

# TWENTY-FIFTH REGIMENT.

By GARLAND S. FERGUSON, SECOND LIEUTENANT COMPANY F.

In May, 1861, the companies which were to form the Twenty-fifth Regiment began to organize in Western North Carolina and to assemble in Camp Patton at Asheville. As each successive company took its position in camp the guard line was extended and the civilian began to do duty and learn the step and manœuvres of the soldier. By 15 August, ten companies, the requisite number, were in camp and the regiment was organized, the field officers being elected by the votes of the commissioned officers of the companies.

HON. THOMAS L. CLINGMAN, Colonel, who for years had represented the mountain district in the Congress of the United States, and who had resigned his seat in the United States Senate—afterwards Brigadier-General.

ST. CLAIR DEARING, Lieutenant-Colonel, who had resigned his position in the United States Army—later Brigadier-General.

HENRY M. RUTLEGE, Major, a boyish-looking young man of 22, with military education and bearing.

W. N. FREEMAN, was appointed Adjutant.

W. H. BRYSON, Quartermaster.

JOHN W. WALKER, Commissary.

DR. S. S. SATCHWELL, Surgeon.

DR. G. W. FLETCHER, Assistant Surgeon.

J. C. L. GUDGER, Sergeant-Major.

CLINTON A. JONES, Quartermaster Sergeant.

JULIUS M. YOUNG, Commissary Sergeant.

PETER M. RICH, Drum Major.

The companies composing the regiment were:

COMPANY A—From Henderson County, commanded by

Captain Baylis M. Edney, who was killed in 1863, and afterwards by Captain Matthew H. Love, who was promoted to Major and Lieutenant-Colonel; Captain John Plumby, who was killed at Five Forks.

COMPANY B—From Jackson County, commanded by Captain Thaddeus D. Bryson, and afterwards by Captain David Rogers.

COMPANY C—From Haywood County, commanded by Captain Sam C. Bryson, who was promoted Major, Lieutenant-Colonel, wounded at Fraser's Farm in front of Petersburg on the night of 17 June, 1864, resigned, and afterwards by Captain W. N. Freeman.

COMPANY D—From Cherokee County, commanded by Captain John W. Francis, who was promoted Major, wounded at Malvern Hill, resigned, and afterwards commanded by Captain Lee B. Tatham.

COMPANY E—From Transylvania County, commanded by Captain Francis W. Johnston, afterwards by Captain Wm. W. Graves, who was killed in front of Petersburg, then by Captain Charles L. Osborne.

COMPANY F—From Haywood County, commanded by Captain Thomas I. Lenoir, afterwards by Captain James M. Cathey, who was killed at the "Crater" in front of Petersburg on the 30th of June, 1864, then by Captain James A. Blaylock.

COMPANY G—From Athens, Georgia, Clay and Macon counties, North Carolina, commanded by Captain Wm. S. Grady, who was promoted Major and mortally wounded at the "Crater" 30 June, 1864, and afterwards by Captain John S. Hayes, then Captain John H. Phinisee.

COMPANY H—From Buncombe and Henderson counties, commanded by Captain Frederick Blake, and afterwards by Captain Solomon Cunningham, who was killed at Fredericksburg 13 December, 1862, then by Captain Thomas J. Young.

COMPANY I—From Buncombe County, commanded by Captain George W. Howell, afterwards by Captain W. Y. Morgan, who was promoted Major, and then by Captain A. B. Thrash.

COMPANY K—From Buncombe county, commanded by

Captain Charles M. Roberts, who was promoted Major of a battalion and killed by bush whackers while on detail duty in Madison County in 1864, and then commanded by Captain Jesse M. Burleyson.

With the exception of a part of Company G, the regiment was composed of mountain men west of the Ridge, the Colonel was a politician and statesman; the Lieutenant-Colonel a professional soldier; the Major a civilian with a military education. There were but few slave owners in the regiment, 90 per cent. of the men were farmers and farmer's sons, fully 80 per cent. home owners, or the sons of farmers who owned their farms. With the exception of the Lieutenant-Colonel the survivors expected to return to the peaceful pursuits of life after the war should terminate.

The majority of the men composing the regiment had been Union men until after President Lincoln's Proclamation, they then regarded their interests with the South and acknowledged their allegiance to the State. They had gone to war to defend their homes from invasion by an armed foe.

