

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers*, Dec 20, 1890 to May 30, 1891)

The Experience of Griffith Williams in a Battle

I fear that my theme may tax your patience, since it is a chronicle of incidents which occurred in the late Civil War; and most of us have so often, either from interest or politeness, listened to the reminiscences of many who took part in the struggle, and have read so much of its voluminous literature, that we became weary of the subject.

Before deciding to impose upon your good nature however, I glanced through the last catalog of the club and found that, in the titles of some 1400 papers recorded, only 19 of them related to our Civil War, providing that the titles themselves gave proper dues to subject matters. Considering the number of members of the Literary Club who took part in the great conflict, I thought the proportion remarkably small, and that you would perhaps forgive me if I added one to the list of war papers.

It is customary to beg pardon after the commission of a trespass. I do so in advance. This writing is not a treatise on the strategy or tactics of an intricate campaign, requiring a study of maps, as well as your closest attention to understand. It is the simple recital of his experience in a battle of an old friend of mine (God rest his soul) told to me by him, again and again through a long acquaintance, that I imagined I knew the story as well as if it had been my own. I shall therefore relate it, as if Griffith Williams himself was speaking and use on his behalf the first person singular.

The time of the incidents, herein narrated, is midway in the progress of the war of succession – at the close of an old year – the beginning of a new year.

For two months two great armies had watched each other from their camps, about thirty miles apart. It appeared like a truce, for each side was recuperating from the effects of an exhaustive campaign. Each army, occasionally sent reconnoitering parties over the neutral ground to observe what his enemy was doing, and insignificant fusillades frequently took place when the detachments met; but with little loss of life or limb.

Each army seemed loth to take the initiative, for there was a feeling that the battle when it did come, would be a bloody one and the cause which either side champions would be seriously affected for better or for worse.

On the day after Christmas the Army to which I belonged, began forward movement. First came all the confusion of the breaking up of an established camp, the galloping of orderlies and staff officers, the movement of ambulances carrying the sick from the field hospitals to those in a near city and the packing of tents and surplus baggage for storage in the rear.

The white canvas of a thousand acres disappeared and in its place lines of troops marshaled on the site of the vanished city, and then filed on to the roads leading towards

the enemy.

In the host of 4700, I numbered only one. The start was made in a soaking rain, and all of this first day it rained at intervals. The main body of the corps to which I was attached marched on one of the turnpike roads, while some few hundred yards in advance of the head of the column, moved a curtain of skirmishers; that is, a single line of men abreast, spread a few spaces apart from each other, and occupying about a quarter of a mile of line at right angles to the turnpike.

The skirmishers passed over hills and valleys, through woods and fields regardless of topography.

At both ends of this front skirmish line, trailing to the rear, were two long strings of troops marching single file on each side of and parallel to the main column on the turnpike. These, technically called "flankers," also marched over the hills and hollows, and with the front line of skirmishers formed a "U" shaped curtain, protecting the main body from surprise. I was on the right side of this curtain, trudging in the single file through mud, wet grass, brush and briars. Thus like a gigantic hooded serpent, the army corps followed the sinuosities of the turnpike from right to left and undulated vertically with the rise and fall of its grades. As the road was most of the time on lower ground, I occasionally had an extended view of it from the generally higher land occupied by the flankers.

The body was of a blue color, but there was a glitter of scales over the whole length of it, and each scale could be as deadly as the fangs of a rattlesnake.

The march was in a steady, swinging gait for four miles, when the outposts of the enemy were encountered. From this on, the progress was slow, for it was necessary to feel the way, and the advance guard of the enemy obstinately opposed that of our own; and skirmishing was continuous until sun set; at which time we halted for the night's bivouac, having made a distance of twelve miles.

For our comfort the rain had ceased. The enemy was spread around the country in battle order, and as our battalion did not occupy an advanced position, we felt at ease and made ourselves quite comfortable. The contraband cook prepared, what the Sunday school books used to call a frugal repast, and I slept profoundly on a mattress of cedar boughs.

It took all of the second day to travel five miles. The rain had returned with increased vigor, the skirmishing was continuous; the outposts of the enemy were stubborn; and occasionally our artillery went to the front to fire at them. Just before sunset the clouds parted, the sunshine streamed upon us, and a magnificent rainbow sprang in full arch against the sky. Whether superstitious are not, Meldrum and myself decided it to be a good augury for us; a promise of success in the coming battle. Possibly some of our hostile countrymen also considered it their bow of promise.

