

**A TRUE STORY AND HISTORY  
OF THE  
FIFTY-THIRD REGIMENT  
ILLINOIS VETERAN VOLUNTEER  
INFANTRY**

Its Campaigns and Marches

Incidents That Occurred on Marches and in Camp.

What Happened to some of it's  
Members and What Became of Others.

Short Stories of Marches and How the Army Lived.

by

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A Member of Company D, Fifty-third Regiment  
Illinois Veteran Volunteer Infantry

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This book is dedicated to the brave men who went out from 1861 to 1865 to perpetuate the Union of States, Free Speech and Liberty and to their relatives.

THE AUTHOR

## CHAPTER I

The Fifty-third Illinois Infantry was organized at Ottawa, Illinois during the fall and winter of 1861 by Colonel Cushman and was mustered into the service of the United States on November 11, 1861. The regiment consisted of ten Companies, one of which was of cavalry, and one battery of six guns. The infantry, cavalry and battery of artillery mustered a little over 1,200 men.

The regiment left Ottawa February 27, 1862 and arrived Chicago the same day where, in company with the Twenty-third Regiment Illinois Volunteer Infantry, it guarded prisoners in Camp Douglas. Remaining at this location until March 23, 1862, it then left for St. Louis, Missouri where it arrived March 24, 1862. Remaining only overnight. The following day, it departed for Savanna, Tennessee arriving March 28, 1862. This was where it heard it's first sound of battle.

Everything was still and quiet Sunday morning, April 6, 1862. Suddenly there was a "Boom! Boom!" of cannon and the continuous rattle of small arms fire. I tell you, it made the hair stand, and to think , every volley meant the death and wounding of hundreds of good men. The regiment had to stay in Savanna, about twenty miles away from the battle of Pittsburgh Landing, Tennessee. We marched out to the front on the morning of April 7, 1862 arriving about noon, too late to take a hand as our boys had them on the run.

It looked awful to us as we had never seen such slaughter as there was along that line of march which was five to six miles long that afternoon. Men and horses, all piled together, extended over a space of eight to ten miles. One could not go anywhere without seeing dead or wounded men.

Many of the wounded lay where they fell for two or three days and slowly died from want of care. We were over a week getting all the dead buried.

As General Johnson was positioned in front of Corinth, Mississippi, General Hallock settled in for a regular siege and the regiment had work to do. They took part in the burial of the dead. While in siege of Corinth, we had a good deal of sickness as, at that time, the weather was very wet. Quite a number of the regiment died and Company D lost their Orderly Sergeant, John Carter, a fine man and a goodsoldier. We thought it was awful at that time but, I tell you, we got used to that by finding out that a man's life was held pretty cheap in those days at the front. On May 30, 1862, General Grant evacuated Corinth, Mississippi and the Union Army took possession.

We left Corinth for Grand Junction, Tennessee where we arrived June 15, 1862. Leaving there, we arrived at LaGrange, Tennessee on the twenty fifth leaving five days later for Holly Springs, Mississippi where we celebrated our first Fourth of July in the Confederacy on July 4, 1862. We then left on the seventh, returning to Lagrange where we arrived on the 7th of July. Being assigned to guard the railroad, we remained until July 17th at which time we departed for Moscow, Tennessee. All of this marching and counter-marching was not done by the regiment alone but by divisions, and sometimes by the whole army. More or less, there was constant fighting and skirmishing on these trips and generally, we had pretty hard living. On this trip we ran out of rations and had nothing but parched corn for two days. That was tough we thought then, but we learned better.

## CHAPTER II

Arrived Moscow, Tennessee July 17, 1862, leaving on the 18th for LaFayette, Tennessee then to Memphis, Tennessee on the 20th, arriving July 21, 1862. On September 6, 1862 our regiment left for Bolivar, Tennessee where we arrived on the 13th. Here we guarded the railroad till September 20th and left for near Grand Junction, Tennessee, getting there on the same day. We then left there and returned to Bolivar the next day, September 21st. On October 4th we left, going as far as Hatchie River. Here the regiment took active part in the battle of Hatchie River, Tennessee on October 5, 1862. This was a hard contested fight on both sides.

Company D, of the Fifty-third regiment had a curious thing happen to two of its men. They both said, on the morning of the battle, that they would be killed and they both disposed of their things and told where to send them. Captain Hudson told them if they felt that way they had better not go in, but they would not hear to that and went into battle and were both killed, almost the first thing. This is something that happened to a good many in the service.

We left the Hatchie River October 7, 1862 arriving at Bolivar October 8th and then left for LaGrange, Tennessee November 3rd arriving on the 4th. Left November 6th for LaMar, Mississippi then went to LaGrange and back to LaMar on the 8th. Went back to LaGrange again on the 9th and guarded the railroad there till the 23rd of November when we left for Somerville, Tennessee returning to LaGrange the same day. Left on November 28, 1862 arriving Holly Springs, Mississippi on the 29th and on the 30th departed for Waterford, Mississippi where we remained till December 11th then on to Oxford, Mississippi arriving December 12th and left the same day for Springdale, Mississippi arriving in the evening of the same day. Left on the 21st for Yacona, Mississippi again arriving in the evening and departing the next morning, December 22, 1862. We stayed here for two days, leaving December 24 for Tallehatchie Fort, Mississippi. On Christmas day 1862, left and returned to Holly Springs, Mississippi arriving January 5, 1863. Left for Moscow, Tennessee on the (?)th. Left Moscow on the 9th for LaFayette, passing through Colliersville arriving Germantown, Tennessee, March 10, 1863. Left same day for Brigewater, Tennessee and arrived at Memphis Tennessee March 11, 1863 where we stayed and got ready to go down the river to Vicksburg.

We left Memphis on May 16, 1863 for Young's Point on Mississippi transports arriving May 19th. Staying overnight we left for Haines's Bluff where we again stayed overnight, leaving the next morning.

## CHAPTER III

Between Memphis and Vicksburg the transports, of which there were five or six all in line, one behind the other, all going on nicely, and one would think it was the quietest place on earth, but we were destined to have some fun, and so we did. All at once there was a puff of smoke from the shore. The boat the Fifty-third was on was in the rear. All looked ahead and saw the boats were trying to see which could get the furthest from that side of the river and how quickly it could be done, but that did not last long as the signal was given to the rear boats to land a couple of regiments in the rear of the Confederates. The Fifty-third regiment was one of them.

We marched through the woods and swamps all the afternoon but they were too swift for us, as we did not catch any of them. We left destruction in our rear, as there was about 50,000 bushels of corn burned that afternoon. About at nighttime, we were back up to the river to where our boats were waiting for us at a little town of Greenville, Mississippi and it was not long before

it was all on fire. I don't think it was ordered to be set on fire but such things did happen. Nobody knew how or why it was done.

The boats went up the Yazoo River where the troops unloaded and started for our destination in the rear of Vicksburg, where we arrived May 25, 1863. From the bluff where the troops landed, we could see General Grant's army and the Confederates fighting. They looked, from where we were, as if the woods, hills and valleys were full of men. It was a sublime sight, but awful wicked. We looked and wondered how soon we would be engaged in the awful work with the rest out there in the front. We had not long to wait as all available men were needed in the front.

We started for the front of Vicksburg on May 24, 1863 where we arrived on the 25th. From here we took an active part in the siege of Vicksburg until the surrender of the city on the Fourth of July, 1863.

#### **CHAPTER IV**

We had a great many experiences here. Our work was Night and day, and no intermission during the time. It was not the policy for General Grant to sleep when the enemy was in front of him.

Around Vicksburg is very hilly country. The hills are a good deal like taking a lot of eggs and setting them up on end on a table. It was all hills and valleys. We were camped in the valleys and built forts and breastworks on the hills. We generally had to build the works at night, with the Rebs shooting at the noise we made. They did not always hit the noise, but more often they hit a man. In one of these works is where Ed(ward) Avery of company D, Fifty-third Regiment received his death wound. He was in one of the works with a Company B man of the Fifty-third Regiment and one of them had shot at a Rebel through the port hole in the fort and then the Company B man was looking to see what he hit, and Ed(ward) Avery was looking over his shoulder at the same time. The Rebel let drive back at him and hit the port hole all right and also hit the Company B man in the temple, just back of the eyes. The bullet went clear through his head, drove both eyes out and hit Ed(ward) Avery in the left breast, just over the heart. The curious part of this little incident was when he found the Company B man was killed. He stuck his fore finger in the bullet hole in his breast and walked to the company in that shape, and said that he was wounded. He had put his finger in the hole so he would not bleed. The boy lived till he knew Vicksburg had surrendered and he said that he was ready to die then. He passed peacefully away the same day. This is only one such incident that might be told. If I told them all, there would be no end to this story and the history of those times.

About the same things happened each day until the 2nd day of July, 1863 when the first flag of truce went up, while Grant and Pemberton were meeting to negotiate for the surrender of Vicksburg. When the white flag would go up, the Rebs would shout, "Yanks, don't shoot now and we won't." Then the men from both sides would climb up on the works and have a great visit.

