

Correspondence.

CHAPLAIN STEWART'S LETTER.

BATTLE FIELD, COAL HARBOR, VA.,
June 6th, 1864.

DEAR BRO. MEARS:—Were passing events merely written of, there would be but a repetition; a long, sickening, almost endless detail of bloodshed; of killing, of ghastly mutilation on the human body, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, not a single part of it that has not often been seen torn, lacerated, and broken in every possible manner. Even a sickly public curiosity may have at length become sated, sickened, clogged with these bloody details. Yet of what else can we write? Our duties, our daily and nightly business, are with the dead, the dying and the tortured sufferer.

And still this death struggle is waged with, if possible, increased earnestness and fury. No appearance of a termination. Each party as apparently ready for the conflict as when begun in the Wilderness a month since. Here we are in front of an old dilapidated farm and mansion called *Coal Harbor*, some ten miles east from Richmond, where the right wing of our army camped in 1862.—Here we are with an unceasing cannonade and musketry roar—cutting down trees and bushes, carrying rails with fragments of demolished houses and old buildings and piling them up for defenses, digging ditches and throwing up long and parallel ridges of earth, both as means for assault and modes of defence against the missiles of the enemy. In many places these works are now pushed up within a stone's throw of the enemy. Should a soldier on either side make a fair exhibition of head or body by day, he is pretty sure to have a Minnie-ball through the same.

WOUNDED REBEL.

During the second day of the battle in the Wilderness, and during a lull in the carnage, I was sitting on Jesse and resting in a place where the rebel line of battle had been the previous day. Their wounded had been generally removed, while the dead lay thickly scattered in all directions and positions. One of their wounded, which had been either overlooked or they unable or unwilling to remove him, lay near a tree where I stopped. Dismounting, I drew near him with the familiar salutation; "Well, friend, how are you getting along?" "Bye me with evident suspicion, mingled with some fierceness, he slowly responded: "Wall, stranger, bad enough." "Anything I can do for you?" was inquired. Seeing I was not about to insult or kill him outright, his tone and manner became greatly modified while responding: "See here stranger! now in the first place I ought not to have been here." Assuring him that no difference of opinion existed respecting that matter, and that this was not the time and place to have the matter discussed and settled, the question was repeated: "What can be done for you?" "Wall, if I could only be turned over. Both my thighs seem to be broken, and lying just in this one way since yesterday, has made me awful tired." Getting outside of him and bending down, he was directed to put his arms around me and help himself as well as he could. We soon succeeded in getting him twisted over. "Thar," says he, "that's better, thank ye." "Got any water?" "Nary a drop since yesterday." A little was poured into his cup from my canteen. "Could you eat a cracker?" "Got nun." Two were handed him, which were eyed with special interest and curiosity. By this time his fear and fierceness were both gone, and his eyes filled with tears. A living Yankee had met him, and instead of being insulted or killed outright, he was receiving at least apparent kindness. "Got a wife?" I queried. "Yes, yes, and a whole lot of children away in North Carolina; and oh, if I was only with Mammy now," meaning his wife.

Just then two of our young men came up, with an empty stretcher. I hailed them and asked if they would not carry this wounded enemy back to our Hospital. "Certainly." And almost as soon as said, the helpless rebel was lifted on the stretcher, and the young men in motion with it. This was too much for all the wounded man's stoicism and animosity. Breaking down altogether, he commenced crying like a little baby; and could only exclaim as he was borne away: "Wall, now, this does beat all."

The fierceness and animosity infused into the Southern army by the leaders of this wicked rebellion, had evidently led him to expect far different treatment, should he be unfortunate enough ever to fall into the hands of these bloody Yanks. When, however, the arms shall be finally knocked out of the hands of these misguided men, they will learn that both Northern soldiers and citizens are so widely different from what they have been led to believe, that

we shall henceforth have not only a lasting, but a loving peace. The truth is, you could not induce our soldiers to retaliate upon the persons of helpless enemies. Though meeting them with all the sternness of death-dealing war, so long as arms are in their hands, yet so soon as helpless at their feet, they become to these rebels, tender as to little children.

