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PORT HUDSON. ITS HISTORY, FROM AN INTERIOR VIEW, AS SKETCHED FROM THE DIARY OF AN OFFICER

[CONTINUED.]

During the morning the gunboats engaged the river batteries, and Col. de Gournay endeavored to draw them on within range of some of his guns, but they could not be induced to repeat their experience of the 14th of March. In the woods, in front of Col. Steadman's line, the enemy's skirmishers kept up a brisk fire after their flag of truce sham had been exploded. Probably supposing, from some experience they had gained during the morning's fight, that they had discovered a weak point on our line, at half-past two o'clock the next morning, in the darkest hour, they made a strong attack at our slaughter pen. It proved a slaughter pen, indeed, for our men were wide awake and the enemy were bloodily repulsed.

At half-past six o'clock on the morning of the 28th Col. de Gournay opened on the mortar boats with Capt. Seawell's columbiads and Capt. Kean's rifled guns. Although at extreme range these boats were struck several times, with what damage was not known, and the Essex silenced for the nonce.

Flag of Truce.

About ten o'clock Gen. Banks himself sent in a flag of truce to Gen. Gardner, asking for a cessation of hostilities until two o'clock P.M., to enable him to remove his dead and wounded, which had been lying in front of our lines more than twenty-four hours. We had ourselves brought in a few of the wounded, and taken some prisoners on the field who were uninjured, besides securing several hundred long range rifles, cartridge-boxes full of ammunition, and canteens partly full of whisky. But it would have been impossible for us to have cared for all their wounded, and besides that, our hospitals were necessarily under fire, and at some times seemed to attract more than their proportion of the bombardment.

The application brought on a considerable exchange of correspondence. Gen. Gardner complained of violations of the flag of truce, and required the enemy's lines to be withdrawn and their fleet to retire to its previous position. Gen. Banks disclaimed and deplored any violations of the white flag on the side of his forces. Gen. Gardner then withdrew his stipulations, and at half-past three o'clock the terms of the truce were agreed upon, to extend to the hour of seven o'clock P.M.

The enemy did not get his dead and wounded removed from the field until half-past seven o'clock, and at eight a furious attack was made on Col. Steadman's line in the woods. This was exactly what we had expected, that the enemy would expect to find us off our guard and unprepared to meet a vigorous assault the moment the limits of the truce were up. They were mistaken; for they found us ready, and again they were driven back. This was the last assault that was made for a long time. We had been tried at many points, and everywhere we had driven

back the foe.

Remarks on the Fight.

The fighting on the 27th was of as desperate and bloody a character as has been seen during the present war, and full credit was accorded by the garrison to the courage and determination evinced by their enemy, particularly as shown in their reforming their lines of battle under our fire, and renewing attacks which had failed before, charging again and again over ground which was swept by a tornado of leaden hail, seemingly more destructive to life than the burning simoon of the desert. The enemy's officers, in particular, challenged our admiration by acts of devotion, placing themselves in the lead, and using every means of encouragement to their men. Even when their line would break before our withering fire, many of them would scorn to fall back with the rest, but taking advantage of such shelter as the stumps, logs, and inequalities of the ground afforded, they would be there till night closed upon them, keeping up a fire on our breastworks, and making it a dangerous undertaking for any of us to show our heads over the top of the parapet.

The quality of courage is one that a true soldier recognizes and admires every where and under all circumstances; he attributes none of the mean and oppressive acts committed by his enemy to those who display this attribute in a high degree; his experience generally teaches him that a brave foeman is an honorable one; and when he does have to succumb on the field of contest it is a great satisfaction to him to feel that he yields to no coward. Had the enemy's fighting, on the 27th, been weak or irresolute, the garrison would not have felt the pride or pleasure they experienced in having held their position. They knew that their own cool and unflinching stand had alone saved them; had they wavered but for a moment, or slackened their murderous fire, or aimed wildly, the assaulting columns would have effected a lodgment in our works from which they could not have been driven by our weak force.

Siege Operations.