The men had been accustomed to independence of thought and freedom of action and had elected for their company officers their neighbors and companions and had no idea of giving up more of their personal liberty than should be necessary to make them effective soldiers—obedient on duty, independent off—this spirit, they in a marked degree, retained to the close of the war, and it was this which made them the pride of their General in battle and sometimes gave him annoyance in camp. Under the mild discipline of the Colonel and skillful training and accurate drill of the Lieutenant-Colonel and Major, the regiment was soon thoroughly drilled and disciplined, on duty. On 18 September the regiment marched from Asheville to Icard Station below Morganton, the nearest railroad point; the majority of the regiment had never seen a steam engine or a railroad. It stopped a day or two in Raleigh and drew uniforms and reached Wilmington 29 September and went into camp at Mitchell's Sound. Here the regiment had arms, muskets, distributed to it. In November it was sent to the coast defence of South Carolina and camped near Grahamville most



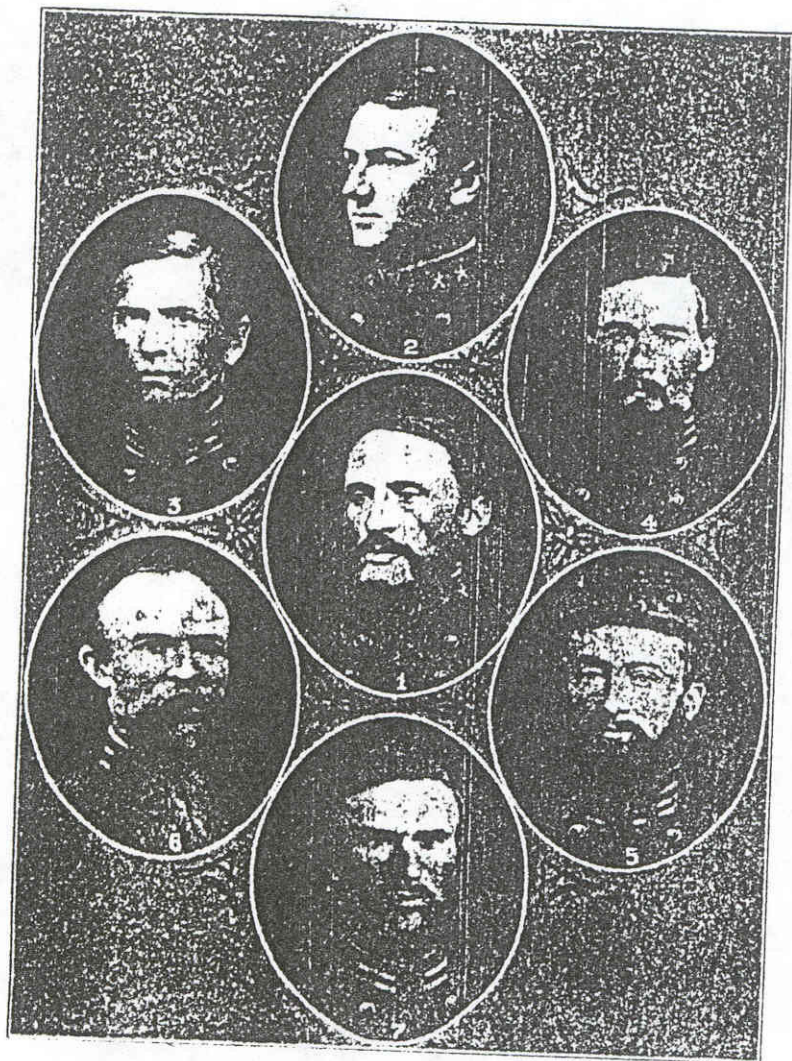
of the winter, doing picket duty, drilling and building fortifications. 14 March, 1862, the regiment left Grahamville for New Bern, N. C., but before reaching that point the city had been taken and the regiment met the retreating Confederate troops at Kinston, where it went into camp and remained until after the re-organization, being attached to the brigade commanded by General Robert Ransom, which consisted of the Twenty-fourth, Twenty-fifth, Twenty-sixth, Thirty-fifth and Forty-ninth North Carolina Regiments. At the re-organization Clingman was re-elected Colonel, Lieutenant-Colonel Dearing being a professional soldier objected to again taking a second place in the regiment and retired from the command. Major Rutledge was elected Lieutenant-Colonel and Captain S. C. Bryson of Company C, elected Major. Colonel Clingman was soon promoted Brigadier-General, Rutledge to Colonel; Bryson to Lieutenant-Colonel, and Captain Francis of Company D, to Major.

