect the incident, while there, of June Lawson, a soldier of Company G of the 22nd, who had been wounded in

[20] After the defeat of the Confederates at the Big Black, Grant had moved his army up to Vicksburg. Fearing an attack from Johnston in his rear, Grant ordered an attack on the city, thinking that it would fall quckly and he could then turn his attention to Johnston. The assault failed, however, and Grant had to prepare for a siege. Grant, *Memoirs*, 1:531.

the charge on the 22nd of May and left on the field between the lines; being unable to get off himself he remained on the field for forty-eight hours until an armistice was held to bury the dead between the lines. He was found and brought into the hospital. He was shot squarely in the middle of the breast, the ball coming out at his left side and entering the fleshy part of his arm. I took care of him for several hours. He was glad to be among friends and felt that he was going to recover. His eye was bright as ever and I thought that he would get well too, and wondered that the surgeon gave him no attention only to direct that his wound be thoroughly bathed with cold water, which I did. The surgeon knew better than either of us for in twenty-four hours he was dead.

Here was the first operating upon wounded by the surgeons that I witnessed. To most people the sight is more trying than a battle. The sight of blood, the groans of the wounded, &c., have a tendency to shake the nerves of ordinary persons and those not accustomed to surgical work.

A day or two of good provisions and I was ready again for duty and joined the Company in camp around the fortifications of Vicksburg.[21] Our camp was in the head of a short ravine, formed in a circle with the convex side to the enemy, around the brow of the hill at the foot of which was a spring from which we and many other Regiments in the vicinity obtained our supply of drinking water. We were encamped about a quarter of a mile south of the railroad and our Corps was on the left of the Union army in the investment. After the charge of the 22nd was made, the army settled down to a siege with a view of starving out or digging out the enemy. Our camp was from seven hundred to a thousand yards from the main fortifications of the enemy's works. Between the brow of the hill, on which we were camped, and the enemy was very uneven ground. There was a deep valley in our front, the ground from our side sloping nearly to the Confederate works but interspersed with knolls and higher ground in other directions. Attached to our command was a battery of eight guns which was located almost immediately in front of our Company, just a little higher up the hill. This was the line of the rear light artillery. Our fortifications were built at night while we could not be seen, for in the day

[21] Vicksburg was now completely surrounded by Union forces: Grant's army on the land the naval gunboats in the river. Grant stationed his corps with Sherman on the right, McPherson in the center, and McClernand on the left. *Ibid.*, 1:534. For the complete story of the siege, see *ibid.*, 532-70; Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General*, 4:388-425.

time it was dangerous to stick a head above the works as it would be sure to draw fire from the enemy, and they used the same caution to prevent being bombarded from our side. Having located our battery, our engineers commenced a zig-zag ditch in the direction of the enemy's works, going a few feet in one direction, then turning in a circle or angle in another direction.[22] A little to the right of our front, we erected a small fort, called the Horse Shoe Fort, perhaps one-third the way between our lines and Fort Beauregard, which was the name of the rebel fort immediately in our front. From the Horse Shoe Fort the ground in every direction toward the Confederate works sloped downward, the fort being situated on a knoll, and the engineering required to cross the ground toward the enemy was exceedingly difficult. A work called the middle rifle pit, nearly half way between the rear line and the Confedrate works, ran parallel with the enemy's lines and connected with the Horse Shoe Fort. The method of getting up to the Confederate works from the Horse Shoe Fort was by digging a ditch to our left parallel with the center rifle pits and immediately in the direction of a Confederate fort to our extreme left. This would seem an impossibility without exposure to the enemy in that direction but the ditch was dug about six feet deep and narrowed so that a bale of cotton would, being laid crosswise, reach from one bank to the other. At the ditch proceeded down the hill a bale of cotton was laid across the top, and farther down the hill another bale, and so on until the foot was reached. The cotton being laid sufficiently close together that a shot going over the top of one bale would strike into the bale above, thus leaving a comparatively open ditch with perfect protection against gun shot. Through this ditch the soldiers, going and coming to and from the front, passed every day during the siege unmolested. I do not recollect of a man being wounded in these approaches during the siege. The lower end of this ditch ended in a ravine or gully by which we were protected from the view of the enemy.

