Head Quarters
21st Illinois Vols.
August 11th 1863.

Col. J. W. S. Alexander's
Official Report
of the
Battle of Stone River

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Division Hospital, 1st Division, Right Wing,
Army of the Cumberland,
Stone River, January 7th 1863.

Capt. Voorhies, A.A.A.G.

I have the honor to submit, for the information of the Commanding Officer of the 2nd Brig. 1st Division, Army of the Cumberland, the following Statement of the movements of the 21st Ills. Vols. Infantry, after leaving the encampment in advance of Nashville, Tenn, on the 26th December 1862, and the part taken by it in the battle of Stone River on the 30th and 31st of December 1862.—

Shortly after leaving Camp by the Edmiston Pike, the rain fell in torrents and reaching the terminus of the Pike at the foot of a range of hills, the March became exceedingly slavish and wearying to the men, and was, with great difficulty, continued in good Order.—

Upon reaching the vicinity of Nolaneville, heavy cannonading occurred immediately in advance; the Brigade, moving left in front, was thrown into position on the right of the road; I was directed to follow, by the left flank, the right of the 101st Ohio, when it should move forward in line of battle; while advancing in this Order, rebel Cavalry, in dispersed Order, were observed

retiring before our extreme right and considerable musketry firing occurred without important result.——

After passing through a thick cedar grove on a rough, rocky surface, and reaching open fields in view of a rebel battery in position, my men threw off their knapsacks, formed forward in line of battle and moved to the front until having reached the position from which the rebel battery retired precipitately after delivering a rapid fire; we were halted to rest the men who had, with the greatest difficulty and yet with alacrity, moved up in excellent order. After a brief delay, an advance being again ordered, my position, on the extreme right of the Brigade, as the valley grew narrow approaching Knob-gap, threw my route of march upon the steep sides and over the crest of some lofty hills, enabling me to well nigh gain the rear of a considerable rebel force supporting a battery that was pouring a heavy fire upon the left of the Brigade in the valley, a heavy volley of musketry directed across the narrow gap here made a perfect route of what had already become a precipitate retreat under the well directed fire of our Canoniers; one piece of their artillery having been abandoned near the left of my Regiment on the near approach of the line of skirmishers and the advance of the Brigade.——

The nature of the ground having thrown my Regiment in advance, we followed up a short distance and were

ordered to halt, having passed the gap, and after some skirmishing without results and some delay, the rebel cavalry force filed slowly away to the front in the distance and we were ordered to bivouac half a mile to the rear.——

On the morning of the 27th, after much delay, we moved in the direction of Triune some three miles, and arrived in the vicinity of batteries throwing a heavy fire, at the commencement of a rain storm of unusual severity, from the violence of which we had no protection; after it had somewhat abated and the firing had altogether ceased, we were ordered to bivouac near the road, where we remained until the morning of the 29th; at that time, we moved back a half mile, and, turning to the right, continued the march in the direction of Murfreesboro, reaching, as was supposed, the immediate vicinity of the rebel army soon after dark. Early on the morning of the 30th, having received an order to that effect, we moved forward in line of battle, preceded by a line of skirmishers; crossing Overalls Creek, we shortly entered a wood beyond which was an extensive body of cultivated lands intersected at 1/4 of a mile to our front by a narrow belt of timber in which was supposed to be a rebel force; after some delay and some firing from batteries to our left that seemed to elicit no reply, my men were ordered to pile their knapsacks

and leave with them a suitable guard and again move forward bearing to the right or South East across a corn field and into the wood above referred to in which we rested in line of battle while the 2nd Minn. Battery opened fire to the front. Our line of Skirmishers, at this time, engaged that of the enemy; after sometime in which the battery maintained a brisk fire, Co. "F" Capt. Blackburn, deployed as skirmishers, was relieved by Co. "G". Capt. George, and Lieut. Col. Mc. Mackin, by order of Brigade Commander, was detached in command of the brigade line of Skirmishers, which, moving forward under a rapidly increasing fire, sharply contested the ground, not without loss. At this time my regiment was ordered to move to the front in line of battle, on the right of the 15th Wisconsin, followed on the left and rear by the 2d Minn. Battery. After advancing slowly and steadily for a time in passing over a rocky piece of ground with occasional large trees and many small cedars, shutting off the view, to some extent, of the surface immediately to the front, my attention was attracted by the discharge of a rebel battery hitherto unknown before my right wing, and directly in the line of my march apparently within the same inclosure and fifty to eighty yards distant, followed instantly by a very heavy volley of musketry from infantry concealed behind rail fences and log buildings near a farm house, a destructive fire was returned by my men upon

the instant, which caused the enemy to recoil and the battery to start in retreat; I ordered my men to continue to move forward and fix bayonets, which was promptly obeyed with spirit and alacrity, with a view to charge the battery and was upon the point of giving the necessary command when, the smoke lifting from the heavy volleys of musketry, I observed that the battery was further to the front than I had supposed and that the space was obstructed by two heavy rail fences, the position flanked by extensive cover to the right (our left) for infantry and fully occupied, and while my attention was directed to the right of my line, the extreme left, under a misapprehension as to an order given and movement made in the Regiment to our left and under a furious fire of musketry at short range, was thrown into temporary confusion. Under the circumstances my line was retired fifty to eighty yards and ordered to lie down in front and to the right of Capt. Hotchkiss battery while it replied to the rebel battery; my men, in the mean time, occupied every available cover and hotly contested the ground with a strong force of rebel sharpshooters after the rebel battery was driven from its last position and until it was too dark to distinguish between friend and foe. Having received an order to that effect, I withdrew my command to a position one hundred yards in rear of the 101st Ohio, in line of battle, to our rear and in supporting distance during the engagement; my loss in Killed and

