CHAPTER V.

MILLIKEN'S BEND, GRAND GULF, PORT GIBSON AND FOURTEEN MILE CREEK.

On April 12, 1863, we were ordered to join General Grant's army at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana, which was a few miles above Vicksburg. We embarked on the steamboat Alone, and left on the 13th to join the forces then gathering to make the last successful effort to capture Vicksburg, which had become the Gibraltar of the Western Continent. By this time the Fifty-sixth Ohio had been assigned to the Second Brigade of the Twelfth Division, Thirteenth Army Corps.

And, as we have since learned, at St. Louis and other points on the Western rivers, there were rich and influential men engaged in running steamboats on the Mississippi and other rivers, which while doing business for the government, were giving substantial aid and assisting the rebel cause by carrying recruits, contraband mail, and drugs and goods of all kind, and in every way aiding and encouraging the rebellion.

We had not been on this boat long before we found that the officers and crew of the Alone had little, if any, respect, for a Union soldier; and, on April 14, the blackguard barkeeper of this boat grossly insulted Willis Walker, a member of Company C. This comrade was a noted forager, and had the nack of getting what he went for. He promised the barkeeper that he would even up with him before we left the boat. Out on the cabin deck of the boat they had two large boxes, securely locked. One of them contained the table supplies for the boat, and the other the barkeeper's extra stock. After midnight we were roused up and told to come below at once. On going down to the lower deck, we found that Comrade Walker and his partners had the entire contents of the two boxes laid out for a banquet, which we disposed

of quietly and hurriedly. What we failed to consume was consigned to the river, as it was not safe to leave a crumb in sight, though some of the boys could not part with the liquor they had, but kept it well hidden. The loss was discovered at daylight, complaint was made, but our officers failed to find who was guilty.

On the 15th of April we landed at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana. Here the raid was reported to our headquarters, and our Brigade Commander, General Slack, was ordered to investigate the matter. The regiment was formed in line near the levee. In the rear of our line was a body of backwater from the river. As General Slack passed down the line the men who had any liquor left in their canteens would throw them into the backwater behind them, the straps of the canteens floating. Captain of Company — waded in and fished them out about as fast as they fell, and, stringing them on his shoulder, he reached the left of the regiment at the same time as the General did, and while they blessed the rebels and all their friends, they took a bumper to the success of the Union cause, to the great applause of a multitude of comrades of other regiments, who were giving this free show their close attention. This episode gave us a reputation, which later on came near depriving us of our colors. Some foragers of other regiments, when caught in unlawful acts, such as burning houses, etc., gave the Fifty-sixth Ohio credit with their membership; but upon investigation, and being confronted with our officers, we were cleared of the charge. Our stay at Milliken's Bend was short, leaving there April 16. We went into camp at Richmond, Louisiana, the same evening. We moved forward early on the 17th, and passed through some beautiful country. On the 18th and 19th we continued our marching, and on the 20th reached Bayou Pirre and encamped. Our pioneers were building a pontoon bridge, and we lay in camp here drilling considerably and holding dress parades. April 28 we moved on amid torrents of rain, the roads being nearly impassible, and camped two miles from the Mississippi river. This was a regular swamp, not a dry place in sight. The pioneers of our division built here about 2,000 feet of bridging, so we could cross the bottomless places. On April 29 we marched to the river

at Perkins' plantation. At this place there were several steamboats and barges at the landing. Here we left our kanpsacks. Each comrade was loaded down with one hundred rounds of cartridges, and then marched aboard a coal barge. Our whole brigade was on one small steamboat and coal barge. We barely had standing room. The boat ran down to Hard Time's Landing, in sight of Grand Gulf, two miles down the river. Grand Gulf was naturally and artificially very strong. Soon after our arrival seven of our gunboats moved down, and a daring and continuous bombardment of the fortifications was kept up for five and a half hours, the flagship Benton leading the fleet. They circled slowly in front, each sending a broadside into the rebel works. General Grant and some of his staff were on a steam tug near our boat, closely watching the work of the gunboats. The enemy sent a few shells in their direction, to keep them at a proper distance. Then the tug retired out of range. This contest gave a fine display of the never failing courage of our brave sailor comrades. It seemed at times as though their boats would steam up to the wharf.. It was apparent to those who witnessed this contest that gunboats, though manned by the bravest men, were not equal to land batteries served by men of valor and skill. Several of the gunboats were damaged, and all of them withdrawn. The failure to silence the rebel batteries relieved us from the dreadful task of landing to storm their rifle pits. This was one of our lucky escapes.

Late in the afternoon we disembarked and marched across a point on a high levee, which brought us out on the river below Grand Gulf. Here we saw a live alligator basking on a log in the swamp. Our regiment led this advance, and as soon as we struck solid ground we filed off and went into camp. Who can ever forget that grand sight, as regiment after regiment passed to camp below. All of the Thirteenth and a part of the Seventeenth Corps passed. The snakes had pre-empted our camp ground, and our rest was not good, as they were disposed to dispute our right to be there. The gunboats, transports and barges ran past the Grand Gulf batteries about midnight under a heavy fire.

