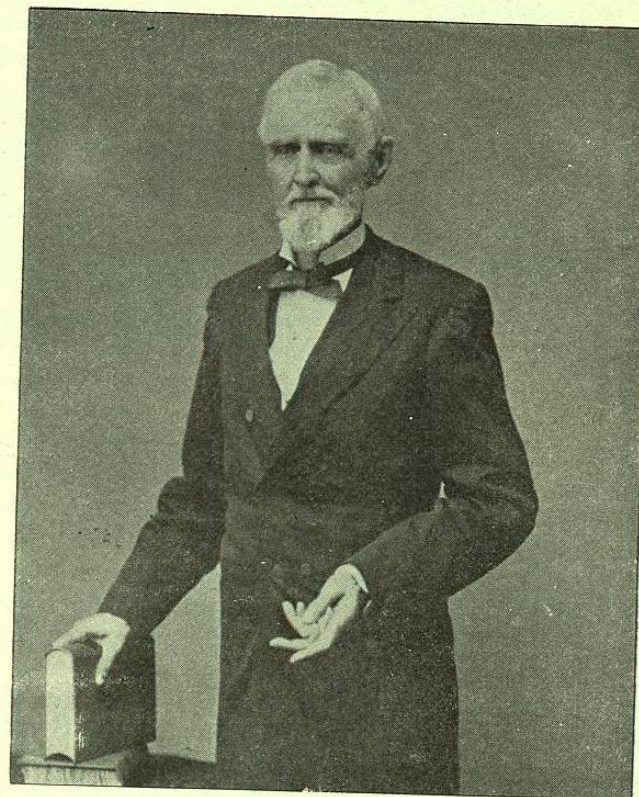


## CHAPTER XI.

Leave for Richmond—Ordered to Evansport, Va., to Blockade the Potomac—Worthless Ammunition—Forces on the Maryland Shore—Constant Firing All Winter—Orders to Fall Back to Fredericksburg—"Come to Richmond Immediately"—Orders from Gen. Lee—New Berne Falls—Relieve Branch at Kinston—Ordered to Wilmington—Build Defenses—Fort Fisher Constructed—Col. William Lamb in Command—Running the Blockade—Whitworth Guns—July 17, 1862, Placed in Command of the Department of North Carolina and Southern Virginia—Defend a Line from the Appomattox to Cape Fear—July 31, Shell Gen. McClellan's Army—Constructed Defenses of Petersburg—Battle of Fredericksburg—Pelham—President Calls for Me—Gen. Lee's Considerate Conduct—Gen. Foster at Tarboro, N. C.—He Interviews an Old Dicky—Railroad Bridge at Goldsboro, N. C., Burned—Weak Defense Made—How I Got Supplies from Suffolk—Mrs. Johnston and Gen. Viele—Was Fannie Cooper a Spy?—Martial Law—Sidney Lanier—Flag of Truce Boats—Exchange of Prisoners.

IN obedience to orders received, I went to Richmond in November. I called on the President, and then reported to the War Department for duty. Secretary Benjamin told me that he would put me on duty at Norfolk; but for some reason, when the order came, I was directed to relieve Gen. Trimble and take command of the troops at Evansport and the batteries there, and blockade the Potomac river to prevent communications with Washington City by water.

An earthwork at the mouth of the Quantico had been constructed, and contained nine or ten nine-inch Dahlgren guns. To these I added five or six heavy guns. These latter guns were far apart, and mounted in circular pits sunk in the earth. Thus isolated, they commanded the river afar, both up and down, and no concentrated fire could be made on them all at the same time. One was a large English Armstrong rifled gun. The infantry force was composed of the regiments of Cols. Brockinbrough, Virginia; J. J. Pettigrew, North Carolina; W. B. Bate, Tennessee; Col. J. J. Judge, Alabama; Col. Thomas, Georgia; Walker, Arkansas; Fagan, Arkansas; Bronough's battalion, Arkansas; Col. Snowden Andrews's battery of field artillery, Maryland; and Capt. Swann's company of cavalry. Capt. Chataud, Capt. McCorkle, Lieuts. Simms and Wood, C. S. navy, were given command of some of the land batteries and the



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steamer Page. On the Maryland shore opposite us were the brigades of Gens. Hooker and Sickles, and some water batteries of Parrott guns: and above several ships of war were blockaded, and below such ships of war as came up from time to time. With this force the river was closed to navigation; and as Lord Lyons, the British minister, remarked in one of his dispatches, "Washington is the only city in the United States that is really blockaded."