wounded, during the afternoon, was one hundred and thirty Five. The early part of the Night was occupied in caring for the wounded who were all removed to a Hospital near by; in distributing Cartridges and getting ready for the Morning, after which the Men slept by their arms, with orders to be ready to fall in at a Moments' Notice, which they did soon after day-light; On the Morning of the 31st, the enemy having opened fire upon our advanced lines, shortly afterwards, I received an order to fall back one or two hundred yards, the Brigade moving back to the line of the other Brigades of the Division, My position was in a narrow belt of woods passed through the day before and to the right of the Brigade Battery, My line extending with the general line of battle from North East to South West; One hundred yards in front of the extreme right of my line was a dense thicket of Cedar, half way a rail fence running nearly due East, along the edge of the wood, My Men were ordered to lie down in position, to observe the field and use their arms, the battle, in the Mean time, was fiercely contested along the entire line to our left, less obstinately to the right; after remaining here a short time, I received Notice from Genl. Davis that I would probably be attacked by forces moving down from the right, our line having given way I immediately threw back my right Wing, causing

it to front directly towards the thicket and soon afterwards broke the line still further to the left, fronting almost entirely to the point from which the attack would then evidently be made. The Enemy's skirmishers having already appeared in the edge of the thicket and opened a brisk fire which was responded to, my men still lying down, the enemy coming up in force immediately and the volume of fire rapidly increasing as they were pressing toward the fence, I ordered my men to their feet. Being thus engaged, I received an order to move to the relief of the 58th Ills, heavily pressed by overwhelming numbers with which, the circumstances in which my command was placed at the moment, rendered it impossible for me to comply. The forces next on my right having entirely disappeared from the field, my lines being completely enfiladed, my men yet stubbornly contested the ground until our entire force to the left was moving to the rear, holding the position without weavering or yielding until the last moment that a just regard for the safety of my entire command from capture would permit, withdrew in good order, delaying at a rail fence separating a corn field from the timber, to deliver several volleys at the advancing rebel forces, from this point across a corn and cotton field we moved, without halting and yet without precipitancy, a distance of a half mile to the

edge of a very heavy body of timber previously occupied by Hotchkiss' Battery; while about to form a line of battle in position to support the battery and resist the advance of the enemy, rallying such of my men as had become separated from their companies, I received a wound from a fragment of shell which penetrated the right foot, causing me, for a time, intense pain. I turned over the command to Lieut. Col. Mc Mackin. My loss during the day to this time was One hundred and Ten officers and men killed and wounded; total loss Two hundred and Eighty, of whom Fifty Five were known to be dead on the field, embracing Two officers and Fifty Three men; One hundred and Ninety wounded embracing Seven officers and thirty five missing enlisted men; a list of the killed and wounded accompanying this report.

In conclusion, I would call attention to the following individuals, whose conduct, during the battle, seem to deserve especial mention.

Lieut. Col. Mc Mackin. rejoined the regiment during the advance on the evening of the 30th, after the line of skirmishers had returned to the command and was constantly at the post of duty and of danger, being in command the remaining days of the battle under circumstances of hardship and exposure the most trying.

Major Galloway. elicited the unqualified commendation

of Officers and Men for fearless and gallant daring, having two horses shot under him.

Adjutant Steele, while bravely encouraging that part of the line advancing immediately upon the rebel battery during the action of the 30th., was struck from his horse, and his horse being shot at almost the same moment, falling partly upon him, his injuries were of such a nature that he had to be assisted from the field and was unable to return.

Surgeon Seeley with Asst. Surg. Link and an efficient Hospt. Corps were, with self sacrificing assiduity and promptitude, ministering to the wants & alleviating the pains of the large number of wounded so suddenly thrown upon their hands, greatly assisted by Chaplain Wilkin whose services were also invaluable in rallying large numbers of stragglers on the 31st and directing them to their various commands.

Captains Eaton, Reed, Blackburn, George, Harlan and Knight; Lieutenants Welshimer, Weigle, Freeland and Wilson were in command of their respective companies, assisted in Co. "A" by Lieut Alvord, Co. "D" Lieut. Taylor, Co. "F" Lieut Hunter, Co. "G" Lieuts. Songer and Smith, Co. "H". Lieut. McOffen, Co. "I" Lieuts. Howe and Gose.

Of the Eighteen Co. officers present in action, each did his whole duty. Lieuts. Alvord and Weigle were Killed.

Captain Knight, Lieuts Howe, Cox and Mc Kean were wounded. Captain Jamison, prostrated by disease, was wholly unable to command his Company, but accompanied the Regiment on the March and rendered every assistance in his power during the action by advice and encouragement. The Regimental Flag was gallantly rescued and borne from the field by Lieut Hunter, Co. "F", under a withering fire after four Color bearers, in succession, had been shot down. Sergeant-Major Roberts rendered valuable Service throughout the action. I would call attention especially to the Non-Commissioned Officers and Men; they are entitled to the highest meed of praise, having responded to every requirement. The ranks of graves at each position taken in succession upon that field bear melancholy testimony to the fearful Struggle in which they engaged. The names of many of the living well known to their Comrades will be presented as opportunity offers for promotion they so richly earned, while the memory of the gallant dead, will be cherished in the hearts of their fellow-Soldiers, their names written in the history of our Country and long mourned in the secret Sorrows of the domestic circle to which they belonged as a fearful tribute to the integrity

of a "priceless Union"

J W Alexander

Col

Comd^g 21st Ills. Vols. Inf^ry.