

THE STORY OF MY REMINISCENCES

IN WHICH I GO TO WAR

It was in Cleveland County, North Carolina, on the 22nd of February, 1842, that I was born, the son of a farmer, Fertherston Jolly. My chance for an education was slim. The schooling that I had was very little. In those days we used Mobster's "Blueback Speller," "Fowler's Arithmetic," and later a fourth reader.

In 1856, when I was about fifteen years of age, my father bought some land in Spartanburg County, South Carolina, to which we moved. There I went to school about ten months in all. Afterwards I was compelled to stay at home and work with my father. The other boys were small. Consequently, the only help he had was what I could give. All of my efforts to supplement his were needed in paying for the land he had purchased in 1856.

In 1860 South Carolina seceded from the Union, and the Civil War between the States was begun. On the 13th day of April, 1861, I volunteered as a private in the Fifth Regiment of South Carolina Volunteers at Grassy Pond. Of my company, J. Q. Carpenter was captain, Fred Latham, first lieutenant; Samuel Ross, second lieutenant; and J. W. McClure, of Union County, was third lieutenant. J. Banks Liles was orderly sergeant.

On the same day we started from Limestone Springs for Spartanburg. John Young carried some of the men. The others walked part of the distance and rode the other part. That night it rained. The following morning we entrained for Columbia on our way to Charleston. In the capital of the state we waited for the other companies of the old Fifth. Accordingly, for the first time the whole regiment was together with Colonel M. Jenkins, of York, in command with Lieutenant Col. George Legg as aide. Our colonel was beloved of his men because he was anxious for their comfort and careful of their needs. He was a loyal, brave, true, and Christian gentleman.

We were at Columbia when Fort Sumter surrendered. However, I recall that the place was not easily taken. It was not until the walls had been blown down and the magazines were afire that the soldiers ran up the white flag, and the firing ceased, April 14th, 1861. This was the beginning of the war. Fort Sumter was then in the hands of the Confederacy when our regiment arrived at Sullivan's Island. We camped, 1,000 strong, and were drilled for seven weeks. During that time we had a good time bathing in the salt water.

At the end of the training period the members of the Fifth re-volunteered and were furloughed home for seven days. We reassembled at Williamsburg, South Carolina, from which place we entrained for Richmond, Virginia, where we were encamped on the banks of the James River for about a month before we marched to Manassas Junction. We remained there for drilling until we moved on to Bull Run Creek where the Confederate armies were to meet the Yankees in the first real encounter of the war. Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States,

had placed the Northern forces under McDowell. The armies of the South were under the command of General Beauregard. On the 21st of April, 1861, the Fifth South Carolina Regiment was on the banks of Bull Run, trimmed and suffered little damage.

Soon after the fight began, I told Capt. Carpenter that the Yankees were retreating, and asked permission to go upon the hill in order that I might see. He said, "Jolly, you would get that head shot off." I replied that it was my own head. Soon afterwards Colonel Jenkins came down the hill. I asked him to allow me to see the retreat from the top of the hill. He gave the same answer that my captain had given.

It was not long until we fell back on Bull Run and the opposing armies stampeded, running over and destroying the fine table that had been set for many prominent Washingtonians who had come out to celebrate the Victory, and who were eating at the time. However, little of this is told in history.

Their plan, "On to Richmond," failed.

The Union forces were so completely routed that they did not stop to tell the tale. All that they did say was that by the living God they had killed most of the opposing armies and had got the splendid dinner set for President Lincoln and his cabinet, including the hated William H. Seward.

The North had 40,000 men in this engagement while the South had only 30,000. To my personal knowledge, the Fifth South Carolina, the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Mississippi regiments were not in the fighting.

In the winter of 1861, we were encamped at Centerville, Va., doing guard duty as far North as Fairfax Courthouse, near Alexandria, Va. Our camp was about seven miles from Bull Run creek, the scene of the first battle.

I was acting corporal and had six men. It was our duty to lay on our stomachs and watch through a glass for a torchlight six miles away through the night and for a flag through the day. One night after one of the men was relieved I asked him what message had he received. He replied, "General Bee was not present when the message was received." To lay flat on one's stomach for an hour at a time is a hard task. However, that was war.