On 24 June, 1862, the regiment reached Richmond, Va., as a part of General Robert Ransom's brigade; by sunrise of the 25th it was on the march towards the front and to join the division of General Huger, which was then engaged at Seven Pines on the Williamsburg road. There was heavy firing of artillery and musketry in front. It had at last come in hearing of the true music of war. About one-half mile from the line the regiment was ordered to double quick. It was thrown in line on the immediate left of the Williamsburg road, and when within range of the enemy the regiment halted, the front rank at the command fired and fell to the ground, the rear rank fired over them, then with bayonets fixed we raised the rebel yell and charged; the enemy gave way and the ground which had been lost in the morning was retaken. The enemy opened a heavy fire of musketry and three times tried, without effect, to retake their lines. At 6 o'clock p. m. a heavy fire of grape was opened on the regiment without demoralizing or moving it. It was relieved at dark. Major-General Huger in his report of this battle says: "The Twenty-fifth Regiment (Colonel H. M. Rutledge) was pushed to the left of the Williamsburg road,

where the enemy had advanced, and drove them back in gallant style." The loss of the regiment was two killed and forty wounded. Private B. B. Edmondson was promoted to Adjutant of the regiment for gallantry on the field. General Robert Ransom commended, in his report of the engagement, the officers and men of the regiment.

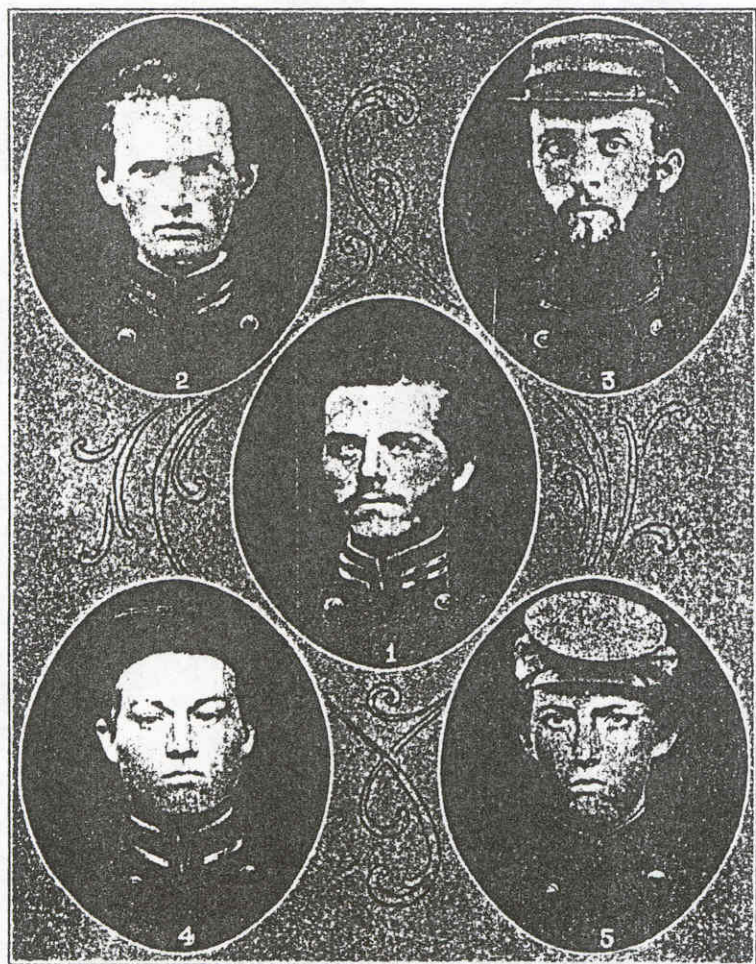
The regiment was on several occasions, during the succeeding days, under fire. On 2 July at Malvern Hill late in the evening it made a charge, but for want of support and on account of a galling fire, it was ordered back, and with other regiments of the brigade, was reformed under cover by General Robert Ransom, and again advanced to within one hundred yards of the enemy's guns and line, when the men raised a yell and charged in the face of a perfect sheet of fire from musketry and artillery, without wavering, to within twenty yards of the enemy's guns, some going even nearer. At this point General Ransom discovered that he was not supported and that the enemy were heavily massed, very greatly outnumbering his men. Unwilling to sacrifice his men in a hopeless charge and dark coming on he withdrew from the attack. In his report of the battle he speaks in the highest terms of praise of the conduct of the officers and men, commending especially the courage and coolness of Colonel Rutledge and Major Francis. The Colonel was stunned by a bursting shell and the Major wounded. The regiment's loss was ninety-three in killed and wounded. After the battle of Malvern Hill General Ransom had full confidence in the fighting qualities of the Twenty-fifth Regiment, and the men of the regiment had full confidence in him as a careful, courageous and skillful leader in battle. It was only in camp and on the march that any difference existed between the men and their General; this existence amounted to positive dislike, in some instances hate. The men of the Twenty-fifth Regiment would not have exchanged General Robert Ransom as a leader in battle for any General in the Army of Northern Virginia. His mastery of military tactics, coolness on the field, and judgment of ground enabled him to place his men in action with great rapidity and comparative safety, until they were ready to do execution. If he had un-