#### **CHAPTER V**

The Union and Confederate works were pretty close together at the end of the siege. In some places they were as close as three or four rods (60 feet). Looking over the works we could see the lines of both sides for two miles each way running over the hills. It was a nice sight at night to look out over the armies and over the city and see the flashes of the gun and mortar shot into the city. We could see the flash of the mortar and see the ball rise up in the air and make a circle through the heavens and then, when near the ground, another flash and "Boom", and all would be still, and they would

be at it all night. The Rebs had to dig caves in the sides of the hills to be in safety from shot and shell.

The negotiations were going on slowly. During the 2nd and 3rd of July we would get up on the works three or four times a day when the white flags were up and visit. Pretty soon, way up the line, the flags would begin to go down. Then you would here everybody shout, "Look out, we are going to shoot," and it would not be a minute till all along the line they were shooting as hard as ever. And so it went till the Fourth of July, 1863 when the city and the Confederate Army were surrendered to the Union forces, and on that day after the Johnnies had stacked their arms, they were allowed to mingle freely with the men and you would not suppose we were a lot of men that had been trying to kill one another for the last two months.

We gave the Johnnies as good a dinner as we could and had a general good time to celebrate the glorious Fourth. But the war was not over yet, as General Johnson (Confederate Army) was in our rear and on the east side of the Black River (Mississippi) so the Johnnies we had taken were paroled and turned loose to go where they pleased and General Grant's army took no rest, but started east on the 5th of July, 1863, to catch General Johnson. We got to Clinton, Mississippi on the 9th and left July 10 for Jackson, arriving the same day.

## **CHAPTER VI**

Jackson, Mississippi is where the Fifty-third Illinois Regiment, the Third Iowa and the Twenty-eight Illinois and the Forty-first Illinois Regiments got into more trouble, and it proved to be serious trouble too. These four regiments made up the First Brigade, Fourth Division, and had been in the rear guard on the 11th of July, 1863. As all the army was on line around Jackson the night of the 11th, the First Brigade went into camp for the night. On the morning of the 12th it was to take it's position on the right of the army (Union forces), and through some mistake in orders we got into a fearful charge.

The Brigade was Marched up on the right of the army on a raised piece of ground and ordered to lie down. We could look across an open space for about 200 rods (1000 yards). I judge, where we could see the Rebel Works. All was still over there, and to wake the up, we placed a battery in the rear of the Brigade and opened fire on the Rebel Works, over our heads but we got no response from them. We were ordered in line of battle, skirmishers were started forward, and the line of battle ordered ahead.

We had gone about 40 rods (600 feet) and had run against the Rebel skirmishers and the skirmishers on both sides commenced to fire. The orders were given to fix bayonets and charge double quick. It was a hard place to charge over, as all the trees had been felled toward us and all the limbs sharpened and sharp stakes (had been) driven in the ground leaning toward us with wire put on them, but we got through under a heavy fire of small arms and artillery. The cannons were loaded with grape-shot and canister-shot and some shells.

We charged within a few feet of the Rebel works, all that were alive, and laid down, in a little plowed furrow. Some (the Union forces) had retreated and most of the rest had been killed or wounded. Those who got close to the works were all taken prisoners (including the author) as before they knew they were in danger of being taken prisoners, the Rebels were in the rear of us and ordered us to surrender. One of our boys thought at first that we did not have to surrender for he jumped up and drew his gun to bear on a Rebel and told him to surrender, but one of the men (a Confederate soldier) told him to be careful as he was the fellow that had to surrender. They got 104 prisoners out of the brigade who all went to Old Libby Prison in Richmond,

Virginia, and from there To Belle Island. The Island is situated in the James River northwest of Richmond. It was a vile place at that time.

The Brigade mustered about 800 men for duty when they went in the charge. They (we) lost something over 300 killed, wounded and missing. The Fifty-third Regiment lost their Colonel, Seth C. Earl. Company D lost or killed outright, L.B. McClaskey. Wounded, Capt. James E. Hudson (who was) shot in the arm and afterwards died from the wound. Joseph McLaughlin, shot in the head and got well. Lot C. Larkin, shot in the hand and got well. Knute Madison, wounded and got well.

The prisoners from Company D, Fifty-third Regiment were Abner Beal, Lot C. Larkin, H. E. Ranstead {the author}, Hamilton White, Geo(rge) Crain, Ed(ward) Thomas and John Cary. Abner Beal, after he got out of prison, came home to Earl (Earlville, Illinois) and died here. No one knows what became of George Crain, as no one ever saw him after he was taken prisoner as he was separated from the others.

## **CHAPTER VII**

After General Johnson retreated from Jackson, the army marched back to Vicksburg. The Fifty-third left Jackson, Mississippi on July, 21, 1863, arriving at Vicksburg on July 23rd where they laid in camp till August 10th when they left for Natchez, arriving the following day. Here they did a good deal of scouting and marching till the 30th of November when they went back to Vicksburg, arriving December 1st, 1863. Left for Milldale, Mississippi on December 2nd and arrived on the 3rd.

While we laid here at Milldale, The order came from Washington that all regiments that had enlisted for three years and had served two of the three, and would enlist again for three years or during (for the duration of) the war, would be given the year off of the first three years they had (originally) enlisted (for) and could enlist as veterans and would be given a thirty day furlough and \$402.00.

The regiment did the right thing----talked for a day or two and looked around and wondered how many would enlist under that law, but waited for someone to go ahead. The writer of this book (H.E. Ranstead) was the first in the regiment to put his name down. After the ice was broken, it did not take long for the rest to (re)enlist and on January 18, 1864, the Fifty-third Illinois was reported as a veteran regiment.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

We left Milldale January 21 1864 for a big raid through Mississippi. Arrived Big Black River January 22 then left February 3 for Clinton , Mississippi arriving the next day. Left on the 5th and got to Jackson, Mississippi February 6 AND LEFT ON THE 7TH. Got to Brandon the same day and left on the 8th and got to Morton on the 9th. Left Morton on the 10th and went to Hillsboro and on to Decatur where we arrived on the 12th. Left Decatur on the 13th and arrived at Meridian on the 15th. We had been marching through the country in Mississippi for a couple of weeks in search of Johnnies, and found a good many of them, and they usually made it pretty lively when we met and that was every day, but we could not catch many of them at a time. We then Turned toward Vicksburg. A good deal of property was destroyed on this raid. Meridian, Mississippi was burned and everything in it. Well we were on the back-track now. We passed through the same places going back as we passed going out. We left Milldale, Mississippi, January 21 and got back to Vicksburg March 13, 1864 having been out on this raid about five weeks.

It had come time for the regiment to have it's veteran furlough, so they made ready to leave the south for Ottawa, where it had organized and gone forth to the south, two years before. And I tell you, it was not the same regiment that left Ottawa.

The Company of Calvary was not with it, nor the Battery of Artillery, and the ranks of the Infantry were thinned out very much. The regiment looked about the size one of the companies did when it went out in 1861.

Well, we arrived in Ottawa March 23, 1864, and there we were disbanded and each company went to it's home where it was enlisted, to have as good a time as possible. I tell you, the regiment was well received on there way home. We were fed at almost every place we stopped, and had a big supper at LaSalle, and such a dinner we had in Ottawa cannot be described. The people could not do enough for a soldier at that time, and Company D came to Earlville and everybody tried to see who should do the most for the boys.

## **CHAPTER IX**

We stayed here till the 28th of April, 1864 and then went to Ottawa and had a big supper and dance and the regiment left on April 29th, arrived in Peroria that evening and left April 30 for Havana, and left for St. Louis, went on to Cairo and Peducah, Kentucky, where we arrived May 11 and left May 11 for Clifton, Tennessee arriving May14. Left for Waynesboro, Tennessee on the 16th, passing through Lawrenceburg, and arrived at Pulaski May 10th. Left for Elkwood, Tennessee and arrived May 21, left for Huntsville, Alabama and arrived May 23, left for Decatur, Alabama and arrived May 26. Left for Somerville Alabama and arrived May 28th, left for Warrentown Alabama then on to Van Buren June 2nd, left for Cedar Bluffs and arrived June 3ed, left for Missionary Station and arrived June 4, left for Rome, Georgia arrived June 5th, left for Kingston, Georgia arriving June 6th, Left for Centerville, Georgia arrived June 7, left for Altoona, Georgia arrived June 7.

We now joined General Sherman's army again. We were kept here at Altoona Pass to fortify and guard the railroad at this point, as this railroad was our only source of supplies. This road had to be kept open clear back to the Ohio River, About 500 or 600 miles. We had to fight for it every day somewhere along the line. The Rebels were making dashes every day or two, trying to tear up the tracks and capture the trains, and very often succeeded.

About this time, General Hood (of the Confederate Army) thought he would try General Sherman's tactics. He withdrew part of his forces and started for Sherman's rear, to try and cut his communications and to force Sherman's army to retreat, but General Sherman did not think that way. We started back and kept between Hood and the railroad and just watched him. There was no damage done as they did not strike the railroad.

After we got back from this raid, the Seventeenth Corps was started for the seat of Atlanta, Georgia. We struck Decatur, Georgia July 19 and moved from there toward Atlanta, and found the enemy strongly entrenched. On the afternoon of July 20, 1864, we were ordered into line of battle.