During the time that we were there, we were, at one time, with a battalion of New Orleans Zouaves, sent to reinforce the troops watching the movements of the Northern army across the Potomac. We went in a forced march, but at that it required two days to march the distance. On that march, the writer ate his first tomatoes in the valley of Virginia. It was here that I saw the first stealing in our army. At a place which was well stocked with hogs and pigs, those Zouaves would catch a pig, kill it, run a stick through its legs, hold it over the fire between two of them, bake it and eat in the same place. That was an unusual sight for our regiment because Colonel Jenkins would not brook any stealing from his men. However, they were ready to march early the next morning. About twelve o'clock that night we reached our destination to find that the Yankees had been pushed back across the river. It was cold with a heavy wind blowing which we realized the more keenly because we had to ford a small stream,

Goose Creek, shortly before we came to Leesburg.

The next morning we began to march back to our camp. As we went, I saw the prettiest sight I saw during my entire campaign when we came to a place where a dozen or more young ladies were lined up. A tamed deer was standing between two of the young ladies. As we came up, they sent cheer after cheer into the air. Our Colonel halted the regiment, gave the command of Front, Right Dress. They cheered again. Then it was Forward, March.

I cannot speak for all, but for me who had been away from home a year and a half, that was one time when I should have been glad to have remained with those beautiful, red-cheeked, dark-haired young ladies.

At another place when we were halted for a rest our Colonel spoke:

“Men, I have a good one to tell you. I stopped for a while back here until those Zouaves came up. One of them had a large turkey on his shoulder. When I asked him what he had paid for it, he held up his two hands indicating that he used his hands.

“Now, my men, I hope and pray that none of my men are guilty of that kind of conduct.” It was after dark when we landed again at Centerville, sore-footed, and worn out. It was not long before I was detailed to drive a four-horse wagon, hauling provisions into camp and hay out of the valley through rain, hail, sleet and snow, as well as through mud oftentimes up to the hub. However, such was war. General Sherman said, “War is hell.” He ought to know because he made fearful havoc of the territory through which he marched his army through the South. The writer went from Gaffney to Camden soon after his march and through all of that territory he knows that from Chester to Camden there were only two houses left standing. Mrs. Ragsdale, whose house was one of those two told me that hers was fired three times but that she succeeded in extinguishing the flames each time.

When about the last of March we broke camp, my wagon was loaded with six or eight barrels of whiskey. Mine was just one of a long string loaded with various things, mostly tents and sick men, meat, corn, hay. Never had I seen such hard driving. One day I drove all day long up hill and downhill in a trot. When we arrived at Culpepper Courthouse, I gave up my wagon, but I had a little squib. I asked the captain and all three of the lieutenants to come over to my wagon to help me finish what was left in a two gallon jug. Under the cover of my wagon we emptied the contents of the jug which I immediately tossed down the flinty hillside.

Soon afterwards we dropped back to Culpepper Courthouse, Virginia, where we remained a short time before we went to a point north of Richmond. There the Fifth South Carolina Regiment re-volunteered for the duration of the war. The old Fifth was taken over by Col. Coward while Col. M. Jenkins assumed command of the Palmetto Sharpshooters. I was transferred with my old colonel and was thereby afforded much satisfaction. We were promptly thereafter sent to Yorktown to aid in holding back McClellan in his move on Richmond. We remained there for a month. One Sunday Summey Alexander and I were on leave going to town, when the gunboat lying in the river opened fire upon the town. Both of us “skeedaddled” for the breastworks just to our left. However, the boat was four miles away. We realized that we

had shown the white feather and pledged ourselves that we would never run again. Time and again a shell whizzed over, but we kept cool and moved on. Finally, we arrived in town and could see from the breastworks the gunboat, two miles away, slowly turning around. The soldiers who were stationed there said to us, "Look out. She is going to fire."

I spoke to Summey, "Remember our pledge."

No sooner had I spoken than they yelled, "Squat down," They dropped to their knees; but Alexander and I remained standing. The bomb fell about a hundred yards away.

I then turned to my comrade. "Let's go back to camp. We have kept our promise."

When we had traversed the five miles back, we told our story to the boys there who derived a great of amusement from the tale.

A prodigious amount of work had been spent on the earthworks about that place, and by 1862 it was well fortified. Nevertheless it was given up after about a week's investment.