The night of this second day I was employed on picket duty and procured a royal supper

of cornbread and sausage from a farm house near our post for the small fee of 25 cents. The pickets were not disturbed and we passed a quiet night.

The third day was Sunday, clear with the brightness of the sunny South. No advance was made; no movement other than the shifting of brigades for a better line of battle. All was quiet on Stewart's Creek where bivouacked. We thought at the time that the well-known piety of our General in command prompted the keeping of the day according to the Decalogue, and I afterward read his official report, in which he merely said that on Sunday his army rested.

The pickets of the two armies on opposite banks of the Creek became quite friendly, and kept up an interchange of newspapers and camp trifles.

On Monday, the fourth day, active operations were resumed by the advance of the whole corps in the order of battle in which it bivouacked. A few hundred paces brought us to Stewart's Creek, but it formed no obstacle. In perfect line it was forded waist-deep, with a shudder as the cold water touched our bodies; the few individuals who were loth to have their clothes wet and began to strip for the emergency being forced into their places. I looked back upon the regiment immediately following in the second line, to admire the manner in which they took a winter bath. The scene was worthy of a picture, but I had no Kodak camera.

On we went over fields and fences, through woods and thickets, preceded by skirmishers. Occasionally we halted when our opponents were not disposed to yield, and waited for our skirmishers to fight it out.

I have a vivid recollection of one of these halts. The landscape was charming. We had reached a rise of ground which dipped away in front of us, in a long wave across green pasture fields brightened by sunshine and rose again to thick cedar forest.

The chain of skirmishers had gained the middle ground without interruption when from the edge of the timber, a line of little puffs of smoke appeared, and a second later we heard the crashing sound of musketry.

As if a machine has moved them our skirmishers fell flat on the ground. The volley directed at them was a word of commands obeyed with the precision of a drill exercise. In a moment they were on their feet again and made toward the woods with a rush. To be prepared for a general attack orders ricocheted from brigade, to regiment, and to company and some fine tactical evolutions were hurriedly performed.

A battery of artillery was brought forward for a duel with a battery of the enemy. Some shells of the latter came unpleasantly close, but the greater number furnished amusement by bursting high in the air.

One shell came with a screech and dug itself into the ground a few yards from me, scattering clods of earth in our faces. Some fell to avoid the expected explosion, and there

was rapid giving way or parting from the vicinity of the unwelcome visitor; but the shell did not burst.

The enemy were becoming obstinate, and all signs indicated that we were nearing the place where the great struggle was to be. A dense column of smoke arose beyond the enemy's skirmishers. Evidently a burning house, which we thought had been fired by our shells; but it proved to be just outside the enemy's position on vantage ground for either party, and had doubtless had the torch applied to prevent our side from using it as a cover.

Our day's march was at an end; and amid the rattle of musketry, the booming of cannon and the crackling of flames from the burning building we turned into bivouac in a cedar wood. That cedar wood has ever since been to me a memorable place for it formed part of the battle ground where the slaughter was appalling. Its boughs sheltered me that night from the December air and also on a subsequent night with the bloody debris of battle around me. All that night, the whistle of the locomotive within the enemy's lines and the rattle of our wagons on the turnpike betokened the active preparation of both armies.

On the morning of the fifth day our brigade was marched out of the cedar forest and took position in an old cotton field. The day was spent in moving troops from one place to another, but except to general or staff officers the exact purports of the movements were unknown. The front of the Army spread over several miles; I may be wrong when I say, it was four. The sound of sharp engagements of small bodies, sometimes distant, sometimes near, told that one side or the other was feeling the strength of its antagonist.

The position of our regiment in the cotton field was uncomfortable. The soil was muddy from recent rains, and as we had nothing to do all day but sit or stand inactive, we gathered the dead stalks of the cotton plant to carpet the ground, or bundle into seats.

The enemy's pickets, from the shelter of a thicket, amused themselves with occasional shots at us in our exposed position, for we were in the front line without advance skirmishers. I saw six in our regiment who were wounded by this irregular firing. Then at times a field piece shot shells at us; but its aim was poor and aside from adding to our discomfort, it did no damage. But nevertheless, we flattened on the cotton stalk mattresses whenever we saw the smoke of the cannon. Toward evening much to our relief, we were taken out of the cotton field and allowed to rest for the night under the friendly shelter of the cedars. Darkness closed in; it was the battle eve.