On April 30 we boarded a gunboat, which ran down and landed

us at Bruinsburg, Mississippi, six miles below. Here we were served with two days' rations that were to last five days, or until we could get more. At 5 o'clock p. m. we started on the road to Port Gibson, Mississippi, some 12 miles inland. One of the never-to-be-forgotten sights as we climbed the hills, a mile or more back from the river, was the display of pickled pork that had been issued to us and was carried on our bayonets. At 8 p. m. we halted to make coffee and rest a little, but started on soon, there being a constant skirmish in advance. We were on the road all night, and this was the third night for us without much, if any sleep. The most of us took short naps as we marched along. At daybreak we halted in the valley of a small stream for breakfast. Some of the more active or hungry ones had finished their meal, but many had not made a start, when the enemy's artillery boomed on the hill just ahead. "Fall in!" was the order, and up the hill we moved at a double-quick, halting in a deep cut in the road near the top of the hill.

In a few moments we were ordered to a position on the right of the road in an open field. In our front some 600 years was a piece of timber, in which there was a heavy contest going on, and a number of the wounded who could do so were falling back to our position. At the left of the road in the yard of a house was one of our batteries pouring shot and shell into the rebel battery in their front. In a few moments we were ordered forward. We moved right obliquely, which brought us to the road. As we came to the fence the rebel battery knocked it over our heads. Some of our men were hurt by the flying rails.

We crossed the road and moved down into a cane-brake at the left of the road, between our battery and that of the enemy. We made our way through the cane-brake, and formed at a fence on a slight ridge. In a few moments General Hovey and his staff rode down in the road to our right. He asked for the commanding officer of the regiment, Colonel Raynor responding. He was ordered to support the Thirty-fourth Indiana Infantry in a charge on the rebel battery in front. The Thirty-fourth Indiana was in the timber on the right of the road, and the Fifty-sixth Ohio to

the left of the road in a corn field. The Thirty-fourth advanced, but their progress was slow. The Fifty-sixth made a rush to secure a good position on the hillside, and were in advance of the Thirty-fourth. We were in close range and the enemy poured their shot and shell into our midst. I was hit by a grapeshot on the foot, bruising it considerably. As soon as our men fell into line we charged forward. The enemy stood their ground until we were in a few feet of them, when they broke to the rear, and we followed fast after them over the brow of the hill. A rebel officer was about to mount his horse when Captain Williams took Comrade Will Morris' musket and gave him the contents. The enemy was doing their best to escape, but we wanted them dead or alive. In a short time we captured 222 men of the Twenty-third Alabama Infantry and the Virginia Artillery Company, also the flag of one or the other of these organizations. The flag was captured by Corporal David Evans of Company C.

The regiment soon after formed line on a hillside in front, when General Grant and some of his staff rode up. The General shook hands with Colonel Raynor, and thanked the regiment for their gallant conduct, saying that he was proud of the men from his native state. After a short rest, we advanced to the right across a valley and up a high hill, where we lay in line for some time. The enemy now made an effort to cut us off from our forces. As they had a largely superior force, we fell back into the valley, where we found good shelter in the bed of a small stream that crossed the valley. But the rebels moved down as we did, and we had it hot and furious for some time. As we entered the run Sergeant Henry C. Dare of Company C was shot in the knee, by which he lost his leg; Corporal Thomas L. Evans lost an eye by a buckshot, and I was shot through my trousers at the knee, and also on my hip. A rebel officer on a white horse was shot, and his horse trotted into our line, and our Quartermaster kept him for a long time.

Our ammunition being exhausted, we were relieved by the Twenty-second Kentucky Infantry. They came in on the double-quick, their young color bearer 15 or 20 feet in advance. They

presented a fine sight. On retiring we were still under fire. The firing kept up until nearly dark, when the enemy retired to a hill, where they had a large cannon that annoyed us greatly, but our gunners were unable to dislodge it. About sunset an officer rode up to one of our batteries, had a gun loaded, sighted it, and with his glass watched the shot, remarking, "That gun will not trouble us any longer." This ended the battle of Port Gibson, the enemy falling back out of reach.

In this action the Fifty-sixth Ohio had six men killed and thirty wounded and missing. Port Gibson was no great battle, but of sufficient magnitude to test the quality of the men, and we all had good reason to rejoice over the gallant action of the regiment.

On May 2, early, we entered Port Gibson, a real pretty town. The enemy the night before had retired across Bayou Pierre, burning the bridge across that stream.

There has been considerable dispute in the National Tribune by members of Benton's Brigade, of Carr's Division, about the capture of this battery, they claiming that none of our division was near the battery until they had captured it and gone on to further conquests. All of the Fifty-sixth Ohio, who were there, know that there is no truth in their claim; and we may well inquire if they took the battery, "Why did they leave the enemy in possession of their guns with their infantry supports?" The business was to capture guns and prisoners when we could. That was what we were there for. The prisoners and colors taken by the Fifty-sixth Ohio, are all the evidence we need to dispose of their claim. A regiment came up in our rear and fired a volley into us and the rebels we had captured, and it was a common report in the regiment that in that volley they killed Corporal James H. Evans of Company E, one of the best soldiers in the regiment. The total loss of our army in this battle was 130 killed and 718 wounded and missing.

The Thirteenth Corps remained at Port Gibson during May 2, and assisted in the construction of a bridge across the south

branch of Bayou Pierre. May 4, 1863, our division advanced some ten miles north and near the Big Black river, and camped on a bleak hill. Our rations were out, and there was nothing in reach to forage, except the native black beans, which were quite a luxury. But in our extremity two of our mess secured a bee-hive full of honey and bees, and then we had beans, honey and stings; more of the last than we wanted.

