

**LETTERS FROM THE FORTY-FOURTH
REGIMENT M.V.M.: A RECORD OF
THE EXPERIENCE OF A NINE MONTHS'
REGIMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
NORTH CAROLINA IN 1862-3**

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Letters from the Forty-Fourth Regiment M.V.M.: A Record of the Experience of a Nine Months' Regiment in the Department of North Carolina in 1862-3 by Zenas T. Haines

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ZENAS T. HAINES

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LETTERS

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IN THE

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NOVEMBER 14, 1928

By J. ...

LETTERS.

IN BARRACKS AT READVILLE, }
SATURDAY, Aug. 30, 1862. }

Your readers in Boston will not be uninterested in following the fortunes of the gallant 44th, which has just gone forth from your city with full ranks, made up in large measure of young men in whose honor and welfare every true Bostonian will feel a peculiar interest. The *personnel* of the 44th (recruited up from the Fourth Battalion of Infantry as a nucleus,) has been so frequently the subject of newspaper remark, that nothing more need be said under that head; but it may not be vainglorious to say that no regiment has gone forth from the old Bay State, renowned for the quality of its soldiers, which exceeds or equals the second New England Guard regiment, as regards the personal qualities of its rank and file. All the learned professions are represented in its ranks, and even some of the recondite sciences and fine arts have their accomplished devotees in this corps. Among the latter may be reckoned the astronomer Tuttle, of Cambridge, and the brothers Cobb, artists, of Boston. We have sons of ministers and millionaires, and many rich men in their own right. The sons of ministers in the 44th, grievous to say, are generally publicans themselves, and give few signs of eminently Christian training. This is strange.

"'Tis true, 'tis pity;
And pity 'tis, 'tis true."

This is the second attempt which the Fourth Battalion has recently made to do their country some service; and we have been wondering if the present will prove as futile as the preceding one. But these do not cover the honorable record of the Fourth Bats. The Massachusetts 24th sprang from this Battalion. That and the 2nd and other Massachusetts regiments of earlier and later dates have been largely officered from its ranks. It has provided the army of the Union *two*

hundred and twenty-five commissioned officers. A fact more extraordinary in connection with one military organization cannot be adduced, and will go far to render the Fourth historic. The youthful patriot, Putnam, whose untimely sacrifice at Ball's Bluff, considered in connection with the unusual sweetness and force of character of the young martyr, has caused the tears of a nation to flow, was once a member of the Fourth, and his portrait now graces the walls of its armory.

The 44th came one day too soon to barrack at Readville, but it was their own fault. The fine new barracks just erected there were not completed, and will not be until to-night, although now habitable and comfortable as heart can desire. But we have all had to work to produce this comfortable state of affairs so early, and the "school of the soldier" has been neglected to-day.

Our first night in barracks was exceedingly jolly, as was to have been expected. Poor devils who depend on good sleep and a good deal of it for what vitality they can muster, might probably have sworn last night, if they had been obliged to barrack at Readville. Not that the boys were riotous, or even obstreperous, but simply jolly. We supped on hard bread, and coffee hotter than the crater of Vesuvius. Then, pipes and cigars lighted, the early evening was devoted to music—songs of home. After we had retired to our bunks, music of another character "beguiled" the hours of night.

Your correspondent slept not at all the first night in barrack, for obvious reasons. The inside musical performances opened with a barnyard chorus by the entire company, followed by a rapid, unintermitting succession of dog, hog, pig, and rooster solos, duettes and quartettes, single and combined, which continued in great volume until the unexpected arrival of the captain and his lieutenants, who are unfortunately without any ear for music. After a short intermission, the performance was resumed in a greatly modified condition, commencing with admirable imitations of chickens astray from the shelter of the maternal wing, and coming to a pause with the low, small, satisfied twitterings of chickens in clover.

Then followed sounds less artistic, but not less suggestive to the general appreciation, intermingled with snatches of conversation of a highly festive character. The good wit of the occasion rendered endurable what would otherwise have been an intolerable nuisance to any one wanting sleep so badly as your humble servant; but at last, as it must be confessed, even this element failed to satisfy a scientific audience. Objurgations, not loud but deep, came from a number of bunks where

sleep had failed to come, or tarried a moment to be cruelly banished. Despite all these adverse circumstances, sound sleep actually came to one poor fellow sleeping unsuspectingly below the "Corporal;" but, as the Fates would have it, it departed from him in this wise.

A small britannia flask, used chiefly to contain coffee and milk in the temporary absence of dippers, fell from the rear of the "Corporal's" bunk directly upon the head of the sleeper, suddenly arousing him to the consciousness of life and its uncertainties. He screamed out vigorously that one of the slats of our bunk had fallen upon his head, and sarcastically offered to get up a contribution to improve our sleeping accommodations, and thereby render his own safety more complete. The "Corporal," who felt the flask slip from beneath his pillow, knew that the aroused man labored under a misapprehension, and clambered down to recover the fugitive vessel, and manipulate a suddenly prominent bump on the cranium of the one man of company D who succeeded in getting asleep.

To-day we have been applying finishing touches to our quarters, and exercising in company movements, by squads, &c. The turn-out at beat of *reveille*, this morning at five o'clock, was a new sensation even to the "Corporal." The style of the morning ablutions was a novelty, too. Instead of basins and soap at the barracks, we were ordered to "fall in with towels," and then were positively marched to a pond to wash our faces and hands! O, the degradation of military rule! Such is war.