Another ditch was dug into the hill upon which the rebel fortifications were erected, somewhat to the left of Fort Beauregard and the Horse Shoe Fort; then lateral ditches were dug to the right and left with many angles and turns to accord with the surface of the ground and the approach of the enemy's works. This ditch was constructed so as to cross the front of Fort

[22] For reports of the army engineers in charge of this approach to Vicksburg, see *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, 168-208.

Beauregard within a stone's throw of the point of the Fort, which stood upon a steep hill in front of and above a ravine across which our rifle pits were constructed with comparative ease in plain view of the Fort. The enemy could not molest our workers in front of the Fort and so far below them, because any attempt to do so would be to expose themselves to our sharp shooters far in our rear at Horse Shoe Fort and our rear line of works. At the lowest point in this ravine where our works crossed, a ditch was started into the embankment right under the Fort. To protect themselves from the enemy's fire, the workers constructed a roller composed of barrels, around which were rolled cane brakes woven into a mattress with elm bark. This mattress was wound around the barrels until the roller was five or six feet high. This was rolled up the hill as the ditch approached the Fort until the sappers and miners decided they had maintained the surface of the ground as long as necessary, when they dug a mine or tunnel directly into the hill under the Fort. It was the intention to fill this tunnel with gun powder and explode the mine and destroy the Fort so that the troops could charge into the works and capture them.

In the earlier part of the campaign, a mine had been similarly placed under a fort far to our right, about the center of the Confederate works, and the fort blown up and the Union forces charged into the breach, but without any beneficial results to the Union cause.

About the 1st of July, while much of the army was far in the rear attending to Joe Johnson [*sic.* Joseph E. Johnston] who was at Black River, and our line of battle was comparatively light — most of us being in the extreme out works watching the Confederate movements with great care, as it was probable they they would try to cut through our lines and break out for we thought they were about out of provisions and knew that they could not stand a much longer siege, and it was the special desire of the Union army to capture every Confederate soldier in Vicksburg — the nerves of the soldiers were drawn to an extreme tension by the constant service and danger of the situation. They slept on their arms at all times while in proximity to the Confederate works and the least suspicious noise or unusual movement would call every man to his feet instantly, although sound asleep in the ditch. To illustrate the tension to which the nervous system was strung, I will relate an incident in connection with our mine which was never exploded as intended by our engineers.

It was about the above date, the 1st or 2nd of July,[23] perhaps after midnight. Everything was perfectly still, not a sound was heard from either army. The troops were lying in the ditch upon their arms, sleeping apparently as soundly as if at home in their beds. All at once the whole line immediately jumped to their feet, threw the muzzles of their guns over the embankment in the direction of the enemy and then breathlessly waited for — what? No shot had been heard by any one, no noise had alarmed any of the troops, and after waiting a few minutes the soldiers began to question each other, "What did you hear?" "Nothing. Did you hear anything?" "No." "Was there any fire?" "Not a shot." "What has occurred?" No one could tell. It perhaps was not two minutes but it seemed ten, until around the corner of the ditch came one of the sappers and miners who had been working in the mine. It was E. J. C. Bealer of my Company. He was talking of the rebels in no very complimentary terms. Here was a solution perhaps to our alarm, so we turned to question him as to the cause of his excitement. He said that the Confederates had put in a counter mine to blow ours out, but had made a miscalculation in their engineering and had only thrown about a barrel or two of dirt down in our tunnel, the most of which fell upon engineer Bealer but did not hurt him very much. In fifteen minutes they were again at work cleaning out the earth thrown down by the Confederate mine and all was again quiet.

