

THEIR BAPTISMS OF FIRE.

SENSATIONS OF FIGHTERS IN THEIR FIRST BATTLES.

Interviews with Gens. Miles, Sickles, Longstreet, Fitz-John Porter, and Others, and Stories of Grant, Sherman, and Taylor—Col. Porter's Ideas.

With novelists who plume themselves on their realism a favorite subject of study lately has been the feeling and conduct of soldiers under fire. Patient, psychologic dissections of the soldiers in battle, at which the enthralled reader catches his breath and sighs, "How true!" have made the fortune of more than one work of fiction.

Gen. U. S. Grant said that the instant he heard the first hostile gun, when down in Mexico with Taylor as a sub-Lieutenant, he felt sorry he ever enlisted. Shortly afterward he borrowed a horse and rode into the thick of the fight against orders.

Fitz-John Porter was under Taylor also. He said: "In every case when shot passed by I always controlled myself so as not to permit the men to see that I was disturbed. My first experience was down with Taylor, and I recall a case in point. Col. Childs had a new regiment formed in a square at Resaca de la Palma, and when the Mexicans opened fire upon it the men began to dodge.

Lee's 'old warhorse,' Lieut.-Gen. Longstreet, received his baptism under Taylor at the same time. He says that the first sound of distant firing caused him to brace for the ordeal. But there was a lull before he was brought into action, and in order to keep his thoughts from wandering, he took from his breast pocket a picture of the girl he had left behind. The calm frank face looking into his dispelled all thought of danger, and he went ahead like the man he aspired to be.

Inquiries directed to the Green Mountain boys, who made a gallant record as fighters, brought forth some responses which go to the root of this whole question of battle field courage. Gen. Lewis A. Grant, commander of the First Vermont Brigade, one of the fighting commands of the Army of the Potomac, said:

"It is somewhat difficult to give my 'first experience under fire,' as I came to it somewhat gradually, and became a little used to it before being thrown into a severe engagement. And my feelings were not the same on all occasions. I disliked very much to go into an engagement, and feared the result, not only to myself, but to my command and the cause. Generally the first experience of a battle was that of trepidation, but my natural pride and feeling of responsibility and a knowledge of its effect upon the men overcame it. But it sometimes took all the self-control at my command to appear calm and cool. But this feeling of trepidation never lasted long. It never extended through a battle."

Gov. Urban A. Woodbury, whose mute badge of courage is an empty sleeve, recalled his first experience under fire without difficulty, for it was then he lost his right arm. Said he:

"As I emerged from the woods on the open field at the first battle of Bull Run, the enemy discovered us and commenced firing upon us with solid shot and shell. If I were to analyze my own feelings I should say I felt a great sense of danger, but not much fright. I had no idea of doing anything else than to march straight ahead toward the enemy, which I was doing at double quick when I received the wound which caused the loss of my arm. I realized perfectly well what was going on about me, the troops who were going off, and where the enemy were posted."

Gen. Theodore S. Peck, a Green Mountain soldier, who has a varied experience, and was one of Stannard's officers, first came under fire in a cavalry charge and skirmish.

We were so excited and interested in chasing the enemy," said he, "that there was not much fear about it. The next time under fire I was thoroughly frightened at the commencement, but later on fright disappeared, and the supreme thought of whipping the enemy took possession. I think I never was in a battle but that I was afraid, and in most of the engagements it lasted throughout the entire time when under fire. While this physical fear was upon me I had no desire to leave the field, but otherwise to whip the other side. I am confident that I had my wits about me during all these trying times, and was cool enough to attend to business."

Gen. W. W. Henry, Colonel of the Tenth Vermont, received his baptism of fire at Bull Run, with Gen. Woodbury. His chief thought and anxiety was to get a

sight of the enemy. A chance view of some wounded men before going in shook his courage somewhat. He saw a shell burst and carry away the arm of his friend and comrade, Woodbury. "This caused me to think that war was a serious matter," said he, "but still I kept on, as well as I could, bound to see the enemy, and when under musketry fire my courage returned."

