

conquest of the South, and of politicians known to be in the confidence of the Executive,—all these are calculated to perplex the councils of Mexico, to keep the country in a state of continual alarm, to encourage the factions which have so long distracted it, and to retard the progress and improvement which peace and repose could not fail to produce in a land so prodigally endowed with all the elements of material prosperity. The United States would play a nobler part, a part more worthy of a great nation, by acting frankly in this matter. The course now pursued towards Mexico is only less reprehensible than active hostility would be.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE CONFEDERACY.

ON Monday morning, 27th March, 1865, three weeks after leaving Canada, I managed to reach the chief city of the Confederacy, though not without much trouble, and after many vexatious delays. Nine long weary days, each bringing its fresh disappointments, sneaking and dodging about the Lower Potomac, suspicious of every new face, an anxiously watching the movements of the Federal cavalry pickets, were not very agreeable to an Englishman and a soldier, usually accustomed to fair questions and plain speaking. Most of my letters of introduction were to officers just then round Petersburg, but there were many kind civilian friends in Richmond who received me most cordially; and who alas, with myself, little dreamt of the tremendous change so soon to take place. Matters were then very far from promising for the South, but still the people were cheerful, and as determined and confident as ever of the ultimate triumph of their cause. As there was heavy fighting going on round Petersburg, I left Richmond on the 30th, by the afternoon train which was crowded with soldiers. Owing to the miserable state of the line, and condition of the rolling stock, we were more than two hours going twenty-two miles, or rather nineteen, as we were obliged to drive three miles into town; the enemy being able to shell any trains, either entering or leaving the city. Petersburg bore a marked contrast to Richmond, where, beyond the presence in the streets of an unusual number of officers and soldiers of all ranks and branches of the service, the absence of ordinary every day luxuries, together with the exorbitantly high prices, and general neglected appearance of the town, there was not much to remind you of the fact of your being in a besieged city.

But here it was very different. Many houses showed the marks of shot and shell, one street in particular near the river, where hardly a building had escaped. There were not either so many soldiers about, all being down at the front, where not a man could be spared. At the commencement of the siege, I am told, the enemy used to shell the city almost daily, but, becoming tired of that, confined their attention to that gallant little army which so long and so nobly confronted them. In the evening, as I strolled out towards the suburbs, smoking my pipe, after a very indifferent meal at the hotel, the continued dropping fire of the picket lines of both armies, was distinctly heard, whilst every now and then the hoarse scream of one of Grant's engines, together with the angry roar of a heavy gun, would remind you of the presence of an indefatigable and relentless foe.

Next morning, I walked out about three miles to General Lee's headquarters. Not a horse was to be obtained at any price, and being ignorant of the road, my destination was not reached till past 12 o'clock. The General was unfortunately away on the right, about six miles off, and I had not again an opportunity of meeting the illustrious soldier who had caused ministers at Washington, and the shoddies of New York to tremble, and whose name throughout this long and bitter strife has commanded the respect and admiration of the world. Nothing struck me so much as the extraordinary veneration I heard everywhere

in Virginia at the mere mention of General Lee's name; whilst no one was more alive to the chivalrous nature of his character, and his great professional talents than the Federal troops themselves. Probably no man in this practical matter of fact 19th century, ever won the hearts of the people more thoroughly than Robert E. Lee. Colonel Charles Marshall, his aid-de-camp, to whom I had a letter, talked for a long time, and very freely, kindly gave me an order to cross the river at pleasure, and a letter to General Gordon commanding the left defence.

Little did we imagine at the time, that in two days that pretty little wayside house would be in possession of the enemy, and burned to the ground.

About 10 o'clock next day, I rode down to the front in company with two of General Gordon's staff, and, leaving our horses in charge of an orderly near the first parallel, walked along the covered way to the trenches. It was a lovely spring day, and the men of both armies had, by mutual consent, knocked off the usual picket firing, the skirmishers being outside their rifle pits, basking in the sun, smoking, talking, and cracking jokes in many places not more than thirty or forty yards apart. At the crater, the scene of Grant's great explosion, in July, 1864, we did not like to show our heads above the parapet, but, everywhere else, walked about with the greatest confidence. The appearance of a stranger dressed in a plain English suit of clothes, and wide-awake hat, attracted a good deal of attention, and provoked many remarks as we passed along the lines. The reader may judge of the discipline, when, although with two officers, I was frequently told to "come out of that hat," or some garment, which suited either the fancy or want of the speaker.

