

Transcript: excerpts from
Gone for a Soldier: The Civil War Memoirs of Private Alfred Bellard

Edited by David Herbert Donald. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1975.

Excerpt 1: 2nd paragraph on page 219 – end of page 224

XIV. *Chancellorsville* chapter:

In the afternoon I went over to the corps field hospital, where the doctors were busy in probing for balls, binding up wounds, and in cutting off arms and legs, a pile of which lay under the table. One drummer boy was brought in to be operated upon, who had both hands shattered by the explosion of a gun barrel. He has picked up a gun barrel on the field, and was holding it in the fire to have a little fun, when it exploded. His hands were shattered all to pieces, saving nothing but a thumb on one hand, and a thumb and finger on the other. When the doctors had him on the table and under the influence of cloraform [chloroform], they picked out the pieces of bone with their fingers. One of the men died at this hospital who had been shot through the breast and was held by a vivandiere of one of the regts. in her lap, until he was dead.

On the 5th the ambulance train began to carry away the badly wounded, all the men who could help themselves having to stay behind. When the last ambulance had gone, myself and another member of the Regt. who was hit in the leg the same as myself took up our quarters on the door steps of a house, with the raining pouring down and wet to the skin. About 12 o'clock at night we were awakened by the doctors who had returned with the ambulances and were told that we would be taken away. As we could hobble along, we started to go ourselves, but two of the doctors got hold of each of us and carrying us to the ambulance put us in. We were now out of the rain and felt quite comfortable, although wet through. My friend, who always had the cleanest rifle in the Regt. had brought it off the field with him intending to carry it along. He was ordered to throw it away by the doctors, and much against his will, it was left behind. In the ambulance with us with a badly wounded man, who lay on a bed, and every jolt of the ambulance over the corduroy road would make him cry out with pain. As we had an all night ride over corduroy roads and stumps of trees, it was not very pleasant even for me.

XV. *Hospital* chapter:

[Editor's note] *Bellard's wound prevented him from witnessing the outcome of the battle of Chancellorsville. Hopelessly confused by the way the fighting developed and more befuddled than usual from the concussion of a shell that landed near him, Hooker pulled his troops back from Chancellorsville to a strong defensive position and then, on May 6, withdrew his army north of the Rappahannock. Meanwhile Lee also drove Sedgwick's troops back across the river near Fredericksburg.*

For the Fifth New Jersey Infantry the Chancellorsville battle provided costly. Ballard's reckoning of casualties is slightly inaccurate; the regiment actually suffered 121 casualties—13 officers and men killed, 102 wounded, and 6 missing in action.

Hospitalized during the summer of 1863, Ballard took no part in the Gettysburg campaign. Nor was he able to participate in putting down the draft riots in New York (July 13-16), which broke out in protest against the new Union Policy of conscription.

By fall, however, he was well enough to serve in the Invalid Corps, which had been established in April 1863 to permit officers and men unfit for full combat duty to perform limited infantry service. The first battalion of the Invalid Corps consisted of those who would handle a weapon. The second battalion received the worst crippled, who were used as nurses and cooks around hospitals. By December 1863 the Corps numbered 20,000 men.

We arrived at Potomac Creek Hospital at noon on the 6th, wet through and hungry, but after getting something to eat I felt better. In the tent were men with their legs off, some with arms off, and men with all kinds of wounds. The most cheerful one of the lot was a man with his hand cut off at the wrist. As it had commenced to supurate [suppurate], of course it did not smel[!] very sweet, and every little while he would poke it under some one's nose, and tel[!] him to smel[!] of that.

On the 7th our brigade got back to camp, bringing in with them seven stand of colors captured from the rebels in the last engagement. The 5th Regt. taking the battle flag of the 19th N.C., the body of which was a brownish red, and the stripes blue, with the names of 8 battles painted on one side and 4 on the other. The loss to our Regt. was 105 wounded, 13 killed and 8 missing. Of the last named, the chances were that they were killed, making a total of 126 officers and men out of a Regt. that mustered previ[o]us to the battle 315 all told. My company was represented by wounded only, to wit. Corpl. Rapp severe in shin, Privates Austin, bruised by a piece of shell on the breast, Ballard, slight in knee, musket ball, Dugan, severe in groin, piece of shell, Flick, severe in shoulder, musket ball, Heslin [Heslen], severe in leg, musket ball, Heatl[e]y, slight in finger, musket ball, Reilly [Riely], slight in leg, musket ball, Robinson, severe in knee, musket ball, Sweitzer [Switzer], slight in thigh, musket ball, and VanBuskirk, slight in arm musket ball with Fenton, missing.

Excerpt 2: 4th paragraph on page 226 – 2nd paragraph of page 227

XV. *Hospital* chapter:

At this hospital, funerals were of every day occurrence. One poor boy who was shot through the lungs died in his mother's arms, who had come to the hospital for the purpose of taking him home. Matters were made worse for her by the actions of one of the officers, who tried to commit an assault on her. He was at once arrested and placed under guard, and I hope got his dissert [dessert].