# TWENTY-FIFTH REGIMENT.

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. T. L. Clingman, Colonel.                  | 4. James A. Blalock, Captain, Co. F. |
| 2. Henry M. Rutledge, Colonel.               | 5. James M. Cathey, Captain, Co. F.  |
| 3. T. D. Bryson, Captain, Co. B.             | 6. W. Pink Welch, 1st Lieut., Co. C. |
| 7. J. C. L. Gudger, 1st Lieut. and Adjutant. |                                      |



TWENTY-FIFTH REGIMENT.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. R. J. Shelton, 1st Lieut., Co. C.     | 3. J. T. Cathey, 2d Lieut., Co. F.        |
| 2. W. H. Harigrove, 1st Lieut., Co. F.   | 4. Garland S. Ferguson, 2d Lieut., Co. F. |
| 5. John W. Norwood, 1st Sergeant, Co. C. |   |



derstood volunteer soldiers and realized that four-fifths of the men in ranks were as careful of their personal honor, and as anxious for the success of the cause as he, he would have been one of the greatest generals in Lee's army, was the opinion of some, and is still the opinion of the writer. After Malvern Hill the regiment went into camp for a time at Drewry's Bluff. It was here, in consequence of the exposure just gone through, that army sickness first made its telling effect on the regiment, the loss by death from sickness being eighty-one. About this time the Twenty-sixth Regiment was taken out of our brigade and later the Fifty-sixth Regiment was assigned us in its place.

† The regiment, with the brigade, was attached to Walker's Division in the Maryland campaign, and at Harper's Ferry was placed to guard Loudon Heights to prevent the escape of the enemy. When it was first made known to the men by General Lee's order that the army was to cross the Potomac there was a considerable murmur of disappointment in ranks. The men said they had volunteered to resist invasion and not to invade, some did not believe it right to invade Northern territory, others thought that the same cause that brought the Southern army to the front would increase the Northern army, still others thought the war should be carried into the North; thus the men thought, talked and disagreed. This was the first dissension among the men of the regiment, but all were united in their confidence and love for Lee.

At Sharpsburg the regiment was put into action near the extreme left of Lee's line. Our troops were retreating in front of a determined charge of the enemy, the men passed through the retreating troops, raised the yell, and charged with a determination that drove the enemy from the field to cover of his heavy works.

Camping equipments had been left behind at Richmond, and frequently on the march the men had to resort to ramrods for baking purposes and forked sticks for the roast; blankets and change of clothing had been left at Sharpsburg, and when the men recrossed the Potomac they were without blankets and bare of clothing, this was late in September and



the regiment did not receive new blankets till some time in October. The beds were roomy but cool.

After remaining in the Shenandoah Valley for some time the regiment marched to Madison Court House, where it bivouaced and there drew a supply of clothing and blankets, then marched to Fredericksburg. The winter at Fredericksburg was cold, but shelters were made of pine brush, log fires built in front, and with an additional supply of blankets and clothing, which most men received from home, the men were fairly comfortable.