LABOR IN FIELD HOSPITAL.

A few days since I was assigned to duty by the proper authorities, as chaplain to our Division Hospital, yet with the understanding that my own Regiment could be visited each day. This hospital for seventeen regiments, is located about two miles to the rear of the front line. Here the wounded from these regiments are brought back; some able to walk, others on stretchers and in ambulances. Here they have their wounds examined and dressed and amputations performed, if found necessary. When the wounded have accumulated sufficiently, they are sent to *White-House Landing*, sixteen miles distant, in a long train of ambulances and army wagons.

In our Division (2d Div. 6th Corps) we have about thirty large tents and awnings, and the ground beneath these is not unfrequently entirely covered with helpless, bleeding, mutilated, agonizing sufferers. What scenes! Some are dead ere they can be conveyed to the Hospital; some die under operation or while their wounds are being dressed; while others linger in pain for hours or days, ere the relief of death comes. A large majority are able to be conveyed away Northward.

The duties assigned me for the present, are to see that the dead are all buried, with, if possible, suitable religious ceremonies, see to the moral wants of the sufferers, and hold such religious services as may be convenient or possible in our condition.

A. M. STEWART.

AMONG THE WOUNDED.

FREDERICKSBURG, Saturday Night,
May 21, 1864.

MY DEAR BRO. MEARS.—I intended, before this, to have fulfilled my promise of giving you a sketch of things as they appear to one who has been looking upon these scenes of suffering and sorrow. All the week we have been incessantly occupied in duties which have so pressed upon us, as to leave almost no moment for quiet thought; least of all a leisure hour for a letter. I write now sitting on the floor with a small book upon my knee, and with men talking on either side, finding it hard to realize that it is Saturday night. The week has been a long weary week of anxiety and excessive toil, full of sorrowful incidents. The agony, the groans and the sharp cry of dying men, have been almost perpetually in our ears and before our eyes; yet thanks to the good hand of God over us, we feel comparatively fresh and vigorous, looking forward to a Sabbath not indeed of quiet and repose, of worship and of song, but of bustle and noise, and the same ministrations which have occupied so many hours.

On our arrival in Fredericksburg last Friday afternoon, we at once put ourselves under the orders of the surgeon in charge of the city, and were by him detailed to the hospitals of the second corps, where we should find the wounded of our Delaware regiments. We selected the place which seemed most destitute and in need of help. It was the St. George's Episcopal church, on the corner of Princess Ann and St. George's streets. The building bears marks of the battles of Fredericksburg. The walls are torn with shot and the spire is pierced with holes, where shot and shell have gone in and out. It was used by both sides as a signal station, and of course was made a mark for the cannon of both union and rebel artillerists. One of our company to-day took from the interior of the clock a piece of shell which had stopped its working. By the way, here is an example of the difference between the two people, North and South. I believe that this clock has not been running since the former battle. We thought it would be pleasant to hear it tell the hours, and to see the hands traversing the dial; so one of our number made it his business to examine and repair it. He found that it was in order, needing a little oil, and the piece of spherical case shot to be removed. So all day it has been running, and I have just heard the pleasant tone of the bell striking nine o'clock at night.

Every part of this building has been turned to hospital service. The main audience room and two large lecture rooms are for the wounded; the room in the rear of the pulpit is the operating room, where amputation and other surgical operations are performed. The room below it, formerly the infant-class room, is our store room and the place

where we prepare our delicacies. I notice in the ceiling a large purple stain; it will remain there; the surgeons above have not been careful enough to have the blood all drip into the box of saw dust, some of it has gone through the floor. The church is doing service for humanity and the country, better, I fear, than it has ever done before.