And now, that the attempt to take Port Hudson by a *coup de main* had proven unsuccessful, commenced the ceaseless, exhausting business of the regular siege. With their numerous line of skirmishers pushed close up to our position, the exchange of shots became dangerous work. Anywhere along our fortifications, it was almost certain death to look over at the foe. A felt hat, raised slowly on stick so as to feign the appearance of one of our men raising to fire, would be speedily perforated with balls. Our engineers directed the top of the parapet to be loop-holed, in some places with sand bags and in others merely with earth, which afforded a better protection to our men; but even then bullets would frequently come through these little openings, ending the earthly career of many a brave fellow. Our ammunition being scarce, the men were not allowed to fire at their inclination, but a few of the best shots in each command were selected to reply at intervals, when good opportunity offered, to the incessant fire we were receiving.

Regular siege approaches being now extended, our engineer officers were on the *qui vive* to discover and meet them in time. Lieutenant Stork, of this corps, had charge of the river line and extreme right, Lieutenant James Freret had the line of land fortifications, and Lieutenant Fred. Y. Dabney, the chief engineer, looked particularly after the left wing, assisted by Mr. Roberts. To their assiduity, courage and skill our successful defence is greatly attributable. Their labors were most onerous and responsible, keeping them engaged every night, for it was only in the darkness and under the enemy's fire that our works could be repaired, and the damage done to our intrenchments and guns by the furious cannonading of each day be made good in

time for the next day's conflict.

Under the direction of the chief of artillery, Col. Marshal J. Smith, the columbiads were so arranged as to shell the enemy over the heads of our own troops, and nearly every night we dropped our 8 and 10-inch shells among them in every direction as a partial set-off to the shells they were now throwing into our lines from land mortars as well as from their mortar fleet.

Two weeks of this kind of work passed away, without rest to our men either by night or by day. There was a monotony of excitement about it which was extremely fatiguing, and the continuous exposure to the sun, rain and night dews brought on much sickness, materially reducing our effective strength. Our stock of medicines proved to be even shorter than our stock of provisions, and with a large and constantly increasing list of chills and fever cases the quinine was exhausted. Ipecac was resorted to in its place, but that also came to an end, and finally there was nothing to be had to check fever except a decoction of indigenous barks, which did not effect any wonderful cures so far as heard from. Still the sick suffered uncomplainingly, and a great many of them preferred remaining at their posts so as to give their aid in repelling another assault, should it be made.

Several batteries were built by the enemy right in the face of our works, enfilading portions of our line. An 8 inch gun which, had such a position, fired shells with a reduced charge of powder so as to roll them as slowly as a ball in a bowling alley for some distance right to the rear of our parapet.

Our Line Penetrated.

On the 10th of June a furious bombardment all day and night indicated to us an approaching attack, and at three o'clock on the morning of the 11th a show of an assault was made near the centre of our line of fortifications, while at the same time the real attack was made on our left in the woods. During the fighting two regiments of the enemy, favored by the extreme darkness, crept up through a gorge among the abattis, penetrating within our lines of defence. Had they known the ground and been strongly reinforced, this movement might have proved disastrous to us. As it was, they captured a courier who was going to Col. Steadman from one of his regimental commanders, calling for reinforcements.

Fortunately for us, their position was discovered before daylight showed them their advantage, and by a vigorous onslaught upon them in front and flank they were driven back, leaving in our hands a captain, lieutenant and several privates. Another attack was made on Col. Steadman at six o'clock the next evening, but not in strong force, and it gained no advantage.

From three o'clock on the morning of the 13th, the enemy commenced heavy skirmishing along our whole line. At eleven o'clock A.M., the mortar boats having been moved up nearer to us, they joined the land batteries in a terrific bombardment of two hours' duration, during which a line of battle was formed on Slaughter's field, and moved forward as if to charge, but fell back to the woods as soon as we opened upon it with artillery.

At 1 o'clock P.M. Gen. Banks sent in a demand for the surrender of the post and its garrison. Gen. Gardner returned an answer declining to surrender, and immediately prepared for an assault, which he expected would be made upon more than one part of our lines. From 11 o'clock that night until half past 2 on the morning of the 14th, the mortar boats rained a perfect torrent of shells upon us, and as soon as they ceased fire the land batteries took up the work and poured forth their volleys of destructive missiles, rending the very air with their deafening roar.