Soldiers Communications.

GALESBURG, ILL., *Sept. 3, 1880.*

Editor of The National Tribune:

DEAR SIR: I am so much gratified to read your very interesting paper, as it monthly comes to hand, that I feel a pleasure in now penning you, what I think, will be some entertaining reminiscences of the war.

I went over to Springfield, Illinois, in the spring of 1861 just about the time our soldiers were being sent to Cairo to guard that important point. Governor Yates, or "poor Dick Yates," as he was familiarly called, at that time, was Governor. He was a noble fellow, but the maddening cup drove him to his grave. Frequently I was brought into association with him; a more devoted, patriotic man never lived. General Fuller at that time was Adjutant-General, and one day I noticed a spare-built, moderate-sized man in his office writing, whom I had not seen before. I asked who it was, "Why," said he, "that is *Captain Grant*, from Galena." He appeared to be frequently in and out of the office, and I learned he had something to do with parties of recruits who were arriving at Springfield. Then the Twenty-first Illinois Infantry was camped out near Macon, Illinois, and one day Governor Yates informed me there was great disaffection in the regiment, with its commander, Colonel Goode, and that he had resigned his position. "Whom to appoint," said the Governor, "I could not at once determine, but in a day or two I commissioned Grant, for he appeared to be well qualified." In a week or two, having run over from Springfield to Quincy, I noticed passing to their camping ground, a new regiment. It dragged slowly along, the boys looked weary and were covered with dust. "What regiment is that?" I inquired of one of the soldiers. "*Twenty-first Illinois Infantry*," was the reply. Grant had marched them the one hundred miles from Springfield to Quincy, in place of sending them on the cars. The regiment was only in camp a day or two at Quincy when it went over to Missouri to fight the bushwhackers and secesh there. Grant soon worked down the river with his regiment and landed at Cairo. Ben. M. Prentiss was then in command there. He had been made a Brigadier General, but Grant's commission ante-dated his and the latter took command of the post. The expedition down the Tennessee having been decided on, Grant was placed in charge of it. His forces took Fort Donaldson, where he became a Major-General, and then his fortunes rose rapidly.

Now, I often wonder what would have been our military fortunes if Col. Goode had not resigned command of the Twenty-first Illinois Infantry, and Governor Yates had not appointed Grant in his stead. By the way, I should mention that Yates told me, he gave Grant the place against the wishes of all the captains in the regiment—they said he was "a new man and we do not want him." "But," remarked Yates, "I knew there was good stuff in him."

On what apparently trifling incidents, often hang the fate of a nation.

Wishing much success to THE TRIBUNE and its work in behalf of the rights and interests of all ex-soldiers, I am

Yours very truly, T. R. W.
Late Tenth Ill. Infantry.

The Battle of Groveton or Second Bull Run.

The following vivid and graphic description of this battle, or rather the part borne in it by one corps, has been written by a soldier friend. It will be read with interest by every Union soldier:

I shall never forget the magnificent panorama—magnificent but at the same time terrible—that burst upon my sight as I reached the high ground south of the Warrenton pike, on my way to the battlefield of the 30th of August, 1862.

You who were with me remember it; and now, as you read, there rises up before you a vision like this: Below you, winding sluggishly along on its way to Bull Run, a small stream; just beyond, parallel with its course and crossing the Sudley Springs road, in which you stand, at right angles, the Warrenton pike. Beyond this, and to your left a mile or little less, a cluster of buildings or Groveton; and then, stretching from those buildings far around to the right and across your path, you behold a high, rolling, open plateau bounded on the farther side by a ridge dotted with cannon.

Beyond this ridge, about midway between Groveton and the Sudley Springs road running on straight before you, are seen the roofs and chimneys of Mrs. Dogan's house. To the right of the Sudley Springs road, embowered in an orchard interspersed with a few forest trees crowning a lofty eminence, you see rising up the lonely chimneys of the Henry House—fitting monuments of the first battle of Manassas.