On May 6 we moved up to Rocky Springs. This was a much finer camp; and on the 7th we had a grand review of the corps by General Grant. May 12 our division moved early, in the advance, being the only troops near the Big Black river. We came up on the south side of Fourteen Mile creek. The Fifty-sixth Ohio was on the right of our line, and near a road where there was a bridge across the creek. The rebels held the opposite side of the stream, with their sharpshooters so posted as to control the bridge. Company A was ordered to cross the creek above the bridge and drive the rebels away. They soon forced them back to the top of the ridge in our front. Company F was also sent to support Company A, and, soon after, the rest of the Fifty-sixth crossed by the bridge, and the entire division followed. We drove them steadily to within two miles of Edward's Depot, confronting Pemberton's main army. The Fifty-sixth Ohio was given the post of honor, and all of that night we lay on our arms in battle line in a cornfield. The roll of rebel drums in front gave notice of the enemy's presence.

At daylight of the 13th we drove the rebels about half a mile, and then, on quick time, we moved to the southeast until we struck the Raymond road, which we followed all day. The rain fell in pitiless fury. We had streams to wade, and, thoroughly soaked, lay out in the woods all night. On the 14th we passed through Raymond. Here we saw a large number who were wounded in the battle of the 12th, when the Seventeenth Corps routed the enemy.

May 15th we were off early, and reached Clinton, within ten miles of Jackson, Mississippi, at noon. From here our division made a square turn to the west, on the road to Vicksburg. This

road ran near the railroad, and at night we camped near Bolton Station. This ground was the enemy's outpost. They were driven off, and we took possession of their camp fires. The detail for picket duty was heavy, and as night came on there settled down upon the camp that indefinable feeling that can not be described, but can never be forgotten, and many of our comrades stood their last watch on the picket line that night; and the sharp report of musketry here and there caused our rest in camp to be rather broken.

CAPTAIN JOHN YOCHEM

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CHAPTER VI.

CHAMPION'S HILL.

At the commencement of the year 1863 the burden of the war was most sensibly felt throughout the loyal states. It was hard to convince all that the acts of the administration at Washington had always been dictated by the wisest policy. The generals in command, so far, had not proved to be sure leaders to an easy or any other kind of victory, but some had shown themselves altogether incompetent. Others had secured victories by the lavish shedding of blood, and on at least one field a mean and petty jealousy had robbed the country of the precious lives of our brave soldiers.

Swinton, in his excellent book, "The Decisive Battles of the War," in referring to our comrades of the Army of the Tennessee in this battle, uses the following language, on page 480, which goes to show the importance of this battle in the mind of this elegant writer: "And when the doomed Confederate armies, compassed in fatal toils, looked southerly for an outlet of escape, there came rolling across the plains of the Carolinas, beating nearer and nearer, the drums of Champion Hill and Shiloh."

This battle to which we were now approaching sealed the doom of Vicksburg, and it was not only the most complete, but the clearest-cut victory since the war began, and was the culmination of a series of splendid victories that held fully 100,000 men from reinforcing General Lee's army, and thereby making sure the defeat of Gettysburg. And, as has been well said, the high tide of the rebellion was met at Champion's Hill, down in the Mississippi valley, and not up in Maryland or Pennsylvania, and in that stupendous conflict was turned in favor of the preservation of the Union. That it was preserved, and we are today a united

country, that we have so much prosperity, peace and freedom, is due alone to the endurance, gallantry, patriotism and valor of the rank and file of the invincible Union soldiers of the North.

At this time the Twelfth Division of the Thirteenth Army Corps, commanded by General Alvin P. Hovey, was composed of the following troops: The Eleventh, Twenty-fourth, Thirty-fourth, Forty-sixth and Forty-seventh Indiana Infantry, the Twenty-ninth Wisconsin Infantry, Twenty-fourth and Twenty-eighth Iowa Infantry, and the Fifty-sixth Ohio Infantry; also the Second and Sixteenth Ohio Light Artillery, and the First Missouri Light Artillery, Battery A.

The Seventeenth Corps, Logan's division leading, on the evening of the 15th, were in our immediate rear; Osterhaus's and Carr's divisions were some three or four miles south, while A. J. Smith's and Blair's divisions were still further to the southwest. These four divisions were north of Raymond, and on two roads that led to Edward's Depot. One of these roads entered the Vicksburg and Jackson road, on the west side of Champion's Hill; the other, further west, entered the same road at Edward's Depot. These four divisions were ordered by General Grant to advance on to the enemy's position, but for some unaccountable reason they failed to do so, or to take any part in the battle.

General Pemberton, having failed to cross Baker's creek to the south, countermarched his army and crossed it near Edward's Depot by a bridge on the main road. His intention was to turn south again, attack our rear and cut us off from our supposed base of supplies at Grand Gulf. But, on the evening of the 15th of May, he received the repeated order of General Johnston to join his army at Clinton, Mississippi, so that with united forces they could give us battle. But at that time, and unknown to both, we had occupied Clinton and passed on beyond; and General Pemberton was ignorant of the fact that General Johnston had been defeated and was retreating north to Canton, Mississippi. Then, when too late, and totally ignorant of the true situation, Pemberton concluded to obey General Johnston's order, and with this

object in view he started, early on the morning of May 16, 1863, east on the road to Jackson, Mississippi. But General Grant, just as early, moved our army west on the same road, which soon resulted in the meeting of the hostile forces. General Pemberton, whether purposely or not, had selected an extra strong position for a defensive battle, on the rugged hill known as Champion's Hill. On its eastern slopes were ravines and gullies, over which grew large trees and underbrush that were almost impenetrable; thus rendering it very difficult to move troops in anything like complete formation, but made it an ideal place for defense. The hill proper is one of the highest in that region, and commanded a fine view of the country to the east, over which our division was advancing.