The Fifty-third regiments position was just on the edge of a open field about half a mile from the Rebel works, and here is where we had to make the charge. Across this field there was a small stream in front of the Rebel works. They were on a low bluff on the west side. The Union forces brought up artillery and we had a lively artillery battle but that did not do much good, and now came the infantry charge.

## CHAPTER X

We were ordered to load and fix bayonets and charge double-quick and away we went with a Yankee yell, and loaded and fired as fast as we could when on the run, and the Rebels were giving us the best they had of artillery and small arms, and our artillery was firing over our heads. At every discharge you would see men pitch forward all along the line, either killed or wounded. This regiment lost quite a number in this charge. Company D had two wounded badly and several others slightly hurt. The wounded were Joseph K. McLaughlin and Solomon Plank. We could not get to the Rebel works. We got as far as the creek and had to stop, but we held our position and stayed and camped close to the enemy's works. The next day,, July 21.1864, the Seventeenth Corps Charged the works and had their position in line.

The 22ed of July was when the Fifty-third Regiment got in bad shape. The left of General Sherman's army rested east of Atlanta and reached clear around to the northwest of the city. The Fifteenth Corps was the extreme left of the army and was facing west toward the city. The Sixteenth Corps was a mile or two to the east, in line of battle. There was an open place of about a mile from the left of the Fifteenth Corps to the right of the Sixteenth Corps. The Fifty-third regiment was strung out on picket in this gap between the two Corps. The regimental camp was on this line. There was a small guard left with the camp. The guard was eating breakfast when we heard something uncommon out in front of camp, to the south, and we started to investigate, but we did not have to look far for the Rebels were coming in line of battle. General Hood (Confederate Army) had taken a notion to come a flanking movement on General Sherman. Hood had moved his main forces east from the city and then came down on our rear. When we saw what was coming, we fellows in camp had to work quick to keep from being taken prisoners and I, the writer of this book, did not want any more of that, for it was not a long time since I had gotten out of prison.

NOTE: The author spent nine weeks incarcerated as a Prisoner of War in the Libby Confederate Prison Camp, Belle Island, Richmond, Vir. This occurred on July 20, 1863 (Pgs. 9/10) and lasted through October 17, 1863. His narrative of his experiences as a Prisoner of War are detailed in Chapter XXX.

## CHAPTER XI

The only chance I saw was to make a run for the Fifteenth Corps, about a mile from us, they being the nearest of any of our men. So we started, each man for himself. Myself and two more of our company started together but not had gone far when we lost one, and the man with me was Ezra Drew. He stayed with me for a ways and then he had to stop. I tried to get him to come on but he did not, and the last I saw of him, he had stood his gun up against a big tree and was resting.

I was not tired just then for I could see Andersonville (Confederate Prison) Just behind and freedom in front and I guess my legs saved me that time. (Ezra) Drew and the other man (were captured and) went to Andersonville and Drew died there. The other man got out alive. Other members of the regiment were taken but I never learned how many.

I got to the Fifteenth Corps, which was General Logan's old corps. They were armed with what we called in those days "sixteen shooters". That is, sixteen shots at one loading and they did some awful fighting that day. I was with them all day and the Rebels charged them. First they got it in the front and the next time they (the Rebels) would try them in the rear.

One of the charges the Rebels made was the worst I ever saw. They came on six lines deep and every man yelling his best, and they charged clear up to

the Union breastworks and climbed over into the fire of those "sixteen shooters", and pushed the line back from the works almost three rods (fifty feet), but the fire was too much for them. They had to fall back and the ground was strewn with dead, wounded and dying. It was a sight never to be forgotten. But the Yankees were too much for the Johnnies and they withdrew and went back, defeated in their flank movement.

The next day, after the battle, the Fifty-third began to look around to see what had become of it's members. They began to get together and in a couple of days, the regiment was organized again and got so it could take it's place once more in line ready for duty, but when the roll was called there was seventy three missing. The regiment had lost seventy three killed, wounded or missing in three days engagement.

On July 27, 1864, the seventeenth Corps, with the Sixteenth Corps, withdrew from the east of Atlanta and moved to the extreme right of the lines at Atlanta and on July 28, 1864, the battle was fought.

Then things were quiet for a short time, and then on August 26, 1864, General Sherman withdrew from before Atlanta and begin his flank movement to Jonesboro, Georgia. On August 31, the battle of Jonesboro was fought and on September 2, 1864, Atlanta was evacuated by General Hood and the Union forces took possession.

## **CHAPTER XII**

After General Hood had evacuated Atlanta, General Sherman made ready for his famous march to the sea. The army consisted of four Corps; one of the corps on the road by itself. From the corps on the right to the corps on the left was about forty miles, so we took in a big scope of the country. The Seventeenth Corps had the center of the main line of the railroad between Atlanta and Savanna. The Fifty-third regiment was in the Seventeenth Corps and this corps had the job of tearing up the railroad and destroying the rolling stock.

It was quite an art to tear up the railroad track. The way we did it was this: We would march on the track till a whole regiment or division was strung out along the track, one man to a tie, and then stack arms. Then the order was given to tip it over, and it (the track) went over quicker than it was built. Then we knocked the ties off the rails and piled the ties in bunches about six feet high and laid the iron on top of the pile and set the pile of ties on fire, and it would soon have the rails red hot in the middle, and then five or six men would take hold of each end of the rail and start for a tree, and one set of men on one end of the rail (would) go one way and the other set (of men) the other way, and the rail was wound around the tree and there they stayed. All that was left of the railroad was the grading. I think it was not as hard work to dress these trees with iron rails as it was to get them off.

While we were tearing up the railroad, the rest would be fighting ahead for more road to tear up, as the Johnnies contested every rod of the country and made the Yanks fight for it. They were in our front all the time. Where the wagon road went through big timber, the Rebs would cut the timber from both sides and fell it into the road, so if we got through at all, we had to cut the timber out. The way a march of that kind is conducted is all the teams and artillery and all kinds of vehicles are marched in the road and the men march at the side of the road.

## CHAPTER XIII

We had rivers to cross, and here is where the Johnnies gave a good deal of trouble. They burned all the bridges after they crossed a stream and then we had to lay pontoon bridges., most generally under fire, and it is not a very pleasant job under those circumstances. Another thing that was a big nuisance was the negroes. They would follow the army by the thousands, with all kinds of vehicles, from a wheelbarrow to a fine family coach that were drawn by all kinds of horses and mules, and they would be loaded with everything imaginable. Some of the (negro) men and the women too, would carry enough on their heads to furnish a house. They would carry a load that would make a mule blush. They would keep falling in all along the road and got so numerous that the army teams could not get along. The way they got rid of them was when we came to a river where we had to lay pontoon bridges. They would station a strong guard at the bridge and halt everything and send them to the side of the road. After the army was all across, (we) would take up the pontoon bridge and leave the "darkies" all on the other side, and all the negroes had to do was go back home.

The days were employed on this march to the sea by tearing up railroad, foraging and getting the road cleared of trees that the Rebs had fallen in the road and fighting the Johnnies out of the road ahead. There was fighting in front all the time. This was the work every day and all these places had to be bridged with corduroy bridges. They were made by cutting the trees at the side of the road in lengths of about eight feet and laid down side by side. Sometimes, before coming to one of these swampy places, if there was a fence handy, each soldier as he passed, would pick up a rail and by the time the last man came by there would be 2,000 or 3,000 soldiers with rails on their backs. As the soldier in the lead would come to the swamp each would lay his rail down, and so-on till there was a good rail-made road across the swamp. And so it went, day after day.

## CHAPTER XIV

This regiment, with the rest of the army, left Atlanta on September 3, 1864 on the way to Savanna and on December 9, 1864 we were camped within ten miles of the city with the Fifty-third regiment in the advanced. We went into camp on the side of the road. General Sherman had his camp on the other side of the road from the Fifty-third regiment.

Everything was quiet on the night of the 9th, but on the morning of the 10th we found something else. We had breakfast and had fallen in line, ready to march forward. The band was at the head and the colonel of the regiment, with his staff officers, at the head of all. There had been no firing that morning and I guess they thought there were no Johnnies in the woods. The country around there was very level and nice.

The road ahead of us was a straight and sandy one with heavy undergrowth of bush and timber on both sides. The order was given by the colonel to "Forward March!". As we moved forward the band commenced to play and the men said they guessed we would be in the city that forenoon. WE had gone but a few rods when we heard another kind of music. It was the "Boom--Boom!" of a cannon in the road ahead of us. The Rebels had masked a battery in the road.

The first shot was a shell. It came through between the colonel and the officers of the staff, passing over the heads of the band and hit the head man in Company I (Fifty-third regiment) on top of the head, the next man in the breast and the next man in the bowels. It then exploded, killing the first four and badly wounding six others, putting ten men off duty at one shot and there was only one shot that morning. It did not take the regiment

long to get into line of battle and put out skirmishers and through breastworks, and they did not get into the city for several days.