The next was the last day of the old year. It opened crisp with frost but with a shining sun. In an address from the General Commanding entitled after the style of the military, Gen. order no.... was read to each regiment. We were told that we were to fight a great battle, exhorted to be faithful, and addressed otherwise in a sensible and patriotic manner. Our regiment marched out of the woods to open ground behind the cotton field just spoken of, and waited listlessly to be assigned a place. I sat down on a log before a deserted bivouac fire, pulled out a novel of Eugene Sue's and began reading, when suddenly the crashing and booming sounds of a genuine battle began on our right. The enemy were evidently flanking us, I jumped up and looked about but no sign of a foe save the din on the right;

but among our wagon trains in the rear was a scene of excitement and confusion. Wagons were being driven here and there, Teamsters were energetically lashing obstinate mules, and horsemen galloping as if for life. The non-combatants were panic stricken, and for a moment, until assured by the direction of the sounds of the firing, I thought that the enemy must be in our rear.

Our Brigadier immediately marched us to the right into the cedars. We stood to arms for some little time awaiting the onset, the noise of the battle growing rapidly closer, until it was apparent that our right wing was being routed and forced back upon us.

A brigade came flying past us; many of them cooler than the majority, joined our ranks. A very useful regular posted himself close to me saying, with smiling face, as he turned and faced the foe "By God I'm not going to run any farther." He was the first in the range of my vision to fall, for in a minute later, a bullet struck through his neck; blood spurted from his wound and splattered a man standing by him.

His short life was ended
It was a normal ending.

Our Regiment at first attempted to stop the fugitives, but it was useless, and before they had all passed through our ranks, the pursuing enemy were in plain sight through the timbers. Our regiment, impatient to check the advancing columns with the propensity of the American soldier to do his own thinking, heedless of commands, commenced firing, not in a volley but singly and in squads, until the whole front was in action and before the retreating men had passed to the rear. All those who were in front fell to the ground to save themselves from their brothers' bullets, and crawled in for the few remaining paces. I think it most likely that many of them were killed or wounded by their own friends.

The advancing line was gray, but there was a bright spot in it. "Aim for the colors" some shouted, "No No it is cowardly," cried the high toned Montfort, "the color bearer is unarmed." Now the battle began with us in earnest. First I had remarked the peculiar sounds of a few stray bullets flying past, and these caused a good deal of involuntary dodging. Now they came so thick we could not notice them and engrossed in the business of our firing had no attention to give them. The uproar going on around us was tremendous. In the midst of it all a stunning feeling on the side of my head, caused me to think that a bullet had struck me. I put my hand up to feel the wound, and happening at the same time to turn on the pivot of the wounded side found, that the trouble had been merely caused by Cunningham standing a pace behind and firing his rifle with the muzzle alongside my ear.

I upbraided him roundly for his carelessness, but he stolidly paid no attention. Probably he did not hear my voice above the uproar, but I do not think he cared a d... if he did.

We had just commenced fighting when I noticed a man in company on my right, as he was in the act of raising his gun to fire, drop it and take to his heels. I was supposing that fear had overcome him, when he sat down behind a tree and pulled up his sleeve. He was wounded.

We had two kinds of rifles in the Regiment, a good and a bad kind. I had one of the bad kind. After several fine shots with it, it refused to perform its duty. I cast it aside and ran up and down the rear, a short distance to right and left, hoping to replace it by one of the good guns belonging to some disabled man but the Enfields were seized as soon as the owners were unable to use them. I met Draper on the same errand; he spoke to me as I was about to carry off a rifle, warning me that it was of no account, as he had thrown it away himself. It was the last time I saw or spoke to my old mess mate, for a few minutes afterward, he was killed. Unsuccessful in my search, I returned to my place, and having nothing to do, I had leisure to look around and observe effects. No enemy could now be seen; our own smoke obscured them. But they were nevertheless in front giving blow for blow.

I saw my old friends dropped one after another. William Truax always cool, casually told me he was shot. He looked around as if undecided what to do and then limped to a neighboring tree, using his musket as a staff, and, too proud to go behind the tree, sat down in front of it to examine the wound in his leg.

Lew Frank was sitting on a stone with his fore head resting on his hands. He must have been wounded somehow, but this was the last seen of him. He was never more heard of.