The ammunition found in the magazine for the large guns was very indifferent. The powder was a mixture of blasting with rifle powder. Sometimes the Armstrong gun, at the same elevation, would not throw a shell more than halfway across the river; then again far over the river.

During the whole winter, notwithstanding a great deal of shelling from the steamers below us and the opposite batteries, nothing of importance occurred. It was only the thunder of big guns.

I think it was on the 5th of March that I received, confidentially, verbal orders to remove all stores to Fredericksburg, and to be prepared to fall back on the 8th inst. All property was removed except the heavy guns. Some of them were thrown into the Potomac, and the remainder spiked and the carriages destroyed. On the 8th the troops in my command were on the road to Fredericksburg. On the night of the 13th a telegram was handed me, saying: "Come to Richmond immediately." I reached that city early next day. Calling on the President, he told me that I must go at once to New Berne, N. C., and relieve Gen. L. O. B. Branch, take command of the forces there, and call at Gen. R. E. Lee's office for instructions. I found Gen. Lee at his home, and he said: "I want you to go to New Berne, and drive Burnside away from there when he attacks the place. When can you go?" I said by the first train, requesting him to have my staff and horses sent me as soon as possible. The train was to leave in the afternoon. Next came a message from the President, telling me that he wished me to call at once. I did so, and he then informed me that he had just received a dispatch that New Berne had fallen, but that I must go down and assume command.

I found Gen. Branch at Kinston. He received me very cordially, and offered to aid me. I disliked to hand him the orders,



because they were written before they knew the battle had been fought. I made an inspection of the troops, and found them cheerful and seemingly not at all discouraged by their defeat. This was on the 17th. On the 20th I received a dispatch ordering me to Wilmington, as there was some apprehension of that place being attacked, and I went there without delay. Gen. Joseph R. Anderson succeeded to the command at Kinston.

On arriving at Wilmington, the first duty was the immediate examination of the defenses at the mouth of the Cape Fear river. Fort Caswell was in fair condition for defense, and any vessels passing it would meet river obstructions while under short range of the guns. Fort Fisher was a small unfinished work, consisting of a casemate battery *fronting the ocean*, and a line of works, nearly at right angles with this, that ran back inland. This latter line constituted the land seaside defense, while the guns also commanded the channel and the entrance thereto. This face I continued inland to the edge of the marsh, making it perhaps a third of a mile in length. From my assuming command in March until I was ordered to Petersburg in July I gave this fort much care, and kept a large force at work. Commencing at the right of the casemate battery, I caused a line of revetment to be put up, extending parallel with the ocean, a distance of perhaps half a mile; knowing the winds would blow the sands up and make a glacis in front; and so the windstorms blew thousands of tons of sand, forming a smooth slope to the seashore. From this front we constructed a line back to the marsh, and thence up to the line running back from the casemate. It was an enormous work, and its garrison should not have been less than three thousand men. Outside the sea front, near the ocean, I sunk a pit, as deep as admissible, and mounted the largest of the Tredegar guns, that swept the horizon in every direction.

Maj. Kendrick was in command of Fort Fisher for some time. I believe it was at his own request that he was relieved, and I put Col. William Lamb in command in his place, and he remained there until it was captured, January 15, 1865. I mention this because it is a part of the history of the fort.

There were many incidents connected with Fort Fisher whilst in my command at Wilmington. I had constructed a telegraph from Wilmington to Fort Fisher. One morning early I received a telegram stating that a "blockade steamer" had been run ashore

near the fort, designedly, because she was fired on by the blockading ships and had much powder on board, and that a messenger had reached the fort, asking the commander to sink his steamer to *save the powder*, and asking me for orders. However, before he got my reply to "not fire a shot at the steamer," a shot was fired at her from Fort Fisher, and, striking below the water line, she gradually filled. All the shells of the enemy fell short. We took charge of the abandoned steamer, and sent two lines from her to the shore, and with the labor of two hundred men removed all the cargo to the depth of six feet in the water. The brandy, whisky, ale, powder, medicines, and above all six Whitworth field guns, were landed. Two of these guns were kept at Fort Fisher. As their range was about six miles, I instructed Col. Lamb to select good men for them, and practice with them inland, so as not to let the enemy know the range. When this was done, one bright day when all was quiet, and the lazy blockaders were lying at anchor about three miles off the fort, these two guns opened on them, creating a lively scene. Black smoke began to stream up from the smokestacks of the steamers; sails were thrown to the wind from the ships in all haste, and the squadron went seaward. When they returned, they anchored out of range, and from this time on I requested all blockade runners (steamers) on arriving to make the mouth of the channel at dawn and run in by daylight out of reach of the enemy's guns.