Bealer's particular grievance seemed to be that the Confederate explosion had caused them the additional work of removing the dirt thrown into the mine by their fruitless waste of powder. To explain my jumping to my feet without apparent cause, I will say that the only thing that I then recollected as the cause of my awakening was that a few grains of dirt fell from the rear embankment upon me, which no doubt was caused by the explosion, but my thought at the instant was that it was the result of a stealthy foot on the rear embankment over my head and might be that of an enemy stealing through our lines while we slept, or that we might even then be trapped and surrounded by Confederates. . . .

In the battery in front of our camp was an old Napoleon gun,[24] which

[23] According to the report of Lieut. Peter C. Hains, chief engineer with the 13th corps, the Confederates made two attempts at exploding mines in front of the sappers in this sector of the front; one on June 28, "doing no damage whatever," and another on July 3, also with no damage. It is probably to one or the other of these incidents that Switzer refers here. *Ibid.*, 185, 186.

[24] A "Napoleon gun" was a brass field gun adopted in France about 1856.

frequently exploded shells at the muzzle. The cause was said to be that the ammunition did not fit the gun. Whatever the cause, the results were far from amusing to us who were usually in front of it when it was fired, the shot from which was expected to carry far over our heads into the enemy's lines. One morning, after having returned from picket duty in front, my brother James and I lay down in the Horse Shoe Fort as a reserve guard for the day and went to sleep in front of the old Napoleon. We were awakened by the screaming and hissing and whizzing of the fragments of shell and shot over our heads and into our midst. The gun had exploded a shell and scattered its fragments all around and amongst us in the Fort, which was filled with soldiers, but fortunately no one was hurt. On another occasion, I saw it explode a shell into a body of our reserve guard and expected to see them all killed but no great damage was done. This Napoleon made more noise than any gun in our vicinity — it seemed to feel its importance and speak for itself. I frequently sat upon the ground in the rear, while it was in action, making an effort to sit still when it exploded, but it seemed to me as though it always raised me about six inches every time it was fired.

Before the works were completed, both armies put out, between the lines, picket posts at night. The method adopted by both sides was to wait until dusk, the pickets would be on the alert, and when they saw those of the enemy ready, both lines would spring from their rifle pits and advance to the neutral ground between the lines, meet and establish their posts, and sit within a few feet of each other all night conversing, trading tobacco, coffee, and other commodities, until dawn began to show in the East when they would mutually agree not to fire upon each other until both sides were safely within their lines. After that the first head that showed above the works was liable to be shot at by the other side.

One evening, shortly before the pickets were withdrawn from between the lines permanently, Major White[25] of the 22nd Regiment had charge of the Union picket line. They got a little advantage of the Confederates, having started more promptly, and before the Confederate pickets reached the front the Union post was stationed almost on top of the embankment of their works. The Confederate officer insisted on the Union pickets moving

[25] Ephraim G. White of Agency City, first lieutenant of Co. E, 22nd Iowa, was promoted to captain on Jan. 30, 1863, to major of the regiment on June 9, 1863, and finally to lieutenant colonel on May 6, 1864. *Roster and Record*, 3:664.

back to the neutral ground. Major White objected. He said the ground was good enough for the Union pickets and they would keep the station. The Confederate demurred, saying "You will want to station your pickets in our works next." The Major replied, "That's what we came here for." The matter was finally settled — I do not know how — but it was amicably arranged and the pickets of the two armies sat down to their usual night of watching, conversing and trading.[26]

Probably the closest call I had to being shot during the seige was on an occasion when I had been on the picket post in the morning watch. We were instructed to leave the post as soon as it became light enough to see and not wait to be withdrawn. I had started but, thinking that I would fire my gun at the rebel fort by the coming light, I went into the hollow in the direction of the works so as to bring the Confederate fort between me and the sky. I found the fog so thick that I could not see the fort. I returned to an unfinished rifle pit outside of the Horse Shoe Fort and fired my gun from the embankment. I had hardly pulled the trigger when two shots passed my head and went into the embankment behind me. The enemy had been waiting for just such an opportunity. I turned to go into the fort but found that I was cut off, there being no connecting ditch, and I was left to spend the day in the rifle works or run the gauntlet again. It was then broad day light. I had no idea of being cooked in the hot sun all day in an out work without any water or provisions so I made a dash for the fort and got over the embrasure safely.