Champion's house was to the left of the road and quite a distance east of the hill. On the morning of May 16, 1863, Hovey's division moved forward at 6 a. m. Our men were in good spirits, the bloody reception so near being mercifully veiled from sight. We were not long in passing over the short distance from our camp to where the enemy was awaiting our approach. The morning was bright and warm. At one plantation we had a hot time in passing some bee-hives that had been disturbed by our advance. On the slope of Champion's Hill, Hovey's division formed into battle line, and moving forward crossed the field and halted near the timber. There was skirmishing at the edge of the woods all along the line.

The Fifty-sixth Ohio was formed with the right on the road. On our left was the Twenty-eighth Iowa, on our right the Twenty-fourth Iowa, and to their right the Forty-seventh Indiana. The little while we lay in that open field, facing the dark woods, with the whistling bullets coming thick and fast from an unseen foe, was a trying time to all of us. Captain John Cook of Company K now came up to the line. He had been too ill to march with his company, and, as he appeared rather weak to take part in the expected conflict, Captain Williams urged him to retire to the rear, but, with determination, he replied: "I am going in with my boys if it is the last thing I ever do." He went in with his

company, and soon received a mortal wound, of which he died six days later. He was a brave and gallant man, and his death was a great loss to the regiment.

Our skirmishers were soon deployed and moved forward. How intently we watched them as they entered the timber and disappeared from our view, many of them forever. It was but an instant until there came the crash of thousands of muskets. The bullets fell thick and fast all about us. In a few moments, "Forward!" was the order; and the regiment entered the dark woods in the footsteps of our skirmishers. We found they had not advanced far, as the enemy was there in force, and their fire was heavy and hot from the start. Under this fire two brothers, William Bass, Company A, and Byron Bass of Company H, were killed within a moment of each other. The crash of musketry and the boom of artillery were deafening and continual. The memory of those four dreadful hours in that terrible orchestra of death is indelibly fixed in the memory of every comrade who was present, and often in these later years we go back in memory to the din and horrid uproar that seemed to rend and split the air, and neither time nor distance can efface from memory that thrilling battle scene.

We met a stubborn resistance from the very start, and I give the gray clad veterans of the Confederacy due credit for the dauntless spirit that inspired them on this field of death. Every foot of ground forward we had to fight for. We drove them, step by step, in our front to a long cornfield on top of the hill, which was surrounded with timber on all sides.

From here they fell back rapidly to the west side of the field, to where the road from Raymond entered the road we were on. Here from behind a strong rail fence they poured into us a deadly fire. After entering the field a short distance the first of Company C, Henry Richards, fell in death, shot through the brain, and all along the line men were being shot; some killed outright, others wounded more or less seriously. But there was no halt.

"Forward!" was the command. When we were about two-thirds of the way across the field, as we halted to give them a

CORPORAL DAVID EVANS

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volley, my brother, John H. Williams, was shot through the heart. He was raising his musket to take aim, and as he fell in death he pitched his musket toward the enemy. It fell with the bayonet stuck in the ground, the stock standing up. Captain Williams sprang forward, grasped the musket, and gave the enemy its contents. I saw my brother fall, there being but one man between us in the front rank of the company. I stopped for a moment at his side, hoping he was not seriously hurt, but he never moved. The fatal bullet, like a flash of lightning, had blotted out his life.

There was no stop. One comrade had his arm shot off, and others in the company and many more in the regiment were being hit. But there was no halt; and, closing up our ranks, we pressed on, giving careful attention to every shot fired. We drove them in our front to and beyond the road from Raymond, and it was a sight to see the rebels falling back and casting away their blankets and other impediments as far as we could see on our left.

Our brigade captured the Virginia Battery at the junction of the roads. The enemy fought their guns until most of them were killed or disabled. For a short time there was a lull in the firing in our immediate front, and, by permission of Captain Williams, I returned to my brother's body, as I thought it would be my only chance. I secured his watch and the other trinkets he had, straightened him out and spread his rubber blanket over him. The blanket was folded across his shoulder, and was perforated through the several folds by the ball that took his life.

The enemy's fire began to increase on our left front, and, on my return to the company, Colonel Raynor asked me to go to the commanding officer of the Twenty-eighth Iowa Infantry, and request him to bring his regiment up in line with the Fifty-sixth Ohio. The Twenty-eighth halted in a ravine near the center of the field, but they did not comply with the request. The bullets came thick and fast, and I moved at a double-quick gait in the performance of this duty. On returning to the line, from our position we could see the enemy forming to attack us. The woods in our front were open with a gradual slope toward them, and with their skirmishers well in advance and their forces in two

lines of battle, they charged our force at the fence. As soon as they were in range, those of the regiment who were on their feet opened fire on them. Most of the regiment at this time were lying down behind the fence, and they called from along the line to stop firing, that we were shooting at our own men. But we paid no attention to them, as we knew better. Captain Williams, who was near, said: "Boys, you would better stop, they may be our men." Corporal David Evans said: "Captain, take a look at them." One glance was enough. "Up, boys, and give them hades!" was the command. In a moment the whole regiment was giving them a close and hot fire. Their line overlapped ours as far as could be seen on our left. The open timber in our front gave us a good view of them as they came on. From tree to tree, or any other shelter, sprang their skirmishers until some of them were just across the road from us, and one had dropped behind a rail cut that I could reach with my musket. Their first line under the withering fire we were giving them from our strong position at the fence bore off to our right and left.