On 11 and 12 December, 1862, the regiment was in position back of Marye's House. About 11 o'clock on the morning of the 13th, General Robert Ransom informed the regiment that General Cobb's men who were holding our line in front of Marye's House, were short of ammunition and must be reinforced, and that the undertaking was a dangerous one; the men fully understanding the importance and danger of the duty, moved forward with a firm and steady step, like patriots, to battle. On reaching the crest of the hill (the regiment having been divided so as to pass the house on either side) it met a fearful fire from the enemy two hundred yards off. In casting an eye along the line men could be seen falling like sheaves before the sickle. In less than two minutes the regiment's loss in killed and wounded was one hundred and twenty. It reached Cobb's line just as his men were emptying their last cartridge, and held the line, repelling six successive assaults, until relieved at nightfall.

During the spring of 1863 the regiment was stationed at Kenansville, Wilmington, and other places in North Carolina. The fall and winter of 1863 the regiment was stationed at Garysburg, from which place it made several excursions to check the advances of the enemy on the coast of North Carolina, but did not see much hard service until the spring of 1864. In October, 1863, a detachment of the regiment under Lieutenant-Colonel Bryson, had an engagement at Hot Springs, in Madison County, North Carolina. The enemy outnumbered them twenty to one, and the loss of the detachment in killed and wounded was heavy, including Lieutenant Hyatt, of Company F, who was killed on the field.

In April, 1864, the regiment participated in the assault and capture of Plymouth, N. C.

During the Virginia and Maryland campaigns, Colonel Rutledge had so endeared himself to the non-commissioned officers and privates of his regiment, by his courage and kindness, that they presented him a fine saddle horse, not allowing the commissioned officers to bear any part of the expense or take any part in the presentation ceremonies.

General Robert Ransom was promoted Major-General June 1863, and Colonel Matthew W. Ransom, of the Thirty-fifth, was promoted to Brigadier-General and assigned to the command of the brigade. General Matthew Ransom was a lawyer, very handsome in appearance, of undoubted courage and knew the temper of volunteer soldiers. The men of the regiment loved him and trusted him.

The regiment was engaged at Drewry's Bluff 12 May, 1864, in which engagement Company F lost Lieutenant Ebed J. Ferguson, killed, and six non-commissioned officers and privates wounded; and participated in the engagements at Ware Bottom Church and Bermuda Hundred.

On 16 June, 1864, the regiment crossed to the South of the Appomattox for the defence of Petersburg and entered at once into the fight in front of Avery's House, and checked the advance of the enemy who was driving back the Petersburg militia, the only protection to the city at that time. On the night of the 17th the regiment participated in the engagement at Avery's Farm, and drove the enemy from their breastworks at the point where the Twenty-fifth made its attack.

From 16 June, 1864, until April, 1865, the regiment was constantly under fire, with the exception of about ten days in March, occupying the trenches in front of Petersburg. The position of the regiment on 30 June, 1864, was on the right of Ransom's brigade and to the left of Elliott's South Carolina brigade. The explosion of Grant's Mine (the "Crater") was in the line occupied by the left regiment of the South Carolina brigade. Immediately after the explosion the Twenty-fifth regiment, then numbering about two hundred and fifty men moved from the trenches and formed a new line in the rear of the trenches occupied by



the South Carolinians, which had been taken at the time of the explosion and which were then occupied by the enemy. The regiment, with a remnant of the Sixth South Carolina, was the only force between the enemy and the city, at that point. The enemy massed his troops in our trenches in front of us until he had sixteen regimental flags in our works. He made several attempts to move forward and force our line, but was successfully repulsed and held in check for several hours, until reinforcements arrived. The regiment led Mahone's men in the charge which retook the works. In retaking the works the fight was hand to hand, with guns, bayonets, and swords, in fact anything a man could fight with. One sixteen year old boy had his gun knocked out of his hands and picked up a cartridge box and fought with that. Major Grady, who commanded the regiment, was mortally wounded and Captain Jas. M. Cathey, of Company F, killed.