Vermont sent out a band of her Green Mountain boys on horseback, the first Vermont Cavalry, one of the elite fighting regiments of that arm of service. Col. Myron M. Porter, now of Washington, wrote thus of his sins of omission and commission:

"You ask for a description of my first experience under fire. I was really too badly scared to remember just how I did feel. I remember distinctly, though, that I wished myself in any other place than that particular fight. A sickening, all-gone, weak-kneed, lonesome feeling; a feeling which suddenly passed away, however, when the order to charge or fire came. After that the feeling was one of excitement and anxiety as to the result. Dying in a charge is sublime; being killed before the charge is disappointing and seemingly inglorious. My experience taught me that fear always preceded the actual fight. It is annoying to be struck when you cannot strike back. This is the way I used to feel when I was a boy soldier. Now I expect I would be badly scared under all circumstances and conditions. Since the war I have heard a number of soldiers say that they never felt better than when they were under fire or in battle. Such a man writes himself down an ass, and if he ever was under fire, it is safe to assume that he was a coward."

In the old town of Plattsburgh, surrounded by classic memorials of combat and separated by the waters of Champlain from his ancestral hearth, yet within sight of its emerald hills, was found another Green Mountain warrior, Gen. Stephen McMillitt of the Ninety-sixth New York Volunteers. Gen. McMillitt's badge of courage is not an empty sleeve. A pair of well-worn crutches and an empty trouser leg turned back rearly to the hip joint are his souvenirs of the conflict. Like Gen. Longstreet and many others, whom it would be merely a repetition to quote, Gen. McMillitt found that the best way to avoid showing off as a coward is to have something to do, no matter how trifling. He said:

"You ask me to give you my first experience under fire; it scared how much, &c."

"I had my first experience under fire near Franklin, Va. We had just entered heavy timber after a march of twenty miles from Suffolk. The Confederates opened upon us from a four-gun battery. The fire was hot, but ineffectual; although the shells flew thick and fast, most of them passed over us. At the first note of the music of the flying missiles nature asserted herself, and her first law was very much in evidence. Yes, I was frightened, thoroughly frightened. At once I appreciated the fact that I was trembling, body and limb and fearing that my men would notice my trepidation, I opened my haversack and took from it a piece of hard-tack, and started in to munch it. Hard-tack was never harder or drier, and how I got it down and finally digested it, under the circumstances, the Lord only knows."

"Did the fear pass off? Not until the last whizzing shell had passed over my head. I had a like experience in every engagement, with but two exceptions."

Imagination has much to do, and perhaps is wholly responsible in cases of uncontrollable battle fright. Major Orlando J. Smith of the Fourth Indian Cavalry told of an instance of fright experienced beyond the reach of bullets. His regiment moved to Balls Bluff the day after the battle, the men knowing the story of the slaughter. At the crossing of the Potomac they saw dead and wounded victims of the field, one particularly harrowing sight, a corpse rolled in a blanket and slung to a pole. Two men bore the pole on their shoulders with the ghastly burden swaying at every step. Mounting the bluff, the raw Indian soldiers were stationed under the crest, with their backs to the river, a second slaughter pen should the enemy attack. Distant firing could be heard, and the men were "scared with the fear of being scared," as the Major expressed it. On coming under actual fire he experienced no fright equal to the one due to imagination.

Past Commander Henry H. Adams of Lafayette Post, New York, responded for the West, as a representative of one of Ohio's fighting regiments, the 125th, known as the "Opdycke Tigers." Mr. Adams served as orderly, captain of scouts and staff officer.

"You asked for my experience when I was first under fire. I will say that my ideas and recollections of Napoleon and Murat were vivid, and it seemed as if we were to be glorified and not hurt, and it was not until warned by a shower of shot and shell that I speedily sought shelter. This occurred at crossing Little Harpeth River, in Tennessee, when our brigade drove out Van Dorn in 1863, but it was after having had an object lesson given by the carnage of one or two sharp fights and the anguish of the wounded that I realized the fear of entering into an engagement."

