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A Ramble on Roanoke Island N.C.

February 13<sup>th</sup> 1862

With two or three companions, I left the Str. "Vidette" at 9A.M. for a run through the Island. We obtained a pass at Head Quarters, and took our course through the woods intending to visit the camps of the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Mass. Vols.

A long and tedious tramp brought us to the upper battery near which the steamer "Pilot Boy" was taking on board a large number of rebel prisoners, officers and enlisted men- guarded by a detachment from one of the Mass. Regiments. Another rapid walk brought us to the barracks occupied by our men. We found our friends seated about a fire, engaged in a delightful occupation of cooking pancakes. They had formed quite a quantity of flour and a little labor

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furnished them with a palatable substitute for "hard tack" although they had no salt and used salt pork to fry them in. Our walk had made us ravenous and we could not refuse the tempting cakes offered us. We afterward strolled through the camp getting an opportunity to talk with some of the prisoners, who seemed willing to talk, many seeming glad they were captured. Occasionally we found one who bitterly denounced the "Yankees" and indulged in a useless bravado more ridiculous than harmful. We bought some of the confederate scrip giving good Yankee money for it. Leaving the camps we walked back to the beach and took our way toward our landing place intending to visit the shore batteries.

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The first battery mounted 12 guns and was now guarded by a detachment of the 57<sup>th</sup> N.Y. Vols. The second I describe as typical of the rest. It was built of sand from 10 to 14 feet thickness of wall, well sodded. The works were 6 to 8 ft. high. The magazine was built in a pyramidal form in the center of the fort, of solid logs, closely joined, covered with sand and outside of this thick layers of sod. It is 12 ft high and 12 to 15 ft thick square at the base. The door is on the side furtherest from the water. 4- 32 pdrs. made up the armament of the fort. Near the path by which we left the fort we saw a marble slab inscribed to the memory of Thos. Fitzpatrick who died in August 1861 and was

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"buried by his comrades-in-arms, the Bourke Guards Georgia Vols. C.S.A." Another Georgian had been buried within the enclosure, whose name had been written in lead pencil on a simple board standing at the head of the grave.

Most of the houses we passed along the way were deserted, but we now came to one that was occupied, and feeling tired and hungry after such a long tramp, we entered and asked for something to eat, promising to pay in Uncle Sam's good currency. Improved the time, while waiting, by talking with the proprietor. He told me there were about 300 people living on the island which was 12 miles long and on the average 6 wide. Two

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churches, one Baptist and one Methodist--are sustained and 2 stores provide the people with necessaries. The inhabitants do a little farming, but fish the greater part of the year. Irish and sweet potatoes and cabbages are staple products. Their market is Elizabeth City N.C.

Our informant had lived on the island about 15 years. He owned quite a large number of acres, most of which he had cleared, and had built several buildings. He had 3 children, one of them a little girl who was quite ready to go with us, for she was "tired, tending the baby."

The Georgians robbed him last fall, destroying his potatoes, killing his cow besides otherwise maltreating him.

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After three-quarters of an hour we found no food forthcoming, and left for the Landing, where we arrived about dusk. While waiting for a boat we approached a Camp-fire of the 5<sup>th</sup> R.I. boys who gave us a soldier's welcome, sharing with us their hard bread and coffee, although they were not overstocked.

A boat soon came off from the "Vidette" and we rowed away passing a small side-wheeled steamer flying the rebel flag at the stern, while a white flag of truce drooped from the staff at the bow. I was told she came for the bodies of Captain Wise and other officers.

H. E. Valentine