## **CHAPTER XV**

Then General Sherman invested the city, and went to work to open communications with the fleet that lay out on the coast. It was necessary for him to hurry so the army could get rations for we had nothing for man nor beast to amount to anything. The country was pretty poor around Savanna in the best of times. It was several days before we got in communication with our fleet and we got pretty short before we got supplies. For four days we had nothing but rice with hulls on. We had to get the hull off and then blow the hulls out.

We had a one horse rice mill to hull rice with but it would not hull enough in a month to give the army one meal as there was over 100,000 men to feed. Uncle Billy Sherman was in a big hurry to get supplies to us.

There was a fort on the river that had to be taken before the boats could get up to the army and the country around there is all low land and awful swampy so it was impossible to get over with teams (wagons and mules). This fort had to be taken at any cost so there was a division put out to take it.

The division had to make a long march to get in the rear of the fort and take the garrison by surprise and they did it nicely. The fort could be seen from where the Fifty-third regiment was as the country was open between us and the fort. We could see General Sherman watching from an old house across the rice fields toward the fort.

We had to watch a long time before we could see anything of our men. At last they came out in the rear of the fort and as soon as they were in sight of the Rebels there was something doing. Our men made the fort on the run and they were soon in a hand to hand fight. From where we were, it looked as though there was a cyclone at work there. The awful carnage was soon over and we could see that our men had taken the fort and our communications were open to the grub pile, but at a heavy loss of good soldiers. But such was war!

## **CHAPTER XVI**

Now that communication was open with our fleet, General Sherman turned his attention to taking the city of Savannah. All lines were advanced close up to the Rebel works, but when everything was ready to do something, we woke up on the morning of the 21st of December, 1864 and looked for the Johnnies, and lo-and-behold, they had skedaddle. The Union forces took possession of the city and General Sherman's famous march to the sea had terminated successfully.

Some of the troops were sent after General Hardee (Confederate Army). The rest got ready to make the march across and through the Carolinas and Virginia to Richmond. The Fifty-third regiment and the Fifty-first regiment Illinois had now lost so many men that the Forty-first regiment was consolidated with the Fifty-third and formed companies G and H of the Fifty third Illinois. This was done on January 4, 1865.

We left Savannah on boats January 6, 1865 for Beaufort, South Carolina and left there on January 13 on the raid through North and South Carolina and on into Richmond (Virginia). On January 14, 1865, The Seventeenth Corps drove the Johnnies into their works at Patotaligo, South Carolina. During the night they evacuated the place.

On January, 29th we started on the grand raid through the Carolinas. February 3ed, the First and Fourth divisions of the Seventeenth Corps forded the Carrabee River at River Bridge, South Carolina after considerable fighting. February 9th (there was) considerable skirmishing on little Edisto River at Orangeburg, South Carolina. February 16th and 17th, considerable skirmishing across the Kangaroo, Salada and Broad rivers opposite Columbus. The Seventeenth Corps was on the west side of the river opposite Columbus. We could see the city plainly from our position. The bridges were all burned by the Rebels when we got there.

There were some big cotton mills here with about 500 or 600 employees, mostly girls and women and they were nearly destitute of anything to eat. They said that the Johnnies took everything to eat with them and we could not help them much as we were living off the country ourselves. When we crossed the river here, we left all the negroes that had followed us up to that place and they had nothing to eat. They must have had a hard time before they got any provisions.

In the night of February 17th, 1865, The Johnnies evacuated Columbus, South Carolina. A boat load from the Thirteenth Iowa regiment, Third brigade, Fourth division, Seventeenth corps crossed the river and raised the flag of that regiment over the Capital, and what was left of that city was in possession of the Union forces. The city was a mass of smoking ruins when we got in there.

#### **CHAPTER XVII**

But we didn't stop there. We were after the Johnnies and they didn't stop in one place long and so they kept us on the jump to catch them.

On March 3, 1865, (there was) considerable fighting at Sheron, South Carolina. The Johnnies evacuated the town and crossed the Pedee River. On March 14, 1865 we had quite a fight at Fayetteville, North Carolina. The Johnnies evacuated the town and crossed the Fear River.

The way the Johnnies were dislodged from in front of us was by a flank movement on them. The way that was done was to send a detachment of troops away round to their left or to the right of them. When they found the Yanks almost in their rear, they up an skedaddked for another good place to make a stand. That gave us the trouble of going around them again, and so we kept moving forward in that way. On March 19, 1865, Heavy fighting on the left. General Johnson (Confederate Army) attacked the Fourteenth and Twentieth cops near Bentonville, North Carolina. On March 20 and 21, 1865, the Army (Union Army) closed up on General Johnson's army (Confederate Army) at Bentonville. Here was the last battle General Sherman's army had. The heaviest fighting was on the afternoon of March 21, 1865. The firing commenced about one o'clock (pm) and was continuous till dark in the open timber with nothing to protect a man but a tall slim tree, and some had two or three men trying to stand behind them. It did not always work for as soon as a Johnnie saw a piece of a Yank, it was a sure mark for a Reb bullet and often a Yank got one for keeps. To help this along, the Rebs were in breastworks and the Yanks in the open, and to make things worse, it rained from dawn all the afternoon. The writer of these pages was so lame and stiff the next morning he could hardly get up. Some were worse off than that, for they could not get up at all and I don't think they have yet. The Fifty third regiment lost, in this battle, one killed and six wounded.

## CHAPTER XVIII

On March 23, 1865, (General) Johnson (Confederate Army) evacuated Bentonville, North Carolina at night and crossed the river. We now lay in camp till April 7, when a dispatch was received that General Grant had taken Richmond, and everyone was sure the war would be done now and we lay and waited and watched for the end till April 12, when another dispatch was received stating General Lee had surrendered to General Grant. Now things begin to come our way pretty fast, as on April 15, 1865, General Johnson asked for terms of surrender, but something happened then that was like stirring up a hornet's nest.

On April 17, 1865, a dispatch was received stating that President Lincoln and Secretary Seward had been assassinated. This certainly made things look as if we would not have peace at all. But on the 18th of April, Sherman and Johnson agreed on terms of surrender subject to the approval of the War Department. On April 24th, the Seventeenth corps was reviewed in town by Generals Grant, Sherman and Mead and Secretary Stanton. The terms of surrender agreed on by Generals Sherman and Johnson were not approved by the War Department, and we were ordered to advance on General Johnson. This again did not look very much like peace, but we did not get a chance to give General Johnson battle, as on April 26, 1865, Johnson surrendered and (with) General Lee's and Johnson's armies having surrendered, there were no more armies to fight, and so we had to quit and everybody was glad to do so and have a chance to go home to a peaceful life. We were sick of war.

We had a long hard march before us. The army was at Raleigh, North Carolina, and had to march from there to Richmond, Virginia and on to Washington for the big last review of all the Armies of the Rebellion. The army left there April 29, 1865, on the long march to Washington where we arrived on the 24th of May, 1865, and went into camp at Fort Henry, D.C., where we stayed until after the big review.

Our march to Washington was considerably different than we had been use to. We had no army in the front to be driven out before we could go ahead. Lee's and Johnson's armies had been paroled and had disbanded and were on their way home. We met them all along the road and they felt happy. They would laugh and say, "Well the war is over; glory to God."

The country we were passing through looked like war. Around Petersburg and Richmond (Virginia) the earth was all turned into big forts and breastworks, and the timber nearly all cut down from south of Petersburg nearly to Washington. General Mead's Army of the Potomac lay all along our line of march between Richmond and Washington and the two armies had lots of jokes for one another. They called us "Sherman's bummers" and we called them "Band-box soldiers" because they were always in camp and could keep clean and get new clothes when they needed them. But "Sherman's bummers" had been on the march and had been fighting almost constantly for nearly eight months and had no time for many white collers. It was all taken in good part for now all were for peace.

## CHAPTER XIX

On May 23, 1865, General Mead's army was reviewed in Washington, and on May 24, General Sherman's army was reviewed. After the big review the armies were sent to the various places where they were to be disbanded and discharged. June 7 was our turn to go toward home so on that date the Fourth Division of the Seventeenth Army Corps marched to the Baltimore depot and took transportation on the cars for Louisville, Kentucky where we arrived June 12.

We laid in camp till the 19th of July and were mustered out of the service, and the Fifty-third regiment was then sent to Chicago, Ill., where they drew their last pay and were given their final discharge from the service, and then the regiment scattered to the four corners as they had come together nearly four years before, and I hope they made as good citizens as they did soldiers.

## CHAPTER XX

The Fifty-third Regiment, In it's various marches had been all over Kentucky, and had marched all over Tennessee, through, across, and up and down the State of Mississippi, all over Alabama and Georgia, and marched through South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, and a piece of Maryland, and the District of Columbia and rode from Washington back to home.

It has been said that the Fifty-third regiment had marched over 5,000 miles and rode as many more. This I cannot vouch for, but I think it is not enough.