Here and there the prospect is varied and its beauty enhanced by solitary trees, or small clusters of them, lifting their leafy crowns in air, while life is given to the picture by moving columns of blue coats, glancing bayonets, galloping horsemen, and all the pomp and panoply of active warfare.

From the cannon on the crest beyond are shooting out sheets of flame and curling wreaths of vapory smoke; and yet farther away, just in front of the heavy timber whose lofty tops here and there shows above the embattled heights of Groveton, are other guns from which the bolts of death come flying over the marching columns, bursting high in the air or falling down, mayhap, at your very feet.

Over all this inspiring and pulse-thrilling spectacle bends heaven's blue canopy, flecked with light fleecy clouds, through which the golden, burning rays of a midsummer's sun fall gently down, shimmering through the foliage of the trees, glancing lightly upon the rippling waters and gleaming with a feverish, fitful light upon the weapons of friends and foemen.

You remember, my comrades of the Fifth Corps, how we marched down into the valley, across the stream—some of us stopping to fill our canteens by the way—and up the opposite slope beneath the dropping shells from the enemy's guns.

You remember when we reached the line of our artillery. You can each doubtless see even now in your mind's eye our line of battle crossing the Warrenton pike in the vicinity of Groveton on the left, and extending around in an irregular semicircle to the right until it crossed the Sudley Springs road.

If you do remember, I ask you to follow me closely as I attempt to describe what subsequently transpired, as I remember the events and as history has recorded them.

Jackson's corps of the rebel army occupied the line of the abandoned independent railroad, his left resting in the vicinity of Sudley's Mills, and his right to the north and west of Groveton. Longstreet was marching down to unite with him from the direction of Thoroughfare Gap, his column forming, with that of Jackson, an obtuse angle. Between Jackson and Longstreet, however, when the battle of the 30th began, there was a small gap, thus leaving the right wing of the army of the former exposed to a flank attack from the Union forces; but the rebel leader had foreseen his weakness, and strengthened his position by massing his artillery at the point of threatened danger. The Union forces were within the angle thus formed, and to the south and east of it, their lines facing west and north.

Now for a more particular description of the ground upon which the battle was fought: The high ground to the west of Groveton was held by the enemy, (the extreme right of Jackson,) thus commanding the Warrenton pike. The railway to which I have alluded runs in nearly an easterly and westerly direction, and, like all graded roads, presents sometimes an embankment—sometimes a cut. Imagine, if you can, a heavy piece of timber, out of which emerges an embankment or "fill" of some twenty or thirty feet in height, flat on top, and which, running westward perhaps a hundred and twenty yards, terminates in a cut of from eight to ten feet deep and about the same width at the bottom, which cut continues on in the same direction for about two hundred yards and then tends slightly to the northward, debouching upon the open elevated ground. Now imagine yourself standing upon the southern edge of this cut, midway between the timber whence the embankment issues and the slight northward bend where the road-bed debouches on the open plain, and face the south. Upon your left you have woods crossing the railway at right angles and extending in a direct line for six hundred yards, forming one side of a parallelogram; in your front, running from east to west, another piece of timber, free from underbrush on the side nearest you, and say three or four hundred yards from left to right, forms the second side; and the railway line at your back makes the third side. The remaining side, to the west, is open rolling country, except that where the line of the road makes the bend toward the north there is on the southern side, and at right angles to it, a small ravine fringed with bushes and stunted trees. From your feet toward the south the ground falls slightly for five or six yards, and then drops away more rapidly till it forms an elevation or ridge, upon which you stand, of some fifty feet in height. From the foot of this declivity it stretches out into a level plain, crossing which you ascend a gentle, even slope to the timber, which, as already observed, faces the cut. Now turn directly about and you will perceive that on the opposite side of the road-bed the ground slopes gently upward until it has attained an elevation of three or four feet above that whereon you stand, and then gradually and evenly falls away to heavy timber a couple of hundred yards distant, thus forming a ridge parallel with the cut, and a commanding position overlooking the ground described as lying to the southward. Upon this ridge on the day of battle, about thirty-six guns—12-pounders—at a point where the embankment terminates in the open field, six guns—howitzers—of the same calibre, the same distance in rear of the cut, (midway between the timber and the bend in the road,) and four guns just beyond the bend but masked from troops approaching in front by the small ravine already mentioned. Behind these guns lay the main body of Jackson's army, and the cut and embankment in front of them were occupied by a heavy force of his infantry. Behind the timber in rear of this formidable position, was stationed on elevated ground the remainder of the rebel artillery, which, when the Union forces advanced, shelled them over the heads of the confederates.