On our right the Twenty-fourth Iowa, being in open timber, was driven back after the most desperate fighting. Our right being unprotected, and having no support on our left, our regiment was forced to leave the fence, for which the enemy made a rush. In a moment we were under a most scorching fire from two or three sides, from which our men fell thick and fast.

I witnessed the instant death of two of our gallant young officers, Lieutenant Geo. W. Mauring of Company A and Lieutenant Augustus S. Chute of Company D. In their death the regiment lost two of its most promising officers. Loading and firing, we fell back unwillingly, but at no time did we turn our backs to the foe. At every favorable place we would halt and give them a few rounds. At one point, while we were shooting from the same stump, Richard Davis of Company C fell dead across my feet, shot through the heart. He had just urged me to be more careful, or they would shoot me. One glance satisfied me that he was beyond any earthly help. Before I left this point, a general officer of the enemy and his staff rode up in the road in our front, urging

his men on. I took deliberate aim at him with my Enfield, which never snapped twice on the same load. This, in all probability, was the rebel General Tilghman and staff. The General was killed at this spot.

As we neared the fence on our retreat, the fire was terrific. As I turned to fire, my musket being about at prime, a bullet from the enemy struck the barrel of my musket, the ball exploding. Four small pieces were buried in the back of my hand, and several more in the stock of my Enfield. My musket proved to be in the right place to save me from the fate of my fallen comrades. At this time the screeching shells and the sound of crashing musketry, and the shouts of the contestants, was a sound to hear once in a lifetime, and remember to eternity. One of our boys had his canteen and haversack straps cut off by bullets. Comrade Wm. D. Davis had the top of his cap shot off of his head, and another had the side of his trousers cut off below the knee by pieces of shells that were bursting in our midst. They made a charge for our flag, but Captain Yochem saw the danger and led a counter charge, and they were repulsed. The troops on our right were being forced slowly back, and the enemy was getting in our rear at the fence on the east side.

Near this fence I stopped to help Corporal Thomas S. Jones, who was shot through the leg, to the shelter of some brush. While doing this their advance made a rush for me, halted me, called me hard names, and were nearly close enough to lay hold of me, but I hoped to see them later on, and under better conditions for myself. The comrades who were there can never forget the desperate and deadly work from that on. How we contested for those little ridges; how we clung to every tree, stump and log. If there were any stragglers they were gone to the rear, and it could be seen in the determined face of every comrade the resolve, that if mortal man could hold that battle line, they were the ones to do so. Shells were bursting in our midst, with falling branches from the trees, and flying brush that was being cut down. It was strange that any of us escaped. A piece of shell knocked Captain Williams down. I assisted to take him

to the road nearby. There I saw Generals Grant and McPherson, also Fred Grant, up near the battle line.

Our ammunition was getting low, and we were supplied by staff officers and others bringing it up to the line. A shell struck Corporal David Evans of Company C, and tore a terrible gash in his breast. He was a man of fine physical frame, but from the effects of this wound he died July 14, 1863. He was the comrade that captured the flag at Port Gibson on May 1, 1863.

From this point the enemy failed to drive us, and soon a brigade of General Crocker's division came to our support. As this reinforcement came up to the decimated remnant of our brigade holding that line, the commanding officer requested an officer near me to have those stragglers fall in on the left of his brigade. The officer addressed, with uplifted voice replied: "These are the men who have fought this battle. There are no stragglers here." The gallant officer, as he looked at our powder blackened faces, took off his hat and said: "I beg your pardon. True enough, there are no stragglers on this line."

In a short time we began to drive them back over the same ground, the third time for us to go over it. The enemy toward the last fell back rapidly, fresher troops following them.

General Grant, in his Memoirs, Vol. 1, page 520, says: "Hovey remained on the field where his troops had fought so bravely and bled so freely." He also says: "Hovey captured 300 prisoners under fire, and about 700 in all, exclusive of 500 sick and wounded, whom he paroled." Also, on page 519, he says: "Hovey alone lost more than one-third of his division," and, on the same page, he says: "Hovey was bearing the brunt of the battle." And on page 518 he says: "The battle of Champion's Hill lasted about four hours of hard fighting, preceded by two or three hours of skirmishing, some of which almost rose to the dignity of battle. Every man of Hovey's division and of McPherson's two divisions were engaged during the battle. No other part of my command was engaged at all."

The regiment lost a total of 138 killed, wounded and missing.