Soon after this another steamer came in from Nassau, and Capt. McCorkle, of the navy, and I got into a yawl with two sailors and went out to meet her. We found a young "my lord" from England, who had run the blockade to carry a "free lance" and have some "fun" with the Yankees. He had been pent up on shipboard and was full of life, and asked us to take him ashore in our boat. When we shoved off, he insisted on taking one of the oars for mere relief to the exuberance of life. We had almost three miles to row, and McCorkle, as boatswain, managed the rudder so as to give him an opportunity to display his strength. When he began to weaken, McCorkle would cry out, "Give way, my lord," to encourage him. When we reached camp, he was not so restless; but he was a jolly good fellow, and I hope he had an opportunity given him to gratify his inclination to fight.



My volunteer aid, Baker, was given a month's leave. He obtained a small boat and loaded her with nine bales of cotton, and, with only a small boy to tend the jib sail, put out for Nassau, reached port safely, and sold the boat and cargo. He returned on a vessel that ran the blockade at Charleston, and brought me a "pith" India hat, gloves, kid gaiter shoes, and other acceptable articles. With him on the steamer came a distinguished officer, carrying a saber as large as the sword of Wallace, who was "spoiling" for a fight, as he expressed it at a dinner given him by some of the officers in Charleston. He was a genuine, good soldier, entered our service, and often distinguished himself while chief of staff for Gen. J. E. B. Stuart.

I was kept very busy during my stay in Wilmington in constructing defensive works. I *fortified the city of Wilmington*; put up, or mounted, isolated guns on the bluff banks of the river, and otherwise defended the city from the approach from seaward.

And now were "fought the fights" around Richmond, and I was down here digging dirt without much honor or renown, and when they terminated an order came, July 17, placing me in command of the Department of North Carolina and Southern Virginia. Gen. W. H. C. Whiting was given the command of the defenses of Wilmington, and I was requested to name certain counties around the city to give him a separate command. He continued there until Fort Fisher was captured, as stated, on January 15, 1865. Although it was subjected to a terrific bombardment, the report shows that out of forty-seven heavy mounted guns twenty-five of them and their carriages were serviceable when captured. How difficult it is to destroy sand forts!

Fort Sumter, with its walls crumbled into dust by four years of bombardment, never was captured, and its defense stands *alone*, unparalleled in the history of the world, and before which all others pale. See Jollification Order, Vol. L., No. 106, page 1143, "War Records," when information was sent to the United States troops that the Confederates had left the fort.

Occasionally some war steamers would come near enough to throw shells into Fort Fisher, but they did very little damage.

The main annoyance was the reports given out that every large naval expedition was designed for Wilmington. On one of these occasions a company of volunteers, mainly *lawyers and the like*,

most elegant men, arrived in Wilmington from Fayetteville and tendered their services to defend Fort Fisher. Although I had learned the destination of the fleet was not the Cape Fear river, I accepted their services, sent them to Fort Fisher, and put them to work with wheelbarrows and shovels to build ramparts. It went hard with them at first, but after a while they considered it as being a rather good offer too prolonged. Their complexions were soon tanned, their hands blistered. They, however, made the time pass away merrily, worked hard, slept well, improved in health, and when their time expired Capt. Devereux and his companions thanked me for the opportunity given them to fight for the cause, and making the fort impregnable, as they expressed it. They enjoyed working because they were men of character.

The battles around Richmond had been fought, and Gen. McClellan driven to seek shelter at Harrison's Landing, on the James river, under cover of the heavy guns of the navy. Gen. R. E. Lee's army rested around Richmond. My line of defense commenced on the James near Drewry's Bluff, thence down the James, down the Blackwater, thence on to the mouth of the Cape Fear river, over three hundred miles in length, with the enemy at intervals along the front at Norfolk, Suffolk, Washington, Plymouth, New Berne, and other places, constantly threatening and making raids. It was imposing on me unceasing labor and a grave responsibility; and I will here remark, once for all, that during my command of this department, although Smith, Hill, and Longstreet were temporarily in command, at intervals, they did not remain in the department any length of time, or interfere with the defense.