Once we had a tremendous rain storm. Our ditches were constructed without regard to drainage, the weather being mostly very dry. The rain filled our principal passage way to the front, in one place about waist

[26] This fraternization was known to the Union officers and in fact sometimes encouraged. Lieut. Hains reported on June 20: "The enemy's pickets in front of General Carr's division have entered into an agreement with the latter's pickets not to fire on each other at night. They allow our men to work in full view, and make no attempts to stop it. Last night the picket officer was directed to crowd his pickets on the enemy's, to allow the working party to push on the second parallel. The two lines of pickets, the enemy's and ours, were then not more than 7 or 8 yards apart, and in full view of each other. A working party was then stretched out in rear of our line, and the work begun. The enemy's pickets could see it all, but did not offer to molest us. By this means a trench was opened within 60 yards of their salient C. . . . Although it is not customary to allow an enemy's pickets so close to the operations of a siege, it was a great benefit to us, as the ground was such in some places as to have rendered it difficult to have carried on the work in any other way." *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XXIV, Part II, 184.

deep. It was necessary to open this ditch and let the water out so that the way could be used and I was detailed as one of the engineers to perform the duty. To get to our work, we either had to run the gauntlet of Confederate guns or wade through the water. As usual we preferred to keep our feet dry. We succeeded in relieving the ditch of part of the water but could not get back dry shod, so we again, one by one, took a run for the rear. The Confederates stationed in the fort to our right noticed our predicament and turned their small guns on us. We all got safely back to camp but the bullets whistled very close to our ears before we reached camp, and the wonder is that some of us were not left on the field unable to get back without help.

Our camp was pretty well protected by the fortifications in our front from exposure to the Confederate guns, being located in the top of a ravine which sloped to our rear in the form of a circle with the convex side toward the enemy. Our tent, which was located immediately behind the old Napoleon gun, was the highest and most exposed of any in the camp. Four of us, E. J. C. Bealer, S. S. Street, Dick Thomas and myself, had the tent to ourselves. Twice during the siege, the tent was entered by Confederate bullets but none of us hurt. One day we had been to the front for some purpose and the Regiment was returning to camp about noon, we having been among the first to reach our tent. To save distance we took the risk of a short cut around the end of the battery earth work and were exposed to the view of the Confederates for a moment while making the turn. Street, who was a predestinationist, was arguing on the subject of predestination and was asserting hotly in argument with Bealer that if he was born to be hung he would never be shot. The argument proceeded for some time, when he made this assertion. I said to him, "Seb, I believe you were born to be hung but if you will go up there and stand on the embankment five minutes, I will guarantee you will never be hung." He said, "Oh yes, if I expose myself, I might be shot." Just then a bullet clipped through the tent within two inches of Bealer's head, cut the cloth of the tent twice and also the shirt sleeve of Thomas who was washing himself at the door of the tent. The argument was immediately postponed and has never been renewed so far as I know.

Street had a very distressing cough and always went to the spring before going to bed and filled his canteen with water, of which he took a sup during the night occasionally to relieve his cough. I bunked with Street,

our bunk being made of cane brakes strapped together into a mattress with elm bark and laid upon cross pieces on stakes about a foot from the ground. One night Street raised up to take a drink of water and, as is customary with soldiers, he shook the canteen to see if there was any water left. A bullet rattled inside instead of water. I was awakened by hearing Seb "blessing" the rebels in no very complimentary terms. In the morinng we examined the canteen. The bullet had struck squarely on the elge of the seam, opened it, passed through to the bottom and simply opened the seam at the bottom sufficiently to let the water out and the bullet remained inside. None of us heard the shot. I would give a small fortune if I could have that canteen as a relic of the war now, but at the time it was thrown away as of no value whatever.

