

As for the army itself, the men in line, they had a news service of their own in which they trusted more than they did the headquarters bulletins or the articles that came back to them from newspaper correspondents. It was a rough but an effective system that grew up in the Army of the Potomac in the three years that it worked together, its territory always the same, Virginia and its rivers; its objective the same, Richmond; its enemy the same, Lee and his army. A good percentage of these veterans viewed military matters a good deal as Lincoln did, with practical common sense; and they supported what they believed to be false moves and defeats a good deal as he did, with disgust but patience. There were few of the more intelligent ones that did not carry inside their pockets a good sized field map - maps, some of them that had gone through the whole three years. They knew the topography of the country better than many of their officers. They had their own notions of strategy and supreme disgust for wasting men. And as for what was going on, there were bodies of men in every corps that knew as well as many of the officers at headquarters; and that came about from the queer system of news gathering and exchanging that

had your own

had grown up.

It was based on a fraternity called "Camp Walkers" - men with a natural curiosity for knowing everything that was going on that concerned them. ~~They were the kind of men that~~ back at home ^{they} had always gone down town at night to sit in whatever might be the local headquarters - the drug store, the grocery, the court yard, if it happened to be a county seat - and hear what had happened about everybody not only in the town but in the county and often out in the state or nation. Turned soldiers these men were not content to know only what was going on in their own company. They followed their old habit of going out at night to learn what had gone on all around. The army camped for the night, its fires built, and there would come stalking into the firstd corps men from the second to the ninth, and so on, members of the Camp Walkers, asking questions, ~~getting all that the men at the various camp fires~~ ^{they were} knew, dropping their own news and passing on. Frequently it would be midnight and later before they got back to their own beds. ^{news service they built up} These Camp Walkers got to have such a standing with the privates that they had far more trust in their news than they had for anything so called official.

One thing that the Camp Walkers picked up and spread at the end of the first day of the Wilderness was the story so often officially denied that Meade had proposed that the army should fall back across the Rapidan.

Now Henry, alert as he was for every source of information, the value to him of the Camp Walker discovered soon after his return to the army from his first experience, and so, night after night, he would drift from camp fire to camp fire, interviewing the news carriers, learnings a thousand things about the way the army was feeling, about their notions of generals, their ideas of strategy, their resentments, their

dissatisfactions, that he never could have learned at headquarters. And the men at the camp fires gave him a welcome that possibly they would not have accorded to any other correspondent in the Army of the Potomac. They knew his story - his limp with them was his badge of honor, and to them it was a sign of superior courage that after what he had experienced he should come back and face it all again for they knew well enough, these men, that he like themselves faced death in all this camp, night and day - met it in this campaign often as they sat around their fires at night - the bullet of the ever present bushwhackers, the bold and enterprising Confederate sharpshooters, stealing in through this country which they knew as they knew their own plantations, to put a bullet through the heart or head of a man as he fried his bacon, filled his canteen. Henry ran the same risk, they

knew that they did, and whatever they had to tell him could have.

Of course this close touch, this intimacy of talk came out constantly in Henry's talks with Mr. Lincoln, gave him the sense of the men for which he was so hungry. He got from Henry a better realization than he was getting from any other source of the contempt that the veterans had for Grant's use of men in the southward march. They were willing to die, but they thought it was stupid to spend veterans as he was spending them, to make attacks on breastworks which must fail, it was not worth it. And they were particularly indignant that the ranks should be depleted by these repeated Confederate attacks because they saw their numbers being replaced by a class of men for whom they had supreme contempt - "Coffee Boilers" they called them. They were men who had been paid to come into the army. The veterans had three classes of men for whom they had the highest respect - Americans, Irish and Germans, but to hear them talk of Coffee Boilers you would suppose that they were come of an entirely

disappointments, that he never... learned at headquarters
And the men at the camp fires gave him a welcome that possibly
they would not have accorded to any other correspondent in the
Army of the Potomac. They knew that he was in the line with them
was his badge of honor, and to them he was a sign of superior
courage that after what he had experienced he should come back
and face it all again for they knew that the men, that
he like themselves faced death in all the day and day
not it is this campaign often as they saw the men at
night - the bullet of the ever present bushwhackers, the bold
and enterprising Confederate sharpshooters, stealing in through
this country which they knew as they knew their own plantations
to put a bullet through the heart or head of a man as he tried
his bacon, filled his canteen. Henry ran the same risk, they
knew that they did, and whatever they had to tell he could have
Of course this close touch, this intimacy of talk came
out constantly in Henry's talks with Mr. Lincoln, gave him the
senses of the man for which he was so famous. He told Henry
a better realization than he was getting from any other source
of the contempt that the veterans had for Grant's use of men in
the southward march. They were willing to die, but they thought
it was stupid to spend veterans as he was spending them, to make
attacks on breastworks which must fail, it was not worth it.
And they were particularly indignant that the tanks should be
depleted by these repeated Confederate attacks because they saw
their numbers being replaced by a class of men for whom they had
extreme contempt - "Coffee Soldiers" they called them. They were

*Henry
any of them men who will protect
the discussion of that
bulletin line & Kennedy
them for me & as a proof*

*They were with Henry a-
see*

distinct race, though probably most of them had one or the other of the three favored origins. No veteran, however, would have admitted that a coffee Boiler ^{could be of} ~~was~~ either Irish, American or German. ^{a coward} He was ~~an~~ ^{an} ~~entirely~~ ^{entirely} coward and only wanted to save his skin. Henry could bring back story after story of the absolute glee with which the seasoned men saw shells scattering groups of Coffee Boilers, of the refusal of surgeons to aid one of these group when they found he had inflicted a self-injury as sometimes happened, or of the way when one of them had turned tail all the veterans in line would combine to drive him back.

Mr. Lincoln's heart was sick again and again when he felt the just criticism of these brave fellows at the ruthless warfare which must replace men of such sterling bravery and sense by so many that were venal and contemptible.

As the army worked its way South, the dissatisfaction of the men grew. They felt that at more than one point Lee had been in their hands if the matter had been properly pushed. There were delays, that they violently cursed - cursed even to the face of officers frequently for they were a tribe for whom all illusions about officers had been dispelled. They obeyed them, yes, that was necessary, but they looked them through and through. There was not one of them that would not have told a Field ^{Grant} Marshall what he thought of him if it had come in his way.

Marshall what he thought of him if it had come in his way.

Nothing was more encouraging to Mr. Lincoln than Henry's reports of how Grant, in spite of what the men felt of his senseless wasting of their force, grew on them. It was the conviction that Grant was not going to turn back as he had sent word to Mr. Lincoln at the beginning of the campaign that won these men. For the first time they told themselves grimly around the camp fire, Lee is no longer the head of this army. It was noticeable that before they reached the James they were singing and singing

193

6

heartily "Ulysses Leads the Van." And the exultation of the groups around the camp fires to whom the Camp Walkers had brought the news that Lee did not know where Grant was, which was true, for some four days - well, they would have been willing to have died on the spot to have that certainty. But to have lost that advantage, not to have been in Petersburg as every man felt that they might have been if the thing had been pushed, was one of the old disgusting failures - a failure even which the President groaned as bitterly as they did.