NAME OF PLACE	DISTANCE	DATE OF ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE
Ottawa, Ill.			February 27, 1862
Chicago, Ill.	75	February 27, 1862	March 23, "
St. Louis, Mo.	250	March 24, "	March 25, "
Cairo, Ill.	180	March 26, "	March 27, "
Savannah, Tenn.	250	March 28, "	April 7, "
Pittsburgh Landing, Tenn.	7	April 7, "	April 26, "
Corinth, Tenn.	30	May 30, "	June 2, "
Grand Junction, Tenn.	47	June 15, "	June 25, "
LaGrange, Tenn.	4	June 25, "	June 30, "
Holly Springs, Miss.	25	July 4, "	July 5, "
LaGrange, Tenn.	25	July 7, "	July 17, "
Moscow, Tenn.	10	July 17, "	July 18, "
LaFayette, Tenn.	10	July 18, "	July 19, "
Germantown, Tenn.	15	July 19, "	July 20, "
Memphis, Tenn.	15	July 21, "	September 6, "
Bolivar, Tenn.	100	September 13, "	September 20, "
Grand Junction, Tenn.	8	September 20, "	September 21, "
Bolivar, Tenn.	18	September 21, "	October 4, "
Hatchie River, Tenn.	30	October 4, "	October 7, "
Bolivar, Tenn.	30	October 8, "	November 3, "
LaGrange, Tenn.	23	November 4, "	November 6, "
Lamar, Miss.	11	November 6, "	November 6, "
LaGrange, Tenn.	11	November 7, "	November 8, "
Lamar, Miss.	16	November 8, "	November 9, "
LaGrange, Tenn.	16	November 9, "	November 23, "
Somerville, Tenn.	14	November 23, "	November 23, "
LaGrange, Tenn.	14	November 23, "	November 28, "
Holly Springs, Miss.	25	November 29, "	November 30, "
Waterford, Miss.	10	November 30, "	December 11, "
Oxford, Miss.	20	December 12, "	December 12, "
Springdale, Miss.	11	December 12, "	December 21, "
Yacons, Miss.	7	December 21, "	December 22, "
Oxford, Miss.	9	December 22, "	December 24, "
Tallahatchie Fort, Miss.	11	December 24, "	December 29, "
Holly Springs, Miss.	18	January 5, 1863	January 10, 1863
Moscow, Tenn.	25	January 5, "	January 9, "
LaFayette, Tenn.	10	March 9, "	March , "
Colliersville, Tenn.	6	March 9, "	March 10, "
Germantown, Tenn.	10	March 10, "	March 10, "
Bridgewater, Tenn.	5	March 10, "	March 10, "

NAME OF PLACE	DISTANCE	DATE OF ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE
Memphis, Tenn.	14	March 11, "	March 17, "
Young's Point, Miss.	280	May 19, "	May 20, "
Haines Bluff, Miss.	25	May 20, "	May 24, "
Vicksburg, Miss.	20	May 25, "	July 5, "
Clinton, Miss.	40	July 9, "	July 10, "
Jackson, Miss.	10	July 10, "	July 21, "
Raymond, Miss.	20	July 21, "	July 22, "
Vicksburg, Miss.	35	July 23, "	August 18, "
Natchez, Miss.	100	August 19, "	November 30, "
Ottawa, Ill.			February 27, "
Chicago, Ill.	75	February 27, 1862	March 23, "
St. Louis, Mo.	250	March 24, "	March 25, "
Cairo, Ill.	180	March 26, "	March 27, "
Savannah, Tenn.	250	March 28, "	April 7, "
Pittsburgh Landing, Tenn.	7	April 7, "	April 26, "
Corinth, Tenn.	30	May 30, "	June 2, "
Grand Junction, Tenn.	47	June 15, "	June 25, "
LaGrange, Tenn.	4	June 25, "	June 30, "
Holly Springs, Miss.	25	July 4, "	July 5, "
LaGrange, Tenn.	25	July 7, "	July 17, "
Moscow, Tenn.	10	July 17, "	July 18, "
LaFayette, Tenn.	10	July 18, "	July 19, "
Germantown, Tenn.	15	July 19, "	July 20, "
Memphis, Tenn.	15	July 21, "	September 6, "
Bolivar, Tenn.	100	September 13, "	September 20, "
Grand Junction, Tenn.	8	September 20, "	September 21, "
Bolivar, Tenn.	18	September 21, "	October 4, "
Hatchie River, Tenn.	30	October 4, "	October 7, "
Bolivar, Tenn.	30	October 8, "	November 3, "
LaGrange, Tenn.	23	November 4, "	November 6, "
Lamar, Miss.	11	November 6, "	November 6, "
Vicksburg, Miss.	100	December 1, "	December 2, "
Mildale, Miss.	10	December 3, "	January 31, 1864
Big Black, Miss.	6	January 31, 1864	February 3, "
Clinton, Miss.	30	February 4, "	February 5, "
Jackson, Miss.	10	February 6, "	February 7, "
Brandon, Miss.	13	February 7, "	February 8, "
Morton, Miss.	25	February 9, "	February 10, "
Hillsboro, Miss.	13	February 10, "	February 10, "
Decatur, Miss.	25	February 13, "	February 15, "
Meridian, Miss.	34	February 15, "	February 16, "
Enterprise, Miss.	18	February 16, "	February 19, "
Near Meridian, Miss.	20	February 19, "	February 20, "
Decatur, Miss.	26	February 21, "	February 22, "
Hillsboro, Miss.	25	February 23, "	February 24, "
Canton, Miss.	35	February 27, "	February 29, "
Livingston, Miss.	12	February 29, "	February 29, "
Brownsville, Miss.	20	March 1, "	March 2, "
Big Black, Miss.	23	March 2, "	March 13, "
Vicksburg, Miss.	10	March 13, "	March 14, "
Memphis, Tenn.	280	March 18, "	March 18, "
Cairo, Ill.	250	March 20, "	March 21, "
LaSalle, Ill.	315	March 23, "	March 23, "
Ottawa, Ill.	16	March 23, "	April 29, "
Peoria, Ill.	115	April 29, "	April 30, "
Havana, Ill.	55	April 30, "	April 30, "
St. Louis, Mo.	125	May 1, "	May 2, "
Cairo, Ill.	180	May 3, "	May 10, "
Paducah, Ky.	80	May 11, "	May 12, "

NAME OF PLACE	DISTANCE	DATE OF ARRIVAL			DEPARTURE	
Clifton, Tenn.	230	May	14,	"	May	16, "
Waynesboro, Tenn.	16	May	16,	"	May	17, "
Lawrenceburg, Tenn.	30	May	18,	"	May	18, "
Pulaski, Tenn.	20	May	19,	"	May	21, "
Elkton, Tenn.	15	May	21,	"	May	21, "
Huntsville, Ala.	33	May	23,	"	May	25, "
Decatur, Ala.	28	May	26,	"	May	27, "
Somerville, Ala.	24	May	28,	"	May	29, "
Warrington, Ala.	32	May	31,	"	May	31, "
VanBuren, Ala.	32	June	2,	"	June	3, "
Cedar Bluffs, Ala.	17	June	3,	"	June	4, "
Missionary Station, Ala.	14	June	4,	1864	June	5, 1864
Rome, Ga.	18	June	5,	"	June	6, "
Kingston, Ga.	15	June	6,	"	June	7, "
Carterville, Ga.	10	June	7,	"	June	7, "
Altoona, Ga.	7	June	7,	"	July	13, "
Ackworth, Ga.	6	July	13,	"	July	14, "
Big Shanty, Ga.	1	July	14,	"	July	14, "
Marietta, Ga.	5	July	14,	"	July	17, "
Roswell, Ga.	15	July	20,	"	July	26, "
Decatur, Ga.	18	July	28,	"	July	30, "
Near Atlanta, Ga.	5	July	31,	"	August	26, "
Fairtown, Ga.	25	August	28,	"	August	30, "
Near Jonesboro, Ga.	14	August	31,	"	September	2, "
Near Lovejoy, Ga.	8	September	2,	"	September	5, "
Jonesboro, Ga.	8	September	5,	"	September	7, "
East Point, Ga.	11	September	8,	"	October	1, "
Fairtown, Ga.	16	October	2,	"	October	2, "
East Point, Ga.	18	October	3,	"	October	4, "
Near Marietta, Ga.	22	October	5,	"	October	7, "
Powder Springs, Ga.	10	October	7,	"	October	7, "
Near Lost Mountain, Ga.	5	October	7,	"	October	8, "
Powder Springs, Ga.	5	October	8,	"	October	8, "
Marietta, Ga.	15	October	9,	"	October	9, "
Big Shanty, Ga.	5	October	9,	"	October	11, "
Ackworth, Ga.	2	October	11,	"	October	11, "
Allatand, Ga.	6	October	11,	"	October	11, "
Carterville, Ga.	7	October	12,	"	October	12, "
Kingston, Ga.	10	October	12,	"	October	12, "
Near Rome, Ga.	10	October	12,	"	October	12, "
Dairsville, Ga.	12	October	13,	"	October	14, "
Resicca, Ga.	23	October	14,	"	October	15, "
Snake Creek Gap, Ga.	12	October	15,	"	October	16, "
LaFayette, Ga.	20	October	18,	"	October	18, "
Somerville, Ga.	13	October	19,	"	October	19, "
Alpine, Ga.	10	October	19,	"	October	20, "
Galesville, Ala	15	October	20,	"	October	28, "
Missionary Station, Ga.	16	October	28,	"	October	29, "
Rome, Ga.	14	October	29,	"	October	31, "
Cedarville, Ga.	20	November	1,	"	November	2, "
Vanwert, Ga.	14	November	2,	"	November	3, "
Dallas, Ga.	15	November	3,	"	November	4, "
Near Lost Mountain, Ga.	9	November	4,	"	November	5, "
Marietta, Ga.	15	November	4,	"	November	3, "
Atlanta, Ga.	22	November	6,	"	November	15, "
McDonough, Ga.	35	November	14,	"	November	17, "
??mulgee Mills, Ga.	31	November	16,	"	November	19, "
Monticello, Ga.	11	November	18,	"	November	19, "
Hillsboro, Ga.	9	November	19,	"	November	20, "