"My second experience will please you. I was marker at the head of the division, which was marching gallantly. We approached Chattanooga, and suddenly we ran upon an ambuscade, where the enemy were massed, and a volley was delivered which frightened me out of my wits, and I suddenly found myself crouching behind my horse in the road, in full view of my command, playing the coward."

"However, in a moment, recovering from this dreadful situation, I mounted my horse, but wished I were at home, and I felt that I would sacrifice every patriotic sentiment I ever entertained if I could only be out of that scrape. However, what seemed to be a month was but probably only one minute, when Gen. Harker gave me orders to retire from the exposed position."

The soldier is stimulated by the uniform of his calling, the sense of the power of the armament of which he is a part, and his elbow touch with men he hopes are braver than himself. It is possible to be caught in a position where a show of cowardice would end uncomfortably for other reasons than disgrace and shame. A new Western story teller, Walter Juan Davis, the hero of an encounter with the savage Geronimo, was asked how it felt to be pounced upon by a band of Apaches. Davis was a United States surveyor in southwest New Mexico when Geronimo left the Mexican sierras and ravaged the border settlements in 1880. He was armed, as were his Mexican helpers, but none of the party had been under fire. Mr. Davis tells his own story:

"We had run something more than a half mile, in our forlorn effort to escape the fiends that were bearing down upon us, and now, dead fagged, we stopped at the crest of a little knoll to fight as we might and die as we had to. It would be silly for me to say that I was not frightened, for I was in a perfect chill of fear, which became almost rank panic when a bullet, from the first fire of the Apaches, sang its peculiar, blood-hunting song within six inches of my ear."

"Oh, God, to die like this in this far-away plain," I said to myself, as the cold wave swept over my flesh and brought out the goose pimples. "The next instant I was as hot as a stove. 'The infernal, bloody beasts of hell!' I shouted, and in another tone and another mood, 'We'll get a few, no matter what they do to us.' And as I pulled up my carbine and blazed away at the on-swooping line of devils, I glanced about me and found that all my little party were with me, shoulder to shoulder, and this glimpse of their dusky faces and set hard looks showed me that they, too, had passed from fright to fury."

Gen. Nelson A. Miles's answer to the question was as follows: "Concerning the effect of being under fire for the first time, I can say that the first battle scene was inspiring and exhilarating, and I do not remember that it produced the least trepidation—nothing like as much as the effect afterward in some more sanguinary engagements, when we had learned to realize the serious effect of the enemy's fire."

Gen. Sickles said: "Before the ball opened I felt shaky, but soon recovered and had too much to do to think about danger. I was a Colonel at that time. The higher the rank the more responsibility and the man in the line with little to do except to wait for the enemy to shoot at him is in the most trying position of all."

Differences in details with agreement in essentials is true of battle-field emotions. These fresh talks of war-worn heroes bear out that statement. Some men would have dodged on all occasions but for the fact that arrant cowards didn't allow occasions to repeat themselves. They went home or to Canada. All men dodged on some occasions, and in so doing saved their fighting vim for the hour when it would tell. Sherman hit the rule that obtained throughout the army, when schooling Cameron's Highlanders under their "baptism of fire"—his own, as well, at Bull Run. When bullets and shells began to fly the Highlanders very naturally ducked their heads. Sherman told them to keep cool, as there was no use in dodging, for whenever the sound of a bullet or shell could be heard the danger from it was over. Besides, it didn't look well in soldiers. The words had barely left his lips when an immense shell came with its murderous "ka-swish! ka-swish!" a few feet above his head. Down went Tomcubeh, until he lay prostrate along his horse's shoulder and neck, and when he rose again it was with a very red face, softened by a smile. Very much amused that a preacher should be so weak in practice the killed Highlanders let the General know it, and "Uncle Billy" let himself down easily by saying, "Well, boys, you may dodge the big ones."

