

Rev. Charles P. Henze

His mission in Vicksburg - His account of the
siege, scene of the diggings and hardships among
civilians - The horrors of Vicksburg surpassing those
of Sebastopol - Hell among the wounded -
Heartrending scenes in the field and
in the hospitals. Sad picture of death
and war and suffering -

Am. Lib. & News

This gentleman was not a regularly appointed
chaplain, but was pastor of St Pauls, Vicksburg,
~~during the siege~~. The following letter bearing
date July 7th 1864 giving a graphic account of the
~~the siege was~~ ^{over}, written by him to a friend, who has placed
it in ~~my~~ ^{our} hands for publication.

An experienced pen could have written
volumes on the subject that would have teemed
with thrilling interest, as the French would
say; and I can safely say that there is not
a man in any city throughout this vast
Republic, who has seen and suffered what
we have. Sebastopol itself could not have
surpassed Vicksburg in horrors. There is
not a Priest throughout the North or South
who has ever been in the situation of
your friend, nor do I say this in the spirit
of boastfulness. God has protected us and
I fear we are not sufficiently thankful for
his goodness.

For forty eight days was
the city continually bombarded. I only speak
of the last bombardment conducted by five
iron-clads, mounting ten guns each - five
inches in diameter: seven mortars, thirteen
inches bore; besides fifty siege guns, varying
in bore from six to ten inches; at least
200 field pieces of all dimensions, such were
the instruments of destruction. A hundred
& twenty infantry regiments. amongst

whom were many regiments of riflemen always on the alert with rifle carrying from a mile to a mile and a half ^{we} were in the center of a circle of about a mile or a mile and a half in diameter.

The bombs were continually passing over our heads and falling everywhere around us.

The rifle balls also played an agreeable accompaniment to the discordant music of the ~~guns~~ ^{federals}. More than ~~400~~ ^{seven hundred} Cannons, sometimes played ~~altogether~~ ^{altogether}, may give some idea of the fabulous number of shells thrown at the old Capitol of Vicksburg. If ~~the~~ ^{it} had been a city built on the European style, ~~she~~ ^{it} would have been ~~ripped~~ ^{ripped} to the ground, but the houses being far ~~apart~~ ^{apart} did not suffer as much as they ~~would~~ ^{would} otherwise have done. Visitors are surprised to see Vicksburg still the same city. I celebrate mass every day - Sunday not excepted -

The bell can be heard in ~~a minute~~ ^{the distance}, so the ~~federals~~ ^{federals} ~~and upon a shell comes crashing through~~ ^{and upon a shell comes crashing through} ~~split~~ ^{split} ~~by sending a bomb through the~~ ^{by sending a bomb through the} church in the midst of the mass.

The disturbance frightens us a little but that's all. In the space of three hours three bombs passed through the church, and three have dropped in our little garden.

This Sunday following, at ~~5 minutes to 10~~ ^{10 o'clock} a bomb pierced the door of the church and took off the arms of an old man, and

at ~~set~~ ^{another} bomb passed through the window and struck before the altar of the Blessed Virgin. This good mother protected us. The splinters fell all around our people - at the side of women praying before the altar of Mary, but not an atom touches one of them.

People fly to the church. The same day another bomb comes towards the church. ~~Too much~~ to the left by near a foot. The house gets it all.

We were four of ^{sitting together} us, and not one of us wounded. The shell passed between my legs, cut the rungs of a chair, and a ~~confederate~~ soldier, who was sitting on it at the time, suffered no injury whatever. The chair is now a relic.

The other ^{evening} day I was eating a supper that had come from a restaurant when a shell pierced the corner of the house, passed before me at the table, saluting me ~~a la Yankee~~.

Well I think you would have done as I did, of course I did not abandon my supper.

Oh, no! It was too precious for that especially as

I had a Mule Steak dressed in oil and molasses. For a whole week I didn't get anything else from the butcher, but Mule steak. ~~As luck would have it~~ I discovered this on the second day and could not eat any more.

The meat is really delicious, which is all I can say for beef. The hard crackers and molasses were considered a fortune. We were gay and contented without being indifferent. But the poor soldiers! Their share was four ounces of bread a day! —

Nine shells through the church have finished the work. It is still in the same condition.

I administered the holy Viaticum and Sacred Unction to a dying man in a rifle pit (~~cellar~~); and while so doing ~~the~~ shells entered through a rat hole, and on returning two bullets flew by me, and three or four rifle balls whistled around my ears. I hastened my steps — a ball struck a fence in front of me. — a shell, ~~a twenty five pounder~~, fell some paces in front of me & turned up the earth and filled me with dust — That is all!

I was waiting on two ~~lieutenants~~ ^{officers} while the two legs of one and the thigh of the other were being amputated, It was near the battle field.

The shells respected us. Oh my friend, do not think me romancing, no! it would take volumes to relate the horrors of that siege.

But the worst terrible horror I ever saw happened in the case of a Louisianian.

^{Heber}
~~gallow~~ His name was ~~Heber~~ of Ibberville, La,
a young ^{Creole} ~~Creole~~, and nephew of General Heber.
Poor friend! The same shell that wounded seven
of his comrades cut him in two just below the
hips; how terrible! His legs and thighs were
left on the battle field and the rest of his ~~and~~
mutilated body was carried to the hospital. I
arrived; eight doctors and more than fifty persons
were ~~anxious about~~ ^{present}; ~~an Episcopalian~~
~~preacher of the A.B. was also there.~~ The ^{body} ~~man~~
was stretched on a table. The blood flowed
out almost in waves. The doctors declared it
impossible to arrest it, all the arteries being ~~to~~
broken. The flesh fell off in shreds, and all
the entrails were laid open. His first word
was in Creole - "My Father! O, my father
I am dying - I am passing away from all these
anxious ones!" - he then confessed with all the
ardor, and sincerity possible believing in his
approaching death. Three minutes elapsed and
he became as pale as death. I gave him absolution
and administered Extreme Unction on his face
when he cried out "Father I die, may God have
pity on me! - Jesus pardon me!" I then commenced
the prayers that follow Extreme Unction -
He was no more. The last drop of his blood
was spilt in remission of his sins as he him-
self publicly remarked before his death.

Three brothers, Babinian of the Lafayette
parish died here with all the rights of religion.
Such examples may be cited by hundreds.

On going out to attend to young Heber, I gave the holy Viaticum to two dying persons, attacked by the gangrene after amputation. In the case of one ^{the amputation} it went to the heart, and his breast became as black as a negro's. Poor friend! he was stretched out like a worm.

Consider now for a moment ~~some~~ without counting the dead during the siege, when the city surrendered we had 6,000 wounded or sick, many of them Catholics of Louisiana, and also those in the three or four large hospitals before the capture, and all this the result of 18 months. We have seen, alas! too much, I never wish you the same. ~~Such ignorance - such indifference among such a population~~ It was terrible, dear friend, nothing but death, sorrow and desolation on all sides. War is a terrible scourge. We have had our share of it. My God, pardon and pity us for we have sinned ~~and~~ ^{for we have} sinned ~~and~~ suffered fearfully.

Yours &c.

Charles P. Menze.