

A COOL TRIO.

UNDER FIRE FROM A FEDERAL "RAILROAD-IRON" BATTERY.

A Confederate Tells a Story of His Experience in the Artillery Service - A Couple of Visitors in White Clothes.

[W. G. E. in Chicago Tribune.]

Last February, while in Virginia, I met with a gentleman who was in the artillery service during almost the whole of the war, being at first in field service and then shut up in mortar batteries at different places. When a battery was invested he, a sergeant, and his brother, a lieutenant, were in a mortar battery situated near old Blandford cemetery, his brother being in charge. Their principal duty was to fire at the Confederates, and draw their fire. When the Confederates made a demonstration they had bomb-proofs to run into of course, but one cannot stay in a bomb-proof and fire a mortar at the same time, and as might be supposed, they became more familiar with pyrotechnic displays than they cared for. There was one Union battery in particular that always gave them trouble whenever they fired at it. It was known as the "railroad iron" battery, and was very heavy armed. Moreover, the gunners therein had the exact range of the Blandford battery, which was twice too large, and it rarely required more than ten minutes to run the Confederates into their bomb-proof.

"One night," says Sergt. Eggleston, "we were working there in the battery firing away in different directions, but taking care to keep our hands off the railroad iron battery, and watching the shells as they flew around, occasionally jumping into the bomb-proof when one would light in our place, when two fine-looking men, whom we all took for general officers, suddenly walked into the works. We could not tell their exact rank, because they wore white waistcoats and coats, but they looked as though they were rank officers. They walked up to George, addressed him as lieutenant, as though they knew him, and said that they had come out to see some mortar-firing, and hoped that he would accommodate them, if it was not inconvenient. George replied that he would be happy to show them any thing in that line, and turning to me, said, 'Touch up the railroad iron battery, Joe.' Well, I wished that these chaps had stayed in their tents, but I thought that it would not be very long before they would be glad to get into the bomb-proof, and that the rest of us could go in then also. So I commenced to touch up that railroad iron piece.

"Those fellows over there seemed to know that the occasion was an unusual one, and they were determined to give us all that we could ask for. The shells were dropped into our battery like hailstones, bursting all around us, and rolling around like footballs; but there stood those two officers and George, leaning up against a piece of timber and talking as cool as if they were leaning on a fence 1,000 miles away from a piece of artillery. A shell came along and cut that piece of timber in two, and scattered splinters all over the place; but all that they did was to lean against a fresh place to go on talking. I came to the conclusion that they liked that thing better than I did, and I told one of the gunners to shift his gun around and play on something else, and pretty soon I shifted another, and the fire gradually died down. I knew that George would stand there and be shot at till the very end of doom before he would suggest anything about bomb-proofs, and the other chaps didn't want to say anything unless he did. Well, they talked on for ten or fifteen minutes after the fire died down, and then said that they would like to go on to the skirmish line and see what was going on there if he would show them the way. He told them to go out of the battery on a certain side and follow the path; they could not miss the skirmish line. They left after expressing their thanks for our kindness, but they did not say what their names were, and George was too polite to ask them.

"Now the funny part of it comes in. The next day George tried to find out who they were, but none of our officers had been out there. The fact is I don't believe that any of our officers had any white clothes on, and if George had only thought a minute he might have known that none of them would be roaming around at night to see mortar-firing; they could stay in camp and get enough of that. But he could not find out who those men were, though every effort was made, as the thing began to get serious.

"About two years ago, or longer, George was on an Ohio river steamboat talking to a man in the saloon, when a gentleman came up and said, 'Are you not the lieutenant who was in command of a mortar-battery near Blandford cemetery at Petersburg?' 'Yes,' he answered. 'And don't you remember two officers coming to your battery one night and saying that they had come out to see some mortar firing?' 'Yes, and I have been looking for them ever since.'

"Well, I am one of them; I am General of the Union army at that time, and my companion was Gen. _____, also of the Union army. 'I am very glad to meet you,' said Lieut. Eggleston, 'but if I had known who you were at that time you would not be talking to me now.' 'So I knew, then,' was the reply. 'We did start out to see mortar firing, just as I told you and we also intended to go on to the skirmish line. But we got into the wrong battery. You remember that our skirmish line ran up to what was a marsh when we first got to Petersburg, and that it really pointed behind your line. Well, we got to the end of our line at the marsh, but it had dried up, and after we had wandered around there for a while, confused by the shells flying in different directions, we suddenly found ourselves right at your battery. We sat there in the ditch for almost two hours, wondering what we could do; we could hear every word that your men said. If we had been in uniform we should have gone right in and surrendered; but we knew that our white clothes would be taken as disguises, and that we would have been arrested as spies. 'Undoubtedly,' said Lieut. E., 'so we concluded to go in and pretend that we were all right, but without telling our names. After we got out of your battery we went back to our lines easily enough. While we were standing there talking to you we were getting our bearings so as to get back. I have thought of that night a thousand times, and wondered if I would ever meet that lieutenant who made us stand under the fire of our own batteries for half an hour without saying a word about bomb-proofs. And as soon as I heard your voice I thought that I recognized the one that said 'Touch up the railroad iron battery, Joe.'"

THE LOST LAND.

