

Breaking Camp

It was one of those clear and beautiful mornings often seen in May in a southern clime — and all was quiet in our comfortable winter quarters (at the foot of Raccoon Mountain) that we had occupied for three Months, When the order to “Strike tents and be ready to March” was sounded. In a moment all was in motion like a disturbed Bee-Hive. each man went to his Quarters and commenced his work of “Packing Up.” — to commence with we will take the pile of Letters that have accumulated during our encampment and selecting a few choice ones, the rest are committed to the fire — for experience has taught us that we can not carry all that we choose and endure the fatigue of the march, for our load is heavy enough when it is the lightest, and when starting upon a “Campaign” the sooner we lighten it the better. — Next is the pile of Clothing which becomes beautifully less by being overhauled. After this overhauling what is not condemned is packed in the knapsack — A Shelter Tent (which is a piece of cotton Cloth about two yards square) and a Rubber Blanket are rolled together and strapped upon the knapsack. Then comes the Haversack which has to be filled with Hard-tack (the staff of army life) Coffee, Sugar, Salt, &c. Next is the Cartridge Box which has to have its full supply of Ammunition and after filling our Canteens with water we were ready for the march. And while waiting for ‘further orders’ some would take a Book or Paper from the pile that is to be left would amuse themselves by reading.

At 3 oclock P.M. the Bugle sounded again the familiar call, ‘Fall In’ — and a few minutes more the Regiment were in ‘Line’ and we started toward Lookout Mountain which is a mile distant — All were cheerful but still there were thoughtful faces, for we well know that the Campaign was about to commence and what would be the fate of each before it ended we knew not, but I think there was none that felt like “Shirking” for a sense of Duty seemed to inspire each one and we went Cheerfully to our calling.

The mile was soon traveled and we were passing over the base of Lookout Mountain, under the shadow of its grey summit which a passing Cloud would occasionally hide from our view. — It was not long before we were leaving the Mountain and Chattanooga behind us, and at sunset we laid down upon the ground near Rossville Ga. which was a portion of the Chickamauga battle field and five miles from our starting point. The next morning we started on our March after being pretty well ‘dampened’ by a Shower in the night. — Two days later was the battle of ‘Rocky-Faced Ridge’ (near Dalton) in which the Casualties in our Regiment were 62 out of 221 that went into action — here the Active Service of our Campaign commenced, — And let me pass the succession of Engagements that followed, — until the Capture of Atlanta, — for it makes my heart ache when some of those scenes flash upon my memory. — See the Regiment now, bearing 93 Muskets out of 221 carried from Chattanooga on the 4th of May, — having traveled and fought a distance of 138 miles in the space of 4 Months. Some of the noble men that started with us as cheerful as any, are now “sleeping the sleep that knows no waking” beneath a Georgia sod. — others are lying in Rebel Prisons, and more are in our Hospitals Sick or wounded.

Perhaps some may think that by this time they are willing to have peace at any price, but this is not the case. They are now the same as ever wishing for an Honorable Peace, — one in which Treason in Arms shall lay down its weapons and return to its Allegiance, and their Prayers are for a more united Sentiment at the North, and that you — if you cannot help them personally, do not by your Words encourage their foes.

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