Some leap into the air, some fall backward, and some simply sink to the ground when they are struck severely or mortally. All around the slaughter went on; many were wounded; many killed. One witnesses the progress of the campaign in such human shambles without the feeling of horror, that the sight of maimed and mangled humanity usually causes in times of peace, or even the feeling of the soldier, revolting at the view of red smeared bodies lying rigid on a field, where others have fought and he visits.

How long we stood in the cedar wood as a phalanx, I had not the slightest idea. Then I have never spoken to anyone who could fairly approximate the time of an exciting engagement. But Major Christman some months afterwards told me he had timed our standing by his watch as 45 minutes.

Probably some ten minutes before the close of the forty five, I was saying something to Captain Thayer, or rather, I was yelling it at him to be heard, when I felt something like a red-hot iron pass into my body at my right side.

Momentarily I became as weak and powerless as an infant, for an instant I endeavored to hold my standing position, but my muscles refused to obey my will and I sank easily to the ground. Thayer dragged me a few steps to the root of a tree and said, "There Grif, that will do for a while." Schooley and Montfort begged to have me taken off the field. I could not hear them, but I could read their words in their faces and actions. I do not know that they asked to carry me off themselves, for they were tried men that had never flinched from fire. But Thayer was inexorable and shook his head. He was perfectly right, but I did not think so at the time, and was indignant.

The wound did not pain in the least, and knowing that removal from the field was, for the present, hopeless, I raised myself slightly on my elbows and watched the progress of the battle with deepest interest. I could not see very much, for my range of vision was limited by the thick timber.

But pretty soon, to my dismay the men on the right began to fall back. Those in front of me, appeared reluctant to follow, but when the gradual cessation of the noise of firing permitted the shouts of "The order is retreat" to be heard, they obeyed with alacrity. The order was given to save the brigade from capture or annihilation as the enemy were on three sides of it. In the 45 minutes up to the time of this order, 40 percent, of the Regiment I was with were killed or wounded. Schooley and Montfort seized me and between them half carried, half dragged me away. But soon they fell far behind and to save themselves were obliged to abandon me. A moment later Doherty one of the last to leave the field, came up and with Irish generosity made an effort to save me. He dragged me only a short distance or to within fifty yards of the edge of the cedars, when being hard pressed, he too had to leave me.

In another minute the enemy were up to where I lay and paused to renew their firing, sheltered by the timber. I had often wished to see a live regiment of our enemy, under the freedom not granted to prisoners of war, and now, although I did not welcome my opportunity I took advantage of it. I raised myself on my elbows again and watched the troops who stood a few paces in front of me, and were firing at our men, who had halted about the place where I had left off reading Eugene Sue, previously mentioned. Their rank were in orderly disorder, no doubt caused by their rapid advance through the timber, as many of them who could, took the cover of the trees, like skirmishers, I had a close view of their new flag for the first time. It was about double the size of a bandanna handkerchief, a red ground with blue St. Andrew's cross, spotted with white stars. I thought the design very pretty. The color bearer from behind a tree kept the flag waving defiantly from the end of its slim pole. An officer raised a revolver and aimed it towards me, where at I quickly ducked my head. A moment's reflection told me that a brave enemy would not hurt a fallen foe, and that I was not the target, and I again raised my head to watch the battle. A piece of artillery was brought up and unlimbered about ten steps from me.

The concussions of its shots over me made a very uncomfortable sensation in my wound; but worse its presence drew a very well directed fire of grape from a battery of our own. Of all the sounds of deadly missiles used in warfare, I do not think any are more mournful than the sound of grape coming towards one, it comes with a funereal wail. This fire caused the men in front of me to part away from their own cannon. What effect the showers of grape had on the artillarists or infantry around, I knew not but being in the same box with them, I dropped my head and flattened as closely as possibly to the ground. I could hear the wailing, and the iron crashing through the trees, and digging up the ground.

Selfishly and unpatriotically I wished the enemy's cannon, I was going to say ours, for I felt that he was protecting me, would silence that of our army. Suddenly with a cheer, the

infantry started on a charge passing over me.

I wished to follow them with my eyes, but my face was in the wrong direction and I had not the strength to turn, but I twisted my head long enough to see across the field near the burnt house, too long lines of gray on a double quick toward our men.

Feeling now much exhausted I laid my head down. Theodore Woolson a sorely wounded man of my own regiment, crawling about the field, saw me and concluded to stop near me for companionship.