JOHN H. WILLIAMS, CO. C

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It is proper here to give the names of our comrades who, as a part of the young manhood of the United States, fought and died as soldiers never did before, and vindicated the right of liberty to continue to the end of time. That they were the choice spirits of the regiment, all will admit. The killed were: Lieutenant Geo. W. Manring, William Bass, W. R. Allen, John Hoffman, Edward Hollenback, Michael Riflemacher, Henry Richards, John H. Williams, Richard Davis, Lieutenant Augustus S. Chute, Luke Clifford, Thomas B. Dodds, Turner Eaton, George Rife, Clement D. Hubbard, Martin Downey, M. Freeland, Henry H. McGowan, Wm. F. Porter, Samuel R. Quartz, Byron Bass, Wm. J. Marshall.

The mortally wounded were: A. M. Martindale, David Evans, Wm. Crabtree, Henry H. Lewis, David A. Loveland, John E. Veach, Henry Martin, Archibald George, Wm. Jones, John D. Markell, Geo. W. Rockwell, James Fields, Charles W. Hill, Duncan McKenzie, James D. Boren, Merit Campbell, George Irvine, James Martin and Captain John Cook.

Also the following were wounded more or less severely: Colonel W. H. Raynor, Captain Geor. Wilhelm, wounded and captured, turned on his guard and brought him into our line; Captain W. B. Williams, Lieutenant Martin Owens, Lieutenant J. A. Aleshire, T. Harkison, Martin G. Allen, Chas. Blosser, L. C. Chappell, Jarvis Coply, Elias Johnson, Wm. D. Jones, Wm. T. Saxton, Fred Held, Geo. Emling, Geo. Meisner, Henry Meyer, L. D. Davis, Thos. D. Davis, Thos. S. Jones, Wm. Edwards, S. Dalrymple, E. E. Edwards, Henry Nolte, David Edwards, Joshua Lewis, Thos. J. Williams, Edward Goudy, Daniel Thomas, James Anderson, John Barr, James Odle, Reason Furgeson, Rees Griffith, Daniel Williams, James M. Pease, George W. Cox, Jasper Font, Joel Burnett, F. M. Seth, Wesley Murphy, John Shaw, Jos. Davidson, Lawrence Hahn, James W. Pauley, Martin Powers, Adam Siemon and Joseph Vanfleet, and a number more were captured and missing out of a few over three hundred in ranks.

We went into camp at the right of the Vicksburg road on the enemy's side of the battlefield, powder stained, tired and hungry. That was one day at least that the important matter of dinner was

forgotten, and our supper was a light one. Shortly after dark Lieutenant Roberts, Evan Edwards, A. S. Drennan and Wm. D. Davis of Company C went back with me to give the boys of our company some sort of a burial. We made a torch, and by its light saw some of the awful sights of that desperate battlefield. One, always remembered, was a very large and tall rebel, stiff in death, sitting with his back against a tree; with deadly pallor he seemed to gaze at the horrors before him, and so many lying dead as they fell, friend and foe alike. We soon found our dead comrades. We were without tools of any kind, but a kind hearted comrade, one of the pioneer corps, who was passing, learned our needs and gave us his shovel. With this we soon prepared a grave, and side by side laid our comrades of Company C, their shrouds being their old rubber blankets. The same work was being done by comrades of the other companies; and the remains of comrades who fell there now moulder in the unknown graves of the largest National cemetery in the United States, at Vicksburg.

The dreadful sights on that bloody ground can never be forgotten. Where our brigade charged the enemy's battery at the junction of the roads the dead men and horses were in piles, as they were before our first brigade.

In 1895, in Jackson, Ohio, a stranger, in appearance a grizzled veteran, inquired of me if I had written a sketch of this battle, which he had read in the Standard-Journal, our county paper. I informed him that I had. "Well," said he, "you gave a fair description of the conflict, as I was there, but not on your side, but a member of the battery at the junction of the road that your men charged." For our work in this battle history gives us high honor, so we need not be silent. Hovey's Twelfth Division, Thirteenth Army Corps, out of 4,180 men, lost: Killed 211, wounded 872 and missing 119; total 1,202.

General Grant says he had about 15,000 men engaged. General Pemberton, commanding the enemy, admits he had 18,000 men. Abrams, a Confederate authority, gave him from 23,000 to 26,000 men. "Ohio in the War," says: "The battle of Champion's Hill sealed the doom of Vicksburg." The Count of Paris, in his

History of the Civil War in America, styles Champion's Hill "the hill of death," adding that it (the battle) was the most complete defeat the Confederates had sustained since the commencement of the war.

Harper's History of the Great Rebellion has this to say of Champion's Hill: "When the order came, ordering forward, the left and center, the right under Hovey, had been contending for nearly two hours against superior numbers. Hovey's division of two brigades, nine small regiments, bore the brunt of the whole conflict. Directly in his front was the Confederate General Stevenson's division, composed of four brigades, posted in a strong position on Champion's Hill. He (Hovey) had been repulsed, leaving behind 11 guns captured from the enemy; but his men, undaunted and under cover of a heavy artillery fire, again advanced and carried the closely contested field."

General Hovey in his report speaks in these words: "I can not think of this bloody hill without sadness and pride. Sadness for the great loss of my true and gallant men; pride for the heroic bravery they displayed. It was, after the conflict, literally the hill of death; men, horses, cannon and the debris of an army lay scattered in wild confusion; hundreds of the gallant Twelfth Division were cold in death or writhing in pain, and, with a large number of Crocker's gallant boys, lay dead, dying or wounded, intermingled with our fallen foe. I never saw fighting like this. The loss of my division on this field was nearly one-third of my forces engaged."