MODELS AS WELL AS MEN. An Old Shipbuilder's Views of Our First Ships. What Ericsson did for steam navigation with the propeller, another distinguished Swede, Frederick Henri de Chapman, whose name is known in America probably only to nautical experts, did for sailing vessels, particularly for those wonderful creations of Yankee genius that won glory in the war of 1812. It must be admitted that Yankee sailors, on frigates and privateers, were quicker and of a nimbler wit than the British men-o-war's men; but too

much has been said of the men, and too little of the models that won those sea fights.

Chapman was born in Gothenburg, Sweden, in 1731, and when very young manifested uncommon zeal in the practice of his profession. He was knighted by Gustavus III. in 1772, and was made the Rear Admiral of the Swedish navy in 1777. The ships that Chapman built were the best of the time, and the naval powers of Europe vied with one another in imitating his productions. His scientific works have been translated into many languages, and their chief merit is, as Prof. Wooley said in his "Review of European Naval Architecture," before the British Institute of Naval Architects in 1860, that they embody the empirical results of his vast experience.

Chapman was the first naval man to reduce Sir Isaac Newton's discovery, known as Simpson's or Sterling's Rule for the measurement of an irregular curve, to a practical form for shipbuilders. He is the only author who ever attempted to discuss the abstruse subject of lateral resistance mathematically, and the elaborate system of triangulation presented in his calculation of the centre of lateral resistance is the work of a master mind. For conciseness and clearness of explanation, and elegance of mathematical demonstration, Chapman's "Treatise on Shipbuilding," published in 1775, stands unrivalled to-day, and the shipbuilder or designer who has not digested his teachings has something yet to learn, though he be crammed with naval science.

This country was the Mecca of shipbuilders in the latter part of the seventeenth century. British shipwrights about whom Sir Walter Raleigh wrote: "A drop of New England's air is better than a whole draught of Old England's ale," wrote the Rev. Mr. Higginson in 1629, and the difference in climate between the two continents no doubt contributed to the energy displayed by the early settlers of America.

The pioneer shipbuilders of the colonies were of pure British stock, and untrammelled by the prejudices and dogmas of the Old World their ingenuity and inventive genius were quickened and their mental stature increased in the New World. As an art, the shipbuilding of the early settlers improved rapidly, the coasting trade of the colonies creating always a healthy competition between the builders. Swift sailing vessels that could be run economically were studied by the colonial builders and in a short time they challenged the maritime world in the excellence of their vessels. A short time before the Revolutionary war the British colonies were building annually, for foreign countries alone, about 25,000 tons of shipping, valued at £25,000, despite the arbitrary legislation of Great Britain against the American shipbuilders. Some years before the close of the eighteenth century, the Atlantic coast from Maine to Georgia became lined with ship yards.

The first colonial frigates were built by Philadelphia shipbuilders, whose special activity enabled Capt. John Barry to put to sea, in the first national vessel, as early as December 1775. Benjamin G. Eyriss, a Philadelphia shipbuilder, with a force of Philadelphia shipwrights, was engaged in the expedition against Newport under Gen. Sullivan in 1778. Among the many able shipbuilders in the Eastern colonies were John Peck of Boston, whose talent was thought to be superior to that of any other builder in the country; the Cross Brothers, who built the Continental frigates Hancock, Boston, and Protector, on the Merrimac, and the Hackett Brothers of Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Peck's vessels were celebrated for their swiftness and stability. The Hackett Brothers built the famous Alliance, a frigate of thirty-two guns, at Salisbury Point, on the Merrimac. She carried Lafayette to France in 1779. Peter Landais commanded her, and she was much admired in France by the naval experts, as she was known to be very fast. It is traditional that the Alliance, when chased by an English ship in 1782, made fifteen knots by the log with the wind abeam. James Hackett built the 74-gun ship America at Portsmouth, N. H. She was given to the French King in 1782. John Paul Jones superintended her building, and when he turned her over to the French officer, declared her to be the finest example of naval art and skill then in existence—and Jones was an expert. Meanwhile American shipbuilders were busily employed in building, fitting out and refitting for sea the famous fleet of privateers—that, despite the paternal care of the British navy, drove the British carrying trade from the Atlantic Ocean before peace was established, in 1783. European shipbuilders, in designing, al-