To-morrow we shall look for a host of friends from Boston. We will not attempt to disguise the hope we cherish, that they may bring their pockets full of apples!

In the multiplicity of Colonels Lee, never *lees* in a military sense, your correspondent may inform somebody by stating that the Colonel Lee commanding the 44th, was Major Lee of the 4th Battalion, and never Colonel Lee of the 20th or 27th, or Colonel Lee of the Governor's Staff, but is a brother of the latter. He is a large-hearted man, and a splendid officer. His staff and line officers are fully worthy of him. Altogether we are eminently satisfied with ourselves as a regiment.

IN BARRACKS AT READVILLE, }
SEPT. 6, 1862. }

Our first Sunday in barracks was enlivened by the presence of friends from Boston. The hope we breathed with respect to apples was more than met. The last cigar in many a private stock had just

ended in smoke, and shed its sweetness on the desert air of Readville, haply to be succeeded by new relays at the hands of thoughtful friends. Wine, fruit and other comestibles poured into some favored messes with overwhelming abundance, and it must be confessed that Monday's bill of health was not improved by Sunday's too luxurious bill of fare. "Corporal" would suggest that pastry and cake are of no benefit to a soldier, but that ripe fruit is not only a luxury, but of great advantage as a corrective of the system.

Another sanitary suggestion. Several sick men on Monday traced their ill health to bathing too soon after dinner. Few men can safely plunge into the water within four hours after eating heartily. It stops the digestive machinery, and then all goes wrong, indefinitely. Just before dinner is a good time to bathe, or just before breakfast or supper will do.

Would any one like to know how our first dress parade went off? Well, I shan't tell. The occasion was graced by the Boston Brass Band; but a spirited young horse in front of the lines did the best thing of the day—dancing in perfect time to the music. With his head erect and nervously distended nostrils, he was a picture of grace. That that horse has a soul "Corporal" has no doubt, else how could he have music in it? Horses of duller metal were all around him, standing upon three legs, and doing nothing but switch their tails at the flies. Some human beings behave still more indifferently at concerts.

There is some emulation among the companies in the way of neatness, conveniences and decorations about their several barracks. The palm is due to Company D for an early display of flags upon the outside, and also for certain novel decorations of the interior in the shape of one or two delicate articles of apparel, probably wafted by the wind from a washing hung out to dry.

One of our fellows was attacked by a cow the other day, and badly wounded in his under-garments, but is expected to recover.

Company D has paid a little compliment to its commissioned officers. Captain Sullivan was made the recipient of a sword, sash, and belt, and to Lieutenants Blake and Stebbins were presented shoulder straps. These gentlemen are justly beloved by the men of their company for their entire devotion to duty, and their high accomplishments as officers. They are all graduates of the Fourth Battalion. Of the qualifications of Captains Hunt, Lombard and Kendall also, the personal acquaintance of your correspondent enables him to speak in terms of high praise.

Company F having had the temerity to erect a flag-staff taller than Company D's, the latter company extended its mast a few feet over that of its neighboring barrack. This ambition to excel exhibits itself in a variety of ways. Some of the barracks are prettily lighted with lanterns, and in one or two of them the bunks are lettered and ornamented in a very artistic manner. Afterward Captain Spencer Richardson's boys secured the tallest pole which could be found in the neighboring woods, and at the present writing their flag floats the highest. The barracks occupied by the companies of Captain Lombard, Captain Hunt and Captain Kendall also have creditable displays of bunting, and contribute to give the encampment an animated and beautiful appearance.

Each company has its excellent choir of singers, but Company F affords instrumental as well as vocal music. The Cobb brothers, who are excellent violinists, nightly delight a numerous auditory assembled about their bunks.

As our stay at Readville protracts, we are gathering about us many little comforts and luxuries which we shall probably have to sacrifice in the event of a sudden retirement from before an enemy. But while we stay here our purpose is to make ourselves extremely comfortable; and in this purpose a numerous constituency of friends are lending their assistance in the way of hampers and baskets and bundles of fruit, and other delicacies. *Our* mess gratefully acknowledges a basket of incomparable pies from a pious lady in Boston, who has no peer among modern pastry cooks. Our judgment condemns all such luxuries, but our heart acknowledges how good they are. And we are most generously remembered in gifts of more substantial value—writing desks, medicines, wax-tapers, smoking caps, pipes, tobacco, cigars, &c., &c. All these, we know, are the romance of war, the pleasant prelude of things considerably rougher, but we will enjoy them while we may, and when we come to the sterner duties of the soldier our hearts and arms shall be nerved to strength by all the thoughtful kindness which friends now lavish upon us.

We shall not forget the "Donation Committee" of the city of Boston, or its queenly agent who presides at the headquarters on Tremont street, and dispenses havelocks, Testaments, pins, needles, towels, handkerchiefs, &c., to every applicant whom it is in her power to serve.

I informed you in my first letter that our regiment was honored by the membership of the astronomer Tuttle; I omitted, however, to mention that he rejected the tender of a lucrative position in the Washington Observatory to do a private soldier's duty in the 44th Regiment.