

Atlanta Southern Confederacy Newspaper

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Newspaper Article

Correspondence at the Southern Confederacy.

In Camp Near Manchester, Tenn.,

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Messrs. Editors

I have but few moments to devote to letter writing, yet will try to give you a hastily prepared sketch of what I saw during the six days' fighting on Stone [sic] River, before Murfreesboro'. The Kentucky Brigade was aroused on the morning of Sunday, the 28th ultimo, at an unusually early hour. In strong contrast with the preceding day, the sun shone out bright and warm, serving to enliven the spirits of the men, already at fever heat on account of the prospect of a general engagement. By nine o'clock we were moving towards the battle field, with banners flying, drums beating and men cheering. We halted in line of battle to the right and rear of General Withers' line – Stone [sic] river intervening between his right and our left. Here we remained until near 8 o'clock, p.m, [sic] of the following day, listening to the roar of artillery on the front and discussing the probable results of the impending struggle. About this time the rattling of musketry along Withers' line brought every man to his place. I am sorry to say that this fire was directed against our own cavalry as they emerged from the woods falling back before the advance of the enemy. As the cavalry filed to the rear, the 6th and 9th Kentucky and 41st Alabama regiments and Cobb's Kentucky battery, under Colonel Thos. Hunt, were ordered forward to occupy a hill in front and to the right of Withers' line. Our advance was impeded by tangled grass and heavy weeds, through which the men eagerly pressed, anxious to secure the hill we were aiming at, as its elevation made the key to our position. Before we reached it the crest of the hill our skirmishers were driven back on the main body, and a Yankee regiment advanced to within twenty yards of Cobb's battery. It was now quite dark, and the woods and corn stalks afforded due cover for the enemy; but Col. Hunt, whose skill and gallantry are only equaled by his watchfulness, discovered them in time to lead forward the 41st Alabama, when the enemy scattered in confusion after firing a heavy volley at the uncomfortable short distance of 80 yards; but strange to say, no one was hurt. Our line of battle was now completed – resembling in shape the letter V – Murfreesboro' opposite the opening and the apex resting on the hill occupied by the troops under Colonel Hunt. Around the base of the hill to our left and front ran the river, along which a very strong line of skirmishers was established. The remainder of us tried to sleep, but the keen wind and cold wintry rain rendered any attempts futile. I was not only without blankets, but had also left my overcoat in the rear, so I was compelled to resort to exercise to keep up warmth, while I amused (?) myself by listening to the occasional report of a skirmisher's gun and counting the camp free of the enemy stretching as far as the eye could reach. Not a fire was built along our whole line.

The long, dreary night had an end at least; but the rain and gusty weather continued during the ensuing day. The day wore away but no attack was made and the quick fire of skirmishers or short artillery duets only, broke the silence reigned over both armies. The Yankee sharpshooters

commanded our hill, and as they had trees to fire from, while our boys had none, all we could do was to "lay low" and wait till night to construct rifle pits. Our skirmishers were completely under fire, and with no protection but the tall grass. The Yankees resorted to all kinds of taunts to induce them to reply, and thus disclose their position. They would cry "Rebs [sic] get off that wet ground – you will catch your death cold," "show your colors," and other expressions too low to repeat. A wag on our side remarked that this was a political difficulty and he thought the Yankees were entirely too personal. Another was rash enough to reply when asked "Rebs, [sic] have you had your breakfast?" "yes, but the Hartsville braves didn't." The next moment fifty balls whistled around our ears. These skirmishers could only bereleived [sic] after dark.

Tuesday went away without any event of note beyond a charge on Withers' center, which was gallantly repulsed, and an occasional shelling. At night we were allowed to fall back a short distance to a ravine, where we built fires and warmed and dried ourselves. Day light found us at our posts, together with the 2d and 4th Ky. regiments, all under General Hanson.

Wednesday's sun was almost an hour high before the bloody contest of that day commenced. You have read and will doubtless receive descriptions by eye witnesses of the gallant fighting on the extreme left. Our battery commanded the enemy's flank so completely that it was increased to twelve guns, which poured death and destruction into their ranks; whole companies were seen to fall before its fire, and every shot was effectual so skillfully were the guns handled under the directions of the gallant Graves and brave Cobb. Of course this brought upon us the concentrated fires of several Yankee batteries. The solid shot whistled, the shells shrieked and grape fluttered around us in a very disagreeable manner. There was scarcely an hour of daylight, from Tuesday morning until Saturday night, that our hill did not receive more or less shelling. It' was here that Adjutant Curd of the 9th Ky. fell, shot through by a grape shot. About the same time Captain Desha, of the same regiment, was struck on the head by a six pound shot. He was carried to the rear as dead, but in less than six hours he was again with his command. At noon Gen. Withers' Division was ordered to charge the enemy. From our position I could see his right, and Chalmers' Brigade as they advanced across an open field. Nothing could have been [section missing]

back for miles, and we remained in undisputed possession of the field until the evacuation, excepting [sic] their shelling and a spirited, but unsuccessful, attack on Chalmers' line late on Saturday evening.

Would that I could and with an account of the evacuation, but facts render if necessary for me to go back to a charge made by the Kentucky Brigade, supported by General Brown's command, on Friday afternoon. Had this charge been made on Wednesday the rout of the Yankees would have been complete. But why the move was ordered when it was I can't see. – The ground was such that the troops became confused, and although Palmer's Division of Crittenden's [sic] corps were driven across the river with great slaughter, our loss was heavy and no good result effected. It was here that General Hanson and Lieut. Burntley of the 4th Ky. fell mortally wounded. Lieut. Tryon of the 2nd, Capt. Utterback of the 6th Ky., and many other noble soldiers were killed.

At 12 o'clock on Saturday night we were aroused from our wet blankets, and quietly fell into lines to evacuate our position, a movement which surprised the majority of us, but doubtless the best we could do after allowing the enemy to rest, fortify, and reinforce. None but a soldier can imagine our horrible experience as we marched to [sic] the rear, stumbling along in the dark, in mud a foot deep. Eight miles from Murfreesboro' the 41st Ala., the 9th Ky. and Cobb's battery, under Col Hunt, were halted as a rear guard. In due time they re-joined the Brigade under Col. Trabue at this place. Col. Hunt remains here in command of the post – None but a participant can know the hardships and suffering experienced by our troops during the past week. Their splendid fighting shows with what

fortitude they endured their trials, --With the exception of a few hours one night, I did not leave the trenches, or even wash my face, during the week.

I fear this disconnected and humbly written sketch will hardly prove readable, but having exhausted my leisure time, I once more sign myself VOLUNTEER.