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ways make a three-plan drawing of their ideas—a tedious and complicated process, which when completed, left much to the imagination of the designer. By the use of the model, however, the most intricate geometry of the vessel's curvature is quickly corrected and proved to the fastidious taste of the designer, and then, by a simple process, expanded to the full size of the vessel. It has been a powerful aid to American shipbuilders, and beyond all doubt much of their superiority to the shipbuilders of other countries has been due to the use of this simple mechanical device.

American shipbuilders were exercised more than ever in producing vessels to compete for the European carrying trade about 1801. To avail themselves as neutrals of the trouble then existing between the English and French nations was the object of our merchants, and American diplomacy was powerless to help them. The shipbuilders had now to build vessels that could either 'hunt with the hounds or run with the hares'—fight or run away from the European cruisers. History records how they succeeded. Their vessels particularly the Baltimore built craft, were the talk of the maritime world, and, although ship owning was not always profitable—for the losses as well as the gains were great—in those times, the shipbuilders gained a practical knowledge that placed them far ahead of all other countries.

Joshua Humphreys, the first naval constructor this country ever had, was a distinguished shipbuilder of Philadelphia when Congress in 1794 ordered the construction of six frigates to protect American commerce. In a letter to Robert Morris formulating his ideas about dimensions and order details necessary to produce his ideal war ship, he concludes:

"Such frigates in blowing weather would be an overmatched for two-decked ships, or in light winds, may evade coming to action by outsailing them. Ships built on these principles will render those of our enemy in a degree useless, or will require them to have a superiority in number before they attack our ships."

President Washington and the Secretary of War adopted Mr. Humphreys's views and requested him to prepare the plans and moulds for such frigates as he had proposed in his letter to the department. Hence the origin of the Constitution, United States, Constellation, President, Congress, and Chesapeake, a fleet of fighting craft that filled the brag of Britons with shame.

An analytical comparison made with the European war ships of that time shows unmistakably that the dimensions of our first war ships were chosen with great judgement. The greater length gave more room for the guns, and also made a finer model possible. In the masting and sparring, the ideas of Chapman were accentuated, so to speak, and when striped to their fighting canvas the handiness of our frigates was impaired but very little in a working breeze. They always out-maneuvred their antagonists.

In view of all things existing at the time a positive genius was displayed by the Philadelphia shipbuilder, and his substitution of the solid live oak of Florida for the common white oak of the country in the framing of the frigates was an inspiration. This daring innovation was opposed strongly and Congress called Humphreys to account for the extra expense incurred. But look at the result of his foresight: When covered with the tough pasture oak plank of New England, a protection was offered to the men at the guns far superior to that of any other ships then afloat. The great disparity in the number killed and wounded, always in favor of the American frigates, that followed their deadly duels resulted directly from this then novel idea. It astounded the naval men of the world—the slight, comparative loss of life aboard the Constitution and the United States.

Said Admiral Duckworthy of the Halifax station to Capt. Longhorne of the British ship of war Alert, when the war first broke out:

"Engage the first Yankee you see and tow him into Halifax."

In 1814, Sir Edward Croker, in a confidential circular sent to the commanders of all the British frigates, said in substance:

"Don't engage them single handed; fight them shy until supported."

And this is the story of the naval war of 1812, about which many volumes have been written by naval men without one line of praise being given to the constructor who designed or the mechanics who built "Old Ironsides."—N. Y. Sun.

The Dinner Bell.

The dinner bell has no charms for a dyspeptic or bilious person. To enjoy your food, avoid dyspepsia and have healthy action of the liver, use Laxa-Liver Pills, small, sure, never gripe. One pill after a too-heavy meal removes all ill-effects. They cure indigestion and give a good appetite.

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