

WAS IT A VISION?

ON the 25th of August, 1862, I was in the Union army, and the regiment to which I belonged was deployed as skirmishers in front of Longstreet's (Confederate) corps, not far from Gainesville, Va. During the day there was some firing on the part of the opposite forces, but no sustained engagement, although we continued to press upon the enemy until darkness settled down and put an end to further manœuvres.

At nightfall, I with four or five companies of my command, remained in the position occupied by them during the day, while the rest of the regiment, detailed for picket duty advanced to the front.

I was in excellent health and spirits, but being greatly fatigued, fell asleep almost immediately after the arrangement for the night had been perfected, and soon began to dream.

For some considerable time my mind wandered over the events or dwell upon the scenes which were familiar, and which, upon awakening I found no difficulty in locating.

After a while, however, I wandered into a dreamland where all seemed strange. I fancied myself in a line of battle with my comrades lying in a piece of timber fringing an open field for some considerable extent, the farther side of which sloped gently forward forming a ridge parallel to our front. Upon the ridge I could distinguish something like a dozen cannons, and could see the Confederate artillerymen resting upon the earth or lounging in little groups with their guns, as distinctly as I could have done with my natural vision.

I could almost perceive the puffs of smoke from the rifles of the enemy's sharpshooters and hear the reports of their firearms, and the ding and thud of the bullets. I might here mention as a further description of the field, that the wood in which we lay was quite clear of underbrush; that we occupied the edge nearest the foe, with a rail fence between us and the cleared space of which I have spoken, and this fence some three hundred yards, more or less, to our right turned off at a right angle and ran quite up to the Confederate line. As was the case where we lay, so it was on our right. The fence separated the cleared field from the timber, which latter constituted two sides of a parallelogram, the angle being, as already observed, not far from the right wing of my regiment.

While I was taking in these details, and experiencing meanwhile the peculiar sensation which sometimes annoy even old campaigners when compelled to remain inactive under a drooping fire, I thought an order came for us to charge the batteries before us.

About midway in our line, running parallel with our line, I noticed a depression commonly called by farmers a "dead furrow"—it being the "finishing off" place in ploughed fields. We passed over this and continued our charge across the open space and up the slope to the very muzzle of the cannon—comrades falling by scores at every step—and then, all at once, we seemed to be enveloped in impenetrable darkness.—My senses were left blank. The next moment, however, light returned and I was lying on the ground, fighting still going on about me, but whether wounded or not, my dream, or whatever it was, did not inform me.

While thus prostrate and helpless, I gazed about me and saw a short distance in the rear of the guns, a small cabin, and in its gable, which was towards me, a window.

About the building were grouped many wounded men, some standing, others lying down. In the immediate vicinity of myself there seemed to be hundreds who had fallen in the contest.

Casting my eyes in the direction from which we had come, I beheld the remnant of my command in full retreat.—I also noticed the sun, which was shining brightly, and appeared to be in the vicinity of an hour above setting.

At this point I was awakened from my slumber, and learned the time to be about 2 P. M., of August 20. Having my dream as I considered it, in my mind, I made inquiries and ascertained that during my nap everything had remained unusually quiet, only a few shots having been exchanged on the picket line.

An hour after we were on the march to Manassas and the battlefield of Groveton.

I must really confess that the realistic character of my excogitations during sleep affected me considerably, and all the more because the scenery depicted was altogether strange. My memory though questioned to the uttermost, failed to recall any locality through which I had ever passed that at all resembled it. Consequently I felt unusually gloomy and depressed in spirits, and all the morning carried in my heart a presentiment, the nature of which can

scarcely be described, of approaching evil.

The old battlefield of Bull Run was reached early in the forenoon, and about 12 M., we were advanced a mile or so to the northward, where we were assigned our position in the line of battle then forming.

The station occupied by my regiment happened to be in a timber skirting an open field, which terminated at a distance of some 500 or 600 yards in front of us in a ridge crowned with several Confederate batteries, the guns in plain sight.

The enemy's sharpshooters lay by their artillery, concealed from view, but the puffs of smoke from the muskets sufficiently indicated their locality, and disclosed the fact that our opposite lines were parallel.

On our left the country was open, but in the opposite direction, beginning at a distance of some three hundred yards from our right, the timber extended up to and beyond the ridge already described.

The excitement consequent upon the fighting going on about me and the skirmish firing drove the dream temporarily out of my mind, although its impressions were allowed to remain.

About 5 o'clock in the afternoon, as I could judge, we were ordered to charge the position in our front; and the various regiments of the brigade, my own occupying the second place from the left, advanced to the dangerous undertaking.

Moving from our place of shelter, we were greeted with a severe shower of grape, cannister or shell, the first discharge of which we encountered as we were climbing or in some manner getting over or past a worm fence of five or six rails high, and which had intervened between ourselves and the cleared field beyond.

