

Confederate Veteran.

IN THE WILDERNESS CAMPAIGN.

BY T. W. METHVIN, SENOIA, GA.

In 1864 the 10th Georgia Battalion was on detached service at Franklin, Va., on the Black River and the Roanoke and Seaboard Railroad, supporting Griffin's Battery. I was detailed river scout, to go up and down the river on the lookout for Federal attempts to cross the river and surround us. I was in Eyleswhite County, on the east side of the river; Franklin is on the west. About the middle of April our battalion was ordered up above Richmond, where he joined the 3d Georgia Brigade. The 10th and 2d Georgia Battalions made a regiment. On the 4th of May we went up on the Rapidan River and bivouacked for the night, and we pickets were on the south side of the river. Next day a courier came out to the picket line and ordered us to stack our tents and overtake the brigade. We obeyed orders, starting at twelve o'clock and marching all the afternoon and until nine o'clock that night before overtaking the command, which had camped for the night. About ten o'clock the ambulance wagons began to pass by with two or three wounded soldiers in each wagon. The boys said: "You will find plenty of the Yankees there." We had hardly stretched out for a little sleep when the orderly sergeant came around and told us to be ready to march at four the next morning. When the tattoo sounded, all we could hear was "Fall in! Fall in!" We were within twelve miles of the Wilderness on a forced march, and we marched for all it was worth. At the break of day we could hear the roar of musketry in the distance. When we were within half a mile of the battle line, we met wounded men coming out, and a little nearer we began to see the dead lying beside the road. These men had been wounded and had come as far out as they could before giving up. When we got up to where John B. Gordon's brigade was fighting on our right, the stray balls were flying thick. Some of our boys were killed while standing in the road.

General Lee and his staff were sitting on their horses on the turnpike road. General Wright saluted, and General Lee said to him: "I am glad to see you. Form your brigade on the right. Those people are advancing; turn them back." This we did. It was awful to see them fall like stalks of grain. Gordon's men were fighting for all they were worth, and we all fought until late in the evening. Grant began to move to the south, General Lee fronting him all the way. Our brigade was detailed to act as rear guard of Lee's army. We had a good deal of skirmishing all along our march, and when we got to South Anna River we had a little artillery duel, with a few killed and wounded. Grant moved on south, Lee fronting him. When we reached Spottsylvania Courthouse, Grant's men had crossed Poor River, west of Spottsylvania, right in the bend of the river, and had thrown up breastworks. General Lee's men were there to front him. We fought seven hours and thirty-five minutes, and when one side was not charging with bayonets the other was. I never saw men lying dead on both sides of the breastworks as I did there. They seemed to be from three to five feet deep for hundreds of yards, a sad-looking sight. This was all done with small arms.

About four o'clock that evening Grant moved some of his army around east of the town and crossed the river on pontoons. General Lee found it out and ordered our brigade to fall in line and double-quick on the east side of the town. As we went up through the town the Yankees were shelling it, the shells falling thick and fast. As we were going up we met five hundred or more women and children, some of the

women with two little babies in their arms, other children holding to their mothers' dresses, crying and screaming for their lives, the shells flying. There was a large gully on the south side of the road, and some of the boys told the women to get in the gully. They did so, and I never saw them any more. I suppose some of them got hurt. We went on about three-quarters of a mile and ran into a line of pickets. They gave us a volley of lead, which we returned, raised a yell, and charged. They fell back, but we left many a man dead behind. It was right at a large house with a fine orchard and flower yard, which were covered with dead of both sides.

About dark our brigade fell back to some breastworks and bivouacked for the night. The next day we were ordered back to the same place. The Yankees had crossed the river. We looked to the left and right, and on both sides the Yankees were hurrying to surround us. All were ordered to about face and get away from there. Four of our boys were killed. The next day Grant moved to the south, Lee still fronting him.

Our next hard fight was at Cold Harbor. We occupied in 1864 the ground that Stonewall Jackson did in 1862 when he got in the rear of McClellan. We fought there two days and nights. Our major was killed on the 12th of May while getting his battalion in line. This was Maj. J. E. Rylander, of Americus, Ga., and James D. Frederick was promoted to major. We left Cold Harbor after two days of hard fighting and crossed the Chickahominy River on our way to Petersburg and the battle field where Stonewall Jackson had fought two years before, which was covered with skeletons. It was a gruesome sight. We had a little skirmish after crossing the river. Grant had moved toward Petersburg and captured the Poplar Lawn Hospital. General Beauregard was there, and he formed his line in a deep ravine, in a hollow square, recapturing the hospital, along with a few Yankees, a few Indians, and some negroes, whom they took to Bell Island, at Richmond. Our brigade was treated with all the kindness possible. As we marched through town we found women and girls on the streets with plenty of coffee and good water. We got into Petersburg about two o'clock, too late to fight any, and camped that night out south of the town.