NAME OF PLACE	DISTANCE	DATE OF ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE
Gordon, Ga.	28	November 20, "	November 22, "
Clinton, Ga.	11	November 21, "	November 23, "
Toomsboro, Ga.	6	November 22, "	November 23, "
Oconee River, Ga.	7	November 23, "	November 25, "
Toomsboro, Ga.	7	November 25, 1864	November 25, 1864
Mills Ferry, Ga.	8	November 26, "	November 26, "
Sabastapol, Ga.	55	November 31, "	December 1, "
Dalton, Ga.	6	December 2, "	December 2, "
Millen, Ga.	13	December 2, "	December 3, "
Scarsboro, Ga.	7	December 3, "	December 4, "
Oliver, Ga.	11	December 5, "	December 7, "
Egypt, Ga.	5	December 7, "	December 7, "
Tower, Ga.	6	December 7, "	December 7, "
Guyton, Ga.	7	December 7, "	December 7, "
Marlow, Ga.	6	December 8, "	December 8, "
Eden, Ga.	7	December 8, "	December 9, "
Pooler, Ga.	11	December 9, "	December 10, "
Near Savannah, Ga.	6	December 10, "	December 11, "
Grass Keyes, Ga.	10	December 12, "	December 16, "
Hoggs Bridge, Ga.	5	December 16, "	December 24, "
Near Savannah, Ga.	17	December 24, "	January 6, 1865
Hilton Head, S.C.	55	January 6, 1865	January 6, "
Beaufort, S.C.	22	January 6, "	January 13, "
Pototaligo, S.C.	26	January 16, "	January 20, "
Combabee River, S.C.	6	January 20, "	January 20, "
Potatoligo, S.C.	6	January 20, "	January 23, "
Combabee River, S.C.	6	January 23, "	January 23, "
Potatoligo, S.C.	6	January 23, "	January 29, "
McPhersonville, S.C.	8	January 29, "	January 30, "
Rivers Bridge, S.C.	23	February 2, "	February 6, "
Midway, S.C.	19	February 7, "	February 9, "
Orangeburg, S.C.	24	February 12, "	February 13, "
Leesville, S.C.	17	February 14, "	February 14, "
Columbus, S.C.	42	February 19, "	February 19, "
Disco, S.C.	21	February 20, "	February 21, "
Ridgeway, S.C.	6	February 21, "	February 21, "
Wimisboro, S.C.	13	February 22, "	February 22, "
Paws Ferry, S.C.	17	February 23, "	February 23, "
Liberty Hall, S.C.	6	February 23, "	February 24, "
Sharon, S.C.	74	March 3, "	March 5, "
Bennettsville, S.C.	15	March 6, "	March 7, "
Florence College, S.C.	25	March 9, "	March 9, "
Fayetteville, S.C.	37	March 11, "	March 13, "
Blocksville, S.C.	18	March 16, "	March 16, "
Owensville, S.C.	10	March 16, "	March 17, "
Bentonville, S.C.	48	March 20, "	March 23, "
Goldsboro, S.C.	18	March 24, "	April 10, "
Raleigh, S.C.	62	April 14, "	April 15, "
Page's Station, S.C.	8	April 15, "	April 19, "
Near Raleigh, S.C.	5	April 19, "	April 25, "
Near page's Station	8	April 25, "	April 27, "
Near Raleigh, S.C.	8	April 27, "	April 29, "
Forestville, S.C.	20	May 1, "	May 1, "
Clarksville Junction	91	May 3, "	May 3, "
Ridgeway, S.C.	4	May 3, "	May 3, "
Warrington, S.C.	5	May 3, "	May 3, "
Robertson's Ferry, S.C.	13	May 4, "	May 4, "
Petersburg, Va.	70	May 7, 1865	May 8, "
Manchester, Va.	21	May 10, "	May 12, 1865

NAME OF PLACE	DISTANCE	DATE OF ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE
Richmond, Va.	4	May 12, "	May 12, "
Fredricksburg, Va.	70	May 16, "	May 16, "
Alexandria, Va.	62	May 24, "	May 24, "
Washington, D.C.	7	May 24, "	May 24, "
Fort Henry, D.C.	4	May 24, "	June 7, "
Relay House, Md.	30	June 7, "	June 7, "
Harpers Ferry, Va.	70	June 8, "	June 8, "
Piedmont, Va.	120	June 8, "	June 8, "
Grafton, Va.	86	June 9, "	June 9, "
Parkersburg, Va.	112	June 10, "	June 10, "
Gillipolis, Oh.	115	June 10, "	June 10, "
Cincinnati, Oh.	190	June 11, "	June 11, "
Louisville, Ky.	145	June 12, "	-----

## CHAPTER XXI

DATE OF THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS IN WHICH THE FIFTY-THIRD TOOK AN ACTIVE PART

DATE	EVENT
November 11, 1861	First Regimental Muster
April 6/7, 1861	Battle of Pittsburgh Landing, Tennessee.
May 30, 1862	Evacuation of Corinth, Mississippi.
October 5, 1862	Battle of Hatchie River, Tennessee.
July 4, 1863	Surrender of Vicksburg, Mississippi.
July 12, 1863	The Fifty-third Illinois with the Third Iowa, twenty-eighth and Forty-first Illinois regiments charged the enemy works at Jackson, Mississippi.
January, 18, 1864	The Fifty Third Illinois reported as a veteran regiment.
July 20, 1864	Closed up on the enemy works at Atlanta, Georgia.
July 21, 1864	The Seventeenth corps charged the enemy's works at Atlanta, Georgia.
July 22, 1864	Battle of the 22nd of July at Atlanta, Georgia. The Fifty-third lost seventy three men in the three days engagement.
July 27, 1864	The Seventeenth corps, with the help of the Fifteenth and Eighteenth corps, went to the extreme right of the line of battle at Atlanta, Georgia.
July 28, 1864	Battle of the 28th of July at Atlanta, Georgia.
August 26, 1864	Sherman withdrew from before Atlanta and commenced his flank movement to Jonesboro, Georgia.
August 31, 1864	Battle at Jonesboro.
September 2, 1864	Atlanta evacuated by {General} Hood {Confederate Army} and taken possession of by the Union forces.

DATE	EVENT
December 10, 1864	Closed up on the enemy's works at Savannah, Georgia. A shell burst in Company I, Fifty-third regiment killing four men and wounding six others.
December 21, 1864	Savannah, Georgia evacuated by {General} Hardee {Confederate Army} and taken possession of by the Union Forces.
January 4, 1865	The Forty-first Illinois regiment is consolidated with and forms Companies G and K of the Fifty- third Illinois regiment.
January 29, 1865	Started on the grand raid through the Carolinas.
January 30, 1865	The First and Forth Division of the Seventeenth corps forded the Combabee River at River Bridge, S.C. Considerable fighting.
February 9, 1865	Considerable skirmishing on the Estido river {South Carolina}.
February 11, 1865	Considerable skirmishing on the Little Estido river of Orangeburg, S.C.
February 17, 1865	Considerable skirmishing across the Congree, Saluda and Broad rivers opposite Columbus. ---- Columbus evacuated. A boat load from the Thirteenth Iowa regiment, Third brigade and the Forth division, Seventeenth corps crossed over the river and raised the flag of the regiment over the Capital.
March 3, 1865	Considerable fighting at Chean, South Carolina. The Johnnies evacuate the town and cross the Pedee river.
March 14, 1865	Considerable fighting at Fayetteville, North Carolina. The Johnnies evacuate the town and cross Fear river.
March 19, 1865	Heavy Fighting on the left. General Johnson {Confederate army} attacked the Fourteenth and Twentieth corps near Benton, North Carolina.
March 20/21, 1865	The {Union} army closes up on General Johnson at Bentonville {North Carolina}. Heavy Fighting all along the lines. The Fifty-third regiment lost one killed and six wounded in this battle.
March 22, 1865	{General} Johnson {Confederate army} evacuated Bentonville, {North Carolina} at night and crosses the Neuce river.
April 7, 1865	A dispatch received stating that General Grant had taken Richmond.
April 12, 1865	A Dispatch received Confirming the news that General Grant had taken Richmond.
April 15, 1865	General Johnson {Confederate army} asks for terms of surrender.

