

**PERSONAL NARRATIVES OF
EVENTS IN THE WAR OF THE
REBELLION. FOURTH SERIES - NO.
16. IN A REBEL PRISION: OR,
EXPERIENCES IN DANVILLE, VA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649239757

Personal Narratives of events in the War of the Rebellion. Fourth Series - No. 16. In a Rebel Prison: Or, Experiences in Danville, Va by Alfred S. Roe

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

ALFRED S. ROE

**PERSONAL NARRATIVES OF
EVENTS IN THE WAR OF THE
REBELLION. FOURTH SERIES - NO.
16. IN A REBEL PRISION: OR,
EXPERIENCES IN DANVILLE, VA**

PERSONAL NARRATIVES
OF EVENTS IN THE
WAR OF THE REBELLION,
BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE
RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

FOURTH SERIES—No. 16.

PROVIDENCE:
PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.
1891.

IN A REBEL PRISON:

OR,


EXPERIENCES IN DANVILLE, VA.

BY

ALFRED S. ROE,

(Late Private, Co. A, Ninth New York Heavy Artillery Volunteers.)

PROVIDENCE:
PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.
1861.



IN A REBEL PRISON:

OR,

EXPERIENCES IN DANVILLE, VA.

"WHEN I was in prison!" How many people I have seen shrink away from me on my uttering this expression; but the appendix, "Rebel prison," invariably draws from them the words, "What! were you in a Rebel prison? In what prison, and how long? How did they use you?"

From intense aversion, the expression has changed to one of the utmost interest, and there are indications of awakening sympathy when I reply, "Yes, in Danville, Va. Between seven and eight months, and as well as they could; but their best was bad enough." The men, captured at Monocacy, Md., by foot and rail, have finally reached the most considerable place in southern Virginia, and on the morn of July 29th, 1864, the heavy prison door

opens and shuts upon our party. I have always rated the total number entering the building at about six hundred. Of these prisoners, one hundred and six were members of my regiment. On the 19th of the following February, when we parted from our prison house, I was one of forty-five "Ninth" men who joyfully set their faces northward. It does not follow that the difference in numbers represented deaths in Danville, for there had been two exchanges of sick; but more than one-quarter of our "boys" were left in Virginian graves. Just twenty-seven out of our one hundred and six succumbed to prison hardships, and in dying found their release. Of those sent northward in August and October, many were stopped at Richmond, and in "Libby," or on Belle Isle, found the fate escaped in Danville. Others, reaching the Federal lines, barely had strength to greet their friends, and then they, too, ceased from earth. It is a very moderate estimate to claim that fully one-half our number fell victims, in less than a year, to the results of our imprisonment. Then, too, any prisoner who had passed beyond the period of boyhood never fully recovered

from his months of hunger, cold, and anxiety. When, at the end of the following April, I rejoined my regiment and a comrade undertook to tell me how much I had escaped through my capture, I quite silenced him by asking if any company had lost more than half its men during my absence; if the Valley campaign, hard though it was, had resulted in the death of one-quarter of the members of the regiment. In the National Cemetery, at Winchester, thirty-eight comrades from the Ninth are sleeping; but they are the dead from Opequan, Fisher's Hill, and Cedar Creek, with those who died from disease during the fall. I make this comparison solely to show the extreme mortality among men in a condition of unnatural confinement with scant sustenance.

As to our location, we were in a brick building, erected some years before for tobacco manufacturing purposes, but which had been pressed into the service of the Confederate government for prison use; and I have since been informed by the owner he never got a cent for it. In the list of prison houses in Danville, it is No. 1. Just back of us, on the bank of a mill-race, is the cook-house, where Yan-

kee workmen mix up and bake strange combinations, called corn bread. My mother still preserves some of this bread as a Rebellion relic after more than a quarter of a century. I think it is as good now as it ever was. A small piece, shown by me on the Northern Central Railroad of Pennsylvania, on my way home, having a furlough, was provocative of great profanity. One man in particular wondering if any blanked blanked government expected God to help it when it gave such blanked stuff as that to white men. I think my returning the obnoxious article to my haversack and thereby ridding him of the sight, alone saved him from an apoplectic fit. Across the mill-race and between that and the River Dan was the foundry of Mr. Holland, where many weak-kneed and empty-stomached prisoners worked for a trifle more than what they could get to eat. Further along rolled the river itself, a stream notable in history as that whose upper waters had stayed the course of Cornwallis when pursuing Greene, and which, before it reached the sea, was broadened into the Roanoke. Here it is wide, but shallow, and its waters, clear or muddy, according to the season, are

to furnish us liquid for drinking. Beyond it, the land rises into a high hill, topped towards the west with trees, but immediately opposite, open, and betraying, wherever the surface is broken, the peculiar red earth characteristic of Virginia and North Carolina, for fully two hundred miles from north to south. It is surmounted by a substantial brick mansion, that of the famous Claiborne family, and the view rests the eye that looks out from a room crowded with woe and wretchedness. Save this building and a few structures along the river's edge, there is nothing to note towards the north.

When we can get a squint from the west windows without the sight of the vigilant guard, we may see a large wooden edifice known by us as No. 2. Here, are the Confederate prison headquarters, and here, too, are the few men detailed from the prisoners to do various things for us. For instance, Negus, of Company B, makes splint brooms to be used in sweeping the prison floors, and Aaron Hall, of Company A, finds plenty to do in painting the names of the dead upon the head-boards provided by the rebels. These men convey to their friends many