I have thus hastily sketched the position of the right wing of Jackson, and will now briefly point out that of the left of our own line confronting him. In the strip of timber running parallel with and about six hundred yards distant from the abandoned railroad, lay the 1st brigade, 1st division of the Fifth Corps, composed of the 18th Massachusetts on the left, extending westward to the open field, the 13th New York, "Rochester regiment," next, then the 25th New York, 2d Maine, 22d Massachusetts, and 1st Michigan, the latter extending into the timber running north up to the embankment by about one company. This brigade numbered about 1,500 men. Farther to the west but deflecting toward the south so as to face in the direction of Jackson's extreme right and from whence Longstreet was expected, and partly crossing the Warrenton pike, stretched the other troops of the corps, some 4,500 men.

I have been thus particular in describing the general situation in order that the movements following may be more clearly understood. Henceforth I will more especially follow the fortunes of my own regiment and brigade.

As we lay waiting for the order to attack we could look into the black-throated muzzles of the guns crowning the crest of the ridge before us, except those of the four pieces screened from view by the ravine in our front and a little to our left. Just before us, along the edge of the timber furnishing us a temporary shelter, was a rail fence "staked and ridered" about six feet high, and between it and us a wagon road.

But I will not dwell longer upon these details. The order came for us to advance. The 1st brigade was to open the conflict by storming the height. We left the timber and began climbing the fence. The rebel guns in sight opened upon us with grape and canister, while from beyond, the heavier batteries of the enemy sent a perfect tempest of shot and shell upon our devoted heads. We passed down the slope in splendid order, our ranks closed up and our alignment almost perfect. We lost men it is true, but the gaps were filled. We kept our front, but a shortened line evidenced our losses. We reached the level ground, through the center of which, parallel to our line, ran a ditch or dead-furrow. Across it we went, leaving many on the way; on, on we pressed to the foot of the declivity, and all the while the heavens rained death from bursting shell; all the while the rebel skirmishers and sharpshooters poured into our ranks the leaden hail. When we reached the level the guns in our immediate front no longer able to do us harm, ceased belching forth their deadly missiles, and as we began to climb the steep ascent we thought the day was ours. Half way up and onward with a rush and a hurrah we dashed. But alas! our hopes were short lived. From our left within a hundred yards of us, the guns hitherto kept concealed opened upon us. Enfilading our lines their fire swept down scores at every discharge, yet we did not falter. I doubt if any man thought of going back. We gained the high ground on a level with the top of the cut; then we saw the rebel infantry—the trap into which we had fallen. For the first time during our charge our rifles rang their notes of death; for the first time since we started from the wood we realized the fullness of our danger.

The rebel infantry poured in their volleys, and we were scarce a dozen feet from the muzzles of their muskets. Oh, it was terrible! Down went Galpin, Reese, Kiehle, Stewart, Benjamin—all from my own company of thirty men—killed; down went Bunnell, Hasler, Savage, Thomas, Jerrolds, Hertendorf, and scores of brave men until a perfect winrow of dead and wounded marked where valor had come to stay; down went your humble servant and many more, until the 13th could count nearly half of its members lying beneath its flag. And the regiments to our right and left fared no better. For twenty minutes the shattered remnants of the 1st brigade held the slope swept by a hurricane of death, and each minute seemed twenty hours long. For twenty minutes the bullets hummed like swarming bees, and the parched herbage was nourished by streams of gore from gallant hearts, while the accursed railroad cut began to fill with rebel dead and wounded; for twenty minutes, and then those yet alive and able to do so received orders to fall back. We who fell—the dead, the dying, and the disabled—held the field.