I picked up on the field two minie balls that met in their flight, striking their points together almost squarely. They were crushed together and firmly welded into one. This is another relic that I carelessly let slip and would now consider invaluable if I had it.

A singular condition of the human system imposed by living and sleeping constantly under fire was that the soldier, getting away from the entrenchments far enough to be beyond the hearing of the incessant firing of the guns, was unable to sleep, produced by the unusual quiet in which he found himself. I recollect being sent as guard with a provision train to the Yazoo River, our base of supplies. The trip occupied two days, one night being spent at Yazoo beyond the hearing of the guns. It was the first time since the 19th of May — perhaps an entire month — that I had been beyond the constant roar of guns, and the unusual quiet of the night disturbed my sleep very much. I was unable to realize that everything was all right and that I might sleep in peace. But on returning the next day to camp and entering the old routine, I slept peacefully behind and under the guns of our battery which kept up constant firing night and day almost.

About noon on the 3rd day of July, a flag of truce was seen emerging from the center of the line in front of McPherson's Corps. The firing ceased and the first negotiations toward the surrender commenced. It was General Pemberton's flag seeking to negotiate with General Grant for special terms of capitulation. The word had been passed all along the line and firing had ceased at all the rear fortifications, but our mortar boats, situated on the River about four miles directly on the opposite side of Vicksburg, had not yet received the order to cease firing. They continued

dropping shells over the rebel fortifications and had very recently improved their range so much that they dropped them almost immediately over the rebel fort in front of our position.

During the negotiations between Grant and Pemberton, which were being held between the lines under a tree, the troops of both armies collected upon their outer works and entered into conversation with one another at places where the fortifications were sufficiently near to permit. Our line was within fifty yards of the rebel fort and conversation was carried on quite easily between the Confederates and ourselves. It was singular to hear deadly enemies chatting with each other, joking, laughing and talking, apparently as socially as if they were the best of friends at all times and under all conditions.

One big fat rebel officer stood upon the parapet of their fort with a field glass in his hand, endeavoring to take advantage of the truce for inspecting our works and observing the number of our troops. He was engaged very industriously for some time when one of our officers suggested to him that he better take down his glass and use only his eyes, or a bullet might stop his eye sight forever. He very gracefully acquiesced and confined further investigation to his normal eye sight.

The reader will appreciate the incident more keenly if he will reflect that although we knew that thousands of men were behind the works immediately in front of us and only a few feet away, it was very seldom that we ever were able to see the slightest sign of a human being, for if a man stuck his head or hand above the works during the day time it was almost sure to be pierced by a bullet. Of course to the Confederates our side was just as devoid of humanity so far as the eye sight went. But during this truce we saw before us, as they did before them, thousands of enemies and had the opportunity of a short spirited conversation with them.

It happened during the time when we were all curiously inspecting each other that our mortar boats on the river were doing their greatest execution and firing rapidly, dropping shells which exploded about one hundred yards in the air, throwing their thousands of pieces in every direction, not only over the heads of the rebels but also over ours and away to our rear. Our fortifications were no protection whatever to the dropping shells. We were in the habit of dodging behind our works to protect ourselves from Confederate shot and shell but were in no way provided for protection from our own mortar shells. The terrible whirring, hissing, whizzing, blood

curdling sound of the pieces of shell as they flew around over our heads, apparently hunting for human gore, caused such an awe inspiring feeling amongst our soldiers that it was impossible to avoid attempting to dodge or try to hide from them, and we would naturally duck our heads and dodge to the ground while the pieces seemed to be searching for us. But the Confederates, who had been under this constant fire ever since the commencement of the siege, had become so accustomed to these shells that they paid no attention whatever to the firing. They would laugh at us and yell out, "Dodge 'em, Yank, dodge 'em!" knowing very well that our dodging was all useless. Some of our boys replied to their jokes that they were not intended for us and wished they would take them over to themselves and keep them on that side of the line, as we had no use for them.