DATE		EVENT
April	17, 1865	A dispatch received stating that President Lincoln and Secretary Seward had been assassinated.
April	18, 1865	{General} Sherman And {General} Johnson agree on terms of surrender subject to the approval of the War Department.
April	24, 1865	The Seventeenth corps is reviewed in town by Generals Grant, Sherman, Mead and Secretary Stanton. The terms of surrender agreed on by {Generals} Sherman and Johnson are not approved by the War Department and we are ordered to advance on {General} Johnson.
April	26, 1865	{General} Johnson {of the Confederate army} surrenders.
May	23, 1865	General Mead's army is reviewed in Washington {D.C.}.
May	24, 1865	General Sherman's army reviewed in Washington {D.C.}.
June	7, 1865	The Forth Division of the seventeenth corps marched to the Baltimore Depot and took transportation on the cars for Louisville, Kentucky.

## CHAPTER XXII

### ON THE MARCH

#### A MARCH AND HOW CONDUCTED IN THE FIRST YEARS OF THE WAR

The order of march was this: The advance regiment was started out in the morning with it's regimental wagons in the rear and the next regiment behind them, and thus all of the regiments of one brigade. It took four regiments for a brigade, three brigades for a division and three divisions for an army corps, and each regiment, brigade, division and corps had it's own wagons in the rear. The regiment that is in the lead one day takes the rear the next day, and so each regiment, brigade, division and each corps takes it's turn in being the lead, and so they keep doubling over from the rear to the front.

It is a great deal easier to march in the rear, and then if there is any thing good to eat, the front ones gobbled it up and left the rear ones in the soup. In the first year of the war there was a guard put at all the houses that claimed to be Union people and for everything taken, a voucher was given for pay in the future. So, in the first stage of the game, the people fared all right. There was even a guard placed over the wells and in order to get water, one man would take the canteens of several of his comrades and stop at the well to fill them up. It was a hard job to do it, there was so many after the same thing at the well. The way they had to draw water was with an old tin can with a bail on it and a string to it. The men would get around a well so thick you could not get near to it till your turn came, and sometimes it never came at that well. All the wells then were dug wells and from forty to eighty feet deep, and we generally suffered for water as it was generally hot and dusty.

The whole thing changed the second year of the war. If it had not been, we might be at it yet. Our mode of marching was changed. All kinds of transportation was given the wagon road and men took to the side of the road and took a straight shoot for any place we wanted to go, and there were no more guards placed over property. Every regiment would send a man or two from each company every day under an officer to forage and get supplies for

the regiment. It was not so hard on the men as it was under the old way, but this was not all fun.

Imagine hundreds and thousand of men hungry, tired, dirty and foot sore. If not marching all day in the dust and heat, it would be raining and they were wet and the rear men would get into camp at all times of the night, tired and hungry, but maybe no supper but detailed to go out a mile or two and go on picket, cold and wet. They were allowed no fire on the picket line, and had to eat hard tack and sow belly that night without coffee to wash it down.

This is a meager description of what a soldier had to undergo on a march. It cannot be put on paper. But then some funny things happened to put life in the man. One time on a march the men were told as they passed a rail fence for each man to take a rail on his shoulder and carry it along, as there was a swamp ahead that had to be bridged with rails or trees, and as every man took a rail, there was a line of men as far as you see each way with a rail and his gun on his back and it made a funny sight. A lot of negroes were standing beside the road. They never had seen Yankees before and one darkie did not know what to say, but at last he found his tongue and looked up and down the line of men and rails and made the remark that was used afterwards as a by-word by the men who heard it. The darkie opened his mouth and eyes and raised hi hands and said, "De Lord, look at de rails", and it struck the men quite comically, and such things were a great stimulant.

Another little incident happened that was comical. We ran across the Johnnies where they were strongly fortified and we had to stop and show them how the Yanks drove Johnnies out of our front when we took a notion to march through the country. After we had formed a line of battle, the line moved forward. In the movement we came across a Plantation residence. There were three or four women folk there, and of course the men did not stop for fences nor anything else in front. There were a good picket fences and a lot of bee hives, a lye leach and other truck around, and of course the yankees never got through there without upsetting everything they came across. Bee hives, lye leach and fence -- all were kicked out of the way, and when the supporting column came up, the old lady of the house was mourning over the destruction of the bees, fence and beach, the spilling of all of her good ashes (it was too bad, anyhow), and she was telling how Captain Sherman had formed a string of fighters and went right through the yard and spilled the bees, and broke her fence and spilled her lye beach and now she could not have any soap, and she wanted to know who was going to pay for it. The soldiers thought maybe Captain Sherman might comeback some day and settle up, and so such things happened every day.

## **CHAPTER XXIII**

### **HOW THE ARMY GOES INTO CAMP**

When an army is on a march and not engaged with the enemy, the advanced guard will go into camp early in the afternoon. When the balance come up, they are marched to the front and so keep on till all are in camp. Generally, they will be nearly all night getting in. When it is late at night, about all you hear is, "How far is it to Camp?", and few ever found out. I never did, as everyone had a different distance, but there is an end to everything. We would find camp after awhile and were always tired, thirsty and hungry. The first thing to look after was some water and fire to make coffee. Some would go and hunt for water and others would hunt for wood and the other fellows would build the fire, and after awhile we would have something to eat. As a general thing, the men would divide up into messes of from two or three to six and that way could help one another. Each one always looking out for his special mess. I don't know what a soldier would have done without coffee for it was seldom he could get any water fit to drink. Most of the water was

saved in holes in ravines. The people built dams across and when it rained it would make a pond of water and these were the places at which the army could get water, and the Rebs would through dead horses and dead hogs in these ponds and at night when we would get into camp late and in the dark, we would get water and make coffee and in the morning we saw where the water came from it would almost make us sick to look at it and see what we had drunk out of, but it was that or nothing in some places. These water holes were generally covered with a green scum in hot weather, but generally we got pretty good grub on the march. When we could catch live hogs we would have fresh pork, and if we had flour would have pancakes.

#### **CHAPTER XXIV**

##### THE FIFTY-THIRD REGIMENT GUARDING RAILROADS

In the winter of 1862, the Fifty-third regiment guarded railroads in Tennessee. We had to guard it to get supplies through to the army. Then road, at that time, was our source of supplies between Corinth and Memphis. We were in camp at Bolivar, Tennessee, north of the railroad and north of town. We had some little skirmishing to do here but no hard fighting but we had a pretty cold job as there was snow on the ground most of the time. We had Silbley tents. They are round and run to a peak in the middle like an Indian wigwam, with a hole in the top for the smoke to go out. In the center of the tent we had a round sheet iron stove and the bunks were around the stove. The beds were straw and hay thrown on the ground and when we went to bed we would go two together and lay down a blanket and one or two blankets for covering, and then crawl in with our feet toward the stove. We would fill the tent, clear around the stove and we slept a good deal like a lot of pigs. What got us was to get out of these warm nests in the morning at three o'clock and stand in line of battle in the snow and cold until daylight. It was worse than picking corn. This was done because it was Johnnies custom to make a dash in the early hours of the morning on the posts guarding the railroad, but we got a little fun out of life and had a laugh. One morning the Captain of the company got out suddenly. The company officers had square tents and they had fire places built up in one end of the tent with stick and mud chimneys. The Captain of the company was a little old Irishman. He had been an officer of the War of 1812. His company in the Fifty-third was all Irish, and a good lot of men they were too. Old Captain got blowed out that time. He came out one way and the chimney went out the other. Some of the boys, to have a little fun, threw some powder down the chimney in the fire and it exploded, and so did the fire place, and the Captain exploded after he got his breath. That was all in the good it did, as no one knew who did it. We had another interesting thing here. We had a big crowd of negroes and Small Pox got among them, and we had to keep them corralled so the soldiers would not get it, and so the time was spent here for about a month, not very pleasantly.

#### **CHAPTER XXV**

##### GENERAL SHERMAN'S ARMY ON A RAID

In the winter of 1864, General Sherman started on a raid through Mississippi. He started for the purpose of finding Johnnies and to destroy the enemy's property and capture his grub pile. This is what a big raid is for, and on this raid there was a good deal of stuff captured and lots destroyed. Not much was done on this march until we got to Meridian, Mississippi and here we went into camp and then scouting parties went out all over the country. The division to which the Fifty-third belonged camped by the town of Meridian. General Crocker, the commander of the Fourth division had his headquarters at the south end of town in one of the buildings. The town, at that time, was one long street, running north and south, and one day when the wind was

blowing pretty hard, the town took fire at the north end. The wind swept from the north and took the fire down the street towards General Crocker's headquarters. He held his post as long as he could till he saw he was going to be burned out and then got on his horse and his headquarters moved and the comical part of this was what the General said about being burned out. He was an awful man to swear, and when he was burned out he looked around at the destruction and he said it was a "H\_\_\_ of a way to burn out as good a Union man as he was".

We had a good living on this raid --- had plenty of flour, fresh pork, and molasses. There was so much sand and wind around Meridian that when we made pancakes and put molasses on them, the wind would start the sand to flying and our pancakes and molasses would be full of sand, and maybe there was not some bad words said, but that did not pick the sand out of the molasses.