The rebels came, helped me up and bore me back a short distance where all our wounded, some 1,800 men, were gathered under guard, and there until the 3d of September I lay in agony, men dying almost hourly for want of care. On the 3d I started for Centreville to be paroled, and crossed the fated field. Our dead boys lay there as they fell, stark and ghastly; and the tears came to my eyes as I passed along the line and recognized one and another and bade them good bye forevermore.

That was long ago; but yet now, as I write, the old times come back to me in all their freshness, and through the long vista of eighteen years that fatal field rises up to view.

In my mind's eye I see the cannon crowned crest, the long waving lines of blue as they advance to the charge, the flags, the gleaming steel, the screaming grape, the rattling musketry, the shrill commands, the groans of agony, the cries of pain, and sadder far, I seem to behold once more the faces of comrades upturned to the blue sky but into whose eyes the falling sunshine sheds no golden light. Ah! language cannot describe my feelings as the past returns, bringing with it the terrible, bloody scenes of that fateful day.

Do the Lying Suffer Pain?

People do not like to think of death. It is an unpleasant subject, but it constantly obtrudes itself, and there has been much speculation as to whether mental or physical pain attend the final act. Observation teaches us that there is little pain of either kind in dying. Experience will come to us all one of these days, but it will come too late to benefit those who remain. It seems to be a kind provision of nature that, as we approach the dreaded event, our terror diminishes, and the coward and hero die alike—fearless, indifferent, or resigned. As to physical pain, Dr. Edward H. Clark, in "Vissions," says: "The rule is that unconsciousness, not pain, attends the final act. To the subject of it, death is no more painful than birth. Painlessly we come; whence we know not. Painlessly we go; whither we know not. Nature kindly provides an anæsthetic for the body when the spirit leaves it. Previous to that moment, and in preparation for it, respiration becomes feeble, generally slow and short, often accomplished by long inspirations and short expirations, so that the blood supply is less and less oxygenated. At the same time the heart acts with corresponding debility, producing a slow, feeble, and often irregular pulse. As this process goes on, the blood is not only driven to the head with diminished force and in less quantity, but what flows there is loaded more and more with carbonic acid gas, a powerful anæsthetic, the same as that derived from charcoal. Subject to its influence the nerve centers lose consciousness and sensibility, apparent sleep creeps over the system; then comes stupor and the end."

The Russian Soldier.

The great cause of the success of the Russian soldier lies in his almost unbounded patience and endurance. The men have marched and fought and slept in snow and ice, and forded rivers with the thermometer at zero. They had no blankets, and the frozen ground precluded all idea of tents: the half wornout shelter tents that the men had used during the summer were cut up to tie around their boots, which were approaching dissolution; and although an effort was made to shelter the men in the huts in the village, yet always half of them had to sleep out in the open air without shelter. Their clothing at night was the same as the day, and it differed from that of the summer only in the addition of an overcoat, woolen jacket and woolen muffler for the head. Their food was one pound of hard bread, and a pound and a half of tough, stringy beef driven along the road; they were forced to carry six and eight days' rations on their backs, in addition to an extra supply of cartridges in their pockets; there was more than one instance where the men fought well, not only without breakfast, but without having tasted food in twenty-four hours. There was not a single case of insubordination; the men were usually in good spirits, and the number of stragglers on the march was far less than during the heat of summer.

BEAUTY.—It is difficult to say what constitutes beauty in women, or what is its real criterion. The Sandwich Islanders estimate women by their weight. The Chinese require them to have deformed feet and black teeth. A Girl must be tattooed sky-blue and wear a nose-ring to satisfy a South Sea Islander. African princes require their brides to have their teeth filed like those of a saw. And thus goes the world, the criterion of beauty differing hugely with differences of latitude and longitude.

"A Dutchman who married his second wife soon after the funeral of his first, was visited with a two hours serenade in token of disapproval. He expostulated pathetically thus: "I say, poys, you ought to be ashamed of yourself to be making all dish noise ven dere was a funeral here so soon."