When about half the distance of the ridge had been traversed, one of the men nearest to me fell; and although going at a double quick, I noticed as I hastily glanced down at him, that he had fallen in a "dead furrow;" but yet the event of the night previous did not recur to me. I was thinking of something else about that time.

We charged ahead and reached the hill. The enemy's gunners had fled.

The crest was almost gained, as we (or at least, I) thought, when suddenly I found myself in total darkness. A pressure upon my throat, a ringing in my ears as though my head was plunged in a stream of running water; a sensation of dizziness, numbness, suffocation, and of falling, and then a shock as I struck the ground; how well I remember it all now.

The concussion of the fall seemed to restore my sight (consciousness had never left me) and to this day the incidents then transpiring are as fresh as though they had occurred within the year.

For instance; While I was momentarily reeling, just at the time of being hit, preparatory to a fall over backward, I heard a comrade remark; "There goes——" (mentioning my name,) and I remember thinking, even on my way down to the Mother Earth with the back of my head, that I was "gone" instead of going.

But to continue: So soon after falling as possible, I constituted myself a board of survey to assess the damages sustained, and forthwith entered upon the investigation.

I found that as a personal matter the injuries were quite serious—a minnie ball having penetrated my throat, passed between the jugular and windpipe, and found an exit at the back of the neck, quite low down, and close by the spine which is slightly fractured.

After making up and sending in this report, and doing what I could to stop the flow of blood by forcing into the wound some lint, and a handkerchief I fortunately had with me, I crawled, as best I could, in my paralyzed condition, to a more sheltered position, which, however, was exceedingly difficult to find.

It was the hottest place I was ever in, and hotter than I hope for in the future. The loss was terrible, more than half my command being either killed or wounded, the other regiments of the brigade suffered in proportion.

Speaking of hot places in a battle, one does not—cannot—understand what they are until he is struck down on the field, there to lie, utterly helpless, while bullets are humming and slinging like ten thousand swarms of bees, pattering on the ground and casting up little puffs of dust and dirt, as the rain drops during a heavy shower do on the waters of a lake, or crushing into the bone or striking with a dull thud the quivering flesh—while grape and cannister shot and shell are howling, hissing screaming over and about his prostrate form—I say one must need experience all these things in order to fully understand the meaning of the term "a hot place."

Then, if he thinks at all he will be inclined to believe that the cauldron of hell, with the cover off, is but an ice

cavern compared to the particular locality fate has fated him to occupy. The fighting continued only a short time after I fell; but before it was thoroughly over I dragged myself into a cut of an abandoned railroad, which ran along its hill-side almost at its summit, and where the Confederate army had lain.—As I did this I caught sight of a small cabin standing just beyond the batteries we had so vainly tried to capture.

I could perceive the roof, and as low down as the eaves. The gable stood facing me and in it was a small window.

At this moment I remembered my visions of the previous night. Instinctively I turned and looked in the direction of my comrades. They were in full retreat, followed up by the victorious foe. The sun was low down in the heavens, just as I seen it in my sleep.

Soon afterward the Confederates carried me back to the cabin. Hundreds of our wounded were there as well as the enemy's besides a large number of men who had died. Everything corresponded with what I had gazed upon four hours before.

The vision was verified. Now comes the curious feature of the case. The nearest I had ever been to the locality described, previous to the day on which I was wounded, was upon the old Bull Run battle-field, some two miles distant, and from which it was absolutely impossible to get a limited view of the field upon which I lay. I had never seen a sketch or photograph of the country. These are facts upon controversy. How then is the matter to be explained? Was it simply a coincidence, or was the circumstance to be properly classed among those strange cases of "second sight," of which we read?

I can understand an ordinary dream, for the visions which it brings to view are almost invariably based upon some incident of the past. The visions may be grotesque or distorted, but yet, if we search long and carefully enough, we can reasonably account for them. As heat will restore the date on a coin otherwise undistinguishable, so sleep will frequently restore, through the agency of dreams scenes and events long since forgotten and gone from the recollection during waking hours. But if the coin never bore a date then nothing exists to be restored. But if there be no foundation in fact, how can a simple dream bring to view scenes through which the dreamer subsequently passes that are verified in every important particular by his actual experience?

It is a knotty problem, and one I have tried again and again to solve, but without success.

The facts are submitted as they actually presented themselves in my case, and let him who can, or thinks he can, furnish the key that shall explain them satisfactorily.

A Chapter on Pens.

DOUBTLESS the first instrument ever used by man for writing was a stick, with which marks were made on the earth and next to that a stone for making more durable marks upon hard substances. But in the most ancient periods of civilization we find allusions to the stylus and the sheets of wax.—The ancient Egyptians used a particular kind of reed for writing with ink.—Along the shores of the Oriental sea this reed is still found, and is still commonly used as a writing utensil. It is very hard and about the size of a goose quill.