I do not recollect how long the negotiations lasted but the flags returned to the works and the two armies again hid behind their fortifications, although the understanding was that there was to be no more fighting until further orders, as the City would surrender probably the next day. But during this truce, the Confederates took the opportunity of remounting a gun immediately in our front and preparing it for vigorous action, and I think it was about nine o'clock at night when they opened fire from this gun, having probably during the truce located a vulnerable point in our works which they thought they would take with it. They opened fire vigorously and the shot seemed to me to pass only a few feet over our heads, but the least of our fears was of being injured by the Confederate gun. We knew that it would draw the concentrated fire of our batteries which would naturally hurl a volume of shot and shell over our heads that would be anything but pleasant to us. It was not long until we realized the fact that our guns were still active. Such a terrific fire perhaps I never was under before or since, of our own guns and theirs firing over our heads. Their gun, however, was knocked down in a short time by our battery and silenced. So far as I recollect now this was the last actual firing of shot and shell during the siege of Vicksburg. We were constantly on the alert for an attempt of the Confederates to break out and escape from Vicksburg. We were kept on watch constantly to prevent any demonstrations of that kind. The truce might be only a blind to cover some other movement.

On the morning of the 4th of July, 1863 word was passed along the lines that the stronghold would surrender at ten o'clock. I had been in the rifle pits under the Confederate fort at the front, nearly three quarters of a

mile from our camp, for sixty hours. Our provisions had been brought to us by the Company cooks and we were on constant duty during this time. I had such a sore mouth — from what cause I don't know — that I could scarcely eat the provisions, especially the salty soup and pork which they brought, and as soon as the word came that the surrender would take place at ten o'clock, I went to the camp and reported to the doctor for some medicine for my mouth.

The troops at the front were relieved from duty. The conditions of the surrender were that the Confederates would march out in front of their works and stack arms and then march back into the City and be paroled. As soon as it was known all along the line that the surrender was assured, the guns of all the Union batteries around the fortifications opened fire with blank cartridges in a grand Fourth of July celebration, the like of which probably never will be heard again on the Fourth of July. It was one constant roar for an hour and beat all the cannonading so far as incessant firing was concerned that I ever heard, as the entire army were firing their batteries at one and the same time as rapidly as they could load and fire.

At ten o'clock in the morning, from our camps in the rear, we witnessed the Confederate troops march out between the lines in front of their fortifications, stack arms, and then retire within the works again. Many of our boys left their camps and wandered into the City to see the prize we had captured.[27] They ransacked the entire City for fire works to continue the celebration in the evening, and while the display was not very extensive the continuation at night of the celebration of that grand Fourth was at least unique and beautiful. From the camps of the Union line situated in the ravines, out of sight of each other, rockets and Roman candles were fired into the air and made a beautiful display.

The incident of these rockets reminds me of another thing I wish to speak of and that is the beautiful sight of the mortar shells as they arose

[27] The capture of Vicksburg, on the same day as the Union victory at Gettysburg, brought great joy to the North. Grant's success in opening the Mississippi was called by Lincoln "the most brilliant in the world," and even Henry W. Halleck, the General in Chief, who had no love for Grant, wrote that "No more brilliant exploit can be found in military history." Grant, never one to indulge in fine writing, had sent Halleck a brief dispatch on July 4, beginning simply "The enemy surrendered this morning." A great campaign, begun as long ago as November 2, 1862, had at last ended with victory, and praises rained on Grant from all quarters. Grant, *Memoirs*, 1:414, 571; Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General*, 4:418, 422, 424; *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XXIV, Part I, 6, 44.