On 21 August, 1864, the regiment participated in the battle of the Weldon Railroad, between Petersburg and Reams' Station. The enemy had entrenched himself behind heavy earthworks and had felled the timber in front, crossing the laps of the trees and sharpening the limbs. In order to reach their works the timber had to be removed so as to make a passway for the men. During this time the enemy kept up a constant fire until our men reached the works. The color-bearer of the regiment was shot down and Sergeant J. B. Hawkins, of Company C, caught the colors, rushed forward and placed them on the works. The works were taken and the enemy driven back under cover of his heavy artillery. The loss of the regiment was heavy in killed and wounded. Lieutenant Garland S. Ferguson, of Company F, was wounded in the right shoulder, but did not quit the field.

On 25 March, 1865, a detail of ten men from each regiment of Ransom's brigade, under Lieutenant Burch, was placed in charge of Lieutenant J. B. Hawkins, of Company C, Twenty-fifth regiment, who received his orders from General Robert Ransom in these words: "I order you to take Fort Steadman, not attack it." Lieutenant Hawkins quietly executed this order and had the fort in possession without the firing of a gun.

The Twenty-fifth was moved forward to the left of Fort Steadman and nearly in front of the position it had occupied in the ditches through the winter; drove in the enemy's pickets, took their first works and held them. The fort of the enemy in the field on the left was not taken, and the enemy from that point poured a fearful enfilading fire into the regiment. Several unsuccessful efforts were made from the front to dislodge the regiment. After the enemy retook Fort Steadman and was advancing in front and while the regiment was suffering the effects of an enfilading fire from the left, the Colonel walked along the line of his regiment with his cap on sword, shouting to his men, "Don't let them take our front, Twenty-fifth, the Twenty-fifth has never had her front taken." At this time orders were received from General Gordon to fall back to our line of works. The loss of the regiment was heavy. A number of commissioned officers were severely wounded, including Lieutenant Garland S. Ferguson, whose left thigh was broken; many non-commissioned officers and privates were killed and wounded.

After Steadman the regiment moved to the right, marching and fighting; the principal battles in which it was engaged were at Amelia Court House, and Five Forks. I can do no better in giving the description of the battle of Five Forks than to do so in the language of the gallant and beloved Colonel of the regiment. He says: "At Five Forks I was more proud of the regiment than I had ever been before, and that is saying a great deal. I have thought of them and compared them to the 'Stonewall' of Manassas. They were surrounded on three sides by many times their own numbers, but there they stood, a solid mass of mountain men, broad sides from the enemy being poured into them, and there they stood like the rock of Gibraltar. When I remember that heroic scene, I cannot fail to compare that gallant company, desperate band, to the line the Great Napoleon saw at Waterloo. Speaking afterwards of the English line of battle, he says: 'I covered them with artillery, I flooded them with infantry, I deluged them with cavalry, but when the smoke of battle rose, there stood the red line yet.' Yes, there stood the gray line, the only line that stood that day, that I



saw, and finally, after combating five different and separate times over the same field, pine thickets, broom grass, old fields, all sorts of a place, I was going to win. I was attempting to whip the enemy with the Twenty-fifth North Carolina, and I knew I could do it. I thought I was getting along finely, until I happened to look to front, left and right, and saw we were surrounded with but a small loop hole to get through. We backed through that, emptying into their faces the last cartridge we had."

The regiment's loss from its enlistment to the surrender was: Killed in battle, 220; died from disease, 280, and 470 were wounded, of which last number 140 were wounded more than once.

When General Lee's order to surrender was received, the Twenty-fifth regiment still had its flag. It was furled, and taken down in obedience to the order, but the color-sergeant concealed it on his person, returned with it home and gave it to his captain, and it was destroyed by a fire when Captain Freeman's house was burned.

I omitted to state that Dr. F. N. Luckey was made surgeon of the regiment in 1862, in place of Dr. Satchwell, who was assigned to hospital duty, and Sergeant-Major J. C. L. Gudger was promoted Adjutant in 1864, to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Adjutant Edmondston.

Captain H. A. Boone succeeded Captain T. D. Bryson in command of Company B. Captain Boone was murdered on the streets of Murphy by the celebrated outlaw, Morrow, after the close of the war.

GARLAND S. FERGUSON,

WAYNESVILLE, N. C.,

9 April, 1901.