We stayed around Petersburg until the 22d of June, which day will be long remembered by all the boys of the 3d Georgia Brigade. General Wright ordered his brigade to fall in, and he formed his line in a deep ravine in a hollow square. He said it was reported to General Lee that the Yankees were establishing a hospital in a piece of woods south of Petersburg and that we would see if the report was true; that Mahone's Brigade would be our support in case we needed them. When we were getting in line alongside the woods I saw Mahone's men forming about four hundred yards in our rear, and that was the last I ever saw of them.

While General Wright was getting his men properly placed in line, all at once a Yankee out in front of us called to some of his men to shoot that "long-haired man"; he wanted his hat. General Wright heard him, turned his horse, and ordered: "Forward, 3d Georgia Brigade!" We moved forward instantly. We had not gone fifty steps before we captured some Yankees. We just kept going forward and ran into the Yankees behind their breastworks. We charged, and they fell back. We kept going until we reached the third line of their breastworks, where their cannons were planted, and they shelled us in a hurry. It seemed that we would all be killed, but we rallied and charged and captured the works and a four-gun battery. A. S. Cutts, of Americus, Ga., was watching us, and as soon as he could get his horses there the can-

nons were limbered up and taken out. I heard General Wright say: "Boys, you have done well. Just hold the breast-works until the dead and wounded can be cared for."

We held them until eight o'clock that night, but just after the sun went down we got orders for four men from each company to go in front and locate the enemy. We had not gone very far when I heard some one say: "Halt, there!" I had not seen any one; but just in front of me, within thirty or forty feet, there lay two lines of soldiers. They ordered me to "come in," or they would shoot me in. Seeing that two of them threw up their guns to shoot a young man on my right, Jesse Clements, I raised my gun, aimed about their middle, and fired, then turned and ran for dear life, going head foremost through the embrasure where we had just captured the four-gun battery. The Yankees followed closely, and when within twenty steps of us they were ordered to fix bayonets. I never heard such a rattle of bayonets before. Our officer's command was: "Hold your fire! Hold your fire!" When they got within ten or fifteen feet, the order "Fire!" was given. I never saw such slaughter. Our line was a blaze of fire as far as I could see. About that time the batteries behind signaled us to lie down, and we obeyed. Our battery then threw shells in our front and set the woods on fire. It seemed to me that the blaze was twenty feet high. The scene was heart-rending, and cries for help to get the wounded out of the fire were heard. All the firing was stopped except a shell occasionally from the batteries. About eight or nine o'clock we fell back in a big ravine for the night.

The next morning our brigade went down the Welden Railroad seven miles. The Yankees had captured the road; and as that road brought our rations, its capture cut off our supplies. After we routed them out, we halted and formed line in a large field, the enemy being east of us in a large orchard. Company D, of our battalion, sent thirty-six out as skirmishers in front; thirty-one of them were shot down. The line of battle was ordered forward and fought until dark. The ground was covered with the dead. General Mahone came up to General Wright and ordered him to form his brigade and charge. It was then nearly dark, and General Wright told General Mahone that he was going to try to get his brigade together and get away from there, which he did.

It was ten o'clock before we got back to Petersburg that night. After that we stayed on a line south of Petersburg, near Battery 45, doing picket duty until the 30th of July, when we had the big blow-up at the Crater north of Fort Mahone. I had been four hours on vedette duty; and as it was getting a little late, I went back to the picket line, which I reached just as the officer ordered all of us to get our accouterments ready, as it was reported that there would be a general charge all around on our lines. We didn't believe it, but in ten minutes it seemed as if all lines from Fort Mahone north were blown out of existence. I never saw so many mortar shells flying and exploding in all my life. Our brigade at double-quick was trying to get the small arms away from the mortar shells. We pickets had to hold our positions. There was a continuous fire of small arms until after one o'clock that afternoon. A great many of our brigade were killed. After everything was quiet, our brigade moved on the south side of the turnpike, going into winter quarters and doing heavy picket duty. While there General Finegan had a brigade of Florida boys to help on picket duty. We had a few little fights. Every time it rained or snowed we had to go to Gaines's Mill to drive the Yankees back. Many men were killed during the winter.