[The Wheeler Wilcox in New York Sun.] There is a story of a beautiful land, Where fields were fertile and where flowers were bright, Where tall towers glistened in the morning light, Where happy children wandered hand in hand, Where lovers wrote their names upon the sand. They say it vanished from all human sight; The hungry sea devoured it in a night. You doubt the tale? Ah! you will understand; For, as men muse upon that fabled old Troy, Give sad credence always at the last, However they have called it at its truest, When with a tear-limmed vision they behold Swift sinking in the ocean of the Past The lovely lost Atlantis of their Y uth.

Naval Service in Shallow Streams. (China Cor. Globe-Democrat.)

The naval service of the delta, with its many hundred miles of shallow channel, is done by seven or eight small gunboats of peculiar pattern and half a dozen steam launches, each carrying a Hotchkiss 6-inch gun, and manned by six or eight sailors. The gunboats are called canoniers. They are nearly all of them of the same pattern, broad, flat-bottomed, and drawing more than three feet of water, even when heavily loaded. The idea is a peculiarly American one, borrowed entirely from the little shallow steamers that have for the last half century nearly been running on the upper waters of the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri, and more directly from the tin-clad cat that did such excellent service during the rebellion.

The boilers are in front, protected by a thin steel plating sufficient to turn any fire to be expected from hostile forces in the delta. The engines are aft, and similarly protected. The quarters of the officers are amidships, or if the pattern is varied, wherever convenience dictates. The armament is usually two medium steel guns forward on a revolving platform, with a range of two miles, the gunners being protected by semi-circular steel plates at the edges of the platform, and two or three Hotchkiss guns at the sides or on a mast-guarded in similar fashion. The wheels at the stern are sometimes masked by broad plates of steel, a continuation of the plating of the sides. The small-arm is the Mauser rifle, a heavy weapon, but considered by the French the most efficient. These vessels are all painted gray. They were built in France, brought out in pieces, and put together either at Saigon or Hiphong.

Morocco Prison Life. (Tangiers Letter.)

We went to the prisons, and looking through some huge doors of iron gratings into large halls - canons they appeared like - saw scores of abject looking prisoners, with grimy faces and straw goods, being us, a number of them came running to the iron gratings and began begging for money or tobacco. In a room near the prisons we were shown where they whipped convicts for insubordination, and also those whom the bashaw had found guilty of petty crimes. In some of these rooms there must have been an immense amount of this terrible punishment inflicted in this room during the centuries of the past. I was told that the prisoner was first stripped naked, and then stretched out on the floor, four muscular Arabs holding his hands and feet, while the unmerciful "cat o' nine-tails" was being applied to his back. The oaken floor was worn deep and smoothly polished by the strugglings and writhings of the tortured victims under the cruel lash.

One of the guides got the "cut" - an ugly relic of past barbarism - and showed it to me. It consisted of several thick shreds of rawhide, about thirty inches long, attached to a stout oaken handle of the same length. I observed that the lashes were stained with blood, and the same red stains could be seen scattered about the floor and walls. As I appeared to take much interest in the room and in listening to the details of the punishment, the guides volunteered to the console to go out and get a prisoner and have him whipped before me, probably thinking it would be an interesting spectacle for me to witness, but I energetically declined the kind offer.

h Cochise.

The cochineal used to be an extensive article of commerce and brought a revenue of several millions to Guatemala every year, but the cheapness of the aniline dyes has driven it out of the market, and nowadays it is cultivated only for local consumption, and extensively used by the natives whose cotton and woolen fabrics are any amount of water or sun. The cochineal is a large species of cactus known as the "nopal," and its natural state looks like frost or mud. The natives are busy scraping it off into gourd, and the cells being full of purple blood it makes a liquid of the deepest color, when the mass is crushed, 1 or 200 years it was the base of dye stuffs all over the world, and thousands of people were engaged in its cultivation. It is the shipments from Guatemala amounted to 500,000 or 400,000 pounds each year, but in 1884 the export had fallen to 1,800 pounds.

Promoting Small Farms.

The schemes of a "Small Farm Company" in England is already assuming the definite shape. The general scope of the company will be to buy up land and to re-sell it in small parcels by a system of annual payments. In so doing the company will, it is hoped, meet the particular wants of several classes of people - such for instance, as the following: (1) Communities of agricultural laborers, each of whom would own separate plots, but who would be able to use horses, plows, etc., in common. (2) Small farmers, willing to farm holdings of not more than thirty acres. (3) Tradesmen and other immigrants from neighboring towns wishing to add to their resources by various kinds of petty culture, market gardening, bee keeping, poultry breeding, and the like. It is an excellent scheme, and its progress deserves to be watched with close and practical interest.

The "Age of Horn."

A variety of prehistoric objects in horn, such as amulets, cups, knives, daggers, rings, buttons, bracelets, etc., have been found in a stratum, existing at a depth of about five feet in the mud of Lake Neuenburg, Switzerland. The finder, Herr G. Kaiser, believes them to be older than the stone and bronze implements of the same locality, and he proposes to call the period to which they belong "the age of horn."

A Vague Response.

Atmospheric knowledge is not thoroughly distributed in our schools. A boy, being asked "What is mist?" vaguely responded: "An umbrella."

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