General Hovey mentions the troops in these words: "Of the Twenty-ninth Wisconsin, Twenty-fourth and Twenty-eighth Iowa, in what words of praise shall I speak? Not more than six months in the service, their record will compare with the oldest and best tried regiments in the field. All honor is due to their gallant officers and men, and Colonels Gill, Bryan and Connell have my thanks for the skill with which they handled their respective commands and for the fortitude, endurance and bravery displayed by their gallent men. It is useless to speak in praise of the Eleventh, Twenty-fourth, Thirty-fourth, Forty-sixth and Forty-seventh Indi-

ana and Fifty-sixth Ohio. They have won laurels on many fields, and not only their country will praise, but posterity will be proud to claim kinship with the privates in the ranks. They have a history that Colonel Macauley, Colonel Spicely, Colonel Cameron, Colonel Bringhurst, Lieutenant Colonel McLaughlin and Colonel Raynor and their children will be proud to read.", No battle of the Civil War can show a finer display of the valor and staying qualities of the Union volunteer than did Champion's Hill. An hour on that awful field was equal to years of ordinary time. But eight other Ohio regiments lost a larger number of men in any one engagement than did the Fifty-sixth Ohio at Champion's Hill. No battle fought for the preservation of the Union was more important and successful than Champion's Hill. At that time the country, discouraged under the disasters of the previous fall and winter, felt that the very existence of the great republic was in peril. The previous year had been one of mistakes and disasters in the department of war and in the field. The winter had been hard, and extremely so, to the troops in the southwest. At Helena and Milliken's Bend hundreds had died of fevers and other diseases so common in that swampy region. The drums beating the dead march, and the volleys of musketry over the graves of our comrades were too often heard, and in the homes of the North fell with crushing effect upon the hearts of the people. But from this memorable day there seemed no more doubt as to the final success of the Union cause, though the time was long thereafter and the conflicts many and terrible before the end was reached.

The Twelfth Division of the Thirteenth Corps leading, on that eventful May 16, with Logan's and Crocker's divisions of the Seventeenth Corps, met and crushed the Confederate army, one of the most complete and disastrous defeats of the war for the Union; and from this time, until the enemy lay down their arms at Appomattox, the safety of the Union seemed assured.

To understand the importance of this battle, it is necessary to remember that it is a matter of record that the rebel General Pendleton had under his command and ready to support him about 82,000 men at the time our forces crossed the Mississippi river at

Bruinsburg; 60,000 of them were at Grand Gulf, Vicksburg and Jackson, and the rest of his forces at nearby points, all within easy supporting distance; and it is also a fact that General Grant had up to and including Champion's Hill only about 40,000 men.

The records show that General Pemberton had with him in the battle of Champion s Hill eighty regiments of infantry and ten batteries, in all fully 25,000 men. The enemy on their own chosen field were most disastrously defeated by an inferior force. And as a result of that defeat they left behind thirty pieces of artillery, 10,000 stands of small arms, and other war material, over 3,100 dead and wounded and over 3,000 prisoners.

General Grant himself asserts that, leaving out the divisions on the left, that virtually took no part in the battle, we had less than 15,000 actually engaged.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SIEGE OF VICKSBURG AND JACKSON—ON TO NATCHEZ AND NEW ORLEANS.

On May 17 our division moved up to Edward's Depot. The only stand made by General Pemberton's demoralized army was at the crossing of the Big Black river. Here it was found by Osterhaus' and Carr's divisions of the Thirteenth Corps on the 17th strongly posted on both sides of the river. At this point, on the west bank—the main position of the enemy—bluffs extended to the water's edge. On the east bank there is an open bottom a mile wide, surrounded by a stagnant bayou two or three feet in depth and from ten to twenty in width. Behind this bayou the enemy had thrown up rifle-pits. A charge was made by our troops. Not a shot was fired by the gallant assailants until they had crossed the bayou. They then poured in a volley, and, without reloading, swept on with fixed bayonets, and the position was hastily abandoned by the Confederates, leaving in their works eighteen guns, 1,751 prisoners, and large quantities of small arms and stores.

We moved up and reached Black river on the 19th. On the 20th we were sent to Bridgeport, and returned the next day. May 22 we marched up to the line of investment around Vicksburg. We were quartered a short distance in the rear of our trenches, and in close range of musket balls. Shells and round shot were too frequent callers. On May 23 the regiment was in the trenches and had an exceedingly hot time of it. The regiment was on duty every day, on guard in the rifle-pits or digging in the trenches. There was hardly a man who did not have many narrow and wonderful escapes. It was a common thing to have a ball shot through one's hat or clothing. In the rifle-pits we fired from fifty to seventy rounds a day, and death lurked on every hand, whether on or

off duty. Comrade Noah Starcher of Company E was mortally wounded by a musket ball while lying sick on a hospital cot in the regimental hospital, which was quite a distance in the rear of where the regiment was quartered for forty-two days and nights.