When General Johnston began falling back McClellan pressed closely in the rear. When the Confederate army had reached the little town of Williamsburg, the seat of William and Mary College, we threw up earthworks, and were preparing supper when we were ordered to fall in and march at double-quick time to Fort William. However, we remained in the fort while our provisions were sent on towards Richmond. All night long it rained—poured down in torrents. In this the Union forces had crawled up close to us in the field where the pine woods had been cleared in front of the fort. The fighting was hot and heavy on all sides, but was the hottest on the side nearest the James River. During the day I fired seventy-five rounds of ammunition. After five o'clock in the afternoon when the firing ceased, I stopped down to the lower end of the fort, I saw a soldier hid behind a fence. I turned my gun on him, but he made a quick get-away. I shot to kill, but did not hit him. Nevertheless I scattered dirt on his back even though he succeeded in getting into the swamp eight hundred yards away.

In the fort were two companies of artillery. The Yankee sharpshooters killed every member of the company on the upper end during the fight the second day. Such a condition of affairs made it necessary to make up a detail of trained men from our company to carry on. This detail was commanded by Lieut. Fred Latham of Gaffney, S. C. The engagement lasted all day long with the fort still in our hands. During the afternoon it looked as though it were gone when our left flank gave back. It rallied and counter-attacked and speedily regained what it had lost. During that time I was detailed to get ammunition from the magazines. The firing was at its hottest and it looked mighty like a "squall" to me with limbs and splinters from the nearby trees flying by me. But I pushed on and brought back ammunitions. The fight continued with fury unabated.

I do not know which side lost more heavily in the encounter.

That night the fort was vacated. The next morning by daybreak we were in full retreat. All day long we marched doggedly on without anything to eat. At one time I broke ranks and followed a number of other soldiers to a barrel which we found full of stale wormy hard-crackers about an inch and a half thick. I got one, poured water over it, and sucked it. It must be

remembered that we had had nothing to eat for more than two days, and remember that in that time hungry pains gnaw sharply. Finally I threw the cracker down in the road and rejoined my squad. Again all day and night it poured rain. We marched along in mud and water up to our ankles. I became so tired and hungry that I fell down and rolled out on the side of the road where I lay until morning when I went on to City Point, on the James River, where I drew some rations, my first food in three days. If food ever tasted good to me, that did. On the same day we moved towards Richmond and camped for several days about ten miles east of the capitol.

From there our regiment moved to Dreary Bluff for guard duty. A week later we were above the city awaiting an attack from McClellan. He was shy of General Joseph Johnston. On the 30th of May, 1862, one of the heaviest kind of rains fell and swelled all of the streams out of their banks. The next night, Johnston thinking that McClellan would not be able to get his men across the river, launched a fierce attack. The Confederates suffered heavy losses but did not gain any ground.

The evening before, our captain, J. Q. Carpenter, returned from his furlough and reassumed command of his company, and led us on a forced march to the Battle of Seven Pines. The regiment arrived in the nick of time. As we went in some North Carolina troops were coming out, some crying, some cursing. I remember that one lad, bloody and battle-torn, called out to us that everybody was killed. We rushed in at double-quick time, and a quarter of a mile further on, saw men piled on top of each other, the ground covered so thickly with men's bodies over a space of a hundred square yards that I could scarcely find a space large enough to put my feet without standing on a body. Here I saw gray-haired men lying dead in their own blood—an awful and heart-rending sight for a sixteen year old boy to behold! This fearful toll of life was taken in the capture, of a small fort thrown up by the Union forces. We did not stop but pressed on into a swamp where the water came up to our knees and where the retreating forces had cut down trees criss-cross with the branches sharpened for the purpose of delaying pursuit, and which made progress very difficult. However, we finally came out just in front of an encampment beyond which the federal forces were. We hastily formed a line of battle, moved across the camp, and attacked the troops on the opposite side. No sooner had we formed line and begun our march than the firing began. Before I had gone far, I received a shot on my ankle. I thought that I was ruined, but while sitting there suffering agony, Major Thompson rode up. I asked him to get down and see where I had been shot. He examined it and said:

“Boy, it did not go into the skin, but it has cut two holes in your socks.”