We were now wholly within the enemy's lines; there were no flying bullets to annoy us, but the wolves and hyenas of the enemy (our own army was not without the breed) were prowling about, robbing dead and wounded. One of them came to Woolson, handled him so roughly, I thought he would end by killing him, but he only took his watch, pocketbook and canteen. Thinking that my turn was next, while the hyena was engaged with my comrade, I endeavored to take my diary from an inside pocket to secrete it on the ground under me, hoping to have some opportunity to send it home, should it develop, that I could never return there myself. But my strength was too weak to allow me to extricate it, and I thought it must become the prey of the hyena. But when he was done with Woolson, he looked at me, paused a moment, and passed on. Others of the pack came along, took Woolson's word, that he had already given up everything, looked at me, and passed on. I could only account for this, and for the very exceptional kindness, afterwards bestowed by all friends and foes whom I met in my helpless state, to my very youthful appearance.

Suddenly the pack of beasts of prey began a flight to the rear, and there came the sound of heavy tramping as of many men running, and I knew that our forces were driving the enemy back. They came rushing past like a torrent, I could almost laugh for joy, and I wanted to jeer at them, but I dared not, and fearful that they might carry me as a prisoner along with them, I lay motionless and shut my eyes to feign death.

They all passed me, and soon I had the welcome sight of our own men around me, it was General Neal's division. There was no order about them. They were like a flock of sheep about their commander, who was striving to get them into some kind of system. Several, prompted me to ask him to have me removed from the field. He immediately acceded, and ordered two men to bear me away. They very willingly obeyed, but had just raised me up when the enemy commenced pouring in volleys, and the disorganized division, without waiting for the word of command, began a retreat. My two bearers were among the first to leave, but they dropped me into the place from which they had raised me.

The enemy again took possession of the field, and this time held it. The battle lulled occasionally a cannon would boom forth; and then a sharp rattle of musketry, but by degrees the sounds of battle ceased. The strong contrast of a deep silence against a recent turmoil came.

The despair of desolation settled on me. I believed then our army was vanquished and

had yielded the field to its victorious rival. I was helpless; far from home; no one to aid me but my enemy.

Then out of the stillness sounded the sweet song of a mocking bird, perched in the tree above me. It was a song of hope. A company of the 4th Georgia marched up to where I lay, and established its pickets around about. Many of the men visited me. One came with some exultation in his speech to speak to me, but he soon softened and tried to make amends for hasty words, and told me that he has been on my side of the question as long as he could hold out, but had finally been swept away in the flood, he then commenced a political discussion. I replied to a few of his arguments, but being in no humor for a debate under my thin circumstances, I let him have his own way and he, not caring for a monologue soon ceased. I told him I was cold, when he looked around and brought a bloody blanket, and very carefully wrapped me up. In doing this he saw my novel by Eugene Sue, and seated on a stone began to take through the pages. I told him to keep it if he wanted it, that I was done with it. He seemed pleased and thanked me.

He also wrapped Theodore Woolson in a blanket and then left us. Years afterwards, I received a letter from him from North Carolina, stating that he had just learned my address from some one he had met, and kindly inquired after my welfare. He recalled the events of our meeting on the battlefield in order that I might identify him.

The receipt of the letter gave great pleasure, as I had never known the name or the fate of my civil adversary. Among others who came to me was the Captain commanding the picket post.

He spoke very kindly, inquired about my wound, and said that when his enemy was in my condition, he could not longer think of him as such, but as a friend whom it was his bounden duty to help, with whatever power that in him lay. He seemed anxious to do something for me; said the ground was too hard to lie on; brought another blanket from the debris of the battle, tenderly lifted me and placed it underneath. Then he went away and came back with a cup of water. He wanted to give me something to eat also. I was neither hungry or thirsty, but I drank a little from the cup he held it to my lips, for I knew it pleased him, to feel that his ministrations were of service. Often, during the remainder of the day, he came himself or sent one of his men to inquire how I was getting along.

He would sit for a while to cheer me with his conversation, saying that he did not want me to feel lonely; and told me to call out to any of his men when I wanted anything.

I regret to say that this gentleman (I use the word in the sense of its old-time significance) was killed in one of the last battles of the war, as I was informed by my North Carolina correspondent. In truth I cannot but speak well of the many who came to me and offered their sympathy, but I mention the foregoing two cases as especially worthy of acknowledgment.

The day began to wane and still I laid there despairing. I asked the pickets to remove me to the hospital, but of course they could not leave their posts and could only give me the

hope that if an ambulance came in sight, they would hail it for me.

