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An early morning Reconnaissance along the Appomattox River near Petersburg 1864.

At 3 A. M. July 11, I was awakened by Capt. M. B. Bessey A.A.I.G. on the staff of Brig. Genl. Geo. J. Stannard comd'g 1st Div. 18th A. C. Our Hd. Qr. were in a spur of the big Ravine that commenced at the River and circled to the left for several miles just within the Union Lines.

Together we walked up the ravine to Capt. Long's quarters. Capt. Long was in command of the Division sharpshooters. After he joined us we took the road along the river for half a mile or more toward Point of Rocks; there crossing a wide field to the left, reached the woods lining the river bank. We kept along the bank toward the junction of the Appomattox and the James. It was still

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dark and we moved freely and safely, though involuntarily hastening our steps across the open spaces where we were exposed to any observers on the other side. We passed a 2 gun battery and occasionally a pit dug for the sharpshooters. As it began to grow light we came to a large tree just opposite the rebel fort, which marked the limits of the present trip. Here we crept about very cautiously, exposing ourselves as little as possible to the enemy's sharpshooters, the river being quite narrow at this point.

As the dawn came on, we got a very good view of the rebel works, and I began a sketch-map of the river, batteries and camps &c and their position in relation to our own works, estimating distances as accurately as possible. As soon as it was broad daylight—

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and the sketch completed—we began our return trip, and here came the excitement. We had to move very carefully, keeping behind the bushes and trees which lined the river's bank, running very swiftly and singly [?] as we passed the open spaces. We made some observations through the loopholes in the rifle-pits, and could plainly see the rebel camps, and men moving about, and we heard the bugles sounding perhaps the "Reveille." At the 2 gun battery we stopped quite a while getting a good view of the works and making some additions to the map. The Sergeant in charge reminded me that my white paper made a good mark and suggested that I carry it under cover.

Keeping on we soon came to the place where we struck the river on our way out,

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but instead of crossing to the road we kept along the river to the battery on the point. Here was quite a stretch of uncovered ground which we had to cross, and we skipped over it in lively style, our speed accelerated by the singing of the "minies" which at least proclaimed the good intentions of "our friend the enemy."

Passing down into the ravine we regaled ourselves on the delicious blackberries which grew very abundantly at that point. Climbing the side of the ravine, we found ourselves in a covered way through which we passed into the battery. It was known as "Dan's battery," sometimes called the "Point battery" as the point upon which it was located was somewhat prominent just at

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the bend of the river. The battery mounted 2 – 30 pounder Parrott guns and several mortars.

Standing directly behind, we could see the bomb leave the mortar and sail majestically into the air, the fuse hissing and sputtering as it went.

A large telescope was mounted in one of the embrasures through which we looked directly into the city. Under the bridge connecting Petersburg and the opposite shore we saw a man in his shirt-sleeves carrying a bucket of water which he had just dipped from the river. A clock on one of the steeples indicated twenty minutes of six o'clock. We lingered here for quite a while but as we must get back to HdQrs., and withal were

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somewhat hungry, we left. It was our intention to get into the 2nd line [?] and get (as we thought we could) a fine view down the river, but as we must go across the "open" to do it, or go a long way round to keep under cover, we gave it up. Walking for a little distance along the edge of the bluff, we descended into the ravine, and, once hidden by the trees made our way back to camp, arriving just in season for a bountiful breakfast of Hard Tack & coffee.

H. E. Valentine