from the river front during the siege, as witnessed from our camps at night. The firing of the gun or mortar caused a flash of light in the west, similar to a faint flash of lightning; immediately a beautiful star would arise from the horizon and mount into the sky, ascending to a great height; just as it reached its highest point and turned to descend, the roar of the gun would be heard, and the swish or roar of the shell as it mounted was terrific and continued long after explosion of the shell. The star would continue to descend until it reached a height of probably one hundred yards and then a puff of smoke would be seen, but still the roar of the oncoming shell would continue for some time until the sound had time to traverse the intervening distance when the noise of the explosion would be heard, and then the buzzing, whizzing sound of the pieces as they flew in every direction over the Confederate works. I have lain for hours of a beautiful starlit evening when all other firing had ceased except the occasional shots of the mortars — about one per minute — and watched these stars mount to the zenith, descend and explode, and counted the time from the puff of smoke at the explosion of the shell until I would hear the noise of the explosion, and thought that no more beautiful sight could be witnessed, not giving a thought to the death and destruction contained in each one of the terrible missiles.

The medicine which the surgeon prescribed for my sore mouth made me so sick that I had not ambition enough during the day of the Fourth to visit the City. I supposed of course that we would march into the City or at least remain in our camp off duty for a few days, but at about dusk on the evening of the Fourth we received orders to march at 5 o'clock in the morning to the rear after Joe Johnson, who had been hovering about our flanks and rear trying to raise the siege during the entire time.[28] I tried to get excused from this march on account of sickness but, as I had only applied to the surgeon for medicine for a sore mouth, I could not and started with the Company, being unable to see our captured stronghold until some weeks afterward.

The evening of the 5th we camped on the Black River, near the scene

[28] Grant had directed Sherman to be ready to move against Johnston, who was between Brownsville and the Big Black, prepared to attack Grant's rear to relieve Pemberton. As soon as Pemberton asked for terms, on July 3, Grant directed Sherman to move against Johnston, who had retired to Jackson on hearing of Pemberton's surrender. On July 4 Grant sent the 13th Corps to reinforce Sherman. Grant, *Memoirs*, 1:555, 566, 576.

of the battle of Black River Bridge, returning over the ground which we fought over while approaching Vicksburg, passed over the battlefield of Champion's Hill and saw the terrific effect of the battle there by the 24th Iowa in the timber on the road where every little sapling and tree was marked by bullet shots in the short but decisive battle.

In consequence of my being sick on the march, I had permission to march "at will." That term means being allowed to march outside of the ranks and take my time to it, resting and moving as I pleased. This leave I carried during the entire march to Jackson after we left Black River. Nothing of any special importance occurred on this march until we approached Jackson. I think the second night before reaching the fortifications around Jackson, there came up a terrific rain storm and the weather turned very cold. I was sleeping in a fence corner where I held my ground until the water got about half side deep. I then got up and attempted to get near a very large rail fire built by the boys but, being weak and unable to push through the crowd standing around the fire attempting to dry one side at a time, I wandered off in search of a shelter and found a cotton gin or cotton store house filled with unginned cotton. I jumped into the cotton and in my wet clothes lay and slept, scarcely waking during the whole night. But in the morning I found myself so stiff that I could hardly move and would have been unable to leave the camp when the army marched had it not been for a mule which one of our boys had taken charge of. He permitted me to ride the mule and so I kept up with the procession until we arrived at the outskirts of Jackson, where Joe Johnson had made a stand to fight us.

A ludicrous affair occurred in our camp the night before the final investment of Jackson. We were camped in a body of timber, a rather thick growth of small trees with much brush and undergrowth, making it very dark, and being in the vicinity of the enemy we were prohibited lights or fires after dark. Some time in the night, a great commotion in camp awoke every one and hasty preparation was made to repel a charge of the enemy or meet any emergency arising. The rebels, however, did not put in their appearance. Upon investigation it was found that a team of mules had stampeded and caused consternation in camp.