We selected as our especial posts, the two basement rooms. We found them sufficiently full of wounded men when we first saw them; but the long lines of ambulances and wagons were, hour after hour, rolling through the streets, and depositing their mournful freight at our doors; not all to be borne into the ward. Now and then a soldier, that did not groan as they lifted him heavily on the stretcher, would be carried within the gate, but only to lie with covered face all silent and still, or on the grass breathing heavily the last breath of a departing life. Soon, however, the wards were full, and could hold no more; the floors are covered all over with wounded men, so thickly that you must stride over them as you walk, treading—we have learned to do it now—with utmost care, looking well where you plant your foot, lest you shall touch some poor mutilated limb, or jar the arms of a stretcher, and have a sharp cry of pain make the tear start to your eyes, at your carelessness.

Of these men I speak carefully, when I say, perhaps not one of them but is desperately wounded. There they lie shot through every portion of the body, with wounds that make you stand in wonder that the man lives still; through the eye, out at the temple, through—they are almost all through and through—the chest, out at the back, through the thighs, arms, legs, in every conceivable direction; some of them have had limbs amputated, at the shoulder, high up on the thighs, below the knee. But I will not describe them. Words cannot convey to you the scene, least of all, give you a conception of the pestilential air, more terrible than sight or sound, which fills the rooms. Many of these festering wounds, (and a gunshot wound is different from any other,) have not been dressed for nearly a week, and as the bandages are unrolled their condition is terrible, demanding a strong effort of the will to compel the hands to do their work.

Of course, our first business was to dress the wounds, and this was a long and weary work. For the first two or three days there was a great scarcity of surgical aid. Great battles were in progress, and every surgeon was needed at the front; just enough had been detailed to attend to the administrative duties of the hospitals, the larger portion of the care of the wounded was necessarily thrown on the volunteers of the Sanitary and Christian Commissions. So, too, almost all the material used, lint, bandages, &c., were obtained only from the Sanitary Commission, and for several days, pretty much every thing that was used to comfort or relieve the sufferers came from the same source. Again and again, and every hour, we had reason to bless God for this great association. And here let me pay a tribute to the devotion and self-sacrifices of the volunteer surgeons. I have in my mind two, especially, in the hospital to which I was attached. Dr. Buck, the celebrated New York surgeon, and professor in the College of Physicians and Surgeons, was the chief surgeon in charge, and was unwearied in the discharge of his responsible duties, performing all the varied operations with his well known skill and success, as well as giving his personal attention to every case that required it among some three hundred or four hundred men. Dr. Parker, a surgeon from Michigan, was in charge of the wards to which we were assigned, and with skill and kindness was always at his post; while one after another would fall, overworked and sick, and go away. I mention these men not because they were peculiar in their labors, but because they came especially under my own eye. They were probably a type of many Fredericksburg, while it has been during these days a scene of agony, has also been a scene of matchless devotion, and an exhibition of the purest patriotism and Christianity. There will be many among these three or four hundred volunteers who will go home to sick rooms, and some to their graves on account of these labors of love. How men can breathe the inexpressibly dreadful atmosphere of these rooms, and not be poisoned, is wonderful. One of our most experienced army nurses in our ward tells me that he has been with the sick and wounded before, and often, but has never seen anything like this. One after another, they are falling sick, and soon to demand attention themselves.

I might describe the destitution of comfort, and our utter and heartsickening inability to give, at times, the most simple relief. How our heart ached as a

poor wagon-jolted body craved something better than the hard floor to lie on, or when a pale and agonized face would look up and ask for something on which to rest the quivering stump of his amputated limb—but it is past now. Oh how we fairly cried out for joy when, in the Sanitary store room, we saw a bale of blankets and a case of pillows! How we quickly wrote our requisition and hastened back like boys overjoyed with them in our arms. You will not wonder that when we came to a patient sufferer and asked him to lift his head, putting our hand under it to raise it from the soiled coat that covered the heavy shoes and was his only pillow, and then slipped a soft pillow that some gentle hand had made under it, while the head sank back and the eyes closed with "Oh how good that is; thank you, sir,"—you will not wonder that our eyes were clouded for a moment, or that a choked voice could hardly answer. Were I to tell it all your columns would be too few.