Having very little knowledge of fortifications, I am not prepared to pass any opinion on the works, which, although of vast extent, did not appear very strong, and could not compare with the Federal works immediately opposite, which I afterwards visited; the Southern generals not having the same labour to expend on them which the North could always command. The men all lived under bomb proofs, and the corps, to whom were entrusted the left defence, was mainly composed of Stonewall Jackson's famous old division.* They were all fine, tall, able-bodied fellows, in physique resembling some of our best battalions of the guards; but all were badly clothed, many of them literally without shirts to their backs. Their daily rations had not for some time past, exceeded three-quarters of a pound of bacon, and a pound of flour or biscuit, and the poor fellows all bore a hungry, ill-fed, wasted appearance. The Southern soldier has a great objection to carry anything beyond his rifle, ammunition, blanket, and water-can, and would be much astonished at the elaborate kits in possession of our men. It was curious to observe, in spite of their general dirty and ragged appearance, that many of them kept tooth-brushes run through the button-hole of their jackets. The constant chewing of tobacco may perhaps necessitate this little piece of refinement, but the presence of a large number of gentlemen in the ranks must also be remembered. I was surprised not to see more than two bayonets the whole day, beyond a few which were used as *tent-pegs*! and heard that the men did not like them, always clubbing their muskets at close quarters.

The Yankees, they said, always had them, but never cared to use them; and a Federal officer of high rank, and great reputation, † afterwards told me that he only remembered two instances in which bayonets were crossed during the whole war. There were only three heavy guns that I remember in the whole left defence, a Columbiad, and two large rifled howitzers, which bore the mark U.S. on them; the remainder were Parrott and Napoleon 12-pounders, most of which were also captured from the enemy, very few having the mark of the Richmond arsenal. It seems difficult to account for the very large number of Enfield rifles now in possession of the Southern army, with the English government mark "Tower, 1863," on the lockplate. I was told

* This only applies to the left defence.

† Major General Warren late Commanding 5th Corps Army of the Potomac.

that they were brought over through the blockade, and afterwards I saw many more similarly marked in the hands of the Federal troops. The weakness of the Confederate army, in comparison to the enormous extent of their works, may be readily understood, when in many places along the lines, the men were as much as nine or ten yards apart.

Everything remained perfectly quiet on our leaving the trenches. Late that afternoon, perhaps at ten p.m. the usual picket firing was commenced, and at midnight sleep became impossible from the loud and continual roar of artillery. Never having heard an angry shot before reaching Petersburg, as I laid in bed listening to the hideous roar of that last night's fighting, a most distressing state of nervous irritation seized me, which soon became intolerable. After watching the shells, from the roof of the hotel for some time, I contrived to find my way through the dark with some little trouble to the front. Shot, shell and bullets dropping all round made it particularly unpleasant for one who had never been under fire before, and I was glad enough to reach the first parallel about 3.30 a.m. The flickering light from the rapid discharge of musketry, the deep roar of heavy guns, with shells bursting in every direction, together with the yelling and cheering of both sides, made a magnificent spectacle not easily forgotten. At day-break on that eventful morning, the position of affairs on the left defence, stood thus: The enemy had succeeded in establishing themselves in Fort Mahone, a strong Confederate work fronting Fort Haskell on the right attack. They had also, issuing from Fort Steadman, penetrated the Southern lines, from which, however, they were speedily driven back. Away on the right some considerable distance off, they had broken completely through the works, carrying everything before them by sheer weight of numbers. Here it was that the heaviest fighting took place, and the loss of life on both sides was very great. On the left although the fighting was very severe, there were not so many killed or wounded, though most of the men were hit either in the head or shoulders, as is usually the case, when fighting behind breastworks. General Lee, seeing the critical state of affairs, and having lost possession of the south side railroad, on which he mainly depended for supplies, at once determined on evacuation, telegraphing to President Davis at Richmond that he could no longer hold his position, and ordering the tobacco, in Petersburg some 7000 or 8000 hogheads, to be burned. Between nine and ten a.m., as you looked back toward the city, two huge columns of smoke might be seen going slowly upwards forming a thick black cloud, which hung like a pall over the doomed city. We, on the left, being ignorant of how matters were going on elsewhere, and holding our own well, in despite of the loss of Fort Mahone, never once thought of the real cause of the conflagration, or dreamed that the early grey of the following morn would show the stars and stripes floating from every tower and steeple in Petersburg. About an hour afterwards, some 200 men,—North Carolinians I think they were,—started up from the trench, and springing over the breastwork with a yell, charged into Fort Mahone, leaving me behind, watching them from the parapet, with some few killed and wounded lying about. Now a charge in battle, according to the usual orthodox way of thinking, is generally supposed to be a very terrible and magnificent sight; but this resembled nothing more than the hurried scramble of a crowd across a ploughed field, such as may be seen at any fair or steeple chase meeting in England. The ground, which was very broken, was thickly covered with stumps, and at least 400 yards of open space had to be crossed before the Fort could be reached, where, after a few minutes' suspense and much shouting, yelling, and cursing on both sides, a dark mass of Yankees were seen to run hurriedly to the rear, wheeling round suddenly like a flock of sheep till scattered by a few well directed volleys of grape and canister. This charge, however, only resulted in the capture of a portion of the out-works. Towards noon the fighting became desultory, both sides becoming weary with the last nine hours' slaughter. As I returned home,