The major stood for a moment while I prepared to get up and hobble back with him. As we went on we found Colonel Dodd of the Twenty-seventh New York regiment with a broken thigh bone. I took his belt and spurs. The latter I gave to my officer, who told three of us to carry him behind the lines. We had not gone far before fighting began about us. Thompson told us to leave the Colonel and take care of ourselves, but to remember where we were leaving Col. Dodd. In this engagement we lost the following men: Capt. J. Q. Carpenter, Pink Bonner, Martin Collins, Martin Lipscomb, Rice Harris and Bill Stacy,

At nightfall the fighting ceased. The regiment slept on the ground, and the next day fell back to the camp of the preceding day. The battle was hard fought throughout. Both sides suffered heavy losses. General Johnston was wounded, and General Robert E. Lee succeeded in command of the army. He immediately began building his army to sufficient strength to hold Richmond. McClellan had about 130,000 men while Lee had only about 90,000 men. The full number was with the federal commander while General Jackson had 15,000 of Lee's men in the valley of Virginia delaying General Banks with 300,000 men in his conjunction with his leader. On June 27, 1862, Jackson fell on the federal forces and administered such a blow that both armies were astonished at the dash with which the federal forces were driven across the river. That night the intrepid commander slipped out and was behind McClellan's army before six o'clock the next afternoon.

Our regiment was thrown into action with orders to charge a regiment of artillery. We pushed ahead and came into collision with the Sixteenth Michigan regiment in Gaines Bottom which had marched out of a strip of woods in front of the meandering stream, and moved across towards our battle line with its colors rolled up. Our regiment, the only Confederate forces engaged in this encounter, was ordered to open fire when the Michigan troops refused to unfold their colors. At the first volley eight of us were wounded. Not far, about ten paces from me I heard Cautius Surratt groaning. I asked him if it was he, and in what place he was wounded. He replied that he was hit in the knee. I was soon beginning to get cold. Therefore, I called to him to crawl up to my back so that we both could keep warm. When he had painfully made his way to me, we pledged an agreement to remain with each other until we got well or one of us died. That evening, about nine o'clock, while we were waiting, John Surratt and Al Thrift came to us, and told us that our regiment had completely annihilated the Sixteenth Michigan regiment. If we could have done so we would have patted and danced Yankee Doodle. However, we had to be content with our place on the ground. Before this Luther Bonner, Third Lieutenant of Company M, who was wounded came running back and laid down behind me and went to praying. When questioned, he said that a ball had hit his sword and driven it into his leg. But that did not hinder his rapidity in getting back. The next day he was killed. Alfred Pritchett passed by us holding his thigh. He too, had been shot in the leg. After a wait that seemed ages, we were taken to a tree at the other side of the bottoms where cotton was placed on our wounds and we were given morphine. From it I slept soundly all night.

The second day after the battle we were moved across to the Gaines house from which place we were placed in a squeaky spring wagon to be carried to the railroad seven miles away. As we went along, sitting upright, with limbs dangling, the blood flowing freely and flies stinging, over a rough road, we had to amuse ourselves the best way we could. Every time—and, that was often—the wagon went across a bump, we responded with “Sunday school” words. At the station we were left on the ground until it came our time to be put on the train for Richmond. Our hospital car was an old fruit box-car. Surratt was taken in first. He asked the stretcher bearers to bring me. There was only one place left and I had to be put in through the

window. That was a terrible ordeal but Surratt and I lived up to our pledge, to remain with each other until death or recovery, as well as the determination not to groan again which we made on our way in the spring wagon.

When we detrained below Richmond we were again placed in a wagon. We had not gone far when a tender and loving woman asked that the wagon stop and allow her to give some milk to us. We blessed her because we had had nothing to eat since the twenty-seventh day of June—three days earlier. She told us to keep cheerful and to pray to God for help. The driver then clucked to the horses and we moved on by a camp of North Carolina troops who said that they were ready for the fray. In the outskirts of Richmond we were placed in a hospital. My loyal friend and I were placed in beds so that we could see each other. The next morning I asked why our wounds had not been dressed. The attendant replied that I was expected to die. I told the nurse, Henry Davis, that I had no intention of “kicking the bucket” and asked that he get something that would rout the maggots. I knew that they were there because I could feel them crawling. After a painful exertion my trouser leg was taken off, and my wound fixed up. Here I wish to say that Dr. Davis, head of the hospital staff, and Dr. Mosley, the ward physician, were splendid men. Davis, the nurse, was transferred to another hospital and Jim Moore, of New Orleans, was assigned to us. The latter and I were like a man and wife; we would fall out one minute, but the next we were hugging and kissing.