It is wonderful how these wounded men live, and it is at times surprising how they die; some with wounds ghastly and horrible, through—or seemingly through—the head, and really through the chest, live on from day to day, while others who seem comparatively slightly wounded, sink away; we leave them comparatively comfortable at night, but find their places vacant in the morning. I have before me now a case of wonderful tenacity of life, the surgeons seemed amazed at it. A rifle ball had plunged directly in the centre of the chest of a soldier through the breast bone, coming out I think at the back. Yet he lived for more than a week and has but just died. For a day he has lain panting for breath and dying. In the delirium of his passing away, his last words were "Forward, march, fire left! double quick!" and so he joined the great host of the dead.

W. A.

JOSIAH PARTINGTON.

Died, at Youngstown, N. Y., on the 11th of February, Rev. Josiah Partington, in the 65th year of his age.

Circumstances beyond the control of those immediately concerned, have delayed the above notice, with an obituary suitable to the death of an aged and honored servant of Christ.

Mr. Partington was born in Manchester, England, Dec. 25th, 1799. At the early age of fifteen he became hopefully converted to God. He acquired an education through his own exertions, and early turned his attention to the Gospel ministry. He preached in several places in England, and was finally sent as a missionary to the Isle of Man, where he remained three years, and returned to his native place. In 1831, he sailed for America. Landing at New York, he immediately repaired to Little York, (now Toronto) C. W., where he preached one year. He then went to Drummondville, C. W., where he was ordained, and united with the Niagara Presbytery. He remained there four years, and in the winter or spring of 1836, came to Youngstown and preached for Rev. Mr. Elliot, during a very interesting revival. He then preached for the church at Lewiston, about six months, when he received a call from the church at Knowlesville, N. Y., where he was installed and remained thirteen years. Thence he went to Byron, Gen. Co., and after three years labor, removed to Pelham, C. W. After four years he came to Youngstown, remaining to the time of his death.

These details have been given with confidence that they will be of great interest to hundreds, who have been his parishioners and to his brethren in the Presbyteries with which he has been connected.

As a preacher of the Gospel, Mr. Partington was distinguished for fervor, soundness and earnestness. At times, when dwelling on the great doctrines of grace and urging them upon men, one would be reminded of the words, "The zeal of the Lord's house hath eaten me up." And thus honoring God, he was, according to the promise, honored of God, in the fruits of his ministry, and in the affection and confidence of multitudes. Through all his ministry, he delighted to dwell on the days of his missionary service in the Isle of Man, and to narrate some wonderful incidents of divine providence there.

As a man, Mr. Partington was distinguished for peculiar friendliness and for inflexible integrity. His heart was always open to the suffering, and his strength and means at their service. He was proverbially prompt and punctual in all dealings with men, and in all calls and duties of the ministry. In this respect, few men have left so useful an example behind them. And when called to go up higher, his children mourned the loss of a faithful friend, and his partner a faithful, affectionate husband. There is pleasant assurance that the human verdict in his life was ratified above. "Well done!"

CON.

ARRANGEMENT AND WORKING OF AN ARMY HOSPITAL.

The public generally but little informed in regard to the organization and efficiency of the Medical Department of our Army. The following communication, on this subject, from the Rev. T. H. Robinson, of Harrisburg, who spent several weeks in the employ of the Christian Commission, in the Army of the Potomac, will interest the readers of your valuable paper. It is taken from the *Harrisburg Telegraph*.