The solitude is profound, broken only by occasional groans from the wounded. But there is a sound! Listen! A most welcome sound! It was the firing of a musket; and another; and another. It was from my own Army, for now my Georgia pickets returned the fire.

And next, a cannon sent a shell over us making my friends prostrate themselves upon the ground; and though I wished the aim was not so close, I rejoiced that it brought the tidings, that our army had not given up the contest. But the battle was not renewed just then; the shots were only the prologue. Night closed in. It was the last night of a dying year.

It was to me, while it lasted, a night of eternity. The moans of the wounded filled the woods with piteous sounds. Through the whole long night was heard the rumble of ambulances in merciful journeys bent, the foolish hope that one would come within hail of me kept one sleepless. The dreary night lingered on, would it never end? At last a bugle sounded the musical notes of the reveille. Still the darkness eternal. Would the day never come again? Had my senses failed me? Was I blind? I asked Woolson if it was day light, but he said no, it was still dark.

But the morning did come, at last, the morning of the new year. I had wished it would bring a renewal of the battle, in the hope that our army would recover its lost ground; but save occasional skirmishing and picket firing the day was remarkably quiet. My Georgia Captain and others called to see how I had spent the night, and kept up their occasional visits as before.

It was a long dreary day. The sun began to sink, and another eternal night was in prospect. The thought was maddening. I had been lying under the cedars for thirty-two hours. I commenced to reason thus – I was wounded, it is true. I have no pain or thirst. All other wounded have pain and thirst. I am only weak. A pellet of lead has passed into my body and I have been so foolish as to imagine, that its slight wound has rendered me helpless. It is not good to let one's imagination ferment unchecked. It has just caused me the dolor of many weary hours. I will assert myself. I will be a weakling no longer. I will arise and go to my own people. But would my Georgia friends, with all their kindness, permit the escape of an able-bodied prisoner? I called for the Captain and diplomatically asked him; that supposing it were possible for me to crawl, or say, even to walk, over to my own lines, would he permit me to go?

“Oh my boy” he said “it is impossible for you to do that.”

“But supposing it possible, could I have your permission?” I said.

“With all my heart,” he replied, “and if I had the power, I would take you to your friends now myself.”

“You won't let your men fire on me,” I said

“Oh no, no” said the Captain “they would never think of such a thing.”

Here Woolson appealed to me not to leave him.

“Will you let me send an ambulance after him?”

“Most certainly, and if it were possible to get word to your lines for one, it could come in safely for you both.”

The Captain returned to his post. I commenced my journey. I intended to rise to my feet and walk away, confident that my friendly Captain would not break his word. I made the effort; it was not as easy as I thought; in fact I could not rise to a standing position at all. But my desperation gave a momentary strength, which enabled me to raise up on my knees, with my hands resting on the ground; but my body was too heavy for my weak limbs, even aided by the desperate will I had invoked; and I fell over. I realized that the effect of the bullet, was not imaginary. But my desperation still had a strength in my wrists, which enabled me to drag myself like a snake, and the toilsome journey was begun. I saw the color of one uniform and struck the shortest course for it.

For the fifty yards through the timbers the passage was comparatively easy. I observed the marks of the battle. The ground was carpeted with burned powder, exploded caps, cartridges, cast off clothing, infantry equipments, and boughs cut from trees. Many dead of both sides were there. Just at the edge of the woods lay the body of one of our officers. Curious to know whose it was, I steered my course to pass it. One glance was enough. My old friend Al Wilbur lay on his back, cold and stark and gory, a bullet wound in his fore head, a smile on his face.

Recollections of happy days before this savage war, and thoughts of the grief of his parents in the loss of their pride, and anguish of his betrothed, came to me as I pursued my journey.

When I reached the plowed ground, the frozen soil, which had thawed on the surface, clung to my clothing and impeded my progress. I could now only go a few feet at a time, and had to rest so long at each halt, that I feared night would overtake me. I turned my eyes to estimate the distance passed over, and the time it would take to reach our pickets, which were only a few yards in advance of the main body. The mud adhering to my overcoat weighted me down and I slipped out of it.

When I got within calling distance of our pickets, I hailed them with a feeble voice, for my artificial strength was fast vanishing.