Pens made of this reed were well enough adapted to writing the Eastern alphabets, which consist for the most part of straight and thick strokes, with a springling of dots. But when the diffusion of the Latin language demanded finer instruments, the feathers of the large birds began to be used, such as the swan, the ostrich, the turkey, the goose, and the crow. Of all these, the goose quill was found to be the best, and this became throughout Christendom the universal writing implement about the year 600 A. D., and held its ground until within the recollection of living men. Indeed, there is still a considerable number of persons who still prefer the goose quill to any other implement.

Both the goose and man have been great gainers by the introduction of metallic pens. The consumption of goose quills in forty years was enormous. Great Britain imported in one year 20000, 000, from St. Petersburg alone, and in all civilized countries the trade in the article was very large. At the schools the mending and making of pens was a serious task to the teacher, every boy being supplied daily with from two to six pens, all of which had to be mended after being used. I can well remember when teachers were obliged to spend all the odd moments of the day in mending pens; for this was one of the tasks which a boy could not be trusted to attempt.—He was extremely likely to waste a quill, and cut two or three fingers, as the knife had to be extremely sharp.

The goose was also a great sufferer.—It was discovered that the quill feathers could be taken every year from the livid, and so leave room for another crop

to grow. The operation was performed by farmers' wives, who first caught the goose, and then thrust its head into a stocking; after which the quills could be drawn without danger from an avenging bill.

Millions of men and geese felt the inconvenience of the quill pen, which ordinarily had to be changed or mended after twenty minutes of continuous use. The first attempt to substitute metallic pens was made in England in 1804; but the attempt was not very successful.—The pens then were made in the barrel form, similar to the quill pen in shape, but thick and clumsy, being wholly made by hand. They were kept in a case of bone for carrying in the pocket, and were used to some little extent by commercial travelers. The great objection to them was that they cost a dollar and a quarter each, and the point was very soon corroded by the action of the ink. They were not worth their cost and soon fell into disuse.

The first American patent for metallic pens bears date 1810, and was issued to Peregrine Williamson, of Baltimore.—This patent also seems to have borne no fruit, and little was heard of steel pens until about the year 1829, when a certain Mr. Perry produced an article that really answered the purpose.

What People Say.

ONE of the perpetual stumbling blocks in the way of happiness is that recurring question, "What will people say?" We would wear our old clothes and be comfortable, live on half our income and put half aside for a time of need, do without a great many things which are unnecessary but fashionable, and choose for our acquaintances and friends the people we like best, but "what will people say?" as if people, which does not mean the few for whom we really care, but the great abstract world, have any thing to do with it.—Do people pay our bills when we buy what we do not want to please them?—Do they think any more of us when we have climbed by infinite pains and inconvenience to their standard? Much more likely they see through our foolish tissue of worldliness and toadying, and despise us for the very effort we made.—There is nothing so futile and fleeting as popular favor. The people who from a sudden fancy or caprice, may take us up to-day will drop us to-morrow; the man or woman who lives with this end in view will be disappointed and deserves to be, for working for popular praise, or from a fear of what people will say, can never be productive of good. Shakespeare has said, "Be thou as pure as ice and chaste as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny," and the censure of the world—a light thing so it be undeserved. There are sweet and gentle natures which shrink from its adverse criticism. They believe in "people." They think the world a kind of alma mater, instead of censorious judge, until too late, they find that they have expended all their strength and courage in trying to please—and failed, and they never rally from the shock.

The Blind Miner.

About two weeks ago a man came to Warrior Station (a mining region twenty-one miles north of Birmingham, on South and North Alabama Railroad) seeking employment as a miner of coal. When it was discovered that he was blind he was laughed at, and it was thought an impossibility for a blind man to dig coal. He persisted in his efforts to secure a place, only asking that a fair test be given him. After a short time he was taken to the mine and proved his efficiency as a miner. He works without a lamp, as that would be of no benefit to a person deprived of eyesight. The coal mined by this man is said to be as clear of slate and dirt as that of any one employed in the mines, and the yield from his room as great as that of other miners. His little son leads him to the mines and into his work room, leaving his father during the day, who digs coal, separates it from the dirt and other substances, keeps the roof of his room propped up, loads the small cars and pushes them out to the main track, as if he possessed the eyesight of two persons. At night the dutiful son returns to the mines, takes his father by the hand and leads him home. W. A. Graves is his name, and he is a native of Union County, Ga., was a Confederate soldier, and on April 9, 1864, at Appomattox Court House had a minnie ball pass through his temple, causing the total loss of eyesight.—*Birmingham Observer.*

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that letters of administration on the estate

of Rev. S. S. Richmond late of Torone township,

Perry County, Pa., deceased, have been granted

to the undersigned. P. O. Address—Landisburg,

Perry County, Pa.

All persons indebted to said estate are requested

to make immediate payment and those having

claims will present them duly authenticated for

settlement to

ALBERT E. RICHMOND,

Administrator

CHAS. H. SMILEY, AU'Y.

May 10, 1881.

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