Sometime toward the last of July Gen. D. H. Hill, who had no command, came over from Richmond, and as no defensive works had been constructed for Petersburg, the matter was mentioned, and it resulted in our riding out and selecting a point on the Appomattox river to start from; and we determined on the line to the City Point railroad, thence on by the farms of Hare, Friends, and Dunns. And as I may not refer to it again, I will state I went to work with my troops, and, staking out the line, *constructed the entire works around the city*, crossing the Jerusalem pike and on to the lead works on the P. and W. railroad. It took one year to build this line, and it served a good purpose in the end, and gave one year of life to the Confederacy.



On the evening of July 28 Gen. Hill handed me a letter from Gen. Lee stating that he would send over to Petersburg the next day Gen. W. D. Pendleton, his chief of artillery, with six batteries. To these other batteries could be added as desired, the whole to go down to Coggins's Point, on the James, and attack, at night, the shipping and camp of the Federal army at Harrison's Landing, on the opposite shore; and that I should command the expedition, etc. Accordingly I increased the number of guns to seventy-five, and designated Gen. Daniel's brigade as the escort. We started on the morning of the 30th, intending to make the attack that night. The forces were halted in the woods. I then rode down with Gen. Pendleton to the dwelling of Mr. Ruffin, on the river, to reconnoiter the grounds and select positions for the guns. At Ruffin's I took off my coat, put on a straw hat, hoisted an umbrella, and in the seeming garb of a farmer examined the shore, rode down to the river and watered my horse near a war steamer. After going down a half mile I returned. It was then growing late, and we started back. To my astonishment, in the darkness, I met the artillery moving toward the river. As not one captain had any idea of the ground, every gun was ordered back, and such trouble to encamp, by reason of the intense darkness, seldom occurs. Gen. Hill, who was in camp, said we would "be discovered next day," and he returned to Petersburg. The next morning the captains of the batteries were instructed to go through the clover fields to the river bank and select positions for their guns. This was done without attracting the notice of the enemy, or the hundreds of vessels in the stream.

As the day closed a drizzling mist made the darkness *thick*. Like the interior of the Mammoth Cave, it could be felt, but not seen. However forty-five guns were put in position, exclusive of the two long Parrott guns captured at Manassas. Amidst such darkness what a beautiful sight was before us! Ten thousand lights from the shipping and the camp shone the brighter from some reflection of the darkness that should have obscured them. At midnight the battery on the right was to open fire, to be followed in quick succession along the line, and in a minute it was a continuous fire. Soon the lights were all extinguished, save one or two on some lone craft in the river. When the firing commenced all the monitors and other war vessels moved up the

river to meet the *ironclad* built in Richmond that was reported to be ready to come down the river, and so we were not subjected to any fire except from one gunboat, and from some Whitworth guns that sent bolts, whistling like birds, high over our heads. As the day dawned the guns were withdrawn and we returned to Petersburg. The report of Gen. Pendleton and my own can be found in the war records. There were no casualties on our side. It was real amusement.

Officers of the Union army, years after, gave me accounts of the wild confusion in their camps. Unexpected as a midnight earthquake it burst upon the slumbering army. Horses and mules broke loose and ran affrighted over the grounds, stumbling over tent cords. Captains shouted everywhere for men to fall in line. The blue was here and there mingled with midnight summer's sleeping uniforms of white indescribables, airy and cool, that were seen only by the light of bursting shells. Gen. Alfred Pleasanton told me he could find nothing in his tent to put on, except now and then by the light of the shells, and my good friend, Gen. Rufus Ingalls, in the first letter he wrote me after the surrender, said: "You don't know, dear Sam, how near you came killing me that night, which, had it happened, would have been a great sorrow to you." I was informed that a war correspondent wrote a letter severely criticising Gen. McClellan's inability with eighty thousand men to offer any resistance to this attack, that was successfully used, with other charges, by his enemies to have him relieved from command of the Army of the Potomac. McClellan, perhaps mortified that his position was shelled without being able to make any defense, treated the matter very lightly in his reports. He had not taken the precaution to place any guns on the river bank, and the intense darkness prevented moving artillery through his camp. Besides, he could not use guns, as the ships and vessels of every kind lined the river shore and were in the way.

Gen. Lee directed me to have my scouts watch McClellan's movements closely, especially movements of the shipping down the James. In time I reported the departure of the transports, and the crossing of the Chickahominy with the infantry. Soon after followed the battles of Cedar Run, August 9; the second Manassas, September 2, where Pope met his reward; then Fredericksburg, December 13, where the vain Burnside was defeated.