

OUR ARMY CORRESPONDENCE.

Letter from the U. S Engineer Corps.

CAMP WINFIELD SCOTT,
Before Yorktown, Va., May 3, 1862.

DEAR CABINET—

It is some time since I have had the pleasure of reading a paper from home. We get the "Herald," with its short despatches and wranglings with Greeley and the other editors of New-York, the Baltimore Clipper and other fast papers. These do well enough generally, but there are times when one wants to sit down and read a good paper from home, and the Cabinet came just in season to day, for I have time to read it through. I said there were times when one wants to read a paper from home—from such a home as most of our New England soldiers have. I might have got nearer the truth if I had said at all times, for I never can lay the Cabinet down but some sapper representative of Maine, New-Hampshire or Massachusetts carries it off and is loth to give it up again. Papers sell very rapidly here, and the newsboys (for we have newsboys here, smart as in their own haunts at New-York and Boston, little fellows most covered with a bundle of papers, fumbling at our tent doors, or hurrying on over the road, making the woods ring with *Herald!* *Frank Leslie!*) make fortunes selling them at ten cents per copy; scarcely a day passes but they collect two or three dollars in our own camp of 250 men.

I see that the Harper Brothers have got into trouble by publishing a view of Yorktown. I don't see why the Government need trouble them, for, as the Herald said, the rebels certainly could get no information from it, when we ourselves could, that it did not represent our situation in the least, and neither did the map in the Herald represent the enemy's batteries correctly, for by it "Camp Winfield Scott" is rendered inside of the rebels' first parallel.—That map will do for next week, perhaps.

The weather here is quite warm now that the cloudy weather is over; rain does not much affect our roads, as they have been all corduroyed since the arrival of our army. Camp Winfield Scott, clean as a Quaker city, is regularly laid out in a large field sloping eastward. Every stick and straw is removed, and aside from the walk the grass begins to look green.

The 2nd New Hampshire, encamped near a grove and a ravine, with a cool, bubbling spring in its bank, have built them large bower houses of holly and pine, and one can walk in Bradford and Manchester streets and find the representatives of those towns there. One more word for the 2nd New Hampshire: it is far the most intelligent and clean looking regiment of infantry I have seen in the service. I heard the remark made by one of our company who had thirty-three of them to work in the trenches; that they worked the best of any he had charge of. Good for the "Old Granite State."

Well, I suppose our cannon will soon commence pounding away at Yorktown in good earnest. Our siege train is one of the finest ever brought into the field. It will be impossible to resist such terrible engines of war. At the same time, on the other side, the rebels have almost equally powerful ones. While I have been writing this, several heavy shells, thrown from a rifled gun, have fallen about 800 yards from our camp, intended for a battery of its superiors three-fourths of a mile to our right. We have one battery and redoubt within 650 yards of the enemy's works, and in plain sight of them; at this they vent their special spite, and many a narrow escape have our men had from bursting shells and solid shot. Though a strange place to laugh, one can scarcely help it to see men (who, like ostriches when pursued, think themselves safe when their head is covered up,) crowd their heads between the gabions close to the ground. One man there had his cap blown off, another had the handle of an axe which he held in his hand taken off, another was covered with dirt, and a good many were very much scared. All however, have not escaped so well. One had his legs blown off, another's head was completely shot away. One fine fellow who persisted in standing on the parapets, was shot in the head by a ball from a minnie rifle. A minnie ball is not to be despised because of its smallness, for it gives no warning but a terribly significant "you." Yesterday a shell struck in a tent near us and killed two men; another struck within 150 yds. of our own camp, causing a rush from the tents in the opposite direction. Many do not burst. I saw one measuring 13 inches in length and 7 in diameter. I got a piece of the one which burst near our tent; it was made of bell metal.

While the rebels are killing and wounding some of our men every day, our own guns are not silent. The boom from a 200-pounder rifled Parrott gun on our right reverberates through the woods at short intervals. Yesterday for three hours the firing was quite heavy and continued. We saw a gun burst in the rebel works, supposed to be the one which threw those 100-pound shells, as we have received no compliments of that size since. If there is such a thing as getting used to those tearing, screeching, stunning shells, I think the Engineers have accomplished the thing, for there has scarcely been a moment, night or day, that a detail from the battalion has not been to each battery, and often times without even the protection of works, out (in the night of course) not seven hundred yds. from the rebel batteries, laying out parallels and redoubts. On seeing the flash of the enemy's guns, the order, "down" would be given, when all would very affectionately embrace the earth.

3 P. M.—The duel has commenced again on our right between our battery and the enemy's inner work at Yorktown, where their heaviest guns are. It generally commences about this time in the afternoon; first comes the report, shaking the ground, then the screech of the shell, faint and loud alternately, as it bores its way through the air; it has gradually gone out of hearing now, and soon the distant report of the shell will be heard; here in quick succession goes a number of guns—all is quiet again. The firing is not confined to the daytime by any means, especially if the enemy suspect the point at which we are at work.

We are out very near the enemy's work, can hear the bark of dogs, can plainly see the enemy's fires and the sentinel as he paces by them; dusky forms are moving here and there, dark masses of men, leaning on their picks and spades, whisper cautiously to each other; the evening breeze shifts about and bears to our ears the sound of moving wagons, and strains of music from Dixie; here comes a man with a dark lantern, marks this point, directs the turnings of that angle; silently the men go to work and by morning will throw up a protection. Suddenly a flash, the earth trembles and the loud report rolls out and dies away on the night air; presently comes another, another and another; some one whispers "where is that?" another answers. Some one, in a husky voice, says, "another poor fellow gone, sure," then turns away to his duty. Morning comes—the enemy is astonished—commences a fierce cannonade—still the work goes on—it is done.

One company of Berdan's sharpshooters is from New Hampshire; they are out on duty in front. In that regiment is man by the title of California Joe, said to be the best shot in the army. It is reported that he shot a rebel officer through a glass, while he was looking at our op-

perations; this was confirmed by a deserter.

A negro who had annoyed our pickets, shooting many, was killed at last, by three sharpshooters, in the following manner: Nig had a hole in the ground in which he laid and watched 'whom he might devour.' It seems that having discovered good game a little too far off for operations in his present position, he left the pit and crept to a tree in front, and nearer the desired object, but discovered, too late to retire, three sharpshooters, who had determined not to sleep until they had slain him. He avoided them for a while, keeping the tree between himself and them, but they deployed, and forced him from it, and while he was retreating, shot him in the back; he fell, rose and walked a few steps, then fell again to rise no more. Three rebels climbed a chimney between the pickets to spy our movements—the three were shot.

When our batteries open in earnest the effect must be terrible. Yorktown is doomed. We are able to take it—it can be seen in the calm, deliberate preparations of our generals, it was seen in the cool charge of the 1st Massachusetts on a rebel earthwork the other day, and probably before you read this it will be proved.

HARTSHORN.