Dr. De Witt mentioned in the communication, is the son of Rev. Dr. De Witt, of Harrisburg, associated with the Rev. Mr. Robinson, as the senior pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of that place:

Fifth Corps—Major General Warren. *First Division*—Brigade General Griffin. *First Division*—Brigade General Griffin. Each division of a corps has its division hospital, which accompanies the corps in all its movements, and is under the direction of a surgeon-in-chief.

A division is divided into three brigades. Each of the brigades of a division has a surgeon-in-chief, who is appointed on the recommendation of the surgeon-in-chief of the division. The surgeons of the various regiments of the brigades are his assistants and make their reports to him.

The 1st brigade, 1st division, is composed of ten regiments, with an average of two surgeons to a regiment. The 2d brigade, 1st division, has five regiments, two surgeons to each. The 3d brigade, 1st division, has seven regiments, two surgeons to each regiment.

Total, twenty-two regiments in the division and over forty surgeons.

Each regiment has also a hospital steward and a complement of nurses, one nurse to ten or twenty men. Each brigade surgeon has a medical supply wagon or traveling apothecary shop, and a certain number of ambulances; also, supply wagons according to the number of men in the brigade. He is provided with a supply of kettles, blankets, provisions and the various medical and sanitary stores needed. These wagons are required to be kept full of supplies for every emergency.

During permanent camp the sick are taken care of in regimental hospitals, but on the eve of a campaign the surgeon-in-chief organizes the division hospital and becomes responsible to the medical director of the corps for all that occurs in his division.

He first recommends for appointment a surgeon-in-charge, who takes the general charge of the hospital and is responsible to the surgeon-in-chief of the division. The assistant surgeon is appointed who is specially charged with the duty of preparing food and shelter for the sick and wounded of the division. The entire culinary or kitchen department is under his control. For its supply he drives along with the hospital, bees for slaughter, cows for milk, has wagons laden with delicacies, and necessities, canned fruits, milk, condensed beef for soups, corn-starch, farina, &c. He is to be ready with these at any warning.

A surgeon is also appointed a recorder of the division, whose duty it is to keep an accurate record of all who are admitted to the hospital, taking the name, rank, regiment, church, character of his slight or serious, and by what kind of missile produced.

When, after a march the hospital is camped for the night or to await a battle, the hospital tents are pitched in three rows to represent the three brigades of the division, each brigade being under the charge of the surgeon-in-chief of the brigade. The camp is pitched in the form of a hollow square—the surgeons' tents on one side, the hospital tents on another, the kitchen on the third side, and near by it the provost guard and the pioneers, and on the fourth side are arranged the hospital wagons. In the centre of the square under a large tent are placed the operating tables where amputations are performed.

In locating a hospital the requisites are—1, pure water; 2, wood; 3, good ground, dry and of even surface; also, if possible near a wood where boughs may be obtained for beds. In making beds for the sick and wounded, a layer of pine boughs is first spread on the ground, upon that the gum blankets of the soldier, and then the woolen blankets, using for the pillow anything that can be obtained. The shelter of hospital tents for the sick and wounded is much preferred to that of houses, on the score of healthiness.

Each brigade of the division has its own operating table in the centre of the hollow square. This table is under the charge of the chief surgeon of the brigade, who is held responsible for all operations performed. He has two assistant surgeons, making three to each table, also a steward to assist and to keep record of operations and to dispense medicines to the sick. There are also other stewards placed in charge of the sanitary stores and of the medical wagons, who are ready at all times to fill the prescriptions of the surgeons. They are required to keep on hand 1500 rations, stimulants and medicines enough to run the hospital four or five days, even in case of a heavy battle, and though entirely cut off from supplies.