The first day we started was cold an raining. I had my musket over my shoulder with my hand over the breech of the gun and I jammed the back of my hand against a post and tore a chunk of skin off my knuckle, and the weather being cold and wet, I caught cold in the sore and my hand and arm swelled clear to my shoulder, and I carried my hand in a sling for four weeks, and carried my gun and did duty all the time we were out, and that was a little over forty days, and never had my clothes off during the march. Such was the duty of a soldier.

#### **CHAPTER XXVI**

##### IN CAMP DOING NOTHING

When an army is in camp doing nothing, the routine consists of getting up at five o'clock and then fall in line and have roll call, and if a man is not there to answer to his name, there is something doing until he is found and if he has no good excuse there is something more doing. After roll call comes breakfast, and then detail for picket, and details for other duties of the day. The quarters of each company have to be cleaned up, and then those left in camp have to fall in and drill till dinner time. Then we have dinner and maybe can rest an hour or two, and if nothing better to get at, will go out and drill again till nearly supper time. After supper, the men have a rest and time to write letters and sew on buttons and do a little mending till nine o'clock sharp, when retreat is sounded and the lights must all be out. The Officer of the Day or the Officer of the Guard will go all through the camp, and if he finds a light burning in a man's tent, the man had better say his prayers for there is no argument. Orders have been disobeyed and that always means trouble for the culprit. So it goes, day after day, one thing after another. This is what a soldier calls "doing nothing in camp".

#### **CHAPTER XXVII**

##### THE FIFTY-THIRD REGIMENT ON A DAY'S SCOUT

After the surrender of Atlanta, Georgia, the Fifty-third regiment was sent out on a scout to a little town about twenty five miles away {Fairtown, Georgia}. We started early one morning and did not find much to make it interesting till we got within a mile of this town, and then our advance guard ran out some Johnnies and we had no way to find out how many there were of them, only to go ahead and see, and if there were too many for us we would have to run for it, and if we were to much for them, they would have to run from us. So into the line of battle we went with skirmishers to the front and all moved forward. The skirmishers begin firing and as we advanced, the Johnnies kept falling back and we were soon in sight of the town. It was more open here and we could see the Rebs and citizens --- some on foot, some

on horseback, and they all seemed to try {to see} who could get out of town the quickest. They had no great force of soldiers --- only a line of skirmishers, and they were in as big of a hurry as the rest in town, but they were not very good shots, as they hit none of the Yanks. They shot wild. I guess they did not take sight, but they left fast and we had the town and all in it. Here we took twenty five prisoners. They said they were citizens but as we could not tell what they were, we kept them under guard and looked the town over to see if we could find any contraband. We found the post office and as there was nothing better, we took the mail and our prisoners, and as it was late in the afternoon, we started back for Atlanta. When the prisoners saw we were going to take them back with us, they said they were not soldiers, and I guess they were not. They wanted us to let them stay at home, but we told them that they were prisoners of war and we had to take them. So they marched with us for almost ten or fifteen miles and then we paroled them and told them to go home, as they could get there by next morning, and to stay there, and they were most tickled to death. Thus we parted. We got to camp about midnight, all alive and ready for a little sleep.

## **CHAPTER XXVIII**

### SHERMAN'S ARMY GOING INTO WINTER QUARTERS IN MISSISSIPPI

It seems to be the aim of the commanding General to keep the army at work at something, and they always succeeded pretty well. In the winter of 1863-64 the general orders were to build houses and fix all in nice shape for the winter. They called it "Going into winter quarters". Nice Camp grounds were selected and laid out in military order.

The Fifty-third regiment was camped in a grove of Beech trees and the ground was covered with beechnuts. We had a nice camp and were well pleased with our location as we expected to stay three or four months. We went to work to fix {the camp} up in good shape. We cut logs and hauled them to camp and built log houses. Each company had it's own houses, and so we worked for over a month, and we had a fine camp, and everything being now done we were hugging ourself thinking what a good time we would have till spring. But we were not destined to enjoy it long for a rumor came that we were going to move camp and the rumor soon proved true, as we got our orders to get ready to move, and no one knew where or what for. We thought possibly we would go on a scout and come back, but after we left there, I don't think any one in that squad ever saw that camp again.

## **CHAPTER XXIX**

### THE BATTLE OF PITTSBURGH LANDING

I will endeavor to give a description of the battle of Pittsburgh Landing as it looked to me at that time. I saw the most of it, except the first day. The attack in the morning of the sixth of April, 1862 was a complete sunrise on the Yanks, for on the night of the seventh, I slept in one of the tents where seven of our men {found on the 6th} lay in bunks where they had gone to bed on the night of the 5th of April. They lay just as they were shot on the morning of the 6th. They were not dressed so they must have been killed quickly.

Our men rallied and got to business pretty quickly. After the first firing was heard on the morning of the 6th of April. 1862, it was one continuous roar of artillery and small arms. There was not a continuous line of battle, as armies of the size of the ones there at that time ought to have been, but we were fighting by divisions and brigades, detached from each other, and therefore the Rebels kept flanking our men, and as soon as they did that they

{we} had to fall back or be captured, as all of the Fifty-third Indiana were captured the first day of the battle. Our men fought desperately that day. There were charges and counter charges but they {the Confederates} drove our men back to the river and the only thing that saved the day for the Union forces was our gunboats and the coming of night. Many men were driven to the water's edge and some swam out to islands in the river rather than be taken prisoner.

But there was help close at hand, for the next morning, the 7th of April, 1862, General Buell's {Union} army was on the march for the landing. They Passed the Fifty-third camp the evening of the 6th and were taken across the river before the morning of the 7th and that put new life into the Union forces for the day's fighting and the ball opened early and desperate.

The sound of yelling was awful to hear and to realize what it was for, but now with a night's rest and organized in a better shape, The Johnnies found a different force to handle. The Union forces soon gained all the ground they had lost the day before. By the night of the 7th of April, the Rebs were in full retreat and the Union forces made a brilliant success out of an almost total defeat and sunrise. But at what a terrible slaughter of men. It was a battlefield of about ten or twelve miles long and six or seven wide, and there were dead, dying and wounded all over this field. There were places where you could step from one body to another. There were patches of brush that looked as though it had been mowed with a scythe, and trees of good size cut off with shot from cannon. There were some desperate things done. One man who was in all the fight told me of a battery that the Rebs charged and took it and then turned it on the Yanks. The Yanks formed again and charged the Rebs again, and so they had it back and forth for two days without any cessation. During the two days' engagement, the two armies fought with desperation for if the Union forces lost there, it meant a prolongation of the war and a big chance of total failure of the struggle for the Union.

It was the hardest and most desperate two days' battle during the rebellion except for the battle at Gettysburg.

## **CHAPTER XXX**

A LITTLE DESCRIPTION OF THE REBEL PRISONS WHERE SOME OF THE FIFTY-THIRD ILLINOIS REGIMENT WERE CONFINED

### ANDERSONVILLE

In the Andersonville Prison, Company D, Fifty-third Illinois had two men. One gave up his life and is buried there. The other got out alive. The regiment had some others from other companies there.

The stockade was a piece of ground situated in a swamp or low wet place. It got the name of stockade because it had a fence around it made of logs sharpened and driven in the ground, close together. There were about forty acres in the stockade and the guards were placed at intervals along the top of the fence. I will not try to tell you all that was done to men in this hell hole called a prison. Pen cannot give a description of the suffering that men underwent in this place till death relieved them. I saw a few who escaped from there when General Sherman was making his march through Georgia. They looked more like crazy men than rational beings. They were just skin and bones, and I don't wonder from what they told of the treatment of the men there.

### THE LIBBY AND BELLE ISLAND PRISONS

The old Libby Prison consisted of old tobacco warehouses owned by a man by the name of Libby and used for the storage of tobacco. There were two buildings, one used to keep the Officers in and the other to keep private soldiers. They were situated on the banks of the James river. The buildings were very filthy and full of vermin, old rotten tobacco and other filth. The place was not fit for a man to stay in overnight unless he wanted to breed disease.

Belle Island was a twin sister of libby prison. It was situated opposite the city of Richmond, Virginia, in the James river. It was quit a large island. The south end is low and flat and this is where the prisoners were kept. In the center of the island is a hill and here is where the Rebel guards were stationed with a battery of six guns trained on the prison camp.

The camp had about five acres in it with a breastworks built around it of dirt, about three or four feet high. The guard stood just outside of this breastworks and the deadline was just inside the works, and woe to the man who stepped over it. for it was sure death if the guard could shoot straight enough, and they could for I saw one man shot while I was there.

The men confined here got about as hard usage men could devise to reduce men down to sickness or death. The prisoners were furnished just enough to eat so they were on slow starvation rations as starvation was what they mostly died of there. The Fifty-third regiment had twenty or thirty men who were prisoners on the island at one time. Company D had six:

Abner Beale	Now dead;
Ed Thomas	Alive;
Lot C. Larkin	Now dead;
John Corry	Now dead;
Hamilton White	Now dead;
Herbert E. Ranstread	Alive' {The author}

I would give all the names of the Fifty-third prisoners, but I have forgotten them all except one --- Captain Hatfield of Company H, Fifty-third regiment.