This same duty in kind continued until July 3, 1863. On that day Company C was at the head of the trench about thirty feet from one of their forts. A rebel sharpshooter grazed my ear, and about the last cannon they fired, on that part of the line at least, was at our company. We could see they were up to something more than usual, and we watched their port-holes so closely that it was unsafe for them to fire a gun. But they did take the risk and fired a load of grape and canister into the head of our trench, knocking over the gabions we had at the head of the trench and covering several of us with dirt and rubbish. Some of the boys thought we were killed, but none of us was seriously injured. July 4, 1863, dawned bright and gloriously, a day of sacred memories to all who love liberty and freedom, and increasingly so to the Union army before Vicksburg, for, after a most heroic defense, the Confederate General Pemberton surrendered to General Grant his army of 31,600 men, together with 172 cannons, about 60,000 muskets and a large amount of ammunition, it being the largest army ever captured or surrendered on the western hemisphere, or in any part of the world in modern times.

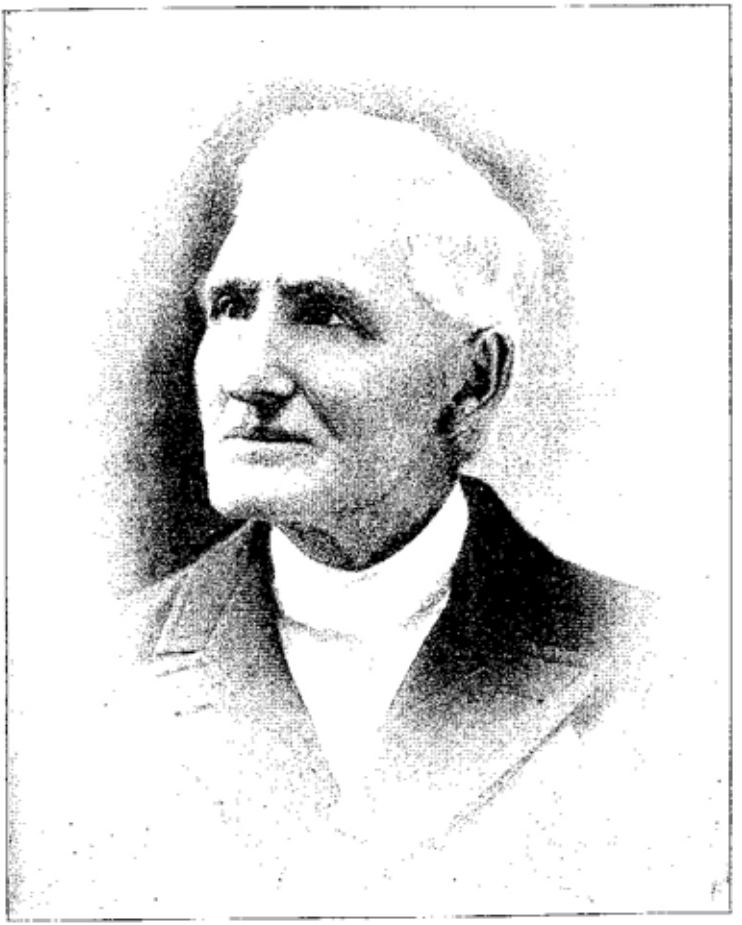
Our line of investment was over fifteen miles, extending from Haines' Bluff to Vicksburg, and on to Warrenton. The enemy's line was about seven miles long. Vicksburg was finely situated for defense. On the north the hills at the highest point rise to about two hundred feet above the Mississippi river, and are cut up by ravines and small streams. The ravines were grown up with cane and brush. The only hope of relief the imprisoned Confederates had in Vicksburg was in the Confederate General Jos. E. Johnston's being able to drive off a portion of our force, so they could withdraw their troops.

By the 25th of June our position was so strong that a less number was required for the investment. Thereupon General Grant detached General W. T. Sherman, with a division from each

of the Thirteenth, Fifteenth and Seventeenth Corps and General Lauman's division to see that General Johnston did not interfere with the siege of Vicksburg. General Johnston had gathered an army of about 24,000 men. General Grant wrote General Sherman that he must defeat General Johnston at least fifteen miles from our works. Most of the troops were not allowed to enter the stronghold they had assisted to capture; but on July 5 the remainder of the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Corps was sent to reinforce the troops already under General Sherman.

General Johnston retreated to Jackson, Mississippi, our forces following him closely, going over nearly the same roads we had marched over in our advance on to Vicksburg. The weather was intensely hot, the roads very dusty and water exceedingly scarce. July 9 our forces reached Jackson, and on the 10th Hovey's division closed up on the line of investment late in the day. On the 11th we had some heavy skirmishing at Lynch's creek, and on the 12th more hard skirmishing along the Raymond road. Our regiment was on the right of Hovey's division, and on our right was Lauman's division, which suffered a heavy loss in an assault upon the enemy's fortifications in their front. This assault was made by a misunderstanding of orders. The siege was prosecuted vigorously until the morning of July 17th, when it was found the enemy had evacuated during the night, after destroying his stores and supplies. Our forces followed them for several miles, but failed to overtake them. The railroads entering Jackson were broken up, and then General Sherman, leaving a garrison in the Capital City, drew back his line to the Big Black. And on the 24th of July, as the regiment was on its way back to Vicksburg, at the crossing of the Big Black river, a violent storm of rain, with thunder and lightning overtook us, and Color Sergeant Wm. Roberts took shelter under a tree, which was struck by lightning, hurling him to the ground and paralyzing his left side, and the flag was stripped from its staff as though cut with a sharp knife. Sergeant Roberts never fully recovered from the shock.

On July 25 our division reached Vicksburg and went into camp below the city, and we then had a chance to see some of the



CHAPLAIN J. E. THOMAS

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