On the 19th the medical director of the army passed through our tent examining the wounded. On coming to mine and examining it for some time, he said, Young man, you have

had a very narrow escape, as a quarter of an inch further to the right, you would have bled to death, and a quarter of an inch to the left, your leg would have had to come off. So as it was, I considered myself a lucky dog. The weather being hot, one of the nurses poured some kind of liquor on the wound, and running in at one hole, and out of the other, it made it smart, but I said nothing. An old man on the bunk opposite to me, and who was wounded in the fleshy part of the leg, yelled as if he was getting killed when it was poured on him, and because I did not kick up a rumpus, he would have it, that it was water and not liquor that was poured on mine.

These military hospitals were a find field for young M.D.'s to practice in. While limping round amongst the tents with two sticks to keep me up, I came across the tent where operations were performed. Stretched on a table inside was a man under the influence of Chloroform [chloroform] who had been shot in the knee, in about the same place as myself, only that the ball penetrated the bone. While I stood there, the doctors were running their fingers in the wound, probing and cutting trying to find the ball. After working in that way for some time with no success, they finally cut off the leg, and wound up the job.

[After a surgeon had deemed Bellard fit enough for light service, he joined the Invalid Corps, later renamed Veterans' Reserve. He was assigned to guarding prisoners.]

Excerpt 3: 3rd paragraph on page 242 – 2nd paragraph on page 244

One night as I was in bed my bunk mate gave me a kick that sent me out of the bed and landed me on top of the stove, knocking it over and nearly setting the shanty on fire. I jumped up quick as possible, and grabbing the fellow by his red beard I held on to him until he cried enough. This was last trouble with him. The next day I changed my bed fellow and had no more fights.

Nov. 12th we were packed up ready to move, but the orders were not issued. At this time we had been formed into regts. and we were now known as Co. C of the 1st Regt. Vet. Reserve Corps. As a large number of rebel prisoners were expected in Washington from Grant's Army, we were detailed along with the 157th Penn, 153rd N.Y. and the 14th New Hampshire Regts. to escort them from the train to the prison. Leaving our quarters at sundown we marched to the depot of the Alexandria R.R. where we formed in line and stacked arms to await their arrival. The weather being very cold, the boys seized some waggons that stood in front of a black-smith's shop and run them round to keep warm. Others took the wheels off and rolled them round but soon tiring of that, fires were started and it was not long before the wheels and waggon boddies were piled on to keep up the heat.

At last the trains commenced to arrive. The first ones to come in was loaded with wounded men from the 6th Corps. About half past two in the morning two large trains came slowly up the track, and stopped in front of us. These were filled with rebel prisoners, with one or two Zouaves in each car as a guard. The escort was now formed in two lines facing inward, and as each car door was opened, the rebels would give a yell and a jump, and start off on a run for the head of the column. It took some time for them to get out, as there was some 1700 of them. Nearly all of them were poorly clad, some without hats, some with no shoes to their feet,



while others again had no coats. When they were going through the ranks, one of them sung out that they had taken Wash. at last. Well they had, but I should not have liked [so] to have taken Richmond. When the last of them had left the train, orders were given to march, the V[eteran]. R[eserve]. C[orps]. bringing up the rear. When we reached the old capitol prison, the line was halted, and the cripples sent back to quarters, tumbling into our bunks about five o'clock a.m. The next night the rebs were taken from the prison and marched on board of the steamer that was to take them to Point Lookout in Maryland. When they were marching away, they set up one of their yells that they generally gave when making a charge. It was kept up for some time and could be heard a long way off.

On the 14th we had another little trip, this time to take some prisoners to Genl. Meade's head-quarters at the front. Ten men of our company being detailed for this service with myself as a member under the command of our second lieutenant. Leaving our barrack with one day's rations in our haver-sacks, and ten rounds of ammunitions in our cartridge boxes, we marched to Forrest Hall, Georgetown, which was used for a military prison and halted in front of the door. After loading our pieces with buck and ball we received our charge of 21 deserters and marched them to the depot of the Orange and Ale[xandria]. R.R. ouside of the city. Boarding train, we took our position on the roofs of the cars, with our prisoners between us. We got started about 10 o'clock and after a long ride over a very uneven track we reached Warrenton Junction about 6 p.m.

As the track had not been repaired any further, we got off the train and started for a tramp of 16 miles. Soon after we left the cars, it commenced to rain and continued during the night. We had gone about 5 miles through mud and slush and [were] wet to the skin, when we espied a large fire in the woods. Going over to it, we found that a waggon train had halted for the night and we concluded to do the same, as we could not find our way in the dark, and the fire was too comfortable to leave. The teamsters having come coffee made, we roped ourselves in and got some of it, which made us feel more comfortable. The prisoners we let run where they liked, as they did not know the roads and were as anxious to make themselves comfortable as we were. They gave us no trouble, but helped the squad to gather fuel amongst the trees.