On the 1st of March, 1863, at night, our brigade was ordered to go in between Appomattox and the James River and relieve General Pickett's division, which had been there since the 18th of June, 1864, with no fighting to do. General Lee sent our brigade there to recuperate, for we had been fighting and on picket duty all the winter and needed rest. On the morning that we relieved Pickett's men an officer remarked to one of our boys: "I reckon you Georgia boys feel mighty proud to have the honor of relieving the flower of the Army of Virginia." P. F. Randolph, of the Spaulding Grays, replied: "If you run as often as we Georgians have, you will get some of the flowers knocked off." When we started to evacuate Petersburg, there were only seventy-three left of the "flowers of Virginia."

On the 1st of April I was on picket, as usual, and while in front of our line on vedette duty, in the night, I could see something moving up on my left. I watched for a while, then slipped back to the picket line and called for Captain Christian to come to post number 8. He came at once and wanted to know what was the matter. Slipping back as close as we could, I told him to look and see for himself. He quickly noted the line of soldiers moving up to our left and also saw the ambulance car moving. Directing me to keep a sharp lookout, he slipped back and notified the line, also the main line. About daylight, just as I got back to the picket line, the pickets opened fire; the Yankees made a charge. The fighting lasted about an hour, but our boys were used to it and soon drove them back.

All was quiet on the morning of April 2. Over at Petersburg we could hear the roar of cannons and small arms. The Yankees had most of their force on Battery 45, south of Petersburg, and captured the line. Gen. A. P. Hill was killed there. Everything began to look blue; so late that evening the picket line was ordered to build good fires in the picket holes and were told that as soon as it was dark enough for us to slip out to the main line; that General Lee was going to evacuate Petersburg and Richmond. Obeying orders, we fell to marching, I knew not where. Looking back to Petersburg and Richmond, I could hear the magazines blowing up and see the flames from burning homes and commissaries. We kept moving on westward and got to Amelia Courthouse next morning about sunrise. We drew a pint cup of meal and a little piece of meat, the last rations I ever drew on our march. That was the morning of April 3.

We had skirmishing all along to Farmersville, where we had another skirmish, but we gained our front. I picked up a book there on the first settlers of Virginia, which I have yet. We marched all night and the next day and night, and on Sunday morning, the 9th, we stopped in a field at a creek to get our canteens filled. In a short while we were ordered to fall in, and in a piece of oak woods we formed our line east and west. The skirmishers advanced down a long slope toward a creek, on the other side of which was the enemy. Some of our boys shot at them, but they did not return the fire. We heard them call to our boys: "Stop that shooting, Johnnie. We have got you in the pen." The firing stopped, and we could see our boys and the Yankees walk close together and stand and talk—something we had never seen before—and some of our boys started back to investigate. Our adjutant's brother came by, and we asked him what the trouble was. He said: "Lee has surrendered." Some of the boys did not believe it, but in a few minutes we heard the galloping of horses, and three Yankee officers and two of Lee's officers went down on our left to stop some fighting that was going on. We fell into line and marched back to the place

we had just left and waited to hear our doom. Late that afternoon General Mahone and some of his aids rode up, formed us in a hollow square, and told us the terms of the surrender.

On Tuesday morning, the 11th, our paroles came, and as quickly as they were signed up we started for home. Some went one way, some another, and quite a number of us went back the way we came. The squad I was with marched all day and all night back to Farmersville, where we had fought on the 7th, the last fight. Early Wednesday morning we drew three and one-half crackers apiece and left there for Burkville Junction, which we reached on the afternoon of the 13th, and left at four o'clock the next morning for City Point, on James River, at Grant's bakery. We stayed there all night. They gave us all the rations we wanted. That was on April 14. The next morning we got on a boat, started down the James River, and at old Fort Powhatan, now called Jamestown, we met a boat coming up the river, the flag on it at half mast, which reported the assassination of Lincoln on the night of the 14th. We landed at Fortress Monroe that evening at six o'clock, got a boat, and went over to Yorktown and boarded a blockade boat with six days' rations. We landed on native soil at Savannah, Ga., and the next morning started home afoot. After walking to Waynesboro, one hundred miles, we took the train to Augusta, thence by freight car to Atlanta, where we spent the night, and next morning we scattered for our homes.