After we got into camp at Jackson, some of the boys who had been foraging found a few half ripe peaches and brought them in, throwing them away as worthless. I got a taste of the peaches and thought they were the

best things I had ever eaten. I was sure that they would kill me if I ate many, although I could not resist the temptation. They tasted so good and I continued to eat. Strange as it may seem, I attribute my recovering to the peaches, as, instead of making me worse, I got better.[29]

During the siege of Jackson, I had charge of the mule and had to see that it got water and provision and I made several trips far to the rear of the army in search of water and forage. At one time I rode a long distance into the country and came into a corn field where the corn was in good roasting ear. I took my blanket and filled it with corn, as much as I could carry back to the camp, and had the cooks make for the boys in the rifle pits a corn soup which they appreciated very highly.

The siege of Jackson lasted only a few days when Johnson evacuated, leaving the City in possession of the Union troops.[30] Whether the Confederates set fire to the City before they left, or whether some vandal Union soldiers started the conflagration, I do not know; but a terrible fire occurred, destroying many valuable buildings and warehouses. To prevent the rebels return to Jackson, our Regiment was sent out far east of the City, across the Pearl River, to tear up miles and miles of railroad. Our Company was detailed as reserve guard to the battery and provision train, and we had nothing to do but lay in camp and forage all day. Some of our boys discovered a peach orchard with fifteen hundred trees, in which the peaches were just in their prime. Our quarter-master sergeant had captured a herd of very fine young cattle and we had a day or two of very fine living upon fruit and fresh meat.

The method of destroying a railroad might be described here, as the effectiveness with which it is done has a great deal to do with the benefit derived from the destruction. If the track is simply torn up and destroyed, the enemy can relay the rails about as quickly as they can be torn up. So a systematic method was employed to render the rails entirely useless. A Company of soldiers would be detailed and deployed along the railroad on one side; they would take hold of the end of the ties and, taking a long section of the track, lift it up and tip it right over off the road bed; then the ties are wrenched loose, piled up and a big fire made. The rails are

[29] Undoubtedly, Switzer's sore mouth was a form of scurvy, caused by the lack of fruit and vegetables in the soldiers' diet.

[30] The siege of Jackson lasted from July 11 to 17, 1863, "when it was found that the enemy had evacuated during the night." Grant, *Memoirs*, 1:576.

laid across the fire until red hot in the middle; a detachment of soldiers would take the rails at the ends and twist them around trees or fence posts or in any way so as to render them entirely useless for railroad purposes until they were again taken through the rolling mill. I do not know how many miles of road were thus destroyed but sufficient to keep the Confederates a long time in replacing.

After this we took up our line of march, retracing our steps again to Vicksburg, passing over part of the ground for the third time. We marched back to our old camp occupied during the siege but did not stop there; we went into the City and camped on the banks of the Mississippi south of the town, where we remained for some weeks. . . .

During our stay in Vicksburg, the weather was very hot and there was a great deal of sickness. I should have taken this opportunity to inspect the Confederate works around the City in the rear, which kept us at bay for so long a time, but the interest I then had in the fortifications was simply the desire to capture them. After they became ours, they lost most of their interest to me and I regret to say that I never once visited any part of the Confederate fortifications. Many interesting things appeared to the naked eye, however, showing that the City had passed through a terrible ordeal. Large buildings were pierced, some of them many times, by cannon shot, breaking great holes through the walls. The ground was torn up and plowed by shot and shell and it seems a wonder that a city full of people could for so long a time have endured such a bombardment and siege as that through which the occupants of Vicksburg passed. For I believe that, although General Grant offered to pass out non-combatants to places of safety during the siege, the courtesy was refused and none left. From the City a good view could be obtained of the canal, which was cut across the neck from above the point opposite which Vicksburg stood by General Williams, with a view to letting the river pass through some miles from the City, permitting communication from above and below without danger from the batteries of Vicksburg. The canal proved to be a failure, as the passage way was not sufficiently large for boats.

[*To be continued.*]