Cautius Surratt's mother's name was Deby Surratt.

Caut was getting along fine when his mother and mine came to nurse us. They had not been there mere than three weeks, when my mother became ill and had to return home, before I became desperately sick. My comrade could sit up and smoke his pipe, and amuse himself by winking at me while I was about to “lie with the rabbits” over a space of about three months. Surratt's mother remained with him until his death. She brought his body back home with her, and buried it near her home in Cleveland County, North Carolina. He was a good soldier, a loyal friend, a dyed-in-the wool Surratt. I have always borne in memory his cheery smile, his bravery, and his fortitude. I am happy that I can, at this late date, express my appreciation for the comradeship he gave me when I lay at death's door.

In the meantime I was fighting my battle with the grim reaper. Finally, Dr. Mosley told me that I would get well if I would listen to what a young doctor, who was taking his place, told me. He was leaving for another post. About the middle of July my leg was put in a pine box. It was extremely hot and it seemed that I would die from the heat and pain. I insisted that the box be taken off. The attendants refused. But I was not satisfied, and after a hot and painful scene it was unloosed. The doctor ordered it put back on. I refused and had to back the refusal with my chair.

About the last of November, 1863, I had recovered sufficiently to get back to Columbia, South Carolina, to apply for a discharge. While there I again met my last nurse, Sam Mendis, and brought him home with me. Ten years later I heard from him for the last time in New Orleans.

In the fall of 1863, I attended school for six months at the Joe Feel schoolhouse in Spartanburg County, S. C., where R. E. Porter was teaching. The next year I went to school to R. E. Porter in York County, near Buffalo Church. While there I boarded with Jonathan Moore and his wife, Viney, who was a White before her marriage. I paid my board with money I had made through some trades.

It was during this time that the Rev. Thomas Dixon held a meeting at Buffalo Baptist Church at which I was converted, joined the church and was baptised.

Later, when Mr. Moore went to war, he asked me to stay with his wife and children, Roxie, Mary, Wiley and Etta, and sow wheat for him.

In the winter I returned home, and began trading again. In the meantime I tried to find a helpmeet. I found her in a beautiful young lady, 23 years old, Louisa Wood, a daughter of Henry and Susan Wood.



ROLL CALL
OF
COMPANY M, FIFTH REGIMENT OF SOUTH CAROLINA VOLUNTEERS
[afterwards known as]
THE PALMETTO SHARPSHOOTERS REGIMENT

Captain. J. Q. Carpenter; First Lieutenant, Fred Latham, after Seven Pines battle, Captain; Second Lieutenant, William McClure; third Lieutenant, S. S. Ross; Orderly Sergeant, J. B. Liles; R. M. Jolly, Summey Alexander, afterwards Lieutenant; Pinkney Bonner, Alex Latham, Rice Harris, Martin Lipscomb, Mart Collins, John Joe Camp, William Camp, Joe Vassey, George Vassey, Finley Goforth, John Goforth, Nathan Byers, Joel Coil, Bill Goforth, Bill James, James Huskey, Alex Huskey, John Blanton, Leander Gaudlock, P. O. Lemmons, Cleveland Robbs, Asa Joe Cline, Cautius Surratt, Barlo Scruggs, Winslow Scruggs, Samuel Smith, Alex Lipscomb, William Smith Lipscomb, Smith Lockard, Peter Morgan, Oney Morgan, Arthur Turner, Millis Surratt, John Surratt, Jonas Harris, Robert Montgomery, John Alexander, John Love, Bill Homes, Allvie Cleary, Gus Colbert, Willie May Berry, Dock Tate. Burrough Jolly, William Doggett, Docker Ed Knot, Drew Scruggs, Buck Scruggs, — Mitchell, Iverson Surratt, Marshall Davis, Allvie Bright, Alex Bridges, Jeff Lavender, Professor Johnston, Daniel Anthony, Bill Stacy, Madison Humphries, Bill Little, Alfred Pritchett, Luther Bonner, afterward Lieutenant; Godfrey Fowler, Robert Gaffney, Tom Kink Littlejohn, William Gaudlock, — Wood, Dexter Shippey, Wallace Shippey, Johnson Shippey, Alvin Thrift, Alexander Gaudlock.

The above roll call is made from memory. I am unable to recall the others.





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