They told me to crawl into a clump of bushes near at hand. I did so and two of them adroitly made their way to me without attracting the attention of the enemy. They picked me up, placed me between them with my arms around their shoulders, made a [good ready], and rushed out of the bushes with me. A volley from the enemy pickets (not

however from the direction of my Georgia friends) Sent the bullets flying past us. They laid me down and exclaimed in surprise, "Why it is Grif Williams." They who had risked their lives for me to were Logan and Bradley, two stalwart young man detailed from my regiment into the pioneers. After they had breathed , they conveyed me to the bivouac of their battalion.

The kindness of the Pioneers was overflowing. Officers and men gathered around me. Some one suggested I must be cold from the long exposure, and instantly a number disputed the privilege of carrying me to the fire. Numerous canteens were thrust at me. One supposing that I must be hungry, took a handful of crumbs from his haversack and offered it to me. It was all he had for himself, for the enemy had captured a train and provisions were scarce. The little act touch me, but I assured him that I was not hungry. I was in high spirits, and the changed situation caused me to forget my wound so that I answered there many questions and interested them with accounts of my recent experiences. In the meantime a messenger had been dispatched for the Pioneer ambulance. I begged the driver to first go after Woolson, telling him about the safe conduct promised by the Georgia Captain. But he refused, saying that he had been shot at too often.

I was placed in the ambulance and thanking them all for the attention shown me, was driven away. The driver was as considerate as the man who bid me good-bye. He drove from one hospital to another, stopping at each to inspect the quarters, and refusing to let me be put out where the only space, for a fresh arrival, was in a tent. His mind was made up, that I should have the best that the field afforded, and although I told him that it could not make much difference, he hunted until long after dark, and stopping before one of the farm houses, which had been turned into a hospital, went in and came back with attendants, saying: "here's the place."

I was taken inside and laid on a red clotted mattress. Two or three surgeons were waiting for something to do and gave immediate attention to me. For probably half an hour they probed the wound but were unsuccessful in finding the bullet, and decided that nothing could be done except to give me careful nursing.

I was taken up to the second story of the log house, where in a large room, under the shingles were perhaps a dozen or more others with quite an assortment of wounds.

I remained in this impromptu hospital two weeks, receiving all the kindness that the surgeons and nurses could bestow. Time hung rather heavily with us. The only books which could be found in the house were a Shakespeare and a Webster's Speller.

The Shakespeare was well thumbed and was often read aloud, and the Speller enabled us to get up spelling matches. Occasionally there was a death among our number. The day following that of my arrival at the hospital, the final period of the great battle took place. Our hearts sank as the sounds of tumult for a time approached us, telling of repulse, and rose as the noise receded, (for that was victory) and the last gun was heard in the faint distance. A soldier shortly after arrived and recounted all he could tell of the great news.

I remained some days in the log house, without seeing any one I knew. But a messenger came, inquiring for any members of our regiment, and finding me, was the means of soon bringing Meldrum and four comrades with a litter. They appeared much affected when they saw me, and one of them turned to brush his eyes. They were so well satisfied with the doctors, nurses and quarters that they said I had better remain where I was, than go to our own tent hospital. One of them remained with me.

I will not weary you further, with the experience of Griffith Williams, by relating his nine months of life in one hospital and another. I will merely say, that he was awakened from a long delirium and recalled to life, by the sight of a devoted mother who had come to see him die; and that he was able again to give his small help to the cause he had espoused.

Peace now to his ashes.

He told me how, long years afterwards, he visited the battlefield and tracked out the place memorable to him. The burned house was marked by a few bricks and a thicket of shrubs. The cotton field was still there, but the great cedar woods were traceable only by the patches of timber left among the new cultivation.

He went to the Bethel Cemetery and read on the Gateway that 6139 of his dead comrades lay buried there. Walking along the rows of graves, he saw the names of many who knew him once, and paused at one, where the modest headstone had this inscription.

Theodore Woolson
Age 22
Xth. Regiment

He mused on what might have been the career of him, stricken down in the freshness of youth, the light of whose life, devoted to his country, went out, at the portal of his manhood, as a candle at the open doorway in the early morning; and whose body here, (once food for worms) had long since mingled with the clay beneath; that

“Some mute inglorious Milton here might rest;”
some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.” The grave was an humble one, but, as an inscription on a monument to some of the heroes of Spain, translated to me by one of her sons, hath it:

“To those who die, bequeathing God's example,
the grave is not a grave, it is a temple.”

G. B. Nicholson

Cincinnati Literary Club
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