This division hospital is kept in the rear of the army from one to four miles, according to circumstances. In addition to it there is also an outpost hospital, established on every field of battle in time of engagement. It is placed as near the fighting body as may be, in some sheltered spot if possible, behind a house, under a clump of trees, beside a spring or stream, if possible. To it wounded men, picked up by the stretcher-bearers on the field are brought, the wounds examined, temporarily dressed, hemorrhages of blood stopped, and then they are placed in ambulances that come up to this point, and borne back to the division hospital. Each man is sent to the brigade to which he belongs, the wound is at once re-examined, the slight ones attended to in tents, the more severe taken to the operating tables. No amputations are allowed on the field or in out-post hospitals. These cases are decided in the division hospitals, consultations of the surgeons being held in cases of doubt.

PARALLEL IN ENGLISH HISTORY TO THE COURSE OF OUR STRUGGLE.

As to this war, no one was more opposed to it at the outset than I was. I too, though in the interest of the Free States, would have said, *Part in peace*; not seeing, as the people with their sounder instincts have seen, that between nations formed by a violent disruption, and divided by no natural boundary, there would be no peace, but perpetual hatred, constant wars, and standing armies, the scourge of industry and the ruin of freedom. I thought the task of subjugation hopeless, suicidal, and therefore criminal. I know from history the tremendous strength of slave Powers, in which the masters are an army supplied by the slaves with food. I knew also the vast extent of the country to be subjugated, and the difficulties which it presented to an invader. I knew that the power of the slave-owning oligarchy of the South would enforce a unity in their councils and actions, which the parties of the free North would be long in attaining; and that though there was a loyal party in the South, as the very process of Secession and the voting at the Presidential election proved, the strong arm of the oligarch would put down all dissent. I did not know, for in truth we had never fairly seen, the power of a great and united nation, every member of which was a full citizen, and felt the common cause to be entirely his own. Yet there was a precedent in history which might in some measure have furnished a key to the probable result. We recall taking on this occasion nearly the same side which we should have taken in our own civil war in the time of Charles I., excepting perhaps a part of the shopkeepers, who in those days had a strong conviction, but who in these days have very strong convictions, and are led to take the side of the South because they fancy it to be genteel. That civil war was marked in its course by nearly the same vicissitudes as this. The Commons, superior in numbers, in wealth, and the material of war, full with overweening confidence on the Cavaliers. But the Cavaliers had at first the advantage in military spirit and in the habit of command, while the retainers whom they brought into the field were better trained to obey. Edgohill was not unlike Bull's Run. One wing of the Parliamentary army galloped off the field without striking a blow; and Clarendon declares that, though the battle begun on an Autumn afternoon, runaways, and not only common soldiers, but officers of rank, were in St. Alban's before dark. Then followed despondency as deep as the previous self-confidence had been high and boastful. Overtures were made to the King, and Pym and Hampden, the "rabid fanatics" of that day, had great difficulty in preventing a surrender. Nor was treason wanting, in camp or council, to complete the parallel. Still darker days followed; and when the King sat down before Gloucester, the friends of "Slavery," Subordination, and Government," at that time, must have felt as sure of victory as they did when General Lee was approaching the heights of Gettysburg. But our Puritan Fathers had the root of greatness in them; and therefore they were chastened, not crushed, by adversity. Necessity brought the right men to the front, and gave the ascendancy in council to those who were fighting for a principle, and who knew their own minds. The armies, which at first were filled with tapsters and serving-men, were recruited from the yeomanry, of whom, with their small estates, there were plenty in Old England; but who, since the soil of Old England has become the property of a few wealthy men, have found another home in the New. The moderate commanders who did not mean to win, gave way to commanders who did. Treason was trodden out and disunion quelled. There was no more boastfulness, no more despondency, but stern resolution. The Commons measured their work, settled down to it, and won. We deem that struggle heroic, and feel a mournful pride in looking back on it; but you cannot be familiar with its history, if you do not know that it had its wicked, its mean, even its ridiculous, as well as its heroic phase; or think it impossible that, when removed by the lapse of centuries, from close inspection, the struggle which we are now watching may appear quite as grand.—*Goldwin Smith's Letter.*